



Session Outcome Document

Between free market and public digital infrastructure: intersections of media viability and public interest journalism

Global Forum for Media Development

Monday, 7 July 2025 - 16:00–16:45 (UTC+02:00)

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/277>

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

1. Over the past 20 years, WSIS Action Line C9 has served as a foundational recognition of the importance of media pluralism, freedom of expression, and access to diverse and fact-based information as essential to a people-centred Information Society.
2. Participants emphasized that journalism should be recognised and supported as an essential public good: vital to the integrity of democracy, civic participation, and equitable access to information.
3. While connectivity and digitalisation have improved globally, emerging challenges (such as platform monopolies, algorithmic opacity, and rising infrastructure costs) are creating a hostile environment for independent journalism.
4. The combined pressures of rising costs, lack of control over infrastructure and data, and reduced competitiveness in platform-dominated environments threaten media sustainability and civic space.
5. There was consensus that Digital Public Infrastructure should not be seen only as state-led technical infrastructure but must be designed and governed in the public interest, with human rights, transparency, and public oversight at its core.
6. The current WSIS framework does not reflect the realities of platform dominance, algorithmic content distribution, or the structural barriers that limit media actors' access to critical digital infrastructure. As highlighted during the session, concepts like Digital Public Infrastructure and the role of journalism as civic infrastructure remain underdeveloped in both the WSIS framework and the WSIS+20 Elements Paper.

7. Speakers from Zimbabwe, Costa Rica, and indigenous and women's communities highlighted the need for DPI and WSIS processes to reflect cultural autonomy, context-driven design, and community-led governance models.

Tangible Outcomes of the session

- **Key achievements**
 1. Reaffirmation of the need to integrate media sustainability and infrastructure access into the WSIS+20 outcome document.
 2. Recognition that public digital infrastructure must include and support journalism, as much as it supports e-government or financial inclusion.
 3. Stakeholders expressed interest in continued collaboration, aligning WSIS+20 advocacy with other processes, including the GDC, Financing for Development, and the IGF.
- **Agreements/commitments as an outcome of the session**
 - Participants were invited to contribute to and endorse GFMD's WSIS+20 advocacy efforts, including the [position paper](#) and consultations on the **Elements Paper** and future Zero Draft.
 - Strong support was expressed for embedding journalism, DPI, and information integrity into the WSIS+20 outcome through a rights-based and multistakeholder lens.

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

1. Ensure explicit recognition of journalism and media sustainability in WSIS+20 outcomes, in alignment with GDC information integrity commitments.
2. Establish dedicated support and follow-up mechanisms to monitor Action Line C9 progress and related commitments, resource capacity-building for media actors (especially in the Global Majority countries), and engage stakeholders in its implementation.
3. Promote equitable access to digital infrastructure and services for independent, local, and public interest journalism media, especially in the Global Majority, by investing in open, human rights-based alternatives to platform monopolies.
4. Support multi-stakeholder dialogue spaces for digital governance, like the Internet Governance Forum, to connect media, civil society, technical communities, and policy actors in shaping the future of WSIS.