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| Report by the Secretary-General |
| DRAFT WSIS+20 REPORT ON ITU'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE WSIS OUTCOMES AND ITS ROLE IN ACHIEVING THE SDGS |
| **Purpose**As part of the preparation for the Overall Review on the Implementation of the WSIS Outcomes: WSIS Beyond 2025, the ITU Secretary-General is instructed to prepare and present a WSIS+20 report on ITU's contribution to the implementation of and follow-up to the WSIS outcomes and its role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This document presents the draft of the WSIS+20 report.**Action required**The Council Working Group on WSIS and the SDGs is invited to **note** the document.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**References** [*CWG-WSIS&SDG website*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Pages/default.aspx)*;* [*Resolution 140 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022)*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-140-E.pdf)*,* [*Resolution 1334 (Modified 2023)*](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0120/en) |

WSIS+20 Report – Building a digital future for all

(draft: work in progress)

Key takeaways

For 20 years, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has been at the forefront of driving the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process. ITU promotes inclusive, development-oriented, and people-centred digital transformation globally. Furthermore, in its capacity as the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs), the organization has played a key role in implementing the WSIS Action Lines.

The WSIS process was launched with two landmark phases: the Geneva Summit in 2003 and the Tunis Summit in 2005. These events set the foundation for a shared vision of a global information society, emphasizing ICT’s transformative potential to accelerate development and bridge digital divides. ITU was instrumental in organizing and facilitating both summits, collaborating with UN agencies, governments, the private sector, and civil society to create a robust framework for action.

The Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda highlighted 11 Action Lines aimed at fostering digital inclusion and leveraging ICT for sustainable development. ITU played a leadership role in coordinating these efforts, particularly in areas such as ICT infrastructure (C2), capacity building (C4), cybersecurity (C5), and enabling environments (C6). These efforts have since evolved into a global multistakeholder movement, with ITU as a central pillar of coordination and implementation.

Over the past two decades, ITU has consistently demonstrated its commitment to advancing the WSIS vision through a range of initiatives, programs, and partnerships:

1 Facilitation of WSIS Action Lines: ITU has facilitated key Action Lines, including C2, C4, C5, and C6, aligning their implementation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, under Action Line C2, ITU has driven the expansion of global broadband infrastructure, bringing connectivity to underserved regions and bridging the digital divide.

2 Annual WSIS Forum: ITU has convened the WSIS Forum annually since 2009, providing a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders. The forum has become a cornerstone event for shaping the global digital agenda, fostering partnerships, and advancing innovative ICT solutions.

3 WSIS Stocktaking and Prizes: ITU launched the WSIS Stocktaking database to document and share successful ICT projects worldwide. This initiative celebrates best practices and promotes replicable solutions. The WSIS Prizes, introduced in 2012, recognize outstanding contributions to the WSIS Action Lines and the SDGs.

4 Global Digital Cooperation: ITU has spearheaded multistakeholder cooperation, working with UN agencies through mechanisms such as the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS). This collaboration ensures that digital transformation efforts are coordinated and aligned with global development priorities.

5 [AI for Good and Emerging Technologies: Recognizing the rapid evolution of technology, ITU has expanded WSIS’s scope to address emerging issues such as artificial intelligence, IoT, and 5G. Initiatives like the AI for Good Global Summit reflect ITU’s proactive approach to leveraging new technologies for social and economic development.]

As we approach the WSIS+20 High-Level Event in 2025, ITU remains committed to evaluating the progress made and identifying opportunities to strengthen the WSIS framework, taking into account the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and other international initiatives to ensure that digital transformation is inclusive, sustainable, and resilient.

In the sections that follow, this report will delve deeper into ITU’s achievements, challenges, and lessons learned over two decades of WSIS implementation. By reflecting on the past and setting a vision for the future, ITU reaffirms its role as a global leader in building a digital future for all.

# Introduction

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) started in response to the rise of digital technologies as a decisive element in global social and economic development.

Proposed by Tunisia in 1998 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2001, the original two-phase summit established a global vision for the Information Society, highlighting the need to bridge digital divides and help drive overall socio-economic development.

The Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action adopted in in 2003 highlighted the imperative of digital infrastructure, capacity building, and cybersecurity for all. The Tunis summit phase in 2005 reaffirmed the Geneva principles and established the annual Internet Governance Forum as a multistakeholder consultation mechanism.

The WSIS+10 Review in 2015 highlighted connectivity growth and persistent digital inclusion challenges, anchoring WSIS outcomes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Now, the WSIS+20 Review coming up in 2025 provides a fresh occasion to assess progress, identify new challenges, and enhance cooperation to build a digital future for all.

ITU driving WSIS achievements

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has been at the forefront of the WSIS process from the outset, implementing key WSIS Action Lines and promoting inclusive, development-oriented, and people-centred digital transformation globally.

ITU – as the UN agency for digital technologies – has ensured broad stakeholder engagement and effective implementation, keeping the WSIS process moving forward amid a continually evolving technology and policy landscape.

For over 20 years, the organization’s governance bodies have provided vital strategic direction and consistently supported the WSIS aims of global digital cooperation and sustainable development. The annual WSIS Forum organized by ITU since 2009 drives ongoing dialogue and collaboration, as well as regular review of WSIS Action Lines.

The WSIS Stocktaking database maintained by ITU documents over 13 000 tech-related projects around the world, while annual WSIS Prizes recognize excellence in those projects in pursuit of inclusive and sustainable digital development.

ITU collaborates closely with its fellow UN agencies, as well as with a wide array of public- and private-sector partners, on digital standards and capacity building. ITU-led initiatives like the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition also exemplify collaborative spirit cultivated through WSIS.

**Why WSIS matters now**

The WSIS process, now entering its third decade, remains vital to advance digital development and leverage technologies for the good of everyone.

Digital solutions have become key to eradicate poverty, improve education and healthcare, protect the environment, and accelerate progress on all 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. Yet severe disparities remain between different regions, countries and people in terms digital connectivity, affordability and engagement.

ITU-led projects linked to key WSIS Action Lines continue to advance connectivity and inclusion, especially rural and underserved areas across the Global South.

The Global Digital Compact adopted at the UN Summit of the Future in 2024 echoes WSIS principles, emphasizing universal connectivity, digital inclusion, and multistakeholder collaboration.

WSIS, meanwhile, remains the vital global framework for inclusive digital development aimed at building a better future for all.

The way forward

In the dawning age of advanced mobile networks, satellite constellations, artificial intelligence and quantum computing, the robust UN-mandated cooperation platform represented by WSIS still brings together diverse stakeholders to address some of the greatest challenges of our time.

The Chair’s report of the WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2024 notably underlines the need for WSIS to continue beyond 2025 as a proven mechanism for cooperation to address connectivity, digital development and wider human development challenges.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The present report will delve deeper into ITU’s achievements, challenges, and lessons learned over two decades of WSIS implementation. By reflecting on the past and setting out a vision for the future, ITU reaffirms its role as a global leader in building a digital future for all.

# Part 1: The history of WSIS

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) began in response to the rapid emergence of digital technologies. The WSIS concept, proposed by Tunisia in 1998, was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001. The WSIS process then started with two landmark summit phases.

The Geneva phase in 2003 established a shared global vision for the rapidly emerging Information Society, resulting in the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Geneva Plan of Action addressing the challenges of digital infrastructure development, capacity building, and cybersecurity.

The Tunis phase in 2005 then focused on bridging digital divides among countries, communities and individuals around the world. It promoted technologies for socio-economic development, reaffirmed the principles from Geneva, and established the annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as a multi-stakeholder mechanism for ongoing dialogue on a crucial global digital issue.

The WSIS+10 Review in 2015, along with highlighting rapid growth in connectivity, identified persistent challenges for digital inclusion. The review produced the *Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015*, anchoring WSIS outcomes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2025, as the WSIS+20 Review approaches, the focus has shifted to assessing progress since WSIS+10, identifying new challenges and opportunities, and mobilizing governments, the digital industry and other stakeholders to step up cooperation on building the digital future for all.

## 1.1 The birth of WSIS: How it all started

In the late 1990s, the world began witnessing opportunities and challenges due to the rapid advance of digital technologies. Equitable access for everyone to the Internet, along with the growing array of associated applications, became paramount to ensure the burgeoning “Information Society” would leave no one behind. Countries worldwide, therefore, welcomed the concept of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) proposed by Tunisia at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in 1998, with ITU Member States adopting a resolution to start organizing the new summit series.[[2]](#footnote-3)

The United Nations General Assembly endorsed the WSIS mechanism in 2001,[[3]](#footnote-4) paving the way for the historic two-phase summit, held in Geneva in 2003[[4]](#footnote-5) and Tunis in 2005.[[5]](#footnote-6) Those initial conferences focused primarily on infrastructure, capacity building, and cybersecurity.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) served the secretariat for both phases, helping shape the WSIS vision that has guided multi-stakeholder consultations on global digital technology issues ever since. ITU remains instrumental in facilitating the WSIS Process, including its initiatives among the UN agencies and with all stakeholders at the global, regional, and national level, emphasizing multi-stakeholder collaboration and documenting progress through the WSIS Stocktaking Database and annual reports.

Geneva and Tunis phases

The Geneva phase focused on developing a shared vision for the emerging information and knowledge societies. Notably, this produced the Geneva Declaration of Principles and the Geneva Plan of Action, which addressed emerging challenges in areas like infrastructure development, capacity building, cybersecurity, and enabling environment.

Two years later, the Tunis phase aimed to bridge the digital divide and promote information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development. This second phase of the summit reaffirmed principles from Geneva and established the annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as an ongoing multi-stakeholder mechanism.

The WSIS+10 Review in 2015 highlighted rapid connectivity growth while also drawing attention to challenges of the new era, such as the digital divide.

The upcoming WSIS+20 Review in 2025 will assess progress since its inception, identifying new challenges and opportunities and its vision beyond 2025, ensuring alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global internationally agreed goals.

WSIS milestones

 **Geneva Phase (2003)**: The Geneva phase focused on developing a shared vision for the information society and establishing a framework for action. Key outcomes included the Geneva Declaration of Principles, which outlined the fundamental principles for building an inclusive information society, and the Geneva Plan of Action.

 **Tunis Phase (2005)**: Building on the outcomes of the Geneva phase, the Tunis phase aimed to further develop and implement the action plan, with a focus on bridging the digital divide and promoting ICTs for development. The Tunis Commitment reaffirmed the principles and goals established in Geneva, while the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society provided a comprehensive framework for the implementation of WSIS outcomes, including mechanisms for follow-up and review. It also established the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as a multistakeholder platform for dialogue on internet governance issues.

