

NRIs Perspectives: Rights in the digital world

Messages

- There was broad support for the view that the rights that people have offline should also be protected online. Rights such as privacy, data protection and freedom of expression are equally important in the digital space as they are in the physical world. Some pointed out that there might not be an uniform understanding of these rights and that the application of rights might vary from country to country.
- While for some access to the Internet should be considered as a human right, others noted that access is more a need than a right. It was generally supported that access to the Internet is an important enabler of development and growth. For this reason, many noted that more should be done to bridge the digital divide.
- Many indicated that the Internet enables them to exercise their digital rights, and called for more education, digital literacy, and for raising awareness about digital rights, and ways to exercise and protect them.
- Some recommended that the protection of digital rights should be imbedded in an inclusive approach that also considers the needs and rights of vulnerable groups and communities – such as children, women, gender minorities, people with disabilities.
- Other challenges and limitations mentioned during the session were: Internet shutdowns; limited transparency in how some Internet intermediaries process personal data or deal with content control policies; individual self-censorship caused by activities such as surveillance; tendencies to trade off rights against each other; and the lack of effective legal frameworks at national level, or insufficient resources to implement them.
- New data-driven technologies such as the Internet of things and artificial intelligence were expected to have both positive and negative impacts on human rights. Suggested solutions to maximise the opportunities and

minimise the risks included the adoption of standards and principles on issues such as security and privacy, ethics, and accountability.

- There was a broad confidence that multistakeholder processes could be effective in addressing challenges related to digital rights. It was noted that more efforts should be made to strengthen the engagement of stakeholders, and empower them to make meaningful contributions.