

JOINT STATEMENT on WSIS & HUMAN RIGHTS: A FUNDAMENTAL RELATIONSHIP

The Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS (GDRC-WSIS)¹ and the Global Digital Justice Forum (GDJF)² are pleased to publish this summary statement on the centrality of human rights to achieve the WSIS vision of building a people-centric, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society.³ This statement reaffirms our view that the outcome document of the WSIS+20 review should consistently and progressively acknowledge the fundamental importance of human rights in the governance of digital technologies and the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines.

The Zero Draft explicitly anchors the WSIS in international human rights law and acknowledges that the respect, protection and promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights is instrumental to achieve the WSIS vision. This is an essential element which cannot change. The governance of digital technologies is and must remain a human rights-based system. It is therefore imperative that Paragraphs 1, 9 and 10 of the Introduction, which anchor the WSIS in international law, including the international human rights framework and UN human rights system, remain as currently drafted.

The Human Rights and Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society section, Operative Paragraphs 77 to 93, provides many important references to States' existing international human rights obligations to protect, promote and respect human rights in all aspects of the governance of digital technologies. These references, especially the explicit references to several international human rights treaties in paragraph 78 and the reference to Article 19 in paragraph 85, must remain in the text. Similarly, we stress the importance of maintaining all of the references to gender contained in the Zero Draft, notably those in Paragraph 13, 92 and 131. Gender equality in the governance of digital technologies is essential to the promotion of human rights and the WSIS vision. These references stipulate the obligations of States and enable non-State actors to know exactly which instruments will be applied to digital governance.

In addition to maintaining the text set forth in Paragraphs 1, 9, 10 and 13 of the Introduction and Operative Paragraphs 77 to 93 and 131, we believe that the following elements need to be included in subsequent drafts:

- In the Human Rights and Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society section:
 - Explicit requirement that States are legally obligated to apply a precautionary approach and to refrain from or cease the use of digital technologies that are

¹ The Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS (GDRC-WSIS) is a collective of civil society organisations offering our shared expertise to advance human rights and multistakeholderism in the WSIS+20 review process. It currently has 25 members. The full list of members can be found [here](#).

² The Global Digital Justice Forum (GDJF) is a dynamic coalition of civil society organisations from 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. The full list of members can be found [here](#).

³ Please note that this Statement discusses only certain concerns related to human rights. Please refer to the GDRC-WSIS and GDJF submissions on the Zero Draft, [here](#) and [here](#), for a full discussion of our concerns and recommendations.

fundamentally incompatible with international human rights law as committed to by States in A/RES/78/213 and A/RES/78/265, and to review their procedures, practices, and legislation regarding surveillance and the interception of data in accordance with the human rights principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, in line with A/RES/78/213.

- Include language calling on States to consider legislation requiring companies incorporated or operating within their jurisdiction to conduct human rights due diligence and human rights impact assessments. Human rights due diligence and human rights impact assessments must account not only for the rights of users of technology but also for all those impacted by digital technologies and platforms.
- Explicit reference calling on States, in their capacity as primary duty bearers for the respect, protection and promotion of human rights, to apply the UN's Human Rights-Based Approach⁴ to development in all aspects of implementation of the WSIS Action Lines, including planning, measurement, and review. It is the integration of human rights at a practical level that is most likely to contribute to building a human-rights oriented approach to ICT for development.
- Explicit references in each relevant section requiring human rights to be integrated throughout the entire lifecycle of all digital technology tools and platforms, including but not limited to Artificial Intelligence and Digital Public Infrastructure. A holistic, lifecycle approach will enable all stakeholders to anticipate, assess, and effectively mitigate any potential human rights risks and harms, as technologies and platforms are produced and deployed.
- Specific language calling for financial and other resources to enable the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to continue and build on its work mainstreaming human rights across the UN system and throughout the planning, measurement and review of the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines.

Collectively, we call for a WSIS+20 outcome document that provides a forward-looking framework to build an open, free, secure and human-centred digital future. This requires diversifying technological capacity, markets and infrastructure, while developing and implementing digital policy frameworks that uphold human rights and advance sustainable development. Sustainable development requires democratic global digital governance, a commitment to promote and protect human rights and advance equity. We believe that our position outlined above will achieve a people-centric, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society.

⁴ For more information, please visit [here](#).

This statement is endorsed by the Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS (GDRC-WSIS), the Global Digital Justice Forum (GDJF) and other civil society organisations.

Members of the Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS (GDRC-WSIS):

1. Access Now
2. Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
3. ARTICLE 19
4. Center for Communication Governance (CCG)
5. CyberPeace Institute
6. Data Privacy Brasil
7. Derechos Digitales
8. Digital Rights Foundation
9. DW Akademie
10. European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL)
11. FactSpace West Africa
12. Fundación Multitudes
13. Global Forum for Media Development
14. Global Partners Digital (GPD)
15. Global Network Initiative (GNI)
16. International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)
17. ICT Watch
18. Media Foundation for West Africa
19. Paradigm Initiative (PIN)
20. Research ICT Africa
21. STOPAIDS
22. Tech Global Institute
23. World Association for Christian Communication (WACC)
24. Weiba Foundation
25. WITNESS

Members of the Global Digital Justice Forum (GDJF):

Organisations:

1. African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD)
2. ARTIGO 19 BRASIL
3. Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
4. Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)
5. BlueLink
6. Campaign of Campaigns
7. CCAOI
8. La Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación (CLADE)
9. Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa, CIPESA
10. Data Privacy Brasil
11. Derechos Digitales
12. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
13. DisCO
14. EngageMedia
15. Equidad

16. ETC Group
17. Fian International
18. Global Digital Inclusion Partnership
19. Global Justice Now
20. Global Policy Forum
21. Groupe de Recherche Pour Une Stratégie Économique Alternative (GRESEA)
22. Indonesia for Global Justice
23. Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor (IDEC)
24. Internet Society, Libya
25. IT for Change (Secretariat)
26. Just Net Coalition
27. Latin American Information Agency (ALAI)
28. Media and Gender Enlightenment Initiative (MEGEIN)
29. Media Monitoring Africa
30. NEXUS Research Co-operative
31. Open Knowledge Foundation
32. Oxfam
33. Public Citizen
34. Public Services International (PSI)
35. Redes por la Diversidad, Equidad y Sustentabilidad A.C
36. Research ICT Africa
37. Rhizomatica
38. Social Watch
39. Tech Global Institute
40. Transnational Institute
41. The Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO)
42. Third World Network
43. World Association for Christian Communication (WACC)
44. 7amleh – The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media

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The statement is also endorsed by the following civil society organisations:

1. <A+> Alliance for Inclusive Algorithms
2. <AI & Equality> Human Rights Initiative
3. Aláfia Lab
4. Alliance for Universal Digital Rights (AUDRi)
5. Asociación Ciiudad Viva
6. Asociación Colnodo
7. Cooperativa Sulá Batsú
8. Equality Now
9. JCA-NET (Japan)
10. Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE)
11. Media Monitoring Africa (MMA rebranding to Moxii Africa)
12. Open Data Collaboratives
13. Rhizomatica Communications
14. Taller de Comunicacion Mujer (TCM)
15. Women At The Table
16. Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)