

SUMMARY

WSIS+20 Overall Review multistakeholder consultation with co-facilitators

9 July, 16:45-17:45 CEST

Room K, Palexpo and remote

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/455>

The session convened all stakeholders for consultations with the WSIS+20 co-facilitators, H.E. Ms. Suela Janina, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations, and H.E. Mr. Ekitela Lokaale, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations. The session began with Ms. Gitanjali Sah, Strategy and Policy Coordinator at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), presenting the joint preparatory process for the WSIS+20 Review. This process is facilitated by key UN organizations, including ITU, UNCTAD/CSTD, UNESCO, UNDP, and UN DESA. Her presentation highlighted the key milestones of events and activities leading up to the WSIS+20 overall review by the United Nations General Assembly, and showcased the co-facilitators' indicative roadmap outlining essential steps.

The session was moderated by Ms. Anita Gurumurthy, Executive Director, IT for Change, India and Dr. Konstantinos Komaitis, resident senior fellow, Digital Forensic Research Lab at the Atlantic Council.

The session also benefited from the presence of Mr. Bob Rae, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). He expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate and underscored the close connection between Geneva and New York in advancing key UN consultations. He emphasized the importance of recent discussions with various stakeholders on topics such as the future of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the WSIS outcome and its upcoming review, its linkages with other processes including the GDC, emerging technologies, capacity building for the Global South, financing mechanisms, and the potential need for measurable targets.

The President of ECOSOC highlighted the critical significance of the digital economy, digital society, and addressing the digital divide within the UN's ongoing processes. He appreciated the opportunity to engage with Member States and civil society, valuing the chance to listen rather than speak extensively.

Below is a summary of key points from the stakeholder consultation session held at the WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025. The session brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including Member States, civil society, the technical community, academia, international organizations, and the private sector. The primary objective was to engage directly with the WSIS+20 co-facilitators, share perspectives, provide input, and discuss expectations for the WSIS+20 review and the forthcoming High-Level Meeting at the United Nations General Assembly in December 2025.

Key Outcomes

1. Preserving and Strengthening the Multistakeholder Model

WSIS has long embraced a multistakeholder approach since its inception, and this foundational principle continues to be strengthened and expanded through the ongoing WSIS+20 review process. This review actively involves a diverse array of stakeholders, fostering deeper collaboration and greater inclusivity across sectors, regions, and

communities. This model remains essential for advancing effective, sustainable, and globally inclusive digital cooperation.

There is a strong commitment to maintaining fair and equitable representation that reflects global diversity—including balanced regional participation, gender equality, and a broad spectrum of expertise and experience. Such inclusivity is critical to accurately capturing the complex realities of the digital divide and ensuring that contributions are comprehensive, balanced, and actionable.

Questions were raised about the role and vision of the Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board (IMSB), an informal mechanism established to support an open and responsive twenty-year review of the outcomes of WSIS. The Co-Facilitators informed that the IMSB was formed with careful attention to fair regional and gender representation. They stated that the WSIS+20 Review process adopts a forward-looking approach, building on previously agreed language from past WSIS documents as a baseline, without reopening settled debates. At the same time, they noted that agreed language could be revisited if stakeholders consider it necessary to reflect recent developments. The co-facilitators also emphasized their commitment to an open and intensive process, fully aware of the tight timeline and high expectations.

Broader consultations have been conducted at key events such as UNESCO's June gathering in Paris, IGF 2025 in Norway, and the WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025 in Geneva. These occasions provided opportunities to engage with the dynamic and vibrant WSIS community, whose contributions continue to enrich the ongoing review.

The annual IGF and WSIS Forum remain vital platforms for ongoing multistakeholder engagement and dialogue.

2. Comprehensive and Transparent Preparatory Process

The transparent and open nature of the WSIS+20 preparatory process was welcomed, with strong emphasis on the importance of maintaining an inclusive consultation framework throughout. Questions were raised about the specific dates and milestones outlined in the indicative roadmap leading up to the draft outcome document. The WSIS+20 co-facilitators reiterated the need to strike a balance between maintaining flexibility and providing clarity on key timelines to enable effective preparation. They announced an extension of the input submission deadline for the elements paper, originally set for 15 July, now extended to 25 July, with an update on next steps expected by the end of July. The preparation of the zero draft is scheduled for August, followed by a period dedicated to reviewing and proposing concrete language.

