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WSIS+20

HIGH-LEVEL EVENT 2025

7 — 11 July 2025
Palexpo, Geneva

High-Level Track Facilitators Session Summaries

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WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025: Summaries from the High-Level Track Facilitators

Introduction

At the WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025, moderated Leaders TalkX took place on the 9th and 11th of July. These 13 sessions, moderated by High-Level Track facilitators nominated and identified by WSIS stakeholders, gathered High-ranking officials of the WSIS Stakeholder community, representing the Government, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia, and International Organizations.

A list of High-Level Participants is available: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/HighLevel

WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025: Chair

H.E. Mr. Solly Malatsi
Minister
Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT)
South Africa (Republic of)

Moderation: High-level Track Facilitators (HLTFs)

All the Leaders TalkX sessions were moderated by High-level Track Facilitators nominated by the different stakeholder types, i.e. Civil Society, Academia, Private Sector and Technical Community.

Session	Photo	Name	Title	Organization
Forging partnerships for purpose: advancing the digital for development landscape https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378		Ms. Amrita Choudhury	Director	CCAOI
Information and communication infrastructure: a foundation for universal, sustainable and affordable access https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379		Ms. Valeria Betancourt	APC Global Governance Advocacy Lead	APC
Accelerating global access to information and knowledge in the digital era https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/417		Prof. Abdulkarim Oloyede	Full Professor of Wireless Telecommunications	University of Ilorin
Future-ready: enhancing skills for a digital tomorrow https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/419		Ms. Cheryl Miller	Vice President, Digital Policy	US Council for International Business

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Towards a safer connected world: collaborative strategies to strengthen digital trust and cyber resilience https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/421		Prof. Lucien CASTEX	Advisor to the CEO, Internet Governance and Society	AFNIC
Building inclusive and knowledge-driven digital societies https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/430		Ms. Cerys Stansfield	Analyst, Global Government Advisory	Access Partnership
ICT application to unlock the full potential of digital - Part I https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/427		Ms. Meni Anastasiadou	Digital Policy Manager	International Chamber of Commerce
Local to global: preserving culture and language in a digital era https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/428		Ms. Caroline Vuillemin	General Director	Fondation Hirondelle
When policy meets progress: paving the way for a fit for future digital world https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/426		Dr. Lidia Stępińska-Ustasiak	President	Polistratos Institute

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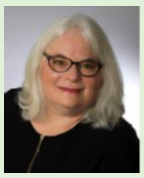
Moral pixels: painting an ethical landscape in the information society https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/431		Ms. Anriette Esterhuysen	Senior Advisor Internet Governance	Association for Progressive Communications
Partnership pivot: rethinking cooperation in the digital era https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/433		Ms. Lori Schulman	Senior Director, Internet Policy	International Trademark Association (INTA)
Click to govern: inclusive and efficient e-services https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/436		Ms. Yuhan Zheng	PhD candidate, National University of Ireland (Geography); Co-chair, IEEE Young Professional Climate and Sustainability Subcommittee (CSSC) for External Affairs	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)
ICT application to unlock the full potential of digital – Part II https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/438		Ms. Daniella Esi Darlington	Lead, Responsible AI Ethics and Governance	ITU Youth Advisory Board member, Alleina.co

Leaders TalkX: Forging partnerships for purpose: advancing the digital for development landscape

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Ms. Amrita Choudhury

Introduction

The discussion highlighted how digital technologies, along with multistakeholder and multi sectoral partnerships, innovative measures are being adopted to advance socio economic development in countries for development of societies at large in the last 20 years.

Achievements of 20 years of WSIS

The opportunities ushered in by digital technologies was discussed at length. Several examples were citied of the transformation brought in by digital technologies in the last twenty years of WSIS, especially towards connecting people, improving both the demand and supply side of internet adoption, building capacity, providing e-services to citizens, connecting rural schools, encouraging start-ups, adoption of innovative funding mechanisms, public private partnerships to empower people and communities.

Fresh priorities

Closing the digital divide including gender digital divide, providing affordable and meaningful access, ensuring all citizens get access to the citizen centric services, more capacity building continues to be the main priority. Reducing the development divide between countries, facilitating developing countries to leapfrog this technological divide by leveraging tools such as digital public infrastructures, digital IDs, payments etc. needs prioritization. Addressing concerns arising from new technologies such as AI, cyber security concerns, protecting the rights of citizens need urgent focus.

Emerging trends

AI and other technologies have the capability to enhance innovation and be used to address infrastructural challenges of countries. On the other hand, the risks posed by emerging technologies such as AI, other cyber threats will continue to pose challenges that need to be addressed.

Opportunities

Adoption and use of digital technologies including responsible use of AI provide immense opportunity to uplift communities and countries. For developing countries, this can help to reduce the technological divide. Links to WSIS Action Lines: the discussions highlighted alignment to several WSIS Action Lines such as C1, C3, C4, C5, C7.

Case Examples

Some of the examples shared include, embedding the use of digital technologies into national strategies, such as the Internet for All by 2030 adopted by Mozambique to promote health-care, public transportation, education, and better government services through interconnected and interoperable state information systems. The Sustainable Integrated Amazon Program (PAIS), aiming to expand access, capacity in the Amazonian area of Brazil. Andorra's Centre for Well-being and Digital Skills that aims to build digital

inclusion by strengthening individual capacities of the citizens. Innovative funding mechanisms were shared such as setting up the digital development fund in Tunisia, incentives to start-ups, etc.

Key challenges

While much have been achieved in last 20 years, concerns were expressed that nearly 40% of the world still needs to be connected. Additionally, even for those connected, the challenges of ensuring meaningful and affordable connectivity persists.

The growing development divide between developed and developing nations, misinformation, cybersecurity concerns leading to erosion of trust online, challenges ushered in by emerging technologies such as AI continue to be challenges across the world.

Additionally, several challenges that hinder the advancement of a unified and effective digital for development landscape were cited. These include fragmented initiatives especially when they operate in silos without a cohesive strategy leads to disjointed efforts; lack of coordination mechanisms that often results in duplicated efforts leads to gaps in service delivery and conflicting objectives was cited as another challenge; and differing mandates and priorities among entities including funding streams, and strategic approaches was observed to be another challenge.

In terms of solutions to address the challenges of connecting the unconnected and for digital inclusion, collaboration between countries, public and private partnerships was stressed to be important. Governments, private sector, civil society, technical community and research institutions need to work together to develop policies and regulations that encourage innovation and contribute to reducing the digital divide.

The need for cohesive multi-stakeholder collaboration in the digital for development ecosystem to enhance effectiveness and avoid fragmented initiatives and greater collaboration amongst stakeholders was emphasized.

At the national level, anchoring all digital initiatives to clearly defined country priorities and establishing mechanisms for aligning international and local strategies, establishing shared frameworks and common platforms for data, standards, and best practices was stressed.

It was opined that cross-sector partnerships that facilitate building alliances between governments, donors, businesses and civil society will facilitate the pooling of resources, align timelines and coordinate delivery. By unifying around shared objectives, can reduce wasteful overlap, close service gaps and drive more focused, sustainable development outcomes, which leads to a cohesive digital future.

Vision for WSIS beyond 2025

In terms of vision for WSIS beyond 2025, closing the digital divide, reducing the development and technological divide between countries, more capacity building, addressing concerns arising from new technologies such as AI, is needed.

Leaving no one behind, equal access to knowledge, connectivity and equal opportunities should be the mantra.

It was agreed that transformation cannot be driven by the Government alone. It is a shared challenge and needs the active engagement of the private sector, international organizations, civil society, technical community, academia and every individual citizen. Apart from good governance, nuanced regulation, and public private collaboration are essential levers to move forward.

It was emphasized that today when technology far outpaces regulations, going ahead the mandate of the WSIS needs to be more agile, inclusive, accountable and measurable.

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To summarize, while we have achieved a lot in the last twenty years of WSIS, if we want to uplift communities and societies across the globe, especially from the global south and ensure sustainable development, it is essential to renew the WSIS mandate and ensure all stakeholders work together and forge creative ways to use digital technologies for social good to build and equitable society we all aspire for.

Leaders TalkX: Information and communication infrastructure: a foundation for universal, sustainable and affordable access

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Ms. Valeria Betancourt

Introduction

With more than 2.6 billion people still offline, many of whom reside in remote, rural and under-served areas, communications and information infrastructure is the key factor for digital inclusion through universal, sustainable and affordable access. The Leaders TalkX2, with a focus on Information and communication infrastructure: a foundation for universal, sustainable and affordable access was held on 9 July 2025 as part of the agenda of the WSIS+20 High Level Event. It explored progress made on the field.

