

First IGF 2024 Open Consultations

27 February 2024

[Transcript] Statement from Renata Dwan, Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology – OSET

Good morning, good afternoon, colleagues. I'm joining you from the Secretary General's Envoy on Technology in New York. I wanted to share a short update on the Global Digital Compact and perhaps explore how the IGF work can contribute to that process which has been underway for over a year now.

And indeed, how your findings and an eventual Global Digital Compact might be reflected in your meeting in December.

So very briefly, you'll recall the origins of the Global Digital Compact in the Secretary General's Common Agenda Report, really, with a view to exploring what is the scope to strengthen digital cooperation globally, and with a particular focus on closing the digital divides, recognizing the progress that has been made to date.

But acknowledging that with 2.6 billion people still unconnected, and with a world in which we must also tackle the harms as well as the benefits of digital technologies, there is more and more pressing engagement and interest in many sectors of the world, particularly amongst governments, to try to look at what is the scope to enhance that cooperation.

I would also say that that cooperation has been turbocharged with the development of ChatGPT to market. And with the developments and discussions around AI governance.

So maybe just to flag that where we are right now, well, we have launched the informal consultations for the global digital compact. Last year was spent exploring key themes, key issues, what we called deep dives, over the course of 2023, and these were open to all Member States as well as to all stakeholders. And I think one thing that the co-facilitators of this global digital compact, permanent representatives of Sweden and Zambia, have tried to do throughout really emphasize and provide for opportunities for multi-stakeholder global participation.

At the end of those deep dives, in September of last year, the co-facilitator circulated a letter really summarizing or outlining what they heard. What were the issues, in particular themes that they heard, in addition to the topics covered over the course of the consultations. I'm happy to discuss those with you if there's any questions, or or in time for discussion.

Where we are now, in February of this year, we've launched the first of two informal consultations. One took place on twelfth and thirteenth of February, open to Member States as well as to non-State stakeholders, and thank you to those IGF participants who joined those discussions.

We have the second and final informal consultations taking place this week on Thursday, the 29th of February, with Member States, and on Friday, the first of March, with all interested stakeholders. If you'd be interested in making a statement or just listening in or participating, all details are available on the UN OSET website, the office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology. You can find details of how to register, and you can also find recordings of the meetings if you want to follow that in any way.

The Member State briefing will be broadcast live on UN Web TV.

So that will be an opportunity to comment on a document that the co-facilitators have circulated, which is a two-page outline of what the digital compact might look like. And it's really just they

seeking input on. Do they have the right structure and elements so that they can go ahead and begin the drafting of that document.

So I encourage colleagues to listen in, to follow in and participate if that is in your interest. You may also be interested in the written input opportunity. There's an opportunity to submit written input by the eighth of March. And again, details are on our website as to how to do that.

The co-facilitators intend to circulate a first draft, what they're calling a zero draft, by the end of March. And at that point, we go into the intergovernmental phase of these discussions and negotiations. There will be a first reading by Member States, a formal presentation of the draft on the fifth of April.

If a global digital compact is successfully negotiated, it will be annexed to the Summit of the Future declaration and addressed at the Summit of the Future ministerial meeting in September of this year.

Now let me just flag that Internet governance is one of the themes discussed in the global digital compact process. I think there are strong voices in support of open, accessible, free, safe, secure Internet. There are also strong calls for a whole-of-Internet approach, for maintaining the multi-stakeholder nature of the Internet governance, and I think strong calls for looking at how to address inclusion, how to strengthen processes for participation, and how to address some of the key challenges that we've experienced during these COVID years around harms, particularly child safety, violence against women online have been key themes as well as the opportunities to enhance digital learning and skills. So there is keen interest in the topic. The IGF's role and the crucial nature of its role have come up many times in the discussions, and I would anticipate that you would expect to see language to that end in the zero draft. Obviously going forward, your meeting in December of this year will be an opportunity to reflect on that compact, assuming it's successfully negotiated, and you'll have an opportunity to see how the IGF can contribute to advancing the commitments set out in that document.

I'll just stop here but am very happy to take any questions or hear your thoughts and comments. Thanks again for your keen interest in the Global Digital Compact.