

EU System for an Enabling Environment (EU SEE) – Proposed text for the WSIS+20 Zero Draft

September 26, 2025

Formatting note for the Secretariat: where we say “*Insert new para Xbis*” we mean a new paragraph following the numbered paragraph X. Where we say “*Amend para X*” we propose a replacement or an add-on sentence.

1) Multistakeholder participation & the enabling environment for civil society

Insert new para 3bis (after para 3) – on protecting civic space for meaningful participation

3bis. We recognize that an enabling environment for civil society, including protection from intimidation, reprisals and unlawful restrictions, is a prerequisite for meaningful, safe and effective multistakeholder participation by non-governmental stakeholders, including human rights defenders, journalists, community groups, youth and the technical and academic communities. All stakeholders should be able to participate without discrimination, obstacles or fear of retaliation, online and offline.

Insert new para 3ter (after para 3bis):

3ter. We encourage governments and all stakeholders to foster a supportive public discourse that recognizes the vital role of civil society in democratic life and sustainable development. States should refrain from negative narratives or smear campaigns targeting civil society actors, and actively counter disinformation and misinformation that undermines public trust in their work. In the digital sphere, States must refrain from unduly restricting civil society discourse, whether through the misuse of criminal or administrative law, undue pressure on digital platforms to remove content, or other actions that circumvent due process and judicial oversight. Any restrictions on online expression must strictly comply with international human rights law, including the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, and fully respect the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

Insert new para 3quater (after para 3ter)

3quater. We underline that meaningful multistakeholder participation requires investment in sustained capacity-building, mentorship, and coalition-building platforms, particularly for civil society from the Global South. We encourage governments, intergovernmental bodies and donors to provide modular, multilingual training, mentorship programmes pairing experienced and new actors, and regional knowledge hubs to strengthen civil society engagement in digital and internet governance processes, recognizing their interconnected but distinct dimensions.

Amend para 5 – add practical support for participation

*... We encourage governments and other stakeholders to ensure that decision-making processes ... enable full and effective participation by developing countries **and by civil society**, including through dedicated travel support, remote participation tools and open, transparent and inclusive consultation modalities.*

The digital economy

Insert new para 15bis:

“We recognize that the evolving political economy of the internet and digital technologies has led to the concentration of economic power among a small number of dominant digital platforms and service providers. This concentration may pose challenges to competition, innovation, and the ability of smaller firms and open-source alternatives to enter and thrive in the digital market.”

2) Human rights baseline online & offline

Amend para 64 – safeguards when addressing online harms

*... We will establish and maintain robust risk mitigation and redress measures that also protect privacy and freedom of expression **and are necessary, proportionate, mandatory, enforceable, and provided by law, consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including Article 19. Measures addressing misinformation, disinformation and hate speech must include transparency, due process and avenues for appeal, and avoid over-broad restrictions that chill legitimate expression.***

Amend para 88 – strengthen commitments on shutdowns and surveillance

... by refraining from undue restrictions, such as Internet shutdowns, arbitrary or unlawful surveillance or online censorship.

We commit to refrain from network disruptions, including Internet shutdowns and content-blocking, and from the use of generalized or indiscriminate surveillance capabilities, and to ensure that any targeted surveillance complies with legality, necessity and proportionality and is subject to independent oversight and effective remedy. We further commit to establishing laws and public policies that prevent private actors, particularly dominant infrastructure providers, from imposing or facilitating shutdowns or surveillance that bypass public accountability or undermine access to communications facilities.

Insert new para 88bis – on encryption

88bis. We affirm that strong encryption and secure communications are essential to privacy, security and trust online and should not be weakened. States and companies should promote the availability and use of strong encryption and avoid requirements that would create systemic vulnerabilities.

Amend para 90 – protect civic actors from abuse of digital laws

... We emphasize the crucial importance of safeguarding journalists, media workers, whistleblowers, human rights defenders and other civil society actors...

We call on States to ensure that cybercrime, cybersecurity and other digital-related laws are not misused to criminalize legitimate activities or restrict civic space, and to include robust human-rights safeguards, oversight and remedies in such frameworks.

