

# Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board (IMSB) Reflections on Revision 1 of the WSIS+20 Outcomes Document

20 November 2025

The IMSB appreciates the continued balance achieved in Revision 1 of the Outcomes Document and welcomes the incorporation of inputs from all stakeholders from the open joint consultative process and engagements between the publication of Zero Draft and Revision 1. We support the streamlining of the document to focus clearly on the WSIS vision, strengthening the WSIS architecture - especially its multistakeholder foundations, and acknowledging the importance of global connectivity in bringing this people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society.

## **Key aspects to retain in the next revision of the Outcomes Document**

- The WSIS vision (paras 3, 5, 103 and 117) reaffirming multistakeholder cooperation as the guiding principle and foundational value of the WSIS.
- The permanent mandate of the Internet Governance Forum (para 98), recognition of the IGF, NRIs and the full range of intersessional work: Dynamic Coalitions, Best Practice Forums and Policy Networks (para 96).
- WSIS-GDC-SDG coherence (paras 24, 104-109, 111, 118-124) and avoiding duplication.
- Closing the Digital Divide (paras 9-12, 18- 27) - “closing”, replacing “bridging” indicates the increased importance and acknowledgment.
- Addressing internet fragmentation is essential for enabling delivery on all WSIS action lines, with this in mind it is important to retain language (para 89) and reinstate omissions from the Zero draft as noted below.
- Financial mechanisms and capacity development (paras 25, 26, 56, 59-64); and
- Follow-up and review (paras 117 as updated below; 118).

During the IMSB office hours (4 sessions: 12 November, 19 November) and the 14 November joint stakeholder consultations, the IMSB notes a convergence of stakeholder input welcoming the strengthening and introduction of new language on key topics.

On review and observation, the IMSB welcomes the strengthening of language in particular the sections on **closing the digital divide** (paras 10, 16, 18, 24, 25); the strengthening of language for a **multilingual Internet** (para 27); the importance of **financing mechanisms** for meaningful connectivity (para 25) and digital capacity development (para 56); the call for a **task force** to consider future financial mechanisms for digital development, with the **involvement of all stakeholders** (para 64); the addition of the **NETmundial+10 guidelines** for multistakeholder

collaboration and consensus-building (para 93); explicit recognition of **youth as stakeholders** (paras 3, 117); recognition of the full range of intersessional work (para 96) of the IGF, and the continued language that supports the **permanency of the IGF** (para 98) as inclusive platform for dialogue among all stakeholders on Internet governance and emerging technologies (para 100); and recommendations on how to strengthen **coherence between the WSIS vision and GDC commitments** (para 120) as well as alignment with the **SDGs** (paras 104, 111).

Similarly the consultations and engagements have also highlighted caution on the softening and deletion of language on various sections such as the **human rights**, in particular the deletion of the dedicated paragraph on **surveillance** (para 73), references to human rights principles of **legality, necessity and proportionality** (para 72 and Zero Draft 89), concerns about the **adverse impacts of artificial intelligence** (Zero Draft para 97) and references to **corporate accountability** (para 13) highlighting the need to identify and mitigate risks through fundamental rights impact assessments for all technological systems, following the precautionary principle in the adoption of technological applications; clarity needed on the use of the phrase “International Human Rights Law” as opposed to “International Law”. Several have noted the weakening of the language on **Internet fragmentation**, especially the deletion of “reject models of state-controlled or fragmented Internet architectures” (para 87). In addition, **environmental impacts** (paras 41-45), particularly, the deletion of text on impacts of e-waste which disproportionately impacts developing countries, while there have been clarifications particularly in the follow-up review section (paras 117-125), there are missed opportunities to retain the call for **multistakeholder advice to UNGIS** to ensure more effective collaboration.

### **IMSB suggestions for clarification and additions in the next revision of the Outcomes Document**

#### **On Capacity Building (paras 56, 57)**

The addition of scaling up international cooperation and financing is good. It goes in line with several inputs from the community about a need for tangible language when it comes to capacity building. We suggest even clearer and more actionable language on roles and responsibilities, as it is currently unclear in para 57 to whom the call to strengthen digital capabilities is addressed. The issue of financing capacity building should not be left out as it is the underlying challenge of the use of capacity building as a phrase rather than a dedicated activity with corresponding resources. In para 64, consider adding capacity building dimension.

Suggestion as follows:

56: We note that lack of capacity is a major barrier to closing digital divides, and recommend that ~~capacity development~~ stakeholders put in place capacity development initiatives, including for innovation, be leveraged to empower local experts and local communities to benefit from and contribute to information and communications technology applications for development. We ~~commit to scaling up to advancing~~ recognize the need to scale up international cooperation and financing for digital capacity development in developing countries and to support the development of local content and content relevant to local realities online.

### **On Development and Interoperability of standards (para 47)**

There was discussion and input brought up by stakeholders during the IMSB office hours on technical standards and it was noted that clarity would be desirable in case of technical standards. The IMSB suggests changing the term “harmonisation” in para 47 with “use of interoperable” since the adoption of technical standards is voluntary.

Possible improvement as follows:

We recognize that science, technology and innovation are integral to digital development.  
We recognize the importance of ensuring that stakeholders in all countries are able to play a part in digital innovation, including the development and **use of interoperable** standards.

