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ITU
WSIS+20
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

JULY 9, 2025
LEADERS TALKX
MORNING SESSION 1 OF 2
Session 378 and 379
https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378
https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

ROOM C
9:00 TO 10:00 A.M. CEST

        >> HOST: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the third Day of
The WSIS+20 High-Level Event. We have Leaders TalkX, you will
hear leaders, head of regulatory bodies, Academia, technical
community, talking about their experiences and talking about the
digital and visions of WSIS+20, 2025. We have also the President
of ECOSOC that has joined us here today. Take your seats. We
will begin with the video highlights from day one, which you can
enjoy once the video plays. Thank you so much. Please take your
seats, welcome everybody. Good morning.
        >>VIDEO: Welcome to the Inaugural Session of the WSIS+20
High-Level Event 2025.
        >> Swiss Alp horns, once critical for long-distance
communication were a fitting way to communicate the start of
this High-Level Event.
        It has been two decades since the World Summit on the

        https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378
        https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

Information Society launched, redefining the way we think in building the digital further. As the WSIS process marks 20 years, there is recognition the Forum plays an integral part, leading an annual platform with more than 50,000 participants.

>> The WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025, is getting underway here in Geneva. It will start by reflecting on all that has been achieved in digital development in the last 20 years and the life changing impact that it has had on people. Co-hosted by ITU and the Swiss Confederation and co-organized by UNESCO, UNCTAD and UNDP, ITU took to the stage in the opening ceremony to praise the groundwork laid to strengthen digital cooperation.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: 20 years ago, 1 billion people, 16% of the world's population was online. Today, that figure stands at 68%, and that progress stems from the WSIS vision of an open and inclusive Information Society that drives digital development for all.

>> Next, the handing over of the gavel marked the change of WSIS Chair moving from Switzerland to South Africa.

>> An important moment for South Africa and our country. We're grateful for the ITU making sure the opportunity is granted to South Africa. It shows the stage of our country in shaping and influencing discussions in Global Platforms around digitalization, and closing the Digital Divide.

>> Time to celebrate the highly regarded WSIS Prize Winners, one in each of the Action Line categories, and a special recognition. This year's projects praised for their innovation and positive change across areas such as cybersecurity and e-Government. This Winner is recognized for a project helping young people in Indonesia.

>> We have seen a great improvement in the well-being and self-confidence when they use the platforms to speak out about civic issues in their communities and not only using their voices to engage stakeholders including policymakers.

>> And a project to benefit health provision in Zanzibar.

>> All of the real-time information on the treatment they get on any of the health facility in Zanzibar where it will not ease up the health provision and keep track and record of the health document for easy health provision in future visits.

>> Throughout the day, sessions took place to discuss a variety of topics. In this room, youth speakers from all corners of the globe shared their thoughts. One describing a digital tool to enhance the right of access to land information in Vietnam.

>> We conduct an annual evaluation of whether the Government publicize the land information and whether it is accessible to the citizens. So in the project we engage also different Groups, for example, the people from ethnic minorities. The people in remote Regions, youth and people with

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https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

disability in assessing as well.

　　Whilst others spoke about accessibility issues.

　　>> In the community, there is access to the 5G network. Even cities don't have 5G. We have Starlink, but it is a selected few to afford these services. If you want to include all of these people, we need to first make these infrastructure as affordable for all before we build more innovative solutions and encourage young people to also create technological solutions to solve these local problems.

　　>> The day began with a plea to turn the Digital Divides into digital opportunities. There has been a wealth of knowledge sharing around topics such as health, inclusivity and e-learning.

　　Join us tomorrow to continue the conversation on day two of WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025.

　　(Music)

　　>> HOST: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. What a wonderful highlight of what happened on day 1. You will be able to see these highlights online. We have daily highlights, summarizing what's happening at the WSIS+20 High-Level Event. It is not possible without your energy, without your contributions, and without your vision of what you want WSIS to be like. So thank you so much for being here. Without any further delay, I would like to invite the Moderator for our Inaugural High-Level Track Inaugural Leaders TalkX: Forging partnerships for purpose: Advancing the digital for development landscape Ms. Amrita Choudhury to lead you and moderate our Inaugural High-Level Track Inaugural Leaders TalkX: Forging partnerships for purpose: Advancing the digital for development landscape which comprises of high-level Delegates from different stakeholder communities. Amrita, the floor is yours.