Amend para 83 – clearer expectations for companies

... ensure that respect for human rights is incorporated into the conception, design, development, deployment, operation, use, evaluation and regulation of all new and emerging digital technologies by conducting human-rights due diligence and impact assessments, with special attention to risks to women and girls, children, persons with disabilities and civic space, and by providing or cooperating in effective remedy when harms occur.

Insert new para 83bis

We also call on platforms to develop and implement globally consistent policies for responding to government takedown requests, with due consideration of their human rights implications. This includes carefully assessing such requests and exploring all available options before complying. Where requests seek to suppress speech that is protected under international human rights law, platforms should use all lawful means to resist them or, where that is not possible, ensure any restriction is as limited and proportionate as possible. Platforms should also commit to regularly publishing information about such requests and their responses, in the interest of transparency and accountability.

Insert new para 83ter – researcher access to platform data

We call on social media platforms to provide researchers, both from academic institutions and civil society organizations worldwide, with meaningful access to platform data, subject to robust safeguards for user privacy. Such access is essential to enable independent research on the impacts of misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, and other online harms. This access should not be limited to researchers based in certain jurisdictions, but made available equitably, as part of a broader commitment to platform transparency and accountability. This aligns directly with the Global Digital Compact commitment 36(b).

3) Bridging digital divides & meaningful connectivity

Amend para 28 – define “meaningful and affordable access”

... universal meaningful and affordable access to the Internet and digital services, including quality of service adequate for participation in education, work and civic life, affordable data and devices, safe and secure access (including encryption), availability of relevant local-language content and services, and user capabilities such as media, information and digital literacy.

Amend para 31 – lifelong digital literacy

We reiterate the need for all users ... to develop the capabilities and capacities, including media, information and digital literacy skills, with gender-, age- and disability-responsive approaches and support for teachers, health workers and local intermediaries.

Amend para 32 – financing for last-mile & community solutions

... to develop financing mechanisms and incentives to connect the unconnected... including transparent, results-based use of universal service and access funds; support for non-profit, municipal and community networks; and blended finance instruments that crowd-in private capital for high-cost, underserved areas.

Insert new para 32bis (after para 32):

32bis. We call on governments, donors and the private sector to safeguard civil society's access to diverse, sustainable and flexible resources, both domestic and international. Funding frameworks should be predictable and long-term, support innovation and inclusion, and avoid restrictions that limit the independence or effectiveness of civil society organizations.

32ter. We further stress the importance of strategic remote and hybrid participation for civil society and other stakeholders. This requires stable infrastructure, accessible equipment, regional hubs, inclusive interpretation and accessibility services, and mechanisms to ensure remote interventions are reflected in decision-making outcomes.

4) Digital economy, competition & openness

Amend para 35 – contestability, interoperability and open standards

We recognize that equitable and meaningful inclusion in the digital economy requires efforts to tackle concentrations of technological capacity and market power ... including by promoting contestability and interoperability, encouraging open, consensus-based and royalty-free standards where appropriate, enabling data portability, and supporting fair platform practices that prevent exclusionary conduct.

Insert new para 9bis (after para 9):

9bis: We are concerned that the ongoing consolidation of the internet is occurring in parallel with growing fragmentation in the way users experience it. This issue is recognised in the Global Digital Compact, which in paragraph 29(c) calls on UN Member States to “promote international cooperation among all stakeholders to prevent, identify and address risks of fragmentation of the Internet in a timely manner” (Objective 3, Art. 29(c), linked to SDG 16). Internet fragmentation is a complex phenomenon, but at its core, it leads to unequal user experiences of the internet's openness, accessibility, and security, depending on geographic, political, or regulatory contexts.

Amend para 10 – add reference to interoperability

*...we are committed to fostering an inclusive, open, safe, **interoperable**, and secure digital space...*

5) Children's rights and education/health safeguards

Amend para 44 – safe, rights-respecting digital education

... We reaffirm our commitment to connecting every school to the Internet by 2030. We also commit to protect children's data and privacy in education technologies, prohibit intrusive monitoring that is not necessary and proportionate, and embed "child-rights-by-design" in digital learning tools.

