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

We welcome the publication of the WSIS+20 Elements Paper and thank the Co-Facilitators for their efforts in preparing this important document. We believe it offers a valuable overview of key issues and provides a solid foundation for further discussion.

As the global community advances the WSIS+20 process, we wish to emphasize the critical importance of adopting a forward-looking, action-oriented outcome. The WSIS+20 outcome should be future proof, technology agnostic, and built upon existing processes, programs, initiatives and commitments. Any remaining gaps necessary to close digital divides should be addressed with clear deliverables and measurable outcomes rather than duplicating existing efforts.

The collaborative multistakeholder approach that brings together governments, private sector, civil society, international organisations, technical and academic communities and all other relevant stakeholders is at the centre of the WSIS. This principle should form the core of the zero draft and be addressed as a cross-cutting issue. The WSIS vision will only be achieved if all stakeholders are engaged on an equal footing and continue to collaborate together, in the spirit of inclusivity and transparency.

The WSIS process has also served as the cornerstone agreement to support global digital transformation and development over the past two decades, including by aligning its outcomes with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. This essential alignment should be retained through the zero draft.

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? *

We consider that WSIS+20 is the opportunity to redouble efforts to address the root causes of digital divides, ensure existing governance structures are leveraged, remain inclusive and fit-for-purpose, and that WSIS+20 offers action-orientated pathways ahead that deliver for all countries.

WSIS+20 must prioritize addressing the ongoing challenge of universal and meaningful connectivity. We must connect the 2.6 billion people who remain offline. The zero draft should consider ways to take advantage of and further support existing programs and initiatives, such as the Partner2Connect initiative, promote a global enabling environment which reduces the costs of infrastructure, supports community networks, promotes digital literacy, effectively deploys new technologies, and provides meaningful online participation.

WSIS+20 provides the chance to reflect upon the opportunities for new and emerging technologies to support digital development and transformation. It is the opportunity to take forward action to develop new partnerships to address the ever-present challenges of maintaining online safety, continuing to guarantee human rights online, and recognising the increasing environmental impact of digital technologies.

Additionally, WSIS+20 is an opportunity to close the gender digital divide, a gap most prominent in situations where women's empowerment through the Internet could create the most opportunity, including by empowering micro- and small-businesses.

Skills and workforce needs are also shifting, and it will be essential to focus future efforts towards ensuring the development of skilled workforces that can take advantage of current and future technologies. Finding ways to promote digital skills, digital literacy and digital workforces for all countries should be an important challenge that WSIS+20 seeks to address.

As digital-first generations emerge, the importance of the Internet to education, employment and social connection rise, as does its ability to foster entrepreneurship and innovation, and bridge traditional development gaps. Empowering youth should remain an area of focus.
WSIS+20 should continue to allow cultural and linguistic diversity to be protected and to flourish.

Of the thousands of languages spoken around the world, 10 languages account for 84 per cent of online content. Protecting cultural diversity and heritage, encouraging multilingualism, and continuing to foster an Internet for all will be essential for the decades ahead.

Finally, WSIS+20 offers an opportunity to strengthen multistakeholder governance mechanisms, including the well-recognized multistakeholder model of Internet governance. Bottom-up, inclusive governance, sufficient resources to enable meaningful participation from all stakeholder groups and regions, and a strong Internet Governance Forum, provide a blueprint for ongoing progress.

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? *

WSIS presents a unique opportunity to advance a positive agenda focused on strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights, and reaffirmation of existing international law. WSIS should acknowledge and reaffirm the recognition by all UN Member States, by consensus, that existing international law – and in particular the UN Charter in its entirety and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – is applicable to State conduct in the Information Society.

We are pleased to see the Elements Paper's focus on closing digital divides, promoting sustainable development, and support for capacity building. The recognition of youth as an independent stakeholder group and the attention to the universality of human rights online, including through gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, are also welcome and should be retained in the zero draft alongside recognition of the risks associated with online harassment, abuse and technology facilitated gender-based violence.

We consider that continued work is needed to support universal and meaningful connectivity. According to the ITU, 2.6 billion people remain unconnected. Connectivity must also be of sufficient quality, available, affordable, secure, accessible, in universally designed formats and supported by digital literacy and skills.

We welcome an evidence-based approach to the WSIS+20 review and encourage the process over coming months, including through the zero draft, to provide spaces for discussion and collaboration among governments and other stakeholders. Doing so reflects the multistakeholder spirit of the WSIS process and is consistent with the best practices documented through the NETmundial+10 Sao Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines.

In this regard, we note with appreciation the ideas presented in the WSIS+20 non-papers of Australia and others. We would encourage the Co-Facilitators to fully consider these documents when developing the zero draft and to incorporate the ideas presented to support ongoing dialogue and discussion. A fulsome zero draft that offers a range of action-oriented ideas which can be refined based on areas where consensus emerges will provide the best possibility of achieving meaningful progress towards the WSIS vision and closing digital divides from the WSIS+20 overall review.

