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| **Contribution by Azerbaijan (Republic of), Belarus (Republic of),  the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan (Republic of), the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan (Republic of)** | |
| RCC INPUT TO WSIS+20 REVIEW | |
| **Purpose**  ITU Council Resolution 1332 resolves to invite the members and other stakeholders to contribute views on the work of the ITU in the WSIS+20 review including ideas related to the review of the WSIS Action Lines through the CWG WSIS&SDG.  However some elements to be considered within WSIS+20 review are of the core interest for Council Working Group on international Internet-related public policy issues (CWG-Internet).  This call for inputs to WSIS+20 review is facilitated through the process outlined in the Resolution 1332. One of the call’s pillar in an [online form](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https://forms.office.com/e/PBwE16XruK&data=05%7c02%7cgbs%40itu.int%7c13564ae8b9bc44ab249608dcc6b2629d%7c23e464d704e64b87913c24bd89219fd3%7c0%7c0%7c638603716653553172%7cUnknown%7cTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7c0%7c%7c%7c&sdata=Uoop/A8JEd40yUhL5OqZk84ntJ7qF9dgCeJbyRYOqgc%3D&reserved=0) launched in August 2024 for all stakeholders, with a deadline of 31 January 2025.  The process is designed to gather detailed insights into various aspects of the WSIS+20 review process, including achievements and challenges in implementing the Geneva Plan of Action, the alignment of the WSIS Process with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the constant evolution of the WSIS process to adapt to emerging trends, and the future of WSIS beyond 2025.  The Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications through its Working Group on Cooperation with ITU agreed upon Common RCC input to the online questionary on WSIS+20 Review on the ITU web site. The RCC Executive Committee was instructed to make the submission on behalf of the region.  In the spirit of exchange of views and transparency in preparation for WSIS+20, the RCC submits to the attention of the CWG Internet its common input to the online form.  **Action required**  The Council Working Group on Internet is invited to **consider** the document. | |

**Common RCC Input**

**to the Call for Inputs on the WSIS+20 Review on the ITU web site**

**The WSIS Implementation Process**

**1. What are the main achievements of the implementation of the WSIS process in the past 20 years?**

In 20 years, society has changed significantly, the introduction of new technologies and the transition to digital have made significant progress in the task of “Connecting the world”. The number of Internet users has increased approximately 7.5 times, opening a window to the world for 5.4 billion people. Digitalization, as a result of the development of new ICTs, has penetrated all spheres of society at the international, state, regional, local and individual levels, having a significant impact on sustainable development. Widespread access to information and knowledge, the continuous introduction of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, cloud computing, blockchain, broadband wireless access technologies that enable communication anywhere in the world have made it possible to involve not only large businesses, but also medium and small enterprises, as well as individual entrepreneurs, in the production process in industry, agriculture, education, health care and ecology, business and finance, and in the dissemination of information, including mass information.

The use of modern ICTs is developing particularly dynamically in the activities of government and administrative bodies – federal, regional and local, including in the provision of public and municipal services, as well as in the financial sector, including online payments.

The growing importance of information technology in all aspects of society has raised awareness of the role of regulation in shaping digital development for the common good.

Almost all countries and regions have adopted digital development strategies and are making the transition to a digital economy. Large businesses in various countries are developing and implementing socially significant programmes and projects that contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Significant efforts have been and are being made in the vast majority of countries to meet the global indicators for growth in ICT connectivity and access to the use of ICTs within the framework of the implementation of the objectives of the Geneva Plan of Action.

ICTs are developing within a framework that includes technical standards and international norms, national government policies, including laws and regulations governing areas such as consumer rights, employment rights, education, health care, and the rights to freedom of thought and expression.

Thus, the necessary springboard and opportunities have been created for building “a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society”, cutting-edge technologies have been developed and implemented, and the will and desire of the entire world community and of all stakeholders in the WSIS process, are needed to achieve the goals and objectives set.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the crucial role of ICTs in the life of modern society, making it possible to continue all processes in the field of production, consumption, education and provision of essential public and social services to all segments of the population, including the vulnerable.

Infrastructure is central in achieving the goal of digital inclusion, and the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda will depend on increasing access to ICTs.

**2. What are ITUs main contributions towards the implementation of the WSIS Process in 20 Years?**

ITU is the initiator of the WSIS Summit. The Summit emphasized that the core competences of the ITU in the fields of ICTs are of crucial importance for building the Information Society and entrusted ITU, in addition to acting as the Facilitator of Action Lines C2 (Information and communication infrastructure) and C5 (Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs) as the sole coordinator and partner for virtually all other Action Lines, to maintain the WSIS Stocktaking database. Since the Summit, ITU has initiated and co-sponsored a number of important projects such as the WSIS Forum, Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, P2C, GIGA, COP, Summit of the Future, and others. At the request of other UN organisations, ITU has taken over the role of Lead Facilitator of Action Lines C3 (Access to information and knowledge) and C4 (Capacity building).

