United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) inputs to the informal consultations and subsequent intergovernmental negotiations on a Global Digital Compact

12-13 February 2024, New York

1. The Global Digital Compact provides an opportunity for shaping a shared vision on digital cooperation that aims to close the digital divide, harness the benefits of digital technologies to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, safeguard human rights, and ensures an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital future for all. How can a shared vision on global digital cooperation be reflected in the Compact?

- The Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action and Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, as the outcomes of the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS), remain the only inter-governmentally agreed global documents on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital technologies adopted by the Heads of States and Government. These represent the foundation of global digital policies and cooperation supporting our shared vision of people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information and knowledge societies that fully respects and upholds the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- Please also see UNGIS' previous submission to the consultations on the Global Digital Compact here (https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/GDC-submission_UNGIS.pdf).

2. We have identified support for the establishment of a Global Digital Compact that rests on the principles of the UN Charter, Agenda 2030, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What are the principles for cooperation to include in the Global Digital Compact?

- In accordance with UNGA Resolution A/70/125, since 2015, the WSIS Process has been aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, so as to ensure the integration of ICTs into all stakeholders' approaches in implementing the activities/initiatives to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

- The principles of multi-stakeholder cooperation of the WSIS Process could be included in the GDC. The annual WSIS Forum is a key platform for multistakeholder networking, coordination of implementation activities, information exchange, knowledge creation, sharing of best practices and forging partnership to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The GDC should leverage the WSIS ecosystem to build upon established

frameworks, including the IGF and the WSIS Forum, as we move towards the Summit of the Future and its Pact and particularly its follow-up.

The GDC should base its principles on the SDGs, which are closely linked to fundamental human rights across all sectors. The utilization of ICT and emerging technologies as enablers for achieving SDGs and related targets necessitates intentional interventions and collaboration among various stakeholders. The GDC also represents an opportunity to further emphasize the link between digitalization and the SDGs.

- The WSIS Outcomes highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming as a cross cutting theme across all WSIS Action Lines. The GDC should emphasize a stand-alone goal on gender equality as well as mainstream gender perspectives across all themes, to draw attention to how digital governance decisions can advance equality - particularly women's and girls' rights in the digital age - and expand efforts to close the gender digital divide.

- The WSIS Process principle of capacity development for individuals, institutions and for countries - particularly for developing countries, could become a core pillar of the GDC, enabling the realization of our shared vision of building and consolidating inclusive global knowledge societies that benefits all. Special attention could be given to building governments' institutional capacities to lead digital transformation processes in ways that leverage innovation to ensure harmonious, fair and equitable development for all, while addressing related risks.

5. What follow up is required to support Compact implementation and deliver on commitments? What mechanisms might be harnessed, including to avoid duplication, in support of follow up?

- Since 2006, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) has been mandated by ECOSOC to serve as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up to the outcomes of the WSIS and advise the Council thereon, including through the elaboration of recommendations to the Council aimed at furthering the implementation of the Summit outcomes.

- The WSIS+20 Review in 2025 to be facilitated by the General Assembly is an opportunity to assess the global progress and challenges over two decades since the inception of WSIS, in view of the outcomes of the Pact for the Future and the GDC, while reaffirming the continued relevance of the WSIS outcomes and WSIS Action Lines. The WSIS+20 process has also already started through discussions at the UN CSTD and at the WSIS Forum 2022 and 2023; as well as through the guidance received through ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2022 that resolved that ITU should continue to coordinate with the relevant United Nations organizations, where appropriate, to support the UNGA overall review of the WSIS outcomes in 2025 and to play an active role in the process according to ITU's WSIS+20 roadmap, and the decision made by the UNESCO 42nd General Conference

tasking the Organization to fully engage in preparations towards a renewed, forward-looking WSIS+20 review.

- The WSIS+20 Forum High-level Event in Geneva will take place from 27 to 31 May 2024 and will serve as a platform for the WSIS+20 review to provide multistakeholder discussions and to take stock of the achievements and key trends, challenges and opportunities since the Geneva Plan of Action. A Global Conference on Digital Transformation will take place in Paris (UNESCO, HQ) from 18 to 20 February 2025, offering a GDC follow-up and an opportunity to translate some of the GDC commitments into reality.

- Member States should consider the linkages between the WSIS and the Summit of the Future, including how the WSIS and its Action Lines could be leveraged to translate the principles and outcomes agreed to in the Pact for the Future and the GDC into concrete and actionable impact.

- This could include reaffirmation of the role played by the Internet Governance Forum, which was established by the WSIS, as well as key players in the WSIS ecosystem, including the CSTD. This important collective effort could then also serve as a contribution to the review process for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognizing the importance of digital technologies as an enabler and accelerator for the internationally agreed Development Goals.

- There is a crucial need for clear and distinct calls-to-action directed at all stakeholders – including the private sector, public sector, technical community, academia, and civil society – to actively participate in the discussion on the GDC.

- It is imperative for digital cooperation, data, and internet governance processes, including WSIS and its outcomes (especially IGF and WSIS Forum) and GDC, to function cohesively. This coherence not only prevents fragmentation and duplication of efforts but also ensures effective resource utilization. Importantly, it helps prevent countries from the global South from being left behind in the digital governance journey.

- The UNGIS is the UN system's inter-agency mechanism for advancing policy coherence and programme coordination on matters related to ICTs in support of internationally agreed development goals. UNGIS is comprised of 38 Members (see www.ungis.org) and is a relevant and successful example of digital cooperation with 20 years of experience. As an existing body of interagency digital cooperation, UNGIS stands ready to ensure that efforts across the UN system are coherent, connected and coordinated to achieve maximum, sustainable impact.

- UN agencies can support Member States' review of and where necessary, updating of WSIS and its Action Lines, processes, structures and workstreams.