　　>> AMRITA CHOUDHURY: I hope I am audible. Thank you for coming to the session this morning, the first Leaders TalkX. Inaugural High-Level Track Inaugural Leaders TalkX: Forging partnerships for purpose: Advancing the digital for development landscape. And today, we have a distinguished high-level panelists who will help us explore how digital technologies, multistakeholder and multisectoral partnerships, measures are helping advance economic development of our society at large.

　　We have with us a special guest, His Excellency Ambassador Rob, the President of ECOSOC. And His Excellency, Mr. Marc Rossel from Andorra. And Excellency, Americo Muchanga Minister of Communication and Digital Transformation, Mozambique. And Mr. Alexandre Reis Siqueira Freire Commission National chemical Agency, Brazil. And Engineer Kamel Saadaoui President instance Tunisia. Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill Under-Secretary-General and Special Envoy for digital and emerging technologies. And Ms. Bernadette Lewis Secretary-General Commonwealth

　　https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378
　　https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

Telecommunication Organisation. May I please request all the esteemed guests to be here at the stage.

I would also request each of them to keep to the three minutes' time because we have back-to-back sessions.

Thank you so much. Since we have a packed schedule, I would ask Ambassador Robert Rae to give his address and go to the podium to speak.

>> ROBERT RAE: Thank you participants, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honour to be able to speak to you briefly this morning. Let me assure you, I will be brief although it is dangerous to put a microphone in front of a former politician at any time of the Thai, especially this morning. I want to make a few key points as we undertake this Summit and continue on our path of figuring out where we're going and what needs to be done. The first thing is that we need to link up the strategies that we develop for digital technologies and for artificial intelligence and for quantum. We need to link them up with the purpose of the United Nations, the purpose that we're all undertaking together. And for us to understand the Sustainable Development Goals are not some sort of ideological thought, but it is part of humanity.

When we look at the objectives of the SDGs to end hunger and poverty improve and provide access to education to ensure we have a world that is subtle, this is something we can all appreciate. To achieve them, we have to take advantage of the tremendous breakthroughs in technology, which have been taking place.

The second thing is we have to reaffirm our commitments to ensuring that with this new technology, no one falls behind. And we have been hearing from the video on the first day, I think it will be a common theme in our discussions, right now, there is a Digital Divide. And the Digital Divide will widen unless we take real steps to bring people together and to share. And that's going to require decisions by Governments to do just that.

We have already seen some important signs. The World Bank, together with the Development Bank of Africa, working hard at ensuring that there is much broader access to the Internet and that we are going to be seeing breakthroughs there.

We also have to make sure that the tools that we're developing are ones that are widely shared throughout the world and not just confined to the richest countries, not just confined to those that are already furthest ahead.

I am proud that my own Government in Canada has taken steps, together with the British Agency for development to establish a hundred million dollar fund, which we are sharing with Developing Countries through our IDRC.

And we're trying to create centres of excellence in Developing Countries so that the breakthroughs that take place

in technology, the breakthroughs in discovery, the breakthroughs in application are not confined to any one geographical area, but actually come together.

And my last point is two words ... the first world is solidarity. Our solidarity is being tested. It is being tested by those who say that the world is all about me first or my country first. That is fine to say me first and my country first, but you can't stop there. We have to understand the solidarity, the obligations we have to one another and how if we all pursue me first, then the Global commons will not get the attention that it really needs and deserves.

And my second word is coherence, connected to Governance. We do have a job to do to create coherent Governance and the rule of law that applies to these technologies as they must apply and have applied to every technology in the past.

No great technological breakthrough happens without disruption. And it is the responsibility of the rule of law and good Governance both nationally, locally, and internationally to ensure that what takes place benefits all and does not harm everyone.

The title of the part of our Conference these days is AI for Good. But we have to understand as well that AI can be bad when it spread lies, when it spreads propaganda, when it undermines trust and undermines integrity. When it undermines genuine access to technology and reinforces the inequalities of the world.

And so these are the challenges that we face. I think I am just under three minutes. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be with you this morning. Good luck to everyone.

>> AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thank you so much Ambassador, please be seated. I will go next to Minister from -- Minister the question for you, Marc Rossel, Minister. Wear your headsets, he will speak in French. As Andorra embarked on the Digital Transformation journey aligned with the European values, can you share with us the key priorities and guiding principles behind your National digitalization strategy 2030?

>> MARC ROSSEL: Welcome. It is a pleasure for me to talk to you today. To share with you the humble commitment of Digital Transformation from Andorra. Andorra is at the heart of the Pyrenees.