Achievements of 20 years of WSIS

Affordable, universal, resilient infrastructure as well as meaningful connectivity that is linguistically representative are now recognized as baselines that all countries must aspire to. Solutions for making information and communication infrastructure accessible are also recognized as crucial priorities in the framework of the WSIS+20 review.

Fresh priorities

As social and public services and access to markets become digitalised and platformed, the question of what happens next when connectivity is provided is key. Digital literacy, local content, localised/contextual innovation and empowerment of specific groups along with improved institutional capacity (in terms of capabilities) of the government to maintain infrastructures and deliver digital services have to be addressed. Also, capabilities to protect people's personal data. Governments also need to come up with regulatory frameworks that are adapted to particular realities of their countries, addressing persistent challenges but also giving space to innovations that can enable people to exercise their digital age rights and achieve development objectives. Platformed services and solutions can become an exclusionary mechanism if local connectivity fails and if they are not connected to ensuring meaningful access. Setting targets and developing indicators for measuring real impact is needed. There needs to be appropriate international support for local communities to build their own language models, reflecting their right to cultural autonomy. How these new innovation infrastructures can be imagined is a fresh priority that encourages pluralistic visions of what emerging technologies can do.

Emerging trends

Corporate walled gardens are taking away from the serendipity of the internet, hollowing out the diversity of the digital public sphere and pushing global to local democracy into a state of permanent crisis. Many instances of local initiatives are proposing community governed infrastructural alternatives - digital commons like decentralised social media protocols and community networks.

Opportunities

Progress made in the adoption of different approaches for developing information and communication infrastructure is a basis for promoting South-South collaborations. Universal telecommunications service funds, where they exist, continue to be a central pillar for digital inclusion in the global South.

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Key challenges

The right to internet access is seen by many states today as a basic right - this means, the fruits of being connected are inherent to the right to access. Unfortunately, the divides in connectivity infrastructure create a graded system of access, in which sophisticated access is available to a negligible proportion of elites, leaving the vast majority to poor quality connectivity that does not enhance the quality of their life, bring well-being or open up new opportunities. This inequality in opportunity is directly a function of unequal infrastructural distribution in the world. This needs urgent action through public financing initiatives. In addition, progress made in investment, cooperation, and coordination, guided by the original WSIS vision, remains uneven. Fragmentation derived from divergence from globally accepted technical norms is resulting in threats to the internet's core functionality.

Links to WSIS Action Lines

Action Line C1: Common standards for digital public goods that emphasize democratic ownership and control, and transparent and accountable governance of digital public infrastructure.

Action Line C2: Universal access to meaningful connectivity, and steps to dismantle the walled gardens of private platform services, promote interoperable platform architectures for enabling market competition, address fragmentation of network standards, and foster the development of multiple and diverse technologies.

Action Line C11: The +20 review is an opportunity to review shared responsibilities and renew a common commitment to safeguarding an open, globally interoperable internet for all.

Vision for WSIS beyond 2025

An international order where internet access enables the right of all peoples and nations to a flourishing digital future where the planetary boundaries are respected and connectivity and meaningful access are enablers of human dignity, central lever to sustainable development, social inclusion, and economic opportunity and a foundation for dynamic economic ecosystems that enhance global competitiveness.

Leaders TalkX: Accelerating global access to information and knowledge in the digital era

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Prof. Abdulkarim Oloyede

Introduction

The WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025 featured the session Leaders TalkX 3: Accelerating Global Access to Information and Knowledge in the Digital Era, held on 9 July 2025. Moderated by Prof. Abdulkarim Oloyede, the session brought together ministers and leaders from Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia, Russia, Somalia, Türkiye, and INDOTEL from the Dominican Republic to discuss progress, challenges, and future priorities in bridging the digital divide. The dialogue emphasized the centrality of WSIS Action Line C3 (Access to Information and Knowledge) and underscored the need for inclusive, multistakeholder approaches to ensure no one is left behind in the digital age.

Achievements of 20 years of WSIS

Over the past two decades, WSIS has catalyzed significant advancements in digital access and inclusion. Key achievements highlighted by panelists included:

- **Infrastructure Expansion**: Countries like Russia reported 90% household broadband penetration, while Indonesia's Palapa Ring project extended connectivity to remote regions.
- **Policy Frameworks**: Somalia's National Digital Inclusion Policy and Cambodia's Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework exemplify institutional commitments to equitable access.
- **Capacity Building**: Ghana's One Million Coders Program and Indonesia's Digital Talent Scholarship illustrate investments in human capital to harness digital opportunities.

Fresh priorities

Emerging priorities identified by leaders included:

- **Inclusive Governance**: Multistakeholder collaboration (Action Line C1) to address disparities, as seen in Ghana's public-private partnerships.
- **Localized Solutions**: Community-driven initiatives like Cambodia's Technology Centers and Somalia's grassroots programs for women and youth.
- **Emerging Technologies**: AI integration (e.g., Russia's language models) and 5G rollout (Türkiye's 2026 target) to future-proof economies.

Emerging trends

- **AI and Digital Public Goods:** Russia's AI-powered government services and Cambodia's Khmer-to-Braille tool demonstrated technology's transformative potential.
- **Satellite Connectivity:** Russia's planned high-orbit satellites and Indonesia's High Throughput Satellite aim to bridge last-mile gaps.
- **Regulatory Innovation**: Indonesia's PP TUNAS regulation highlighted cross-sectoral coordination for sustainable digital transformation.

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Opportunities

- **South-South Cooperation**: Knowledge-sharing among Global South nations (e.g., Ghana-UAE AI partnership) to reduce dependency on advanced economies.
- **Affordability Measures**: Subsidized devices and services (Somalia, Dominican Republic) to lower access barriers.
- **Digital Literacy**: Türkiye's nationwide training programs emphasized skills as a cornerstone of inclusion.

Key challenges

- **Persistent Divides**: Geographic (Indonesia's archipelago), gender (Somalia's focus on women), and economic disparities remain hurdles.
- **Funding Gaps**: Russia noted reluctance among developed nations to share technologies and finance equitable access.
- **Fragmentation**: Indonesia's PP TUNAS highlighted the need for aligned policies to avoid duplicated efforts.

Links to WSIS Action Lines

The session reinforced the relevance of WSIS Action Lines, particularly:

- **C1 (Multistakeholder Governance)**: Ghana's partnerships and Indonesia's participatory policymaking.
- **C3 (Access to Information)**: Cambodia's open-data policies and Türkiye's infrastructure investments.
- **C7 (ICT Applications)**: AI and e-government solutions (Russia, Dominican Republic).

Case Examples

- **Cambodia**: Community Technology Centres provide rural access to internet and training.
- **Ghana**: Public-private collaborations (e.g., Huawei, MTN) drive ICT sector growth.
- **Somalia**: National Digital Inclusion Policy targets women, youth, and rural communities with measurable goals.

Vision for WSIS beyond 2025

Panellists called for:

- **Extended WSIS Mandate**: Russia advocated for a renewed 10-year WSIS process to consolidate gains.
- **UN-Centric Governance**: Strengthening ITU and UN agencies to regulate ICTs equitably.
- **Holistic Inclusion**: Beyond connectivity, addressing affordability, literacy, and multilingual content (per Türkiye's emphasis).

Conclusion

The session underscored that digital inclusion is a prerequisite for sustainable development and human rights. As WSIS+20 reviews progress, the collective call was for bold, collaborative action to ensure access to information and knowledge becomes a universal reality not a privilege in the next decade.

Leaders TalkX: Future Ready: Enhancing Skills for a Digital Tomorrow

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Ms. Cheryl Miller

Introduction

The Leaders TalkX Sessions at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) + 20 High Level Event took place in Geneva on July 9, 2025. These panels convened Ministers and senior experts in digital policy from across the globe to provide impactful, three-minute interventions on topics critical to the future of the information society and success of the WSIS + 20 Review.

The Leaders TalkX: Future-Ready: Enhancing Skills for a Digital Tomorrow session was moderated by Cheryl Miller, VP for Digital Policy at the US Council for International Business (USCIB).

The UK Experience

Her Excellency, Baroness Jones kicked off the discussion with an overview of how the UK has integrated digital skills into their digital development agenda. Her comments reflected on how the UK's efforts support the WSIS agenda on digital development and inclusivity. The UK's in-country approach is the same that they apply internationally and it is simple-- for ICT's to benefit all aspects of life they must be accessible to all people. The Baroness noted that a third of the world is still not online, and that connectivity must be affordable.