 **WSIS+10 Review (2015)**: The WSIS+10 Review marked a decade since the original summit phases. The comprehensive progress review highlighted achievements such as increased global connectivity and enhanced international cooperation. But it also identifying ongoing challenges like the persistent digital divide. Crucially, the WSIS+10 review produced the new Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015, which stressed the need to align WSIS outcomes with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and make sure ICTs would help achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

 **WSIS+20 Review (2025)**: The forthcoming WSIS+20 Review will assess progress since the WSIS+10 Review and identify new challenges and opportunities in the evolving information and societies. ITU, together with other UN agencies, is coordinating the preparatory process, collaborating with Member States and key stakeholders to ensure findings and recommendations from the review process feed into global digital governance discussions and remain well-aligned with key development frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A multi-stakeholder platform

From the outset, WSIS has emphasized the importance of multistakeholder collaboration. The involvement of various stakeholders ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more effective and sustainable ICT initiatives.

Major stakeholder categories in WSIS discussions include governments the private sector, civil society organizations, international organizations (including UN agencies), academic institutions, and technical organizations in fields like radiocommunications and standardization.

ITU has been instrumental in bringing all these different stakeholders together. With 194 Member States and over 1 000 companies, universities, research institutes and international and regional organizations from all over the globe, the organization’s unique membership provides unmatched public-private convening power within the UN system. All told, ITU counts more than 20 000 professionals in its global network, creating a powerhouse for timely policy and technology discussions that engage experts and leaders in across global digital ecosystem.

## 1.2 A multi-stakeholder platform

The WSIS process is a collaborative effort that relies on the active participation of multiple stakeholders. Governments shape digital policies, the private sector drives innovation and investment, civil society advocates for inclusion, international organizations facilitate cooperation, academia advances knowledge, and technical organizations enable infrastructure deployment. Together, these stakeholders contribute to the shared goal of leveraging ICTs for sustainable development and ensuring that the benefits of digital technologies are accessible to all individuals and communities.

WSIS remains a unique multi-stakeholder platform that brings together diverse actors to collaborate on leveraging ICTs for sustainable development. Each stakeholder group plays a crucial role in the WSIS process, contributing their expertise, resources, and perspectives to drive digital transformation and bridge the digital divide. This section highlights the contributions of various stakeholders to the WSIS process.

Government: Shaping digital policies for inclusive development

Governments are pivotal in shaping digital policies that promote inclusive development. Through the WSIS process, governments collaborate to create policies that bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to technology. National digital strategies, often developed with guidance from ITU, are instrumental in driving these efforts. For example, Rwanda's “Smart Rwanda Master Plan” aims to transform the country into a knowledge-based economy by leveraging ICTs. Governments also play a key role in implementing regulatory frameworks that foster innovation, protect consumers, and promote fair competition in the ICT sector.

Private sector: Driving innovation and investment

The private sector is a driving force behind innovation and investment in the digital economy. Companies partner with ITU and other stakeholders to develop new technologies, expand digital infrastructure, and create digital solutions that address global challenges. Initiatives like the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition exemplify these collaborative efforts, mobilizing commitments from various stakeholders to enhance connectivity and digital inclusion, particularly in underserved regions. The private sector’s investment in research and development, as well as its ability to scale technological solutions, is critical for advancing the goals of WSIS.

Civil Society: Advocating for Inclusion and Bridging the Digital Gap

Civil society organizations play a vital role in advocating for digital inclusion and bridging the digital gap. Their involvement in the WSIS process ensures that the voices of marginalized and underserved communities are heard and addressed. Programs such as Girls in ICT Day highlight the importance of gender equality in the digital space, encouraging girls and young women to pursue careers in ICT. Civil society organizations also work on the ground to implement digital literacy programs, provide access to ICTs, and promote digital rights and freedoms.

International organizations: Facilitating global and regional digital cooperation

International organizations, including UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD, UN DESA, and UN CSTD, facilitate global and regional digital cooperation. Their collaborative efforts with ITU have been instrumental in advancing the WSIS agenda. For instance, the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, co-chaired by ITU and UNESCO, provides valuable insights into global broadband deployment and its impact on sustainable development. These organizations also support the development of international standards, promote best practices, and provide technical assistance to countries in implementing digital initiatives.

Academia: Advancing knowledge and research on digital transformation

Academic institutions contribute to the WSIS process by advancing research and knowledge on digital transformation. Their insights help shape policies and strategies that drive sustainable digital development. Research initiatives supported by ITU provide valuable data and analysis on emerging digital trends. For example, the ITU Journal explores the latest advancements in ICTs and their implications for society. Academia also plays a crucial role in developing digital skills and fostering innovation through education and training programs.

Technical organizations: Enabling digital infrastructure deployment

Technical organizations are essential for enabling the deployment of digital infrastructure. Their expertise ensures that the technologies developed are reliable, secure, and accessible to all. ITU’s standardization work, which includes developing technical standards for ICTs, is critical in this regard. ITU-T Study Groups bring together experts from around the world to develop standards that ensure interoperability and security in ICT systems. Technical organizations also provide technical support and capacity-building services to countries, helping them develop and maintain robust ICT infrastructure.

## 1.3 Leveraging tech for the 2030 Agenda

ITU leverages digital solutions to advance education, healthcare, economic growth, and sustainability. Key initiatives include the AI for Good Global Summit, AI for Disaster Response, and AI for Health. The Giga initiative aims to connect all schools to the internet by 2030. The WSIS-SDG Matrix maps ICT contributions to SDGs, highlighting significant impacts on industry, innovation, infrastructure, and partnerships for the goals.

Tech accelerating progress on SDGs

Technology is a powerful enabler for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ITU has been at the forefront of leveraging digital solutions to accelerate progress across various SDGs. By harnessing the potential of technologies, ITU initiatives have driven significant advancements in education, healthcare, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.

One notable ITU-led initiative is **AI for Good**, which brings together experts from various fields to develop artificial intelligence (AI) solutions that address global challenges. ITU is also closely involved in initiatives to utilize AI to predict and manage natural disasters, save lives and reduce economic losses[[1]](https://www.itu.int/en/sustainable-world/Documents/Fast-forward_progress_report_414709%20FINAL.pdf?source=post_page---------------------------) and to improve healthcare delivery and outcomes, particularly in underserved regions[[2]](https://www.itu.int/en/sustainable-world/Pages/report-hlpf-2017.aspx).

**Giga**, a joint initiative between ITU and UNICEF, aims to connect every school to the Internet by 2030. Giga projects aim to give students access to digital learning resources, enhancing education and promoting digital inclusion[[3]](https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/connect-2030-agenda.aspx). By helping to expand broadband infrastructure and connect remote areas, Giga supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).

Evaluating the WSIS-SDG Matrix

The WSIS-SDG Matrix is a tool developed by ITU to map the contributions of WSIS Action Lines to specific SDGs. This matrix provides a clear framework for assessing the impact of ICTs on sustainable development and identifying areas for further action. By aligning WSIS initiatives with the SDGs, the matrix helps stakeholders understand how digital technologies can drive progress towards global development goals.

The latest evaluation of the WSIS-SDG Matrix highlights significant contributions to SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). For instance, initiatives under Action Line C2 (Information and Communication Infrastructure) have expanded broadband access, particularly in underserved regions, supporting economic growth and innovation[[4]](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1). Similarly, Action Line C5 (Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs) has enhanced cybersecurity measures, fostering a secure digital environment that promotes trust and cooperation.

Highlighting SDG solutions

The WSIS Stocktaking platform has documented over 13 000 ICT-related projects since its inception. One notable project is the "Digital Transformation Centres" initiative, which aims to enhance digital skills in developing countries. Supported by ITU, this initiative has established training centres in various regions, providing essential digital literacy and skills training to underserved communities.

The WSIS Prizes recognize outstanding contributions to the WSIS action lines and the SDGs. In 2024, the "E-Health for All" project won the WSIS Prize for its innovative approach to delivering healthcare services through digital platforms. This project has improved access to healthcare in remote areas by leveraging telemedicine and mobile health applications.

Other ITU projects and initiatives also put tech solutions for sustainable development at the forefront. Since 2023, the **SDG Digital GameChangers** initiative has highlighted innovative digital solutions that are helping drive sustainable development.ITU News and the BDT4Impact platform provide also showcase successful projects, share best practices, and highlight the impact of digital technologies on sustainable development.

The ITU-led Partner2Connect Digital Coalition has mobilized commitments from the public and private sectors to enhance connectivity and digital inclusion, particularly in underserved regions.

For the past decade, the ITU-UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development has advocated for universal broadband access as a key driver of sustainable development, with the annual "State of Broadband" report offering valuable insights into global broadband deployment and its impact on the SDGs.

By leveraging technology and fostering collaboration, ITU and its partners are driving progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These initiatives demonstrate the critical role of digital solutions in achieving the SDGs and building a more inclusive, sustainable future for all.

[[1]](https://www.itu.int/en/sustainable-world/Documents/Fast-forward_progress_report_414709%20FINAL.pdf?source=post_page---------------------------): AI for Good [[2]](https://www.itu.int/en/sustainable-world/Pages/report-hlpf-2017.aspx): AI for Health [[3]](https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/connect-2030-agenda.aspx): Giga Initiative [[4]](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1): WSIS-SDG Matrix: Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI): Digital Transformation Centres: WSIS Prizes: Partner2Connect Digital Coalition: Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development

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[1] [Leveraging tech to achieve the global goals - ITU](https://www.itu.int/en/sustainable-world/Documents/Fast-forward_progress_report_414709%20FINAL.pdf?source=post_page---------------------------)

[2] [Report- Fast forward progress: leveraging tech to achieve the ... - ITU](https://www.itu.int/en/sustainable-world/Pages/report-hlpf-2017.aspx)

[3] [Connect 2030 – An agenda to connect all to a better world - ITU](https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/connect-2030-agenda.aspx)

[4] [WSIS+20 report draft + reporting](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1)

## 1.4 Geneva Plan of Action: Where we are now

The Geneva Plan of Action, established during the first phase of WSIS in 2003, set out to shape an inclusive Information Society by leveraging ICTs to bridge the digital divide and promote sustainable development. Over two decades, significant progress has been achieved in terms of connectivity, digital infrastructure, capacity building, and cybersecurity.

Increased digital inclusion, enhanced international cooperation, and the growing prevalence of e-services reflect the collective efforts of governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society, facilitated by ongoing coordination through the WSIS mechanism.

Status and achievements

Key objectives outlined in the Geneva Plan of Action in 2003 include enhancing connectivity, infrastructure, digital skills and capacity, cybersecurity, and digital inclusion and accessibility, as well as e-services and international digital cooperation.

