

1. What are the most important **achievements** arising from WSIS that should be highlighted in the Zero Draft? *

I have had the privilege of contributing to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process for the past 24 years as the leader of the Civil Society Organization (CSO) from Bangladesh. Below are the most important achievements of WSIS that should be highlighted in the Zero Draft of the WSIS+20 Review process:

Establishment of a Global Framework for the Information Society

The Geneva Declaration of Principles (2003) and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society (2005) established a visionary roadmap for building an inclusive, people-centered, and development-oriented Information Society. These documents serve as foundational reference points for digital development policy worldwide.

Multistakeholder Engagement as a Norm

WSIS institutionalized the principle of multistakeholder participation, bringing together governments, the private sector, civil society, technical communities, and international organizations. This inclusive model has influenced other UN processes, such as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and has become the gold standard for digital governance dialogues.

Global Recognition of the Role of ICTs in Sustainable Development

WSIS led to widespread recognition of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as enablers of sustainable development, paving the way for their integration into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in relation to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 9, 16, and 17. It emphasized the role of ICTs in poverty reduction, education, health, governance, and disaster response.

Action Lines and Follow-up Mechanisms

WSIS created Action Lines (C1 to C11) covering areas such as ICT infrastructure, capacity building, cybersecurity, media, cultural diversity, and ethics in the Information Society. These Action Lines are monitored annually, fostering accountability and tracking progress.

Launch and Continuation of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

WSIS catalyzed the creation of the IGF, a unique multistakeholder platform for discussing Internet governance issues. It has played a critical role in shaping global discourse on digital rights, access, and governance.

WSIS Forum as a Sustained Implementation Platform

The annual WSIS Forum, co-organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and its partners, has become a major venue for global cooperation, the exchange of best practices, and capacity building in digital development. It fosters partnerships and shows innovation at the grassroots and national levels.

Bridging the Digital Divide

WSIS placed a global focus on bridging digital divides, including those related to gender, geography, age, and language. It inspired the development of national e-strategies and infrastructure investments, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Promotion of Digital Rights and Ethical Principles

WSIS emphasized the right to access information, privacy, freedom of expression, and cultural diversity in digital spaces. Discussions on the ethical dimensions of ICTs were introduced, forming early foundations for later frameworks on Responsible AI and digital inclusion.

WSIS Prizes and Innovation Recognition

The WSIS Prizes have celebrated and scaled impactful ICT4D (Information and Communication Technologies for Development) solutions, promoting a culture of innovation and practical action aligned with the WSIS Action Lines and the SDGs.

Influence on Regional and National Policies

Many countries and regional bodies, such as the African Union and ASEAN, have adopted ICT strategies aligned with WSIS principles. WSIS has helped to create coherence among national digital agendas and global digital development goals.

2. What are the most important **challenges** to the achievement of WSIS outcomes to date and in the future that need to be addressed in the Zero Draft? *

Here are the most important challenges to the achievement of WSIS outcomes, both to date and looking into the future, that should be clearly addressed in the Zero Draft of the WSIS+20 Review:

1. Persistent and Evolving Digital Divides

Access Gap: Over 2.6 billion people remain offline, mostly in rural, low-income, and conflict-affected regions.

Affordability & Infrastructure: Cost of connectivity, devices, and inadequate infrastructure hinder universal access.

Digital Skills Divide: Even among those connected, many lack the skills to meaningfully use digital tools.

Gender & Inclusion Gap: Women, persons with disabilities, older persons, and marginalized groups are underrepresented and underserved in digital spaces.

2. Fragmented Global Digital Governance

Absence of a coherent, inclusive, and binding global digital governance framework.

Increased geopolitical tensions and digital fragmentation (e.g., data sovereignty, Internet splintering) threaten the open, interoperable Internet.

Lack of coordination between WSIS follow-up and emerging digital governance bodies, including those addressing AI and data governance.

3. Inadequate Integration with the 2030 Agenda and SDGs

WSIS implementation is often siloed from broader development planning and UN SDG processes.

Limited visibility of WSIS Action Lines in national development strategies and global financing mechanisms.

4. Underfunded Implementation and Limited Capacity

Many developing countries face resource constraints, limiting their ability to implement WSIS-related policies.