UK's Digital Access Program targets underserved communities across the globe, and it is a shining example of international cooperation as it helps partner countries to reduce their digital gap. Inclusive digital development is the UK's goal. Digital skills are crucial and the UK partners across many programs to increase digital literacy and raise cybersecurity awareness. The UK's Digital Development Strategy partners with developing countries and recognizes that international cooperation and multistakeholder approaches are vital to inclusive and responsible digital transformation. The UK has partnered with ITU since 2020 to advance the WSIS Action Lines.

The Estonian Experience

Estonia's Minister explained how their approach to teaching and skills development has driven high PISA results. Estonia regained independence in 1991, and learning at school during the Russian occupation was a form of resistance. Schools produced heavily skilled students that built a baseline for their digital society. They delivered internet to all of the schools and taught IT skills from the beginning. In the AI era Estonia has now launched a program for schools that targets10th and 11th graders, giving them free access to AI tools. Estonia is positioning itself to be a leader in AI to develop AI for the good of its citizens. This has all supported other learning subjects as well as democratic values.

The Tanzanian Experience

The Honourable Mr. Silaa described the enabling environment that has positioned Tanzania for success in building a digital tomorrow for all. In July 2024 they launched a new digital strategy, and with regard to infrastructure they have heavily invested in 3G, 4G and 5G as well as the last mile. On the policy side they have passed a personal data protection act and have built strong legal protections for online users. They have many international partnerships and a high level of youth inclusion with targeted efforts to engage them in the start-up ecosystem to ensure that they are not left behind. Tanzania also has committed to creating a level playing field to not leva anyone in society behind, with a focus on digital skills. This is

implemented from kindergarten through college and the government is designing a digital technology institute where individuals can hone their skills in AI, big data, and other advanced technology subjects.

The Turkish Experience

Mr. Karagözoğlu discussed how Turkey has promoted widespread access to ICT skills and digital literacy. Ensuring nationwide access to digital skills is a strategic goal and is vital for fostering sustainable international cooperation. Digital skills must be inclusive and accessible to all. Equipping businesses with these skills significantly enhances productivity and strengthens international value chains.

Digital literacy is no longer optional and must consider persons with disabilities and older communities. It is a foundational skill and the BTK Academy was launched in 2017 and it is a comprehensive online portal aimed at building online skills and providing internet access. The Academy also targets rural and underserved regions with programs at all levels. It offers subjects in AI, cloud computing, and cybersecurity. It has offered 317 thematic programs and this investment will build a more future ready information society.

The TakeItGlobal Experience

Ms. Jennifer Corriero closed out the discussion by redirecting the audience to focus on the importance of K-12 skills. Experiential hands-on learning opportunities need to inspire kids. She believes we need to increase investment in public education and surround children with role models, offer virtual field trips, and position children for success in the digital transformation. She explained the need to focus on well-being and humanity, so that technology can connect us all as people. Youth-led community-based projects will create a more interactive experience for children.

Emerging Trends Opportunities and Challenges

The panel demonstrated how governments are leaning in on investing in digital skills, starting from kindergarten and through college. There are many opportunities for the private sector, the technical community and civil society to support and partner on some of these efforts. The need for affordable access remains, as well as a focus on underserved communities and populations.

Challenges persist in preserving languages online, serving people with disabilities, combatting affordability, and shrinking the digital divide. Connectivity remains a baseline goal for ensuring the information society can be open and inclusive.

Links to the WSIS Action Lines

Panellists covered a broad range of initiatives providing thoughtful commentary and case studies that mark their progress in supporting the WSIS Action Lines and inspired the audience. The speakers discussed digital skills, access, infrastructure, creating an enabling environment, global cooperation, cultural diversity and the needs of underrepresented populations, applications. This session linked to 10 out of the 11 WSIS action lines:

Action Line 1: The role of governments and stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

Action Line 2: Information and Communication Infrastructure

Action Line 3: Access to information and knowledge

Action Line 4: Capacity building

Action Line 5: Building Confidence and Security in the Use of ICTs

Action Line 6: Enabling Environment

Action Line 7: ICT Applications

Action Line 8: Cultural Diversity

Action Line 10: Ethical Dimensions

Action Line 11: International and Regional Cooperation

Vision for WSIS 2025 and Beyond

Making sure that these case studies are loaded into the main WSIS database that was developed in 2024 should be a paramount goal, as well as amplifying the work that is being done to achieve the WSIS Action Line Targets. There needs to be a bigger effort to disseminate all of this information in the right places, as well as an attempt at using these examples in a way that can more accurately measure progress.

Leaders TalkX: Towards a safer connected world: collaborative strategies to strengthen digital trust and cyber resilience

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Prof. Lucien Castex

Introduction

The session entitled « Towards a safer connected world: collaborative strategies to strengthen digital trust and cyber resilience » achieved a good balance between the presentation of concrete use cases and proposals.

The session highlighted the momentum at the WSIS+20 to find ways and means, effective strategies and collaborative solutions to reinforce cyber resilience and trust in the information society. The session also pointed out both the importance of sharing best practices and concrete use cases, as well as the essential need of bold ideas. The discussion emphasized the need for multistakeholder cooperation, pivotal to make concrete progress, public-private partnerships, and of governmental cooperation and, both within the United Nations and across other platforms, to enhance user trust, safeguard rights and strengthen education and digital literacy.

Achievements of 20 years of WSIS

Multi-stakeholder cooperation has been essential to help securing our digital future.

Fresh priorities

- Develop a comprehensive framework for building a secure and trustworthy online experience
- Build from comparative use cases between countries and stakeholders**.**
- Strengthen digital literacy, in particular for vulnerable groups of society**.**

Emerging trends

A rapidly evolving landscape requiring greater international collaboration as online threat increases.

Opportunities

- Cross sectoral cooperation and coordination is essential to build meaningful cyber Resilience against a backdrop of growing online threats and geopolitical tension.
- Cooperation and mutual assistance e.g. Memorandum of cooperation between countries to share threat intelligence and incident information.
- Harmonize certification standards across countries (e.g., ENISA NIST, ISO/IEC…).
- Make use of ITU Global Cybersecurity Index to find gaps and strengthen cybersecurity.
- Country and region wide (e.g. in the EU with the NIS 2 directive and cyber resilience act) coordination on threat detection, crisis response to help achieve cyber resilience

Key challenges

- To truly harness the potential of ICTs. It is needed to build digital trust and promote a trustworthy, open and inclusive internet for everyone.
- Strengthening digital trust and cyber resilience need to take into account the most vulnerable groups of society. Equipping all citizens, particularly the elderly and other vulnerable groups, with the necessary digital skills.

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Links to WSIS Action Lines

C5. Building confidence and security in use of ICTs.

Case Examples

- ASEAN Guideline on the Safe and Responsible Use of Social Media Platforms which aims at enhancing online safety by promoting stronger standards, support the public aud SMEs by raising awareness and improving digital literacy and strengthen user rights.
- India's Initiatives to address cyber resilience and cyber security in particular, the system for restoration of Telecom Network with a strong cross-sectoral collaboration dimension
- Trust Valley, public-private partnership, supported over 250 innovative companies in the domains of digital trust and cybersecurity in more than 50 countries worldwide drawing on joint pilot project, flexible financing and administrative procedures.
- Malaysia' Mobile ID platform, which is integrating national ID verification with mobile services, helping prevent identity theft
- Spain collaboration with the Organization of American States in order to promote joint initiatives for capabilities building (e.g. Cybersecurity Summer Bootcamp) and the creation of a collaborative network among experts.
- Lithuania digital literacy initiative « No One Left Behind » and a key event « Digital Wave », organized on the Safer Internet Day, bringing together over 80 000 elderly people and schoolchildren all over Lithuania.

Vision for WSIS beyond 2025

How do we work together to ensure a safe and open online experience drawing on strong multistakeholder collaboration?

Leaders TalkX: Building inclusive & knowledge-driven digital societies

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Ms. Cerys Stansfield

Introduction

Session 430, the Leaders TalkX entitled, "Building inclusive & knowledge-driven digital societies", took place on the third day of the WSIS High Level Event 2025. The panel features representation from the Somalian, Ugandan and Zimbabwean telecommunications and ICT regulators, the Jamaican National AI Task Force, the World Association for Christian Communication, the Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio & Communication, and the Leadership Panel for the Internet Governance Forum.