Enhanced connectivity

Global connectivity has grown dramatically since the first phase of WSIS and the adoption of the Geneva Action Plan. Internet usage has surged from 16% in 2005 to 69% by the end of 2024[[1]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/geneva/official/poa.html). This growth has been driven by the expansion of broadband infrastructure, the proliferation of mobile technologies, and initiatives to make internet access more affordable and accessible. The number of mobile-cellular subscriptions worldwide has surpassed 8 billion, indicating near-ubiquitous mobile connectivity[[2]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/outcome/booklet/plan_action_A.html).

Infrastructure development

Significant advancements include the expansion of broadband networks, the establishment of Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), and the enhancement of satellite connectivity. These efforts have improved internet connectivity, reduced costs, and extended access to remote and underserved areas[[3]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/outcome/booklet/plan_action_B.html).

Capacity building and digital skills development

Building the capacity of individuals and institutions to effectively use ICTs has been a key focus. The ITU Academy has provided training to over 45 000 learners from all Member States, covering topics such as spectrum management, cybersecurity, and digital skills[[4]](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1). Initiatives like the EQUALS Global Partnership have empowered thousands of women and girls through digital skills training, promoting gender equality in the ICT sector.

Promotion of cybersecurity

Ensuring a safe and secure digital environment is a critical aspect of expanding meaningful connectivity. ITU’s Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) offers a comprehensive framework for promoting cybersecurity and building confidence in digital technologies. ITU has developed international cybersecurity standards, helps countries establish national cybersecurity strategies, and promotes awareness and policies to protect children online.

Digital inclusion and accessibility

In line with the Geneva Plan of Action and its call for global digital inclusion. ITU has implemented numerous projects aimed at providing access to ICTs for underserved and marginalized communities. International standards have helped make ICT products and services accessible to all individuals, regardless of ability.

E-services

Electronic applications have significantly enhanced public administration, healthcare, education, and business. E-government services have improved the efficiency and transparency of public administration, while telemedicine initiatives have provided remote healthcare services to underserved communities.

International and regional cooperation

Fostering international and regional cooperation has been a cornerstone of the Geneva Plan of Action. ITU has collaborated with a wide range of international and regional organizations to advance the WSIS outcomes and promote ICT for development.

Table

Progress on “Indicative Targets” under Geneva Plan of Action since 2003

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Target | 2003 baseline | 2024 status | Progress |
| Internet users | 16% | 69% | Significant increase in global internet penetration [[1]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/geneva/official/poa.html) |
| Mobile subscriptions | 1.5 billion | 8 billion+ | Near-ubiquitous mobile connectivity [[2]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/outcome/booklet/plan_action_A.html) |
| Broadband access | Limited | Extensive | Expansion of broadband networks [[3]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/outcome/booklet/plan_action_B.html) |
| Digital Skills training | Minimal | 45 000+ trained | ITU Academy and other initiatives [[4]](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1) |
| Cybersecurity frameworks | Emerging | Comprehensive | Global Cybersecurity Agenda |
| Digital inclusion projects | Few | Numerous | Projects for underserved communities |
| E-government services | Nascent | Advanced | Improved public administration |

[[1]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/geneva/official/poa.html): ITU Facts and Figures 2024 [[2]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/outcome/booklet/plan_action_A.html): ITU Mobile Connectivity Data [[3]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/outcome/booklet/plan_action_B.html): ITU Broadband Infrastructure [[4]](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1): ITU Academy Digital Skills Toolkit : EQUALS Global Partnership : Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) : ITU Accessibility Standards : ITU E-Government Services : ITU International Cooperation

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[1] [WSIS: Plan of Action - ITU](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/geneva/official/poa.html)

[2] [Plan of Action – Geneva 2003 - ITU](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/outcome/booklet/plan_action_A.html)

[3] [Plan of Action – Geneva 2003 - ITU](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/outcome/booklet/plan_action_B.html)

[4] [WSIS+20 report draft + reporting](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1)

1.5 Updating and evolving

The WSIS process has evolved continuously amid rapidly advancing tech and a changing global digital landscape. In the second decade of WSIS, alignment with the 2030 Agenda has strengthened cooperation on tech for sustainable development.

Notably, the WSIS Forum continued in an online format through the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, WSIS discussions have kept embracing the growing array digital technologies and explored new policy questions. These include delving into the challenges prompted by AI.

The alignment of WSIS initiatives with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is crucial for maximizing the impact of digital technologies on global development. The WSIS-SDG Matrix serves as a framework for this alignment, mapping the contributions of WSIS Action Lines to specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, Action Line C2 (Information and Communication Infrastructure) supports SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), while Action Line C4 (Capacity Building) aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education). This matrix helps stakeholders identify areas of synergy and opportunities for collaboration, ensuring that digital initiatives contribute effectively to the achievement of the SDGs.

Evolving with technologies

The implications of advancements in cloud computing, AI, robotics, and space technologies are profound, offering new opportunities for innovation and development. ITU's work in standardization and policy development is critical to enhance WSIS discussions in this regard, ensuring that these technologies are deployed responsibly and ethically. ITU-T Study Groups are active in developing standards for emerging technologies and promoting interoperability and security promoting interoperability and security in AI, 5G, IoT, quantum and other fields.

Tackling cybersecurity challenges

ITU's Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) addresses the growing challenges of cybersecurity, promoting international standards and best practices to build trust in digital technologies. The Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) is a key tool in assessing the cybersecurity commitments of countries worldwide, providing a comprehensive assessment of national cybersecurity frameworks. The latest GCI report shows significant progress in global cybersecurity efforts, with many countries enhancing their legal, technical, and organizational measures.

Exploring AI cooperation and coordination

The rapid evolution of AI presents both opportunities and challenges. WSIS has become a venue for in-depth discussions on AI ethics and governance frameworks, as well as cooperation and coordination on AI development and deployment.

WSIS+20 High-Level Events in 2024 and 2025

The WSIS+20 High-Level Events –including one in May 2024 and another coming up in July 2025– provide a platform for stakeholders to discuss progress, share best practices, and develop actionable outcomes.

Key takeaways from these events include:

 **Actionable outcomes:** The events are aimed at guiding future WSIS initiatives, particularly as technologies and policy priorities continue evolving rapidly.

 **Ministerial perspectives:** Ministerial Roundtables will provide high-level perspectives on the challenges and opportunities in the digital landscape, with discussions informing policy development and strategic planning.

 **Chairs’ summaries:** Summaries by conference chairs will capture key points from high-level discussions, providing a valuable resource for stakeholders to understand progress to date and the next steps in the WSIS process.

# Part 2: ITU driving WSIS achievements

The International Telecommunication Union has facilitated the WSIS process from the outset, ensuring broad, dynamic stakeholder engagement and effective implementation. Governance bodies such as the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, the ITU Council, and the Council Working Group on WSIS & SDGs provide strategic direction for ITU to support the WSIS vision of digital cooperation and sustainable development.

The organization has led UN engagement on WSIS Action Lines C2*(information and communication infrastructure)*, C4 *(capacity building)*, C5 *(building confidence and security in the use of information and communication technologies)*, and C6 *(enabling environment)*, as well as contributing actively on several other WSIS Action Lines.

The annual WSIS Forum, hosted by ITU since 2009, offers a multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing that produces actionable policy recommendations, highlights best practices, and fosters collaborative initiatives.

ITU maintains the WSIS Stocktaking Database, documenting over 13 000 tech-related projects that are helping to advance sustainable development, in introduced the WSIS Prizes to recognize excellence in implementing such projects.

In addition, prominent ITU-led initiatives like the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition exemplify the collaborative spirit fostered by WSIS from the earliest years of global digital cooperation. ITU also advances the WSIS aim of sustainable digital development through joint initiatives with fellow UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNDEP and UNICEF.

Together with a growing array of partners across the public and private sectors, ITU aims to leverage digital technologies for the good of everyone worldwide.

## 2.1 ITU’s facilitation role

ITU facilitates WSIS engagement on infrastructure development, capacity building, cybersecurity, regulatory environments and other key action lines. ITU's governance bodies oversee WSIS implementation, ensuring continuous dialogue and strategic alignment. ITU also hosts the annual WSIS Forum, maintains the WSIS Stocktaking database, and collaborates on measuring ICT development, reinforcing its leadership in advancing global digital technologies and sustainable development.

ITU-driven achievements

ITU has been instrumental in driving and supporting WSIS initiatives, ensuring the process remains dynamic and effective. ITU has facilitated key WSIS Action Lines, primarily enhancing connectivity in underserved regions, focusing on digital literacy and training, implementing cybersecurity measures, and developing policies to support digital growth.

ITU was mandated to setup and maintain initiatives such as the WSIS Stocktaking database which documents and shares digital projects worldwide, providing insights into progress and successful initiatives, while the Partnership for Measuring ICT Development collaborates on meaningful metrics to track the impact of ICT initiatives.

Other key elements include the annual report on ITU's contributions to WSIS, WSIS Action Line Roadmaps, the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), and the WSIS Forum, a multi-stakeholder platform promoting digital for development.

This comprehensive involvement in WSIS implementation reflects ITU’s status as the leading UN agency in the field of digital technologies.

ITU has been instrumental in facilitating WSIS action lines as well as coordinating with diverse stakeholders, keeping the WSIS process dynamic and effective.

Governance and resolutions

ITU’s governance bodies, including the Council Working Group on WSIS&SDG (CWG-WSIS&SDG), the ITU Council, and the Plenipotentiary Conference (PP), oversee the implementation of WSIS outcomes. These bodies ensure continuous dialogue on WSIS follow-up activities, provide strategic direction, and align ITU’s activities with the overall WSIS framework. Key resolutions, such as UNGA Resolution 70/125 and ECOSOC Resolution 2023/3, reinforce ITU's leadership in WSIS implementation[[1]](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-140-E.pdf)[[2]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/background/resolutions/pp06-plen6.html).

Facilitating WSIS Action Lines

ITU is the lead facilitator for critical WSIS Action Lines, essential for the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda. These Action Lines address key areas such as infrastructure development, capacity building, cybersecurity, and regulatory environments.

Specifically, ITU leads:

 **Action Line C2: Information and Communication Infrastructure**: Focuses on developing telecommunication/ICT infrastructure to bridge the digital divide and ensure universal access to ICTs[[3]](https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/sg/ictdefinition/PP10_Resolution140.pdf).

 **Action Line C4: Capacity Building**: Aims to enhance the capacity of individuals and institutions to effectively use ICTs[[4]](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1).

 **Action Line C5: Building Confidence and Security in the Use of ICTs**: Addresses the need for a secure and trustworthy digital environment.

