



WSIS 2026

Connected and coherent: the Yin and Yang of digital education *From school connectivity to DPI for education*

Date: 8 July 2026

Time: 14:00 – 15:45

Venue: PALEXPO, Geneva

Background and Rationale

Education systems globally are at a pivotal moment in their digital transformation journeys. While digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities to expand access to quality learning, many countries continue to face persistent gaps in both infrastructure and system-level integration.

On the one hand, school connectivity remains a fundamental prerequisite. Without reliable and meaningful internet access, schools are unable to fully participate in the digital ecosystem. The [Giga initiative](#), led by ITU and UNICEF, is addressing this challenge by working with Governments to connect every school to the internet and provide the data needed to guide investments.

On the other hand, connectivity alone is insufficient to deliver transformation. Countries increasingly require coherent and integrated digital education systems that enable platforms, data, and services to function together effectively. In many contexts, fragmentation across systems continues to limit scalability and impact.

Efforts such as the [Gateways initiative](#), led by UNESCO, UNICEF and ITU, are helping countries build interoperable and sustainable digital education ecosystems, supported by shared principles such as the [Charter for Public Digital Learning Platforms](#).

This session brings these two agendas together, highlighting the need to align investments in connectivity with broader system-level transformation – what can be understood as the “yin and yang” of digital education.

Objectives

The session aims to:

- Highlight school connectivity as the foundation for digital education
- Showcase progress and partnerships under the Giga initiative
- Explore how countries are building integrated digital education systems





- Promote alignment between infrastructure investments and system-level transformation
- Facilitate high-level dialogue among governments, donors, and partners

Session Description and Format

This 90-minute high-level session will be structured around two complementary round table discussions, each exploring a critical dimension of digital education. The session will also feature brief welcoming and closing remarks from senior representatives of the co-hosting institutions and partner governments.

Discussion 1: Connecting Every School – Scaling Infrastructure through Partnerships

The first round table discussion will focus on advancing school connectivity through partnerships and financing models. It will explore how countries are moving from mapping connectivity gaps to delivering sustainable access at scale, including lessons on coordination, investment, and public-private collaboration.

Indicative panelists:

- Moderator: Irene Kaggwa, Giga Programme Manager, ITU
- [TBC] H.E. Vandeth Chea, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Cambodia
- [TBC] Ms. Helena Fernandes, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, INCM - Mozambique Communications Regulatory Authority, Mozambique
- Mr. Antonio García Zaballos, Director Digital Sector Office, Asian Development Bank
- Mr. Ayman Essam, Chief External Affairs Officer, Vodacom Group

Discussion 2: From connectivity to DPI for education – Advancing digital education systems

The second round table discussion will shift the focus from access to systems, exploring how countries are building coherent digital education ecosystems that go beyond individual tools and platforms. The discussion will highlight national approaches to digital learning solutions, governance frameworks, and interoperability, as well as the role of global initiatives and shared principles.

Indicative panelists:

- Moderator: Mark West, Lead for the Gateways Initiative, UNESCO
- [TBC] H.E. Mr. Sherzod Shermatov, Minister of Digital Technologies, Ministry of Digital Technologies of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan





- [TBC] H.E. Hon. William Kabogo Gitau, EGH, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy, Kenya
- Mr. Frank van Cappelle, Global Lead for Digital Education, UNICEF
- Mr. Hani Eskandar, Giga Senior Project Manager, ITU

Expected Outcomes

The session is expected to:

- Strengthen the understanding of connectivity and digital systems as interdependent priorities
- Highlight practical lessons and country experiences
- Support alignment between global initiatives and national strategies
- Foster stronger partnerships across stakeholders
- Identify key enablers for scaling integrated digital education systems

Target Audience

The session will convene senior stakeholders from across the ecosystem, including government representatives, development partners and donors, UN agencies, private sector actors, and members of civil society and academia.

Key Messages

- Digital education requires both connectivity and interoperable systems
- Infrastructure investments must be aligned with system-level transformation
- Fragmentation limits scale, while coherence enables impact
- Partnerships are essential to achieving sustainable outcomes
- Country leadership remains central to digital transformation

Run of Show	
14:00 – 14:05	<p><i>Welcoming Remarks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Alex Wong, Senior Advisor, Strategic Engagement and Initiatives, Office of the Secretary-General, ITU • [TBC] Mr. Thomas Gürber, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office in Geneva
14:05 – 14:45	<p><i>First Roundtable discussion</i></p> <p>Connecting Every School – Scaling Infrastructure through Partnerships</p>





14:05 – 14:08	<i>Framing by moderator</i> Set the scene around the importance of connectivity as a foundation, including guiding reflections such as what it takes to move from mapping gaps to delivering access at scale.
14:08 – 14:20	<i>Short interventions from key panellists</i> Focused interventions highlighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financing and scaling connectivity efforts• Public-private partnerships• Implementation realities and lessons learned
14:20 - 14:45	<i>Panel-driven dialogue, with audience interaction</i> Moderated exchange among panellists, with the possibility of curated interventions from the audience.
14:45 – 15:25	<i>Second Roundtable discussion</i> From connectivity to DPI for education – Advancing digital education systems
14:45 – 14:48	<i>Framing by moderator</i> Introduce the shift from access to impact, with guiding reflections on how countries translate connectivity into real transformation.
14:48 – 15:00	<i>Short interventions from key panellists</i> Focused interventions highlighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What a coherent digital education system looks like in practice• Governance, interoperability, and system integration• Country experiences and pathways to scale
15:00 - 15:25	<i>Panel-driven dialogue, with audience interaction</i> Moderated exchange among panellists, with the possibility of curated interventions from the audience.
15:25 – 15:30	<i>Closing Remarks</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [TBD], Government of Spain• Mr. Sobhi Tawil, Director, Division for the Future of Learning & Innovation, and Director (ai), International Bureau of Education (IBE), UNESCO

