High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation: Feedback Summary

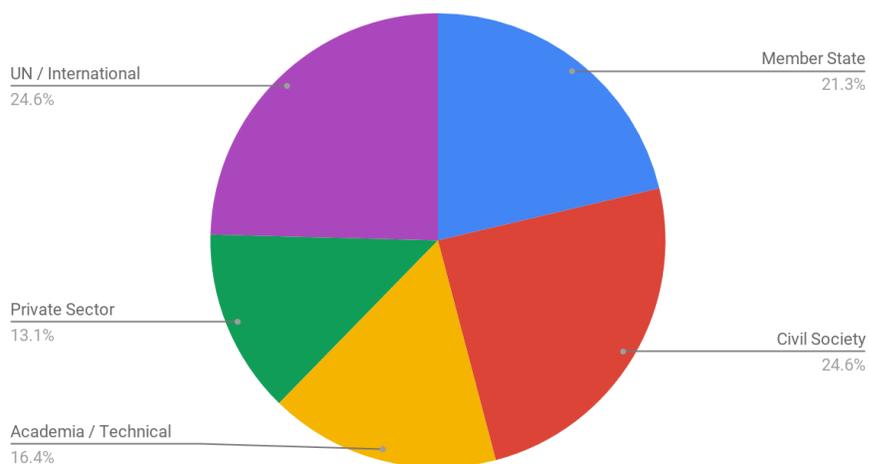## Digitalfeedback: Response Summary

The High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation Follow up team has sent a follow up emails to over 400 stakeholders from civil society to international organisations requesting feedback on how they wish to take the recommendations forward. We have also briefed the ASEAN Group, G77, LDCs, LLCs, SIDs, and Group of African States to ensure larger ownership and visibility for the recommendations. We are also working closely with Mexico, Singapore and Finland's Group of Friends which was based in part on the High-level Report. The Group of Friends will look at the interlinkages between digital technologies and the three pillars of the UN, namely, peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development.

We have received broad multistakeholder and multilateral response to the report, with written feedback from more than eighty entities covering feedback for all 12 recommendations. Entities range from member states, civil society organisations, private sector, academia, technical networks and international organisations.

Overall, feedback covered - where there is agreement / disagreement for specific recommendations, suggestions for modifications / additions to recommendations, and suggestions for next steps (i.e: hosting events, partnerships, HLP related initiatives, best practices, etc.)
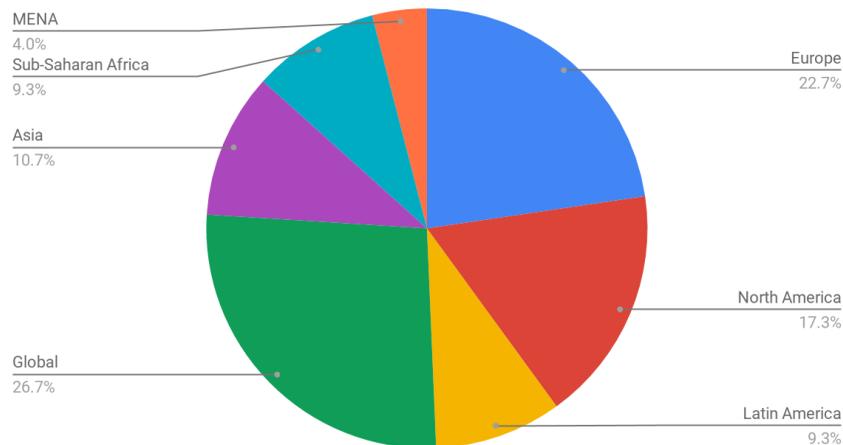
Of the feedback we have received, the stakeholder breakdown of entities across stakeholder groups is as follows:

Constituency Representation

- UN / International — 24.6%
- Member State — 21.3%
- Civil Society — 24.6%
- Academia / Technical — 16.4%
- Private Sector — 13.1%

The breakdown by geography is also illustrated by the chart below:

Regional Representation

MENA
4.0%

Sub-Saharan Africa
9.3%

Asia
10.7%

Global
26.7%

Europe
22.7%

North America
17.3%

Latin America
9.3%

High-level Review

The reception of the report has been generally positive. Member States are interested in seeking ways to pursue the implementation of its recommendations, especially on bridging the digital divide. However, recommendations advocating for a governance framework for the Internet remain controversial, with the opposition of some, who fear that an international governance system may infringe on the libertarian, free market ethic of the internet.

Some recommendations, including 1A, internet connectivity, 1B, digital public goods, and 5A/B, digital cooperation architecture, have already achieved a good measure of progress, including in-person meetings and conferences. Many will also be convening informally on the sidelines of the Internet Governance Forum in Berlin in November.