We appreciate the establishment of the multistakeholder sounding board, welcome proposals for hybrid participation including across a variety of time zones, and support calls for joint consultations between government and other stakeholders throughout the process.

We encourage the co-facilitators to provide clear timelines for future negotiations to support planning by all stakeholders, particularly those travelling to New York. We further encourage the Co-Facilitators to hold multiday negotiations.

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

We refer to our other answers.

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

1. We recognise the importance of AI and Data governance but consider that their inclusion as stand-alone sections risks reopening work currently underway through the implementation of the GDC and other processes. The commitments agreed through the GDC, including through its implementation, and which remain subject to ongoing negotiations, should be carried forward. The WSIS should not duplicate ongoing efforts in these areas.

2. We welcome the digital divides section. We would encourage the addition of a specific reference to digital divides facing Indigenous communities and the importance of Indigenous connectivity. We support the reference to ICANN and emphasize the importance of multilingualism online and would welcome a strong emphasis towards improving multilingualism in the zero draft.
We recognise the complexity of issues such as ensuring information integrity and responding to challenges such as cybercrime. However, it will be important that the WSIS+20 review not seek to reopen or interfere with other existing processes.

3. Enabling environment: We welcome a focus on ways to support innovation and entrepreneurship, strengthen national digital policies, and ways to support ongoing regulatory coherence. However, we do not support the WSIS+20 review considering issues of radio frequency spectrum, this being the distinct responsibility of the ITU and associated treaty-based processes.

4. Financial Mechanisms: We recognise the need for ongoing financing to support the WSIS vision. The multistakeholder approach has been a successful model of supporting digital transformation and development, with a track record of progress. We encourage the Co-Facilitators to consult agencies like the World Bank, to understand how other existing mechanisms can further support closing digital divides.

5. We welcome a standalone section on human rights, including recognition that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected, promoted and fulfilled online.

We support making human rights the foundation of an Information Society and consider that the preamble of the zero draft should explicitly acknowledge human rights as a cross-cutting issue, and that our digital cooperation rests on and respects international law, including international human rights law. We also believe that the OHCHR should have a formal role in the WSIS, including by leveraging its Advisory Service on human rights in the digital space as referred in paragraph 24 of the GDC.

We encourage ongoing consultation with experts in preparing human rights language to ensure that the text of WSIS+20 is consistent with international law. Paragraph 48 of the Elements Paper should reflect the recognized threshold questions.

6. The Internet governance section should reflect the GDC, which affirmed that "Internet governance must continue to be global and multistakeholder in nature." The zero draft should include explicit references to the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, clearly recognizing the essential roles of the private sector, governments, the technical community, civil society, and academia as equal and vital contributors to the governance of the Internet.

We note references to "enhanced cooperation". Despite long-standing efforts, this term lacks a universally agreed definition and it remains unclear what specific actions remain unfulfilled. We urge caution, particularly given the opportunity to focus on areas where actionable progress can be achieved to close digital divides. If the co-facilitators disagree with this view, we call on specific ideas to be put forward to ensure meaningful and time-limited discussion which avoids distracting from other priority areas to close digital divides.

We also urge greater recognition of the IGF NRIs, which serve as core pillars of the IGF ecosystem. These initiatives play a critical role in localizing global discussions, ensuring that diverse perspectives and regional priorities are reflected.

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

We support the continuation of the WSIS Action Lines and believe they remain fit-for-purpose. New action plans, prepared by the Action Line lead agencies, could set out future deliverables, bringing together the breadth of work across the UN system on digital issues. Measurable targets would ensure that WSIS continues to deliver an action orientated agenda for all countries, regions and stakeholders.

We support the role of UNGIS as the coordinating body for WSIS and would welcome initiatives to strengthen it while avoiding duplication. In this regard, we encourage the Co-Facilitators to consider UNGIS's role in developing an implementation roadmap to incorporate commitments made through the GDC into the WSIS. Doing so would enable the WSIS to reflect the progress achieved through the GDC, avoid reopening agreements reached less than a year ago by consensus, and enable WSIS to continue to offer a practical, action-orientated agenda that supports all to maximise the opportunities of the digital world.

We believe that WSIS+20 should take forward an enduring mandate for the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The IGF has proven to be an essential platform for inclusive, transparent, and constructive dialogue on Internet governance, bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders from governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community, and academia. Its importance as the primary multistakeholder platform for discussion of Internet governance issues was recognized in paragraph 28 of the GDC, reflecting ongoing support for the IGF.

Finally, we consider a further 10-year extension to the WSIS process, providing a strong digital-first foundation to the years ahead, is essential. We call on the zero draft to offer long-term pathways that provide the certainty needed for all stakeholders to continue their efforts to close digital divides.

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

Canada and Australia appreciate the opportunity to comment on the elements paper and wish to thank the co-facilitators for this opportunity.

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

Sarah-Lizabeth Paquette (Global Affairs Canada - Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Submitting on behalf of the Governments of Canada and Australia.

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

Please enter an email