ITU has maintained a recognized leadership role in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, primarily its Geneva phase, closely contacts with other participants in the WSIS process, is the permanent Vice-Chair of the UNGIS, and has repeatedly chaired the UNGIS.

In preparation for the first phase of WSIS, ITU established a working group to prepare for the Summit and then to follow up on the implementation of its outcomes[[1]](#footnote-1).

In order to monitor the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, the meeting of Lead Facilitators for the WSIS Action Lines, held since 2006, was transformed in 2009 at the initiative of ITU, supported by the UNGIS, into a wider format – the WSIS Forum, which over the years of its existence has occupied a crucial niche in the process of searching for innovations in the ICT field that are most conducive to sustainable development. It is still held today, and it is the ITU that supports its work, developing and filling the agenda of the annual event with an increasing number of topical issues.

In addition, 10 years after Tunisia phase, at the WSIS+10 High-Level Event coordinated by ITU the implementation of the WSIS outcomes was reviewed: ITU organised and managed the WSIS+10 Multistakeholder Preparatory Platform, where two documents were prepared – the WSIS+10 Statement on implementation of WSIS outcomes and the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015. The first document is an analysis of what has been achieved in 10 years (what has been done, what problems have arisen, what new challenges have been encountered), the second one is a list of what needs to be implemented and how beyond 2015.

Today, ITU is the lead facilitator in the implementation of key WSIS Action Lines for an increasingly digitalised world: C2 (Information and communication infrastructure), C4 (Capacity Building), C5 (Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs) and C6 (Enabling environment), as well as a co-facilitator of a number of other important WSIS Action Lines.

**3. The WSIS process stands as a strong example of global digital cooperation in action for over two decades now. How can we ensure that this inclusive multistakeholder model is sustained and further strengthened?**

One of the most important outcomes of the WSIS process is the establishment of a definition of Internet governance that includes multistakeholder participation. These stakeholders include governments, international intergovernmental organisations, private sector, technical community, and civil society, including selected expert communities.

After 20 years of using the multistakeholder model, it can be concluded that there is a vital need for evolution and tuning of the model. Today we are witnessing a crisis of the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, which does not guarantee that this model will be sustained and further strengthened:

a) Over the past 20 years, the “respective roles” of many stakeholders have not been identified in accordance with the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, which creates uncertainty, duplication and chaos in the process of managing the Internet, and above all the critical resources of the public core;

b) the role of States is artificially reduced, there are no practical mechanisms for their participation in Internet governance at the international level;

c) the dominance of pro-Western governmental and civil society organisations, think tanks, academic institutions from developed country groups, and other thematic institutions, including in platforms devoted to the problems of developing countries, continues, creating the appearance of diversity of opinion and promoting their desired Internet governance narratives;

d) there is still no international legal framework concerning Internet governance, despite the declaration in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society on the need to implement “shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet.” Not only are there no such norms, rules and procedures developed and adopted, but there is not even a prospect of their preparation;

e) There is no work on the internationalisation of Internet governance system.

In this regard, we would like to stress the relevance of the principle contained in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society that governments, on an equal footing, should carry out their roles and responsibilities, in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. Unfortunately, that principle has not been put into practice.

It is critically important to organise Internet governance in the form of an open democratic process that is based on universally recognised principles and norms of international law, oriented towards the needs of people, protection of their rights and freedoms, including ensuring personal information security. The system of governance of global critical infrastructure must be equitable, neutral and immune to geopolitical challenges. The current multistakeholder Internet governance system does not fulfil these requirements.

Taking the above into consideration, it seems appropriate to implement a number of initiatives to address the current crisis of the multistakeholder model in order to ensure that the multistakeholder model is sustained and strengthened.

While the Geneva Declaration of Principles and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society remain fully relevant, it is obvious that much more needs to be done in terms of their implementation and achieving the goals and objectives of the WSIS process that is based on them. To this end, the following are essential:

• Implementation of all outcomes of the Summit and UNGA Resolution A/70/125, including those regarding the sovereign rights and obligations of States with respect to international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet.

• Support of the complementary nature of the WSIS and SDG processes, as well as the Global Digital Compact (GDC), in line with the WSIS-SDG-GDC Matrix, expanding and enhancing the effective use of ICTs to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the GDC objectives.

