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RIYADH DECLARATION

Table of contents

Preamble

In an era defined by digital transformation, the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and global digital identities present unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges for the global community. Recognizing the profound impact of these technologies on society, economy, and governance, it is imperative to ensure inclusive digital development and resilient frameworks that protect and empower all citizens.

Artificial intelligence is at the heart of building an inclusive, sustainable, and well-governed digital future. While AI has the capacity to drive global innovation, enhance social and economic outcomes, and address critical issues, it also raises concerns regarding privacy, security, and stability. As AI becomes further embedded in global economies, vigilant governance is essential to manage emerging risks.

As we embrace the digital age, ensuring digital safety is crucial for maintaining effective global digital governance. The digital revolution has indeed revolutionized societies, offering new opportunities for development while also presenting challenges such as privacy concerns, child protection, and misinformation / disinformation.

In uniting these priorities, IGF 2024 stands as a platform to foster collaborative action, inspiring a global commitment to responsible digital governance and fostering a future where digital technologies serve the entire global community equitably and sustainably. This document is intended to serve as an aspirational declaration to foster international cooperation's in the outlined topics and is not legally binding.

1. Artificial Intelligence for an Inclusive, Sustainable and Governed Digital Future

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2024 in Riyadh serves as a vital platform for global stakeholders to shape how AI can positively impact society. We acknowledge that AI has evolved beyond a technical tool to become a transformative force influencing global policy, economies, and culture. The Forum's theme, "Building our Multistakeholder Digital Future", underscores a commitment to ensuring digital development aligns with societal values and serves the common good. With a focus on inclusivity and sustainability, we are working toward a digital ecosystem where AI advances social and environmental responsibility. This approach

encourages AI-driven change that benefits societies globally while upholding ethical principles essential to an inclusive digital landscape. In this way, integrating AI into digital governance is essential to building a future that serves the entire global community.

1.1 Promoting Digital Inclusion through AI

Recognizing that AI has the potential to be a powerful force for promoting inclusion and bridging the digital divide, we have an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the digital landscape. By using AI to increase digital access and literacy, we can empower individuals and communities traditionally marginalized in the digital space, ensuring they have a voice and access to meaningful opportunities in the digital economy.

For instance, AI can enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities through applications like speech-to-text, predictive text, and machine learning models that can interpret sign language. Such technologies empower individuals to access online content and engage with digital platforms that might otherwise be inaccessible. In education, AI can personalize learning experiences, addressing individual needs, and creating pathways to knowledge for those who may lack traditional resources. AI can enhance equitable access to information, education, healthcare, and other essential services, fostering a more inclusive society where no one is left behind.

1.2 AI's Role in Sustainable Development

Appreciating the transformative power of artificial intelligence, we recognize its vast potential to accelerate the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). AI can serve as a pivotal tool in advancing environmental protection, enhancing public health, strengthening disaster response, and driving economic inclusion — laying the groundwork for a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable world. By harnessing AI to tackle these pressing global challenges, we have a unique opportunity to create meaningful, large-scale impact and bring us closer to a future where everyone thrives.

1.3 Leveraging AI for Responsible Innovation

Acknowledging AI's role in reshaping business innovation, market exploration, and productivity, we see how automating complex tasks accelerates research and development, enabling quicker, data-driven insights. AI's capacity to analyze large datasets, identify trends, and predict consumer needs empowers companies to make informed choices. Additionally, AI streamlines operations, reducing costs and allowing employees to focus on high-value tasks.

For instance, in manufacturing, AI-powered robotics handle assembly tasks, quality control, and predictive maintenance, minimizing downtime and reducing operational costs.

This strategic use of AI not only boosts productivity and profitability but also aligns with sustainable growth, enabling businesses to scale responsibly while meeting customer expectations. This shift enhances efficiency and supports responsible growth across industries.

1.4 Strengthening AI Governance for the Digital Future

Affirming AI's pivotal role in promoting transparency, enabling collaborative governance, and driving efficiency across sectors, we recognize its capacity to reshape both public and private operations. AI empowers organizations and governments to enhance decision-making and governance by offering real-time insights that support swift, informed responses to complex issues. In collaborative governance, AI strengthens communication and coordination by streamlining information flow across different entities and among diverse stakeholders, fostering a unified approach to address shared challenges. This seamless connectivity not only improves operational effectiveness but also builds trust, accountability, and a more responsive governance framework.

