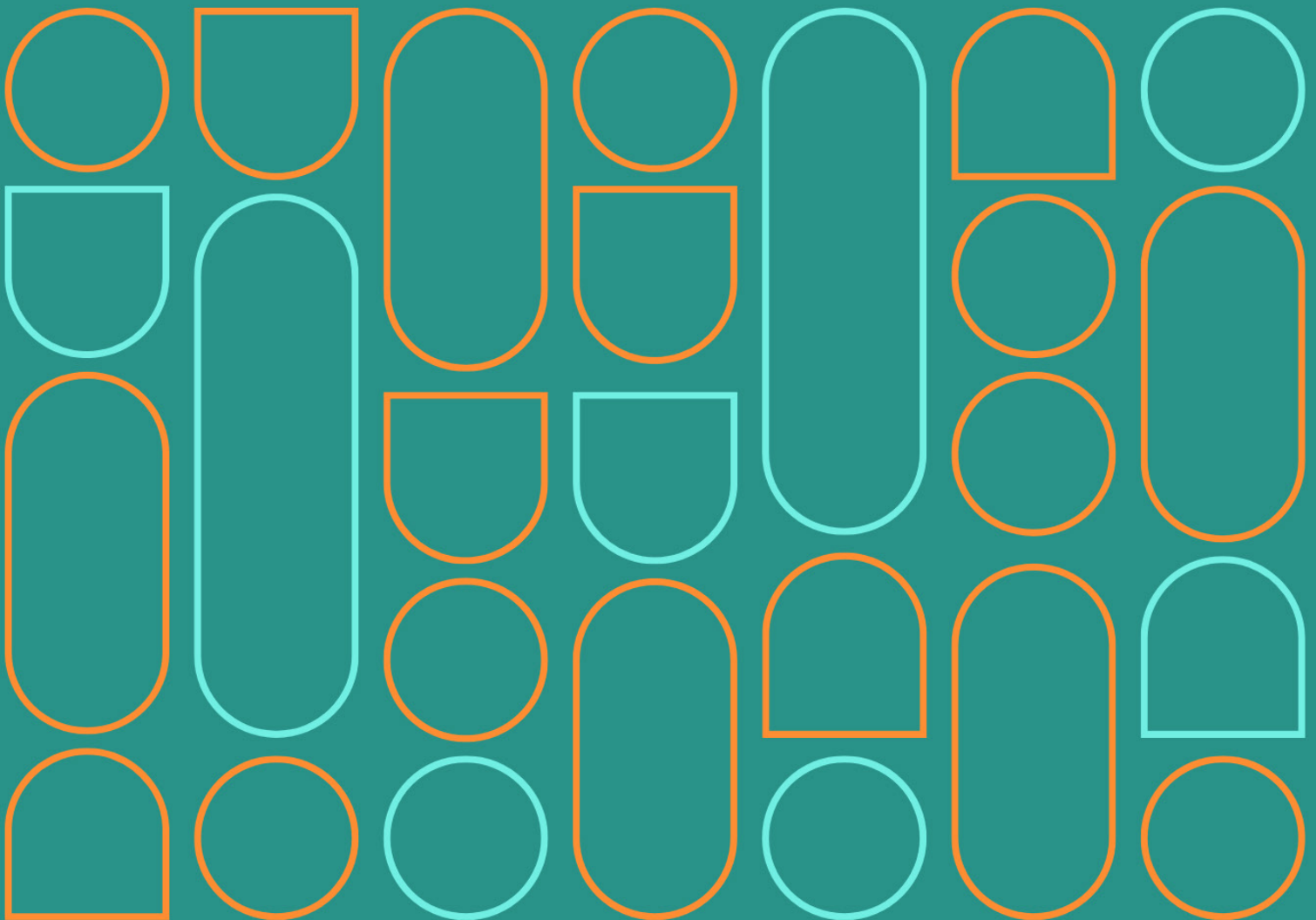




Digital Justice, Now!

A Call to Action for WSIS+20 and Beyond

April 2025



The [Global Digital Justice Forum](#) (GDJF) is a dynamic coalition of civil society organizations from across the Global South and their allies in the Global North who are committed to returning digital power to all peoples. Through multi-pronged action grounded in a structural justice perspective, the Forum seeks to bring to fruition the vision of an equitable, just, and development-oriented international digital order.

Twenty years after the conclusion of the World Summit of the Information Society (WSIS), we find ourselves in a now-or-never moment. The vision of a people-centered, inclusive, and development-oriented digital order has never seemed more elusive, yet so urgent, to claim. The new digital order dictated by corporate greed and state control is a far cry from the ideals of the WSIS consensus (See the [GDJF's Johannesburg Communique](#) for our analysis on what is wrong with the status quo). The weaponization of data and artificial intelligence (AI) has already seen widespread job precarity, misinformation, war crimes, the climate catastrophe, and more. Our autonomy, agency, shared humanity, and planetary well-being are under siege.

We need *Digital Justice, Now!* We need to take back the tech paradigm.

Our values:

- Human rights and freedoms for human flourishing
- Equal societies rooted in democracy, distributive justice, and social justice
- Gender equality
- International solidarity
- Cultural pluralism
- Shared responsibility to harness science, technology, and innovation for the common good
- Development autonomy of people
- Respect for the rights of nature and climate justice
- Digital non-alignment¹

Our demands:

Global digital justice is the cornerstone principle of global digital cooperation. WSIS implementation mechanisms and the emerging institutional processes on data and AI governance need to deliver on digital justice. A long-haul vision is needed to reclaim the promise of the digital.

¹ The freedom for all countries to make technological and innovation choices independently and in line with their interests and aspirations, and not formally aligned with or against any major digital power.

