



# WORLD WIDE WEB FOUNDATION

Feedback on the Recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation

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## **Background**

The World Wide Web Foundation (Web Foundation) welcomes the report of the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation and extends its congratulations to the members of the panel. The members of the panel represented a diverse, multilateral and multi-stakeholder group and a good level of gender equity.

The title of the report “[Age of Digital Interdependence](#)” was an apt choice that captures the right vision of digital cooperation in the framework of the digital commons and the internet and the web as a public good. The open, consultative and largely inclusive nature of the working method of the panel is one that should be commended. This method keeps to the ideology and vision of the digital pioneers founding fathers, putting co-creation at the center of the process. The process allowed for persons, groups, organisations and entities to contribute in several ways. Over the duration of the consultations, the Web Foundation is of the opinion that its voice was heard, its submission considered and the issues raised taken into consideration. Ms. Nanjira Sambuli, Web Foundation's Senior Policy Manager, was an active member of the High-Level Panel.

## Specific Feedback

While acknowledging the enormous task of the panel in synthesizing complex content into a short report for a global audience, the Web Foundation notes that the report could have delved deeper into some issues. Specific feedback from the Web Foundation includes:

1. **1A**: On “affordable access to digital networks, as well as digitally-enabled financial and health services”: The Web Foundation wishes to draw attention that through the work of the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) a largely-accepted and practiced definition of “affordable” internet access already exists. It is the “1 for 2” principle. This means that 1GB of mobile broadband data is priced at 2% or less of average monthly income. We would recommend that this target be taken into consideration. On a similar note, A4AI, the Web Foundation and its research partners are working to go beyond just “affordable” access, “to explore meaningful connectivity”. We recommend that the notion of meaningful connectivity be scoped further and mainstreamed for the digital community.
2. **1D** - The “ set of metrics for digital inclusiveness” is welcomed. The Web Foundation would recommend that the ongoing work, which we are party to, of the Working Group on ICT Indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals be taken into consideration. We also note that our Women Rights Online Digital Gender Gap Audits, has a set of metrics that address gender inclusiveness that may prove helpful in this process.
3. **2** - On “establishment of regional and global digital help desks to help governments, civil society and the private sector to understand digital issues and develop capacity”, We recommend exploring whether existing mechanisms can fulfill this purpose before creating new mechanisms. For example exploring the applicability of the IGF secretariats at the global, regional and sub-regional levels.
4. **3A** - To “institute an agencies-wide review of how existing international human rights accords and standards apply to new and emerging digital technologies.” The Web Foundation believes that these reviews need to extend beyond agencies to the global digital community, and notes that now is the right time to strive for “affordable internet access as a right”
5. **4** - On Digital Cooperation Architecture: While the three models each present laudable possibilities, only one refers to an existing initiative - The IGF Plus model. Over its years of existence, the IGF has established its working principles, its engagement model and its co-creation process. Further, it has improved remote participation, bridging the divide, albeit not completely, for persons who are unable to be physically present at convenings. Regional, sub-regional, national and even thematic internet governance forums are now being cultivated. This existing ecosystem stands to provide a more viable engagement and cooperation framework than others that are, for the moment,

nonexistent, untried and uncertain.

6. Specific point on Internet Shutdowns. While cybersecurity concerns are valid, so are rights. In the past few years, Internet shutdowns are increasingly becoming mainstream. The Web Foundation is concerned that this may endanger the digital ecosystem over time, if this becomes the norm. We recommend that the “Trust, Security and Stability” actions not only engage on cybersecurity but also on measures that address Internet shutdowns and the human rights violations that result from such actions.

## **Web Foundation’s engagement**

The World Wide Web Foundation is a thought-leading organisation in the Digital Cooperation landscape and works toward realising the founding vision of the inventor of the world wide web. In keeping to its vision, the engagement of the Web Foundation may be built along its three-fold mission:

- A. Generating evidence: The Web Foundation boasts of a global network of researchers and research partners across the global South. The Web Foundation ran the publication of landmark digital publications like the [Web Index](#) and the [Open Data Barometer](#). It has continued the flagship [Affordability Report](#) and will soon launch the State of the Web report
- B. Building alliances: In five years, the [Alliance for Affordable Internet](#) (A4AI) has successfully implemented national multi-stakeholder coalitions that tackle policy issues, reinforce digital capacities and strengthen infrastructure investments in at least ten countries.
- C. Catalyzing action: The notable independence with which the Web Foundation works has made it a trusted partner in convening actors in the digital space around critical issues that are of importance to the global digital community. More than 1000 individuals, organisations and governments have been convened by the Web Foundation to draft the [Contract for the Web](#).

In operationalising the “Global Commitment for Digital Cooperation”, the Web Foundation will be happy to continue collaborating with the United Nations, by generating evidence, building alliances and catalyzing action. The Web Foundation will use its existing networks, partners, publications and coalitions to achieve the common agenda of global digital collaboration.

The Web Foundation also envisions engagement following the launch of its [Contract for the Web](#). With the launch of the Contract, the Web Foundation foresees overlaps in the definition of norms for shared responsibilities for “Trust, Security, and Stability”. To these, we would like to add “Openness”. We are convinced that the Contract for the Web will be a valuable policy tool to the process.

## **Contact persons for Follow-up and Technical Roundtables**

For ease of communications and follow-up activities on Digital Cooperation, the main contact for the World Wide Web Foundation will be Ms Emily Sharpe, the Director of Policy ([emily.sharpe@webfoundation.org](mailto:emily.sharpe@webfoundation.org)) with copy to Nnenna Nwakanma, Chief Web Advocate ([nnenna.nwakanma@webfoundation.org](mailto:nnenna.nwakanma@webfoundation.org)) as an alternate.

## **About the Web Foundation**

The World Wide Web Foundation was established in 2009 by web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee to advance the open web as a public good and a basic right. Web Foundation team members located in four continents work globally with the inventor of the web to generate evidence, build alliances and catalyze action to achieve change that can realize the founding vision of the web. The Web Foundation is the sister organisation to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and holds a special consultative status with ECOSOC.

The Web Foundation has been active at the Internet Governance Forum at the global, regional (Africa IGF, Latin America IGF) and some sub-regional forums (West Africa IGF, Southern Africa IGF, Eastern Africa IGF). The Web Foundation is a member of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and its team members have been on the ITU Broadband Commission for over 7 years. The Web Foundation is also a member of the EQUALS partnership, running a 19-country [Women Rights Online](#) (WRO) partnership and a bi-annual continental summit in English and French of #TechWomenAfrica, with support to sub-regional and national women in technology initiatives. With over 80 members and coalitions in seven countries across Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the Web Foundation's A4AI is the largest multi-stakeholder organisation working for affordable and meaningful internet access in the world.