Dear Ambassador Janina, dear Ambassador Lokaale,
Dear Suela and dear Ekitela

Thanks again for the fruitful exchanges we had the opportunity to conduct during our various meetings in Norway and Geneva. Your presence at our informal dinner was especially valuable and greatly appreciated!

Furthermore, I'd like to again express our deep appreciation for your leadership and commitment as facilitators of the overall review of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20), and, in particular, for your transparent communication and the inclusive approach, notably by establishing an Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board.

As discussed, we are now delighted to share – in response to the issues outlined in the element's paper – specific proposals for your consideration in view of the forthcoming zero draft. As conferred at the bilateral meeting with us at the Internet Governance Forum, we provide these proposals to you directly rather than through the online submission form.

Some language is new (in blue), some is inspired by text from previously adopted documents, and some are direct quotes; all is annotated with references for your convenience.

Please find a suggested structure as well for a streamlined and action-oriented zero draft:

1. ***Chapeau***
   - *Reaffirming the original WSIS vision of a people-centered, inclusive Information Society, as well as the Global Digital Compact (GDC).*
   - *Recognizing advances since 2003–2005 and emerging challenges.*
   - *Reviewing achievements and gaps across the Action Lines.*

2. ***Substance ("What")***
   - *Reaffirming WSIS, WSIS+10, and the GDC with a view to avoid relitigating settled issues (especially critical given the current challenging environment).*
   - *Where needed, we propose "recalling" or "reaffirming" agreed language from the GDC, UNGA resolutions, or other relevant texts.*
   - *Focusing substantive debate only on newly emerged issues since the GDC.*
   - *Ensuring Action Line facilitators align efforts with a joint implementation roadmap to maintain consistency.*

3. ***Implementation ("How")***
   - *Strengthening the WSIS framework through:*
     - *An updated UNGIS,*
     - *Enhanced CSTD and IGF roles,*
     - *A more focused WSIS Forum,*
     - *A proposed WSIS Helpdesk, and*
     - *Integrating GDC implementation via the roadmap to avoid duplication and foster collaboration.*

Should you have any questions or require clarifications, please don't hesitate to reach out to me and our team (especially, isabelle.lois@bakom.admin.ch). We appreciate your leadership in guiding this process toward a pragmatic and impactful outcome.

Kind regards,
Jorge Cancio

Chapeau
[…]

- *Reaffirming the original WSIS vision of a people-centered, inclusive Information Society, as well as the Global Digital Compact (GDC).*
- *Recognizing advances since 2003–2005 and emerging challenges.*
- *Reviewing achievements and gaps across the Action Lines.*

Substance ("what")
- *Digital divides*

    1.   We reaffirm the Global Digital compact commitment to achieving universal, meaningful, and affordable connectivity and access, with particular attention to the digital inclusion of marginalized groups.

    2.   We request the relevant Action Line facilitators to update the corresponding workplans under Action Lines C2 and C4, ensuring in their work a timely, efficient, and effective integration of necessary implementation actions of the GDC commitments.

Some useful language:
- **A/RES/77/150:** Recognizing that information and communications technologies present new opportunities and challenges and that there is a pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in accessing new technologies, stressing the need to close the digital divides, both between and within countries and including the rural-urban, youth-older persons and gender digital divides, and to harness information and communications technologies for development, and recalling the need to emphasize quality of access to bridge digital and knowledge divides, using a multidimensional approach that includes speed, stability, affordability, language, training, capacity-building, local content and accessibility for persons with disabilities,
- **E/RES/2024/13** [to be updated with 2025 version of the ECOSOC/CSTD WSIS-resolution]**:** 73. *Notes* that topics continue to emerge, such as e-environment applications and the contribution of information and communications technologies to early warning, mitigating and adapting to climate change, disaster response, social networking, cultural and linguistic diversity, virtualization and cloud computing and services, mobile Internet and mobile-based services, community networks, the gender digital divide, cyber, the protection of privacy and freedom of expression as defined in articles 17 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the empowerment and protection, especially against cyber-exploitation and abuse, of vulnerable groups of society, in particular children and young people;
- **HRC/RES/50/15:** Stresses that many States all over the world need support in expanding infrastructure, technological cooperation and capacity-building, including human and institutional capacity-building, to ensure the accessibility, affordability and availability of the Internet in order to bridge digital divides, to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights.
- **E/RES/2024/13** [to be updated with 2025 version of the ECOSOC/CSTD WSIS-resolution]: 37. *Emphasizes*, in this regard, the vital importance of multilingualism and local content but also the integrity of information in the information society, and urges all stakeholders to encourage the creation of, and access to, educational, cultural and scientific content online so as to promote meaningful access and ensure that all people and cultures can express themselves and have access to the Internet in all languages, including Indigenous languages in the context of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032);

- *Artificial intelligence*

    3.   We reaffirm the Global Digital compact's call for a human-centric approach to AI governance, further reaffirms General Assembly resolutions A/RES/78/265 and A/RES/78/311, which underscore the need for global cooperation on AI governance and capacity building.

    4.   We look forward to the implementation of the Global Digital Compact, in particular, to the establishment of a multidisciplinary Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the initiation of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance.

    5.   We request the relevant Action Line facilitators to incorporate

> AI into their workplans, especially regarding AI-related capacity-building
> and multistakeholder participation in AI governance processes, while taking
> into account relevant Global Digital Compact commitments.

Some useful language:

- **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** We commit to advance equitable and inclusive approaches to harnessing artificial intelligence benefits and mitigating risks in full respect of international law, including international human rights law, and taking into account other relevant frameworks such as the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** We call on standards development organizations to collaborate to promote the development and adoption of interoperable artificial intelligence standards that uphold safety, reliability, sustainability and human rights (SDGs 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 16 and 17).
- **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** We will promote safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems that advance, protect and preserve linguistic and cultural diversity and that take into account multilingualism throughout the life cycle of these systems (SDGs 10 and 16).
- **A/RES/78/265:** 5. Emphasizes that human rights and fundamental freedoms must be respected, protected and promoted throughout the life cycle of artificial intelligence systems, calls upon all Member States and, where applicable, other stakeholders to refrain from or cease the use of artificial intelligence systems that are impossible to operate in compliance with international human rights law or that pose undue risks to the enjoyment of human rights, especially of those who are in vulnerable situations, and reaffirms that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, including throughout the life cycle of artificial intelligence systems;
- **A/RES/78/311:** 3. Calls upon the international community to foster an enabling environment for international cooperation on artificial intelligence capacity-building, and emphasizes that international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms, must be respected;
- **UN Committee on Information report of the 47ᵗʰ session** [to be published]: *Recognizing* that safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems have the potential to accelerate and enable progress towards the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable development in its three dimensions, in a balanced and integrated manner, while recognizing also that the improper or malicious design, development, deployment and use of artificial intelligence systems could undermine information integrity and access to information, and noting with concern the rapidly expanding use of artificial intelligence for disinformation and misinformation,
- **A/RES/78/265:** 8. Acknowledges the importance of continuing the discussion on developments in the area of artificial intelligence governance so that international approaches keep pace with the evolution of artificial intelligence systems and their uses; and encourages continued efforts by the international community to promote inclusive research, mapping and analysis that benefit all parties on the potential impacts and applications that artificial intelligence systems and rapid technological change can have in the development of existing and new and emerging technologies and on accelerating the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and to inform how to develop, promote and implement effective, internationally interoperable safeguards, practices, standards and tools for artificial intelligence designers, developers, evaluators, deployers, users and other stakeholders for safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems; as well as stresses the need for Governments, the private sector, civil society, international and regional organizations, academia and research institutions and technical communities and all other stakeholders to continue to work together, as appropriate; as well as acknowledges the need for more cohesive, effective, coordinated and inclusive engagement and participation of all communities, particularly from developing countries, in the inclusive governance of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems;
- **A/RES/78/311:** 7. Encourages Member States to consider the benefits and risks when scaling up the responsible use of digital solutions, such as open-source artificial intelligence and digital public infrastructure, among other methods and business models; to promote, protect and preserve linguistic and cultural diversity, taking into account multilingualism in their training data, particularly for the large language models; to adopt proactive measures to counteract racism, discrimination and other

forms of algorithmic bias; and to enable fair competition in the artificial intelligence market place, promote an innovation environment and the use of digital public goods to harness the potential of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems;

