

Follow-up WSIS+20 Informal Stakeholder Consultation Session

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Theme: The Digital Economy

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Statement

Thank you, your Excellencies. My name is Shumaila Shahani, and I represent the Tech Global Institute (TGI). We co-submitted and fully endorse the joint inputs by the Global Digital Justice Forum and the Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS+20.

The Elements Paper provides a useful starting point. To build on it, we propose the Zero Draft incorporate specific provisions to:

1. remedy structural imbalances;
2. nurture small enterprises; and
3. institutionalize fair access principles.

1. The current market-led paradigm entrenches digital colonialism through extractive data flows and infrastructure dependency. The Zero Draft must explicitly:

- include language on asymmetric data flows and call for reforms to trade/tax regimes enabling value extraction from the Global South.
- establish a global fund financed by corporate levies on digital monopolies to support Digital Public Infrastructure in developing countries; and
- recognize connectivity as a human right, anchored in the draft's principles and aligned with the GDC's commitment to universal access.

2. Equally urgent is addressing how Big Tech dominance stifles local innovation. The Zero Draft can break this stranglehold by:

- requiring interoperability in digital infrastructures to reduce SME dependency on Big Tech.
- allocating resources for community-led platforms and cooperatives (e-business); and
- regulating data markets to enable fair competition and local value creation.

3. With over one-third of the world's population still offline due to cost barriers, language divides, and power asymmetries, we need transformative solutions. The Zero Draft must ensure digital growth advances:

- advances gender-responsive and climate-just transitions, ensuring digital growth doesn't come at the expense of marginalized communities or the environment; and
- prioritizes localized solutions, including multilingual technologies and circular economy models to combat e-waste dumping.

We urge a global internet framework that recenters justice and dismantles colonial legacies. We stand ready to collaborate on this transformative agenda. Thank you.