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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| WSIS+20 REVIEW – ITU’S CALL FOR INPUTS: SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED | |
| **Purpose**  This document presents the summary of submissions received from the ITU’s Call for Inputs that was launched in August 2024 to contribute views on the work of the ITU in the WSIS+20 review, including ideas related to the review of the WSIS Action Lines.  **Action required by the Council**  The Council is invited to **note** the document.  **Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**  Convening platforms; partnerships and international cooperation.  **Financial implications**  Within the allocated budget 2024-2025.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [*CWG-WSIS&SDG website*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Pages/default.aspx)*; ITU Council Resolution* [*1332 (Modified 2024)*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0141/en) | |

Background

ITU Council Resolution 1332 invited members and stakeholders to contribute to ITU’s work in the 20th year review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) to gather insight into the achievements and challenges of the WSIS process. Out of 97 submissions received, some of which included input from various entities, including governments within regional groups, 62 were published upon consent: [CWG-WSIS&SDG Call for Inputs on the WSIS+20 Review Responses](https://www.itu.int/en/itu-wsis/Pages/CWG-WSIS%26SDG_Call_for_Inputs_2025.aspx).

This summary will be submitted by the Chair of the Council Working Group on WSIS and SDGs to the WSIS+20 overall review by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). In addition, the ITU Secretary-General is invited to consider the outcomes of this Call for Input when submitting the ITU Secretary-General’s WSIS+20 Report to the WSIS+20 overall review, pursuant to the [ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 140 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-140-E.pdf)). These inputsserve as a valuable reference for all stakeholders towards the WSIS+20 Overall Review by the UNGA.

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, WSIS has advanced global digital transformation by promoting inclusive access to ICTs and bridging the digital divide. Supported by the ITU, WSIS has become a cornerstone of multistakeholder digital governance. The report highlights key achievements, challenges, and impactful WSIS Action Lines, while exploring ways to sustain the inclusive model and address emerging digital trends. The WSIS architecture is recognized as important for implementing the Global Digital Compact, leveraging fora such as the WSIS Forum and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) to foster an inclusive, secure digital space.

# I Major achievements of the WSIS Process in 20 years

The WSIS process has contributed significantly to the expansion of global connectivity and internet access in developing countries; efforts to bridge the digital divide; e-government services to enhance transparency and accessibility; transformation of e-health and education; fostering rapid growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship in the digital economy and e-business sectors; supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with climate action and disaster preparedness; global collaboration through knowledge sharing and capacity-building; cybersecurity and data privacy frameworks; emerging technologies like AI and blockchain under ethical and inclusive principles; multistakeholder participation reinforcing inclusive governance; multilingualism and cultural diversity, and cross-sectoral impact, empowering individuals and communities.

WSIS is instrumental in fostering inclusive, secure, and innovative information (and knowledge) societies. WSIS achievements underscore the role and contributions of the WSIS process in global digital development, social, economic and sustainable growth. Despite this progress, a substantial connectivity gap remains. The WSIS+20 Review presents a valuable opportunity to reflect on collective achievements, draw lessons, and renew commitments to digital development and closing the digital divide. Additionally, WSIS and its Action Lines have demonstrated adaptability in addressing emerging issues, including the rise of social media and transformative and emerging technologies like AI and virtual reality. WSIS provides a UN framework and guidance on digital governance, ensuring that global digital policies are aligned with globally agreed development goals and ethical dimensions of the information society.

# II ITU’s main contributions to the WSIS process

ITU has played a key role in facilitating dialogue among multistakeholders, supporting digital transformation strategies, and ensuring integration for emerging technologies to drive social, economic and sustainable development, some of the key areas referred by stakeholders are:

– **Leadership and coordination:** ITU’s leadership has been critical in coordinating the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action by convening the UN System and other stakeholders to implement the WSIS Process. Its key components, like the WSIS Forum, WSIS Stocktaking database, Partnership on measuring ICT for Development, and United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), have fostered coherence and collaboration across the UN system.

– **Facilitator of the WSIS process:** Over the past 20 years, ITU has advanced ICT infrastructure development, enhanced capacity building, improved cybersecurity, and enabled policy environments through the implementation of WSIS Action Lines C2, C4, C5, and C6, as the lead facilitator. ITU has also hosted and organized the annual WSIS Forum, maintained the WSIS Stocktaking Platform, and managed the WSIS Prizes. By fostering global dialogue and collaboration, ITU has enabled knowledge sharing, policy development, and the implementation of concrete ICT initiatives aligned with WSIS and the UN development goals.

