W3C submission - WSIS+20 Zero Draft

To: ungawsisreview@un.org

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The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) welcomes the opportunity to submit our comments on the WSIS+20 Resolution Zero Draft. We commend the co-facilitators' leadership and openness in facilitating stakeholders' participation in the WSIS+20 review process, including providing feedback on the Zero Draft. We believe that continued openness and transparency throughout the negotiations on the text will be essential for a successful review. As negotiations advance, we strongly encourage the co-facilitators and member states to deepen their engagement with non-governmental stakeholders, in particular the technical community and standard development organizations, as their input is key for interoperability, openness and security of the digital spaces that are permeating every aspect of human interaction, and support different layers of the technology that we all use and enjoy.

We welcome and strongly support the permanent mandate for the Internet Governance Forum and encourage the inclusion of clearer language around future funding for the Forum, ensuring its stability and independence, in consultation with existing funders and supporters, and the support to the National and Regional initiatives.

In this review, it is important that member states formally recognize the impact of the Web and how open standards developed at W3C and other standard development organizations continue to empower humanity. Knowledge and information can be accessed over more than 75,000 globally distributed interconnected independent networks, running on open standards developed by other organizations such as the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and others. Open standards support innovation, and powered advancements in privacy preserving and secure technologies that are accessible and that work across all languages and cultures.

This could not have been achieved without multistakeholder mechanisms and collaboration across borders and disciplines. This global cooperation is more essential than ever if we hope to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

We would like to invite the co-facilitators to review the Zero Draft to better recognize important milestones in the evolution of multistakeholder governance, in particular the 2024 NETmundial+10 Multistakeholder Statement: Strengthening Internet governance and digital policy processes, and to revise language to align more clearly with the WSIS+10 review and the GDC.

In our submission to the Elements Paper, we highlighted the importance of urging the incorporation of ethical frameworks during the design phase, before solutions have reached users or during the solution development process. We encourage the Zero Draft to expand on the value of standardization and the reflections and discussions that

power the consensus that takes place in technical community organizations, and recognize the value of principles-led technical developments, such as those enabled by the W3C Ethical Web Principles.

We welcome the inclusion of references that align the Zero Draft with the core values that guide W3C work. In particular, we welcome the inclusion of references to:

- Accessibility in paragraph 25. However, we encourage the co-facilitators to include specific reference to the "continuous development and support for adoption of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) across all government, financial, health and educational services.". We strongly recommend the importance of articulating into the sections of the document that address capacity building to facilitate wide-spread adoption across digital technologies and content.
- Cultural and linguistic diversity in paragraphs 12, 18, 30. We strongly recommend that further consideration is given to cultural diversity as a core component of the WSIS's vision to build a people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented information society, in particular efforts related to internationalization, localization and language preservation in tandem with efforts related to Universal Acceptance and Internationalized Domain Names, so that the end user experience improves.
- Privacy in paragraphs 20, 58, 64, 69, 86, 89. We encourage the co-facilitators to review that all references are articulated into the sections of the document that address capacity building, to facilitate adoption or privacy preserving technologies and best practices. In paragraph 64, we commend the commitment expressed in the document to urgently counter and address all forms of violence and discrimination, in line with our W3C Web Ethical Principles and Privacy Principles. The paragraph should be expanded to reinforce the adoption of privacy and security standards and practices as a clear pathway to end all forms of violence and discrimination online.
- Security in the document in paragraphs 16, 62, 63, 65, 69. We would like to suggest expanding the text to incorporate in a consistent manner across the document the principles of security by design to protect users. Although it might be a subtle distinction, it is our aspiration, that security is not only consistent with human rights frameworks, but in service of human rights.
- Sustainability in paragraphs 49, 50, 51, 54, and the importance of setting up sustainability standards for digital technologies and reporting. We encourage the WSIS+20 review process to include the W3C Sustainable Web Guidelines in their deliberations around this key concept, to facilitate adoption of sustainable practices by design.

In addition, during our review of the document, we identify the following areas that could benefit from additional refinement:

- The Zero Draft includes references to "wide spread availability" but as almost half of the world does not have meaningful connectivity and affordable access,

we invite the co-facilitators to revise that language. We also invite the revision of the use of "artificial intelligence models" with more technically accurate terms and to emphasize the importance of open standards and interoperability as essential building blocks for such data models.

- The document mentions multistakeholder participation in the "development of digital public goods". We encourage the co-faciliators to offer additional clarity in the language by expanding it to include "design, development and governance … safeguarding fundamental rights" to bring into focus the needs, interests and aspirations of users around the world.

- In paragraph 22, we recommend the co-facilitators to revise the language to more specifically include at the end of the current paragraph the following: "We recognize the importance of public-private partnerships, universal access strategies and other approaches to this end, including the sustained engagement of civil society, the technical and academic communities, and other stakeholders, whose efforts in building local Internet exchange points, community networks and open technical standards have been central to expanding connectivity and enabling inclusive access."

- We recommend the co-facilitators to articulate in different sections of the document where "enabling environment" is mentioned to specifically incorporate references to existing measures that create and facilitate such an environment, fostering investment, innovation, and technological development. Most of the key instruments are not reflected. The omission of key elements such as fostering competition, transparent and non-discriminatory regulatory systems, infrastructure sharing, community-based approaches and open standards, represents a significant regression from WSIS+10. We also encourage the co-facilitators to recognize the essential role that clear definitions of a technical stack based on open standards play in enabling a policy and regulatory environment that nurtures a healthy ecosystem, fosters competition and provides users with agency and choice.

- In paragraph 73, we highly recommend the inclusion of clearer wording that reflects the importance of incorporating incentives for businesses to engage in open standards development, as well as the facilitation of stable investment and funding support so that civil society, academia and small business in particular, especially those emerging across the Global Majority, to be able to participate on an equal footing to power locally-relevant digital innovation at scale.

Finally, as "Enhanced Cooperation" with regards to Internet Governance has been discussed in several previous working groups that were unable to agree on a set of Recommendations, we recommend not to include it in paragraph 109 of the Zero Draft.