

IT for Change's Written Inputs for the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future

IT for Change

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Note: Text additions made in all chapters are in CAPS and underlined.

Chapeau

Language suggestion:

#2 - "...knowledge and technology, properly managed AND EQUITABLY DISTRIBUTED, could deliver a better future for all."

Rationale: The gains of technology, especially through the value of data and digital intelligence derived from it are unequally distributed in favor of Global North countries, in particular, the USA. The UNCTAD's Digital Economy Report 2021 notes the importance of an "equitable distribution of the gains from data flows" to enable inclusive and sustainable development.

#5 - "...We are committed to...new and emerging challenges, INCLUDING IN THE DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL SPACE..."

Rationale: There has to be express recognition of the new and emerging challenges in the digital world.

#14 - "...We commit to ensuring that new technologies...including through the Global Digital Compact annexed to this Pact. WE RECOGNISE THE ROLE OF LARGE TECH CORPORATIONS IN DETERMINING THE TRAJECTORY OF DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT, AND COMMIT TO REGULATING THEM."

Rationale: Any commitment to digital cooperation must address the need to govern the transnational corporation for positive social outcomes. The Big Tech-led model of digitality perpetuates an unjust world. Explicit global agreement for the accountability of TNCs is vital.

General comments:

The future of multilateralism cannot ignore the pre-eminence of the digital for our collective coexistence. Hence, the chapeau should call out the significance of digitalization for its impact on the UN pillars; development, peace and security, and human rights.

The Pact should recommit to the WSIS Geneva principles and the Tunis agenda for digital solidarity.

Finally, it is necessary to review the progress in the implementation of the Pact in periodic intervals of 5 years, given the rapid pace of digital technological advancement that can pose unanticipated challenges for States, people, and the planet.

1. Sustainable Development and Financing for Development

Language suggestion

#22 - “We acknowledge that the goals...right to development AND ITS INEXTRICABLE LINKAGES WITH DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY.”

Rationale: In today’s digital paradigm, development is inextricably linked to people’s data sovereignty – sovereign right of peoples and nations to own, control, generate value, and benefit from their data resources, and policy autonomy of nation-states to evolve domestic data governance regimes for their infrastructural development. Hence, the sovereign right of peoples to govern their data resources towards the progressive realization of ESCR, should be seen as an extension of state parties’ right and duty towards development of its people.

#25 - “...prioritizing policies and investments, INCLUDING INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE, that have multiplier effects..”

Rationale: See general comments.

#45 - “...impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries. THE POLICY FRAMEWORKS RELATED TO TRADE, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, TAXATION, AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN AREAS SUCH AS HEALTH AND FOOD SYSTEMS MUST BE FIT TO ADDRESS THE INEQUITY OF DATA AND AI INFRASTRUCTURAL POWER, AND ENABLE THE FURTHERANCE OF OPEN AND FLOURISHING DIGITAL FUTURES.”

Rationale: See general comments.

General comments:

Rationale for text addition in #25: Public finance is vital to ensure that public digital and data infrastructural capabilities in developing countries are built so that they can reap the benefits of structural transformation led by digitalization.

Rationale for text addition in #45: To achieve data equity and justice, we must address data power consolidation among select countries and corporations. This requires new policy and legal frameworks, as well as changes to existing ones related to trade, IP, taxation, and international development.

Investment in digital technologies, including digital public goods, is vital to accelerate progress towards SDGs. Meaningful enjoyment of the right to development necessitates reducing the technological gap between the developed and developing countries, addressing concerns of the Global South regarding extractive data practices of TNCs, and preserving their sovereignty to regulate their policy space.

Optimism towards private finance for sustainable development in the Addis Ababa Agenda is

misplaced. Without recognizing the State's developmental role and ensuring its regulatory abilities in the public interest, the private sector risks undermining rather than supporting sustainable development.

2. International Peace and Security

Language suggestion:

#88 - "... and to regulate all other types of autonomous weapons systems, IN LINE WITH THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE."

Rationale: See general comments.

#89 - "We commit to strengthening oversight mechanisms for the use of data-driven technology, including artificial intelligence AND PREVENTION OF POSSIBLE MISUSE OF DUAL-USE AI TECHNOLOGIES, to support the maintenance of international peace and security. We also commit to developing norms, rules and principles IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW on the design, development and use of..."

Rationale: See general comments.

General comments:

Rationale for change to # 88: The commitment to immediately conclude a legally binding instrument to prohibit lethal autonomous weapon systems is commendable. In regulating other types of autonomous weapon systems, it is vital to adopt a precautionary principle used in environmental law to judge the potentiality of an autonomous weapon system to become lethal, as functions of autonomous systems can evolve over time or can be changed by reconfiguration by bad actors, thereby making a non-lethal autonomous system lethal.

Rationale for change to #89: Since many AI technologies used in the military are also used for civilian purposes, it is important to institute measures to prevent the possible misuse of dual-use AI technologies without adversely affecting the development of civilian technologies.

Any regulation of military application of Artificial Intelligence should be in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law. Further, given the recent [reports](#) of defense forces of Israel and Ukraine being supplied AI weapons by technology companies, even private actors engaged in building autonomous and AI systems should be required to respect international human rights and humanitarian law and take reasonable measures to safeguard their products from unethical use.

3. Science, Technology and Innovation and Digital Cooperation

Language suggestion:

#93 - "...possibilities and capacities, INCLUDING THE DIGITAL AND DATA DIVIDE, to produce new scientific..."

Rationale: Only 36% of the population in LDCs used the Internet in 2022, compared with [66% globally](#). Further, the developing countries find themselves in subordinate positions by becoming mere providers of raw data to global digital platforms, while having to pay for the digital intelligence obtained from their [data](#).

