THE WSIS+20 SUBMISSION, G-77 & CHINA INPUTS

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

We recognize that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) has made significant contributions toward bridging the global digital divide and raising global awareness on the transformative potential of information and communications technologies (ICTs) for development. WSIS successfully established a global consensus on the centrality of ICTs as enablers of sustainable development and laid the foundation for their integration into national development strategies, as well as into the broader United Nations development agenda, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

WSIS articulated a common vision of a people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge. The WSIS framework has also promoted capacity-building, knowledge-sharing, and infrastructure development and emphasized the right to development through the use of ICTs.

WSIS has played a key role in the promotion of multi-stakeholder governance, fostering a cooperative ecosystem for ICT policy development. Moreover, the establishment of monitoring and review mechanisms such as the WSIS Forum has enabled ongoing dialogue, implementation assessment, and the identification of emerging challenges.

During the past 20 years, Information and communication technologies, including new and emerging technologies, have brought about a tremendous impact on the economy, education, culture, healthcare, politics and access to information, with great benefits to the lives of individuals and societies. This has been facilitated by the standards, partnerships and policy coherence promoted by the WSIS process.

We must therefore acknowledge that substantial progress has been made in the pursuit of the objectives set forth in the World Summit on the Information Society, but also highlight that many challenges are still to be overcome. As per Operative Paragraph 4 of the Modalities Resolution 79/277, the outcome document should "take stock of the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society and address potential information and communication technology gaps and areas for continued focus, as well as addressing challenges, including bridging the digital divide, and harnessing information and communication technologies for development".

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?

Bridging the digital divides:

Despite notable progress over the past two decades, the digital divides remains one of the most persistent and pressing challenges confronting the realization of the WSIS vision. While access to digital technologies has expanded globally, stark disparities persist between and within developed and developing countries in terms of infrastructure, affordability, digital literacy, and capacity to benefit from the digital economy. The emergence of advanced digital technologies—such as artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing, and cross-border data flows—has introduced new layers of digital exclusion. These structural imbalances are further exacerbated by unilateral Coercive measures that restrict access to ICTs and digital platforms.

The Outcome Document should emphasize the need for ensuring affordability of ICTs and the need for increased ICT penetration in all developing countries. The Document must also recognize divides within countries themselves, and outline steps to bridge those divides. The key to this effort is to give priority to satisfying the needs of developing countries, helping them strengthen communication infrastructure and capacity-building, ensuring access to adequate, predictable and concessional financing, improving their overall digital landscape, and promoting social-economic development through science and technology. The international community should foster a fairer and more reasonable global digital environment, International development order, and take strong actions to promote universal meaningful connectivity and improve the ability of women, the youth and children to use information and Internet platforms.

In addition, the Outcome Document should address key issues for the meaningful inclusion of developing countries in the digital transformation, including through digital public infrastructures. It should, in particular, address the emergence of further digital divides related to artificial intelligence and new and emerging technologies, including cloud computing, big data, and cross-border data flows, which risk exacerbating inequalities between developed and developing countries.

Furthermore, the Document should reaffirm the sovereign right of States to formulate and implement their own digital policies and strategies, protect national data, and promote local content in their own languages.

As such, bridging the digital divides in all their dimensions—access, affordability, capacity, innovation, gender, governance, and language—must remain at the core of the WSIS+20 review and future digital cooperation frameworks.

Financing Mechanisms:

Sustainable and concessional financing remains one of the most pressing challenge to achieving the WSIS vision of a 'people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society'. The WSIS+20 Outcome Document should explicitly call for increased concessional and sustainable financing. The Outcome Document must report on the progress made under Paragraph 23 of the Tunis agenda, which called for increased funding for a number of approaches to ICT for development financing that have been given insufficient attention, and specify future goals and responsibilities for the multistakeholder community, in particular developed countries and international financial institutions.

The Outcome Document must report on the progress made under Paragraph 27, which recommended improvements and innovations in existing financing mechanisms, including in identifying new concessional and sustainable financing models.

The global digital governance architecture:

A key concern that must be addressed in the WSIS+20 Zero Draft is the increasing duplication and fragmentation within the global digital governance architecture. The proliferation of institutions and initiatives has led to overlapping mandates and unclear institutional roles in relation to the WSIS framework.

There is an urgent need to establish complementarity and coordination among these processes while preserving the distinct and intergovernmental character of WSIS, as affirmed by the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society and the Geneva Plan of Action. These foundational UN frameworks laid down the principles of multistakeholder cooperation within a development-oriented and intergovernmental structure.

In this context, alignment of the Global Digital Compact (GDC) within the WSIS framework which is one of the most critical dimensions of the WSIS+20 review. The WSIS Action Lines and the GDC commitments share overlapping objectives necessitating structured coordination to avoid overlapping and duplication of mandates. However, such coordination must fully preserve the intergovernmental nature of WSIS and its development orientation. Any engagement with the GDC must reinforce, not replace, the WSIS framework, and respect the mandates and institutional arrangements already established by Member States.

The Group of 77 and China therefore call for the WSIS+20 review to work towards the development of a universal, inclusive, and cohesive digital governance model under the leadership of the United Nations. A key priority in this regard shall be ensuring the representation of the Global South in global technology governance and standard-setting bodies, particularly those shaping the future of artificial intelligence new and emerging technologies.

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?

Addressing Key Challenges in Digital Cooperation and Governance

The Zero Draft must address several pressing challenges to the realization of a truly inclusive Information Society:

- There is a critical lack of adequate, concessional, predictable, and sustainable public financing and technology transfer from developed countries and international financial institutions to support digital development in developing countries.

- Digital technologies, platforms, and data governance are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few dominant global actors—including major technology companies and developed countries—limiting developing countries' ability to benefit fully from digital dividends and undermining their digital sovereignty.