Achievements of 20 years of WSIS

The panellists reflected on national efforts by regulators and governments to foster inclusive digital societies through clear regulations and policies, targeted investments and public-private partnerships. All participants, from both the public and NGO sector, recognized the importance of cooperation among all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development, as articulated in Action Line One. The WSIS Process over the past twenty years has been a key platform to shape our shared understanding of sustainable digital development, to influence national actors, and to increase accessibility, affordability and accountability in the digital sector.

Fresh priorities & Links to WSIS Action Lines

The discussion underlined two core foundations that are required to build digital societies that are both inclusive and knowledge-driven in nature: digital infrastructure and digital literacy. To capitalize on the benefits offered by participation in the digital society, individuals must not only have strong, secure access to the digital ecosystem, but also be equipped with the necessary skills to navigate it. This can be directly linked to Action Line Two and Action Line Four

Emerging trends, Opportunities & Challenges

There are key opportunities globally directly linked to these two prerequisites for fostering inclusion in the digital sphere. In expanding digital infrastructure and deploying digital upskilling programs, panellists drew attention to the importance of reaching remote and rural communities, women, the youth population, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups within society and showcased the range of initiatives and programs that have already been set up to reach these groups. This includes widespread investment, including in partnership with the private sector, by governments across the globe to expand digital infrastructure, and digital upskilling programs, such as the Girls in ICT program in Zimbabwe and digital literacy courses for marginalized groups in Uganda and Somalia. The World Christian Association called for the development of strong community-led media ecosystems, governed by robust, equitable media regulations, data governance, to create a global digital economy based on fairness, inclusivity and accountability.

Artificial Intelligence is a key emerging technology referenced repeatedly by the panel. This requires more advanced infrastructure and specialized training programs for communities to harness its benefits and ensure it used in a safe, secure manner. The Jamaican AI Task Force has compiled a report highlighting opportunities for the integration of AI in public services, where a key area of focus is the education sector, and the Leadership Panel for the Internet Governance Forum reflected on the various technologies that

render the digital world accessible to people with disabilities, who would otherwise be excluded.

Case Examples

For all the progress that has been made, the panel did not shy away from the reality that the global digital divide remains: 7.5 million Ugandans are still offline, and, in some geographies, this divide is increasing. Policy fragmentation and inconsistent regulation, in direct connection to Action Line Six, are key challenges that can delay and undermine progress towards bridging the divide, in addition to technical and investment challenges. Inclusivity must be accounted for at all levels of the digital ecosystem: from the users and designers of digital technologies to the policymakers and regulators, and the World Association for Christian Communication highlighted that too often on digital platforms, the voice of civil society, and, especially those from the Global South, are diminished. This was echoed by the Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio & Communication, who highlighted that corporate and commercial interests play a dominant role in the ICT and media sector, and this can sometimes be at the expense of inclusive development.

Vision for WSIS beyond 2025

The future vision of the WSIS Process, as articulated by the Panel, is twofold: firstly, the WSIS Process should continue its work in steering national policies that focus on digital infrastructure, digital upskilling, and inclusion for all, regardless of age, gender or (dis)ability. Secondly, the WSIS Forum should act as a strong connecting point between the broader UN and international fora and national actors, to help create localized action plans for nations to enact the principles of the WSIS Action lines and accelerate progress towards building inclusive, knowledge-driven societies.

Leaders TalkX: ICT Applications to Unlock the Full Potential of Digital – Part I

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Ms. Meni Anastasiadou

Key Issues discussed: Looking Beyond 2025

- Over the past 20 years, ICT applications have played a key role in expanding access, inclusion, and innovation. Global Internet connectivity improved significantly, with the number of unconnected people decreasing from 5.7 billion in 2003 to 2.6 billion in 2025.
- The multistakeholder model has proven essential for digital governance, providing a platform for diverse actors to jointly shape policy responses and technological development.
- Rapid developments in AI, quantum computing, and other emerging technologies create both new opportunities and governance challenges. The digital policy environment must adapt quickly to manage risks and deliver societal benefit.
- Achieving equitable outcomes from digital transformation requires a shift in mindset—from scaling technologies to solving real-world problems. Investments must focus on underserved areas and avoid reinforcing existing inequalities.
- ICTs have demonstrated potential to improve public service delivery, enhance learning, and support local economic development, particularly when tailored to local needs and infrastructure constraints.
- Safety, trust, and ethical governance are increasingly critical. Connectivity alone is insufficient without protections for mental health, safeguards against misinformation, and mechanisms to ensure fairness in digital systems.
- The digital economy must align with sustainability goals. Infrastructure and services should be designed to minimise environmental impact while extending access to those currently excluded.
- Policymaking must be technology-neutral, predictable, and investment-friendly. Enabling environments that reduce regulatory uncertainty and support long-term planning are critical to unlock digital value across sectors.

Tangible Outcomes of the session

- Key achievements: (a) Reinforced relevance of the WSIS Action Lines over two decades., (b) Showcased diverse, practical ICT use cases that deliver social and economic benefits., and (c) Highlighted inclusive and sustainable digital models in education, public health, and infrastructure.
- Agreements/commitments as an outcome of the session: (a) Affirmed the continued importance of multistakeholder approaches, (b) Emphasised the need for stronger integration of ethical principles and inclusive design in digital policy and infrastructure, (c) Called for increased alignment of policy frameworks with sustainability and equity goals.

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

- Ensure that policies prioritise inclusion, equity, and impact: Policies must focus on measurable outcomes for underserved populations by embedding equity and problem-solving at the core of technology development and deployment.
- Strengthen the enabling policy environment for digital innovation: Governments should adopt clear, consistent, and technology-neutral regulations that attract investment, promote ethical governance, and enable long-term planning.

WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025: Summaries from the High-Level Track Facilitators

- Advance universal, meaningful connectivity as a baseline: Universal access should be treated as a public good and a prerequisite for all other digital benefits. Connectivity efforts must go hand in hand with digital literacy and safety.
- Embed sustainability and trust in digital systems: Infrastructure and policy must support low-carbon, energy-efficient deployment while building public trust through transparency, safeguards, and accountability mechanisms.
- Promote collaboration through structured, coordinated models
- Transition from fragmented initiatives to strategic, co-designed partnerships that leverage strengths across stakeholders and avoid duplication.

Leaders TalkX: Local to Global: preserving culture and language in a digital era

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Ms. Caroline Vuillemin

Introduction

The session was about inclusion and representation of all the human cultural diversity in today's digital world. It is not a new question. It was first raised at the birth of the Internet and the first WSIS: how will the new technologies integrate all the languages? How to make sure people speaking rare languages can access the Internet in their own language? How can we prevent the monopoly of one language above the others?

Languages are not just about words. They are about culture, visions of the world, representation of how I see the world and project myself, with my socio-cultural background and my intellectual analysis's capacities, formatted according to my mother tongue. One can describe his/her culture only if she/he has his/her language to do so.

Achievements of 20 years of WSIS

Mixed achievements:

1. On the right hand: huge progress with the diversity on line over the past 20 years, protection, recognition and promotion of indigenous cultures and rights, as well as promotion of multilingual URL. and domains' names. Some countries like Latvia have developed strategies to digitalize the Latvian language to ensure its comprehensive inclusion in digital and AI-driven technologies.
2. On the other hand, we failed in the recognition, presence and promotion of diverse cultural realities and languages on line: on the internet over the past 20 years, and today with AI. Today there is a monopoly of one language (English) and a monopoly of roughly 5 America Big Tech' that control the platforms, the channels, the algorithms and as such the contents people can access, in their native language or not (most of the time not). There is also a lack of harmonized national frameworks to ensure the proper balance between cultural preservation and innovation.

Fresh priorities

- Develop AI in low resources languages.
- Stop the monopoly of American Big Tech' and their unwillingness and lack of capacities to work in local languages
- Impose transparency of algorithms and data collection from digital actors to stop profiling people, limit choices and as such views on cultural and social diversities -> improve discoverability of contents
- Empower locally host producers and domain names

Emerging trends

- Diversity must be a core principle: the industry must integrate it, legal requirement backed by political will.
- Develop curriculum and dictionary to help capacity building

WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025: Summaries from the High-Level Track Facilitators

Opportunities

1. WSIS review should (re)prioritize the cultural and languages diversity as an issue at the heart of today's development of AI, if we want it to really be for all, for good, inclusive, accessible and helping the most vulnerable.
2. Change in international relations where the US is isolating itself -> opportunity for Europe, India, and others to create global, alternative digital platforms and tools, including LLM based on public good and respecting human rights.
3. Tax the digital big tech' so that they finance the development and implementation of tools favouring diversity and local languages.