- *Information integrity*

  6.   We affirm the responsibility of States to counter, as appropriate, and in accordance with international human rights law, the dissemination of disinformation, which can be designed and implemented so as to mislead, to violate and abuse human rights, and expressing concern that the dissemination of disinformation can violate and abuse human rights, including privacy and the freedom of individuals to seek, receive and impart information, and to incite all forms of violence, hatred, discrimination and hostility, inter alia, racism, xenophobia, negative stereotyping and stigmatization, and stresses that responses to the spread of disinformation and misinformation must be grounded in international human rights law, including the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination and underlines the importance of free, independent, plural and diverse media and of providing and promoting access to independent, fact-based information to counter disinformation and misinformation.

Some useful language:
- o **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** Access to relevant, reliable and accurate information and knowledge is essential for an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space. We recognize that digital and emerging technologies can facilitate the manipulation of and interference with information in ways that are harmful to societies and individuals, and negatively affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- o **UN Committee on Information report of the 47th session** [to be published]: *Reiterates* its concerns about the exponential spread and proliferation of misinformation, disinformation and information manipulation, thereby increasing the need for the dissemination of factual, timely, targeted, clear, accessible, multilingual and science-based information, and emphasizes the need for all Member States to stand together to address the challenge of disinformation and misinformation, including on the Internet and other digital technologies;
- o **UN Committee on Information report of the 47th session** [to be published]: *Stressing also* the need for all individuals to be equipped with the information and media literacy skills needed to build resilience against discriminatory, false or misleading content, manipulated information and disinformation,
- o **HRC/RES/50/15:** Recognizing the primary responsibility of States, as the main duty bearers, to promote and protect human rights online and offline, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the importance of their support for relevant efforts that strengthen the resilience of societies against the negative impact of disinformation at all levels, in particular through digital, media and information literacy education, and inclusion, intercultural understanding, fact-checking and transparent and accountable technological solutions.

- *Data governance*

  7.   We welcome the Commission on Science and Technology for Development Working Group on Data Governance and look forward to its outcome.

- *Digital public Infrastructure*

  8.   We recognize that digital public goods, which include open-source software, open data, open artificial intelligence models, open standards and open content that adhere to privacy and other applicable international laws, standards and best practices and do no harm, empower

societies and individuals to direct digital technologies to their development needs and can facilitate digital cooperation and investment. Resilient, safe, inclusive and interoperable digital public infrastructure has the potential to deliver services at scale and increase social and economic opportunities for all.

- *Human rights and gender inclusion*

9. We reaffirm, moreover, that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online. We emphasize that progress towards the vision of the World Summit on the Information Society should be considered not only as a function of economic development and the spreading of information and communications technologies but also as a function of progress with respect to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

10. We commit to respect, protect and promote human rights in the digital space. We will uphold international human rights law throughout the life cycle of digital and emerging technologies so that users can safely benefit from digital technologies and are protected from violations, abuses and all forms of discrimination. We recognize the responsibilities of all stakeholders in this endeavour and also call on the private sector to apply the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,

11. We call on: (a) Digital technology companies and developers to respect international human rights and principles, including through the application of human rights due diligence and impact assessments throughout the technology life cycle (all SDGs); (b) Digital technology companies, developers and social media platforms to respect human rights online, be accountable for and take measures to mitigate and prevent abuses, and to provide access to effective remedy in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and other relevant frameworks (SDGs 5, 10 and 16),

12. Noting with great concern the fact that a gender digital divide persists in women's access to and use of information and communications technologies, including in education, employment and other areas of economic and social development, and in this regard welcoming the many initiatives that focus on access, skills and leadership to promote the equal participation of women and girls in the digital age, such as the International Girls in ICT Day of the International Telecommunication Union and the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age, known as the Equals Partnership,

Some useful language:

- **UN Committee on Information report of the 47th session** [to be published]: *Condemns unequivocally* measures taken by Member States in violation of international human rights law aiming to or that intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or the dissemination of information online and offline, aiming to undermine the work of journalists in informing the public, including through practices such as Internet shutdowns or measures to unduly restrict, block or take down media websites, such as denial of service attacks, and calls upon all Member States to cease and refrain from these measures, which cause irreparable harm to efforts at building inclusive and peaceful knowledge societies and democracies;

- **A/RES/78/213:** 18. *Calls upon* Member States to refrain from imposing restrictions on the free flow of information and ideas that are inconsistent with relevant obligations under international law, including articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, through practices such as the use of Internet shutdowns and online censorship to intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or the dissemination of information, and from using digital technologies to silence, unlawfully or arbitrarily surveil or harass individuals or groups, including in the context of peaceful assemblies;

- *SDGs*

13. Encourages close alignment between the World Summit process and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as called for in General Assembly resolution 70/125, highlighting the cross-cutting contribution of information and communications technology to the Sustainable Development Goals and poverty eradication, recognizing the World Summit on the Information Society-Sustainable Development Goals matrix developed by United Nations World Summit action line facilitators to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and noting that access to information and communications technologies has also become a development indicator and aspiration in and of itself.

Institutional outcomes from WSIS:
- *Internet governance*

14. […]

15. We recognize the importance of the Internet Governance Forum as the primary multistakeholder platform for dialogue on Internet governance issues, including emerging digital public policy issues, as reflected in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

16. We decide to continue the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum as set out in para 72 to 78 of the Tunis Agenda with periodic reviews based on open and inclusive consultations of Member States and all other stakeholders to be held in preparation of future WSIS overall reviews; also *decides* to strengthen the Forum's funding by combining a mix of core UN funding and voluntary contributions, and to this aim requests the Secretary General to submit to the General Assembly, at its eightieth session, a proposal on such a funding mechanism for the Internet Governance Forum.

17. We welcome, in that context, the continuous progress made with regard to the intersessional work of the Internet Governance Forum in the different modalities of connecting and enabling the next billion online, dynamic coalitions and best practice forums and policy networks, as well as the contributions of national and regional Internet governance forums, the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group and the Leadership Panel.

18. We welcome, the establishment of the Leadership Panel of the Internet Governance Forum, as a step in implementing the Internet Governance Forum Plus proposal presented in the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

19. We call upon the Forum to report on outcomes of its annual meetings and intersessional work to relevant UN entities and processes, and calls, in particular, on UN Group on Information Society and all relevant UN agencies, offices and departments, Action Line Facilitators, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and WSIS Forum to duly take into account Internet Governance Forum outcomes in their work and proceedings; *further calls* upon the Forum to continue progress and report to Commission on Science and technology for Development on issues such as:

(a) Further enhancing its working modalities, including through reinforcing its intersessional work and supporting national and regional initiatives and to apply innovative, open, inclusive, transparent and agile collaboration methods, drawing inspiration from the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines, in the development of IGF "Messages" and recommendations;

(b) Further broadening the participation of all relevant stakeholders and interested citizens, with particular attention to

underrepresented communities and Governments and other stakeholders from developing countries;

(c) Further strengthening its strategic functions, including through the effective engagement and contributions of the Leadership Panel;

20.   We call upon the Commission on Science and Technology to give due consideration to the Forum's reports and outcomes, and to include them, as appropriate, in its work as well as within its regular reporting.

