**Session Outcome Document**

**Digital Transformation for all: An Information Society that respects and protects human rights**

***Human Rights Due Diligence as a tool to advance responsible technology use and governance***

**African Union, European Union and UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**10 July 2025, 14h00-14h45**

[**https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/263**](https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/263)

**Key Issues discussed: Looking Beyond 2025**

* The international community is increasingly grappling with digital technologies and their impacts on people and planet. The Geneva Declaration of Principles declared the common desire and commitment to building a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, grounded in respecting and fully upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The WSIS+10 review recognized the role of human rights in the information society.
* Human rights present a pathway that can be used to enable the responsible and inclusive development and deployment of digital technologies whilst also identifying and addressing risks.
* The UN General Assembly called upon governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders to use human rights due diligence (HRDD) as a concrete way forward to reduce risks while enabling the benefits of digital technologies. The Global Digital Compact (GDC) has a strong commitment to integrate human rights into global digital transformation and has integrated human rights due diligence as a critical approach to preventing and addressing any adverse impact on human rights.
* In May 2024, the United Nations Executive Committee adopted Guidance for [Human Rights Due Diligence for Digital Technology Use](https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/digital-space-and-human-rights) for the UN System. Focusing on the private sector, the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/reference-publications/guiding-principles-business-and-human-rights) (UNGPs) are driving the integration of human rights due diligence across the tech life cycle, advancing the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS.
* The discussion aimed to explore how human rights due diligence can be better integrated into technology development and digital governance frameworks, specifically within the context of the WSIS+20 review process. The goal was to demonstrate that human rights considerations enhance rather than hinder technological innovation and business success, while providing practical guidance for implementation.

**Tangible Outcomes of the session**

* **Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) as a Framework for Technology**: Digital transformation must center human digital dignity – ensuring that individuals are not only protected online but also empowered, represented, and respected in all digital interactions. The discussion emphasized HRDD as a systematic approach to identify, prevent, and mitigate human rights risks in technology development and deployment, with speakers describing it as a “compass” rather than an obstacle to innovation, providing a framework to surface hidden harms and make invisible impacts visible in technology development.
* **Business Case for Human Rights in Technology**: Panellists argued that respecting human rights not only complies with corporate responsibility but is also economically beneficial, with trust being fundamental to the data economy – companies that respect user rights build greater trust and achieve more sustainable business models.
* **Implementation Strategies and Best Practices**: The conversation covered practical approaches including embedding human rights considerations early in product development, requiring management support for human rights policies, conducting continuous training, and using external audits through multi-stakeholder initiatives.
* **Integration of Human Rights into WSIS+20 Review**: Participants discussed how to strengthen human rights language in the WSIS+20 review process, emphasizing that human rights should be “by default” rather than an add-on, and calling for explicit inclusion of action-oriented language on Human Rights and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
* **Addressing Digital Divides and Vulnerable Populations**: The discussion highlighted the need to focus on those left behind, particularly the 2.6 billion people still unconnected globally, with special attention to children and youth, elders, persons with disabilities, women, Indigenous communities, and other vulnerable groups in the context of AI and emerging technologies.

**Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Action Plan for the WSIS+20 Review and Beyond**

* The original WSIS vision of people-centered, inclusive, development-oriented information society inherently embodies human rights principles and should guide the review process, translating human rights principles into actions.
* The WSIS+20 co-facilitators committed to strengthening human rights language in the zero draft of the WSIS+20 outcome document, building on progressive language from recent UN documents like the Global Digital Compact.
* Participants called to actively engage with written inputs for the zero draft preparation process.
* Participants called for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to have a more prominent role in future discussions of the WSIS+20, and for the improvement and strengthening of the WSIS architecture for upholding human rights on the Internet and in digital governance.
* Participants called for i) the development of a Digital Dignity Index, a rights-based global framework to measure the impact of digital policies and technologies on personal agency, data sovereignty, inclusion, and well-being – especially for marginalized and digitally disconnected communities; and ii) the drafting of an AI Rights and Inclusion Charter, affirming digital personhood, algorithmic accountability, and equitable access to AI benefits.
* Discussions highlighted the need for more case studies and documented examples of businesses making human rights-based decisions to strengthen the argument that human rights is good for business.