Key challenges

- Political will to address the American Big Tech
- Funding to create alternative/ new models
- How to stop the current speed of AI? If prompts replace search engines, all the work done to build the internet over the past 20 year must be done all over again.

Links to WSIS Action Lines

Action Line 8 -> diversity + Action Line 9 -> media (key actor to produce and broadcast in local languages and provide contents for the internet and AI LLM in low resources languages)

Case Examples

Learn from Latvia and India's experience and how these governments are tackling the issue with development of services in local languages for their people as part of the E-governance efforts, as well as making sure that the people can access the internet in their own languages.

Vision for WSIS beyond 2025

- A diversified set of actors providing AI and Digital services to the global population, outside of only US actors, with a confirmed commitment to digital services as a public good and a set of tools respecting and serving cultural diversity and multiple languages (i.e. respecting human rights).
- Keeping the human above the machines, with the ultimate human decisions on choices of contents, with transparent rules.

Leaders TalkX: When policy meets progress: paving the way for a fit for future digital world

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Dr. Lidia Stępińska-Ustasiak

SESSION GATHERS GLOBAL LEADERS TO REFLECT ON TWENTY YEARS OF WSIS AND SHAPE A PEOPLE-CENTRED DIGITAL FUTURE

On 9 July 2025, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) High-Level Event featured Session 426, which convened senior digital policy leaders from around the world. Moderated by Lidia Stępińska-Ustasiak of the Polistratos Institute, this high-level Leaders TalkX session marked two decades of the WSIS process with a timely and forward-looking dialogue on shaping a digital future that is secure, inclusive, and resilient. A broad diversity of perspectives was represented across stakeholder types and global regions, with speakers from Africa, Europe, North America, and Latin America sharing national experiences and collective aspirations. The panel featured high-level representatives including Dr. Konstantinos Masselos, President of the Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission (Greece); Prof. Sandra Maximiano, President of the Board of Directors at ANACOM and Digital Services Coordinator under the EU Digital Services Act (Portugal); Dr. Aminu Maida, Executive Vice Chairman and CEO of the Nigerian Communications Commission (Nigeria); Mr. Mothibi Ramusi, Chairperson of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (South Africa); Ms. Ekaterine Imedadze, Commissioner and outgoing Chairperson of the Georgian National Communications Commission and EaPeReg (Georgia); Dr. Charles Noir, Vice-President of Community Investment, Policy and Advocacy at the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (Canada); and Mr. Federico Chacón Loaiza, Council President of the Superintendence of Telecommunications (SUTEL) of Costa Rica.

COUNTRIES REPORT SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS DRIVEN BY WSIS VALUES AND ACTION LINES

Participants reflected on the significant achievements made possible under the WSIS framework. Georgia described its journey from a monopolistic telecommunications environment to a fully liberalized and competitive market, where over 99 percent of households are now connected to fixed broadband, and 5G covers 75 percent of the population. South Africa highlighted how digital transformation is framed within the values of its Constitution, ensuring equity and dignity as part of access to technology. Nigeria has transitioned to a transparent and data-driven regulatory approach that enhances both competition and consumer protection. Portugal presented its dual-track strategy of supporting market efficiency while safeguarding public trust, using behavioral insights to better protect vulnerable digital users. Canada's CIRA underscored its work as a technical operator in advancing trust and infrastructure resilience through DNS security tools and international governance partnerships. Costa Rica's regulator, SUTEL, shared its experience in using the National Telecommunications Fund (FONATEL) to extend internet access to underserved and rural populations. This publicly managed fund has helped close the digital divide by supporting broadband infrastructure, subsidized service plans, and school connectivity projects across the country.

SPEAKERS OUTLINE FRESH PRIORITIES TO GUIDE FUTURE DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

Emerging regulatory priorities showcased how countries are aligning digital transformation with ethical governance, technological change, and social inclusion. Portugal emphasized the need for future-proof regulation that anticipates the risks and opportunities of artificial intelligence and quantum computing, while also applying behavioral research to address how online environments influence user decision-making.

Greece called for a reevaluation of traditional communications policy in light of the convergence of networks, cloud, and computing. Simplifying regulatory processes, fostering investment, and ensuring long-term sustainability were framed as critical priorities. Georgia reaffirmed its focus on placing people and trust at the center of regulatory innovation. Nigeria is embedding transparency and real-time data into oversight practices to make regulation more efficient and responsive. South Africa highlighted the need to ensure meaningful and affordable access for all, especially those in rural or marginalized communities. Canada's CIRA stressed that technical operators must not only provide secure infrastructure but also engage directly in shaping governance spaces to preserve trust. Costa Rica illustrated how regulatory frameworks can promote both market competition and social equity by targeting public investment through FONATEL to deliver services to remote, Indigenous, and low-income populations.

EMERGING TRENDS INDICATE THE NEED FOR RESPONSIVE AND TECHNICALLY GROUNDED POLICYMAKING

Speakers highlighted key shifts shaping the regulatory landscape. Greece observed that the interplay between connectivity and computing is becoming central to future service delivery, especially for areas like autonomous vehicles and telemedicine. Nigeria is moving from traditional quality-of-service benchmarks to user-generated quality-of-experience data, collected at scale and made available for public comparison, thereby empowering consumers and driving service improvement. South Africa emphasized that digital policy must now account for infrastructure resilience and cybersecurity by design, especially in the face of environmental threats. CIRA noted that the legitimacy of the multistakeholder model depends on active participation from technical actors who can ensure decisions are informed by operational realities. Costa Rica shared that the deployment of FONATEL-supported networks has not only expanded connectivity but created partnerships between public institutions and telecom providers, demonstrating a practical model for bridging digital divides.

COUNTRIES IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIVITY, ETHICAL TECHNOLOGY AND SMART GOVERNANCE

The dialogue also highlighted multiple opportunities. Georgia's growing role as a digital hub between Europe and Asia presents a case for smaller nations to lead in infrastructure coordination and cross-border standards. Portugal's focus on embedding ethics into technology design opens regulatory pathways for proactive and rights-based governance. Nigeria's digital tools have enabled more agile and transparent oversight, creating market incentives for performance without heavy enforcement burdens. Greece linked digital infrastructure to broader economic development, citing opportunities to enable smart services across transport, health, and public administration. South Africa is using its digital transformation roadmap to improve government efficiency and community wellbeing. Costa Rica's experience with FONATEL shows how universal service funds, when strategically managed, can deliver broadband to rural schools, remote villages, and vulnerable communities while still encouraging private sector competition.

KEY CHALLENGES INCLUDE BALANCING INVESTMENT AND COMPETITION, ADDRESSING AFFORDABILITY AND ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL AGILITY

Several ongoing challenges were acknowledged. Greece pointed out the policy tension between encouraging long-term investment in infrastructure and preserving market competition. South Africa and Georgia warned that inflationary pressures and geographic disparities still pose barriers to affordability. Portugal and Canada stressed the importance of institutional agility to keep pace with emerging technologies while maintaining public trust. Costa Rica's model demonstrates that universal service funds can be effective, but require strong governance, clear accountability, and coordination across ministries and regions to ensure implementation reaches the most excluded populations.

INTERVENTIONS ALIGN CLOSELY WITH WSIS ACTION LINES, ESPECIALLY ACTION LINE C6 ON ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

The interventions clearly aligned with WSIS Action Lines. The role of governments in shaping enabling environments (Action Line C1), improving access to information and digital literacy (C3), and ensuring trust and security in digital systems (C5) were at the core of each national strategy. In particular, the session reinforced the importance of Action Line C6 – Enabling Environment. Countries emphasized the need for forward-looking legal and institutional frameworks that support innovation while protecting public interest. This includes reducing regulatory fragmentation, designing flexible oversight mechanisms, and creating the right balance between openness, investment incentives, and consumer rights.

COUNTRIES SHARE INNOVATIVE CASE EXAMPLES THAT OPERATIONALIZE WSIS PRINCIPLES LOCALLY

Several speakers shared national initiatives that brought these principles to life. Georgia's Digital Adoption Program has helped thousands in mountainous regions gain digital skills and access public services. Nigeria's Major Incident Reporting Portal publishes real-time data on network outages, increasing transparency and accountability. South Africa's Digital Transformation Roadmap launched in May 2025 outlines a whole-of-government approach to public service modernization. Canada's CIRA has deployed DNS firewalls and supported open governance through global technical coalitions. Portugal is using behavioral research to adapt regulation to actual user behavior online. Costa Rica's FONATEL program has subsidized access for hundreds of thousands of low-income households and connected public institutions in regions that would otherwise be commercially unviable.

