



## **Global Digital Compact**

### **Deep-Dive #4**

*Human Rights Online*

**NEW YORK, 8 May 2023**

Thank you for giving me the floor Mr. Co-facilitator,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to add the following in its national capacity.

Existing and emerging digital technologies can strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, for instance through improved access to information and increased opportunities for civil society to collaborate. Digital technologies empower people and provide new means to enjoy and exercise human rights.

At the same time, merely increasing internet access and connectivity are not a silver bullet solution. As pointed out in the submissions of multiple stakeholders, such as Research ICT Africa and the Australian Human Rights Commission, the protection of human rights online is a condition for meaningful connectivity. There is widespread consensus on the fact that international law, including international human rights law, applies equally offline as it does online. The Global Digital Compact should recognize this.

The Compact should address the protection of human rights and we would like to highlight two angles. First, the angle of access, which can be impeded through internet restrictions and shutdowns. And second, the angle of development and design of digital technologies, which can be used to commit mass surveillance, microtargeting and online gender-based violence. Therefore, the Compact should include a commitment to apply human rights in a holistic manner to the entire digital ecosystem.

Human rights go even further than access to and the use of technologies. Technical standards are at the core of the development and use of technologies, have an impact on the promotion and protection of human rights and should be consistent with international human rights law. This is why the Netherlands calls for the Compact to strengthen and intensify the involvement of all stakeholders in the standardization process, especially human rights experts. The incremental role of the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights should be acknowledged in that regard.

The Netherlands emphasizes the importance of sustainable support to civil society organisations and human rights defenders who strive to promote human rights and gender equality in the digital sphere. However, these organisations and defenders are more often at risk of online threats and violence. Similarly, some individuals are more vulnerable and at a disproportionate risk of human rights violations due to the intersection of inequalities. So, the Compact should take an intersectional approach to human rights and gender equality online. Moreover, the Compact could include the use of the Universal Periodic Review to address recommendations to States.

Lastly, we want to highlight the responsibility of not only states but also of companies in this matter. The responsibility and accountability that companies have is laid down in, among others, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The Compact should reaffirm these existing commitments and improve their implementation in the digital domain.

To conclude, clear focus should be on strengthening the open, free, secure and interoperable Internet through a multistakeholder model so that digital domain is a safe and trusted space for everyone.

Thank you.