1. What are the most important **achievements** arising from WSIS that should be highlighted in the Zero Draft? *

Affirmation of journalism and media's important role in the digital governance and that communication, which media and journalism underpin, is a fundamental societal process is well-established under the Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10) and related Principle 55, including the corresponding Action Line C9 in the Geneva Declaration of Principles.

These existing documents have provided a solid foothold for building a people-centered, inclusive, and development-oriented information society by recognizing freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as independence, pluralism, and diversity of media (Principle 55). This recognition has also been translated into commitment 35.b in the Global Digital Compact, which seeks to "Promote diverse and resilient information ecosystems, including by strengthening independent and public media and supporting journalists and media workers." In the context of WSIS, it means preserving Principle 55 and Action Line C9 and better implementation and integration of media perspectives across other sections of the WSIS framework.

Recognition of the need for and establishment of a multistakeholder governance model, including the Internet Governance Forum, which aims to foster participatory and inclusive approaches to digital policy from state authorities, the private sectors, civil society, media, international organisations, the technical and academic community and all the other relevant stakeholders that continually worked together on the implementation of WSIS vision.

Affirmation and fostering of universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelation of human rights. Protection of human rights is built on affirmation of international human rights treaties, multistakeholder cooperation and stressing the role of the states in ensuring their compliance with the international human rights treaties.

2. What are the most important **challenges** to the achievement of WSIS outcomes to date and in the future that need to be addressed in the Zero Draft? *

Despite the foundational importance of noted WSIS architecture, media and journalism, as important actors in the digital governance framework, still face serious challenges that need to be addressed in the Zero Draft:

· Serious threats to freedom of expression, plurality of information, independent and public media, and journalists caused by increased dependence on social media business models and design (also noted in UNGA RES/76/227 from 24 December 2021), in particular, the weak social media platforms' accountability.

· Digital divide that remains between certain sectors, including concerns over unequal access, affordability, stability, and local content production to digital infrastructure, such as AI tools, cloud services, secure hosting for media and journalists as enablers of sustainable development. Media and journalists are vital to ensuring accessible and fact-based information, and their access to ICT solutions, based on open source, free software, is vital to that end.

· Digital governance frameworks give insufficient consideration to the impact of digital infrastructure and the internet on the survival of independent journalism and yet digital and media governance are extremely interconnected and often addressed separately.

· Inconsistent and weak state measures to ensure freedom of expression, including the need to respect media independence and viability, and to enable resilient information ecosystems and human rights-based uses of ICTs in line with international human rights treaties.

3. What are the most important **priorities** for action to achieve the WSIS vision of a 'people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society' in the future, taking into account emerging trends? *

Anchor WSIS vision in the international human rights treaties, with particular emphasis on freedom of expression as a bedrock of information integrity and media independence. WSIS should preserve its international human rights protection rationale, including a reference to the important role of the OHCHR.

The WSIS process must continue to recognise and promote the independence of the media and journalism as a public good, aligned with the UN's international treaties and documents, also referenced in this submission.

Preserve WSIS commitment to the principles of freedom of the media, with particular focus on independence, pluralism, diversity of media, media ownership and viability, as stipulated in Principle 55 of the Geneva Declaration. Address the digital divide and unequal meaningful participation from underrepresented communities or sectors, such as investigative and independent journalism, and smaller news media outlets in digital governance processes. This would require the creation of resources and financial support to ensure a people-centered multistakeholder governance model.

Finally, prioritize assessment and inclusion of media and journalism perspectives across other WSIS Sections to reflect current and emerging threats to journalism and to link explicitly to commitments made in the Global Digital Compact, such as strengthening independent media, protecting journalists, and enabling fact-based information.

Ensure that the WSIS architecture plays a central role in the implementation of the GDC commitments by integrating the processes to ensure cohesion at the international digital governance level. Follow the Sao Paulo Multistakeholder guidelines as the model for Internet governance, to ensure that digital systems and governance are co-designed by diverse stakeholders equitably and fairly, respecting the needs and rights of all persons.

4. What **additional themes/issues**, if any, should be included in the Elements Paper? *

Alongside clear references to information integrity in the Zero-draft, the Elements paper is an opportunity to expand this notion through acknowledgement of the role of journalism and the commitment to fostering diverse and resilient information ecosystems, strengthening independent and public media and supporting journalists and media workers that provide access to relevant, timely, local, multilingual, and fact-based information. Such commitment is a prerequisite to any meaningful digital content governance framework– in line with the SDGs 16, GDC, WSIS+10 Resolution, various UN Resolutions, and international human rights treaties.

Media independence, viability, pluralism, and diversity of media should be reaffirmed as central to information integrity and democratic processes and must be safeguarded in today's digital governance landscape. By doing this, the WSIS Elements paper will be fully capable of meeting SDG 16 and upholding WSIS+10 commitment (para.45) and principle 55.

Information integrity and platform accountability should be tied to infrastructure design and governance, addressed beyond content regulation, self-regulation, and generative AI emergence, including media literacy.

5. Do you wish to comment on **particular themes/issues/paragraphs** in the Elements Paper?   *

Para. 47: While recognizing the commitments expressed in the Global Digital Compact (34 and 35), the issue of information integrity and platform accountability should be expanded to stress the role of media and journalism as critical enablers of democracy and resilient information ecosystems.
In particular, platform governance should be observed through the lens of social media companies' business models and design (UN A/HRC/RES/49/23 (2022) and UN Secretary-General's Global Principles for Information Integrity (June 2024)) and their systemic risks (UNESCO Platform Regulation Guidelines) in line with the human rights-based approach.

Para. 48: International human rights treaties enshrine that any limitation on freedom of expression must meet the following criteria: legality (existence of a clearly defined legal basis), necessity in a democratic society, and proportionality to the legitimate aim pursued.

