To:

His Excellency, António Guterres
Secretary-General, United Nations

November 16, 2020

Non-State Actors' Position Paper on the appointment of the UN Tech Envoy

This document sets out the aspirations of non-State actors engaged in the Digital Cooperation process concerning the guiding principles, profile, roles and responsibilities, and working methods of the United Nations Technology Envoy (Tech Envoy) to be appointed by the Secretary-General. It is a consensus document among several organizations, networks and industry stakeholders. The process leading to this document has sought to be open, inclusive, and as transparent as possible. Four consultations over six months, one week of open call for contributions on the draft, and an open session at the virtual Internet Governance Forum of 2020, (vIGF2020) were held, allowing broad consultation and diversity of contributions from as many organisations as possible.

Non-State[1] actors have actively engaged in the Digital Cooperation process from its inception.[2] The experience and expertise of stakeholders from civil society, the technical community, private sector and other stakeholder groups were essential to bringing more diverse voices and perspectives to discussions. As such, non-State actors are committed to working with the future Tech Envoy, in order "*to ensure greater coordination between UN agencies, advise the senior leadership of the United Nations on key trends in technology and serve as an advocate and focal point for digital cooperation – so that Member States, the technology industry, civil society and other stakeholders have a first port of call for the broader United Nations system*."

As mentioned in the Options for the Future of Global Digital Cooperation Paper developed by the office of the Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General as well as by the Governments of Germany and the United Arab Emirates "*there is room to*

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[1] Legally incorporated Civil Society Organisations, Academia, Technology Communities, Think tanks, and Companies.
[2] Including providing input into the High-Level Panel's consultation on its report "the Age of Digital Interdependence," to engaging in the follow up process, including in the virtual Roundtables, set up to discuss if and how the recommendations included in the Roadmap can be advanced and finally, the launch of UN Secretary-General's Digital Cooperation Roadmap.

conceptualize the mandate of the UNSG's Envoy on Technology in a way which would ensure a personal and institutional overlap between the UN Tech Envoy and the IGF structures and also heighten governmental interest". Further, in the Response to the Options Paper developed by the IGF MAG's Working Group on Strengthening and Strategy, it is noted that "*grounded in the principles of multistakeholder dialogue and transparency, this role will have the unique opportunity to facilitate dialogue and should be open and responsive to all stakeholders seeking involvement in digital cooperation initiatives*".

Background

As organizations dedicated to promoting human rights, digital rights and an inclusive digital ecosystem, we know and respect the United Nations as a global, trusted and vital entity, and an essential actor of global Digital Cooperation. Because Information and Communication Technologies are increasingly underpinning access to nearly all essential services, including food, water, energy, and healthcare, critical government functions, as well as education, innovation, diplomacy, national and global security and world peace, we are of the opinion that if there was ever a time that Digital Cooperation among all stakeholders was urgent, it is now. The United Nations, representing the collective conscience and will of the global community, has a responsibility to take the steps necessary to ensure the digital cooperation agenda embodies and represents the aspirations of the world.

Guiding principles for appointment

Do No Harm and Ensure Expertise in Internet Governance, Digital Technologies and Human Rights

Digital technologies profoundly transform societies, offering unprecedented opportunities, as well as underlying challenges and risks. The Tech Envoy must be guided by the do no harm principle, and take responsibility for the United Nations' engagement with technology companies. As captured in the United Nations Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, "*when improperly or maliciously used, digital technologies can fuel divisions within and between countries, increase insecurity, undermine human rights and exacerbate inequality.*" Considering the profound global impact and capabilities digital technologies have, coupled with the ultimate responsibility entrusted in the Tech Envoy, it is imperative that the selection process appropriately vet candidates for their expertise in internet governance, digital technologies, and human rights. The Roadmap has set the

role of the Tech Envoy to advise the senior leadership of the United Nations on key trends in technology and serve as an advocate and focal point for digital cooperation. As such, the Tech Envoy should have visibility into the United Nations own use of Information Technology, the implementation of the Secretary General's new "Data Strategy," and other internal mechanisms to ensure the highest standards of rights protections in particular in the areas of transparency, data protection, privacy and freedom of expression.

