



Guaranteeing Universal Digital Rights for All

Open Forum Session Proposal

Organizers: Government of Spain, Equality Now, Women Leading in AI

Background information

Equality Now and Women Leading in AI have come together in a campaign to call to mobilize the international community towards the adoption of universal digital rights that are rooted in existing human rights law and underpinned by an intersectional, feminist informed anti-discrimination analysis. These digital rights will articulate what people's rights are in the digital space and provide a model for governments to ensure that these rights are upheld.

The problem we seek to solve

As we know, digital technology and the internet provide significant opportunities for advancing human development and have transformed the ways in which we interact and exercise our rights. Sadly, not everyone has been able to access use of digital technologies and the internet with a reported three billion people never having used the internet in 2019.

Also, there are new and gravely alarming examples of how digital technology is used to undermine people's rights and freedoms, for instance hate crime, invasions of privacy, online gender based violence and automated decision making locking the most vulnerable out of essential services and algorithms replicating and amplifying existing stereotypes thus coding structure inequalities into technology.

Further, the digital space is unevenly regulated with no common standards stipulating online human interactions as well the interaction with machines - where lack of redress and opaque practices put women and girls and the most vulnerable at risk of exploitation.

The rapid expansion of digital technology is bringing profound disruption to our global society. The Internet and digital technology reflect "real life" and structural inequalities, such as racism and misogyny embedded in our laws, politics, and social structures, are being replicated online. Rights and freedoms are infringed, existing discriminations and biases amplified, and online

violence and crime perpetrated globally. Simultaneously, online channels have created new opportunities for free expression, organizing, and countering oppression. But, international and national laws and systems have not kept pace with the technological advances and their consequences.

What has been done so far?

There have been a number of initiatives, digital rights Charters and Declarations that are being discussed and adopted at international and national levels. These are a result of multistakeholder consultations and are anchored in the adoption of a human rights-based approach with the acceptance that human rights are internationally binding as defined by international law and can be translated directly to the internet. These include the Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet and the African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms, the Guide to Human Rights for Internet Users from the Council of Europe, and the Brazilian Civil Rights framework.

It is accepted that human rights govern the relationship between the State and the individual. However, there is a growing recognition that the private sector does have obligations under human rights law, as authoritatively outlined in the UN “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework, implemented in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Existing international law is not always well-equipped to protect all rights in the digital sphere. In light of where there are gaps in protection or application, considerations need to be had to:

- Ensuring transparency of automated decisions and provision for redress rights.
- Protecting citizens' access to the Internet.
- Applying a human rights-based approach to online content moderation.
- Protecting people from human rights violations that are outside the framing of our current laws, e.g. rape in the Metaverse or deepfakes used for image-based sexual abuse.

We want to use the IGF as an opportunity to begin engaging on why bold, transformative, and universally agreed Digital Rights will ensure that the rights of all people, especially the most vulnerable, are protected in the digital space.

Below is a brief description of the panel discussion.

Description of Session:

The session will be an interactive hybrid discussion with 4 panel members consisting of government officials, International and regional body representatives and experts to discuss why in working to connect all people and safeguarding human rights bold, transformative, and universally agreed digital rights and needed and how they will ensure that the rights of all people, especially the most vulnerable, are protected in the digital space.

The Session will have onsite and online Moderators. The Online Moderator will facilitate the Chatbox function and online panelists as necessary and manage the online Poll that will run during

the session, so as to ensure seamless engagement between onsite and online participants. An onsite Rapporteur will take notes during the session and give a brief report on the proceedings of the session, as well as a full session Report after the IGF.

Session structure:

Part 1 - 25 minutes: An introduction will be made by the Moderator, introducing the topic and need for universal digital rights. The Panel will then discuss the topic, including initiatives governments are taking and can take and highlight the implications of the same for the global human rights community.

Part 2 - 20 minutes: Participants will be invited to comment and feedback on the issues highlighted and share perspectives on possible solutions. To accommodate online participants, a chat-box will be used to crowdsource views. We will also use a live poll, for online participants to vote on possible solution(s) presented. Poll results will be shared in real-time.

Part 3 - 10 minutes: The Panel will provide final insights and respond to questions raised.

Part 4 - 5 Minutes: Closing remarks and a call to action.