• Full implementation of the WSIS Action Lines, taking into account the proposals contained in Section II “Further enhancing of Action Lines” of the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS beyond 2015 (WSIS+10 High-Level Event, Geneva, 2014) to support the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

• Continuation of the WSIS process, with a particular focus on practical actions to internationalize Internet governance, as well as the leading role of governments in high-level policy issues.

• Development, through the WSIS process and further endorsement, of a legal framework for Internet governance, especially for critical public core resources.

• “Connect the Unconnected”, to work together through public-private partnerships and civil society to achieve affordable Internet connectivity for the remaining one-third of the world's population and increase their digital literacy.

• Digital transformation and widespread transition to a digital economy. Assisting developing countries in this process. Removing discriminatory barriers to the introduction of the latest technologies. Ensuring information security, widespread fight against cybercrime, protection of personal data and privacy.

• A high-level agreement on the rules of the “digital movement” is needed, perhaps the process of implementing the GDC could play this role.

• Continuation of holding of the annual WSIS Forum and IGF beyond 2025.

• Continuation of the exchange of best practices in the implementation of ICT- projects (WSIS Prizes).

• Development and widespread introduction of digital literacy, especially among the younger generation and elderly citizens, including the concept of personal information security, teaching “digital hygiene”.

• Fulfilment of commitments to pay particular attention to the special needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups of society and to ensure their inclusion in Internet governance processes on an equitable basis.

**4. What are the challenges that remain in the implementation of the WSIS process?**

Digital development has brought forth not only new opportunities but also new challenges and risks for the international community in its efforts to ensure universal inclusion in the digital economy, eliminate wealth and gender inequality, integrate digital development and environmental sustainability, and address cybersecurity threats, including cybercrime.

The WSIS+10 Statement on the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes (WSIS+10 High-Level Event, Geneva, 2014) recognizes:

• that the implementation of the WSIS action lines has identified a number of challenges that remain and need to be addressed in order to achieve an inclusive information society beyond 2015;

• the need to ensure proper integration of WSIS and the development agenda beyond 2015.

It also lists 30 challenges that have arisen in implementing the Action Lines and new challenges in implementing these Action Lines in the post 2015 period.

Unfortunately, it should be noted that almost all of these challenges are still relevant 10 years later, but at a new level. Not only do they not close the digital divide, as required by the WSIS, SDGs and GDC, but they also shift it under the pressure of new technologies.

The issue of global equality and the right to development is one of the key issues in contemporary world politics and the digital economy. The gap between North and South, between the “Golden Billion” and the rest of humanity has persisted, despite all efforts to bridge it, for half a century since the collapse of the colonial system. Digital neo-colonialism has become a reality, with dominant global powers and digital transnational corporations, mostly from economically developed regions, controlling and influencing the digital sphere in less economically developed countries in their own interests, without regard for the interests of developing countries. Moreover, the introduction of new technologies gives the above-mentioned problems an even higher priority. This is especially true for the risks associated with the development and implementation of Artificial Intelligence.

The issue of implementing paragraph 35a) of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, which states that “Policy authority for Internet-related public policy issues is the sovereign right of States. They have rights and responsibilities for international Internet-related public policy issues” has not been resolved. There is no system of international legal mechanisms of Internet governance at the top level, as well as a system of principles and norms harmonized with it, allowing to realize the sovereign right of States to regulate the information space, in particular, in national segments of the Internet. Most States have to adapt state regulation of information and information technologies to new circumstances autonomously, “on the fly”, which leads to fragmentation of the unified digital space and creation of isolated national service spaces with unique regulation. This is a serious challenge to the global, cross-border nature of the Internet. The absence of internationally recognized regulatory standards for Internet governance at the UN level or by relevant UN agencies, such as ITU and UNESCO, poses a security threat, especially for developing countries. Despite the advantage of providing access and information exchange, the worldwide development of social networks allows for the violation of human rights with impunity, is capable of destroying society from within, and ensuring obedience not even just to formal laws, legal rules, but also to the moral laws of society. Influencing the younger generation, inciting national and religious hatred and discord, calls for aggression and suicide, interference in personal life, manipulation, blackmail and imposition of alien values are particularly dangerous.

The introduction of new technologies tends to cause redistribution in the labor market, and it is necessary to provide in advance the possibility of training and retraining to work in new conditions and to prevent “digital Luddism”.