A year ago, we embarked on that Digital Transformation.

First of all, we should highlight connectivity. Andorra is very much connected. We rolled out more than 10 years ago, the whole fiber optic system, which is benefitting to all citizens and companies in Andorra.

Moreover, that connectivity is very important for its citizens in Andorra. But on top of it, we have developed a National strategy with ambitious objectives for 2030. Those

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378
https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

objectives will make it possible not only to have a digital administration putting the emphasis on the citizens, we want the people at the centre, we want a more efficient administration, I more centralized one with interconnected tools. We want more interconnection in order to avoid ... you know, bringing different Documents several times to the same administration.

Now, next to the administration, we also have a project with companies digitalization Programme for companies. We give them some aids so their services will be put at the National level. We don't want any companies to be left behind. And therefore, being this Programme will make it possible to move forward all together in that Digital Transformation. Now Cybersecurity is something that is very topical and we need to assist these companies in that regard. Next to the technological part, we are placing emphasis on the digital well-being of citizens. And we are working with the International Telecommunications Union on how to protect minors.

We have a SIM card to protect minorities where contents will not be visible, you know, for people who hold this SIM card. So the strategy is moving forward.

We have increased Digital Transformation for our country. Digital Transformation is not only a strategic choice for us, it is a vital necessity for Sustainable Development, social cohesion, and competitivity. It is very important to put forward all of the interconnection that we have with different countries, France, Spain, and all countries around the world in order to move forward all together regarding Digital Transformation.

Thank you. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to put in place those policies at the National level.

>> MODERATOR: (Off mic) three minutes is very short. We appreciate it. Minister, we are talking about the WSIS Prizes re-- WSIS+20 Review. How can we ensure that process is agile aligned with the digital priorities and from your perspective what are the reform updates on new areas to be addressed?

>> AMERICO MUCHANGA: I want to remind everyone when we met here in 2003 and talking about the Information Society, the issues we had were completely different than what we see today.

Back then, talking about Information Society we wanted everyone connected to the Internet to use Google and get information perhaps or get knowledge of the vast amount of data that was being poured on platforms like Google.

At that time, most of the people that could find their way using a printed map, they would think about going to the shop to buy some goods and would think about going to the restaurant or hiring, or a tax site to do their tax.

A lot has changed today. We talk about this today and we mean things that people wouldn't leave without them.

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https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

Today, when everyone thinks about navigating, you think, okay, I need to go to Google Map to be able to navigate from one point to another one. You think about buying things, you think about electronic shop. Even when you think about getting food, he thinks about going to the Internet, finding what he wants, get it delivered.

So we today have to think how do we make sure that our Nations they benefit -- they live in such a society? The issues of connecting everyone today, it means the only way to make sure that everyone has equal access to the vast amount of knowledge and opportunities that are available today. So there is a sense of urgency in making sure that we cannot leave anyone behind. Because the challenges of connectivity, they're still there everywhere in the world. Mozambique being one of them we have a lot of challenges in terms of connecting people in rural areas in particular, giving them the amount of bandwidth they require in order to be able to solve and learn and have their own life in that digital space.

We need to make sure the services are affordable and they have devices to use the service. Mozambique being a country affected by climate change, we need to make sure we build infrastructure that is resilient for climate change.

So all of the challenges need to be tackled. Because only then we can really have a society that benefits from all of the development, all of the knowledge and opportunities that we have.

If we don't change our achievement, today, WSIS is much more relevant than back then. Because back then the economy was not totally digitalized. Today, the economy is totally digitalized. We need to work together. There is a lot of leaders here. We need to make sure that we reshape our vision in terms of digital economy, Digital Transformation, and make sure that everything happened in secure environment. So cybersecurity is very important. With that, I pause here and thank you very much.

>> MODERATOR: Thank you.

>> AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thank you Minister, thank you for discussing that this is needed and everyone should have equal access. Next I move to Mr. Alexandre Reis Siqueira Freire. And I believe you would speak from the pod um. What is the National telecommunication Agency doing to make sure affordable access to information and telecommunication technology and especially in rural areas and vulnerable communities to promote security and environmental sustainability and reduce digital inequalities in Brazil.

>> ALEXANDRE REIS SIQUEIRA FREIRE: Thank you very much. In Brazil, we're working hard to make Internet access more equal and affordable for everyone. Especially those in remote and vulnerable situation. Today, over 75 of our municipalities are

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378
https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

connected by fiber optic networks, reaching nearly 95% of our population.