- ***Enhanced cooperation***

21.   We acknowledge that various initiatives have been implemented and some progress has been made in relation to the process towards enhanced cooperation detailed in paragraphs 69 to 71 of the Tunis Agenda.

22.   We highlight the well-established role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development as an intergovernmental platform for discussions on the impact and opportunities of technologies, and call for strengthening of this Commission in accordance with para 26 of this Resolution, as a means to contributing to enhanced cooperation;

23.   We invite the United Nations Group on the Information Society to operationalise a lean, agile and light-weight help-desk function to direct Member State and other stakeholder requests for support on digital policy issues to the appropriate United Nations entities and other relevant actors, in particular offering information and guidance on capacity development opportunities on digital governance offered within and outside the WSIS architecture, as well as on available funding mechanisms, and we emphasise that the help-desk would serve as a liaison mechanism and not provide substantive policy advice itself.

Implementation and follow-up ("how"):
- ***Follow-up and review (text below is WSIS+10 with additional proposals)***

24.   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, international organizations and the technical and academic communities, and that regular review of progress of the full set of Summit action lines will be essential to achieving the vision of the Summit.

25.   We recognise the Economic and Social Council's role in overseeing the system-wide follow-up of the implementation of the World Summit on Information Society outcomes and request the Council to further integrate in such oversight the Global Digital Compact implementation.

26.   We recognise the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in reviewing and assessing progress made in implementing the World Summit on Information Society outcomes, requests the Commission further to review and assess progress made in implementing the Global Digital Compact commitments, and further call upon the Commission to advise ECOSOC thereon, including through the elaboration of strategic guidance and recommendations aimed at furthering the implementation of these outcomes and commitments; to that end, the Commission shall:

(a) Review and assess progress at the international and regional levels in the implementation of action lines, recommendations and commitments contains in the outcome documents of the Summit and Global Digital Compact commitments;

(b) Share best and effective practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to overcome them and important measures for further implementation of the Summit outcomes and Global Digital Compact commitments;

(c) Promote dialogue among all stakeholders with a view to advance the attainment of the goals and objectives set by of the World Summit on Information Society and the Global Digital Compact, including by further integrating stakeholders, where appropriate, in the proceedings of the Commission, and, in particular, in the discussion and development of strategic guidance and recommendations;

27. We also call for the continuation of the work of the United Nations Group on the Information Society in coordinating the work of United Nations agencies, according to their mandates and competencies, and we invite the regional commissions to continue their work in implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society action lines and their contribution to the reviews thereof, including through regional reviews.

28. We request the UN Secretary-General to strengthen the agility, efficiency and effectiveness of the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) as United Nations system's inter-agency stewardship mechanism for advancing policy coherence and programme coordination on digital matters, including by expanding its membership with further United Nations entities with responsibilities in matters of digital cooperation, such as the Office of Digital and Emerging Technologies and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, as well as multistakeholder advice to its work as appropriate;

29. We request the UN Group on the Information Society to develop a joint implementation roadmap to be presented at the Commission on Science and Technology for Development twenty-ninth session, to integrate the implementation of the Global Digital Compact commitments into the World Summit on the Information Society framework, based on the "WSIS Process and 2030 Agenda – GDC Matrix" developed by the UN Group on the Information Society, ensuring a unified approach to digital cooperation that avoids duplication and maximizes resource efficiency, while maintaining the multistakeholder nature of the World Summit on the Information Society process;

30. We invite the United Nation Group on the Information Society to consider the following elements in the development of the aforementioned implementation roadmap:

(a) Developing a structured mapping that aligns the World Summit on the Information Society action lines, corresponding Global Digital Compact commitments, and relevant SDGs, with a view to facilitating a comprehensive overview of complementarities, advancing policy coherence, and supporting integrated implementation and follow-up.

(b) Assigning UN entities – members of the UN Group on the Information Society – as responsible for following up on the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society Action Lines and Global Digital Compact commitments, taking into account current roles as the World Summit on the Information Society Action Line facilitators and the ongoing work regarding the implementation of the Global Digital Compact.

31. We request the Commission on Science and technology for Development to host a special session during the twenty-ninth session, where all UN Member States are invited to review and endorse the aforementioned joint roadmap, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

32. We recall the annual reporting of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcomes of WSIS, as well as para 74 of the GDC, and request the Secretary-General to provide joint annual progress reports on the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society outcomes and Global Digital Compact commitments, based on the joint implementation roadmap.

33. We call for the continuation of annual reports on the implementation of outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, through the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, to the Economic and Social Council, taking into account the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and requests that these reports are expanded to also reflect on the implementation of GDC commitments, using the joint implementation roadmap as a basis and taking into account the annual reporting of the Secretary-General and in this regard invite the high-level political forum on sustainable development to consider the annual reports of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. We encourage the members of the United Nations Group on the Information Society to contribute to the reports.

34. We request the Economic and Social Council to keep the General Assembly apprised on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit outcomes and the Global Digital Compact, taking into account the annual reports mentioned in the previous paragraph.

35. We recall paragraph 74 of the Global Digital Compact, and we request the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to provide through the Economic and Social Council by 2027 a progress report on the joint implementation roadmap, based on the annual reporting by the Secretary-General, and which will serve as a basis for the discussions of the High-level review of the Global Digital Compact.

36. We recognize that the World Summit on the Information Society Forum has been a platform for discussion and sharing of best practices in the implementation of the World Summit outcomes by all stakeholders, and it should continue to be held annually as central venue for exchanging on good practice, initiatives and multistakeholder collaboration in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines according to the Joint Implementation Roadmap.

37. We acknowledge the importance of data and statistics to support information and communications technology for development, and call for further quantitative data to support evidence-based decision-making, as well as for the inclusion of information and communications technology statistics in national strategies for the development of statistics and in regional statistical work programmes, and for strengthening local statistical capacity and targeted training by Governments and all other relevant stakeholders. The activities of the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communications Technology for Development have made a valuable contribution to data gathering and dissemination and should be continued.

38. We recognize that, in the preparation of this review, a number of challenges and opportunities have been identified, requiring longer-term consultations to determine appropriate responses, and that

the pace of the development of information and communications technologies necessitates higher- level consideration of progress achieved and future action. We accordingly request the General Assembly to hold a high-level meeting on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society in 2035, involving the input and participation of all stakeholders, including in the preparatory process, to take stock of progress on the outcomes of the World Summit and identify both areas of continued focus and challenges. We recommend that the outcome of the high-level meeting be an input into the review process for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Annex:
WSIS Plus non-paper with language proposals for zero draft

1. Introduction

This non-paper outlines ideas to contribute to discussions on the WSIS+20 review to strengthen and update the current architecture into a "WSIS Plus". The review should build on existing structures, address their shortcomings, integrate the Global Digital Compact (GDC) follow-up, ensure inclusivity, avoid process proliferation, and foster cost-efficiency.

2. WSIS: what is it?

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is an UN-led initiative launched in 2003 to address the challenges and opportunities associated with the development of ICTs. Held in two phases in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005), it produced the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda, establishing an architecture to bridge digital divides, promote sustainable development, and foster a people-centred information society. The WSIS Action Lines cover critical areas such as infrastructure, health, education, security, knowledge, and ethics; multiple UN agencies act as facilitators for the action lines to ensure follow-up actions. In addition, UNGIS (UN Group on the Information Society) serves as an inter-agency mechanism to coordinate substantive issues related to the implementation of WSIS outcomes, and the annual WSIS Forum serves as a platform to discuss progress made towards achieving the goals set in WSIS outcome documents. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) play key roles in reviewing WSIS outcomes implementation, with annual discussions, reports, and resolutions dedicated to this issue. WSIS also recognizes a multistakeholder approach to digital governance, engaging governments, the private sector, civil society, technical community, academia, and international organizations, chiefly through the Internet Governance Forum (**IGF**) tasked, among other functions, with discussing Internet-related public policy issues and identifying emerging issues as set out in §72 from the Tunis Agenda.