One of the key issues hindering the adoption of ICTs for good is the lack of financing and transfer of modern technologies at affordable prices, unilateral sanctions, the absence of healthy dialogue and substantive solutions in terms of non-discriminatory access to new telecommunication technologies, information technologies and modern telecommunication/ICT means, services and related applications. All of these factors, as well as the high cost of Internet access and ICT services for many developing countries, especially the least developed ones, are the cause of the digital divide between the Global North and South, which, unfortunately, is only deepening with the transition to the latest technologies.

In addition, the indiscriminate “digitalization” and robotization of society, the lack or loss of the skill to live without digital technologies, can have an extremely negative impact on the lives of the new generation in critical situations such as failure of energy or navigation in emergency situations.

**WSIS Action Lines**

**5. Which specific Action Lines have had the most significant impact, and why?**

While all of the WSIS Action Lines, as well as the Geneva Plan of Action, have remained relevant for almost a quarter of a century, it should not be overlooked that the challenges of the present – primarily the COVID-19 pandemic – have demonstrated the inherent importance of efforts under Action Line C2. Thus, humanity has realized that infrastructure is not just the basis for achieving the goal of digital inclusion for all inhabitants of the planet, providing a window to the world, it is the very foundation of life in the new environment – from life support to the only basis for the transfer of knowledge and the preservation of social ties.

At the same time, the implementation of efforts under Action Line C2 lays the foundation for the implementation of the rest of the Geneva Plan of Action. Without infrastructure connectivity and provision, talking about all the other Action Lines is meaningless in modern society.

**6. Considering that the WSIS outcomes have demonstrated their relevance and applicability to new and emerging areas, how can the implementation of the WSIS principles and corresponding WSIS Action Lines be enhanced to effectively address these topics?**

The following points seem appropriate here:

• Support of the complementary nature of the WSIS and SDG processes, as well as the GDC, in line with the WSIS-SDG-GDC Matrix, expanding and enhancing the effective use of ICTs to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the GDC objectives, ensuring harmonization and avoiding duplication.

• Full implementation of the WSIS Action Lines, taking into account the proposals contained in Section II “Further Improvement of the Action Lines” of the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS beyond 2015 (WSIS+10 High-Level Event, Geneva, 2014) to support the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. Updating, where necessary, the WSIS Action Lines in light of emerging technologies and new challenges posed by the SDGs and the GDC, as it was done 10 years ago.

• Reducing the digital divide by, inter alia, providing tangible support to developing countries in terms of financing ICT development and applications, affordable technology transfer and digital literacy.

•  Convening a Working Group on Internet and Global Digital Platforms Governance under the UN Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies for the purpose of:

- developing a common understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, including governments, existing international organizations and policy forums, as well as the private sector and civil society from both developing and developed countries;

- identifying public policy issues related to Internet governance and developing proposals for the preparation of internationally recognized UN-level regulatory standards for Internet governance;

- developing a working definition of global digital platforms, studying and proposing basic principles for their regulation at the highest international level, including issues of personal data privacy, and, if necessary, preparing proposals for internationally recognized UN-level regulatory standards for the governance of global digital platforms.

Such a working group, if established, would operate from the Office and would report to and advise the Secretary-General on the above-mentioned issues. The group should include representatives of States, the private sector, the technical community and civil society.

**7. Have you any suggestions and inputs on the WSIS+20 Review Action Lines, highlighting key milestones, challenges and emerging trends beyond 2025 prepared by the WSIS Action Line facilitators.** (<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Home/About#actionLines>)?

Before talking about prospects, the review should provide a detailed analysis of achievements and challenges for each Action Line and each target set out in the WSIS Outcome Documents, the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS beyond 2015 and UNGA Resolution 70/125, as, for example, in the Sustainable Development Goals Report of UN Secretary-General.

It is advisable for the WSIS Action Line facilitators to prepare proposals for updating them, taking into account the emergence of new technologies and new tasks set by the SDGs and the GDC. Such proposals should be posted on the relevant websites for each action line in advance, organizing a platform for exchange of views before the CSTD session and the WSIS Forum in 2025.

This review lacks a critical element – an agreed understanding of what needs to be done so that the WSIS Action Lines process can demonstrate increasing achievements. It is obvious that in order to form such a section, efforts should be made to immediately organize a discussion with a clearly defined modality, whose output should be a formally agreed document on the basis of which the work will be carried out. The CSTD session and the WSIS+20 2025 Forum seem to be events during which such a document could be agreed upon. Such a document could also be included in the outcome document of the UNGA’s overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of WSIS outcomes.