THE FUTURE OF WSIS REQUIRES TRUSTWORTHY, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Looking to the future, the session affirmed that digital development must be designed to serve people first. A digital society that is truly fit for purpose must be inclusive from the start, with services that are affordable, accessible, and tailored to diverse communities. It must also be trustworthy, built on transparent governance, secure infrastructure, and ethical principles that respect privacy and human rights. At the same time, digital transformation must be sustainable—economically, socially, and environmentally—so that its benefits can extend across generations. None of these goals can be achieved in isolation; rather, they require deep cooperation across governments, regulators, technical communities, private companies, and civil society.

BOLD AND BALANCED REGULATORY LEADERSHIP IS ESSENTIAL TO BUILD A FIT FOR FUTURE DIGITAL WORLD

Shaping a fit-for-future digital world depends on bold yet balanced regulatory leadership. Policies must be anchored in trust, designed for inclusion, and rooted in long-term resilience. Creating an enabling environment, as defined under WSIS Action Line C6, is essential: legal and institutional frameworks must be agile, inclusive, transparent, and innovation-friendly. Whether through data-led oversight, ethics-guided rules, or multi-stakeholder engagement—as seen in Costa Rica's efforts through SUTEL and FONATEL—this balanced approach forms the foundation for equitable digital transformation. In moving forward, international cooperation and shared accountability will remain central to building an open, secure, and people-centered digital future.

Leaders TalkX: Moral pixels: painting an ethical landscape in the information society

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Ms. Anriette Esterhuysen

Introduction

This Leaders TalkX looked at how to infuse universally held values, human rights and ethical dimensions into the digital. Speakers connected right and ethics to digital inclusion and accessibility, and highlighted the importance of awareness and education. They discussed measures to ensure a respectful, rights-respecting safe and secure digital environment. The panel also encouraged member states and all stakeholders to not be overwhelmed by fear of the potential risks and harms of AI and pointed out the potential of tech to help us solve problems, for example by using AI to help build the human skills and capacities needed for a safe digital environment.

Summary

The global dialogue on ethical digital transformation highlighted shared priorities across nations, though with region-specific emphases. Belgium champions inclusive digital governance, mandating non-digital service alternatives for vulnerable groups while pioneering ethical AI through its AI4Belgium ecosystem and algorithmic transparency observatory. Libya focuses on regulatory safeguards, developing AI frameworks that combat bias and protect data sovereignty through cross-sector collaboration. Cuba exemplifies a state-led approach, constitutionally mandating an inclusive digital society backed by extensive tech education programs—like its 642 Youth Computer Clubs training millions—and curricula embedding ethical tech use. Poland proposes turning AI risks into solutions by deploying AI itself as an educational tool to combat disinformation, while leveraging EU regulations like the Digital Services Act. These national perspectives converge with Prof. Salma Abbasi's urgent warnings about unchecked AI threats—from algorithmic bias to cultural erasure—and her call for enforceable global standards prioritizing transparency, human oversight, and equitable representation of Global South voices. Across all interventions, three imperatives emerge: protecting youth in digital spaces, bridging the gap between technological innovation and social values, and fostering multistakeholder cooperation to ensure digitalization serves humanity equitably. As Poland's delegate noted, the challenge isn't rejecting AI but harnessing it wisely—using its power to "teach about itself" while anchoring systems in universal ethics.

Achievements of 20 years of WSIS implementation

a. Multistakeholder governance and collaboration:

- Belgium's AI4Belgium – Public-private ecosystem for ethical AI governance.
- Libya's emphasis on collaboration – Government, private sector, and civil society partnerships for data protection and AI fairness.
- Cuba's constitutional mandate – Institutionalizing ICT development with a people-centred approach.

b. Digital inclusion and capacity building

- Cuba's Youth Computer and Electronics Clubs – 642 centres training 5M+ citizens, focusing on youth.
- Cuba's Computer Science University – 17,000+ graduates in digital fields.
- Belgium's non-digital service alternatives – Ensuring access for vulnerable groups.

c. Regulatory and ethical frameworks

- Poland's adoption of the EU Digital Services Act – Combating disinformation and ensuring platform accountability.
- Libya's data protection laws – Aligning AI and digital policies with societal values.

- Cuba's Digital Transformation Policy (2024) – Integrating ethics into national tech strategies.

Fresh priorities for the next decade

a. Ethical AI and algorithmic accountability

- Belgium's Observatory for AI – Monitoring algorithmic transparency in public services.
- Libya's anti-bias measures in AI – Ensuring fairness in automated decision-making.
- Prof. Salma Abbasi's call for explainable AI – Demanding auditable algorithms and bias testing.

b. Youth and vulnerable group protections

- Belgium's focus on youth risks – Addressing ethical challenges for digital-native generations.
- Cuba's digital citizenship education – Teaching privacy, source verification, and anti-discrimination in schools.
- Poland's AI literacy for seniors/disabled – Personalized learning tools for marginalized groups.

c. Global equity in tech governance

- Prof. Abbasi's push for Global South inclusion – Challenging Northern-dominated AI standards.
- Libya's data sovereignty efforts – Localizing infrastructure to reduce dependency.

Emerging trends shaping the future

a. AI as an educational and social tool

- Poland's AI-powered digital literacy programs – Using AI to teach about AI risks (e.g., deep fake detection).
- Cuba's integration of tech ethics into curricula – Mandating critical thinking in digital spaces.

b. Cultural and linguistic preservation

- Prof. Abbasi's warning on AI's cultural blind spots – Highlighting the loss of indigenous knowledge in datasets
- Mr. Oko in Poland's use of AI to build media and cultural literacy

c. Behavioural governance and mental health

- Prof. Abbasi's alert on algorithmic manipulation – Social media's impact on youth mental health.
- Poland's "safe internet" vision – Combating behavioural influence through transparency.

Opportunities for accelerating progress

a. Public-private synergies

- Libya's shared regional data centres – Cost-efficient infrastructure for interoperability.
- Belgium's AI4Belgium – Leveraging private expertise for public-sector AI ethics.

b. Digital sovereignty and local innovation

- Cuba's Digital Agenda – Homegrown solutions aligned with socialist values.
- Libya's peering databases and IXPs – Reducing reliance on foreign infrastructure.

c. AI for inclusive development

- Poland's adaptive learning tools – AI for seniors and disabled populations.
- Cuba's mass digital literacy programs – Scaling through community networks.

Key challenges requiring urgent action

a. Misinformation and disinformation

- Prof. Abbasi's deep fake warnings – AI-generated content distorting geopolitics.
- Poland's disinformation challenges – Despite the DSA, synthetic media outpaces regulation.

b. Regulatory fragmentation

- Divergent AI laws – EU (strict) vs. Global South (nascent) frameworks creating compliance gaps.
- Libya's struggle with cross-border data flows – Balancing openness with sovereignty.

c. Infrastructure and resource gaps

- Prof. Abbasi's critique of Global South exclusion – Lack of funding for local data ecosystems.
- Cuba's need for tech upgrades – Despite training, hardware/connectivity limitations persist.

d. Power asymmetries in tech

- Prof. Abbasi's "weaponized automation" alert – Corporate/governmental misuse of AI.
- Libya's call to confront bias – Tech giants' algorithms reinforcing inequalities.

Links to WSIS action lines

Action Line C1 (The Role of Governments and Stakeholders) was addressed by all speakers. For example, Belgium's AI4Belgium which is a public-private collaboration, Libya's call for government-private sector-civil society partnerships and Prof. Abbasi's demand for inclusive global governance that includes the global South.

Action Line C4 (Capacity Building) was addressed by: Cuba, Poland, Libya. Examples include Cuba's Youth Computer Clubs and university programs, Poland's proposal to use AI for digital literacy (e.g., seniors, disabled learners) and Libya's focus on regulatory infrastructure strengthening.

Action Line C5 (Building Confidence and Security in ICTs) was addressed by: Belgium, Libya, Prof. Abbasi. For example, Belgium's Observatory for AI which provides algorithmic transparency, Libya's data protection laws and anti-bias measures and Prof. Abbasi's warnings about surveillance and manipulation risks.

