

GFMD Submission to the WSIS+20 Rev. 1 Outcome Document

November 2025

17 November 2025

With this submission, the [Global Forum for Media Development \(GFMD\)](#) takes the opportunity to welcome **the strengthened references to independent and diverse media, as well as the emphasis on the safety of journalists, media workers, human rights defenders, and civil society actors**, in [Revision 1 of the WSIS+20 Outcome document](#). In particular, we applaud the call for all stakeholders to strengthen independent and public service media, support media workers, and contribute to creating an enabling environment and conditions for journalism to thrive.

As the negotiations enter their final stage, GFMD wishes to **reiterate the importance of preserving media independence and journalism references**, particularly the **recognition of independent and diverse media as essential to strengthening information integrity and ensuring access to information (op.74)**. We also welcome the recognition of **multistakeholder engagement as a key operational principle**, the emphasis on strengthened international cooperation, and the anchoring of the WSIS framework in international human rights law.

To fulfil the WSIS vision of a people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented information society, and to uphold commitments relating to media independence and journalism, we believe it is crucial to **reinforce specific elements of the current text by drawing directly on the relevant UN General Assembly resolutions**, presented in the table below.

Finally, as the process moves into its final stage, we recall the recommendations from Global Digital Rights Coalition previous statement, endorsed by GFMD, [on engagement in the WSIS+20 Intergovernmental Phase](#), which called for enhanced transparency through the dedicated WSIS+20 website — including the publication of the draft outcome document, structured discussions around key questions, and open proceedings for non-governmental actors, while limiting closed-door negotiations to the final stage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The GFMD Team

Human Rights Safeguards

Op. 67 We reaffirm our commitment, set out in General Assembly resolution 69/166 of 18 December 2014, that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online. We recall the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 78/213 on 22 December 2023, which set out principles and actions concerning the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of digital technologies. We will uphold international human rights law throughout the life cycle of digital and emerging technologies, so that users can safely benefit from digital technologies and are protected from violations, abuses, and all forms of discrimination. We commit *“to refrain from or cease the use of digital technologies that are impossible to operate in compliance with international human rights law or that pose undue risks to the enjoyment of human rights and”** to establish appropriate safeguards to prevent and address any adverse impact on human rights arising from the use of digital and emerging technologies and protect individuals against violations and abuses of their human rights in the digital space, including through *“regular, comprehensive human rights impact assessments of digital technologies”*** human rights due diligence and establishing effective oversight and remedy mechanisms.

* A/RES/78/213, para.20(b)

** A/RES/69/166, para.4

Op. 71. We reaffirm our commitment to article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that no person shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, consistent with countries’ obligations under international human rights law. *“We call on Member States to review their procedures, practices and legislation regarding the surveillance of communications, their interception and the collection of personal data, including mass surveillance, interception and collection, with a view to upholding the right to privacy and other human rights by ensuring the full and effective implementation of all their obligations under international human rights law.”**

* A/RES/69/166, para. 4(c)

See also: WSIS+10, para.46

Private sector accountability

Op.68. We recognize the responsibilities of all stakeholders in this endeavour. We call on the private sector and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that respect for human rights is incorporated into the conception, design, development, deployment, operation, use, valuation, *“sale, procurement”*, and regulation of all new and emerging digital technologies *“in order to prevent and mitigate their adverse human rights impacts, and ensuring effective remedies as well as human oversight, accountability and legal responsibility”** and to

provide for redress and effective remedy for the human rights abuses that they may cause, contribute to, or to which they may be directly linked. We also call on the private sector to apply the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

*A/RES/78/213, para.20(a)

See also: GDC, para. 25, and para. 35

Op75. We recognize that digital and emerging technologies can facilitate the manipulation of and interference with information in ways that are harmful to societies and individuals, and negatively affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. We will work together, *“including with technology companies, national human rights institutions, and civil society”**, to promote information integrity, tolerance and respect in the digital space, as well as to protect the integrity of democratic processes. We will strengthen international cooperation to address the challenge of misinformation and disinformation and hate speech online and mitigate the risks of information manipulation in a manner consistent with international law. *“We encourage online platforms, social media companies, to review their business models and ensure that their design and development processes, their business operations, data-collection and data-processing practices are in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and we emphasize the importance of conducting human rights due diligence of their products, particularly of the role of algorithms and ranking systems in amplifying disinformation and hate speech in line with international human rights law.”***

*A/RES/78/213, op.14

** A/RES/78/213, op.7

See also: GDC, para.35, 36(a)(c)

Free flow of information

Op. 73. We stress the importance for all Member States, and stakeholders as appropriate, to promote universal, free, open, interoperable, safe, reliable, and secure use of and access to the Internet by respecting and protecting human rights and by refraining *“from imposing restrictions on the free flow of information and ideas that are inconsistent with relevant obligations under international law, through practices such as the use of Internet shutdowns and online censorship, including through the use of blocking, throttling or filtering measures, and from using digital technologies to silence, unlawfully or arbitrarily surveil or harass individuals or groups, including in the context of peaceful assemblies.”**

* A/RES/78/213, para.18

Op. 74. We underscore the need to respect and protect the independence and diversity of media, including digital media, which are essential to maintaining information integrity and

access to reliable and accurate information. We emphasise the importance of safeguarding journalists, media workers, human rights defenders, and other civil society actors. *“We acknowledge that, in the digital age, encryption and anonymity tools have become vital to freely exercise their work and their enjoyment of human rights, including to secure their communications and to protect the confidentiality of their sources. We urge Member States not to interfere with the use by journalists and media workers of such technologies and to ensure that any restrictions thereon comply with the obligations of States under international human rights law.”** We call on all stakeholders to prevent and respond to online and offline threats, including harassment, mass surveillance, and arbitrary detention linked to their legitimate activities. We call for reliable and accurate information. We emphasise the importance of safeguarding on all stakeholders to strengthen independent and public media, support media workers, and ensure the conditions that allow journalism to operate freely, sustainably, and in the public interest without harassment, surveillance or arbitrary detention linked to their legitimate activities.

* A/RES/78/213, op.15. 17

See also: WSIS+10, para.45, GDC, para. 35
