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To: Delegations

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Subject: Council Conclusions on EU Digital Diplomacy

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Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on EU Digital Diplomacy, as approved by the Council at its meeting held on 18 July 2022.

**EU Digital Diplomacy:**

**Council Conclusions, Foreign Affairs Council, 18 July 2022**

1. Digital technologies have brought new opportunities and risks into the lives of EU citizens and people around the globe. They have also become key competitive parameters that can shift the geopolitical balance of power.
2. Following the Council conclusions of November 2020 and the first substantial discussion on the geopolitics of emerging technologies in the Foreign Affairs Council of July 2021, the Council invites the High Representative and the Commission, in close coordination with Member States, to ensure that Digital Diplomacy become a core component and an integral part of the EU external action, including by strengthening existing multilateral, regional and multi-stakeholder processes, and matching the progress achieved with the EU's Green Diplomacy and Cyber Diplomacy. This approach will enable the Union to play its full role in the global green and digital twin transitions.
3. The Council stresses that EU external policies on digital, cyber and countering hybrid threats, including foreign information manipulation and interference, must be fully coherent and mutually reinforcing. Consolidation of the progress achieved so far in the Union's ambitious quest to strengthen its technological and digital sovereignty, in line with the Versailles Declaration and the relevant European Council and Council conclusions, requires further decisive steps towards a more visible, influential and coordinated Digital Diplomacy, making use of all relevant EU tools.

4. The EU's digital diplomacy will be carried out in close collaboration with like-minded partners, and be built on universal human rights, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and democratic principles.
5. Our digital economies and societies can only flourish if we have trust in the safety of information and communication technologies and the security and integrity of our data. The Council is committed to further strengthen its international engagement on cyber, in particular in the United Nations, the OSCE and other relevant multilateral and regional fora, as well as through the use of the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox.
6. The Council stresses that the purpose of EU Digital Diplomacy is to:
  - Strengthen the EU's global role in digital affairs, on the basis of common geopolitical priorities, paying special attention to countries of strategic importance or that have a high level of vulnerability.
  - Actively promote universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and democratic principles in the digital space and advance a human-centric and human rights-based approach to digital technologies in relevant multilateral fora and other platforms.
  - Promote an open, free, global, stable and secure Internet based on the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance.
  - Influence the shaping of ethical, safe and inclusive international technology standards based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, inter alia through strengthened outreach coordinated between the High Representative, the Commission and the Member States, particularly with a view to negotiations at the global level in bodies such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

- Contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the development of the UN's Global Digital Compact.
- In line with the Global Gateway strategy, promote and support resilient and trusted digital infrastructures, the enhancement of democratic digital societies beyond EU borders, digital public infrastructure and digital public goods, and digital commons.
- Pro-actively advocate for innovation-friendly and human rights-based technology governance and promote the EU's human-centric and human rights-based approach to the digital transition.
- Actively promote EU internal digital policies and regulations, taking into account the vision set out in the "2030 Digital Compass: the European Way for the Digital Decade", once adopted, and monitor development of digital policy globally, while also informing the EU's internal policy making.
- Contribute to a coherent and mutually reinforcing implementation of the relevant parts of the EU's security and defence policy, including on cyber and hybrid aspects, as outlined in particular in the Strategic Compass, the EU Cybersecurity Strategy, the recently adopted cyber<sup>1</sup> and hybrid<sup>2</sup> Council Conclusions, as well as the Defence and Space packages in line with relevant Council Conclusions.
- Contribute to safeguarding the EU's security also in the context of countering hybrid threats, cyberattacks, and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), including state-sponsored interference, as well as combatting violence and hate speech, including through support for the Paris and Christchurch Calls.

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<sup>1</sup> [Council Conclusions on the development of the European Union's cyber posture](#), 23 May 2022.

<sup>2</sup> [Council conclusions on a Framework for a coordinated EU response to hybrid campaigns](#), 21 June 2022.

