

Input into the Informal Consultations on Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda": Frameworks for a peaceful world—promoting peace, international law and digital cooperation

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First of all, thank you for the opportunity to make an input at this esteemed platform. I am Amay Korjan and I represent IT for Change, an NGO based in India working to further a socially just and gender equitable digital paradigm.

My comment in this forum pertains to some key provisions in Chapter IV of the 'Our Common Agenda Report', specifically, the issues surrounding digital cooperation.

We acknowledge that the goals outlined in the OCA report are both timely and admirable - with a central space given to the urgency of digital inclusion, safeguarding of human rights, and the need for a new compact on strengthening the governance of the global digital commons and public goods.

That said, the manner in which these goals are being addressed in the OCA report, as well as the underlying diagnosis of our current predicament, raise a number of important concerns.

For instance, while the crucial need for a Global Digital Compact is acknowledged, the report contains no directions to create and implement an international rule of law framework -- a global governance regime -- vis-à-vis emerging digital public goods. This omission is striking, given that countries around the world are beginning to engage with the need to regulate the digital economy; formulate new legislations on issues such as data governance, anti-trust, and e-commerce; provision public digital infrastructure; and secure national digital sovereignty. A new global norm-building process could bolster these efforts, and institute a genuinely democratic regime that no individual nation has the power to enforce.

Relatedly, the report's submission that new institutions are not needed to govern the digital commons (as highlighted in Para 62 of the OCA Report¹) runs counter to the view of other UN organizations such as the UNCTAD, which has underscored the urgent imperative for an international institutional framework for global data governance. The status quo -- as UNCTAD argues -- is inadequate to achieve a fair and equitable economic order.

Perhaps more worrying is the emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnerships -- a modality that has a fraught history in the digital space -- as a vehicle that has entrenched corporate interests.

¹ Para 62. One of the strongest calls emanating from the consultations on the seventy-fifth anniversary and Our Common Agenda was to strengthen the governance of our global commons and global public goods. This does not require new institutions. Rather, we need new resolve and ways of working together that are suited to the challenges we face and the diverse landscape of actors (public, civic and private) that have the capacity to contribute to solutions. The balance between a global breakthrough and a breakdown scenario hinges on the choices we make now. These choices are ultimately in the hands of Member States, with the support of other relevant stakeholders.

Finally - There is unmistakable evidence that multi-stakeholderist approaches in building digital infrastructure and public goods have only hollowed out the public sector, transferring control of public data systems to opportunistic private entities, disregarding considerations of local accountability and human rights in the deployment of frontier technologies.

A Global Digital Compact needs to be predicated on a process that is embedded in public interest and democratic representation. If the organizing principle of our common agenda is multistakeholder partnerships, then it is hard not to conclude that such a trajectory would hammer the final nail in the coffin of the multilateral system's capacity to deliver on democratic global governance. This is particularly true looking at developments from a global south perspective.

A global social contract for the digital paradigm cannot simply be forged through a focus on modalities for how the private sector and civil society could come together to prepare for a Summit of the Future (as outlined in Para 93 A of the OCA²). What we need is the clarity of vision for a new democratic and multi-lateral body for developing global Internet and digital policies. [As the submission from over 170 organisations in response](#) to the UN secretary General's Roadmap for Global Digital Cooperation argues, without appropriate and adequate institutional arrangements, any compact would be nothing more than a recipe for Big Tech-dominated digital cooperation.

²Para 93 A. Building on the recommendations of the road map for digital cooperation (see A/74/821), the United Nations, Governments, the private sector and civil society could come together as a multi-stakeholder digital technology track in preparation for a Summit of the Future to agree on a Global Digital Compact.