Recommendations which are more politically controversial are 5A/B on digital cooperation architecture, as well as 4 on Trust and Security. The political commitments cited under both recommendations are receiving some resistance from larger countries, which differs from perspectives expressed by developing countries. Less controversial are recommendations surrounding digital inclusion (1A/B/C), capacity building and helpdesks (recommendation 2). There is particular enthusiasm around digital access, which aligns well with existing member state priorities and mandates around digital inclusion. The importance of harnessing the full potential of digital technologies to fight inequalities and support the SDGs is broadly recognised across stakeholders.

Certain regional groups see value in internationalizing their own approach of having a healthy degree of regulation, especially regarding safeguarding data. At the same time, are worried about the international politics surrounding regulatory dynamics. There is concern around the prospect on the one

hand of getting in to friction with the certain countries who are at the forefront of the regulatory debate, while on the other a concern that opening up the internet for international standard setting on content would open the door to those states that wish to exercise greater international control – and censorship - over content.

There is a division between those states that want to monitor content and those that feel that free speech is the only reference point. There is some consensus however amongst states, for example regarding the use of new technologies to better monitor and intervene in terrorist activities. However, states vary considerably in how importantly they regard the use of human rights safeguards in the process.

Many smaller states have raised their interest in seeing a thorough implementation of the more controversial digital governance recommendations, but are tentative to engage with major powers. This may be indicative of a certain level of ´multilateralism fatigue´ in light of geopolitical divisions. Where there is strong opposition of a large power, many are unwilling to push back regardless of how many smaller states are with them, due to the energetic and resource trade-off. There has been a call to find ways to meaningfully leveraging regional political cooperation in the Global South.

Feedback Insights

Below is a non-exhaustive recommendation-specific summary of feedback received:

Recommendation 1A: Global Connectivity

- A focus on internet connectivity is of great importance. Without continued attention by policy-makers to expand access, the potential of digital transformation to equip populations with tools to relieve poverty, access education, and benefit from "digitally-enabled financial and health services" will remain a secondary issue.
- Conveying importance to local ownership models, and ensuring extensive participation by those who are meant to benefit from these programmes. Without this they are very unlikely to result in what we understand to be meaningful access.
- In addressing how to guard against abuse by building principles and best practices, the inclusion of globally open standards was recommended, that can address and enable implementation of practical technology solutions.
- Connectivity programmes should be accompanied by community development activity, skill building, content development, services to maintain devices, among other activities

Recommendation 1B: Digital Public Goods

- Agreement that digitalisation acts as an accelerator and enabler of all the SDGs, creating opportunities for sustainable development and inclusive growth
- Encouragement for digital solutions to help combat poverty by contributing to better target humanitarian and development activities
- The Technology Transfer Mechanism was highlighted as a source of tension - with developing

countries advocating for its use and developed countries avoiding its use

- There was expressed advocacy towards building local institutions that ensure the benefits of data collection accrue locally rather than commercial actors
- A recommendation of reducing the friction of data sharing by offering a set of legal, licensing, and governance tools for consideration by interested communities
- Suggestion of creating a collaborative process and a storefront designed to facilitate the development, discovery, scalability, and use of digital public goods by anyone in the world at little or no cost.

Recommendation 1C/D: Digital Inclusion

- Local capacity building is important to enable not just adoption, but also production and consumption, of localized content and services. Such capacity building could include training for young people and disadvantaged populations, particularly girls, as well as support for local small- and medium-sized enterprises
- It was expressed that works in one country may not work in another when it comes to developing policy/connectivity solutions. Each community must find the right solution for sustainable development.
- The necessity of taking into account collaborative approaches that involve local infrastructure development in/with communities was highlighted - this is the most effective way of addressing barriers (eg: geographic, socio-economic)
- Defining the metrics for inclusion is only the starting point, and availability and accuracy of data will also be important topics to consider – given that the necessary data, e.g. disaggregated by gender, might not be widely available. There may be metrics from other contexts that provide valuable lessons, such as the Access to Medicine Index.
- As metrics for digital inclusiveness are developed, new forms of digital competencies that can help people become ready for the rapid advance of digital technologies and systems and other digital technologies in the near future should also be addressed.

Recommendation 2: Digital Help Desks

- Helpdesks may also help those investing in capacity building better understand demand signals and where additional investments might be most impactful.
- A provision of resources to help various stakeholders understand what resources exist and how to improve their understanding of a range of topics would help to amplify the impact of existing capacity building efforts.
- The wealth of ideas and information collected over the years by organisations such as the IGF provides a sound basis for a Help Desk function within an IGF Plus – the challenge is to find ways to ensure that the existing written outputs are better organized and marketed, something that the under-resourced IGF Secretariat has not been able to consistently do.
- There are existing questions around how inclusive helpdesks would be if they are led by regional organisations that have uneven track records regarding the inclusion of non-governmental stakeholders and respecting human rights.