#95 - "...risks and challenges emerging from the use of technologies, INCLUDING TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE."

Rationale: Violence against women in digital contexts can have a chilling effect, impeding their full and equal participation in public life with serious health, social and economic impacts.

#96 - "...scale up the means of implementation, INCLUDING THROUGH CLEAR COMMITMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC FINANCING SUCH AS THROUGH ODA AND IFIs, for science, technology and DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS, especially in developing countries..."

#100 - "...intellectual property framework, THAT DOES NOT UNDERMINE THE DEVELOPMENT SOVEREIGNTY OF COUNTRIES, THE KNOWLEDGE COMMONS OF THE PEOPLE OR THE PUBLIC INTEREST, while encouraging access..."

Rationale for #96 and #100: See general comments.

General comments:

This Chapter should echo the WSIS vision of creating a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society.

Bridging infrastructural and innovation gaps is crucial for SDG achievement. Hence, governments and multilateral systems should prioritize universal connectivity and digital public goods to foster public innovation ecosystems.

State parties' sovereignty and self-determination on internet-related policies must be acknowledged. Today, data sovereignty is synonymous with development sovereignty, and all nations must have the autonomy to shape domestic data governance for their infrastructural development. While private sector investment can enhance innovation access, it often undermines policy autonomy, turning countries into data sources for corporations. Data, a societal common, belongs to the people; indigenous groups, facing increasing threats of data appropriation, have declared their data as integral

to their [traditional knowledge](#).

To protect countries' development sovereignty, global IP and digital trade rules need reform to ensure technology transfer and data flows adhere to equity, human rights, and sovereignty under international law, and algorithms can be opened up in public interests, thereby enabling innovations for public interest.

4. Youth and Future Generations

Language suggestion:

#104 - "...is the most important investment that States can make to ensure the immediate and long-term development of youth. WE RECOGNISE THE ROLE OF WORKER RIGHTS IN SECURING A DECENT WORK AGENDA AND COMMIT TO CREATING A FRAMEWORK OF WORKER RIGHTS THAT IS BASED ON CONSULTATION WITH STATES, CIVIL SOCIETY, TRADE UNIONS AND WORKER REPRESENTATIVES, TO ENSURE A SAFE FUTURE FOR THE YOUTH."

Rationale: Securing decent working conditions for the youth of tomorrow must go beyond training them, and protect worker rights agenda today.

#105 - "...right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health AND PROTECTION FROM ONLINE ABUSE AND VIOLENCE, AND INTERNET ADDICTION."

Rationale: See general comments.

General comments:

This chapter must recognize and provide direction to address the unique challenges faced by the youth and future generations, who are digital natives, and hence experience the world quite differently. To realize the full potential of digital technologies for children and youth, they should be protected from online violence and abuse, internet addiction, unauthorized access to and exploitation of personal data for commercial gains, and exposure to unaudited algorithms. States should commit to ensure that digital technologies are safe, supportive spaces for children and young people to enjoy their health and wellbeing, and realize their human rights. There should be focus on building critical thinking capacities, and critical digital and media literacy and competency among children and youth.

While use of technologies in education has numerous benefits, it must be ensured that they do not create new exclusions in State educational programmes, given the lack of access to digital services and the increasing drive to privatize education with the rise of Ed-tech platforms. There needs to be a clear vision and a roadmap for technology in education that promotes its public value and unequivocally restrain its commercialization.

5. Transforming Global Governance

Language suggestion:

#116 - “We commit to a vision...just and representative ACROSS COUNTRIES, COMMUNITIES, AND PEOPLES; inclusive to allow for a diverse range of actors beyond States, ESPECIALLY CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS, while maintaining the intergovernmental character of the United Nations...”

Rationale: See general comments.

#130 - “We also resolve to...civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, AND IN PARTICULAR, A NEW CLASS OF RIGHTS ADEQUATE TO THE NEW DIGITAL PARADIGM, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO THE INTERNET, RIGHT TO BE FORGOTTEN, THE RIGHT TO BE REPRESENTED (OR NOT) IN DIGITAL SYSTEMS, NEW LABOUR RIGHTS FOR ALGORITHMIC WORK ENVIRONMENTS, as well as the right to development...”

Rationale: See general comments.

#143 - “...We look forward to the intergovernmental discussions on a framework convention on international tax cooperation in order to strengthen international tax cooperation and make it fully inclusive and more effective. WE COMMIT TO CREATING A DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY FUND THROUGH A DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT TAX TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WITH THE CREATION OF PUBLIC DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE.”

Rationale: See general comments.

General comments:

It’s significant to strengthen existing UN agencies to take on today’s polycrisis, and also important to establish an interagency body for global data governance.

Rationale for #116: There needs to be focus on communities outside of the multilateral state system that are responsible for bringing different perspectives for consideration of the UN system. It is important for the Pact to be specific in this regard to bring together voices of the people and their representatives.

Rationale for #130: There is an urgent need to update the current human rights framework to accommodate a new class of rights that reflect the new digital paradigm. Such a framework must recognise the ESCR implicated in data value chains and should not be reduced to the single-point agenda of privacy and personal data protection.

Rationale for #143: The reform of global financial institutions has to be accompanied with reform to international economic law and systems that are deeply unequal and disadvantage developing countries. The commitment towards a Digital Development Tax ([UNSG suggestion](#)) for a democratically governed Digital Solidarity Fund, collected from taxes on and compulsory contributions from digital TNCs, can help finance public digital infrastructure in developing countries.