 **Action Line C6: Enabling Environment**: Focuses on creating a conducive policy and regulatory environment for ICT development.

Additionally, ITU serves as a co-facilitator and partner for other WSIS Action Lines, collaborating with various stakeholders to promote ICT development. This extensive involvement underscores ITU’s comprehensive role in advancing the WSIS framework.

The annual WSIS Forum hosted by ITU since 2009 brings together a diverse community of stakeholders, including governments, private sector, civil society, and international organizations, to engage in dialogue, share knowledge, and collaborate on ICT for development.

[[1]](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-140-E.pdf): [ITU's role in implementing WSIS outcomes](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-140-E.pdf) [[2]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/background/resolutions/pp06-plen6.html): [UNGA Resolution 70/125](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/background/resolutions/pp06-plen6.html) [[3]](https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/sg/ictdefinition/PP10_Resolution140.pdf): [ITU Action Line C2](https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/sg/ictdefinition/PP10_Resolution140.pdf) [[4]](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1): [ITU Action Line C4](https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/sg/ictdefinition/PP10_Resolution140.pdf): [ITU Action Line C5](https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/sg/ictdefinition/PP10_Resolution140.pdf): [ITU Action Line C6](https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/sg/ictdefinition/PP10_Resolution140.pdf): [ITU's comprehensive role in WSIS](https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/sg/ictdefinition/PP10_Resolution140.pdf)

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[1] [ITU's role in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the ...](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-140-E.pdf)

[2] [ITU’s role in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the ...](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/background/resolutions/pp06-plen6.html)

[3] [ITU's role in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the ...](https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/sg/ictdefinition/PP10_Resolution140.pdf)

[4] [WSIS+20 report draft + reporting](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1)

## 2.2 Facilitating WSIS Action Lines

ITU's facilitation of the WSIS Action Lines underscores its commitment to leveraging ICTs for sustainable development. Through its leadership and collaborative efforts, ITU has made significant progress in advancing the goals of the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda, ensuring that digital technologies benefit all individuals and communities.

WSIS Action Lines serve as a comprehensive framework for advancing digital development and leveraging information and communication technologies (ICTs) to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ITU plays a pivotal role in facilitating these Action Lines, driving initiatives that promote connectivity, digital literacy, cybersecurity, and an enabling environment for ICT growth. This section outlines the 11 WSIS Action Lines and highlights ITU’s contributions to their implementation.

### C1: The Role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

Public governance authorities and stakeholders play a crucial role in promoting ICTs for development. ITU collaborates with governments, private sector entities, civil society organizations, and international bodies to create policies and frameworks that support digital inclusion and innovation. Key initiatives include public-private partnerships, policy advocacy, and capacity-building programs that empower stakeholders to leverage ICTs for sustainable development.

### C2: Information and communication infrastructure

Developing robust ICT infrastructure is essential for bridging the digital divide and ensuring universal access to digital services. ITU provides technical support, develops international standards, and promotes best practices for infrastructure deployment. Notable initiatives include the GIGA project, which aims to connect every school to the internet, and support for Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) to enhance local internet traffic exchange.

### C3: Access to information and knowledge

Ensuring access to information and knowledge is fundamental for digital inclusion. ITU implements initiatives that promote digital literacy and provide access to ICTs for underserved and marginalized communities. The WSIS Forum and other knowledge-sharing platforms facilitate the exchange of best practices and successful projects, enabling stakeholders to learn from each other's experiences.

### C4: Capacity building

Building the capacity of individuals and institutions to effectively use ICTs is a key focus of ITU’s efforts. The ITU Academy offers a wide range of courses, workshops, and training programs to enhance digital skills and knowledge. Specialized training programs and Centres of Excellence provide high-quality training services tailored to regional needs, empowering communities to thrive in the digital age.

### C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

Promoting a safe and secure digital environment is critical for building trust in ICTs. ITU’s Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) provides a comprehensive framework for cybersecurity, including the development of international standards, national cybersecurity strategies, and initiatives to protect children online. The Child Online Protection (COP) initiative raises awareness about online risks and promotes safe digital practices.

### C6: Enabling environment

Creating an enabling environment involves developing policies and regulations that support ICT growth. ITU provides guidance on regulatory frameworks, promotes international cooperation, and supports the development of policies that encourage investment in ICT infrastructure. The Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) and digital regulation training programs help regulators create effective regulatory environments.

### C7: ICT applications

ICT applications in various sectors, including e-government, e-health, e-learning, e-business, e-agriculture, e-environment, and e-science, enhance the quality of life and promote sustainable development. ITU supports the development and implementation of these applications, providing technical assistance and promoting best practices. Initiatives such as telemedicine and e-learning platforms improve access to essential services and opportunities.

### C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content

Promoting cultural and linguistic diversity in the digital space is essential for ensuring that ICTs are relevant and accessible to diverse populations. ITU supports the creation of multilingual digital content, collaborates with UNESCO to preserve cultural heritage through digitization, and provides technical assistance for local content development.

### C9: Media

Strengthening media infrastructure and promoting freedom of expression are key components of ITU's efforts. ITU provides technical assistance for community radio and digital broadcasting, supports media development in developing countries, and offers training programs for media professionals to enhance their digital skills.

### C10: Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

Developing ethical guidelines and standards for ICT use is crucial for promoting responsible digital behaviour. ITU's initiatives include guidelines on data privacy, cybersecurity, and the ethical use of AI and other emerging technologies. Awareness campaigns and educational programs promote digital citizenship and online safety.

### C11: International and regional cooperation

Fostering international and regional cooperation is essential for addressing global ICT challenges. ITU collaborates with a wide range of international and regional organizations to advance WSIS outcomes and promote ICT for development. Partnerships with UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD, and other UN agencies enhance the effectiveness of ICT initiatives and promote the sharing of best practices.

### 2.2.1 ITU-facilitated Action Lines

ITU facilitates four key WSIS Action Lines to bridge the digital divide and promote sustainable development. Action Line C2 focuses on technical support, standards development, and infrastructure deployment. Action Line C4 emphasizes capacity building through the ITU Academy and specialized training programs. Action Line C5 addresses cybersecurity via the Global Cybersecurity Agenda and Child Online Protection. Action Line C6 promotes a conducive regulatory environment through policy guidance and the Global Symposium for Regulators.

### C2: Information and communication infrastructure

The development of robust information and communication infrastructure is essential for bridging the digital divide and ensuring universal access to digital technologies.

ITU has focused, as the lead facilitator for Action Line C2, on:

 **Technical support and standards development** – helping ITU Member States develop and implement modern, secure, accessible, and affordable ICT infrastructure. ITU also develops international standards that ensure interoperability and quality of ICT services.

 **Infrastructure deployment initiatives –** particularly in underserved and rural areas. For example, the Giga initiative, launched in partnership with UNICEF, aims to connect every school to the Internet, providing students with access to digital learning resources and opportunities[[1]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/stocktaking/help-action-lines.html).

 **Support for Internet Exchange Points (IXPs)** – crucial for improving internet connectivity and reducing costs. IXPs facilitate the exchange of internet traffic locally, enhancing the efficiency and performance of internet services.

The ITU-backed **Smart Rwanda Master Plan**, for example, helped build a knowledge-based economy in Rwanda through expanded broadband access and improved digital infrastructure across the country.[[2]](https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2022/Files/outcomes/draft/WSISForum2022_Report_WSISActionLines.pdf)

### C4: Capacity building

Building the capacity of individuals and institutions to effectively use ICTs is crucial for fostering digital literacy and skills development.

As the lead facilitator for Action Line C4, ITU has implemented various programs, notably including:

 **ITU Academy**: The ITU Academy is ITU's primary platform for capacity building and training in the field of ICTs. It offers a wide range of courses, workshops, and training programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of ICT professionals, policymakers, and other stakeholders. The ITU Academy engages over 45 000 learners from all Member States[[3]](https://www.itu.int/en/itu-wsis/Pages/Roadmaps.aspx).

 **Specialized training programmes**: ITU offers specialized training programs on topics such as spectrum management, cybersecurity, quality of service, and digital skills. These programs are designed to address the specific needs of different target groups and ensure that they have the necessary skills to thrive in the digital economy.

 **Centres of Excellence**: ITU has established Centres of Excellence in various regions to provide high-quality training and capacity-building services. These centres collaborate with local institutions and experts to deliver training programs that are relevant to the regional context.

Digital Transformation Centres set up under a partnership between ITU and Cisco has helped build digital skills and promote digital inclusion in underserved communities. By 2023, the initiative had established over 20 centres in different countries and regions, providing training to thousands of participants[[4]](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1).

### C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

Ensuring the security and reliability is crucial to build trust in digital technologies.

As the lead facilitator for Action Line C5, ITU has implemented:

 The **Global Cybersecurity Agenda** – a framework for promoting cybersecurity and building confidence in the use of ICTs. It addresses the growing challenges of cybersecurity and aims to build trust in digital technologies. ITU develops international cybersecurity standards, promotes national cybersecurity strategies, and supports initiatives to protect children online.

 **Child Online Protection** – an initiative to protect children from online risks and promote safe and responsible use of the Internet. It includes guidelines, training programs, and awareness campaigns to educate children, parents, and educators about online safety.

 **Cybersecurity Capacity Building** – whereby ITU provides technical assistance and capacity-building support to help its Member States develop and implement effective cybersecurity measures. This includes training programmes, workshops, and the national cybersecurity strategies.

ITU’s Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) highlights and assesses the cybersecurity commitments of countries worldwide. The latest GCI report highlights significant progress in global cybersecurity efforts, with many countries enhancing their legal, technical, and organizational measures.

### C6: Enabling environment

Creating a conducive policy and regulatory environment is essential for promoting digital growth and innovation.

As the lead facilitator for Action Line C6, ITU has focused on:

 **Policy and Regulatory Guidance** – helping countries adopt regulatory frameworks and policies that promote ICT development. This includes best practices for fostering competition, ensuring universal access, and encouraging investment in ICT infrastructure.

 **Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR)** – an annual event organized by ITU that brings together regulators from around the world to discuss policy and regulatory issues related to ICTs. The symposium provides a platform for sharing experiences, discussing challenges, and exploring solutions.

 **Digital Regulation Platform and Training** – to help regulators develop the skills and knowledge needed to create effective regulatory environments. These programs cover topics such as spectrum management, competition policy, and consumer protection.

The ITU-led Partner2Connect Digital Coalition has also mobilized commitments to build skills, strengthen regulations, and ensure digital inclusion.

By continuing to support and advance these action lines, ITU and its partners can build a digital future that benefits everyone, ensuring that ICTs contribute effectively to sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs.