- Insufficient and unstructured international cooperation persists, impeding equitable access to digital tools, platforms, and infrastructure, which must be addressed through coordinated, UN-led multilateral efforts aligned with development goals.

- Unilateral measures and discriminatory actions by some Member States obstruct other countries' technical access to telecommunications and information technologies, contradicting the spirit of WSIS and international cooperation.

- It is essential to safeguard the principles of multilateralism and people-centered development as the cornerstone of global governance for the Information Society.

- Sustainability issues must be highlighted, in other to guarantee viability of the long-term digital transformation of societies, in particular developing countries. Issues such as space sustainability and environmental sustainability must be stressed, albeit never as a condition to the right of development.

Inclusive and Transparent Digital Governance, Reinforcing the United Nations' Central Role

The UN's leadership role in global digital governance must be strengthened and reaffirmed. This includes reinforcing multilateralism, ensuring inclusivity, and fostering international cooperation that respects the sovereign rights of States to shape their digital policies and development pathways.Ensuring governance models that are multilateral, inclusive, and transparent is crucial. This includes emphasizing equitable participation of developing countries in governance bodies, standard-setting, and emerging technology regulation. New and emerging technologies such as AI must be integrated into the WSIS+20 architecture holistically, with a strong focus on equitable access and capacity building for developing

countries. Ethical and inclusive AI governance frameworks must be adopted with the participation of all UN Member States, ensuring innovation benefits all and does not exacerbate inequalities.

Upholding and Strengthening the Original WSIS Framework

The foundational structure and principles established by the Geneva Plan of Action and Tunis Agenda remain critical to the WSIS+20 process. While these frameworks have guided significant progress over the past two decades, there is a pressing need to update and improve international digital governance to respond to the expanding and complex nature of the digital ecosystem.

Broadening the Horizon of Digital Governance

The scope of digital governance has expanded significantly beyond early WSIS topics like domain names and IP addresses to encompass the digital economy, data governance, artificial intelligence, capacity building, and environmental sustainability. The Elements Paper should be calibrated to address these multidimensional challenges comprehensively, ensuring governance structures are responsive, future-ready, and aligned with the development aspirations of the Global South.

Capacity Building and Digital Literacy:

Strengthening capacity-building and digital literacy must be a foundational priority for advancing a people-centred and inclusive Information Society. The bridging of knowledge and skills gaps is essential to ensure that all individuals—regardless of geography, language, gender, or ability—can meaningfully participate in the digital world. Targeted digital literacy programmes must focus on rural and tribal populations, women, persons with disabilities, and speakers of regional languages, supported by accessible interfaces and locally contextualized content.

Dedicated youth fellowships, such as youth-IGF models, should be scaled to cultivate future- ready leadership. Simultaneously, national digital awareness and skills campaigns must be paired with device-affordability measures to remove economic barriers to access. Public knowledge-bases, open datasets, and multi-stakeholder technical advisory bodies can further democratize expertise and foster a culture of inclusive digital innovation.

WSIS+20 offers an opportunity to embed such holistic and scalable models into global digital cooperation frameworks, ensuring capacity-building is treated not as an adjunct but as a central pillar of inclusive digital development.

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

The needs and perspectives of developing countries must be more explicitly mainstreamed throughout the document, especially in relation to financing, capacity-building, and equitable

participation in digital governance. References to governance and stakeholder engagement should clearly reaffirm the central role of governments and the UN system, while also recognizing the contribution of all stakeholders under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

We encourage stronger language around the unfulfilled commitments made in previous WSIS processes, and the need for renewed political will and resource mobilization.

Measurement Framework: Develop indicators to assess implementation of WSIS Action Lines currently missing.

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

The Groups inputs to the Elements are reflected in the draft elements paper.

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

There is a pressing need to update and improve the existing WSIS architecture, including the WSIS Action Lines, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the WSIS Forum, and the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), as these platforms are the result of broad consensus and carry clear intergovernmental mandates. The current mechanisms are valuable in promoting dialogue, coordination, and review of digital development efforts, and should not be replaced or weakened. Strengthen the development focus of all WSIS platforms, ensuring that the needs and priorities of developing countries remain central. This includes enhancing support for the participation of developing countries in these platforms.

The WSIS+20 process should be enhanced through more structured, transparent, and inclusive dialogues that enable active engagement from all stakeholders, especially from the Global South. Greater institutional coherence across WSIS Action Lines, IGF, UNGIS, and related UN mechanisms such as the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies (ODET), is vital to ensure synergy, avoid duplication and to strengthen alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promote Global South inclusion in the digital transformation. The outcomes of WSIS+20 must be tied to a clear implementation roadmap with measurable goals and regular reviews to ensure concrete, inclusive, and sustainable progress. In particular, it should envisage making the IGF a permanent forum and updating its terminology to encompass the digital realm as a whole.

The principle of enhanced cooperation, as outlined in the Tunis Agenda, must be formalized and operationalized within the WSIS framework. This requires structured multistakeholder collaboration to address international public policy issues related to the Internet and ICTs. Formalizing enhanced cooperation will strengthen global digital governance, ensure inclusive decision-making, and uphold the development-oriented vision of WSIS.

7. Any other Comments?

The WSIS+20 High Level meeting outcome document should be as short and as concise as possible in its form. In its substance, it should reaffirm the validity of the WSIS outcome documents, as well as identify priorities towards bridging the digital divide and achieving the other goals that were set in those documents, envisage a permanent mandate of the IGF and indicate how the discussion on the concept of Enhanced Cooperation should evolve as from 2026.

It should not only take stock of past experience and evaluate the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, but also look ahead and develop a new programme of action that reflects the new circumstances and the goal of building a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society.