Statement of the Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS (GDRC-WSIS) to WSIS+20 Informal Stakeholder Consultation Session

Thank you, your Excellencies, colleagues, my name is Ellie McDonald and I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS (GDRC-WSIS). This is based on a written input, submitted by eighteen organisations from the Global majority and global North with decades of collective experience in human rights-based Internet public policy.

We particularly welcome that today's consultation is taking place with all stakeholders: we believe this sets a valuable precedent which should continue throughout this process and be replicated in others.

The Elements Paper is a positive first step: we particularly appreciate the introduction which grounds the rest of the contents in multistakeholder cooperation.

We wish to make the following recommendations to ensure a people-centric and rights-respecting WSIS outcome. In our view, the zero draft should:

1. Ensure a human rights-based and gender-responsive approach, including through:
    a. Anchoring the language in international human rights law and standards;
    b. Underscoring the universality, interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights;
    c. Reaffirming the obligations of states to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, clarifying that any limitation on the rights to privacy and freedom of expression must comply with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality;
    d. Reasserting the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the responsibilities of the private sector to respect human rights throughout the technological lifecycle, including through human rights due diligence and impact assessments;
    e. Assigning the OHCHR a role as a co-facilitator of Action Line 10, on Human Rights and Ethics, securing its place in the future implementation of the WSIS framework.

2. Commit to additional measures to achieve meaningful connectivity and address digital divides, including by recognising the structural obstacles disproportionately impacting access to and use of the Internet for specific categories of rights-holders.

3. Reinforce the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance, referencing the agreed definition of Internet governance and acknowledging all stakeholder groups. Additionally, consider proposals to operationalise the multistakeholder approach, building on initiatives like the Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board and the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines.

4. Institutionalise the IGF as a permanent structure with dedicated and sustained funding.

5. Restate the commitment to publish a joint implementation roadmap to integrate the Global Digital Compact commitments through the WSIS framework, as stated in the ECOSOC resolution on WSIS+20 follow-up, adopted today. Additionally, establish a clear pathway for multistakeholder engagement in their joint implementation.

We encourage you to consider our recommendations, which are included in more detail in our written input. We remain ready to support in the process.