[[1]](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/stocktaking/help-action-lines.html): ITU Broadband Infrastructure [[2]](https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2022/Files/outcomes/draft/WSISForum2022_Report_WSISActionLines.pdf): Smart Rwanda Master Plan [[3]](https://www.itu.int/en/itu-wsis/Pages/Roadmaps.aspx): ITU Academy Digital Skills Toolkit [[4]](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1): Digital Transformation Centres : Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) : Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) : ITU Regulatory Tracker : Partner2Connect Digital Coalition

References

[1] [WSIS Action Lines - ITU](https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/stocktaking/help-action-lines.html)

[2] [WSIS Action Lines - ITU](https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2022/Files/outcomes/draft/WSISForum2022_Report_WSISActionLines.pdf)

[3] [WSIS Action Line Roadmaps - ITU](https://www.itu.int/en/itu-wsis/Pages/Roadmaps.aspx)

[4] [WSIS+20 report draft + reporting](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1)

### 2.2.2 Other WSIS Action Lines

ITU's role as a co-facilitator and partner in various WSIS Action Lines underscores its commitment to leveraging ICTs for sustainable development. Through collaborative efforts and impactful projects, ITU has made significant contributions to advancing the goals of the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda, ensuring that digital technologies benefit all individuals and communities.

ITU also plays a significant role as a co-facilitator and partner in other Action Lines. This section highlights ITU's contributions to these Action Lines and showcases stories from the ground that illustrate the impact of these initiatives.

### C1: The Role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

ITU collaborates with public governance authorities and stakeholders to promote the role of ICTs in development. This includes advocating for policies that support digital inclusion, innovation, and the use of ICTs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Public-private partnerships and policy advocacy are key components of ITU's efforts in this area.

**Story from the ground**: In collaboration with local governments, ITU supported the development of national digital strategies that prioritize ICT infrastructure and digital literacy. For example, the "Smart Rwanda Master Plan" aims to transform Rwanda into a knowledge-based economy by leveraging ICTs, with a focus on digital skills training and e-government services.**C3: Access to information and knowledge**

Ensuring access to information and knowledge is fundamental for digital inclusion. ITU implements initiatives that promote digital literacy and provide access to ICTs for underserved and marginalized communities. Knowledge-sharing platforms, such as the WSIS Forum, facilitate the exchange of best practices and successful projects.

**Story from the ground**: The "Digital Transformation Centres" initiative, supported by ITU, has established training centres in various regions to enhance digital skills in developing countries. These centres provide essential digital literacy and skills training to underserved communities, empowering individuals to participate in the digital economy.

### C7: ICT applications

ICT applications in various sectors, including e-government, e-health, e-learning, e-business, e-agriculture, e-environment, and e-science, enhance the quality of life and promote sustainable development. ITU supports the development and implementation of these applications, providing technical assistance and promoting best practices.

**Story from the ground**: The "E-Health for All" project, which won the WSIS Prize in 2024, leverages telemedicine and mobile health applications to improve access to healthcare in remote areas. This project has significantly enhanced healthcare delivery by providing remote consultations and health monitoring services.

### C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content

Promoting cultural and linguistic diversity in the digital space is essential for ensuring that ICTs are relevant and accessible to diverse populations. ITU supports the creation of multilingual digital content, collaborates with UNESCO to preserve cultural heritage through digitization, and provides technical assistance for local content development.

**Story from the ground**: ITU's collaboration with UNESCO on the "Digital Heritage Preservation" project has led to the digitization of cultural artifacts and the creation of online repositories. This initiative helps preserve cultural heritage and makes it accessible to a global audience, promoting cultural diversity and identity.

### C9: Media

Strengthening media infrastructure and promoting freedom of expression are key components of ITU's efforts. ITU provides technical assistance for community radio and digital broadcasting, supports media development in developing countries, and offers training programs for media professionals to enhance their digital skills.

**Story from the ground**: In partnership with local media organizations, ITU has established community radio stations in rural areas, providing a platform for local voices and promoting access to information. These stations play a crucial role in disseminating information on health, education, and community development.

### C10: Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

Developing ethical guidelines and standards for ICT use is crucial for promoting responsible digital behaviour. ITU's initiatives include guidelines on data privacy, cybersecurity, and the ethical use of AI and other emerging technologies. Awareness campaigns and educational programs promote digital citizenship and online safety.

ITU's Child Online Protection initiative, for instance, has implemented awareness campaigns and training programs to educate children, parents, and educators about online safety. These efforts have reached millions of children worldwide, promoting safe and responsible use of ICTs.

The rise of AI has added fresh urgency to tech-related ethics discussions. AI Governance Day, organized by ITU as part of the WSIS+20 and AI for Good conferences in May 2024, brought together policy makers (including many from developing countries) to consider the crucial shift from principles and practice for responsible AI.

### C11: International and regional cooperation

Fostering international and regional cooperation is essential for addressing global ICT challenges. ITU collaborates with a wide range of international and regional organizations to advance WSIS outcomes and promote ICT for development. Partnerships with UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD, and other UN agencies also enhance the effectiveness of ICT initiatives and promote the sharing of best practices.

## 2.3 WSIS Forum

The annual WSIS Forum promotes digital development through inclusive dialogue, collaboration, and the sharing of best practices. It stands as a cornerstone of the WSIS process, spurring dialogue, collaboration, and the sharing of best practices among a diverse array of stakeholders, including governments, private sector entities, civil society organizations, international organizations, and academia.

The WSIS Forum is renowned for its inclusive and participatory approach, bringing together stakeholders from various sectors to discuss and address critical tech-related issues. This multi-stakeholder platform facilitates the exchange of ideas, experiences, and solutions, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered in the formulation of digital policies and strategies. By promoting collaboration and partnership, the WSIS Forum helps to advance the goals of digital inclusion, innovation, and sustainable development.

Convening annually for 15 years

The WSIS Forum has been convening annually since 2009, providing a consistent and reliable platform for stakeholders to engage in meaningful dialogue. Each year, the forum features high-level policy sessions, thematic workshops, and interactive discussions that address pressing issues in the ICT sector. The annual nature of the forum ensures that it remains responsive to emerging trends and challenges, allowing stakeholders to stay informed and adapt to the ever-changing digital environment.

Key outcomes each year have included:

 **Policy recommendations:** The forum generates actionable policy recommendations that guide stakeholders in implementing effective digital strategies. These recommendations are based on the insights and experiences shared by participants during the sessions.

 **Best practices and case studies:** The forum highlights successful projects and initiatives that demonstrate the transformative power of ICTs. These best practices and case studies serve as valuable resources for stakeholders looking to replicate and scale successful models.

 **Collaborative initiatives:** The forum fosters the creation of collaborative initiatives and partnerships that address specific challenges in the ICT sector. These initiatives leverage the strengths and resources of multiple stakeholders to achieve common goals.

This has become vital annual digital event, attracting thousands of participants from around the world. WSIS Forum sessions have expanded to cover a wide range of topics, reflecting the rapid advancements in technology and the evolving needs of the digital landscape.

The road to 2030 and beyond

The WSIS Forum can continue to serve as a catalyst for innovation, collaboration, and policy development in years to come. Priorities going forward include the push for last-mile connectivity, digital literacy, affordable access, and meaningful digital opportunities for everyone, particularly in underserved and marginalized communities.

The WSIS Forum can also support further cooperation to create robust cybersecurity frameworks and protect digital infrastructure and data. Dialogue and collaboration through the WSIS process remain a vital asset in building a digital future for all.

## 2.4 Taking stock of cooperation and investment

ITU tracks tech initiatives worldwide and recognizes those making breakthroughs for sustainable development.

In accordance with the Tunis Agenda, ITU maintains the WSIS Stocktaking database, which compiles information on ICT-related initiatives and projects. The WSIS Stocktaking process has grown into an international repository of over 13 000 entries, providing valuable insights into ICT development trends and best practices.

Complementing the database, the annual WSIS Prizes contest, launched in 2012, recognizes excellence in the implementation of ICT projects that further the goals of the WSIS process.

About the database

The WSIS Stocktaking database is a valuable resource for documenting and sharing digital projects and initiatives, as well as assessing them in relation to WSIS action lines and SDGs. Thus, the database promotes cooperation, investment, and knowledge sharing, while documented initiatives demonstrate the transformative power of ICTs in various sectors and highlight the importance of continued efforts to leverage digital technologies for sustainable development.

Managed by ITU, this comprehensive repository provides valuable insights into the progress made in implementing the WSIS action lines and highlights successful projects that contribute to global digital development.

Since its inception in 2004, the WSIS Stocktaking database has grown to cover a wide range of ICT-related initiatives. The over 13 000 entries are categorized according to the 11 WSIS action lines and the 17 SDGs, providing a clear framework for assessing the impact of ICTs on sustainable development.

The WSIS Stocktaking Database provides:

 **Comprehensive coverage:** The database includes a diverse array of projects, from large-scale national initiatives to community-based efforts. This comprehensive coverage ensures that the database reflects the full spectrum of ICT activities globally.

 **Categorization by Action Lines and SDGs:** Projects are categorized according to the WSIS action lines and SDGs, making it easy to identify initiatives that align with specific goals and priorities.

 **Accessibility and transparency:** The database is publicly accessible, allowing stakeholders to explore and learn from the documented projects. This transparency promotes knowledge sharing and encourages the replication of successful initiatives.

The database documents a wide range of projects in various sectors, including education, healthcare, agriculture, and governance.

The "E-Health for All" project, a WSIS Prize winner in 2024, leverages telemedicine and mobile health applications to improve access to healthcare in remote areas. By providing remote consultations and health monitoring services, the project has significantly enhanced healthcare delivery and improved health outcomes for underserved populations.

WSIS Stocktaking also includes projects where ITU is directly involved.

For instance, the Digital Transformation Centres (DTC) Initiative, supported by ITU and Cisco, aims to build digital skills and promote digital inclusion in underserved communities. By establishing training centres in various regions, the initiative provides essential digital literacy and skills training to individuals, empowering them to participate in the digital economy. Thousands of participants, enhancing their digital skills and promoting economic opportunities.

ITU and UNICEF launched the Giga initiative to connect every school to the Internet. This ambitious project aims to provide students with access to digital learning resources and opportunities, thereby enhancing education and promoting digital inclusion. The Giga initiative has made significant progress in expanding connectivity to schools in remote and underserved areas, bridging the digital divide and ensuring that no child is left behind.

Initiatives to implement WSIS Action Lines

The WSIS Stocktaking database also documents initiatives that specifically aim to implement action lines like infrastructure development, capacity building, cybersecurity, and enabling environments.