3. WSIS+20 review: what's at stake?

The WSIS+20 Review, scheduled for 2025, marks the 20th anniversary of the Tunis Agenda. It presents a critical opportunity to assess the progress made since 2005 and provide a path forward for addressing the challenges in the digital landscape. The review will evaluate the implementation of WSIS outcomes and its Action Lines in the context of rapid technological advances, including artificial intelligence (AI), data governance, and the platform economy, as well as persistent challenges like the ever-evolving digital divides, as 2.6 billion people remain offline in 2024[1] a majority of whom are women and girls in the Global South, and disparities in access to digital infrastructure, skills, and content continue to hinder global progress. Additionally, better integrating WSIS with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should emphasize the role of digital technologies in advancing the 2030 Agenda, as already highlighted in the WSIS+10 outcome document[2]. The Review will also have to consider the extent to which the current WSIS architecture is fit for purpose, what changes are needed, and whether and how the mandate of the IGF should be extended. Furthermore, the interplay between WSIS and the GDC implementation will be examined. This includes exploring how the WSIS architecture may play a role in the implementation of the GDC. (See point 5 below).

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[1] Global Internet use continues to rise but disparities remain, especially in low-income regions, link.
[2] A/70/125 §5, §12 and §27 on gender divides

- More detailed information on the Review can be found in the slides prepared by Sorina Teleanu from Diplo Foundation under WSIS+20 and AI negotiations | April 2025 | Diplo/GIP

4. Towards a "WSIS Plus"

"WSIS Plus" aims at a strengthened and further developed inclusive architecture for digital governance and cooperation which will be fit-for-purpose and serve us well as we navigate an era of fast and uncertain digital developments. It would incorporate updates from the GDC and other relevant processes, while fostering a fair digital deal that ensures benefits for all stakeholders, addressing the challenges set out above. Any advancement in implementing and updating the WSIS architecture must reflect inclusive multistakeholder engagement that has defined WSIS since its inception, ensuring meaningful participation form all stakeholders. This approach should be guided by principles of true openness and inclusivity, strengthening the complementarity of multilateral and multistakeholder collaboration, as described in the Sao Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines, which provide a framework for equitable stakeholder engagement in digital governance processes.

A key focus is reinforcing a human-centric approach, ensuring technology serves humanity and upholds human rights. Building on the GDC, WSIS Plus would strengthen commitments on human rights, Internet shutdowns, and data governance, while also prioritizing meaningful connectivity and bridging the digital divides to ensure equitable digital access.

5. WSIS and GDC: strengthening existing structures

The GDC was adopted as part of the Pact for the Future. It aims to establish a renewed political commitment for digital cooperation, focusing on inclusivity, human rights, and sustainable development. As the GDC and WSIS share similar goals, there is a risk of overlap and duplication of efforts, which could strain resources and dilute the impact of both initiatives as well as the impact of the UN. Both initiatives require significant resources, and overlapping mandates could lead to inefficiencies, particularly for countries and stakeholders with limited capacity to engage in multiple processes at once.

Bringing together the GDC and WSIS is organic, as WSIS action lines and GDC commitments share the overarching goal of advancing the vision of an inclusive, safe, secure, and human-centred digital society. Streamlining processes would help avoid duplication of efforts and better use resources (both within the UN and at the level of member states and other stakeholders) while allowing concentrated efforts to focus on addressing critical digital governance issues.

GDC commitments could be integrated under an updated WSIS architecture. WSIS's proven multistakeholder approach could enhance the GDC's implementation by ensuring broad participation from all stakeholders. In this sense, a **joint implementation roadmap** could be mandated to be developed by an updated UNGIS (as per 7.1. below) and presented at CSTD, in order to integrate the WSIS Action Lines and GDC commitments within a unified architecture. UNGIS is already working on a matrix putting WSIS action lines, GDC commitments, and SDGs next to each other (see *WSIS Process and 2030 Agenda– Draft GDC Matrix*). This matrix could serve as the starting point for said roadmap.[3] Furthermore, some of the proposed functions foreseen by the GDC, such as the AI Global Dialogue, may be performed in full or in part by WSIS structures, notably the IGF.

In addition, a new, integrated **follow-up and review process** to look at the progress made in advancing the joint WSIS/GDC implementation roadmap outlined above should be established. Such a process would include:

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[3] 2025 CSTD draft resolution on WSIS paras: 7b, 14b, 127quiq, 131, 131b, 131g

- Periodic (e.g. annual, biannual) implementation reports (outlining both progress made and areas requiring strengthened efforts), based on input from UN agencies, member states, and other stakeholders (following the model of the current annual report on WSIS outcomes implementation).
- CSTD and ECOSOC current roles in WSIS follow-up to be expanded to also cover GDC follow-up. Furthermore, the UN IGF would also be an integral part of such review and follow-up processes.
- Every five years, a high-level process could be convened at the UNGA level to review progress made in implementing the WSIS action lines and GDC commitments, as aligned in the joint implementation roadmap. The first such high-level meeting could be convened in 2030, to also coincide with the Agenda 2030 milestone.
- The GDC review in 2027, could serve as a first midterm review, providing an opportunity to review progress on the joint implementation roadmap and hold multistakeholder discussions thereon, in line with para 74 of the GDC.

Proposed text

- *We recognise* ECOSOC's role in overseeing the system-wide follow-up of the implementation of WSIS outcomes and requests the Council to further integrate in such oversight the the GDC implementation [alt: to further integrate the follow-up of the GDC implementation into this oversight]..

- *We recognise* the role of the CSTD in reviewing and assessing progress made in implementing WSIS outcomes, *requests* the Commission to further review and assess progress made in implementing GDC commitments, and further calls upon the Commission to advise ECOSOC thereon, including through the elaboration of strategic guidance and recommendations aimed at furthering the implementation of these outcomes and commitments; to that end, the Commission shall:

    - Review and assess progress at the international and regional levels in the implementation of WSIS outcomes and Global Digital Compact commitments;
    - Share best and effective practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to overcome them and important measures for further implementation of WSIS outcomes and Global Digital Compact commitments;
    - Promote dialogue among all stakeholders with a view to advance the attainment of the goals and objectives set by WSIS and the GDC, including by further integrating stakeholders, where appropriate, in the proceedings of the Commission, and, in particular, in the discussion and development of strategic guidance and recommendations;
    - Invite all UN Member States, UN entities, and other stakeholders to actively contribute to these review processes by submitting written inputs and participating in deliberations;

- *We request* the UN Secretary-General to strengthen the agility, efficiency and effectiveness of the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) as United Nations system's inter-agency stewardship mechanism for advancing policy coherence and programme coordination on digital matters, including by expanding its membership with further United Nations entities with responsibilities in matters of digital cooperation, such as ODET and OHCHR, as well as multistakeholder advice to its work as appropriate;

- *We request* UNGIS to develop a joint implementation roadmap to be presented at the CSTD 29th session, to integrate the implementation of the Global Digital Compact commitments into the WSIS framework, based on the "WSIS Process and 2030 Agenda – GDC Matrix" developed by UNGIS, ensuring a unified approach to digital cooperation that avoids duplication and maximizes resource efficiency, while maintaining the multistakeholder nature of the WSIS process;

- *We invite* UNGIS to consider the following elements in the development of the aforementioned implementation roadmap:

    - Developing a structured mapping that aligns WSIS action lines, corresponding GDC commitments, and relevant SDGs, with a view to facilitating a comprehensive overview of complementarities, advancing policy coherence, and supporting integrated implementation and follow-up.