Stakeholders recommended that member states hear directly from different groups throughout the negotiation process, suggesting options such as livestreaming and regular summaries to ensure continued engagement. There were repeated calls for defining clear and predictable consultation dates, including virtual options, to enhance coordination and participation. The importance of scheduling informal discussions well in advance—particularly those planned for the autumn period—was emphasized to enable inclusive and accessible engagement.

Concerns were also raised regarding practical barriers to participation, particularly for civil society organizations and individuals from vulnerable or underserved communities. Specific mention was made of challenges affecting migrants, refugees, and those from the Global South. Visa restrictions—especially for meetings in New York and Geneva—were noted as limiting physical attendance. While virtual formats help improve accessibility, they still exclude those facing digital access challenges, reflecting persistent digital divides.

The WSIS+20 Co-facilitators highlighted that consultations have been designed to accommodate multiple time zones and use hybrid formats, including remote participation, to reduce barriers and encourage broad engagement. It was informed that summaries of the consultations are made available [online](#). To address travel-related challenges, the Co-facilitators underscored the importance of hybrid options to ensure global accessibility.

While acknowledging the limited timeframe for discussions, many underlined the need for a forward-looking and action-oriented review focused on advancing digital development and bridging the digital divide, without reopening previously settled language.

Coordination between Geneva and New York-based processes was seen as essential to ensuring alignment. It was suggested that the roadmap be further refined with concrete milestones to support a coordinated and inclusive lead-up to the WSIS+20 Overall Review by the General Assembly.

3. Regional and Global Engagement

Regional consultations remain a key component of the preparatory process, providing an avenue for incorporating diverse and context-specific perspectives. The importance of strengthening National and Regional Internet Governance Forums (NRIs and IGFs) was emphasized, particularly to address participation barriers such as visa constraints, travel costs, and digital access limitations.

The need for enhanced cooperation among global digital initiatives—including WSIS and IGF was highlighted. Stakeholders called for concrete input on what has worked well in WSIS architecture over the past 20 years and where improvements are needed. There was also a call for greater openness, cooperation, and joint consultations among stakeholders and member states to maintain a spirit of inclusive dialogue.

The annual Open Consultation Process of the WSIS Forum, which collects input from all stakeholder groups across regions, continues to serve as a valuable mechanism for broad and inclusive participation.

4. Avoiding Duplication and Fragmentation

There was a shared concern about multiplying forums or splitting participation across multiple platforms. Stakeholders stressed the importance of maintaining coherence and avoiding parallel or overlapping processes, particularly in relation to the Global Digital Compact. Participants agreed that alignment should avoid duplication and reinforce WSIS as the primary platform for digital cooperation. Emphasis was placed on aligning with ongoing processes and leveraging existing mechanisms.

The WSIS+20 co-facilitators, acting under the delegated authority of the President of the General Assembly (PGA), confirmed that no separate consultations will be held outside the ongoing official process. They regularly provide updates to the PGA to ensure alignment and coherence throughout the preparatory process. Further, they emphasized examples of fostering multistakeholderism at the national level and encouraged mutual support and collective ownership of the process. They highlighted the importance of openness and collaboration to sustain the multistakeholder spirit and stressed that WSIS must continue to evolve to remain fit for the future.

Stakeholders underscored the importance of taking into account outcomes from related initiatives, including the outcomes of NetMundial. These inputs should inform the review while respecting the unique mandate and history of WSIS.

Conclusion

The stakeholder consultation session brought together participants from various sectors and regions. The multistakeholder approach remains a cornerstone of the WSIS+20 process, supported by transparent, coordinated, and adaptable engagement mechanisms. Participants highlighted the critical need to avoid duplication while continuing to advance digital inclusion and address emerging technologies. The WSIS Action Lines have stood the test of time and continue to remain agile in meeting new challenges. Stakeholders are encouraged to actively engage and contribute to the ongoing consultations for the WSIS+20 Overall Review.