Amend para 45 – health data protections

... improved analysis of health data ... We underline the need for robust privacy and security safeguards for health data and for non-discriminatory access to digital health services.

6) Environmental sustainability

Amend para 53 – circularity, right to repair and producer responsibility

We call on governments and the private sector to develop global standards for the design of sustainable digital products as well as for reuse, repair and recycling.

We encourage extended producer responsibility schemes, right-to-repair policies, eco-design and public procurement standards for energy and material efficiency across the digital life-cycle.

Amend para 50 – transparent reporting

We call for the development of global reporting standards on environmental impacts ... including transparent, verifiable and accessible reporting by large digital firms and public bodies on energy use, greenhouse-gas emissions and e-waste, with methodologies aligned to international standards and applicable across data centers, networks, devices and artificial-intelligence systems.

7) Enabling environments, law & regulation

Amend para 58 – rights-respecting frameworks

We note the importance of legal and regulatory frameworks ... including comprehensive data-protection and privacy laws consistent with international standards, safeguards for strong encryption, competition and consumer-protection rules suited to digital markets, and clear limitations on intermediary liability that preserve freedom of expression and due process.

Insert new para 58bis (after para 58):

58bis. We reaffirm that the right to form, register and operate associations, including non-governmental organizations, is a fundamental element of an enabling environment for civil society. States should ensure that registration procedures are clear, non-discriminatory and not unduly burdensome, and that civil society organizations can operate freely and independently without arbitrary interference.

8) Confidence & security in the use of ICTs (information and communication technologies)

Insert new para 65bis – human-rights-based cybersecurity & CERT/CSIRT cooperation

65bis. Cybersecurity capacity-building should be human-rights-based and inclusive, enabling cooperation among national Computer Emergency Response Teams and Computer Security Incident Response Teams, the private sector and civil society. States should incorporate safeguards, oversight and access to remedy into cybersecurity laws and policies and avoid measures that unduly restrict encryption or security research.

9) Data governance

Amend para 94 – cross-border data flows with trust

We recognize that responsible and interoperable data governance is essential ... including frameworks that enable cross-border data flows with trust, protect privacy and other human rights, support data portability and access, and encourage open government data and community data-sharing for development.

Insert new para 94bis (after para 94) – equitable data infrastructure & capacity

94bis. We will support equitable geographic distribution and capacity for cloud and data processing infrastructure, including in developing countries, to foster resilience, reduce single-region concentration risks and strengthen trustworthy data stewardship, consistent with cross-border data flows with trust and human-rights protections.

Insert new para 96bis – inclusive process & safeguards

96bis. We request the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) Working Group on Data Governance to ensure open, inclusive and transparent participation by all stakeholder groups, including civil society and national human rights institutions, and to develop recommendations that promote interoperability and guard against data-localization requirements that are inconsistent with human rights or that hinder sustainable development.

10) Artificial intelligence

Insert new para 98bis – human-rights, safety and transparency baseline

98bis. We will promote a baseline of safeguards for artificial-intelligence systems, including prior human-rights and social-impact assessments for high-risk uses; transparency, explainability and record-keeping adequate to enable accountability; meaningful oversight and access to remedy; and measures to prevent uses inconsistent with human rights, such as generalized social scoring or mass surveillance. These

safeguards should build on existing global standards, including Principle 1.3 OECD AI Principles, in order to ensure consistency and accountability.

Amend para 99–101 – capacity & independent research

... to improve capacity-building efforts on artificial intelligence ... **and to support independent public-interest research, including in developing countries, on AI's societal and environmental impacts. The AI research program and fellowship should prioritize participation of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, and include gender-responsive approaches.**

Insert new para 101bis – environmental impacts of AI

101bis. We encourage the development and use of AI systems that are energy- and resource-efficient, and the publication of comparable environmental-impact metrics by major AI developers and operators.