    - Assigning UN entities – members of UNGIS – as responsible for following up on the implementation of WSIS action lines and GDC commitments, taking into account current roles as WSIS Action Line facilitators and the ongoing work regarding the implementation of the GDC.

- *We request* the CSTD to host a special session during the 29th session, where all UN Member States are invited to review and endorse the aforementioned joint roadmap, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

- *We recall* the annual reporting of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcomes of WSIS, as well as para 74 of the GDC, *request* the Secretary-General to provide joint annual progress reports on the implementation of WSIS outcomes and GDC commitments, based on the joint implementation roadmap;

- *We call* for the continuation of annual reports on the implementation of WSIS outcomes, through CSTD, to the ECOSOC, and requests that these reports are expanded to also reflect on the implementation of GDC commitments, using the joint implementation roadmap as a basis, and taking into account the annual reporting of the Secretary-General;

- *We request* ECOSOC to keep the General Assembly apprised on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit outcome documents and the GDC, taking into account the annual reports mentioned in the previous paragraph;

- *We recall* para 74 of the GDC, we *request* the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to provide through ECOSOC by 2027 a progress report on the joint implementation roadmap, based on the annual reporting by the Secretary-General, and which will serve as a basis for the discussions of the High-level review of the Global Digital Compact;

6. Main subject-matter related gaps in WSIS

Recalling the Global Digital Compact (GDC) adopted under the Pact for the Future, which reaffirms the commitment to an inclusive, human rights-based, and sustainable digital future, and *reaffirming* its objectives;

Emphasizing the imperative to integrate GDC commitments into the WSIS architecture to avoid duplication and maximize synergies,

Our proposal per topic is to have:

1. an intro para that recalls and reaffirms the GDC commitments in each topic

2. An additional para that refers to work that took place since the GDC was adopted (e.g. on AI: the adoption of the ToR of Panel and Dialogue; in Data Governance: the establishment of the CSTD WGDG, etc.)

3. An additional para where consistent with the request for a Joint Implementation Roadmap „the relevant Action Line facilitators are requested to update the corresponding workplans under the relevant Action Lines, in order to ensure a timely, efficient, and effective integration of necessary implementation actions of the GDC commitments. "

While WSIS has been successful in addressing various digital governance challenges with a technology-neutral approach, several subject-matter gaps are becoming apparent as the terminology and the technological landscape evolve. This calls for a review of how the WSIS architecture adapts to the current landscape, inter alia, in the following areas:

6.1. Digital divides

Digital divides remain a persistent and evolving challenge, requiring continuous attention across different areas, highlighting that connectivity (Action Line C2) is an inescapable precondition for addressing other divides. Leveraging the WSIS architecture can help accelerate efforts to bridge these gaps effectively. A robust response must address the challenges, particularly the critical need for capacity building (Action Line C4). The WSIS architecture is uniquely positioned to support these efforts, as demonstrated by existing initiatives, like the WSIS Forum (7.4), which could be further enhanced by a "WSIS Help Desk" as discussed below (7.3).

We reaffirm the GDC's commitment to achieving universal, meaningful, and affordable connectivity and access, with particular attention to the digital inclusion of marginalized groups;

We request the relevant Action Line facilitators to update the corresponding workplans under Action Lines C2 and C4, ensuring in their work a timely, efficient, and effective integration of necessary implementation actions of the GDC commitments;

Some useful language:
- **A/RES/77/150:** Recognizing that information and communications technologies present new opportunities and challenges and that there is a pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in accessing new technologies, stressing the need to close the digital divides, both between and within countries and including the rural-urban, youth-older persons and gender digital divides, and to harness information and communications technologies for development, and recalling the need to emphasize quality of access to bridge digital and knowledge divides, using a multidimensional approach that includes speed, stability, affordability, language, training, capacity-building, local content and accessibility for persons with disabilities,
- **E/RES/2024/13** [to be updated with 2025 version of the ECOSOC/CSTD WSIS-resolution]: 73. *Notes* that topics continue to emerge, such as e-environment applications and the contribution of information and communications technologies to early warning, mitigating and adapting to climate change, disaster response, social networking, cultural and linguistic diversity, virtualization and cloud computing and services, mobile Internet and mobile-based services, community networks, the gender digital divide, cyber, the protection of privacy and freedom of expression as defined in articles 17 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil

> and Political Rights and the empowerment and protection, especially against cyber-exploitation and abuse, of vulnerable groups of society, in particular children and young people;
>
> - **HRC/RES/50/15:** Stresses that many States all over the world need support in expanding infrastructure, technological cooperation and capacity-building, including human and institutional capacity-building, to ensure the accessibility, affordability and availability of the Internet in order to bridge digital divides, to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights.
> - **E/RES/2024/13** [to be updated with 2025 version of the ECOSOC/CSTD WSIS-resolution]: 37. *Emphasizes*, in this regard, the vital importance of multilingualism and local content but also the integrity of information in the information society, and urges all stakeholders to encourage the creation of, and access to, educational, cultural and scientific content online so as to promote meaningful access and ensure that all people and cultures can express themselves and have access to the Internet in all languages, including Indigenous languages in the context of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032);

6.2. Artificial Intelligence

The WSIS outcomes currently lack explicit references to AI, however the technology-neutral approach of WSIS Action Lines (e.g. C10 on ethics and C4 on capacity building) provides a sound foundation for addressing AI governance. Capacity-building initiatives under Action Line C4 should explicitly include AI-related training, particularly for the Global South, such training could focus both on the development and deployment of AI technologies across economies and societies (e.g. developing skills, creating enabling policy environment), and on ensuring equitable participation in global AI policymaking and implementation. This aligns with the UNGA resolution on AI capacity-building (A/RES/78/311) and both WSIS and the GDC's emphasis on bridging digital divides.

> *We reaffirm* the GDC's call for a human-centric approach to AI governance, further reaffirms General Assembly resolutions A/RES/78/265 and A/RES/78/311, which underscore the need for global cooperation on AI governance and capacity building;
>
> *We look forward* to the implementation of the Global Digital Compact, in particular, to the establishment of a multidisciplinary Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the initiation of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance;
>
> *We request* the relevant Action Line facilitators to incorporate AI into their workplans, especially regarding AI-related capacity-building and multistakeholder participation in AI governance processes, while taking into account relevant GDC commitments;
>
> Some useful language:
> - **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** We commit to advance equitable and inclusive approaches to harnessing artificial intelligence benefits and mitigating risks in full respect of international law, including international human rights law, and taking into account other relevant frameworks such as the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
> - **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** We call on standards development organizations to collaborate to promote the development and adoption of interoperable artificial intelligence standards that uphold safety, reliability, sustainability and human rights (SDGs 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 16 and 17).

