

Making global governance work for developing countries in the digital age

Introduction

The growth of the data-driven digital economy poses significant opportunities and challenges for developing countries. However, harnessing the potential of new technologies for inclusive growth may require internationally or regionally coordinated responses. To date, much of the debate about tech governance has been based on the priorities of rich nations. The Pathways for Prosperity Commission is interested in shifting the debate to better reflect the point of view of developing countries.

Through our survey we have collected data from 65 people, the vast majority working on policymaking in developing countries. The survey is still open and receiving responses through [this link](#), and we will complement the data collected through semi-structured interviews and discussions with policymakers and experts (such as this one).

Why the focus on developing countries?

- Developing countries often lack enforcement mechanisms, technical capacities, and human resources required to regulate digital technology
- More than 65 percent of the roughly four billion people in the world without internet access live in developing countries. Policymakers will face new challenges, as these people come online
- Policies implemented in developed countries, in particular in the United States and the European Union (e.g. the US CLOUD Act and the EU GDPR), can directly affect less developed economies and restrict the set of regulatory options available to other countries
- There are no effective metrics or tools to assess the value of intangible assets that power the digital economy (e.g. algorithms and data) making it difficult to compare the effects of global policies across different contexts

Initial findings of the survey

- The largest percentage of respondents has expertise in countries in the Latin America & Caribbean region (32%), followed by South Asia (19%), Sub-Saharan Africa (18%), East

Asia & Pacific (10%), and Europe & Central Asia (8%). 11% of respondents identified themselves as global experts, and 2% with expertise in North America.

- The majority of respondents work in government (40%), followed by academia (25%), private sector (16%), international organisation (16%), and civil society organisation (3%).
- The top three issues identified by respondents as needing global action are "cybercrime and cybersecurity" (25% of respondents), "privacy and data protection" (21%), and "market competition" (15%).
- The overall top priorities from the survey were "jobs and skills" and "telecommunication and infrastructure", but the majority of respondents did not think international coordination was an obstacle to resolve these issues.

Questions for discussion

What are technology policy priorities from the perspective of developing countries?

- What are the most important technology policy issues facing developing countries?
- In what ways could international coordination help developing countries achieve their technology policy goals? What particular actions would be useful?

Do we need a different approach to the current global governance debate?

- Are current global conversations around technology policy aligned with developing countries' priorities? If not, what needs to change?
- Are there any examples where international consensus and governance outcomes have conflicted with developing countries' priorities?

How can the international community take action to support developing countries?

- What are the tools and instruments that the international community could deploy to help developing countries best engage with the global digital economy?
- Who are the individuals or organisations that are best placed to coordinate international technology policy decision-making?