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| Contribution from Algeria (People's Democratic Republic of), Saudi Arabia (Kingdom of), Bahrain (Kingdom of), Egypt (Arab Republic of), United Arab Emirates, Kuwait (State of), Morocco (Kingdom of) and Tunisia | |
| WSIS AND UN GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT | |
| **Purpose**  Taking into consideration the undergoing preparatory process of the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the Summit of Future, and recognizing the need to create synergy and to harmonize GDC with the World Summit of Information Society (WSIS) outcomes, the Union needs to be fully engaged in the preparatory process. By this contribution, we are suggesting actions that further engage the Union with GDC and Summit of Future seeking for alignment that is more effective, coordination and complementarity between the GDC and WSIS outcomes.  **Action required by the Council**  The council is invited **to consider** this contribution and **take the necessary actions** accordingly.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References** | |

**1 Introduction**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has transformed society in an extraordinary manner. With the growing ubiquity of the internet and ongoing digital transformation, the world has become increasingly interconnected and empowered. The ICT has proven its worth in enabling continuity, resilience, and adaptation in the face of unprecedented challenges. However, this ICT revolution has not been evenly distributed across the globe, as many people, particularly in Developing and Least Developed Countries still lack access to digital technology and have not been able to reap the real benefits of ICT services.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was a significant milestone in the advancement of technology and its impact on the world. Since its inception it has proven to be a global platform that seeks to enhance the use of ICTs to promote sustainable and socio-economic development. The Summit and its proceedings over the years have played key role an attempt to bridge the digital divide, create a more inclusive society and promote digital inclusion by providing a platform for stakeholders to collaborate and share best practices through open dialogue, creative thinking, and cross-sectoral cooperation with direct participation of governments, businesses, and civil society organizations.

The WSIS also proved to be an opportunity to enable the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). WSIS action lines have been a facilitation for achieving the SDG’s. The WSIS action lines provided an opportunity for the developing countries to leapfrog past developmental stages, thus enabling a more equitable and sustainable world.

However, the WSIS process over the period has evolved and in the process has also faced several challenges. One of the biggest challenges is that progress has been comparatively slow, with many of the objectives set out in the Tunis Agenda are still not fully achieved. The digital divide, equitable access to ICT services, privacy and data protection and capacity building are some of the activities which are work in progress through WSIS.

UN Secretary General report titled "Our Common Agenda" has Key proposals across the 12 Commitments including the commitment of “Improve Digital Cooperation”. The Common Agenda proposes a Global Digital Compact to be agreed at the Summit of the Future in September 2024 through a technology track involving all stakeholders: governments, the United Nations system, the private sector (including tech companies), civil society, grass-roots organizations, academia, and individuals, including youth. The aim is to facilitate digital cooperation to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to create a global partner network of various stakeholders, including governments, civil society groups, academia, and the private sector.

The United Nations Global Digital Compact has following core objectives,

1. Connect all people to the Internet, including all schools
2. Avoid Internet fragmentation
3. Protect data
4. Apply human rights online
5. Introduce accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content
6. Promote regulation of artificial intelligence
7. Digital commons as a global public good

Welcoming all the diverse efforts aimed at the digital cooperation, it is important to highlight, that the WSIS process has not finished yet, and there is a close SDGs-WSIS interlinkage reflected in WSIS-SDGs Matrix, that implies on the feasibility of continuing the WSIS process beyond 2025 in alignment with the timeframes for achieving the 2030 agenda.

At the same time there is a linkage between the WSIS process and possible Global Digital Compact reflected in the draft ECOSOC Resolution “Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society” approved by CSTD to be submitted to the forthcoming ECOSOC meeting:

*Highlights the ongoing discussions on the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Roadmap for digital cooperation” and the proposals contained in the Secretary-General’s report “Our Common Agenda”, including the Global Digital Compact, relevant to WSIS, and in this regard, calls for further transparent and inclusive consultations with member States and all relevant stakeholders, on the way forward, consistent with the WSIS outcomes and underlines the importance of ensuring synergies and avoiding duplication across various entities;*

We underline the need and importance of effective alignment, coordination and complementarity between WSIS+20 review process and the Global Digital Compact process to avoid duplication and overlap, and overburdening of member states.

**2 Proposal**

Based on the above, we propose the following:

1. To kindly request the Secretary General of the ITU, as United Nations specialized agency for ICTs and as facilitators of relevant WSIS Action Lines, to engage actively on issues related to the mandate of ITU in preparation and participation in Global Digital Compact (GDC) process and the Summit on the Future in 2024. In doing so, attention should be paid to harmonize relevant WSIS outcomes and SDGs with Summit on the Future process;

2. To instruct the ITU Secretariat to carry out a study, including but not limited to the below items, and share results with ITU Membership for their knowledge and understanding prior to the Ministerial meeting planned in September 2023 to prepare for the Summit of the Future:

* The long-term impact of Summit of the Future on WSIS process, and its proceedings and the WSIS outcome documents implementation including the provisions in the Tunis Agenda that has yet to be fully implemented.
* Comprehensive review of the WSIS process including opportunities and challenges and best practices of how they can be complemented, facilitated or settled by the Summit of the Future and the Global Digital Compact objectives, with which WSIS objectives can be synergized.

ITU role and input in the preparatory process of Summit of the Future / Global digital Compact.

* How will the Summit of the Future outcome complement the WSIS process.
* How do achievements on WSIS Action lines contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda, bearing in mind the WSIS-SDGs Matrix and the feasibility of continuing the WSIS process beyond 2025 in alignment with the timeframes for achieving the 2030 Agenda.
* The envisaged future of WSIS in light of the Global Digital Compact.

3. Instruct the ITU Secretariat to submit the study mentioned in (2) to Council Working Group on WSIS & SDGs and the Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues for their considerations and to provide recommendations to the Council when it deems appropriate.

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