- **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** We will promote safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems that advance, protect and preserve linguistic and cultural diversity and that take into account multilingualism throughout the life cycle of these systems (SDGs 10 and 16).
- **A/RES/78/265:** 5. Emphasizes that human rights and fundamental freedoms must be respected, protected and promoted throughout the life cycle of artificial intelligence systems, calls upon all Member States and, where applicable, other stakeholders to refrain from or cease the use of artificial intelligence systems that are impossible to operate in compliance with international human rights law or that pose undue risks to the enjoyment of human rights, especially of those who are in vulnerable situations, and reaffirms that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, including throughout the life cycle of artificial intelligence systems;
- **A/RES/78/311:** 3. Calls upon the international community to foster an enabling environment for international cooperation on artificial intelligence capacity-building, and emphasizes that international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms, must be respected;
- **UN Committee on Information report of the 47th session** [to be published]: *Recognizing that safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems have the potential to accelerate and enable progress towards the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable development in its three dimensions, in a balanced and integrated manner, while recognizing also that the improper or malicious design, development, deployment and use of artificial intelligence systems could undermine information integrity and access to information, and noting with concern the rapidly expanding use of artificial intelligence for disinformation and misinformation,*
- **A/RES/78/265:** 8. Acknowledges the importance of continuing the discussion on developments in the area of artificial intelligence governance so that international approaches keep pace with the evolution of artificial intelligence systems and their uses; and encourages continued efforts by the international community to promote inclusive research, mapping and analysis that benefit all parties on the potential impacts and applications that artificial intelligence systems and rapid technological change can have in the development of existing and new and emerging technologies and on accelerating the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and to inform how to develop, promote and implement effective, internationally interoperable safeguards, practices, standards and tools for artificial intelligence designers, developers, evaluators, deployers, users and other stakeholders for safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems; as well as stresses the need for Governments, the private sector, civil society, international and regional organizations, academia and research institutions and technical communities and all other stakeholders to continue to work together, as appropriate; as well as acknowledges the need for more cohesive, effective, coordinated and inclusive engagement and participation of all communities, particularly from developing countries, in the inclusive governance of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems;
- **A/RES/78/311:** 7. Encourages Member States to consider the benefits and risks when scaling up the responsible use of digital solutions, such as open-source artificial intelligence and digital public infrastructure, among other methods and business models; to promote, protect and preserve linguistic and cultural diversity, taking into account multilingualism in their training data, particularly for the large language models; to adopt proactive measures to counteract racism, discrimination and other forms of algorithmic bias; and to enable fair competition in the artificial intelligence market place, promote an innovation environment

> and the use of digital public goods to harness the potential of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems;

6.3. Information integrity

The proliferation of social media and AI-driven content creation has intensified the spread of misinformation and disinformation and other harmful content. This includes the targeted dissemination of technology-facilitated gender-based violence that systematically discourages women from participation in the digital public sphere. These evolving challenges are not yet adequately addressed within the existing WSIS Action Lines but could be integrated, inter alia, in the implementation of Action Line C5 which focuses on building confidence and security in the use of ICTs.

Some useful language:

- **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** Access to relevant, reliable and accurate information and knowledge is essential for an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space. We recognize that digital and emerging technologies can facilitate the manipulation of and interference with information in ways that are harmful to societies and individuals, and negatively affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

- **A/RES/78/213:** 13. *Also affirms* the responsibility of States to counter, as appropriate, and in accordance with international human rights law, the dissemination of disinformation, which can be designed and implemented so as to mislead, to violate and abuse human rights, and expressing concern that the dissemination of disinformation can violate and abuse human rights, including privacy and the freedom of individuals to seek, receive and impart information, and to incite all forms of violence, hatred, discrimination and hostility, inter alia, racism, xenophobia, negative stereotyping and stigmatization, and stresses that responses to the spread of disinformation and misinformation must be grounded in international human rights law, including the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination and underlines the importance of free, independent, plural and diverse media and of providing and promoting access to independent, fact-based information to counter disinformation and misinformation;

- **UN Committee on Information report of the 47th session** [to be published]: *Reiterates* its concerns about the exponential spread and proliferation of misinformation, disinformation and information manipulation, thereby increasing the need for the dissemination of factual, timely, targeted, clear, accessible, multilingual and science-based information, and emphasizes the need for all Member States to stand together to address the challenge of disinformation and misinformation, including on the Internet and other digital technologies;

- **UN Committee on Information report of the 47th session** [to be published]: *Stressing also* the need for all individuals to be equipped with the information and media literacy skills needed to build resilience against discriminatory, false or misleading content, manipulated information and disinformation,

- **HRC/RES/50/15:** Recognizing the primary responsibility of States, as the main duty bearers, to promote and protect human rights online and offline, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the importance of their support for relevant efforts that strengthen the resilience of societies against the negative impact of disinformation at all levels, in particular through digital, media and information literacy education, and inclusion,

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> intercultural understanding, fact-checking and transparent and accountable technological solutions.

6.4. Data Governance

The growing importance of data as a critical resource for AI and other technologies underscores the need for a more comprehensive approach to data governance under the WSIS architecture, building on agreed language from the GDC. Also important in this context will be to bring back more focus on the relevance of capacity development focused on local data policies addressing local needs, and the need to protect knowledge (in addition to data), as well as linguistic and cultural diversity, as highlighted in WSIS outcomes (see Action Lines C3 and C5).

> *Welcomes* the CSTD Working Group on Data Governance and looks forward to its outcome;

6.5. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPIs)

The concept of DPIs, which are essential for achieving the SDGs, is not yet fully integrated into WSIS architecture. Strengthening the role of DPIs within WSIS could enhance their contribution to global development efforts.

> Some useful language:
> - **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** We recognize that digital public goods, which include open-source software, open data, open artificial intelligence models, open standards and open content that adhere to privacy and other applicable international laws, standards and best practices and do no harm, empower societies and individuals to direct digital technologies to their development needs and can facilitate digital cooperation and investment. Resilient, safe, inclusive and interoperable digital public infrastructure has the potential to deliver services at scale and increase social and economic opportunities for all.

6.6. Human Rights and Gender Inclusion

While WSIS acknowledges human rights and gender perspectives, there is room for greater inclusivity. This could be strengthened by explicitly incorporating agreed language from the GDC, such as the one that calls on the private sector to apply the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the application of human rights due diligence and impact assessments throughout the technology life cycle. Expanding on gender-inclusive language and integrating robust human rights connections into WSIS architecture would further foster equitable digital governance.

> Some useful language:
> - **A/RES/70/125:** 9. We reaffirm, moreover, that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online. We emphasize that progress towards the vision of the World Summit on the Information Society should be considered not only as a function of economic development and the spreading of information and communications technologies but also as a function of progress with respect to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
> - **UN Committee on Information report of the 47th session** [to be published]: *Condemns unequivocally* measures taken by Member States in violation of international human rights law aiming to or that intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or the dissemination of

information online and offline, aiming to undermine the work of journalists in informing the public, including through practices such as Internet shutdowns or measures to unduly restrict, block or take down media websites, such as denial of service attacks, and calls upon all Member States to cease and refrain from these measures, which cause irreparable harm to efforts at building inclusive and peaceful knowledge societies and democracies;

- **A/RES/78/213:** 18. *Calls upon* Member States to refrain from imposing restrictions on the free flow of information and ideas that are inconsistent with relevant obligations under international law, including articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, through practices such as the use of Internet shutdowns and online censorship to intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or the dissemination of information, and from using digital technologies to silence, unlawfully or arbitrarily surveil or harass individuals or groups, including in the context of peaceful assemblies;

- **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** We commit to respect, protect and promote human rights in the digital space. We will uphold international human rights law throughout the life cycle of digital and emerging technologies so that users can safely benefit from digital technologies and are protected from violations, abuses and all forms of discrimination. We recognize the responsibilities of all stakeholders in this endeavour and also call on the private sector to apply the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,

- **A/RES/79/1 (Global Digital Compact):** We call on: (a) Digital technology companies and developers to respect international human rights and principles, including through the application of human rights due diligence and impact assessments throughout the technology life cycle (all SDGs); (b) Digital technology companies, developers and social media platforms to respect human rights online, be accountable for and take measures to mitigate and prevent abuses, and to provide access to effective remedy in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and other relevant frameworks (SDGs 5, 10 and 16),

- **A/RES/77/150:** *Noting with great concern* the fact that a gender digital divide persists in women's access to and use of information and communications technologies, including in education, employment and other areas of economic and social development, and in this regard welcoming the many initiatives that focus on access, skills and leadership to promote the equal participation of women and girls in the digital age, such as the International Girls in ICT Day of the International Telecommunication Union and the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age, known as the Equals Partnership,

6.7. Better integration with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Although the WSIS Action Lines have been mapped to the SDGs, the connection between digitalization and sustainable development could be strengthened. Questions remain about how this will evolve post-2030, highlighting the need for a more explicit and actionable integration of digital advancements including an SDG component. The outcome of the WSIS+20 review will serve as an input into the 2030 Agenda review process, as already foreseen in the WSIS+10 outcome document. It is to be considered during the HLPF in 2026 and the SDG Summit in 2027.