Civil society and grassroots innovators often lack support despite their critical role in digital inclusion and innovation.

Limited capacity for policy coherence, regulation, and digital literacy at local and national levels.

5. Rising Risks from Emerging Technologies

Rapid deployment of AI, big data, IoT, and digital platforms outpaces governance.

Ethical, legal, and human rights risks—including bias, surveillance, misinformation, and algorithmic harms—are increasing.

Lack of inclusive participation in shaping rules for AI and digital trust.

6. Disinformation, Misinformation, and Online Harms

Online spaces are increasingly affected by harmful content, including hate speech, cyberbullying, disinformation, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV).

Weak media literacy and platform accountability exacerbate societal polarization and democratic erosion.

7. Weak Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms

WSIS lacks a strong accountability framework to assess implementation at national, regional, and global levels.

No binding commitments, standardized data, or independent evaluation mechanisms to measure real progress on WSIS Action Lines.

8. Environmental Impact and Sustainability Concerns

Digital technologies contribute significantly to e-waste, energy consumption, and environmental degradation.

Lack of clear integration of climate-resilient and sustainable ICT policies within WSIS implementation.

9. Limited Youth and Grassroots Engagement

Youth, indigenous peoples, and grassroots innovators are often underrepresented in WSIS processes.

Barriers to participation include language, funding, access to decision-making, and bureaucratic constraints.

10. Platform Dominance and Data Exploitation

Concentration of power in a few tech giants undermines diversity, openness, and economic justice.

Lack of fair data governance, digital taxation, and user rights weakens trust and equity in the digital economy.

3. What are the most important **priorities** for action to achieve the WSIS vision of a ‘people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society’ in the future, taking into account emerging trends? *

To achieve the WSIS vision of a “people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society” in light of current and emerging digital trends, the Zero Draft should prioritize the following key areas for action:

1. Achieve Universal, Affordable, and Meaningful Connectivity

Invest in affordable, reliable, and high-speed broadband for all, especially in rural and underserved areas.
Prioritize last-mile connectivity, including community networks, public access points, and Universal Service Funds.
Promote accessibility standards for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and linguistically diverse populations.
Ensure meaningful connectivity—not just access, but also devices, skills, and relevant content.

2. Advance Digital Literacy and Capacity Building for All

Make digital skills a foundational element of education systems and lifelong learning.
Tailor training programs for women, youth, older persons, indigenous communities, and informal workers.
Support media and information literacy to counter online harms, disinformation, and digital manipulation.
Boost local content creation, language diversity, and digital innovation at grassroots levels.

3. Strengthen Digital Trust, Rights, and Governance

Promote a human rights-based approach to digital policy, ensuring online freedoms, privacy, and protection from surveillance and cybercrime.
Establish transparent, inclusive, and accountable governance frameworks for data, AI, platforms, and emerging technologies.
Ensure ethical use of AI and digital systems through inclusive standards and regulation.
Promote interoperability, openness, and net neutrality to preserve the Internet as a global public good.

4. Align WSIS Implementation with the SDGs and Climate Action

Embed WSIS Action Lines into national SDG plans, especially in education, health, governance, agriculture, and disaster response.
Promote green and sustainable ICT practices, including energy-efficient infrastructure, circular e-waste management, and low-carbon innovation.
Develop and fund climate-resilient digital infrastructure to support vulnerable communities.

5. Deepen Multistakeholder Participation and Inclusion

- Institutionalize meaningful engagement of civil society, grassroots innovators, youth, and local governments in WSIS processes.
- Ensure gender-responsive digital policies, including dedicated resources to close the gender digital divide.
- Support local and indigenous knowledge systems and participatory technology design.

6. Establish Stronger Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

Create independent, disaggregated, and participatory evaluation mechanisms for WSIS implementation.
Develop open data dashboards and indicators aligned with WSIS Action Lines and SDGs.
Incentivize peer learning, south-south cooperation, and evidence-based policymaking.

7. Reform and Reinvigorate Global Digital Cooperation

Promote coherence between WSIS, the Global Digital Compact, the Internet Governance Forum, and other global digital efforts.
Empower the WSIS Forum and Action Line facilitators to serve as engines of innovation, coordination, and accountability.
Support a people-first Global Digital Governance Architecture anchored in multistakeholderism and UN values.