**Broadband expansion projects**, for instance, advance *Action Line C2: Information and Communication Infrastructure*. Various initiatives documented in the database focus on expanding broadband infrastructure to enhance connectivity in underserved regions. These projects aim to bridge the digital divide by providing high-speed internet access to rural and remote areas.

The **ITU Academy** programme advances *Action Line C4: Capacity Building* with a wide range of courses, workshops, and training programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of ICT professionals, policymakers, and other stakeholders. The academy's programs cover topics such as spectrum management, cybersecurity, and digital skills, contributing to capacity building and digital literacy.

ITU’s **Global Cybersecurity Agenda** (advances *Action Line C5: Building Confidence and Security in the Use of ICTs*) through the development of international cybersecurity standards, national cybersecurity strategies, and child online protection programmes.

**Regulatory development** advances *Action Line C6: Enabling Environment*. Many ITU-supported projects focus on creating conducive policy and regulatory conditions to promote competition, protect consumers, and encourage investment in digital infrastructure.

**E-Government projects** advance *Action Line C7: ICT Applications*, while improving the efficiency and transparency of public administration. These initiatives promote the use of ICTs in public service delivery, enabling citizens to access services online.

**Digital heritage preservation** advances *Action Line C8: Cultural Diversity and Identity, Linguistic Diversity and Local Content*. Initiatives such as the "Digital Heritage Preservation" project focus on digitizing cultural artifacts and creating online repositories, helping to preserve cultural heritage and promote cultural diversity and identity.

**Community radio stations** advance *Action Line C9: Media*. ITU supports the establishment of community radio stations in rural areas, providing a platform for local voices and promoting access to information. These stations play a crucial role in disseminating information on health, education, and community development.

**Ethical guidelines and standards** advance *Action Line C10: Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society.* ITU standards promote ethical behaviour in the use of technologies and provide guidelines on data privacy, cybersecurity, and the responsible use of AI and other emerging technologies.

**Digital partnerships and alliances** advance *Action Line C11: International and Regional Cooperation*. ITU collaborates with a wide range of international and regional organizations to advance WSIS outcomes and promote technologies for sustainable development. ITU-led partnerships consistently facilitate the sharing of best practices and promote international cooperation.

## 2.5 Tracking real-world progress

The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development and the collaboration on meaningful metrics are essential for tracking real-world progress in ICT development. ITU and partners provide valuable data and insights that guide policy-making and support sustainable development, particularly through initiatives like the IDI, GCI, IPB, WSIS-SDG Matrix, and MISR. These efforts ensure that ICT initiatives are effective, impactful, and aligned with global development goals.

The effective measurement of ICT development is crucial to understand the impact of digital initiatives and guide future digital cooperation.

ITU is an active member and Chair of the Steering Committee of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. Furthermore, ITU provides internationally agreed methodologies that enhance the quality and comparability of statistics on core indicators of ICT access and usage.

This section highlights the importance of collaboration on meaningful metrics and the key initiatives undertaken to track real-world progress in ICT development.

About the partnership

The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development is a collaborative effort involving multiple international organizations, including ITU, UNESCO, UNCTAD, and the World Bank. Established in 2004, this partnership aims to improve the availability and quality of ICT data and statistics, providing a robust foundation for policy-making and development planning.

Key objectives of the partnership include:

 **Enhancing data quality and comparability:** The partnership focuses on developing internationally agreed methodologies and standards for ICT statistics. This ensures that data collected from different countries are comparable and reliable, facilitating meaningful analysis and benchmarking.

 **Capacity building:** The partnership organizes capacity-building workshops and training programs to empower countries to improve their ICT data collection and dissemination practices. These initiatives help build the technical skills and knowledge needed to produce high-quality ICT statistics.

 **Promoting data use:** By promoting the use of ICT data in policy-making and development planning, the partnership helps ensure that decisions are based on accurate and up-to-date information. This enhances the effectiveness of ICT initiatives and supports sustainable development goals.

Collaboration on meaningful metrics

Collaboration on meaningful metrics is essential to track real-world progress in ICT development. ITU, working through the partnership, has developed and promoted indicators and tools that measure ICT development impact.

Examples include:

 The **ICT Development Index (IDI)** – a composite index that measures the level of ICT development in countries. The IDI provides a comprehensive overview of ICT development and allows for comparisons between countries and regions, helping policymakers identify areas for improvement

 It is composed of three sub-indices:

– **Access –** measuring the availability of ICT infrastructure and access to ICTs, including indicators such as fixed-telephone subscriptions, mobile-cellular subscriptions, and internet access.

– **Use –** measuring the intensity of ICT usage, including indicators such as internet usage, fixed-broadband subscriptions, and mobile-broadband subscriptions.

– **Skills –** measuring the capability of individuals to effectively use ICTs, including indicators such as adult literacy rates and enrolment ratios in education.

 The **Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI)** – assessing the commitment of countries to cybersecurity based on five pillars: legal measures, technical measures, organizational measures, capacity building, and cooperation. The GCI provides valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of national cybersecurity frameworks, guiding efforts to enhance cybersecurity globally.

 The **ICT Price Basket (IPB)** – an indicator for the affordability of ICT services. It includes the prices of fixed-telephone, mobile-cellular, and fixed-broadband services, expressed as a percentage of gross national income (GNI) per capita. The IPB helps identify barriers to affordability and supports the development of strategies to reduce the cost of ICT services.

 The **Measuring the Information Society Report (MISR):** Report (MISR) is an annual publication that provides comprehensive data on global ICT development. It includes a wide range of indicators that measure the impact of ICTs on development and provides policy recommendations. The latest MISR highlights significant progress in mobile broadband adoption, with over 70% of the global population now covered by a mobile broadband network.

## 2.6 Other key elements

Regular reporting, conference cycles, and awareness-raising prizes all highlight ITU's comprehensive approach to advancing the WSIS process and promoting sustainable digital development. Through annual reports, action line roadmaps, the coordination efforts of UNGIS, the WSIS Forum, the WSIS Prizes, and regional implementation, ITU continues to drive progress in global ICT development and support the achievement of the SDGs.

Annual report on ITU contribution to the implementation of the WSIS Outcomes

The annual report on ITU's contribution to WSIS implementation provides a comprehensive overview of the organization's efforts and achievements in advancing the WSIS process, including initiatives, projects, and partnerships to promote digital inclusion, enhance connectivity, and support sustainable development.

The 2023 report, for instance, details ITU's efforts in expanding broadband access, promoting digital literacy, and advancing cybersecurity measures. It serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders to understand the impact of ITU's work and plan their own initiatives accordingly.

WSIS Action Line Roadmaps on C2, C4, C5, C6

WSIS Action Line Roadmaps outline the steps needed to achieve the goals of each action line, serving as a guide for stakeholders to align their efforts with the overall WSIS objectives. These roadmaps are regularly updated to reflect new developments and emerging priorities in the broad areas of **Information and Communication Infrastructure** (C2), **Capacity Building** (C4), **Building Confidence and Security in the Use of ICTs** (C5), and **Enabling Environment** (C6).

**United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) – Role and Impact**

UNGIS plays a critical role in coordinating digital initiatives across UN agencies, ensuring a unified approach to digital development. Established in 2006, UNGIS fosters collaboration and partnerships among UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) members to achieve WSIS objectives. ITU, as the permanent secretariat of UNGIS, has been instrumental in organizing joint thematic activities, meetings, open consultations, and events. UNGIS's impact on the WSIS process underscores the importance of a coordinated effort to address global ICT challenges and promote sustainable development.

WSIS Prizes – Recognizing and celebrating best practices

The WSIS Prizes contest, launched in 2012, is an integral part of the WSIS Stocktaking process. It recognizes excellence in the implementation of ICT projects and initiatives that further the goals of the WSIS process. With over 4 000 submitted projects and initiatives, the WSIS Prizes have attracted hundreds of thousands of stakeholders through its submission and online voting phases, reaching millions of people through the promotion of its outcomes and celebrations of winners and champions. The prizes highlight successful projects that have made significant contributions to the WSIS action lines and the SDGs, promoting the replication of best practices.

Regional Implementation

ITU maintains six regional offices and collaborates closely with UN Regional Commissions, and Regional Telecommunication Organizations.

ITU regional offices provide crucial support in advancing WSIS priorities at the regional, national or local level. These offices provide technical assistance, capacity-building support, and policy guidance to Member States in advancing tech for the good of all.

## 2.7 Interconnections and synergies

Interactions between WSIS and other multi-stakeholder platforms exemplify the collaborative spirit that drives global digital development. Initiatives like IGF, AI for Good, and others complement the impact of WSIS in advancing digital technologies as part of a sustainable and inclusive future for all.

WSIS is a vital multi-stakeholder platform, fostering global digital cooperation and development.

This section explores these interconnections and highlights the collaborative efforts that enhance the impact of WSIS initiatives.

Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

The IGF is a key platform for public policy discussions pertaining to the Internet. It brings together stakeholders from governments, the private sector, civil society, and academia to discuss and address internet governance issues. The IGF and WSIS share a common goal of promoting an inclusive and sustainable digital future. Their collaboration is evident in several areas:

 **Policy development**: Both platforms contribute to the development of policies that promote internet access, security, and governance. The IGF's discussions on internet governance complement WSIS's broader digital development goals, ensuring that internet policies are aligned with global digital cooperation efforts.

 **Stakeholder engagement**: The IGF's multi-stakeholder approach aligns with WSIS's principles of inclusivity and collaboration. By engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, both platforms ensure that various perspectives are considered in shaping the digital landscape.

 **Capacity building**: The IGF and WSIS jointly support capacity-building initiatives that enhance stakeholders' understanding of internet governance and digital policies. These efforts empower communities to actively participate in the digital economy and governance processes.

AI for Good

AI for Good, an ITU-led initiative involving over 40 UN partners, focuses on leveraging artificial intelligence to address global challenges and achieve the SDGs.

Overlapping WSIS and AI for Good conferences in 2024 brought together two diverse stakeholder communities**.** Both platforms emphasize the importance of ethical considerations in AI development and deployment.

The first AI Governance Day, held in May 2024, addressed issues such as bias, transparency, and accountability in AI systems. These discussions have also informed further WSIS engagement on responsible AI.

Other examples

Other ITU-driven initiatives also contribute to the collaborative ecosystem that supports WSIS's mission:

For example, the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, co-chaired by ITU and UNESCO, has advocated for universal broadband access as a key driver of sustainable development, closely matching with the WSIS aim of bridging the digital divide and promoting digital inclusion.