Some useful language:
- **E/RES/2024/13** [to be updated with 2025 version of the ECOSOC/CSTD WSIS-resolution]**:** Encourages close alignment between the World Summit process and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as called for in General Assembly resolution 70/125, highlighting the cross-cutting contribution of information and communications technology to the

> Sustainable Development Goals and poverty eradication, recognizing the World Summit on the Information Society-Sustainable Development Goals matrix developed by United Nations World Summit action line facilitators to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and noting that access to information and communications technologies has also become a development indicator and aspiration in and of itself;

Possible measures:

The existing Action Lines are flexible enough to encompass new challenges. Rather than introducing new Action Lines or deleting existing ones, updates should be made to the current implementation architecture. This approach ensures continuity and tech neutrality while addressing emerging issues and integrating GDC commitments. This update should consider the findings of the CSTD Report on the 20-year WSIS Review as well as other relevant UN documents. Many of the abovementioned gaps have been considered by the GDC – hence, the joint implementation roadmap further elaborated below would address the need of better taking into account these issues under an updated and joint WSIS/GDC architecture.

7. <u>Main architectural gaps in WSIS and potential measures</u>

In addition to subject-matter gaps, the WSIS architecture faces several structural and operational challenges that hinder its effectiveness, inter alia the following:

- o Lack of a strategic and holistic governance of the WSIS architecture
- o Limited synergies between different parts of the WSIS architecture
- o Limited responsiveness to emerging developments
- o Limited political visibility, impact and funding of the IGF

Possible measures:

To achieve the vision of WSIS Plus and address the gaps in the current WSIS architecture, while also creating concrete synergies with GDC implementation and follow-up, the following measures could be considered:

7.1. Enhanced UNGIS: updating day-to-day stewardship of the WSIS architecture and integrating GDC

The day-to-day stewardship of the WSIS and GDC implementation activities could be entrusted to an updated UNGIS building on (a) the existing UNGIS and (b) the working group on digital technologies created as part of the follow-up on the Summit of the Future (and currently co-led by ODET and ITU), hence integrating ODET and other relevant UN bodies (e.g. OHCHR) into UNGIS and its activities.[4]

The updated UNGIS indicated above would:

- Ensure coordination and cooperation in developing and implementing the afore-mentioned joint implementation roadmap across the UN (see 5).
- Direct the creation of a one-stop-shop space within the UN system where relevant information about the implementation and follow-up of WSIS action lines and GDC commitments could be easily accessed in one place.
- Be co-chaired by two UN entities on a rotation basis (following the UNGIS experience).

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[4] CSTD draft resolution, PP131g: "Highlights the role of UNGIS in coordinating the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, and *recommends* as an outcome of the WSIS+20 Review to strengthen its functioning by including further UN offices with responsibilities in matters of digital cooperation, as well as multistakeholder advice to its work as appropriate"

> - See proposals above

7.2. Improving the overall stewardship of the WSIS architecture by establishing a Strategic Multistakeholder Steering Group complementing the updated UNGIS

Establishing a Strategic Multistakeholder Steering Group (MSG) to complement UNGIS could significantly enhance the implementation of WSIS and GDC commitments. This MSG would include a small set of representatives from governments, the private sector, civil society, academia, and technical communities, ensuring equitable gender and geographical representation. In its establishment, the Sao Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines would be considered. The role of the MSG would be as a strategic advisory body which would offer guidance to UNGIS in the implementation of the joint WSIS-GDC implementation roadmap, monitor progress, and provide recommendations for addressing emerging challenges. To maintain transparency and accountability, the Steering Group would provide regular updates and reports, including as an input to the annual SG Report on Progress in Implementation of the WSIS outcomes.

7.3. WSIS Plus Helpdesk

Building on recommendations by the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, a 'help desk' function should be operationalised within the WSIS architecture to '*direct requests for help on digital policy (such as dealing with crises, drafting legislation, or advising on policy) to appropriate entities.*' Such function would especially be focused on addressing the needs of governments and stakeholders from developing countries and could be performed by an enhanced UNGIS. The helpdesk would not provide advice itself on specific policy issues, but act as a liaison to the corresponding Offices and Departments coordinated through UNGIS. Furthermore, it could offer information and guidance on capacity development opportunities on digital governance offered within and outside the WSIS architecture, as well as on available funding mechanisms.

> - *Invites* UNGIS to operationalise a lean, agile and light-weight help-desk function to direct Member State and other stakeholder requests for support on digital policy issues to the appropriate United Nations entities and other relevant actors, in particular offering information and guidance on capacity development opportunities on digital governance offered within and outside the WSIS architecture, as well as on available funding mechanisms, and *emphasises* that the help-desk would serve as a liaison mechanism and not provide substantive policy advice itself;

7.4. More focused role for the WSIS-Forum

The WSIS-Forum has evolved during the last years in a positive fashion, becoming more inclusive and multistakeholder in its programming. At the same time, sometimes its discussions seem to duplicate debates had within the IGF framework. It could be worthwhile to sharpen the WSIS-Forum's scope and function, focusing it more clearly on showcasing activities in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines, implemented, as mentioned above, by the integration of GDC commitments.

> - *Recognizes* that the WSIS Forum has been a platform for discussion and sharing of best practices in the implementation of WSIS outcomes by all stakeholders, and it should continue to be held annually as central venue for exchanging on good practice, initiatives and multistakeholder collaboration in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines according to the Joint Implementation Roadmap;

7.5. Enhanced cooperation and multistakeholder collaboration within CSTD

The CSTD (and consequently ECOSOC) would be more clearly established as the main instance for receiving periodic reporting from the UN agencies through UNGIS and offering guidance and stewardship to the overall joint WSIS-GDC implementation architecture. The CSTD would periodically set strategic priorities, coordinate overall WSIS activities, and foster coherence across different workstreams. By assigning to the CSTD the periodic follow-up and review of the integrated implementation work of WSIS and GDC, Member States' role to periodically offer strategic guidance to the UN system in the area of digital governance and cooperation would be bolstered. This would be in line with the spirit of the provisions on enhanced cooperation contained in WSIS.

At the same time, the multistakeholder approach within CSTD should be equally strengthened by complementing its current governmental composition with a multistakeholder set of members nominated by the different stakeholder groups and rotated similarly to the current IGF MAG. Such a move would build on the experience gained through the practice of multistakeholder exchanges within the CSTD, notably with several multistakeholder CSTD working groups that have existed over the years.

- *Highlights* the well-established role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development as an intergovernmental platform for discussions on the impact and opportunities of technologies, and calls for strengthening of this Commission in accordance with para XYZ of this Resolution, as a means to contributing to enhanced cooperation;

7.6. Enhanced IGF, better interconnected with the rest of the WSIS architecture

The IGF is a key part of the WSIS architecture, but some concerns have been raised over the years regarding issues such as the nature of IGF outcomes, the forum's limited visibility among certain actors, as well as the need for broader participation (e.g. from governments from the Global South or communities traditionally less represented in digital governance spaces), which needs to be addressed. Additionally, its role within the broader WSIS architecture needs to be strengthened to ensure greater interconnectedness with other WSIS mechanisms.