11) Internet governance & the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

Amend para 104 – protect the open, global Internet

... and reject models of state-controlled or fragmented Internet architectures. **We reaffirm the importance of open, consensus-driven technical standards processes and commit to preventing technical and policy fragmentation that undermines the Internet's openness and interoperability.**

Amend para 115–118 – permanence and predictable funding for the IGF

115. We decide that the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) shall be made a permanent forum of the United Nations.

118. **We call for the strengthening of the Secretariat of the Internet Governance Forum... We request the Secretary-General to present options for predictable, multi-year funding of the IGF Secretariat and its intersessional work, including a dedicated multi-donor trust fund and opportunities for multi-year, voluntary contributions from Member States, the private sector and philanthropy, with transparency and safeguards for independence.**

We further invite the IGF to strengthen outputs by issuing clear, time-bound synthesis papers and best-practice compendia and to track uptake of recommendations by relevant UN bodies and stakeholders.

118bis. We call for the establishment of a dedicated, sustainable funding mechanism to ensure meaningful, predictable civil society participation in the Internet Governance Forum and related Internet governance processes. This should include dedicated, sustainable, multi-year, flexible and predictable support for participation from the Global South, regional hubs, mentorship and capacity-building, and strategic remote engagement. Contributions should come from governments, the private sector and philanthropy, with safeguards for independence, transparency and accountability.

118ter. We request that inclusivity in Internet governance processes be systematically measured and reported, including gender balance, regional diversity, accessibility, and participation of youth, marginalized groups and persons with disabilities, to ensure fair representation and accountability.

Insert new para 117bis – inclusion via National and Regional IGFs (NRIs)

117bis. We encourage support for National and Regional Internet Governance Forums to broaden participation, particularly from underrepresented communities, and request the IGF Secretariat to provide capacity-building and micro-grants to NRIs to enhance inclusivity and impact.

12) WSIS “machinery”: Action Lines, UNGIS and alignment with the Global Digital Compact

Amend para 129–131 – action-line roadmaps & mainstreaming rights/gender

129. We further request Action Line facilitators to develop implementation roadmaps ... **through open, inclusive and transparent multistakeholder processes, with time-bound targets, indicators, baseline data, and resourcing plans, including gender-responsive targets and disability inclusion.**

130. We recognize the importance of human rights ... **and request the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to support all Action Line facilitators in mainstreaming human-rights standards, including guidance on safeguards for civic space online.**

Amend para 141–142 – UNGIS joint roadmap with multistakeholder advice

141–142. ... We request that the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) develop a joint implementation roadmap ... **UNGIS should establish a standing multistakeholder advisory mechanism to provide inputs to the joint roadmap and publish annual progress updates, ensuring coherence between WSIS structures and the Global Digital Compact and avoiding duplication.**

13) Monitoring & measurement

Amend para 135–136 – disaggregation & civic-space metrics

135–136. We are committed to the further development and strengthening of internationally agreed targets, indicators and metrics ... **These should include disaggregation by gender, age, disability, geography and income where feasible, and incorporate metrics on meaningful connectivity (quality, affordability, device access and skills), online civic space (including incidence of shutdowns and unlawful surveillance), the safety of journalists and defenders online, and environmental footprints of digitalization, to inform evidence-based policymaking, including metrics on the inclusivity of digital governance processes, such as civil society participation rates, gender balance, regional representation, accessibility measures, and effective participation of marginalized groups.**

14) Follow-up & review

Insert new para 146bis – annual stock-take at WSIS Forum

146bis. We invite the WSIS Forum to host an annual multistakeholder “WSIS–Global Digital Compact implementation stock-take” that consolidates Action Line, IGF and UNGIS progress, identifies gaps and good practices and informs the Secretary-General’s yearly report to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

15) Minor clean-ups (consistency and inclusivity)

- **Throughout:** the phrase “persons with disabilities” appears—ensure all participation, capacity-building and measurement clauses explicitly reference disability inclusion and accessibility (web content, documents, meetings).