Our efforts need to take steady and rapid steps towards the following:

Agenda 1. Human rights adequate to the digital paradigm

1.1. Digital rights are human rights. Legal systems that protect and promote rights—both individual and collective—need to be made fit for purpose and adequate to our digital condition. There is no right to public participation without the right to belong in the digital public sphere; no right to privacy in the absence of the right to consensual representation; no right to knowledge sans epistemic rights of communities to innovate from their shared data resources; and no right to equality without algorithmic transparency. The respective roles and responsibilities of state and non-state actors in upholding these rights must be defined.

1.2. An international governance framework for the global communication commons must be rooted in a ‘right to communicate for all’ that strikes at the heart of techno-fascism and its chilling effects.

1.3. The Legally Binding Instrument on Transnational Corporations, currently being negotiated, needs specific provisions on corporate liability for the societal harms of data and AI innovations.

Agenda 2. The internet as a global communications commons

2.1. The internet is a powerful enabler of human rights and freedoms. Bridging the digital divides requires uninterrupted, meaningful, affordable, and universal access to the internet for all, in a manner that promotes equity and well-being rather than adverse integration.

2.2. Dominant social media, with its basis in surveillant advertising and algorithmic profit-maximization at any cost, has vitiated the serendipity, community, and emancipatory potential of the internet. The internet’s walled gardens must make way for an inclusive, pluralistic, decentralized, and vibrant transnational communications agora.

Agenda 3. A just international economic order based on the principle of digital non-alignment

3.1. Sustainable peace is non-negotiable in the emerging AI paradigm. The AI arms race must end immediately. Dual-use AI technologies and their international trade must be subject to rigorous, independent, ex-ante risk assessment by the International Scientific Panel on AI and subject to continual monitoring. Digital industrialization needs indigenous pathways, not lock-ins into one technological bloc or another. Sovereignty of digital public infrastructure and local AI capability are vital for regenerative economies, and call for dedicated international public finance.

3.2. The proposed International Decade of Data (2025–35) must be built on international data solidarity. Data resources are a societal commons that cannot be treated as a ‘free-for-all’ resource for dominant digital corporations to extract. A trusted international digital future depends on cross-border data flows that are governed for equitable innovation dividends. Communities to whom the data belongs have the right to decide which data must flow, to whom, to what extent, and to what ends.

3.3. An urgent reform of digital trade, taxation, and intellectual property (IP) regimes that entrench inequality between countries is in order. Digital trade agreements cannot take away the policy space of governments to regulate transnational corporations in their domestic economy, nor erode regulatory authority to prevent data and AI harms. Taxation regimes need to be overhauled to address new forms of illicit financial flows in virtual operations—trade mis-invoicing, abusive transfer pricing, and base erosion and profit-shifting practices—that undercut the fiscal foundations for social care infrastructure in the Global South. IP regimes cannot lead to the enclosure of public knowledge and colonization of cultures by powerful companies and their opaque AI models.

Agenda 4. A sustainable digital transition that safeguards the human rights of future generations

4.1. Ecological justice is a central principle for the design of digital innovation systems. Policies and standards must reject green-washing, eliminate ecological harms and inequalities in corporate-controlled digital value chains, and mandate business models in digital products and services in line with the right to a clean, healthy, equitable, and sustainable environment.

4.2. The ‘precautionary principle’ from the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development must guide the pursuit of national data and AI policies and roadmaps. The right of the public to access information and participate in decisions about digital innovation, akin to the right enshrined in the Aarhus Convention on environmental matters, is critical.

4.3. The human rights and aspirations of young people, particularly those from the Global South, are vital to building just digital futures. Intra- and inter-generational equity requires meaningful participation of young people in shaping the digital world they will inherit. The Declaration on Future Generations needs to be upheld by state and non-state actors to secure a just and sustainable digital future.

Our immediate call for action at the WSIS+20 review:

We call for reinvigorated efforts under the WSIS Action Lines based on international cooperation and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders.

In order to realise the WSIS vision, Action Lines must be expanded in the following directions:

- **Action Line C1:** Common standards for digital public goods that emphasize democratic ownership and control, and transparent and accountable governance of digital public infrastructure.
- **Action Line C2:** Universal access to meaningful connectivity, and steps to dismantle the walled gardens of private platform services, promote interoperable platform architectures for enabling market competition, address fragmentation of network standards, and foster the development of multiple and diverse technologies.
- **Action Line C3:** Measures to protect media pluralism and diversity, and tackle risks to democratic integrity, especially misinformation, hate speech, and gender-based cyber-violence, stemming from algorithms gone rogue.
- **Action Line C4:** Critical and transformative public digital education and civic literacy for the age of algorithmized public life, and investment in human development for empowered participation of all in the digital society and economy.
- **Action Line C5:** Global agreement to end the militarization and weaponization of cybertechnologies and AI.
- **Action Line C6:** An integrated approach that recognizes continuities between internet-related public policy and data and AI governance.
- **Action Line C7:** A strong 'data for development' agenda that explores appropriate and rule-based data sharing at global, regional, and national levels to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **Action Line C8:** Governance frameworks for generative AI development to protect the knowledge sovereignty of indigenous communities and to ensure an open science and innovation culture that benefits all of humanity.
- **Action Line C9:** The right to communicate in social media and immersive internet environments.
- **Action Line C10:** Benchmarks on digital human rights, and due diligence guidance for transnational corporations and other business enterprises on human rights and the environment in digital value chains.
- **Action Line C11:** Removal of barriers to effective international cooperation on data and AI—specifically, the lack of flexibilities in IP regimes in AI value chains, constraining clauses in digital trade agreements, stifling of digital industrial policy choices of developing countries in the data economy, and lack of compute power in the majority world.
- A new Action Line on gender equality in the digital society for transversal integration of gender in the action plan.

