Session Outcome Document

AFRICA ICT FUTURE: THE ROLE OF MULTISTAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT BEYOND WSIS+20

AfICTA - Africa ICT Alliance

Thursday, 10 July 09:00 – 09:45 (Geneva)

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/329

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)

Session Summary

The session underscored the critical importance of multistakeholder engagement in Africa's digital transformation, especially in the aftermath of WSIS+20. Africa continues to face significant challenges, including low internet penetration (39%), weak cybersecurity maturity (29.1%, UNECA), and limited data infrastructure (<1% of global datacentre), despite constituting 19% of the global population. Speakers emphasized that addressing these gaps requires inclusive collaboration between governments, private sector, academia, civil society, and the technical community. The Sao Paulo guidelines were highlighted as a useful framework for localizing inclusive governance across the continent. Real progress, they agreed, must shift from policy promises and pilot programs to actionable strategies and implementation.

Youth and women emerged as central to Africa's digital future, with calls for increased investment in digital skills, innovation funding, and policy inclusion. Programs like SheCode.ai and GirlHype were cited as successful models of youth and women-led innovation when supported adequately. There was also a strong push for Africa to build homegrown, scalable tech solutions through improved R&D and academia-industry partnerships. The development of secure digital identity systems, like OSIA[1], was praised as a model for successful multistakeholder collaboration. Ultimately, the session concluded that trust, inclusion, and shared responsibility must define Africa's approach to shaping its digital future.

Tangible Outcomes of the session
1. **Urgency of Digital Inclusion:** The session underscored Africa's urgent digital needs in respect to low Internet penetration (39%), weak cybersecurity (29.1%), and less than 1% of global data centers despite constituting 19% of the global population. This highlights the need for immediate, inclusive digital action.

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[1] OSIA: Open Standard for Identity APIs www.osia.io

2. **Multistakeholder Collaboration:** It was emphasized that governments alone cannot drive ICT growth. Inclusive collaboration across government, private sector, academia, civil society, and the technical community is essential to localize and implement digital policies effectively, guided by frameworks like the São Paulo Multistakeholder guidelines.

3. **Youth and Women as Catalysts:** Youth and women were identified as key to Africa's ICT future. Their inclusion in policy-making and innovation through initiatives like SheCode.ai and GirlHype demonstrated how targeted support can drive scalable digital impact.

4. **Shift to Innovation and Production:** Africa must move from tech consumption to innovation. Limited R&D in local ICT firms was flagged as a barrier. Greater academia-industry collaboration and local innovation are critical to building globally competitive solutions.

5. **Digital Identity and Trust:** The OSIA framework was celebrated as a proof of Africa's capacity to lead in digital identity standards. Participants highlighted digital trust, human rights, and inclusive governance as cornerstones for successful regional digital transformation.

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)

1. **Establish ICT Councils:** Countries should set up national multistakeholder ICT councils to co-create and monitor digital strategies, ensuring all sectors especially youth and civil society are involved from policy design to implementation.

2. **Build Talent Pipelines:** Develop digital talent pipelines from early education to employment, focusing on high-demand skills like AI, cybersecurity, and data science to meet market needs and close the skills gap.

3. **Fund Inclusive Innovation:** Increase funding for youth and women-led tech initiatives. Ensure that financing is accessible, transparent, and responsive to the unique barriers these groups face in the digital space.

4. **Secure Digital Identity Systems:** Promote adoption of secure, interoperable digital identity systems, aligned with global standards like OSIA and backed by civil society to protect user rights and enable cross-border access.

5. **Strengthen Research and Infrastructure:** Boost R&D through industry-academia collaboration and close digital infrastructure gaps like broadband and electricity by replicating inclusive models such as Nigeria's Digital Bridge.