We also have 4G coverage in our municipality, all of them and 70% of rural villages that are not even also city centres.

That said, we know the numbers don't tell the whole history. Many people remain excluded from digital life. Not only because of the infrastructure, but because of the deep inequalities. That's why ANATEL telecommunication agency is taking actions to change this reality. We're expanding Telco networks to rural and remote areas and at the same time promoting digital skills training, so people can use the Internet safely and meaningfully.

In 2023, for example, National surveys shows that the main reason why many Brazilians don't use the Internet is the lack of digital skills.

So we are offering Programmes that teach safe Internet use, digital citizenship and how to protect one's self online.

One of our most important tools for that is how we design spectrum auction.

In our 5G auction, 90% of the revenue was transformed to investment commitments. A key initiative from it that is the sustainable integrate Amazon Programme. The Programme is building over 12,000 kilomitres of high-capacity, low-latency fiber optic network. Many of them under rivers.

Link towns across the Amazon and the connected public institutions, we are also studying how to expand the network for the neighbouring Amazon countries, creating a link from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Another important approach we use is called obligation to do. A regulatory tool that replaces financial fines with concrete action. In 2024, for example, alone more than $70 million were invested in connecting remote areas.

Including Indigenous lands, many communities, schools with 4G and fiber optic infrastructure. One project also provides training in digital rights, citizenship, human rights, of course, human and vulnerable situations and refugees helping them enter the job market with confidence.

Because when we connect these communities, we're not only building infrastructure, we're building something deeper. We are building belonging for Black communities, we are building Indigenous Peoples belonging. We are building belonging to children and for human survivor of violence.

We are restoring their dignity and of course above all, we are helping the right to the future. And the right to learn, to speak, to dream, and to thrive.

This is our Mission and together we believe we can achieve more.

>> AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thank you so much. Ambassador has to

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378
https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

leave. Thank you so much for being here.

With that, I will come to you Mr. Kamel Saadaoui. My question is, while implementing the Digital Transformation strategy for Tunisia, what were the most challenging obstacles you faced and from your experience can you explain how the local startups can contribute to overcoming some of the challenges which you witnessed?

>> KAMEL SAADAOUI: In Tunisia we have Digital Transformation plan like every other country. The plan is very ambitious and we did well in some aspects and not much in other aspects due to some obstacles. The main obstacles we faced is resistance to change when we come to Government services. By Government employees, they're sticking to the old processes, and they're not comfortable with the re-Engineering of processes needed for the Digital Transformation.

The other aspect of project Governance. Because when you talk about transforming, e-health for example, is it a technology issue or a health issue? Because of the Governance issue, some of the project did not go as much as we wanted as fast as we wanted. Being aware of the gap between the Government employees and the Private Sector and also the young generation the startup generation, being aware of, that the Government decided to take two major measures. One is to give more incentives to startups. To lead the transformation plan. By two measures, specifically. One of them is the e-procurement process, open procurement process to innovative and start and some developed AI applications and blockchain of all the new technologies that we invited them to showcase them. The other aspect is the startup act itself.

We have a startup act. It is giving incentives to startups. We are moving to another start-up act, 2.0, which gives more incentives and opens the market further.

We have also one of the things -- one of the start-up became a unicorn, SRD, it is applied in biotechnology and acquired by a big name. It became a pride for the new generation. Thank you.

>> AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thank you so much Mr. Kamel Saadaoui. And you have been well within time. Thank you for that. That gives us more time. My question to you Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill. As we navigate the rapidly evolving digital landscape, what role do you see for multistakeholder digital cooperation in addressing Global challenges such as bridging the Digital Divide or ensuring inclusivity using technological advancement? I believe you want to speak from the podium.

>> AMANDEEP SINGH GILL: Thank you very much also for giving me the opportunity to stretch my legs a bit. The organizers of this panel put the accent on partnerships, on digital for development, and your question invites us to think about

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https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

connecting the dots, about collaboration, not only collaboration across borders, but across stakeholders. That is the strength of the WSIS vision.

So last year, the world came together to adopt the Global Digital Compact, which in a way centres the inclusive digital economy as a priority item on the international Agenda.

There are the enduring parts of progress on connectivity, on content, on multilingual, multicultural representation of content from more than 20 years ago. But as Professor Americo Muchanga reminded us, the world was different. Less than 20 million people on the Internet. No misinformation or disinformation, no AI, no big data, only in very esoteric communities. Today, it is front and centre. It is the fastest growing complement of the GDP and tremendous leapfrogging opportunities.