8. Mobilize Resources and Investments for Inclusive Digital Development

Expand public and private investment in inclusive, gender-responsive, and sustainable ICT infrastructure and services.
Create dedicated digital inclusion funds for LDCs, conflict-affected countries, and marginalized communities.
Encourage partnerships with social enterprises, cooperatives, and community media t

4. What **additional themes/issues**, if any, should be included in the Elements Paper? *

The essential objectives of the WSIS mandate have yet to be fully realized, as outlined in the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda for Action.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for a further strengthened WSIS Forum to discuss long-standing and emerging issues, contributing to the identification of possible ways to address and the process of localization of WSIS, as well as annual monitoring, implementation, and review at the country level. What is urgently needed is a permanent, reinforced, and even more inclusive WSIS and IGF, with sustainable funding at both the secretariat and country levels.

5. Do you wish to comment on **particular themes/issues/paragraphs** in the Elements Paper? *

Our immediate call for action at the WSIS+20 review:

We call for reinvigorated efforts under the WSIS Action Lines based on international cooperation and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders.

In order to realise the WSIS vision, Action Lines must be expanded in the following directions:

- Action Line C1: Common standards for digital public goods that emphasize democratic ownership and control, and transparent and accountable governance of digital public infrastructure.
- Action Line C2: Universal access to meaningful connectivity, and steps to dismantle the walled gardens of private platform services, promote interoperable platform architectures for enabling market competition, address fragmentation of network standards, and foster the development of multiple and diverse technologies.
- Action Line C3: Measures to protect media pluralism and diversity, and tackle risks to democratic integrity, especially misinformation, hate speech, and gender-based cyber-violence, stemming from algorithms gone rogue.
- Action Line C4: Critical and transformative public digital education and civic literacy for the age of algorithmized public life, and investment in human development for empowered participation of all in the digital society and economy.
- Action Line C5: Global agreement to end the militarization and weaponization of cybertechnologies and AI.
- Action Line C6: An integrated approach that recognizes continuities between internet-related public policy and data and AI governance.
- Action Line C7: A strong 'data for development' agenda that explores appropriate and rule-based data sharing at global, regional, and national levels to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Action Line C8: Governance frameworks for generative AI development to protect the knowledge sovereignty of indigenous communities and to ensure an open science and innovation culture that benefits all of humanity.
- Action Line C9: The right to communicate in social media and immersive internet environments.
- Action Line C10: Benchmarks on digital human rights, and due diligence guidance for transnational corporations and other business enterprises on human rights and the environment in digital value chains.
- Action Line C11: Removal of barriers to effective international cooperation on data and AI—specifically, the lack of flexibilities in IP regimes in AI value chains, constraining clauses in digital trade agreements, stifling of digital industrial policy choices of developing countries in the data economy, and lack of compute power in the majority world.
- A new Action Line on gender equality in the digital society for transversal integration of gender in the action plan.

6. What suggestions do you have to support the development of the **WSIS framework** (WSIS Action Lines, IGF, WSIS Forum, UNGIS etc.)? *

Integrated WSIS, IGF, and GDC process at the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) system at the country level.

Currently, the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) system at the country level unites all UN entities to enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of operations through improved coordination and coherence.

We would greatly appreciate your consideration to include the annual monitoring, implementation, and review of WSIS at the country level, in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator (RC), and engagement with multi-stakeholders in a manner that suits the country's specific needs.

7. Do you have any **other** comments? *

We express our strong support for "Digital Justice, now! A Call to Action for WSIS+20 and beyond," articulated by the Global Digital Justice Forum, Five-Point Plan for an Inclusive WSIS+20 Review, initiated by Global Partners Digital (GPD), Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) regarding the WSIS+20 review process. Five-Point Plan for an Inclusive WSIS+20 Review initiated by Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

8. Who is **submitting** this input? *

Kindly provide the name of the person submitting this input, as well as the associated country, organization, stakeholder type, and relevant contact information

This question is required.

9. Please provide your **e-mail** address: *

Please enter an email

This question is required.