**WSIS Action Line for advancing the SDGs**

**8. How can the alignment between the WSIS Action Lines and SDGs be strengthened towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

In a general sense, the key here is to support the complementary nature of the WSIS and SDG processes according to the WSIS-SDG Matrix, to expand and enhance the effective use of ICTs to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the approaches mentioned in point 3 above are relevant here. Currently, as a result of the Future Summit, this matrix has been expanded to take into account the objectives of the GDC.

**Future Vision and WSIS beyond 2025**

**9. How can we further strengthen multistakeholder platforms such as the WSIS Forum as the platform for digital development and IGF as the platform for governance and policy issues?**

It would be advisable to focus these formats with a wider audience than at the decision-making level to their original mandates, which determine their agendas. For example, the WSIS Forum should review the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action on an annual basis through discussions on achievements, shortcomings, identified problems and promising approaches in the implementation of each Action Line. The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) discussions should provide a basis for informed decision-making on Internet-related issues within the framework of the Tunis phase of the Summit. At the same time, it is important that the output documents of such events should be not be informational but analytical – they should demonstrate an annual “snapshot” of progress on the implementation of the output documents of the relevant stages of the Summit, contain proposals and recommendations, in close connection with the WSIS-SDG-GDC Matrix, and their content should be taken into account in the work of the relevant UN organizations when making decisions.

The IGF was initiated by the United Nations in 2006 as a platform for equitable dialogue among all stakeholders on Internet governance issues. However, the mandate of the IGF is not to produce outcome documents containing recommendations, proposals or action plans for the United Nations. Every year it becomes a place to discuss the most topical issues of the digital future and to unite efforts to create an inclusive and sustainable digital ecosystem, but only in a discussion format. It seems appropriate to include in the mandate of the IGF the preparation of recommendations, draft action plans on specific areas for the United Nations and proposals on practical mechanisms of action for Internet governance at the international level.

Besides, it is important that these formats be organized under common schemes and agendas at the regional level, with the results presented at the global level, so that the outputs of the global events are as reasonable and fair as possible in terms of representing the views of developed and developing countries.

**10. How can the implementation of the WSIS process and the Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact be aligned to achieve shared goals?**

Coherence should be the key principle in the implementation of such processes. It seems necessary to abandon the tendency to adopt documents similar to existing ones, but of a declaratory nature, and to focus on the implementation of already agreed documents, while clearly harmonizing the efforts of their secretariats and avoiding duplication of efforts. It is necessary to consider the feasibility of establishing a new UN office for the GDC and the possibility of using the experience of the ITU secretariat on WSIS issues, supporting it with both authority and financial and human resources for the implementation of the recently adopted GDC, which is similar in substance to the WSIS outcome documents. This will allow achieving a synergistic effect in their implementation. Such an approach will strengthen the work on implementation of the WSIS outcomes and reduce the likelihood of duplication of efforts in the framework of implementation of the GDC provisions. In practice, the expanded WSIS-SDG-GDC Matrix could serve as a basis for launching such work.

An important aspect here is to increase the level of coordination of efforts between the New York and Geneva headquarters in initiating and implementing global processes. It is also important to note the need for a more active position of the ITU General Secretariat in raising awareness of the global audience, especially the audience of the events taking place in New York, about the WSIS process its close linkage with the process of achieving the SDGs, as set out in the relevant UNGA Resolution and other important elements of the related discussion taking place in Geneva.

The UNGIS should play a significant role in this process.

**11. What are the key emerging digital trends and topics to be considered by ITU in the WSIS+20 review and future vision beyond 2025?**

Technologies such as big data, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, broadband communications systems, especially mobile communications (5G and beyond), quantum and bio-technologies, augmented and virtual reality, 3D printing, wireless power transfer, blockchain and other digital financial instruments, smart communities, cities and homes, and of course AI and robotics, and in the future the neuroweb, will have a decisive influence on future progress in human development.

The introduction of modern technologies into all spheres of life affects the development paths of the state, business, civil society and the individual. E-government and financial institutions, health and education, agriculture, climate change and disaster management, etc., mean the transition to “digital rails”. Digitalization has become one of the key trends in the development of the largest corporations, necessary to effectively meet the challenges of the new times. Smart homes will become quotidian and affordable, making everyday life much easier and freeing up personal time. It will be possible to create and provide the necessary conditions for human development. Particular attention should be paid to the younger generation, eliminating gender inequality and providing assistance and support for vulnerable populations, including the special needs of persons with disabilities and older persons. All this should be taken into account when preparing the Vision for WSIS Beyond 2025 and updating, where necessary, the relevant Action Lines, taking into account the SDGs and the GDС.

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1. This group was led by representatives of the RCC (CA of Russia) for two decades, until the autumn of 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)