Openness in process

Since the Tech Envoy intends to "serve as an advocate and focal point for digital cooperation and a first port of call for the broader United Nations system" the Tech Envoy selection and appointment process should remain open to all stakeholders. One of the overall aims of the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation is to accelerate global digital cooperation "*so that progress towards achieving the Goals by 2030 can be made collectively*." Collective action requires collective awareness. To ensure openness in the process, it is imperative to clarify the timeline, working methods, modalities, and opportunities for engagement: in person or virtually in the Tech Envoy appointment process. Active and meaningful efforts by all stakeholders should be made to ensure an open, transparent, and inclusive appointment process. Such efforts should include transparent documenting and routine reporting.

Multi-stakeholder engagement

Meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement and systemic global action requires intersectional perspectives from a diverse set of stakeholders worldwide. The Tech Envoy's policies and decisions must be rooted in open, transparent, inclusive, and meaningful multi-stakeholder consultations both prior to appointment, and routinely throughout the duration of the mandate. The UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation explicitly recognizes the importance of engaging with various stakeholders from the outset: *"digital cooperation is a multi-stakeholder effort and, while Governments remain at the centre, the involvement of the private sector, technology companies, civil society and other stake-holders is essential. It is **vital to engage** with the private sector, the technical community and civil society **from the beginning** if realistic and effective decisions and policies are to be made."*

Profile

While it may not be possible to entirely define a professional profile, we deem it fit that the Envoy be:
- **A Respected Convenor**

Experienced in the multistakeholder approach for policy development and possess a solid understanding of the UN, UN Bodies and Agencies and its mandates.

Demonstrated ability to harness these competencies to foster collaboration, cooperation and inclusive dialogue among internal and external stakeholders in the digital cooperation process.

- **Commitment to Human Rights**

Ensure that UNGA Resolution A/HRC/32/L.20 on "the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet," is a key consideration throughout the digital cooperation process. This includes supporting and promoting access to the free, open and secure Internet and digital technologies as enablers of human rights.

- **Technically Competent**

Strong familiarity with the Internet architecture and infrastructure that supports an open, global and interoperable Internet. An understanding of the processes and actors participating in the Internet standards' making process; demonstrable ability to work and collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders participating in such standards' processes; demonstrable appreciation of the roles and responsibilities of actors participating in the development and evolution of the Internet; demonstrable knowledge of the complex interdependencies of technical and policy considerations. An understanding of emerging technologies and the complex policy considerations.

- **An Inclusive Negotiator and collaborator**

Willingness to respect the heritage of the World Summit on Information Society - WSIS, i.e. a commitment to leading open and inclusive engagement with non-governmental stakeholders.

Roles and responsibilities

The Roadmap has set the role of the UN Tech Envoy to ensure greater coordination between UN agencies, advise the senior leadership of the United Nations on key trends in technology and serve as an advocate and focal point for digital cooperation – so that Member States, the technology industry, civil society and other stakeholders have a first port of call for the broader United Nations system.

While we consider the above to be truly representative of our aspirations, we expect that the Envoy, once in office, will clarify how these roles and responsibilities will be carried out on a day-to-day basis. Ample information needs to be available online on these roles. Digital cooperation stakeholders should be able to give feedback to the Tech Envoy, make recommendations, and also bring in constructive criticism.

We cannot underestimate the powerful position the Tech Envoy will have with private sectors actors, particularly information communication technology (ICT) companies. We believe that the Tech Envoy may contribute to monitoring public-private partnerships, ensuring transparency and respect for human rights.

Prior to COVID-19, we have witnessed United Nations agencies and offices increasingly enter into public-private partnerships. The United Nations currently has no dedicated office or Special Representative to govern and monitor such partnerships, yet such a representative is imperative to ensure increased consultation with various stakeholders and scrutiny around both the process and content of any private-public partnerships within the United Nations. This ranges from questions about whether potential conflicts of interest have been identified and mitigated, to whether a human rights impact assessment was conducted, and to the scope of the potential terms of an agreement and the privacy, data protection, and security measures in place to govern these services. In relation to analogous public-private partnerships at the national level, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council have warned that "care must be taken to ensure that negotiations for public-private partnerships are fully transparent and are not kept confidential." The Tech Envoy, and the office, could therefore serve as, if not a gatekeeper, at least a minder and expectation-setter when it comes to private-public partnerships to ensure each new private-public partnership the United Nations enters into provides a positive precedent for future digital cooperation between intergovernmental organizations and ICT companies.

