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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2023 to implement the outcomes of the WSIS

Submission by

Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 27th session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

Implementation of Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

Response by the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology

November 2023

Part One: Executive Summary

The Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology (hereinafter referred to as "OSET") was established in 2021 and is led by Under Secretary-General Amandeep Singh Gill. OSET leads implementation of the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (Roadmap), coordinating the range of actions envisaged therein and working closely with the various United Nations entities and multi-stakeholder groups involved to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and contribute to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). It facilitates dialogue on relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General's Common Agenda to accelerate global digital cooperation, in particular the proposed Global Digital Compact which would outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all and could be adopted at the Summit of the Future in 2024. Furthermore, OSET serves as the secretariat for the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Part Two: Global Trends and Experiences

OSET continues to serve as a key advocate and focal point for digital cooperation and other technology-related activities at the United Nations. Contributing to the WSIS action lines, OSET supports projects on international digital governance and facilitates multilstakeholder dialogue thereon.

International Digital Cooperation
In the General Assembly declaration on the commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations of 21 September 2020 (GA resolution 75/1), Member States recognized the importance of technology as a fundamental global issue and pledged to "improve digital cooperation" to be able to maximize the benefits digital technologies can bring while curtailing risks. Member States also agreed that "the United Nations can provide a platform for all stakeholders to participate in such deliberations." Over the past year global conversations on ways to strengthen digital cooperation have intensified, including in the General Assembly, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and regional forums. OSET is providing knowledge support to the intergovernmental process on the proposed Global Digital Compact. In support of the Co-Facilitators of this process, OSET supported the organization, in 2023, of ten multi-stakeholder consultations in New York.

Over 3000 participants joined these consultations online and in-person. OSET also launched an open online consultation for which over 400 contributions were received. All contributions are available online on OSET's website.

Accelerating Progress on the SDGs

A priority theme in global discussions on strengthening digital cooperation is the opportunity such cooperation provides to accelerate progress on the SDGs. All stakeholders highlight the potential that digitalization offers as well as the risks for countries to fall further behind their development goals without inclusive and paced digital transformation. In leading the preparation of the Secretary-General's Policy Brief on a Global Digital Compact, OSET set out a number of concrete actions to target digital cooperation in support of SDG progress and played an active role in the UNGA ministerial week's focus on implementation of Agenda 2030. OSET used its convening role to support dialogue and launch catalytic initiatives especially around digital public infrastructure, open source resources and capacity building.

Artificial Intelligence

Technology developments in 2023 increased attention and global discussion of the risks and benefits of AI. To facilitate global multistakeholder dialogue, OSET hosted dialogues and events on the topic of AI governance including during UNGA's ministerial week and the IGF annual meeting in Kyoto, Japan. OSET plays a coordinating role in the UN-led efforts on AI governance. In particular, OSET played the central coordination role in the creation of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence launched on 26 October 2023. OSET hosts the secretariat of the AI Advisory Body and works closely with UN entities, including ITU, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO and UNU, to align UN contributions to global discussions on AI governance and help leverage data-driven technologies for humanity.

Part Three: Innovative Policies and Future Action

The Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology (OSET) has been actively engaged in a series of pioneering initiatives to help advance the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) action lines. Since the last report, OSET has launched new initiatives, demonstrating its commitment to driving progress within the framework of WSIS. The following sections details OSET's existing and forthcoming endeavours, categorized under the respective WSIS action lines.

C2. Information and communication infrastructure

Achieving universal and meaningful digital connectivity is key for enabling digital transformation and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to reach the

Roadmap's goal of ensuring that every person has safe and affordable access to the Internet by 2030, including meaningful use of digitally enabled services, OSET has adopted a collaborative, people-centered and holistic approach to connectivity that includes focus on digital literacy alongside efforts to expand infrastructure especially to rural communities and affordable connectivity. In his policy brief "A Global Digital Compact – an Open, Free and Secure Digital Future for All," of May 2023, the Secretary-General, called for an acceleration in the efforts to connect all schools by 2030.

OSET is working closely with the Digital Public Goods Alliance (DPGA) and other stakeholders to strengthen partnerships to advance Digital Public Goods and access to open source solutions, especially for developing countries. To better connect Open Source Program Offices across the world, OSET co-organized the conference "OSPOs for Good" in June 2023 and will increase its activities to support the use of open source globally.

C3. Access to information and knowledge

In his policy brief "A Global Digital Compact – an Open, Free and Secure Digital Future for All," of May 2023, the Secretary-General introduced an initiative for a Common Blueprint for Digital Transformations. This blueprint is a framework for action for harnessing digital transformation to achieve the SDGs by drawing on the diverse experiences of Member States and the specialized knowledge of stakeholders from non-profit and for-profit sectors. The blueprint provides a structured resource for effective investment in digital technologies by governments, UN country teams, and development partners in an inclusive coordinated effort for global digital transformation. .. Through a series of high-level dialogues, OSET is facilitating the identification of partnership opportunities, the sharing of impactful digital strategies, and exploration of structures for this blueprint. .

C5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

With the launch of the Universal Safeguards for Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) initiative, OSET has collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to introduce a universal framework designed to protect digital public infrastructures. This initiative emphasizes the necessity of constructing digital systems that not only drive progress but also safeguard against potential risks, thereby contributing to the attainment of the SDGs especially goals related to innovation, infrastructure, peace, and justice.

C10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

OSET coordinates a UN systemwide interagency working group on the issue of freedom of expression and social media, which has developed internal key messages for senior UN leadership.

C11. International and regional cooperation

OSET has been active in supporting international discussions around a proposed Global Digital Compact (GDCOSET is supporting the Co-Facilitators for the GDC and has sought to facilitate the participation of diverse stakeholders in discussions on a possible Global Digital Compact in different regions of the world, including Africa (Addis), India and Mexico. Through the organization of eight thematic deep dives, OSET has sought to support Member States preparations for substantive negotiations an facilitating the participation of a wide variety of perspectives and expertise.

The Secretary-General's Common Agenda commits the UN system to harness collective efforts for a more coherent and effective contribution to global digital transformation. A central role for OSET is to support UN collaboration. In 2023, OSET coordinated contribution of over 45 UN entities in the preparation of the Secretary-General policy brief on a Global Digital Compact. OSET participates in key UN interagency processes on digital and broader technology issues such as the Interagency Task Team within the Technology Facilitation Mechanism mandated by the 2030 Agenda, the interagency meetings supporting the WSIS and UNGIS processes, the UN's ICT Steering Committee, and relevant work of the Chief Executives Board. The Envoy on Technology is an ex-officio member of the IGF Leadership Panel which. OSET actively participates in processes on internet governance, engaging actively as a stakeholder in both global and regional Internet Governance Forum (IGF) meetings.