1.5 Managing the potential risks of AI

Acknowledging AI's transformative potential, and deployed with a commitment to ethical standards and inclusivity. Achieving this vision requires collaboration among governments, the private sector, and civil society to ensure AI policies contribute to a fair and inclusive digital future. Cross-border partnerships are essential to scale AI solutions that bridge divides and for advancing AI tools that address environmental, healthcare, and economic needs while establishing standards that safeguard ethics, positioning AI as a unifying force for sustainable progress.

Despite AI's promise, it presents risks that demand oversight to ensure responsible use. For instance, AI systems trained on biased data can unintentionally reinforce discrimination, affecting marginalized groups and perpetuating inequality. Ensuring fairness in AI is essential but challenging, as bias detection and mitigation require rigorous testing, particularly with complex data. Additionally, AI can spread misinformation by generating realistic but false content, complicating truth discernment, especially on social media. Fragmented oversight compounds these issues, as inconsistent global standards create accountability gaps. A

cohesive international oversight framework is essential, promoting shared standards, audits, and transparency. Multi-stakeholder dialogue, comprehensive policies, and cooperation are key to building a trustworthy AI ecosystem that supports innovation while protecting the public interest.

2. Global Digital ID

In today's global digital economy, creating trusted, inclusive, secure, and interoperable digital identities is essential for equitable access to services and economic opportunities. As societies increasingly adopt digital-first approaches, universally recognized digital IDs are necessary for individuals, businesses, and governments to fully engage in the global economy. In response to these challenges, various international initiatives have been launched to address this need.

The World Bank's ID4D initiative is a key effort aimed at establishing inclusive and trusted identity systems globally, especially in developing economies where the absence of formal identification disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations. The initiative focuses on creating ID systems that facilitate digital transactions, empowering people to take part in the economic, social, and digital transformation occurring worldwide. Beyond individual identification, ID4D also supports broader civil registration, which is fundamental to sustainable development and economic inclusion. Likewise, The UN's Summit of the Future emphasizes the importance of digital public infrastructure, to ensure inclusive and secure digital access for all.

From a legal perspective, the UNCITRAL Model Law on the Use and Cross-border Recognition of Identity Management and Trust Services (2022) establishes a foundational legal framework for recognizing and managing digital identities across borders. The law is designed to support the interoperability and legal acceptance of digital identity systems internationally, providing a standardized approach that can facilitate secure and trustworthy digital interactions between countries. Similarly, The European Union's eIDAS framework (amended and re-established as the European Digital Identity Regulation - Regulation (EU) 2024/1183) is a framework for establishing trusted, interoperable digital identity systems across EU member states. It provides an example for how interoperable digital identity systems can function across borders, creating a reliable way for citizens and businesses to verify identities and authenticate digital interactions. By mandating that member states recognize each other's digital identification systems, eIDAS reduces barriers for EU citizens and businesses to engage in cross-border activities, making it easier to conduct online transactions securely throughout the EU.

The Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior (MOI), in collaboration with the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA), has expanded its physical identity infrastructure to establish a National Digital Identity System through its Digital Platform, (Absher). This system facilitates secure online identity authentication between individuals, service providers, and the government, enhancing national security and enabling seamless digital identity solutions.

Additionally, the MOI has extended the implementation of digital identity beyond the national level through collaborative initiatives with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

The Absher platform securely offers over 300 government services, including passport renewals, visa applications, and vehicle registrations. With advanced Identity and Access Management (IAM) measures such as multifactor authentication and biometric verification, Absher ensures robust security and enhances public trust in digital services, setting a benchmark for e-governance.

All these efforts have built the foundation for broader discussions on digital identity, yet the extent of the issue — particularly in ensuring cross-border interoperability and universal access — remains a significant challenge. A more cohesive and globally accepted approach is needed. In this context, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2024 in Riyadh can serve as a vital platform for global stakeholders to discuss how to foster a universally recognized digital identity system.

2.1 Universal Digital ID for all

Establishing a universal digital ID holds immense potential to promote inclusion, empower individuals, and bridge global inequalities in access to resources and opportunities. A universal digital ID would ensure that every person, regardless of their location, has a trusted and recognized identity in the digital space, unlocking access to essential services like healthcare, education, financial services, and legal protections. A globally recognized digital ID can foster equitable access by allowing individuals to engage in secure online transactions, apply for jobs, and participate in digital platforms that are increasingly central to daily life. This foundation of digital inclusivity and trust supports a more interconnected world where all people have the opportunity to thrive in a digital society and where services and opportunities are accessible without discrimination.