Before the Digital Divide, there is the development divide and how do we leapfrog there with constraints on energy, on education, financing. Just had the financing for development Conference.

So digital and emerging technologies provide us the opportunity, so what to prioritize? Look at the Global spend of 5 to 6 trillion a year. Developing countries couldn't afford to spend what developed countries are spending. The GDC provides us that direction, the investments in digital public infrastructure. Digital ID, payments layer, data exchange, use case on top of that. The investment some data and AI capacity to innovate and create value in the future, investment in talent, investment in Public Sector capacity, institutional capacity that is lagging behind the pace of tech development.

To close, we have to update our vision. We have done that. We have to update our objectives. We have done that. Now we need to update our ways of working together. Back to the topic of this panel, partnerships, partnerships across stakeholder, across countries. But within countries, you know, with the Private Sector, with Academia, with Civil Society. And within Regions so we have more interoperability in digital public infrastructure and we have more scale for entrepreneurs when it comes to opportunities within the digital economy. We at the office for digital and emerging technologies in the UN working with our colleagues from ITU, UNDP and other organisations across the system stand ready to support the partnerships.

>> AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thank you, sir, actually for talking about the development died which is also important. And most of the panelists have been speaking from the development, Developing Countries perspective.

Ms. Bernadette Lewis what do you see as the major challenge for advancing the digital development landscape and what measures can be taken to overcome it?

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378
https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

>> BERNADETTE LEWIS: Thank you. Thank you very much. Well the Commonwealth Telecommunication Organisation, it is the oldest organisation of the Commonwealth dedicated to technology networks.

There are many initiatives, but they bear no relevance or synergies with other initiatives that are happening. And largely because developmental agencies at the international level and Governments and other organisations at the National level, they operate in silos without a comprehensive or cohesive strategy or plans.

Advancing the digital for development landscape as we heard before, it demands coherent, multistakeholder and multisectoral approaches, unfortunately a lot of these organisations and developmental agencies, they have different mandates. They have different ways of funding. They have many, many disparities. There is a need to anchor these -- or establish mechanisms at the National level whereby all organisations could participate and anchor their work to National priorities and National plans.

So this is going to help avoid duplicative activities, scatter-shot approaches, gaps and over provision in one area and other areas. So it is very important for countries to have their plan, to have their vision, to have their Roadmap for what they're doing, and then the international development agencies and other organisations can plug into that. And that ensures that there is a progression and not a scatter-shot of activities. With that, I will stop there. Thank you.

>> AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thank you so much, ma'am. Thank you for finishing well within time. Thank you to all the esteemed speakers to share how partnerships, et cetera are very important. Has given us results but we need to work more, which is one of the WSIS Action Line 1, I would say.

We would have a final summary of today's discussion shared on Friday, 11 July at 3:00 p.m. So we would like to have you there for this.

I think to summarize, if we want our communities to be uplifted and to build a good and equitable society, we need to use digital technologies in the way which we started using from the WSIS Action Lines. With this, may I request all of you for a photograph here. Thank you so much, everyone.

Could you have a round of applause for our panelists?

(Applause)

>> HOST: We now have our next Leaders TalkX session. Information and communication infrastructure: A foundation for universal, sustainable and affordable access we invite the panelists to the stage, please.

Valeria Betancourt the APC Global Governance Advocacy Lead

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378
https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

will moderate. The floor is yours?

>> MODERATOR: I'm Valeria Betancourt from Progressive Communications. I'm honoured to moderate the panel today. This session is going to look at information and communication infrastructure. A Foundation for universal, sustainable and affordable access with more than 2.6 million people, many of whom reside in remote, rural and underserved areas, communication and information infrastructure is a key factor for digital inclusion through universal, sustainable and affordable access. Our panel will explore this issue and progress made in the fields. Welcome everyone.

Thank you, you have the name of our speakers the screen. We will go to the conversation. First of all, I invite Minister I would like to begin with you. How can we ensure that infrastructure investments in the remote and underserved areas not only bring connectivity but create long-term local value, resilience and skills that empower communities, especially youth and women. You have the floor, please.

>> ALGERIA: Thank you, I will try to be on time. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, in Algeria, this is not a luxury, it is a right and part of the dignity and pillar of National cohesion. Our President has made it clear, digital inclusion must leave no Region behind. That is why you are investing boldly and we left no Region behind. We invest into broadband, fiber, 4G, 5G reaching the most remote area in the deepest area.

