

Ref: WSIS Forum 2021/01
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To: All WSIS Stakeholders
- Governments
- Private Sector
- Civil Society
- Academia/ Technical Community
- International Organizations

Invitation to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as the co-organizers, are pleased to invite you to the WSIS Forum 2021, which ITU will host. The final week of the WSIS Forum will be held on 17-21 May 2021 with pre-events starting from January onwards under the theme of ICTs for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Societies and Economies (WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals), with a focus on accelerating action on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic towards SDG achievement by 2030.

The WSIS Forum represents the world's largest annual gathering of the 'ICT for development' multistakeholder community and is a global multistakeholder platform facilitating the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines for advancing sustainable development. The platform provides an opportunity for information exchange, knowledge creation and sharing of best practices, while identifying emerging trends and fostering partnerships.

The WSIS Forum builds upon the outcomes of the UN General Assembly Overall Review of the implementation of the WSIS outcomes (UNGA Resolution 70/125) that recognized the necessity of holding this Forum on an annual basis and called for close alignment between WSIS and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context, the WSIS Forum will leverage the WSIS-SDG Matrix and serve as a platform for discussing the role of ICTs as a means of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, with due regard to the global mechanism for follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (UNGA Resolution A/70/1).

The WSIS Forum is organized with the engagement of other United Nations Agencies, including FAO, ILO, ITC, UNDESA, UNEP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNODC, UPU, UN Women, WFP, WHO, WIPO, WMO and UN Regional Commissions.

Its format, agenda, and thematic focus are the result of an open consultation process with the involvement of all WSIS stakeholders. The Forum will build upon two tracks, the *High-Level Track*, consisting of policy statements, interactive high-level dialogues, a WSIS Prize ceremony, a ministerial round table, and the *Forum Track*, which will offer participants a series of WSIS Action Line facilitation meetings, country workshops, thematic workshops, training sessions, special tracks on various thematic areas, knowledge cafés, a Hackathon (ICTs and Older Persons) as well as an exhibition addressing issues that are critical to WSIS implementation and follow-up in a multistakeholder setting.

To ensure gender balance at the WSIS Forum 2021, we encourage all WSIS stakeholders to plan gender balanced representations and nominate women speakers for sessions and workshops, in particular the high-level segment.

Relevant documentation, the format and timeline, agenda and registration can be accessed at www.wsis.org/forum. We look forward to welcoming you to the WSIS Forum 2021.

Yours faithfully,

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Mr. Houlin Zhao
Secretary-General, ITU

Ms Audrey Azoulay
Director-General, UNESCO

Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi
Secretary-General, UNCTAD

Mr. Achim Steiner
Administrator, UNDP