Action Line C6 (Enabling Environment) was addressed by: Belgium, Cuba, Poland. Belgium's non-digital service guarantees for inclusion and Cuba's constitutional mandate for equitable access are examples as is Poland's Digital Services Act.

Action Line C7 (ICT Applications: E-government) was addressed particularly by Belgium through the training of civil servants to improve digital public services and transparent AI use in government algorithms.

Action Line C9 (Media and Content Diversity) was addressed by Prof. Abbasi and Poland. Example are efforts to combat AI-generated disinformation (deep fakes) and Poland's use of AI in media literacy programmes.

Action Line C10 (Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society) was addressed by all speakers

All speakers addressed the Action Lines on inclusion.

Cross-cutting observations

From Access to Ethics: WSIS 2003 focused on connectivity; 2024 priorities centre on human rights in tech (e.g., Cuba's constitutional reforms, Belgium's youth safeguards).

Education as a Lifeline: All speakers stressed digital literacy—whether through Cuba's clubs, Poland's AI tutors, or Prof. Abbasi's transparency demands.

The Sovereignty Paradox: Nations like Libya and Cuba seek data localization, yet depend on global cooperation (e.g., IPv6 standards, AI governance).

Leaders TalkX: Partnership pivot: rethinking cooperation in the digital era

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Ms. Lori Schulman

Key Issues Discussed:

The digital revolution has the potential to propel societies forward, yet a significant divide, 2.6 billion people remain without access to information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Critical need for enhanced international collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, international organizations, and UN, support infrastructure development and digital projects, particularly within developing countries in line with WSIS Action Lines.

Artificial Intelligence is evolving from basic concepts to increasingly autonomous systems—such as agentic AI, autonomous vehicles, and humanoid robots—raising both exciting real-world applications and important ethical questions.

In a fully digital world, regulation must be flexible, forward-looking, and globally coordinated—ensuring seamless, secure, and accessible digital services while supporting innovation, investment, and resilient infrastructure for an unpredictable future.

In a fragmented world, strengthening public-private collaboration is more vital than ever to tackle global challenges—by aligning innovation with public interest, investing in inclusive ecosystems, and empowering local solutions that deliver real impact for people and the planet.

Tangible Outcomes / case studies discussed during the session

- Burkina Faso is leveraging digital transformation—including infrastructure, education, AI, and inclusivity initiatives—as a strategic response to its security challenges and a driver of national development.
- Hungary is concerned about the evolution of agentic AI into embodied intelligence. AI is heading toward physical manifestation and interactions with our world – specifically, as highly capable humanoid robots. There are questions about how to manage that evolution responsibly. The WSIS multistakeholder model provides the means to consider these questions in a cooperative environment. Hungary is also concerned that capacity is not just about access or knowledge. It also encompasses the ability to manufacture hardware and create industry not just using software or platforms.
- Senegal has launched a "Digital New Deal" to enable its evolution into a leading digital society by 2050, leveraging its youthful population, strategic partnerships, and infrastructure development to drive inclusive digital transformation, foster innovation, and compete globally.
- Albania has embraced digital transformation as a strategic path toward modern governance, overcoming resource limitations through strong political will, a clear vision, and both domestic and international collaboration to deliver digital public services and empower its citizens.
- Malaysia is fostering inclusive, cross-sectoral, and future-ready partnerships—engaging government, industry, academia, and communities—to co-create sustainable digital solutions, adapt regulations, and drive innovation in areas like smart cities, healthcare, and connectivity.
- Bahrain is thinking about the present and future. It is a nation with excellent technical resources. They support flexible legislation that supports evolving technology and borderless functionality. For example, regulators should cooperate more to make mobile phone coverage seamless when traveling between jurisdictions. Local taxation inhibits global cooperation. Cooperation applies to internal and external governance.

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- Denmark highlighted the EU Global Gateway and its ability to support the Global South with knowledge and resources. Enhancing engagement with the tech industry is one of the key digital diplomacy priorities for the Danish EU Presidency. WSIS+20 process gives us an opportunity to reflect and re-commit to building a human-centric, inclusive and development-orientated information society. OECD General Partnership for AI (GPAI) is cited as an excellent example of cooperation.
- The US Chamber of International Business (part of the ICCC) champions a multistakeholder approach to digital transformation, emphasizing that inclusive, trust-based collaboration across sectors is essential to bridging digital divides, enhancing cybersecurity, upholding human rights, and building a people-centred, sustainable Information Society.

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

It is clear that the session covered almost all of the WSIS action lines. This integrated approach is a direct outcome of multistakeholder engagement. Recommendations include:

1. Return to core United Nations principles, highlighting the SDGs, WSIS Action Lines and multistakeholder systems like WSIS and IGF. SDG's and WSIS Action lines are pathways that, ultimately, lead back to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR offers a foundational framework for ensuring healthy, productive, inclusive and respectful societies.
2. Rather than focusing on rethinking international collaboration and public-private partnerships, the panel urged recommitting to such efforts. Sustained multistakeholder collaboration as supported by WSIS and IGF provide the correct framework for progress.

Submitted by Lori S. Schulman, INTA– WSIS High Level Facilitator and Christine Strutt, INTA Internet Committee, Chair Subcommittee on Global Governance

Leaders TalkX: Click to govern: inclusive and efficient e-services

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Ms. Yuhan Zheng

Introduction

This session convened ministers, regulators, and private sector leaders from Costa Rica, Kuwait, Colombia, Uruguay, and EY to evaluate progress on WSIS Action Lines after two decades. Representing Latin America, the Middle East, and global business perspectives, panellists explored how digital governance can drive inclusion while balancing efficiency and innovation. The dialogue centred on translating WSIS principles into tangible outcomes for underserved communities.

Achievements of 20 Years of WSIS

Significant milestones emerged:

- Connectivity Scale: Costa Rica increased household internet access from 10% (2005) to 85% (2024), while mobile penetration reached 141%.
- Regulatory Innovation: Colombia pioneered regulatory sandboxes for testing inclusive solutions and deployed AI-driven decision systems to enhance citizen engagement.
- Citizen-Centric Platforms: Kuwait's "Sahel" e-government platform exemplifies user-focused service delivery in rapidly digitizing societies.
  These advances reflect concrete implementation of WSIS Action Line C2 (Infrastructure) and C11 (E-Governance).

Fresh Priorities

Panellists identified critical shifts:

- Beyond Binary Metrics: Uruguay emphasized that electricity access ≠ meaningful connectivity, advocating for multidimensional progress indicators beyond GDP.
- Institutional Transformation: Internal governance restructuring (e.g., workforce reskilling, process digitization) must precede external service rollouts.
- Asymmetric Investment: Public funding for unprofitable rural/indigenous zones (Costa Rica subsidizes 42% of impoverished households) paired with private-sector innovation.

Emerging Trends

- Ethical AI Integration: EY highlighted interpretability challenges in automated governance, citing their "AI Sentiment" report on public trust gaps.
- Regulatory Agility: Colombia's dynamic frameworks (e.g., Resolution 6242 enabling digital user protection) adapt to technological convergence.
- Hyper-Localization: Kuwait designs services through continuous citizen feedback loops rather than top-down solutions.

Opportunities

- 5G for Inclusion: Costa Rica's 52% tower expansion targets rural coverage gaps.
- Cross-Border Sandboxes: Colombia proposed replicating its regulatory testbeds globally to accelerate pro-poor innovation.

- Data Diplomacy: Harmonizing digital identity standards (e.g., European e-passports) could enable seamless service portability.

Key Challenges

Persistent barriers include:

- Last-Mile Exclusion: 29% of Costa Rica's indigenous territories lack reliable connectivity despite national progress.
- Techno-Social Divides: Uruguay noted digital literacy gaps undermine infrastructure investments.
- Ethical-Governance Tensions: EY warned that AI efficiency gains risk marginalizing analogue citizens without inclusive design.

Links to WSIS Action Lines

Session outcomes directly advanced:

- C1 (Public Policy): Uruguay's governance restructuring for service digitization.
- C2 (Infrastructure): Costa Rica's 5G rollout with rural coverage obligations.
- C3 (Access): Colombia's community networks for remote areas.
- C11 (E-Governance): Kuwait's citizen-centric platform design.

Case Examples

- Colombia's Regulatory Sandbox: Tested AI-driven dispute resolution systems in Cauca's indigenous communities, reducing complaint resolution time by 70%.
- Kuwait's Sahel Platform: Integrated 400+ services with voice/AI assistance for low-literacy users, achieving 94% satisfaction among elderly citizens.
- Costa Rica's Indigenous Connectivity: Deployed solar-powered mesh networks in Cabécar territories, connecting 71% of previously unserved households.