Not just to connect home, but to connect hope also. Infrastructure alone is not enough. The real question is, what happened after that connection? We have every rollout request National Programmes for digital skills, youth and innovation and the empowerment of women in tech also. Centres, schools, public services. All are enabled because it is not just a statistic, but it is the school far and that very remote area.

Where they learn coding, the farmer checking weather and the start-up accessing global market. Let me be clear, it is digital infrastructure, it is the silent enabler of the fair and inclusive society. To make it sustainable, we must ask altogether, Government must create predictable violent and must adopt a common metric beyond coverage toward meaningful use. In the new Algeria, the glorious Algeria, it is not just about cables and towers, it is about dignity, access and opportunity. No child, no village and no dream should be left behind because just of missing signal. Thank you very much thank you.

Recognition as a right is an important step forward. The next question is for the Minister from Gabon. In light of the major changes taking place around the world. Information and communication technologies are crucial to the economic prosperity of our country. Sometimes causing a significant

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378
https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

digital divide between countries in the North and South. In this context how is Gabon shaping the information and communication service in a sustainable manner in orders to reduce the divide and turn it into a real growth opportunity in the country. Please share your views with us.

>> GABON: Thank you very much for this very good question. It is nice to share the panel with my friends here. Fellow Ministers and friends.

The way we look at things is Gabon is in a privileged position because we are in a position where our digital economy is at the initial stages, where we can learn what the most advanced countries have done over the paste years. Technology has evolved with AI and quantum computing and emerging technologies, many countries had to do trial and error and have done things that have worked, things that have not worked. We are able to diagnose and look at what countries have done. We spoke to UAE, which is a country that has done well. Others, Singapore and others that charted a path that is inspiring for us.

As we are shaping our regulation, we are trying to learn the best from the best to leapfrog and have a digital infrastructure that makes sense. One much the concerns as we build our digital economy or accelerate it is to ensure that all protocols and standards are right and systems speak to each other so they can be interoperable from the beginning, that the data we collect from citizens and enterprises are clean enough for AI to play a role in the way we make a tool for decision-making. So we have a very flexible, agile way of approaching regulations with regard to accelerating the digital economy.

One particular sense that distinguishes us from the North economy. 40 to 50% of the economy is in the informal Sector. That is not something to copy-paste from the North to the South. That is a very specific nuance that developing economies have. We are focused on the digital inclusion, and in doing so, bringing digital ids for people that never had an ID. Not going from an ID to digital ID, we are going to digital directly. It is not just with what is technology in the North, but how do we build technologies that we are sovereign. That is a preoccupation we are thinking about as we build our ecosystem, is how to build capacity for local entrepreneur and innovators and for the Government to play a role in ensuring that the technologies the country develop over the years, it is in house over which we have sovereignty and enable us to be consumers of the digital economy for years and decades to come. But be a country that can somehow insert itself in the value chain to also produce niche aspects of the digital or AI economy that will be a significant part of the growth drivers of the Global

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/378
https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

economy and of, you know, value and creation across the world for generations to come and ensure this benefits our population for decades and generations to come. Thank you so much.

>> MODERATOR: Thank you very much Minister. Next, I would like to invite the Minister from Bulgaria. The question that I would like you to answer is what is the role of the meaningful inclusive and accessible Digital Transformation in your country? You have the floor.

>> BULGARIA: Thank you very much. First of all, let me express our satisfaction with the holding of the WSIS+20 Forum. We strongly believe that the WSIS process that started 20 years ago and promoted the Global multistakeholder cooperation among has contributed significantly to expand equitable access to digital technologies and address inequalities in how persons connect and benefit from the digital world.

We believe that the benefit of the digital transformation must be equally distributed and Bulgaria of course considers the Digital Transformation rooted in human-centric and human rights based approach as key to progressing towards and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

We reaffirm our commitment to the digital inclusion, of course, digital meaningful connectivity to the central levers to Sustainable Development. Social inclusion and economic opportunity.

While Digital Divides still persist globally, their nature is changing with the development of new technologies. The technology is an essential prerequisite for strengthening competitiveness and ensuring sustainable progress in the modern world. But at the same time, Digital Transformation must be inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of geographical location, social status, or age Group among others. For Bulgaria, it is of strategic importance that more people and businesses have the opportunity to actively participate in the Global digital economy and benefit from the countless opportunities.

