WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

WSIS+20

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Session 413

Bridging the Digital Divide:
Inclusive ICT Policies for Sustainable Development

This session, titled "Inclusive and Ethical ICT Policies for a Sustainable and Equitable Digital Future," seeks to foster a critical dialogue on the urgent need to design, implement, and monitor ICT policies that leave no one behind. As we mark 20 years of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), it is essential to reflect on progress made while acknowledging the persistent challenges of the digital divide, ethics in emerging technologies, and environmental sustainability.

Drawing on examples from global initiatives—including India's Digital India, Kenya's community networks, the EU AI Act, and Rwanda's Green ICT strategy—the session will highlight best practices and offer policy recommendations to ensure that digital transformation is inclusive, ethical, and sustainable. Participants will be invited to share local challenges and opportunities for collaborative action.

Bridging the Digital Divide:
Inclusive ICT Policies for Sustainable Development

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Introduction

Celebrating 20 years of WSIS — a milestone in advancing the Informatio Society.

Recognizing the ongoing digital divide that still leaves billions offline.

This presentation explores inclusive, ethical, and sustainable ICT policies bridge these divides and shape a fairer digital future.

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Why This Matters

Digital Divide: Over 2.6 billion people remain offline (ITU, 2024).

Affordability: Access to affordable internet is still out of reach for many.

Literacy: 1 in 4 lack basic digital skills, limiting meaningful participation.

A sustainable digital future demands inclusive and rights-based policies.

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Policy Gaps

Lack of Inclusivity: Policies often overlook marginalized groups.

Ethics in Emerging Tech: Rapid AI/IoT deployment without adequate safeguards.

Fragmented Approaches: National and regional policies often lack coordination, leaving gaps in global governance.

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3 Pillars Overview

📌 **Inclusion**

Universal connectivity & meaningful access

📌 **Ethics**

Human rights & accountability in tech

📌 **Sustainability**

Green ICT and equitable growth

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Pillar 1 – Inclusion-First ICT Frameworks

Universal Connectivity: Affordable broadband, community networks, last-mil solutions.

Local Content & Multilingual Tech: Empower communities with relevant information in their languages.

Capacity-Building: Digital literacy, gender-sensitive programs, skills training

Examples:

India's Digital India: Rural connectivity and e-governance.

Kenya's Community Networks: Bridging access in underserved areas.

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Pillar 2 – Ethics-Centric Digital Governance

Data Rights & Privacy: People-first data governance.

Transparent AI: Explainable, accountable, and bias-aware systems.

Rights-Based Design: Embedding human rights and equity in every technology deployment.

Examples:

EU AI Act: *Enforcing accountability and transparency*

UNESCO AI Ethics: Global guidance on ethical AI development.

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Pillar 3 – Sustainability and Equity in Tech

Green ICT: Energy-efficient infrastructure, e-waste management.

Human Capital Investment: Empowering digital skills and local talen

PPPP Models: Public-Private-People Partnerships to share benefits equitably.

Examples:

Rwanda's Green ICT Strategy: Reducing e-waste, promoting eco-design.

Estonia's e-Residency: Digital transformation with inclusivity at its core.

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Policy Recommendations

✓ Foster multi-stakeholder collaboration across sectors.
✓ Embed human rights and ethics in design, deployment, and evaluation.
✓ Support innovation sandboxes for safe experimentation.
✓ Develop regional & global frameworks to align policies and shar best practices.
✓ Integrate gender, youth, and marginalized voices.

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Call to Action

🌍 Let's co-create inclusive, ethical, and sustainable ICT ecosystems.
🔲 Build partnerships that prioritize solidarity over silos.
🔍 Mainstream ethics and inclusion in every digital policy.
⚖ Together, we can bridge divides and empower communities.

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Challenges & Risks

⚠ Unintended Consequences: Widening divides or digital colonialism.
⚠ Bias & Discrimination: Embedded in data and algorithms.
⚠ Surveillance & Privacy Risks: Abuse of digital technologies.
⚠ Environmental Impact: E-waste, energy-intensive tech.
⚠ Resistance to Change: Policy inertia and vested interests.

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Conclusion

✓ Digital Inclusion: Everyone, everywhere, meaningfully connected.
✓ Ethical Tech: People-centered, rights-based, transparent.
✓ Sustainable ICT: Green, equitable, future-proof.
🔑 ☐ Together, let's harness technology to empower communities and build a better digital future.

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Interactive Discussion Prompt

💬 **Question:**
What are your local challenges in building inclusive and ethical ICT policies?

Are there barriers to connectivity or digital skills?

How can policy frameworks adapt to your community's needs?

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Thank You!

🎧 **Thank you for your attention!**
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Thank you !

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