

Transcript UNESCO
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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

As you may know, in accordance with its constitutional mandate to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image, UNESCO launched a global multi stakeholder dialogue on regulating digital platforms.

To protect freedom of expression and access to information while addressing issues such as mis- and disinformation and hate speech online.

To achieve this goal, UNESCO launched a multi stakeholder consultation last September 2022 which has progressed through several stages including through the organization at UNESCO headquarters this past February 2023 of the Global Conference “Internet for Trust” to lead and follow up on this debate.

I'm delighted to inform you about the outcomes of this conference and the next steps of the consultation process for drafting guidelines for digital platform regulation.

The “Internet for Trust” Conference was an important consultation forum for gathering feedback from various stakeholders on the guidelines to regulate digital platforms.

The discussion on how to regulate digital platforms is not new.

However, it has remained in silos, where governments, businesses, civil society, academia, the media and the technical community have all met in separate rooms to debate potential solutions. But without hearing each other.

UNESCO used its convening power to breakdown these silos by holding a truly inclusive multistakeholder debate on the draft guidelines.

The conference sparked a global dialogue and drew over 4000 participants, both in-person and online, including leading experts from various stakeholder groups and 130 nationalities.

It was, furthermore, successful in making a wide range of perspectives heard.

Many participants perceive the conference as a watershed moment in an inclusive, urgent and global conversation.

Since the beginning of this initiative, UNESCO has been guided by two key principles:

First, the need to ensure that any work to regulate digital platforms does not jeopardize the significant advances in freedom of expression and access to information made possible by the development of the Internet.

And the second key principle is the need to ensure the broadest possible consultations around the world, including civil society and the international human rights community, to ensure that our guidelines take into account the widest possible range of perspectives.

Since the consultations began in September 2022, dozens of diverse entities have participated in the

discussions and through written comments; including regulators and networks of regulators, governments, civil society groups, researchers, our partners across the UN system, and nearly every major online digital platform.

An initial draft developed by UNESCO was updated through several rounds. Based on these discussions and the comments that we received.

The most recent version was published early February, before our global conference.

And we received over 3000 comments from 281 organizations and individuals, from 63 countries.

We'll continue this consultations in the coming months and will soon release a new version of the draft guidelines to solicit additional feedback before releasing the final version next September.

Our aim is to develop a document to guide the regulatory processes for digital platforms that are being developed or reviewed in conformity with international human rights standards.

For example, some regulators may lack the technical capacity to address exceedingly complex and rapidly evolving issues.

Others may not have the authority to summon platforms as larger countries or regional organizations.

This is part of our role as a global clearinghouse, a laboratory of ideas and the standard setter.

The guidelines, however, have no legal standing and do not constitute an international normative framework, an instrument or a Model Law.

As many people have said throughout the conference, there is no one-size-fits-all answer.

In fact, the guidelines must be adjusted to regional and national situations, with one overarching goal in mind: Full conformity with international human rights law.

It is important to note that we do not intend to create an intergovernmental normative instrument.

Our goal is to provide the resource that can be used as good practice and an accountability tool by all stakeholders.

In a closely related field, I wish to add that UNESCO's collaborating with the UN on the development of "our common agenda" policy brief, the Global Digital Compact.

The brief defines digital space as a global common and proposes a new global multi stakeholder framework to deliver an open, free and secure digital future for all, based on the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, while also accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

UNESCO will also play a key role in the "Summit for the Future", which will take place in New York from September 22nd to the 23rd, 2024.

This Summit aims to forge a new global consensus on critical challenges and to address gaps in global governance.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you fruitful debates.