- *Recognizes* the importance of the Internet Governance Forum as the primary multistakeholder platform for dialogue on Internet governance issues, including emerging digital public policy issues, as reflected in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society;

- *Decides* to continue the mandate of the IGF as set out in para 72 to 78 of the Tunis Agenda with periodic reviews based on open and inclusive consultations of Member States and all other stakeholders to be held in preparation of future WSIS overall reviews; also *decides* to strengthen the Forum's funding by combining a mix of core UN funding and voluntary contributions, and to this aim requests the Secretary General to submit to the General Assembly, at its 80th session, a proposal on such a funding mechanism for the IGF;

- Welcomes, in that context, the continuous progress made with regard to the intersessional work of the Internet Governance Forum in the different modalities of connecting and enabling the next billion online, dynamic coalitions and best practice forums and policy networks, as well as the contributions of national and regional Internet governance forums, the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group and the Leadership Panel;

- Welcomes, the establishment of the Leadership Panel of the Internet Governance Forum, as a step in implementing the Internet Governance Forum Plus proposal presented in the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

> - *Calls* upon the Forum to report on outcomes of its annual meetings and intersessional work to relevant UN entities and processes, and calls, in particular, on UNGIS and all relevant UN agencies, offices and departments, Action Line Facilitators, CSTD and WSIS Forum to duly take into account IGF outcomes in their work and proceedings; *further calls* upon the Forum to continue progress and report to CSTD on issues such as:
>   a. Further enhancing its working modalities, including through reinforcing its intersessional work and supporting national and regional initiatives and to apply innovative, open, inclusive, transparent and agile collaboration methods, drawing inspiration from the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines, in the development of IGF "Messages" and recommendations;
>   b. Further broadening the participation of all relevant stakeholders and interested citizens, with particular attention to underrepresented communities and Governments and other stakeholders from developing countries;
>   c. Further strengthening its strategic functions, including through the effective engagement and contributions of the Leadership Panel;
> - *Calls upon* the CSTD to give due consideration to the Forum's reports and outcomes, and to include them, as appropriate, in its work as well as within its regular reporting.

7.6.1. Permanent mandate

The IGF has demonstrated its key role within WSIS and the digital governance space. Accordingly, its mandate should be made permanent, without prejudice to subjecting its performance to periodic WSIS reviews.

7.6.2. Sustainable funding

The IGF must be enabled to fulfil its full mandate. This can only be done if the IGF is backed by a secure and stable funding, combining a mix of core UN funding and voluntary contributions.

7.6.3. Improved inclusion of Governments

Appropriate funding could allow for the establishment of a dedicated capacity within the IGF Secretariat to liaise with Governments, particularly from developing countries, in a more effective fashion. Indeed, to respond to certain concerns during the GDC process that governments need a space to exchange on digital governance and policy issues, and that the IGF did not yet attract sufficient governmental participation, a new governmental program space could be established within the forum. This could also serve as a follow-up to the provisions on enhanced cooperation in the WSIS outcome documents. Such a space would be an addition to other tracks that the IGF has created or considered over the years (e.g. the parliamentary track).

7.6.4. Strengthening inclusion, especially from Global South, under-represented communities and citizens

Additionally, the IGF would be enabled to foster greater participation from under-represented groups, such as small and medium enterprises, representatives from less tech-advanced economies, and marginalized communities. This can be done by strengthening the provision of travel grants or virtual participation options (as already set in place) to ensure broader inclusivity.

To further strengthen its inclusivity and to ensure that policy discussions reflect diverse needs and experiences, the IGF could explore the integration of citizen deliberation methods[5]. These contributions

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[5] See e.g. examples of citizen deliberation projects on Internet Governance matters held in past years here

could complement existing stakeholder inputs and enrich the IGF's capacity to reflect the full spectrum of perspectives in digital governance.

7.6.5. More tangible outcomes and impact

The IGF discussions could be better summarized in more concise, forward-looking "Messages" that would outline actionable action points and even recommendations, while avoiding the forum's transformation into a negotiation space. The process to elaborate such Messages as well as outputs from the intersessional work from Policy Networks, Best Practice Fora and Dynamic Coalitions should be open and inclusive, drawing inspiration from the process steps and guidelines defined in the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines. These messages would be presented as a periodic input to feed into UNGIS proceedings and should also be duly taken into account by the other component parts of the WSIS architecture, such as CSTD and WSIS-Forum (see respectively 7.5 and 7.4 above).

7.6.6. Rebranding

One further measure should be to strengthen the IGF by rebranding it into a **Digital Governance Forum** (DGF) or Digital Cooperation Forum (DCF), reflecting and better showcasing the fact that its mandate and practice already cover all aspects of digital governance, not just matters related to the technical governance of the Internet.[6] This rebranding, which may be implemented without re-opening up the Tunis Agenda mandate of the IGF, would reflect the evolving nature of digital challenges and ensure that the IGF remains the primary platform for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on digital governance and digital policy issues.

7.6.7. Recognition of IGF improvements, intersessional, national and regional structures

The WSIS+20 Review would be a good opportunity to formally recognize the rich intersessional work undertaken by the IGF ecosystem, its global network of national and regional IGFs (NRIs), as well as the IGF Leadership Panel as a key element of the IGF structure, building on language already agreed at the level of ECOSOC WSIS Resolutions.[7]

7.6.8. Enhancing the interconnectedness with the overall WSIS architecture

The discussions and outcomes from the IGF should be proactively leveraged as valuable inputs by the other component parts of the WSIS architecture, including leading UN departments and agencies and other stakeholders. This would render IGF outputs more tangible, action-oriented and effective. The IGF is uniquely placed to identify emerging topics, bringing key issues to the forefront and placing them on the global agenda, harnessing the wide range of inputs from its multistakeholder community. This issue-spotting is complemented by initial conversations during the annual meetings as well as network-building and intersessional work, which allow to develop and shape common approaches to addressing digital governance issues, sharing best practices and potentially developing non-binding recommendations. Such work is crucial to constantly evolving the field work under the WSIS Action Lines, which in turn are considered every year during the WSIS-Forum, with their work and relevant developments being subject to review and consideration by the CSTD in its annual reporting to ECOSOC and UNGA. A means to foster such impact would be to reserve a seat for IGF Leadership Panel representative(s) within the multistakeholder complements to UNGIS and CSTD described under 7.2. and 7.5. Additionally, as mentioned above, the annual IGF "Messages" should be duly considered by the other mechanisms of WSIS, most notably by UNGIS, the CSTD and the WSIS-Forum.

8. <u>Overall Conclusion</u>

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[6] Consistent with the Tunis agenda, see e.g. §72.

[7] E/2024/13, para 95: "Notes, in that context, the establishment of the Leadership Panel of the Internet Governance Forum, as a step in implementing the Internet Governance Forum Plus proposal presented in the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation"

The WSIS+20 Review presents a unique opportunity to reimagine global digital governance, addressing emerging challenges, harnessing and building on existing structures and delivering on an updated WSIS architecture fit-for-purpose to address ever-evolving technological developments. By addressing subject-matter and architectural gaps, as well as integrating the implementation of GDC commitments into WSIS, the global international and multistakeholder community can ensure that WSIS remains a relevant and effective architecture for achieving an inclusive, sustainable, and people-centered digital society. The vision of WSIS Plus offers a pathway to strengthen digital cooperation and ensure that no one is left behind in the digital age.