Desired working methods

Among other ways of working and communicating to the broader community, the Tech Envoy's may consider:
1. Regularly updated website
2. Quarterly reports (or briefings)
3. Open Consultations
4. Regular engagement in events
5. A flagship annual report
6. Continued and enhanced use of social media
7. Hosted dialogues

Essential collaborations

The digital cooperation ecosystem boasts of a range of critical ongoing initiatives that may support the UN Tech Envoy's role. We would suggest the following as key:

1. The Internet Governance Forum
2. The Broadband Commission
3. Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security
4. Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of ICTs in the Context of International Security (OEWG)
5. The UN Human Rights Council

6. UNESCO, especially with its work on internet universality and AI
7. UNEP's work on digitizing environmental sustainability and mitigating the environmental impacts of ICT
8. UN Global Working Group on Big Data
9. ITU's work on enhancing environmental efficiency of AI and ICT while mitigating e-waste and supply chain impacts
10. And other relevant global technology and digital convenings, such as the Web summit, Global Tech Summit, World Summit AI, the International Open Data Conference, Mobile World Congress, UN World Data Forum, World Economic Forum, and RightsCon.
11. The WSIS+20 Review process

Continued Collaboration and Engagement

This Position Paper is a joint action of non-State actors engaged in the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. It is only a part of what the undersigned organisations consider as the beginning of a longer engagement with the office of the Secretary-General, the Tech Envoy and all State actors. It is coordinated by the World Wide Web Foundation, and its Chief Web Advocate, [nnenna.nwakanma@webfoundation.org] is the focal point.

Signatories

1. <A+> Alliance for Inclusive Algorithms
2. Access Now
3. Accur8Africa
4. Advocacy Initiative for Development (AID)
5. Afghanistan Democracy and Development Organization (ADDO)
6. Africa Foundation for Community Development (AFCOD-Uganda)
7. Africa Freedom of Information Centre
8. African Centre for Citizens Orientation
9. African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms Coalition
10. African Freedom of Expression Exchange (AFEX)
11. Africa Open Data and Internet Research Foundation (AODIRF)
12. AFRIX
13. AfroLeadership
14. Afrotribune
15. Alliance for Affordable Internet - A4AI
16. Asociación TEDIC
17. Association for Progressive Communications - APC
18. Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication
19. Bareedo Platform, Somalia
20. Bloggers of Zambia
21. CCAOI, India
22. Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria
23. Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD)
24. Centre for Multilateral Affairs (CfMA)
25. Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa - CIPESA
26. Community Development Initiative (CDI), Kano, Nigeria
27. Data2X
28. Datalat, Quito (Ecuador)
29. Derechos Digitales
30. Digital Peace Now
31. Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF)
32. Digital Rights Foundation (DRF)
33. DigitalSENSE Africa
34. Environmental Development Initiative
35. Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica)
36. Free Expression Myanmar (FEM)
37. Future of Life Institute
38. Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)
39. Global Partners Digital
40. Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data
41. HOUSE OF AFRICA, Ndjamena,Chad
42. iamtheCODE

43. Impact4News, UK
44. Internet Governance Caucus
45. Internet Society - ISOC
46. Inventario Nacional de Calidad del (Agua-INCA) National Inventory for Water Quality
47. Jade Propuestas Sociales y Alternativas al Desarrollo, A.C. (JADE SOCIALES), Yucatán, México
48. Jokkolabs Banjul
49. Keeping It Real (KIR) Foundation
50. Kinango Coalition for Human Rights Defenders
51. League for Societal Protection Against Drug Abuse (LESPADA)
52. Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)
53. Media Institute of Southern Africa-Zimbabwe Chapter
54. Media Rights Agenda (MRA)
55. OISTE
56. Open Data Watch
57. Organization of the Justice Campaign
58. Ovillage, Côte d'Ivoire
59. PACKS Africa
60. Paradigm Initiative
61. Policy Alert - Nigeria
62. Rainier Communications
63. Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales (R3D)
64. RNW Media
65. SDSN TReNDS group
66. Simply Secure
67. Social Media Exchange (SMEX)
68. Somali Youth Development Foundation (SYDF).
69. Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression (SafeNet)
70. Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Economic Development Initiative (SEEDi)
71. Tanzania Health Care and Environmental Conservation Organisation
72. The Bachchao Project
73. Ubunteam
74. UCSF Global Programs, Kenya
75. WikiRate
76. Wisekey SA
77. Women at the Table
78. Women in Crisis Response LLC
79. World Wide Web Foundation
80. ZeroToOne Foundation