### **On Financial mechanisms (paras 64)**

The IMSB notes the general agreement on the need to address the gap in the WSIS framework regarding financing for the implementation and achievement of the WSIS vision. The call to establish a task force shows commitment with the principle that achieving the WSIS goals requires a serious and more coordinated approach to financing. In order to narrow the scope and mandate of the task force and avoid duplication, the **focus** should be on **WSIS implementation rather than digital development**, as currently indicated in Rev1. **It should be a body in the framework of the WSIS architecture with a limited and clear mandate, operating for a specific period of time, aimed at filling an existing gap.** In this sense, it would focus on mapping existing financing mechanisms; analysing gaps, different approaches and strategies; and making recommendations for the way forward. The specifics can be developed through inclusive multistakeholder consultations during follow-up and implementation of the WSIS+20 outcomes, ensuring that the task force is multistakeholder.

Suggestion as follows:

64. We ~~invite the Secretary-General to consider the~~ establishment of a task force to consider future financial mechanisms for ~~digital development~~ **WSIS implementation**, with the involvement of all stakeholders including multilateral financial institutions and other development partners, and to report on its outcomes to the 81st session of the General Assembly in 2026.

### **On Strengthening and scope of the IGF (paras 95-101)**

The IMSB notes that a permanent IGF would need to strengthen the IGF Secretariat and address long term financial stability. This is essential for enabling the IGF, and the NRIs, to remain agile while providing a mechanism to address issues and policies of importance globally, in particular those relevant to the Global South. There is a need to recognise the **role of UN DESA, the institutional home of the IGF and its Secretariat** (para 101) and its role in the overall WSIS process.

The IMSB suggests correcting the **scope** of the discussions at the IGF in para 95 and 100 to also include the broader set of digital issues, as envisioned in para 72 of the Tunis Agenda.

Suggestions as follows:

95. We applaud the successful development of the Internet Governance Forum, established by the Secretary-General following the World Summit on the Information Society, which provides a unique platform for multistakeholder discussion of Internet governance issues, **broader digital issues** including emerging issues, as reflected in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

100. We also call upon the Forum to enhance its working modalities, including by reinforcing its intersessional work and supporting national and regional initiatives, and to apply innovative, open, inclusive, transparent and agile collaboration methods. We emphasize the need to broaden the participation of all relevant stakeholders, with particular attention to underrepresented communities as well as Governments and other stakeholders from developing countries. The Internet Governance Forum should continue to serve as an inclusive platform for dialogue among all stakeholders, while further strengthening the engagement of governments and other stakeholders from developing countries in discussions on Internet governance, **broader digital governance issues including** emerging technologies.

101. We call for the strengthening of the Secretariat of the Internet Governance Forum, **within UN DESA**, to enable it to continue its development, implement further improvements and support the work of National and Regional Internet Governance Forums and intersessional activities, and invite the Secretary-General to make proposals concerning future funding for the Forum.

#### **On UNGIS/ODET (paras 107/119)**

There has been significant discussion amongst stakeholders about the evolving roles of UNGIS and ODET in future WSIS coordination, and these two institutions are addressed in paragraphs 107 and 119 of the Rev1 draft. However, in the current text, there is significant potential for confusion, with both ODET and UNGIS (an autonomous UN interagency group) identified as fostering UN institutional coordination on “digital cooperation/matters”, including in support of commitments in the Global Digital Compact implementation. Given the concerns expressed, it is essential to provide more clarity on the distinctiveness and complementarity of these institutions and their evolution.

It is clear that the two bodies can complement each other in the specific roles they play. However, the nature of WSIS has always centred on the diverse roles and activities of the various UN agencies and their remits - UNGIS has served to represent this diversity, and provided an essential, autonomous space for coordinating the diverse activities facilitated by the different agencies. During formal and informal consultations, many stakeholders have expressed strong and consistent support for stronger coordination of WSIS-related activities across the UN and beyond, and many have identified UNGIS as the vehicle most suitable for further development to foster this coordination. This need not preclude the inter-agency nature of UNGIS, but could include expanded formal opportunities for stakeholder engagement,

potentially employing existing tested IGF institutions (the MAG, the Leadership Panel) in a multistakeholder engagement mechanism.

An edit to para 107, drawing on alternative language from the ODET mandate, may help to mitigate the potential confusion:

107. We welcome the establishment by the Secretary-General of the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies to ~~strengthen United Nations system-wide coordination on digital cooperation, working with existing mechanisms~~ serve as an advocate and focal point for digital cooperation within the UN for Member States and stakeholders, and to support the follow-up and implementation of the Global Digital Compact.

**On implementation (para 117)**

Finally, noting that 10 key “Targets” were part of the WSIS outcome; and the significant value of remote and virtual participation technologies in facilitating more inclusive governance discussions, we suggest a minor addition to para 117 in the ‘Follow-up and review’ section of the document:

117. We reaffirm that the ongoing implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society will require the continued commitment and action of all stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, civil society, youth, the technical and academic communities, and international organisations, and that the annual review of progress on the full set of Summit Action Lines, **and Targets**; and the outcomes set out in this resolution will be essential to achieving the vision of the Summit. **To achieve this inclusive vision, we encourage all stakeholders, where possible, to leverage the potential of remote and virtual participation technologies throughout WSIS follow-up and review processes and events.**