Recommendation 3A/B: Digital Human Rights
- Entities were welcoming to the Panel's recommendation that Secretary-General institute an agencies-wide review of how existing international human rights standards apply to new and emerging digital technologies.
- The UN and partner organizations could create a catalogue or compendium that sets out the legal obligations that States have towards human rights online, contributing to debate at not only the global level but also the national level, which is where implementation needs to occur.
- A suggestion for efforts to mainstream interpretation of human rights in digital contexts in the UN system should extend to efforts to advance responsible state behavior in cyberspace, to counter terrorism and violent extremism online, and address the use of the ICTs for terrorist purposes.
- A suggestion for the addition of "digital annexes" to a number of UN instruments - most obviously to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; digital rights must be added, as the report anticipates

Recommendation 3C: Artificial Intelligence
- General agreement on the promotion of ethical and human-centred development and use, with a view to leaving no one behind in the digital revolution.
- Designing AI to be trustworthy requires creating solutions that reflect principles that are deeply rooted in important and universal rights. Related principles – fairness, reliability and safety, privacy and security, inclusivity, transparency, and accountability – are necessary to guide the cross- disciplinary development and use of artificial intelligence.
- Suggestion to begin exploratory discussions on innovation and intellectual property policy for Artificial Intelligence
- Ethics and legal discussions must also consider the ways in which AI technologies are being developed and tested. Predatory beta-testing and ethics dumping - where risks are exported to marginalised and vulnerable populations or to low and middle income countries, are increasingly of concern.
- Engaging policy makers in developing countries to the AI policy discourse to address geographic discrepancies in perception of greatest challenges and opportunities of AI. Actors influencing the regulatory discourse, remain firmly grounded in data mature and affluent geographies, despite the Global South holding the most to gain and the most to lose from AI
- Capacity building in localised AI policy development at a global level, and on the ground through the concrete digital cooperation in joint programmes we are implementing alongside partners and the UN
- With regards to lethal autonomous weapons:
    - A desire for some degree of human involvement in the use of force. This has been expressed repeatedly in UN discussions on lethal autonomous weapon systems in different ways
    - Define guiding principles for human involvement in the use of force

- Develop protocols and/or technological means to mitigate the risk of unintentional escalation due to autonomous systems
- An emphasis on the inclusion of the Global South, given that it is clearly underrepresented in the LAWS debate

Recommendation 4: Cyber Trust and Security
- No consensus on the need for a convention on cybercrime, but requests that the language should rather reflect existing consensus on need for cooperation and capacity building.
  - There would be tremendous value in demonstrating agreement and continuity across initiatives and in focusing on implementation.
- Some support for developing a Global Commitment on Digital Trust and Security if it is grounded on collaborative and bottom-up approaches.
- Clarifying how the Global Commitment would overcome the sharp disagreement that has characterised many intergovernmental processes on cybersecurity, or how it would relate to the two processes currently underway - the Open Ended Working Group and Group of Governmental Experts
- Broadening the cybersecurity discussion beyond the military or national security discourse to include hate speech and education of the public on disinformation and infrastructure vulnerabilities / malicious software
- Looking more broadly at the question of cybersecurity to ensure it fully recognizes the role of all stakeholders and spaces beyond the UN in building confidence and security in ICTs
- A call for acknowledging role for non-state actors, who are contributing to addressing cyber security and cybercrime.

Recommendation 5A/B: Digital Cooperation architecture
- Overall there is more support for the "IGF Plus" as a preferred mechanism
- Some support for the "Digital Commons Architecture"
- Suggestions for a proper discussion about resources and funding: The proposed consultation process requires significant effort and resources to ensure that this process brings far more diverse voices to the table.
- The IGF Plus model should address the role of NRIs. Questions on how they would link with the help desks, incubator, accelerator, and other aspects.
- Emphasis on mechanisms to ensure meaningful participation of developing countries
  - Enabling developing countries to participate substantively and equitably in the various forums related to Internet Governance and in the policies which have a direct impact on social and economic development
  - Funding mechanisms, especially for developing country participation, should be expanded (not only strengthened) to make this a reality

- Expanding regional, national, and intra-national or sub-national IGF Initiatives given their contributions, their importance to the global IGF, and their role in increasing policy development capacity building
- Moving towards a multistakeholder model. The IGF Plus could provide multi-stakeholder and multilateral legitimacy
  - However, at the same time in trying to be both, an IGF Plus may arguably be forced to make unreasonable compromises in negotiating outcomes, and might not, at the end, do either very well

Moving Forward

Progress is accelerating in the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. Bringing together the entities who have provided written feedback, we will be holding multistakeholder action roundtables beginning in December where "Champions" and "Key Constituents" will collaborate to bring recommendations to practical implementation. For each recommendation we have finalised a set of three multistakeholder "Champions" that will work with a broader group of 10-20 geographically diverse "Key Constituents". Each set of Champions includes a UN lead and a mix of Governments, industry, civil society and academia.

The Champions will host their first virtual meetings with the Key Constituents in December with three goals: i) to agree on an a realistic outcome by UNGA 75, ii) to agree on the milestones and indicators over the course of the year, and iii) to identify additional necessary stakeholders who are not already included in the conversation. The agreed outcomes of these meetings will be used to inform the SG Roadmap on Digital Cooperation.