– **Promoting global connectivity:** ITU has actively promoted the development of broadband and mobile networks, especially in developing countries where connectivity gaps remain significant. Through international telecommunications standards, ITU has ensured global interoperability, enabling equitable access to ICTs.

– **Fostering digital access:** ITU has implemented capacity-building programs aimed at enhancing digital literacy and skills development, particularly among marginalized populations. These initiatives support efforts to bridge the digital divide and ensure that all communities, including women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and those in rural areas, have access to the opportunities offered by ICTs.

– **Enhancing cybersecurity**: ITU has led the development of global cybersecurity frameworks and standards, which help countries and organizations implement robust policies.

– **Supporting sustainable development:** ICTs as enablers of sustainable development have been a significant contribution to the WSIS process. ITU has promoted ICT applications in critical sectors such as education, healthcare, and agriculture.

– **Global governance and policy support:** ITU has contributed significantly to the development of internet and cybersecurity frameworks. It has also provided policy and regulatory guidance to member states, helping them craft ICT strategies and programmes that promote digital growth while addressing issues like data protection, market competition, and universal service.

– **Capacity building and technical assistance:** A core area has been building human and institutional capacity in ICTs. Extensive training programs, workshops, and technical assistance missions have empowered governments and institutions—especially in developing countries—to strengthen their ICT infrastructure and policy environments.

– **Promoting innovation and emerging technologies:** ITU is at the forefront of emerging technologies by facilitating global dialogue through initiatives like AI for Good. The organization also supports innovations such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning, 5G and beyond, energy efficiency, blockchain, and the Internet of Things (IoT).

– **Monitoring and Reporting:** To track progress and share knowledge, ITU has maintained the WSIS Stocktaking database, a comprehensive repository of ICT development initiatives that facilitates global cooperation and learning among stakeholders.

# III Sustaining and strengthening the WSIS process and its multistakeholder model

The WSIS process aims to enhance collaborative frameworks through regular dialogues with governments, private sector, technical community, civil society, international organizations, and academia, as well as through local and regional involvement to ensure diverse perspectives and shared responsibility in progressing the implementation of WSIS.

# IV Major challenges in WSIS implementation

Addressing the digital divide remains a significant challenge; including those of cybersecurity and privacy; governance and regulation; barriers faced by marginalized groups; and economic, social, cultural and environmental impact.

# V Most impactful WSIS Action Lines

**C1: The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development** –The importance of inclusive governance by fostering collaboration among governments, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders.

**C2: Information and communication infrastructure** –This is essential in significantly improving connectivity, fostering social and economic growth, and bridging the digital divide in underserved regions.

**C3: Access to information and knowledge** – This supports education, fuels innovation, and empowers informed decision-making —essential for inclusive development and reducing global knowledge gaps.

**C4: Capacity building** –This has enabled more people to engage meaningfully in the digital transformation and to harness technology for personal, educational, and professional development.

**C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs** –Efforts have focused on cybersecurity and secure digital environments to ensure safer online engagement.

**C6: Enabling environment** –This involves fostering regulatory and policy frameworks to support ICT development and innovation, ensuring that digital advancement benefits all.

**C7: ICT applications** –Improved efficiency and transparency of public service delivery and citizen engagement via e-government; expanded access to medical services of e-health; accessible education of e-learning; enhanced trade through e-business.

# VI WSIS Action Lines addressing new and emerging technologies

The WSIS Action Lines continue to adapt to include emerging trends such as AI, blockchain, and IoT; fostering inclusive cooperation among governments, strengthening cybersecurity and privacy frameworks; promoting digital inclusion; investing in capacity-building programs; and establishing effective governance mechanisms and ethical frameworks.

# VII Suggestions and inputs on WSIS+20 Review Action Lines: key milestones, challenges, and emerging trends beyond 2025

Challenges

– *Digital divide –* Significant disparities persist, particularly in rural and underserved areas—an issue that must be addressed to ensure that no one is left behind.

– *Rapid technological changes –* The fast pace of technological advancement poses a challenge for safe, ethical, and inclusive frameworks and standards.

– *Cybersecurity threats –* Adapting and updating cybersecurity frameworks is vital to protect individuals, businesses, and critical infrastructure.

– *Inclusivity –* Meaningful digital inclusion remains a challenge, with a pressing need for targeted policies and programs on equitable access.

Emerging trends beyond 2025

– *Artificial intelligence (AI) and automation –* Key concerns include ethical implications, data governance, and the potential impact on employment, especially in labour-intensive sectors.

