Session Outcome Document

Strong Sustainability by Design: People-and Place-Centered Policy and the SDGs

IEEE

Monday, 07 July 2025/12:15-13:45

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/149

Key Issues discussed: Looking Beyond 2025 (5–8 bullet points highlighting achievements, emerging trends, challenges in 20 years, figures, success stories and opportunities for WSIS beyond 2025)

- Through participatory dialogue and shared readouts, the session surfaced insights and pathways for embedding sustainability-by-design into real-world systems–bridging global goals and global standards with specific local community-centered issues, goals and opportunities to arrive at local context-based solutions that align with the WSIS Action Lines. This was a unique multi-stakeholder opportunity for policymakers, technical professionals, civil society, standards experts and others to co-create knowledge on how to develop local sustainable solutions and scale sustainability through standards, innovation and policy alignment.

- The discussion included key issues around strong sustainability principles, technical standards, and policy approaches that are people and place centered, and that can work together to advance progress toward the UN SDGs looking at the local issues in order to grow and map solutions at the national and international level, such as:

    - AI and the energy it uses where discussed, and the depletion of resources by frontier technologies. It brings inequality. This should be addressed by government and regulations, but standards can offer a way forward.

    - e-waste, direct and indirect impacts were discussed, incl. the ability/right to repair and make sure that hardware can carry new software.

    - Oil & Gas extraction, which needs to be sustainable at the local levels and technology can be instrumental in that. Oil & Gas technology shall not aim at maximizing extraction, but at safeguarding local communities.

    - Polarization of the debate. Sustainability needs to be on the political agenda of all countries at the local levels. Increasing awareness and work of not-for-profit organisations, such as IEEE, at the local, section level is important.

    - Increase awareness of the sustainability footprint of products/services we use and what the degree of responsibilities of the different parties involved is. Technical

standards can offer a way forward, becoming norms or soft law and being widely accepted.

- New methodologies for Life cycle assessment based on new standards are needed. Environmental Impact Assessment should be based on new standards: Standards are not developed by Government and Technical communities, but in a multi-stakeholder approach. Big tech companies need to be pooled to work on these standards, without having them setting those standards unilaterally.

- Looking at sustainability issues through the lens of the local community in order to identify the key issues and needs to support the advancement of the global sustainability ecosystem and address the WSIS Action Line implementation to meet the 2030 goals.

Tangible Outcomes of the session (Key achievements, announcements/launch during the session, agreements/commitments as an outcome of the session)

- Table outcomes included:

  - The commitment to standards, technology design and local governance as they can advance strong sustainability by addressing regenerative systems, ecological integrity and long-term resilience; enable locally grounded solutions reflecting place-based realities and priorities. These can support measurable progress toward the SDGs.

  - It was agreed that standards and policy tools can work together to scale solutions globally while remaining grounded locally.

  - Opportunities for collaborative initiatives were identified that help align standards development with sustainability targets.

  - Actionable insights were highlighted that help inform the IEEE Planet Positive 2030 sustainability initiative and its engagement with communities.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Action Plan for the WSIS+20 Review and Beyond (2–5 bullet points presenting concrete actions and guidance to inform the WSIS+20 Review by UNGA and build the multistakeholder vision of WSIS beyond 2025)

- Concrete actions and key recommendations related to SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure); SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities); SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production); and SDG 13 (climate action) included:

  - Poor e-waste management and water pollution can be addressed if local governments partnered with youth groups, and offered incentives. National policy should support producer responsibility, where sellers help collect old devices. Public education

through radio, schools, and social media should emphasize e-waste dangers and solutions. This approach creates green jobs, protects health, and promotes a circular economy. It's low-cost, people-powered, and scalable.

- To adapt strong sustainability by design to local social and cultural contexts, we need to start by redefining what 'sustainability' means to our people. In many communities, sustainability is embedded in our traditions: we fix before we throw, we share land and water, and we respect nature.

- When strong sustainability by design is applied at the local level, communities can become not just passive beneficiaries, but active creators of solutions. It can lead to cleaner, healthier environments because the solutions are culturally accepted and designed for long-term use. It can also open up opportunities for job creation, especially for youth and women whether in green construction, local recycling, or sustainable agriculture. It can strengthen social cohesion, as people work together around shared values and community-driven projects.

- A mindset shift is required, because when sustainability is not seen as a foreign idea, it becomes part of everyday life. This transformation builds real resilience, pride, and dignity from the grassroots up and that's where true development begins.