

Summary

IGF 2025: Digital Cooperation for Development: UNGIS in Action

26 June 2025, 14:45-15:45 CEST

Workshop Room 3, Lillestrøm, Norway

UNGIS Vice-Chair, ITU

- Opened the session by welcoming participants and underlining the session's relevance in the lead-up to WSIS+20 review.
- Reiterated UNGIS's coordinating role in implementing WSIS outcomes and fostering digital cooperation across the UN system.
- Reaffirmed a commitment to stronger interlinkages between WSIS and IGF processes.

UNGIS Chair, UNESCO

- Outlined UNESCO's work on digital inclusion, governance of digital platforms, and implementation of the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, adopted by 193 Member States.
- Stressed the importance of human rights-based approaches, open digital ecosystems, and media/digital literacy as core elements of inclusive digital transformation.
- Reaffirmed UNESCO's commitment to capacity building, countering online hate speech, and contributing to WSIS+20 and GDC dialogues.
- Announced a UNESCO-led WSIS+20 event in June 2025 to support convergence between digital policy and human development goals.

UNGIS Vice-Chair, UNDP

- Reiterated the importance of DPI as a key enabler of inclusion and service delivery, especially at the country level.
- Highlighted collaboration with India during its G20 presidency and support for inclusive digital health infrastructure.
- Emphasized the need to build on existing platforms like WSIS and IGF rather than creating duplicative mechanisms for GDC implementation.
- Reinforced the role of field-based agencies in tackling last-mile digital access and supporting nationally owned digital transformation efforts.

UNGIS Vice-Chair, UNCTAD

- Announced that the WSIS+20 review process had been completed under the CSTD and will be submitted to the UNGA in December 2025.
- Stated that the UNGA resolution affirms UNGIS's role and tasks the group with integrating GDC objectives into WSIS action lines.
- Encouraged agencies to align their digital policy roadmaps with GDC principles and proposed a more proactive UNGIS platform beyond 2025.

UNGIS Vice-Chair, ECLAC

- Presented ECLAC's Digital Transformation Simulator, supporting evidence-based digital policymaking in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Outlined three pillars of ECLAC's 2026 Agenda: productive development, social well-being, and state transformation.
- Identified transversal focus areas: meaningful connectivity, digital governance, and AI.
- Noted ongoing working groups on data governance, AI, and digital economy in the region.

UNGIS members

WIPO

- Highlighted WIPO's global IP databases and the significant increase in AI-related patents (3,000% growth since 2010).
- Described support provided through Technology and Innovation Support Centers (TISCs) in over 90 countries.
- Discussed WIPO's role in frontier tech and IP discussions via AI-powered search tools and Patent Insight Reports.
- Noted ongoing contributions to digital innovation ecosystems through evidence-based IP policy support.

UNIDO

- Discussed AI applications in sustainable industrial development and smart manufacturing, including Centers of Excellence in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
- Highlighted the Scale-X program supporting AI-based innovations such as food loss detection tools developed in partnership with FAO.
- Emphasized inclusive digital transformation for SMEs through public-private partnerships.
- Confirmed UNIDO's co-leadership of the "Inclusive Digital Economy" track within the GDC framework.

UNU

- Outlined UNU's role as an independent think tank contributing to digital governance, city-level AI policy, and multistakeholder evidence generation.
- Reaffirmed collaboration with ITU on the AI for Good initiative and support for the UN SG's High-Level Advisory Body on AI.
- Emphasized UNU's presence in 14 countries and mission to translate research into policy implementation.

ESCAP

- Presented ESCAP's digital cooperation activities in the Asia-Pacific, including the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway and policy capacity support.
- Announced the next regional steering committee meeting in November 2025.
- Called for stronger regional engagement in GDC and WSIS+20 processes, particularly for LDCs and small island states.

Stakeholder Interventions

South Africa

- Commended UNGIS and UNECA for their support of Africa's digital transformation.
- Advocated continued alignment with regional digital policy initiatives post-2025.

Civil Society (India)

- Raised concerns regarding digital health exclusions in rural areas.
- Called for increased UN coordination with national governments to address connectivity and access gaps.

UNDP Response

- Reaffirmed its partnership with the Government of India and support for inclusive digital healthcare through DPI-focused initiatives.
- Highlighted that lessons from India are being shared globally as best practices.

Key Takeaways

- UNGIS members are aligning their strategic agendas to support the WSIS+20 review and GDC priorities.
- There is growing consensus on the need to leverage existing platforms (WSIS, IGF) for GDC implementation rather than create new structures.
- Coordination among UN agencies remains critical, especially in addressing digital divides, promoting AI ethics, and scaling digital public infrastructure.
- UNGIS's role may need to evolve from coordination to a more action-oriented platform to ensure inclusive, coherent, and measurable outcomes for digital development beyond 2025.