Considering that the level of digital ID adoption varies significantly across countries, it is relevant to have in place an adoption index to track digital ID usage. The Digital Identity Adoption Rate would measure the percentage of eligible individuals actively using digital IDs. This metric can provide an effective way to assess how widely a digital identity system is embraced by its target population. By expressing the adoption rate as a percentage, it can enable an easy comparison across regions, demographics, and time periods, offering a standardized mean to track progress and identify trends. Focusing on the "Number of Active Digital ID Users," the rate can reflect the actual engagement, not just registrations, ensuring that the metric captures meaningful use rather than simply counting issued IDs, which may include inactive accounts. This metric would enable a detailed analysis of adoption gaps across various segments, such as age groups, regions, or socioeconomic classes.

The index is envisioned to be adaptable across diverse contexts and can be tailored to reflect specific characteristics of different populations or systems. For example, it can be adjusted to measure adoption in particular sectors (e.g., healthcare, finance) or among specific groups (e.g., rural populations, elderly citizens). This flexibility supports targeted assessments required for specific policies or program goals. Indeed, by regularly measuring and analyzing adoption rates, policymakers, service providers, and stakeholders can identify areas where adoption lags and implement targeted interventions, such as improving digital literacy, enhancing user experience, or raising awareness through public campaigns. The metric supports continuous monitoring and evaluation, essential for refining digital ID systems.

2.2 Cross Border Interoperability

Cross-border interoperability is fundamental to realizing a global digital ID system that can empower individuals and businesses in a connected economy. Indeed, interoperability enables digital identities to be recognized and verified across countries, fostering an environment where individuals can securely interact with services and institutions worldwide. This capability is essential in today's globalized economy, where digital services and transactions frequently span national borders, from remote work and e-commerce to cross-border banking and healthcare. An interoperable digital ID system would enhance international mobility, allowing individuals to carry out secure, authenticated transactions wherever they go, promoting both personal and economic freedom. Businesses, in turn, could streamline operations and reduce barriers when verifying identities across jurisdictions, leading to smoother international trades and investments.

2.3 Unlocking global economic value

A global digital ID system holds the potential to unlock significant economic value by enabling individuals and businesses to engage seamlessly in the global economy. By providing a universally recognized means of digital identification, individuals can securely access financial services, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities across borders, breaking down traditional barriers that hinder economic participation. For businesses, global digital IDs streamline cross-border transactions, improve customer verification processes, and reduce fraud, allowing companies to operate more efficiently across borders and access new markets with greater ease. Moreover, a global digital ID system could drive financial inclusion,

particularly for those without access to conventional identification. By integrating these individuals into the digital economy, global digital IDs create new opportunities for entrepreneurship, investment, and innovation, ultimately expanding the economic base and fueling global growth. This foundation of trusted, borderless identification supports not only secure and efficient transactions but also the creation of new digital services and platforms that can adapt to a rapidly globalizing economy.

3. Online Safety

In today's interconnected world, the internet has reshaped our societies and communities, making global connections stronger than ever. The digital revolution has generated many opportunities for economic, social, and political development, yet also introducing significant challenges, such as those related to data protection and privacy, online misinformation and disinformation, and online child protection.

The vast disparities in digital resources, knowledge, and security measures across nations underscore the necessity for a unified approach. Recognizing the need for a secure digital environment, nations and organizations worldwide have enacted frameworks to enable online safety.

The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) plays a vital role in establishing frameworks to protect digital assets, safeguard data privacy, and build cross-border trust. Many countries have also enacted data protection laws, such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Saudi Arabia's Personal Data Protection Law, to ensure secure and responsible data practices. Since 2019, a growing number of OECD countries have established dedicated regulatory bodies focused on online safety. These organizations are responsible for developing, implementing, and enforcing regulations that enhance online safety and promote overall digital well-being.

3.1 Data protection and privacy

Personal data is being collected, processed, and shared on an unprecedented scale, making it vulnerable to misuse, breaches, and unauthorized surveillance. Therefore, protecting this data is essential to maintaining trust in digital systems and ensuring personal data protection . As raised also in the "Pact for the future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations", the increasing collection, sharing and processing of data may amplify risks in absence of effective personal data protection and privacy norms. Furthermore, the exponential growth of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT) amplifies the importance of privacy. These technologies rely heavily on data to function effectively, but without safeguards, they can lead to unintended consequences, such as algorithmic bias, Excessive collection of personal data , and loss of privacy.