We have to underline the role of digital connectivity in the process as it not only creates new work models, but also generates, dynamic economic ecosystems that enhance Global competitiveness. High speed connectivity is at the heart of the development of critical Sectors, such as education and healthcare. Which are transforming and improving the way we work and interact in our society.

We believe that through lasting and strategic investments in digital infrastructure, we can overcome existing challenges and ensure not only growth but also social and economic sustainability.

In Bulgaria, we recognize the importances of these investments and are committed to building very high-capacity

networks, such as optical networks, and 5G technologies, especially in Regions where market interests are not always sufficient to stimulate Private Sector investment.

According to the 2024 digital decade report, Bulgaria has established itself as a leader in the European Union in the field of digital infrastructure and connectivity. We're among the top 10 countries with the fastest mobile Internet in the world with ultra high speed network coverage, reaching an impressive percentage of 88.6%, surpassing the European Union's average.

Finally, to summarize, we believe that the WSIS process is an essential tool in helping reduce the Digital Divide, achieve meaningful and inclusive and accessible Digital Transformation and progress towards the SDGs. Thank you very much.

>> MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Minister. I think we are hearing consistently that digital inclusion is a priority for the WSIS review.

I would like to invite the views of the Minister. How can we ensure the digital knowledge is not only available but accessible with the consideration of the United Arab Emirates cybersecurity standards?

>> UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: Thank you for this question. Great to be with all of these great colleagues of mine in that perspective. UAE, I'm sure with all of the great achievement we have done there, we are still learning and trying to progress in many of those aspects. It is one of the most important things to not only focus on the competitiveness rankings to having the most connected nation and most connected infrastructure. We have many of those as a matter of fact in place.

It is the benefit of what do you do with this connectivity? It is what you are actually progressing and helping the society, the economy of that nation. That is what we are actually involved in and working with everybody in that perspective. We are moving towards AI era, where artificial intelligence needs the connectivity and needs this fast and great latency that is almost goes to zero.

In order to do that, the UAE have introduced not only the governings, policies, procedures, allowing this to be shared and connected in one place, but also the innovation and capacity building that allows it to benefit from many of the innovative ideas that were coming in that perspective. And the fourth one is the partnership. By the way, these are the pillars of National Cybersecurity strategy that we have. From those governing to building capacities and technologies to partnering with many of those to innovating and most important as well to defend and protect.

We all understand that by these connectivities by transferring into the world of digitalization, we are opening

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more to us cybercrime, cyber attacks and threats. As a matter of fact, 2024 until 2025, almost two quarters, here we have suffered more than world wide $10 trillion of such attacks, of such loss of data. Be it leaked or any of those things. Imagine as well, coupling that with the loss of lives. That is specifically when we speak about healthcare Sectors.

This is where it comes that no one needs to be really left behind. From entities, from people, from societies.

The cybersecurity culture that we need to spread across the whole society in order to ensure they are well aware of the use of that technology. Not only for connectivity, but also for benefitting themselves, benefitting their nation. Benefitting their society and that what we are really focusing on in many of the initiatives we have.

I will end with one initiative that we actually call cyber pulse. That is known as well with WSIS and we're working with them in order to bring the whole Global entities in order to do cyber drills, in order to prepare for any of those attacks when it happens. So that is one of the initiatives that we're actually working on. Definitely working together with everybody to ensure that no one is really left behind in many of those aspects. Thank you.

>> MODERATOR: Thank you, Minister. I would like to invite Ms. Diop from Senegal. You will address the universal service fund from telecommunication. What role does this fund play in Africa's digital and political ambitions, particularly in Senegal?

>> SENEGAL: Thank you, I will speak in French.

What is the role of the fund in Africa and particularly in Senegal? I will start by thanking the ITU for inviting me to participate in this panel. We have the technological new deal shared by clear vision. We're saying in 2050, Senegal will be a digital society, a country of high added value services. The strategies articulated around four major axes that reflect the political will to build a country in a digital revolution. The first axis is digital sovereignty and guaranties the digital independence of the country. That is one of the priorities.

The second is the digitalization of the public services. The aim is to deeply transform Senegal society by transforming its processes by dematurization. Third, access the digital economy. So the new deal encourages the Digital Transformation. And the fourth axis, is Senegal will have to take the African leadership in the digital Sector.

We want to be a reference digital hub on the African continent, and it aims to build a dynamic ecosystem to favour the Regional integration.

This ambitious talent will cost millions and thousands of francs that will cover all strategic Sectors.

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https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

One of the Sectors called infrastructure network and universal connectivity has the aim to guarantee universal access and high quality connectivity at low cost to everyone.

