

IT for Change's Input at the Global Digital Compact Consultation – Digital Commons

As the Secretary General's policy brief on the Global Digital Compact has highlighted, we need to ensure a principled governance of the global digital commons in order to effectively realize the SDGs -- this means that the governance of the global Internet, digital public goods, including data commons, should be aligned with universally recognized human rights and the vision of Agenda 2030. Towards this, we need the following set of actions:

1. We need to take immediate action to reclaim the internet as a global knowledge and communication commons, disavowing surveillance capitalism and embracing the generative peer-networking affordances of the horizontal web of the hyperlink. Governments must provide key services such as email, video-conferencing, search engines, etc., as public goods, similar to postal services and basic telecommunication services. They must also explore alternative platform business models grounded in the logic of social and solidarity economy enterprises.
2. We need a new approach to governance of data resources, one which maximises the public value of data while containing the risk of individual and collective harms. This involves setting clear boundaries on the operations of data markets to protect human rights accompanied by a new commons-based resource governance regime for data that recognises that : we must aggregate data as knowledge commons, and the a priori claims that 'source communities' – communities from whose interactions and territories data is aggregated – have over such commons. Inspiration for the establishment of such a commons-based governance to data at the multilateral level can be sought in the Nagoya

Protocol on the Convention on Biological Diversity, specifically its access and benefit sharing mechanism.

3. In multistakeholder partnership arrangements for the provisioning of digital public goods, including data commons in sectors such as food and health as being explored at the Committee on Food Security and the World Health Organization, we need strong guard rails to guard against elite capture of data value and conflict of interest issues stemming from the participation of multinational corporations.