– *Internet of Things (IoT) –* IoT technologies offer new opportunities, but also raise critical concerns around data privacy, cybersecurity, and the need for more robust infrastructure support.

– *Blockchain technology –* Blockchain is a powerful tool for enhancing transparency, security, and efficiency in finance, supply chain management, and governance across public and private sectors.

– *Green ICT –* Green ICT initiatives aim to reduce the sector’s environmental footprint via energy-efficient technologies, responsible e-waste management, and climate-conscious innovation.

– *Privacy and data protection –* With the expansion of digital services, ensuring privacy and safeguarding personal data via data protection laws are critical to maintaining public trust.

Suggestions for enhancing the WSIS Action Lines

– *Update Action Lines –* These should be regularly reviewed and updated to be future-oriented and adaptable to the latest technological advancements, trends, and societal needs.

– *Continue to strengthen multistakeholder engagement –* Strengthening collaboration among governments, private sector, technical community, civil society, international organizations and academia is essential for balanced digital policies.

– *Focus on inclusive participation –* Addressing existing disparities in access and usage for vulnerable and marginalized populations.

– *Enhance cybersecurity measures –* Robust cybersecurity frameworks should continue to be implemented and supported to establish trustworthy, secure, sustainable digital ecosystems.

– *Support environmental ICT practices –* Sustainable green ICT approaches will help minimize environmental impacts and align digital growth with climate goals.

# VIII Strengthening multistakeholder platforms like WSIS Forum and IGF

Strengthening regional and national engagement through the creation of hubs ensures that global discussions are informed by regional contexts. Enhancing capacity building and training for stakeholders will improve their understanding of digital issues, while utilizing technology to facilitate remote accessibility for stakeholders with varying levels of digital access is essential. Focusing on actionable outcomes —such as policy recommendations, best practices, or collaborative projects— with tracking and reporting mechanisms will ensure that discussions lead to tangible results. Additionally, fostering innovation and adaptability by encouraging new approaches and solutions, and adapting to emerging trends and challenges, is important. Securing sustainable funding and resources guarantees the long-term viability and effectiveness of these platforms, while enhancing access and representation by actively involving underserved communities, youth, and underrepresented sectors remains crucial. Improving coordination and collaboration between the WSIS Forum and IGF can help address overlapping issues and leverage synergies. Finally, implementing systems for regular review and feedback will help assess progress and make necessary adjustments.

# IX Alignment of the implementation of the WSIS process and the Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact (GDC) to achieve shared goals

To align WSIS with the Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact, areas of complementarity must be identified in order to harmonize a unified vision of common priorities and avoid redundant efforts that would divert resources for international, multistakeholder cooperation. The WSIS Process, along with its key elements such as the WSIS Action Lines, UNGIS, WSIS Stocktaking, the WSIS Forum, and the IGF, provides a comprehensive framework for implementing the commitments outlined in GDC. The alignment of these processes requires integrating the GDC’s priorities into the existing WSIS framework.

In support of this goal, UNGIS members have developed a matrix to highlight and illustrate how existing UN processes are contributing to the implementation of GDC. The matrix can be accessed here: [UNGIS-CompiledMatrixOfLinkages-WSIS-GDC.pdf](https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/ungis/Content/upload/gdc/UNGIS-CompiledMatrixOfLinkages-WSIS-GDC.pdf).

# X Key emerging digital trends and topics for ITU’s consideration in the WSIS+20 review and future vision beyond 2025

Key emerging digital trends include focusing on ethical development and access to AI and machine learning, addressing gaps and promoting universal access to 5G and 6G for economic and social development, and strengthening global cooperation on cybersecurity and data privacy. Bridging the digital divide and promoting digital literacy for all essential, including preparing the workforce for the future digital economy as is exploring governance and standardization for the metaverse and virtual and augmented reality. Developing standards for IoT interoperability, data privacy, and security is crucial for ensuring connectivity, user protection, and trust in emerging digital space. Supporting energy-efficient technologies and addressing e-waste will contribute to environmental efforts.

Expanding access to digital health services and ensuring health data interoperability are crucial for advancing digital health and telemedicine. Exploring blockchain for transparency and security while addressing regulatory challenges will enhance decentralized technologies. Monitoring quantum computing developments and their implications for cybersecurity will help prepare for future advancements. Adapting global governance frameworks to evolving digital technologies with a focus on ethics and digital rights will ensure responsible digital governance.

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