Vision for WSIS Beyond 2025

Panellists called for:

1. Anticipatory Governance: AI-powered systems predicting service gaps (e.g., disaster-responsive infrastructure).
2. Inclusion by Default: Mandating accessibility in all digital service design (inspired by Uruguay's equity metrics).
3. Planetary-Scale Cooperation: A global pact for knowledge sharing on ethical AI and connectivity, ensuring:
    - No community excluded from digital sovereignty
    - Every regulatory innovation scales beyond borders
    - Digitalization consistently furthers SDG alignment

Conclusion

As Costa Rica's Vice Minister affirmed: "Connectivity is now synonymous with democracy." This session demonstrated that WSIS's people-centred vision remains vital. By combining regulatory courage (Colombia), technological agility (Kuwait), and ethical vigilance (EY), we can transform "click-to-govern" from efficiency promise to inclusion reality—ensuring digitalization leaves no territory, identity, or voice behind.

Leaders TalkX: ICT application to unlock the full potential of digital – Part II

Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator Ms. Daniella Esi Darlington

Introduction

Ms. Daniella Esi Darlington, Alleina.co, opens the Leaders TalkX 13: ICT application to unlock the full potential of digital – Part II. Discussions focused on how Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be leveraged to achieve digital transformation.

Achievements of 20 years of WSIS

The discussions highlighted significant progress and initiatives undertaken in digital transformation. Zimbabwe has actively reviewed its ICT policy, broadband plan, and AI strategy, which is currently undergoing cabinet processes. They have also constructed digital centres, ICT laboratories, and implemented the Presidential Internet Scheme to achieve a digitalised country. India has made strides in connecting approximately 6.4 lakh villages through high-speed Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) networks, transforming connectivity into impact through multi-layered digital outcomes. Gabon is on an ambitious agenda to achieve 100% coverage of inhabited areas by 2027 and is currently connecting over 250 villages. They have also launched e-visa, e-tax systems, visa-free opportunities for tourists and are providing scholarships to young people through digital technologies. Huawei has developed solutions that have served 120 million people in 8 countries in rural areas and partnered to provide digital skills to 10 million people, focusing on teachers and students. Their ICT technology is used by 8 million people every month for disability and elderly support. Furthermore, Huawei's digital power solutions have resulted in significant energy savings, saving 81.8 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity, equivalent to 710 million metric tons of carbon emission reduction.

Fresh Priorities

- Moving from dialogue to development, by building effective digital governance structures to harness the full potential of technology for national development. Putting in place its AI strategy and driving inter-governmental partnerships to promote adaptive policies, data driven decision making and cross-functional collaboration. (Zimbabwe: H.E. Dr. Tatenda Annastacia Mavetera, Minister, Ministry of ICT, Postal and Courier Services)
- Sustainable Infrastructure Design for AI: The increasing consumption of AI tools necessitates designing less computing-intensive infrastructure for environmental sustainability. Protecting local languages and cultures in the AI era was also highlighted as a priority (France: Ms. Laure de La Raudière, President, ARCEP)
- Digitalisation of public services like visas, introducing e-tax, and creating digital platforms for students to access scholarships. (Gabon: Mr. Célestin Kadjidja, Président, Autorité de Régulation des Communications électroniques et des Postes (ARCEP))
- Connecting 6.4 million communities to internet, leveraging USOF for telemedicine, connecting all schools – smart schools, drones for agriculture, etc. (India: Mr. Niraj Verma, Administrator (Digital Bharat Nidhi))
- Creating enabling environment means fostering meaningful digital inclusion for all through conducive policies, free flow of information for SDGs, and protection of human rights in digital spaces. (Netherlands Tech Ambassador: Mr. Ernst Noorman, Cyber Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
- Reducing carbon emission of digital applications is a priority. (Huawei: Mr. Ran (Evan) Xiao, Corporate Vice President, European and International Standardization, Ecosystem & Industry Development, Huawei))

- Prioritize satellites as a strategic pillar for inclusive digital futures, focusing on agile policies that leverage space technology to connect remote, underserved regions and empower users, especially the 80% of unconnected landmass. (GSOA: Ms. Isabelle Mauro, Director General (remote participation))

Emerging Trends

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is recognised as a general-purpose technology with the risk of widening existing digital divides, where those with access benefit significantly, while those without lag further behind. The AI sector also entails high consumption of tools.

Governments are increasingly leveraging digital governance to unlock the full potential of digital technologies. Satellite Technology emerged as a critical enabler for expanding digital access and opportunity, particularly for remote, unserved, or underserved areas that traditional infrastructure cannot reach. It is seen as the only infrastructure capable of delivering instant, scalable coverage across entire territories (mountains, deserts, small island states, oceans, disaster zones).

Opportunities

The panel identified numerous opportunities for leveraging ICTs:

- Policy and Regulatory Frameworks: Creating robust policy and regulatory frameworks that support ICT innovation, investment, and adoption of new technologies presents a significant opportunity.
- Public-Private Partnerships: Fostering partnerships for the development and deployment of ICT infrastructure, and promoting innovation and investment, are crucial.
- Whole-of-Government Approach: Collaborating across government departments to avoid silos and coordinate efforts (e.g., with energy, transport, local government regulators) can enhance digital transformation initiatives.
- International Cooperation and Knowledge Sharing: Platforms like WSIS+20 offer opportunities for learning, collaboration, and international engagements to drive digital deployment and deliverables.
- Digital Inclusion for All: Tailoring policies and solutions to ensure meaningful digital inclusion for diverse groups, including women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities, offers a vast opportunity for societal benefit.
- Leveraging Existing Infrastructure: Effectively utilizing broadband infrastructure developed under Universal Service Obligations to create sustainable digital services and economic opportunities in rural areas.
- Satellite for Universal Access: Satellite technology offers a unique opportunity to provide instant, scalable connectivity to the 80% of land mass not covered by traditional networks, unlocking economic and human potential in remote regions.

Key Challenges

Despite the progress, several challenges remain:

- Digital Divide: A significant digital gap persists, particularly between urban and rural areas (e.g., in India, urban internet connectivity is almost 100%, while rural is only 60%). A gender gap also exists in digital education and the labour market. The spread of AI risks widening these existing digital divides.
- Connectivity vs. Usage: Simply providing connectivity is not enough; usage depends on capability, trust, and relevance, highlighting the need for meaningful applications.
- Absence of Enabling Environment: In many countries in 2025, the necessary enabling policy and regulatory environment is largely absent, with national and international policies sometimes hampering or blocking internet access (e.g., internet shutdowns). Policies may also fail to address existing gaps like the gender gap in digital education.

- Limitations of Traditional Infrastructure: Mobile and fibre networks, by design, are limited to high population density areas and only cover 20% of the land mass, leaving vast remote areas unserved.
- Protecting Culture: The challenge of protecting cultural identity and language in the evolving AI era.

Links to WSIS Action Lines

The discussions explicitly referenced the original WSIS framework documents from 2003 and 2005, which emphasised the importance of an enabling policy and regulatory environment for inclusive digital transformation. The WSIS+10 review also recognised the free flow of information and knowledge as a key feature of such an environment. There was a call for the evolution of the WSIS action line on e-environment to better enhance digital sustainability, and the importance of updating WSIS texts on the enabling environment to reflect the diversity of internet users and current challenges was highlighted.

Case Example

- Zimbabwe: Reviewed ICT policy, broadband plan, and concluded AI strategy; working on an ICT start-up policy and creating incentives for ICT investment; extending national backbone, constructing digital centres, ICT laboratories, and the presidential internet scheme.
- Gabon: Aims for 100% coverage of inhabited areas by 2027, connecting over 250 villages; implementing e-visa and visa-free opportunities for tourists; providing scholarships to young people through digital technologies.
- India: Connecting 6.4 lakh villages through high-speed OFC networks; implementing tele-medicine (e-Sanjeevani app, health ATMs), digital education (smart schools, multilingual content), e-governance (birth/death certificates, pensions at panchayat level), agriculture (soil health cards, drones, IoT), and rural e-commerce (onboarding artisans to platforms like Amazon).
- Huawei: Rural Stars solution serving 120 million people in eight countries; programs for skilled people in need (10 million people); ICT technology used by 8 million people with disabilities/elderly monthly; digital power solutions saving 81.8 billion-kilowatt electricity, equivalent to 710 million metric tons of carbon emission reduction.