The ITU-ledgender initiatives, like Network of Women, International Geneva Gender Champion, EQUALS initiative, and others that aim to work with all stakeholders for gender digital inclusion.

# Part 3: Why WSIS matters now

WSIS remains a vital framework for advancing digital development and leveraging digital technologies for sustainable development. From the start, a key goal has been to bridge the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to technologies regardless of geographical location, gender, socio-economic status, or ability.

Despite impressive progress, severe disparities persist in digital access and usage around the world today. Yet ITU-led projects in support of WSIS Action Lines continue advancing connectivity and digital inclusion for all.

Today, digital technologies are essential to eradicate poverty, improve education and healthcare, protect our environment, and achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. WSIS provides a valuable framework to ensure technologies help build a better future for humanity.

WSIS continues bringing together governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, international organizations, and academia to address complex digital development challenges. This robust, inclusive, and established consultation platform, therefore, remains crucial amid the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), 5G mobile networks, and unprecedented satellite coverage.

The Global Digital Compact adopted at the UN Summit of the Future in 2024 echoes long-standing WSIS principles. The new compact, just like WSIS, emphasizes universal connectivity, digital inclusion, and multistakeholder collaboration.

WSIS, in turn, can drive on-the-ground implementation of these worthy aims, further strengthening the drive to build a digital future for all.

## 3.1 Still potent

The WSIS platform remains a potent tool for shaping the global digital landscape, particularly in parallel with the new expression of familiar WSIS priorities in the Global Digital Compact. The framework will remain flexible and adaptive, capable of addressing new challenges and seizing emerging opportunities. Through ongoing collaboration and innovation, WSIS will ensure that digital technologies contribute effectively to sustainable development and that no one is left behind in the digital age.

Existing, effective, and evolving

The process stemming from the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) offers a robust framework for leveraging information and communication technologies (ICTs) to drive sustainable development. Since its inception, WSIS has provided a comprehensive platform for addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age. This framework is built on a foundation of multistakeholder collaboration, involving governments, private sector entities, civil society organizations, international organizations, and academia. This inclusive approach ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more effective and sustainable ICT initiatives.

The WSIS framework is not static; it evolves to meet emerging challenges and harness new opportunities. Over the years, WSIS has adapted to technological advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and 5G networks. By continuously updating its strategies and action plans, WSIS remains relevant and effective in promoting digital inclusion, cybersecurity, and sustainable development.

WSIS+20 Review: Evaluating WSIS outcomes to date

As we approach the 20th anniversary of WSIS, it is crucial to evaluate the outcomes achieved so far. The WSIS+20 Review, scheduled for 2025, will provide a comprehensive assessment of the progress made in implementing WSIS outcomes. This review will involve contributions from all stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, private sector entities, and civil society. The goal is to identify successes, challenges, and areas for improvement, ensuring that WSIS continues to drive meaningful digital transformation.

Key areas of focus for the WSIS+20 Review include:

 **Global connectivity**: Assessing the progress in expanding ICT infrastructure and bridging the digital divide.

 **Digital inclusion**: Evaluating initiatives aimed at promoting digital literacy and ensuring that everyone has access to ICTs.

 **Cybersecurity**: Reviewing efforts to enhance cybersecurity and build trust in digital technologies.

 **Sustainable Development**: Analysing the impact of ICTs on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The review will also highlight best practices and successful projects, providing valuable insights for future initiatives. By learning from past experiences, WSIS can refine its strategies and continue to drive digital development effectively.

Continuing beyond 2025 – Aligned with GDC priorities

The Global Digital Compact (GDC), adopted at the Summit of the Future in 2024, aligns closely with WSIS principles. Both frameworks emphasize the importance of universal connectivity, digital inclusion, and multistakeholder collaboration. As WSIS moves beyond 2025, it will continue to support the implementation of the GDC, ensuring that digital transformation efforts are coordinated and aligned with global priorities.

Key priorities for WSIS beyond 2025 include:

 **Universal connectivity**: Expanding ICT infrastructure to ensure that everyone has access to affordable and reliable internet services.

 **Digital inclusion**: Promoting digital literacy and skills development, particularly for underserved and marginalized communities.

 **Cybersecurity**: Enhancing cybersecurity measures to protect digital assets and build trust in digital technologies.

 **Sustainable development**: Leveraging ICTs to achieve the SDGs and promote environmental sustainability.

With several similarities shared with the GDC priorities, the WSIS process will continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the global digital landscape. The framework will remain flexible and adaptive, capable of addressing new challenges and seizing emerging opportunities. Through ongoing collaboration and innovation, WSIS will ensure that digital technologies contribute effectively to sustainable development and that no one is left behind in the digital age.

## 3.2 Why WSIS matters now

WSIS remains a vital framework for advancing digital development and leveraging ICTs for sustainable development. Its ongoing relevance is underscored by its ability to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities, ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital age.

The process stemming from the original two-phase summit in 2003 and 2005 remains a cornerstone in the global effort to harness the power of technologies for sustainable development.

WSIS remains key to bridge the digital divide, promote sustainable development, enhance global connectivity, and more.

One of the primary goals of WSIS has been to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their geographical location, socioeconomic status, or gender, has access to ICTs. Despite significant progress, disparities in ICT access and usage persist, particularly in rural and underserved areas. WSIS initiatives continue to play a crucial role in addressing these disparities by promoting policies and projects that enhance connectivity and digital inclusion.

ICTs are vital for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They enable innovative solutions to global challenges such as poverty, education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. WSIS provides a framework for leveraging ICTs to advance the SDGs, ensuring that digital technologies contribute effectively to sustainable development. The WSIS-SDG Matrix, for example, maps the contributions of WSIS Action Lines to specific SDGs, demonstrating the interconnectedness of digital development and sustainable progress.

Global connectivity has seen remarkable growth since the inception of WSIS. Internet usage has increased dramatically, with mobile and broadband technologies reaching billions of people worldwide. However, the goal of universal connectivity is yet to be fully realized. WSIS continues to drive efforts to expand ICT infrastructure, particularly in remote and underserved regions, through initiatives like the GIGA project, which aims to connect every school to the internet.

Fostering multistakeholder collaboration

WSIS has established a robust multistakeholder platform that brings together governments, private sector entities, civil society organizations, international organizations, and academia. This inclusive approach is essential for addressing the complex challenges of digital development. By fostering collaboration and dialogue among diverse stakeholders, WSIS ensures that ICT initiatives are comprehensive, inclusive, and effective.

Global digital cooperation remains essential going forward.

Addressing emerging technologies

The rapid advancement of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and 5G networks presents both opportunities and challenges. WSIS provides a platform for discussing and addressing the implications of these emerging technologies. It promotes the development of ethical guidelines, regulatory frameworks, and best practices to ensure that new technologies are used responsibly and benefit all of society.

Promoting cybersecurity and trust

Growing digital integration into all aspects of life requires countries and organizations worldwide to ensure cybersecurity and build trust in digital systems. WSIS initiatives, such as the Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) and the Child Online Protection (COP) program, play a vital role in promoting cybersecurity awareness, developing international standards, and supporting national cybersecurity strategies.

Supporting digital literacy and skills development

Digital literacy and skills are essential for individuals to effectively use ICTs and participate in the digital economy. WSIS emphasizes the importance of capacity building and education, providing training programs and resources through platforms like the ITU Academy. These efforts are crucial for empowering individuals and communities, particularly in developing countries, to harness the benefits of digital technologies.

Ensuring environmental sustainability

The environmental impact of ICTs is an emerging concern that WSIS addresses through initiatives promoting sustainable ICT practices. This includes developing energy-efficient technologies, managing electronic waste, and advocating for the use of renewable energy sources. By integrating environmental considerations into digital development, WSIS contributes to a more sustainable and resilient future.

Incorporating Global Digital Compact

The Global Digital Compact (GDC), adopted at the Summit of the Future in 2024, echoes long-standing WSIS principles. Both frameworks emphasize the importance of universal connectivity, digital inclusion, and multistakeholder collaboration. WSIS can therefore support GDC implementation of the GDC, while the GDC further enhances a core part of the WSIS vision – the drive to build a digital future for all.

As we enter a third decade of WSIS, this process has become more important than ever. The rapid advancement of technology and the increasing reliance on digital solutions for everyday life underscore the need for a robust, inclusive, and collaborative digital framework. WSIS provides this framework, guiding international efforts to harness the power of ICTs for sustainable development.

As we look towards the future, the WSIS process will remain a vital mechanism for ensuring that digital technologies contribute effectively to global development goals and that no one is left behind.

Addressing global challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical role of ICTs in maintaining societal functions during crises. From enabling remote work and education to facilitating access to healthcare and essential services, digital technologies proved indispensable. However, the pandemic also exposed significant digital divides, emphasizing the urgent need for global digital cooperation. WSIS is more important than ever in addressing these challenges, as it provides a platform for stakeholders to collaborate on bridging the digital divide and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Promoting digital inclusion

Digital inclusion is a core principle of WSIS. The process emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic status, gender, or abilities, can benefit from digital technologies. Programmes such as the EQUALS Global Partnership work to bridge the gender digital divide by providing digital skills training, mentorship, and networking opportunities for women and girls. Similarly, initiatives aimed at enhancing digital literacy and skills development are crucial for empowering individuals and communities to participate in the digital economy.

## 3.3 Insights from the Summit of the Future

The Summit of the Future, held in September 2024, provided a critical platform for discussing the future of global digital cooperation. Key insights from the summit emphasized the need for inclusive digital policies, the importance of leveraging emerging technologies, and the role of multistakeholder collaboration in achieving sustainable development goals. Discussions highlighted the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI), space technologies, and digital innovation in driving sustainable development and addressing global challenges[[1]](https://aiforgood.itu.int/harnessing-ai-and-space-technologies-for-a-sustainable-inclusive-future-key-takeaways-from-global-discussions-at-unga-and-beyond/). The summit underscored the necessity of creating governance frameworks that ensure the ethical and responsible use of these technologies, aligning with the broader goals of the WSIS process.

The future of WSIS and digital development is shaped by the insights from the Summit of the Future, the objectives of the Global Digital Compact, and the vision for 2025 and beyond. By maintaining a people-oriented, development-oriented, and inclusive approach, and by strengthening existing WSIS structures in complementarity to GDC implementation, the WSIS process can continue to drive sustainable digital development and ensure that the benefits of digital technologies are accessible to all individuals and communities*.*

The Global Digital Compact, adopted at the Summit of the Future, aims to reinforce the WSIS process and promote multistakeholder digital cooperation. The GDC's objectives include closing digital divides, expanding inclusion in the digital economy, fostering a safe and secure digital space, and advancing responsible data governance[[2]](https://www.itu.int/hub/2024/05/what-is-the-future-of-global-digital-cooperation/). By aligning with the GDC, WSIS initiatives can leverage broader support and resources to achieve their objectives. The GDC emphasizes the need for universal connectivity, digital inclusion, and the ethical use of technology, ensuring that digital development efforts contribute effectively to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The WSIS vision for 2025 and beyond

The WSIS vision for 2025 and beyond is centred on maintaining a people-oriented, development-oriented, and inclusive approach to digital development. This vision will guide the WSIS process in the coming years, ensuring that digital technologies benefit everyone, particularly marginalized and underserved communities.