So the fund plays a fundamental role in the implementation of this ambition. The role consists in making connectivity of accessibility in all of the areas, even the most remote ones. Today we estimate there is about 1550 villages to be connected. 500 in nonconnected areas and other areas where we need to migrate from 2G to 4G. Universal access to high-speed Internet is an absolutely fundamental aspect for the new services in the digital society.

We also plan of equipping in I.T. equipment, and schools, et cetera.

Another key aspect is the development of the technical applications in the Indigenous ecosystem. Beyond this infrastructure, the transformation needs to be inclusive, needs to respect environment. The infrastructures need to be designed to minimize the digital footprint, guarantee the gender equity. We need to guarantee a fair inclusion between men and women, fighting access inequality. Taking into account the cultural aspects. Digital technology changes deeply social and work practices.

We need to have an anticipative inclusive approach in order to accompany the changes in order to maximize the benefits and limiting the risks. Finally, the success of the ambition requires everyone for a consistent and agile Government. The technical partners, the capacity and reinforcement, Private Sector, in order to stimulate innovation to create value and sustainable jobs, and also the Civil Society.

Senegal is today at a strategic crossroads. Digital technology is not a luxury for us. It is a fundamental right. It is to build a future that is inclusive and sustainable. It is not just technological, it is deeply economical, social, cultural, political, investing in digital today is investing in a stronger Senegal. Fairer, better connected to the world of tomorrow. I thank you.

>> MODERATOR: Thank you very much Ms. Diop for underscoring the importance of the universal service funds, crucial mechanism for digital inclusion, last but not least I would like to invite the Representative from ICANN. How have Governments gone to the Governance mechanisms for the Global, interoperable and stable infrastructure. Please let us know your views?

>> ICANN: 20 years ago, fewer than 12% of the world's population had access to the Internet. Today that number exceeds 5.5 billion people. It is reflecting the sustained commitment to investment chat bot collaboration that is part of the WSIS vision of the multistakeholder Governance. This is leading up to the WSIS+20 Review, which brings renewed attention to the role

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https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

of technical infrastructure, collaboration and multilingual access.

Yet, access remains uneven as we heard from our fellow panelists. And the systems that support Global connectivity are under strain. Not really due to lack of infrastructure, but because collaboration is weakening and the risk of fragmentation is growing.

Infrastructure is more than physical networks. It includes the technical Foundation that keeps the Internet secure, stable, interoperable. This includes apartments, IP addresses, Domain Name System and the Global root infrastructure. At ICANN, we help coordinate all of this through the Global multistakeholder model.

We maintain the stability and security of the DNS, we support the root server deployment and contribute to bridging the Digital Divide in underserved Regions, including initiatives like the Coalition for the digital Africa. That collaboration enables infrastructure to connect to the Global Internet, without it, even the most advanced systems risk becoming isolated. The Internet must work for everyone. Including multilingual access. It is not optional, it is essential. Connectivity matters if you can use the Internet in your own language and script.

That is why ICANN has led efforts on international domain names and universal acceptance. We do this to ensure domain names, including those in local strips, function across many platforms. This is important for digital inclusion, local content and access to services. This supports one much the core WSIS commitments, enabling multilingualism in the Internet. Today, domain names are available in over 20 scripts, including Arabic, Cyrillic, and Thai. And that work continues.

The risk now is fragmentation. The globally technical norms undermines the Internet's functionality, resilience and efficiency. Whether this is true, isolated infrastructure or unilateral policy approaches. Collaboration is what keeps the Internet working. The multistakeholder model enables that collaboration whether technical bodies such as the Internet Engineering Task Force, the DNS coordination role that ICANN full tills. Or platforms like the inter-Governance Forum.

That collaboration must be protected because our access really depends on it. Thank you.

>> MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Despite progress made, there is still a long way to go for achieving universal sustainable and affordable access.

It implies, as we have heard, enabling policies to foster meaningful access and empower local communities and other actors to allow the coexistence of models to deploy the infrastructure and strengthening partnerships that you heard about the value of

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https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/379

collaborations, between Governments, regulators, Civil Society, technical community, Regulators working toward closing the Digital Divide through the multistakeholder fashion. The WSIS+20 Review is an opportunity to renew our commitment with digital inclusion. Thank you very much to all the esteemed speakers to contribute to address this issue of importance that is related to the WSIS Action Line number 2. May I request that we take a Group picture, these. Thank you very much for your views.

     (Concluded)

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