Global adoption, global progress: Managing the challenges of AI inclusion

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

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https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/189

1. Key Issues Discussed: Looking Beyond 2025

- **Connectivity is the foundation for inclusion** – Speakers underscored the persistent global gap in meaningful Internet access, particularly in Africa, noting that without connectivity, the benefits of AI remain inaccessible. Bridging this divide requires investment in both physical infrastructure and supportive digital ecosystems.
- **Soft infrastructure and policy ecosystems are often underrecognized** – Beyond connectivity, trusted platforms, safe online environments, and clear regulatory frameworks are key to sustaining digital inclusion. The session highlighted the importance of investing in these elements alongside physical infrastructure.
- **Inclusive, representative data is critical** – Speakers highlighted the need for equitable, diverse datasets that reflect local languages, contexts, and realities. Persistent data gaps in many regions limit AI's usefulness and inclusivity. They emphasized expanding open-access data platforms and advancing responsible, community-driven data stewardship to ensure AI serves all populations.
- **Skills and capacity development must scale** – Speakers emphasized the urgent need to scale skills and capacity development to keep pace with rapid AI advancements. Building competencies from early education through to workforce transition is essential to ensure that users, developers, and regulators can effectively engage with emerging technologies.
- **Agile and harmonized governance is essential** – Regulatory fragmentation presents significant challenges. An adaptive, innovation-friendly regulatory environment that promotes interoperability and cross-border data flows was identified as critical to accelerating inclusive digital transformation.
- **Multistakeholder collaboration is indispensable** – Speakers emphasised that bridging the digital divides requires joint efforts from governments, the private sector, civil society, and academia. Partnerships, such as those demonstrated in climate risk prediction and inclusive AI initiatives, highlight how cross-border and cross-sector collaboration can drive real-world impact and build trust.
- **Empowering users as co-creators of AI is critical** – Enabling users to participate in designing and innovating AI technologies, rather than solely consuming them, was identified as essential for sustainable digital development.

2. Tangible Outcomes of the Session

- **Key achievements:** The session reinforced strong alignment among diverse stakeholders on the urgent need to prioritize connectivity, inclusive datasets, AI skills development, and agile, interoperable regulatory frameworks as foundational building blocks for inclusive AI.
- **Announcements/launch during the session:** ICC announced the release of its policy paper, Achieving Inclusive AI (released 8 July), which outlines practical recommendations to promote inclusive AI benefiting both business and society.
- **Agreements/commitments as an outcome of the session:** Speakers and participants expressed a shared commitment to advancing inclusive AI.

3. Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Action Plan for WSIS+20 Review and Beyond

Governments, businesses, and stakeholders should:

- **Prioritise comprehensive digital infrastructure investments** that integrate both physical connectivity (such as broadband networks and cloud access) and essential soft infrastructure, including inclusive policy frameworks, digital safety measures, and trusted platforms. This holistic approach is crucial to ensure that inclusion is sustainable and addresses not only access but also meaningful and secure use of technology.
- **Scale capacity-building initiatives** by embedding AI and digital skills education throughout formal education systems and workforce development programs. This will equip individuals across all sectors with the technical expertise and regulatory understanding needed to participate effectively in AI innovation, governance, and usage.
- **Expand equitable data ecosystems** through promoting open data access, responsible data stewardship, and targeted investment in developing datasets that are diverse, representative, and inclusive of multiple languages and local contexts. Such datasets are foundational for creating AI systems that serve all populations fairly and effectively.
- **Foster agile and harmonized regulatory environments** that support technological innovation while ensuring interoperability and secure cross-border data flows. Regulatory frameworks should be flexible enough to manage risks without stifling growth, adapting swiftly to the fast pace of AI developments and promoting international cooperation.
- **Strengthen multistakeholder collaboration** by encouraging sustained partnerships among governments, private sector actors, academia, and civil society. Collaborative efforts are essential to co-design inclusive solutions, bridge digital divides, and enable the responsible deployment of AI technologies that benefit diverse communities worldwide.