 **People-oriented:** The WSIS process will continue to prioritize the needs and aspirations of individuals, ensuring that digital technologies are accessible and beneficial to all. This includes promoting digital literacy, enhancing digital skills, and ensuring that everyone can participate in the digital economy.

 **Development-oriented:** WSIS initiatives will focus on leveraging digital technologies to drive sustainable development. This involves aligning digital development efforts with the SDGs, promoting innovation, and fostering economic growth.

 **Inclusive:** Inclusivity remains a core principle of the WSIS process. Efforts will be made to bridge the digital divide, promote gender equality, and ensure that digital technologies are accessible to all, regardless of their socio-economic status, gender, or abilities.

Strengthening existing WSIS structures in complementarity to GDC implementation

Effective GDC implementation requires strengthening WSIS. The WSIS Forum, the WSIS Stocktaking database, and the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) will play crucial roles in this process.

GDC reinforcing WSIS and wider multistakeholder digital cooperation

The GDC reinforces the WSIS process by promoting a cohesive approach to digital development and enhancing multistakeholder cooperation. The compact's priorities align with the goals of WSIS, ensuring that digital initiatives are inclusive, sustainable, and aligned with global development objectives. By fostering collaboration among governments, private sector entities, civil society organizations, and international organizations, the GDC strengthens the multistakeholder model that is central to the WSIS process.

The GDC also emphasizes the importance of ethical considerations in the development and deployment of digital technologies. This includes ensuring data privacy, promoting cybersecurity, and addressing the ethical implications of emerging technologies such as AI and IoT. By aligning with the GDC, WSIS initiatives can leverage broader support and resources to address these challenges and opportunities effectively.

[[1]](https://aiforgood.itu.int/harnessing-ai-and-space-technologies-for-a-sustainable-inclusive-future-key-takeaways-from-global-discussions-at-unga-and-beyond/): [Harnessing AI and Space Technologies for a Sustainable, Inclusive Future](https://aiforgood.itu.int/harnessing-ai-and-space-technologies-for-a-sustainable-inclusive-future-key-takeaways-from-global-discussions-at-unga-and-beyond/) [[2]](https://www.itu.int/hub/2024/05/what-is-the-future-of-global-digital-cooperation/): [Overview of the Global Digital Compact](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/2024/InfoSession%20on%20GDC_2Oct2024V2.pdf)

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[2] [What is the future of global digital cooperation? - ITU](https://www.itu.int/hub/2024/05/what-is-the-future-of-global-digital-cooperation/)

## 3.4 The way forward

The continuation of the WSIS process beyond 2025 is essential to bridge the digital divide, advance sustainable development, enhance the quality of global connectivity, promote digital literacy and skills, ensure cybersecurity and data privacy, foster innovation, promote multistakeholder collaboration, address environmental sustainability, support global governance, and leverage digital technologies for inclusive growth. By continuing to support the WSIS process, the UN system and countries around the world can build a digital future that benefits everyone.

ITU has been at the forefront of implementing WSIS outcomes, driving global digital development progress.

Reiterating the WSIS+20 vision

The WSIS+20 vision emphasizes a people-oriented, development-oriented, and inclusive approach to digital development. This vision aims to ensure that digital technologies benefit everyone, particularly marginalized and underserved communities. By focusing on inclusivity and sustainability, the WSIS+20 vision will guide the WSIS process beyond 2025, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals and leveraging ICTs to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Call to action for ITU Member States and stakeholders

As we look beyond 2025, it is imperative for ITU Member States and stakeholders to continue supporting and advancing the WSIS process. This collective effort is crucial for enriching the overall process and ensuring that digital technologies accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Global Digital Compact priorities

The Global Digital Compact outlines key priorities for digital development, including universal connectivity, digital inclusion, and the ethical use of technology. These priorities align closely with the goals of WSIS, ensuring a cohesive approach to digital development.

How WSIS serves each priority

 **Universal connectivity**: WSIS initiatives, such as the expansion of broadband infrastructure and the Giga project, directly contribute to achieving universal connectivity. By connecting schools and communities, these efforts ensure that everyone has access to digital opportunities.

 **Digital inclusion**: WSIS promotes digital inclusion through capacity-building programs, digital skills training, and projects aimed at underserved communities. Initiatives like the EQUALS Global Partnership address the gender digital divide, empowering women and girls in the digital space.

 **Ethical use of technology**: WSIS emphasizes the ethical use of technology through frameworks like the Global Cybersecurity Agenda and the Child Online Protection initiative. These efforts ensure that digital technologies are used responsibly and safely.

Ensuring technology accelerates SDG progress

Technology is a powerful tool for achieving the SDGs. WSIS initiatives demonstrate how digital solutions can accelerate progress on various goals, from education and healthcare to economic growth and environmental sustainability. Projects like AI for Good showcase the potential of technology to address global challenges and drive sustainable development.

By continuing to support and advance the WSIS process, ITU Member States and stakeholders can build a digital future that benefits everyone. Together, we can leverage digital technologies to achieve the SDGs and create a more inclusive and sustainable world.

[[1]](https://ituint-my.sharepoint.com/personal/neil_macdonald_itu_int/Documents/Microsoft%20Copilot%20Chat%20Files/WSIS%2B20%20report%20draft%20%2B%20reporting.docx?web=1): [ITU Facts and Figures 2024](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/facts-figures-2024/)

ITU publications and reports available at [ITU Gateway for WSIS](https://www.itu.int/en/itu-wsis/Pages/default.aspx#:~:text=ITU%20Contribution%20to%20the%20WSIS%20Implementation,-ITU%20Contribution%20to&text=Co%2Dfacilitator%20of%20Action%20Lines,on%20Measuring%20ICT%20for%20Measurement.) include the following:

1. **Annual WSIS Forum outcome documents:**

o These documents summarize the discussions, action points, and recommendations from the annual WSIS Forum. They provide insights into the progress made in implementing WSIS outcomes and highlight key themes and challenges.

2. **ITU contribution to the implementation of the WSIS outcomes reports**:

o These annual reports detail ITU's contributions to the implementation of WSIS outcomes, including initiatives, projects, and partnerships. They assess the impact of ITU's activities on digital development.

3. **WSIS Forum**

o This website provides information on the annual WSIS Forum, including agendas, session details, outcome documents, and resources for participants.

4. **WSIS Stocktaking reports**:

o Global, regional, and special WSIS Stocktaking reports provide valuable insights into the development of ICTs and their impact on economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects. They highlight trends, challenges, and opportunities in the ICT sector.

5. **Measuring the Information Society Report (MISR)**:

o This annual publication provides a comprehensive overview of the state of ICT development worldwide. It includes a wide range of indicators that measure the impact of ICTs on development and provides policy recommendations.

6. **Global ICT Regulatory Outlook**:

o This annual report provides an overview of the regulatory landscape for ICTs, including indicators that measure the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks and their impact on ICT development.

7. **ICT Development Index (IDI)**:

o The IDI is a composite index that measures the level of ICT development in countries. It provides a comprehensive overview of ICT development and allows for comparisons between countries and regions.

8. **Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI)**:

o The GCI measures the commitment of countries to cybersecurity. It assesses the level of cybersecurity development based on legal measures, technical measures, organizational measures, capacity building, and cooperation.

9. **ICT Price Basket (IPB)**:

o The IPB measures the affordability of ICT services. It is a composite index that includes the prices of fixed-telephone, mobile-cellular, and fixed-broadband services.

10. **WSIS-SDG Matrix**:

o This tool maps the contributions of WSIS Action Lines to specific SDGs, providing a clear framework for assessing the impact of ICTs on sustainable development.

11. **ITU Academy publications**:

o These include training materials, course guides, and reports on capacity-building initiatives. They provide insights into ITU's efforts to enhance digital skills and knowledge.

12. **Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) reports**:

o These reports provide a comprehensive framework for promoting cybersecurity and building confidence in the use of ICTs. They include guidelines, best practices, and case studies.

13. **Child Online Protection guidelines**:

o These guidelines provide recommendations for protecting children from online risks and promoting safe and responsible use of ICTs.

14. **EQUALS Global Partnership reports**:

o These reports focus on bridging the gender digital divide and promoting gender equality in the ICT sector. They include research findings, case studies, and recommendations.

15. **Digital Transformation Centres (DTC) INITIATIVE reports**:

o These reports provide insights into the impact of the DTC Initiative, which aims to build digital skills and promote digital inclusion in underserved communities.

16. **ITU Innovation Challenges reports**:

o These reports highlight the outcomes of the ITU Innovation Challenges, which encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in the ICT sector.

17. **ITU Telecom World reports**:

o These reports provide insights into the discussions, trends, and outcomes of ITU Telecom events that brought together leaders from the ICT industry, governments, and international organizations between 1971 and 2021.

18. **ITU-D Regional Initiatives reports**:

o These reports provide details on regional initiatives that address the specific ICT needs and challenges of different regions. They highlight best practices and successful projects.

Other ITU websites and online resources

1. **ITU Publications portal**:

o [ITU Publications](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/Pages/default.aspx)

 This portal provides access to a wide range of ITU publications, including reports, handbooks, and databases. It offers functionalities to search, order products, and download digital content.

2. **ITU Hub**:

o [ITU Hub](https://www.itu.int/hub/pubs/)

 The ITU Hub offers free access to global, neutral, telecom, and ICT reports, trends, analysis, telecom data, and statistics. It covers topics such as digital skills, e-waste, satellite, 5G, and the digital divide.

3. **ITU Academy**:

o [ITU Academy](https://academy.itu.int/)

 The ITU Academy provides access to a wide range of training programs, courses, and resources for capacity building in the ICT sector. It offers online and blended learning opportunities for ICT professionals, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

4. **Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) website**:

o [Global Cybersecurity Index](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/pages/global-cybersecurity-index.aspx)

 This website provides information on the GCI, including the methodology, indicators, and results. It offers insights into the level of cybersecurity development in different countries.

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3. United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 56/183, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 10 to 12 December 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Held in Tunis, Tunisia, from 16 to 18 November 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)