

UNECA's Submission to the IGF2023 2nd Open Consultations & MAG Meeting

OUTCOMES OF THE REGIONAL REVIEW MEETING ON AFRICA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT (GDC)

The Digital Center of Excellence, a division of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), successfully hosted a **regional review meeting on Africa's contribution to the GDC in Cape Town, South Africa, from July 4th to 5th, 2023**. The primary objective was to incorporate Africa's perspectives into the United Nations Global Digital Compact (GDC) and foster a fair and inclusive digital future. The event united a diverse array of participants, including experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from **32 Member States**. Representatives from government, private sector, civil society, and academia collaborated to ensure a comprehensive and holistic approach to shaping the future of digital development..

The workshop revolved around key discussions aimed at proposing and consolidating Africa's input to the Global Digital Compact. Participants had the opportunity to contribute to **the eight thematic priorities** of the Global Digital Compact, which encompassed the following areas:

1. Infrastructure Development and Access
2. Digital Public Infrastructure
3. Emerging Technologies (AI, IoT, DLT, Quantum, blockchain technology, etc.): Risks and opportunities for Africa
4. Regulation of emerging technologies such as AI
5. Digital Trust, Data Protection, and Human Rights
6. Avoiding the risk of Internet fragmentation
7. Digital Capacity Building
8. Public Goods and Digital Commons.

The discussions conducted during the meeting aimed to consolidate technical inputs from the African context, **encompassing core principles and recommendations**. The overarching objective was to foster an open, free, and secure digital environment guided by shared principles of trust, inclusivity, and sustainability.

During the meeting, participants emphasized the pivotal role of Africa in shaping the Global Digital Compact, ensuring active participation of the continent in determining its digital future. Addressing issues of inclusivity, language diversity in AI training, enhancing digital culture, and utilizing empirical data for informed policymaking were identified as critical areas of focus.

Furthermore, the importance of breaking down silos, sharing information, and involving all stakeholders was highlighted as a crucial approach to leverage the three pillars of the UN: peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development. Participants also emphasized the significance of addressing digital infrastructure disparities, policy gaps in governing new technologies, and promoting talent and capacity development for a fair and equitable digital transformation.

The final working document is scheduled to be completed by the end of this month. Additionally, ECA is preparing a plenary session at the African Internet Governance Forum (IGF) to discuss the recommendations from the outcome document. This session aims to involve a wider range of internet governance stakeholders as part of the ongoing consultative process.

These continuous efforts aim to consolidate African voices within the UN's multistakeholder framework of the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and collective endeavors to address global digital challenges.

Following these consultative processes, ECA will submit Africa's final contributions to the Technology Envoy Office ahead of the Global Digital Compact. The UN Global Digital Compact is expected to be agreed upon at the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

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