- Exchange with stakeholders from business, academia and civil society as appropriate, both in the EU and beyond, to identify opportunities that could match the political, economic and geostrategic goals of the EU in third countries, while understanding the different starting points for digitalisation and use of technologies across the world.
- Promote secure, free flow of data with trust, taking into account inter alia exceptions for legitimate public policy objectives and in full respect of data protection and privacy, support European businesses' global reach and promote European examples of ethical approaches to data usage, since responsible use of data by businesses and governments forms the basis for the development of trustworthy and responsible digital ecosystems.
- Contribute to the transition to a sustainable future, by promoting innovative European digital solutions that can help achieve a climate neutral economy.
- Contribute to strengthening the EU's, Member States' and partners' ability to evaluate and address risks, vulnerabilities and critical dependencies in emerging and foundational technologies and enhance the resilience of the EU by strengthening the resilience of our partners.
- Improve the EU's capability to monitor global digital regulatory activity, international data flows and the data privacy of EU citizens, patterns of digital trade, partnerships between third countries and their effects on the competition framework in the global market for digital technologies and services.

7. The Council invites the High Representative, the Commission and Member States together to ensure complementarity and coherence between the EU's and Member States' internal and external digital policy initiatives and effective action. The Council also invites the High Representative and the Commission to keep track of major ongoing and prospective international developments relevant to EU Digital Diplomacy and Cyber Diplomacy, while noting the important role of the Member States, including through relevant Council bodies and the Digital Diplomacy and Cyber Ambassadors Networks, in guiding and monitoring their implementation.
8. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission, with the full involvement of the Member States, to develop tailored approaches to build coalitions and strengthen cooperation in and with the UN system, the G7, the OSCE, the OECD, the WTO, NATO, the Council of Europe and other multilateral fora, as appropriate, including multi-stakeholder organisations and particularly in standardisation bodies, in which coherent and harmonised European standards play an influential role.
9. In this context, the Council notes the increasing importance of EU coordination on elections and appointments for positions at UN and other relevant multilateral bodies, while respecting national competences of the Member States, and supports the EU's efforts to promote its aims, along with like-minded partners.

10. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to continue to promote universal human rights and fundamental freedoms and pursue alignment with partners in the UN system, with full involvement of the Member States, and in particular in the Human Rights Council, the third committee of the UNGA, the process around the UN Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" report, as well as the Secretary General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, where the EU should significantly contribute to the preparation of a Global Digital Compact and work with the UN Tech Envoy.
  
11. The Council expresses its support for ambitious partnerships on external digital issues, and underlines the importance of the EU's bilateral, regional, multi-stakeholder and multilateral initiatives in the digital field, notably the EU-U.S. Trade and Technology Council, the Digital Partnership with Japan, future Digital Partnerships with the Republic of Korea and Singapore, the EU-India Trade and Technology Council, the Digital Agenda for Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership's EU4Digital Initiative, the joint commitment to digital transformation in the EU-Africa Joint Vision for 2030, Strategic Partnership with the Gulf and the New Agenda for the Mediterranean, the Joint Declaration by the EU and Indo-Pacific countries on privacy and the protection of digital data, as well as the forthcoming EU-LAC Digital Alliance and the digital trade provisions in existing EU trade agreements. The Council invites the Commission and the High Representative to ensure effective coordination with Member States so as to make full use of these fora and instruments.
  
12. The Council encourages the Commission and the High Representative to explore additional initiatives to increase the visibility of the EU globally by learning from best practices of the Member States.

13. The Council supports the establishment of digital economy packages that combine investments in digital infrastructure, capacity building and the strategic promotion of technological solutions and regulatory and standards convergence, and that respect democratic values and human rights, also as part of the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy. The Council invites Member States and the Commission to explore potential contributions to such packages in a Team Europe approach, as well as to inform, as appropriate, that approach through dialogue with third countries, civil society, tech companies and other relevant actors.
14. The Council calls for continued dialogue and cooperation with the private sector, including online platforms, and civil society to jointly develop solutions for addressing challenges and misuse of digital technologies and platforms.
15. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to make use of a global tech panel in seeking multi-stakeholder inputs to developing the EU's digital diplomacy.
16. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to promote new and innovative digitalisation tools developed by the European Union, such as technologies, standards or data sets developed in EU programmes, including the global coverage data delivered by the EU Space Programme.



17. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to build on the consensus with like-minded partners to better protect and promote democracy, universal human rights and the rules-based order in an increasingly digitalised world, in line with the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade, once adopted. The Council further welcomes the Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment, Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-based Digital Government and Lisbon Declaration on Digital Democracy with a Purpose. The Council invites the High Representative, the Commission and Member States to promote these mutually supportive Declarations internationally and to integrate them more firmly into the EU's external action, also taking into account the Declaration for the Future of the Internet.
  
18. The Council stresses the importance of applying online the same rights that apply offline. The Council invites the High Representative, the Commission and Member States to promote a human rights-based approach to the whole life-cycle of digital technologies – including design, development, deployment and use - as part of a coherent narrative of the EU's human-centric vision of the digital transformation, contributing to the visibility of the EU as a crucial actor in this field, including in international standard-setting processes.

19. In line with the EU Action Plan on human rights and democracy, the Council invites the High Representative, the Commission and Member States to continue to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, and rule of law in the digital sphere across the world, in particular by fostering digital literacy and closing the digital gender divide. This also requires committing relevant instruments and funding to combat Internet shutdowns, arbitrary or indiscriminate digital surveillance and data retention alongside a concerted policy to promote human rights online e.g. through Human Rights dialogues, to protect human rights defenders and civil society online and expand civic space. Public diplomacy should be used to give visibility to the impact and the benefits of responsible use of new technologies for democracy and human rights and their role to document human rights violations.
20. The Council commends the ongoing efforts to promote digitalisation and data sharing in favour of sustainability and the SDGs, and invites the Commission and the High Representative to promote sharing of standardised digital data related to the sustainability of companies and products.
21. The Council expresses concern about the growing scope and sophistication of disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) in the digital space, which can erode public trust in democratic processes and institutions, undermine public initiatives, reinforce stereotypes, and incite discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance and violence. The Council invites the High Representative, the Commission and the Member States to address disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) while ensuring an open, free, global, stable and secure Internet and fully respecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

22. The Council reiterates its support for the EU Digital Diplomacy Network, as set out in the Council Conclusions adopted on 17 November 2020. The Council calls for strengthening the network as a platform for coordination, discussion and exchange of information and best practices among EU Member States about Digital Diplomacy-related issues as well as for further strengthening its coordination with the EU Cyber Ambassadors' Network.
23. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission, with the close involvement of the Member States, to continue to work with partner organisations in the framework of the UN declaration of principles for international election observation to further develop guidelines for election observation missions to analyse social media and the online debate during electoral campaigns. The Council calls for continued deployment of a methodology for observation of online election campaigns as a systematic part of all EU election observation missions. Attention to new digital technologies should also guide EU electoral support efforts.
24. The Council welcomes the upcoming establishment of an EU office in San Francisco as a means of strengthening transatlantic engagement on the digital agenda, fulfilling the related goals of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, building contacts with authorities and stakeholders on the ground with a view to contributing to a successful, sustainable and human centric digital transformation to ensure a human rights based approach in accordance with the EU and the U.S. shared values and democratic systems.

25. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to make full, systematic and coordinated use of the network of EU Delegations and Member States' representations to work with third countries, international organisations as well as the multi-stakeholder community, conveying EU positions and strengthening reporting on technology policy issues, while being mindful of the increasing interconnection between economic aspects of new technologies, related critical technological dependencies and their effects on European digital sovereignty, internal security and foreign, security, trade, development and defence policies.
26. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission, together with Member States, to strengthen regional digital diplomacy hubs in key EU Delegations, fully coherent and mutually reinforcing with the EU Cyber Diplomacy Network as envisaged by the Council Conclusions on the development of the European Union's cyber posture.
27. Given the need to ensure coherence across all digital and cyber work streams within Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Council invites the High Representative, the Commission and the Member States to further develop the EU's capabilities for analysis on technological and digital policy developments.
28. The Council invites the High Representative to develop digital diplomacy training for EU's and Member States' diplomats in order to improve skills and to establish a common understanding of technology in geopolitics, and make sure that European diplomacy is fit for the digital age.

29. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to ensure close involvement of Member States in digital diplomacy and to continue regularly to report to the Council on its implementation, as well as to assess the impact of digital technologies internationally on democracy, universal human rights and the rules based international order.
  30. The Council will revert to this issue by summer 2023 and take stock of progress on a regular basis.
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