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Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

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Your Excellencies,

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) recognises the efforts of the Co-Facilitators to develop the current draft of the Global Digital Compact (Revision 3). We appreciate that the modalities of this process have been challenging for all stakeholders, and the good faith and diligence of the Co-Facilitators has been essential in guiding the process successfully to this point.

We recognise the significant evolution of the text over the four drafts, and believe that there is much to support in the current Rev. 3 draft, including its ongoing commitment “to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)” (par. 5) and its recognition that all stakeholders have “roles and responsibilities in advancing an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital future” (par. 8k). In particular, we appreciate the draft's recognition that “Internet governance must remain global, in nature, with the full involvement of governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, technical and academic communities, and all other relevant stakeholders in accordance with their respective roles and responsibilities”, and that it “reaffirm[s] the role of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as the primary multistakeholder platform for discussion of Internet governance issues” (par. 27).

Agreement of this Compact will be an important milestone in the timeline of global digital cooperation and Internet governance. However, like all stakeholders, we are also looking to the post-GDC reality, including and especially:

- follow-up on commitments made in the Compact;
- inclusive processes to ensure effective engagement with the rapidly evolving digital landscape; and
- efficient, collective efforts to build on the structures and processes developed over two decades of WSIS activity, not least the IGF itself.

The Rev. 3 section on “Follow up and review” makes important strides towards these goals - the recognition of the role of the IGF ecosystem (including national and regional initiatives and intersessional projects) and the call to develop an “annual policy discussion track to facilitate the contribution of stakeholders to the delivery of the Compact’s commitments and actions” is very much welcomed. We would strongly urge any further review of the language to guard against weakening these commitments.

The essential and prescient insight of the original WSIS outcomes was the fundamental need for coordination on issues pertaining to the Information Society - coordination between Member States, across UN agencies and processes, and in the ongoing adoption, evolution, and application of multistakeholder governance processes. This insight is as relevant and urgent now as it was 20 years ago, and we acknowledge that this has very much informed efforts to develop a Global Digital Compact.

At the same time, we are concerned by the possibility of establishing a parallel track of UN digital processes that are not linked to the WSIS processes. The language in Rev. 3 paragraphs 72, 73, 75, and 76 raises concern about such a parallel track, operating independent of WSIS efforts, at a time when the importance of a coordinated and holistic approach to digital issues has been highlighted and reinforced by Member States and other stakeholders.

Most states and stakeholders have emphasized the importance of utilizing existing structures and processes. The WSIS 20-year review, the IGF, the WSIS Forum, and other related efforts and events provide an effective, dynamic, and responsive framework upon which to build a successful post-GDC strategy. We encourage further negotiations on the Compact language to reflect this. We commit, on behalf of the IGF community and ecosystem, to work collectively and cooperatively with partners throughout the digital ecosystem, and to maintain and further develop the IGF's role as the primary multistakeholder platform for discussion of Internet and digital governance issues.

Sincerely yours,

Vint Cerf, Chair of the IGF Leadership Panel

Carol Roach, Chair of the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group