Para. 50: Stakeholders should promote information integrity, tolerance and respect in the digital space, protect the integrity of democratic processes, strengthen international cooperation concerning misinformation, disinformation and hate speech online, and mitigate the risks of information manipulation in a manner consistent with international law. Governments should promote diverse and resilient information ecosystems and strengthen independent and public media.
In line with the GDC commitments and WSIS Principle 55, additional wording in the last sentence should highlight governments' role in the promotion of diverse and resilient information ecosystems and strengthen independent *journalism* and public *interest* media.
In a similar vein, stakeholders should also promote freedom of expression and plurality of information (WSIS+10 Resolution, para.44).

Para. 65. *Additional wording to be added*: [...] This has enabled much more sophisticated data analysis by governments, commercial businesses, which has facilitated developmental goals but also widened the scope for targeting commercial products, services, information, and posed new challenges in data governance and *human rights, notably privacy*.

Para. 68. *Additional wording*: We need to emphasize the need for responsible, interoperable, *decentralised*, data governance, and stronger national capacities, especially in the Global South. Growing concerns around algorithmic transparency, surveillance, *affordability* and unequal protection frameworks underscore the need for open and global standards, trust-based data flows, *security and privacy by design, public accountability,* and inclusive policymaking.

Para. 7: Reinforce the direct link between "information integrity" and the functions of independent media. Proposed Addition (after "information integrity,"): *the undermining of trusted news sources and independent media ecosystems, harassment and hate speech*...

Para. 10: Emphasize the GDC's specific commitment to independent media. Proposed Addition (after "human rights."): *This alignment must explicitly integrate the Global Digital Compact's commitment to strengthening independent and public media and supporting journalists and media workers as foundational to achieving an inclusive, rights-respecting information society.*

Para. 16: New wording: To bridge these divides, enhanced international cooperation, targeted investment, and supportive policy frameworks are needed. *While striving for inclusion, individual rights must be upheld, including the right to opt out from technology and mechanisms to protect civilians who don't wish to partake in data collection.*

6. What suggestions do you have to support the development of the **WSIS framework** (WSIS Action Lines, IGF, WSIS Forum, UNGIS etc.)? *

Preserving Action Line C9 as a core component of the WSIS mandate: Fostering diverse and resilient information ecosystems, supporting independent media and journalism that provide access to relevant, timely, local, multilingual, and fact-based information is a prerequisite to any meaningful digital content governance framework. To support the necessary actions to uphold this objective and to enable the implementation of multilateral commitments by 2030 means "strengthening independent and public media and supporting journalists and media workers", as noted in the GDC Information Integrity commitments

Consider Media Perspectives Across Action Lines: Media-related commitments and action lines must be systematically integrated into the monitoring, measurement of all relevant Action Lines, in particular ICT for data governance, AI, development, Digital Economy, Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity, and local content, Enabling environment, International and regional cooperation. This includes identifying opportunities to meet the commitments, and addressing any potential gaps or regulatory blind spots that could negatively impact open, safe, and secure internet, media, and journalism, access to, and distribution of fact-based and diverse information.

Leverage the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as a permanent venue to advance dialogue on digital public infrastructure and journalism, building synergies between WSIS, GDC, and technical standard-setting spaces.

Expanding financial aid, guided by OECD DAC principles, especially the Development Co-operation Principles for Relevant and Effective Support to Media and the Information Environment, is crucial for inclusive digital transformation in global majority countries. This includes adhering to "do no harm" and offering long-term, context-sensitive support to protect media freedom, information integrity, and democratic resilience. Integrating these principles ensures financial flows support inclusive digital transformation while reinforcing the information ecosystems essential to human rights, sustainable development, and open societies.

We recognise the importance of increasing digital literacy. In addition to that, media literacy is also important, as well as specific capacity-building efforts directed to media and journalists. Online safeguards are much needed, as well as securing funding, and strengthening protection of journalists and their content online, otherwise, there will be no reliable, independent, fact-based and accurate information online.

We deem it crucial to add specific practices for a more action-oriented tone when developing ideas around cybersecurity and literacy in the Zero draft. Paragraphs 51 and 55 are necessary for it, and should include the idea that a global culture of cybersecurity should be developed and implemented based on contextual knowledge to enhance security and the protection of data and privacy, while striving for a balance and allowing for adequate access. This means accessible literacy models to civil society in all demographics, special capacity-building and protection to vulnerable actors, especially activists and journalists, and a multistakeholder approach to work with industry to deploy cybersecurity practices within their products.

Additionally, the WSIS framework is an opportunity to reiterate, as much as possible, that "The same rights that people have offline must also be protected online". As seen on paragraph 44, but also should be reaffirmed earlier, such as in paragraph 9. This should also be expanded to cover particular rights, notably freedom of expression, privacy, fair trial guarantees, and the right of non-discrimination as also reaffirmed in the WSIS+10.

7. Do you have any **other** comments? *

WSIS+20 must not be a backward-looking review, but a forward-looking agenda-setting process that reaffirms, preserves and builds on the achievement of the WSIS+10 Resolution and GDC.

The next phase must recognize the convergence between content and infrastructure, and ensure journalism is not left behind in digital governance.

To future-proof WSIS, digital governance must embrace not only ICT for development but also public-interest infrastructure for democracy, including the infrastructures that enable journalism, protect rights, and facilitate civic participation.

8. Who is **submitting** this input? *

Kindly provide the name of the person submitting this input, as well as the associated country, organization, stakeholder type, and relevant contact information

Laura Becana Ball, Spain, Global Forum for Media Development, Civil Society

9. Please provide your **e-mail** address: *

Please enter an email