In this context, data protection laws, ethical guidelines, and international cooperation are vital to safeguarding these rights while enabling the safe and responsible use of technology in modern society.

3.2 Combating online disinformation and misinformation

The digital age has transformed how information is created, shared, and consumed, offering unprecedented connectivity and access. Despite the benefits, this has also led to the spread of misinformation and disinformation, posing a significant challenge to digital trust impacting individuals, societies, and countries. As social media platforms and online ecosystems become primary sources of information, the rapid dissemination of misinformation. Countries are taking proactive steps to combat disinformation and misinformation. For instance, the European Union (EU) has introduced the Digital Services Act (DSA), which holds online platforms accountable for moderating harmful content and ensuring transparency in their algorithms.

3.3 Child Online Protection

Addressing cyberbullying among children is essential due to its high prevalence and profound impact on their well-being. A 2019 UNICEF survey revealed that one in three young people across 30 countries experienced online bullying, with one in five skipping school as a result. The 2024 Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) study from the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that 15% of youth faced cyberbullying, increasing from 12% in 2018. Cyberbullying poses unique challenges for adolescents, reaching beyond the school environment and into their private lives. As young people spend more time online, these statistics emphasize the urgent need for collaborative action involving educators, parents, community leaders, and policymakers to promote digital literacy and enhance online safety.

Countries and international organizations, including the United Nations, have launched impactful initiatives to combat cyberbullying on a global scale. These initiatives focus on raising awareness, developing legal frameworks, and encouraging collaborative efforts among nations to address cyberbullying effectively. For example, UNICEF has introduced several campaigns and educational materials aimed at increasing awareness of online safety. Similarly, Saudi Arabia, represented by the Saudi Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), has launched initiatives to raise awareness about cyberbullying, collaborating with public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Riyadh Declaration Principles

Principles:

Artificial Intelligence for an Inclusive, Sustainable, and Governed Digital Future

- ▶ Advance AI technologies and related governance frameworks that are inclusive, fair, and built on principles of integrity and respect
- ▶ Reaffirm to our vision of a digital future where AI contributes meaningfully to the well-being of all individuals, supports the Sustainable Development Goals and drives innovation that benefits society
- ▶ promote digital literacy and skills development initiatives that empower individuals to navigate the digital landscape confidently, ensuring that all members of society can participate in and benefit from AI advancements
- ▶ promote robust oversight mechanisms that promote accountability, fairness, and transparency in AI deployment
- ▶ Strengthen international cooperation in AI research and development, sharing best practices and resources to ensure that the benefits of AI are distributed equitably across nations

Global Digital ID

- Emphasize that every individual, regardless of geographic location, economic status, or technological proficiency, has access to a secure and verifiable digital ID by 2030
- promote the development and harmonization of regulations that support the mutual recognition of digital IDs, easing regulatory compliance and fostering an environment of trust in digital transactions
- Recognize the significance of developing a robust framework (including Digital ID Adoption Index) to evaluate digital ID adoption, emphasizing active usage as a key metric to inform targeted strategies for inclusivity, engagement, and system improvement
- Emphasize the importance of cross-border interoperability as a catalyst for facilitating global trade, travel, and cooperation and advocate for the development of international standards that promote interoperability while respecting data protection, privacy, and local sovereignty
- Recognize that a robust digital identity system is a key enabler for unlocking global economic value and foster the adoption of secure digital identities to drive significant economic growth, particularly in sectors such as e-commerce, finance, and healthcare.

Online Safety

- Promote in international cooperation to ensure that data collection and storage practices are safe and secure
- Share experiences and good practices for data policy to ensure data protection and privacy
- Explore and better understand privacy enhancing technologies
- Advance policies to combat misinformation and disinformation
- Recognize the importance of child protection and foster the development of guidelines and best practices against cyberbullying
- Support the development of age-verification technologies to ensure online children protection

Closing Statement

In conclusion, we recognize the transformative potential of artificial intelligence, secure digital identities, and online digital safety in building a world that is equitable and accessible to all. By harnessing AI's capabilities, fostering globally recognized digital ID systems, and strengthening digital safety frameworks and initiatives, we aim to empower marginalized communities, enhance international cooperation, and address the pressing challenges of our time.

Therefore, we recognize that our principles mark a pivotal step towards Benefiting from the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in building a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable digital future. At the same time, We emphasize the importance of fostering the development of a standardized, secure digital ID systems that empower individuals and enable businesses to operate across borders with ease. Finally, We emphasize the importance of promoting international cooperation to ensure digital safety.

Adopted in Riyadh in December 2024