

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

The most important achievement of the WSIS was to declare that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are not an end in themselves, but should be considered as tools for the advancement of humanity.

It is important to reaffirm that the WSIS was not a summit about technology, but a summit about development. It continued a series of Summits that laid the groundwork for international agreements on sustainable development and global cooperation.

Among the Summits that preceded the WSIS are: Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, 1992); World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993); International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995); Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995); Millennium Summit (New York, 2000); International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, 2002); and World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10) (Johannesburg, 2002).

That commitment of the WSIS to harness ICTs for development is clearly expressed in the first two paragraphs of the Declaration of Principles of the Geneva phase of the WSIS:

1. "We, the representatives of the peoples of the world (...) declare our common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

2. "Our challenge is to harness the potential of information and communication technology to promote the development goals of the Millennium Declaration, namely the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; achievement of universal primary education; promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women; reduction of child mortality; improvement of maternal health; to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and development of global partnerships for development for the attainment of a more peaceful, just and prosperous world. We also reiterate our commitment to the achievement of sustainable development and agreed development goals, as contained in the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation and the Monterrey Consensus, and other outcomes of relevant United Nations Summits."

In this context, after arduous discussions, the representatives of the developing countries succeeded in having the so-called "digital divide" recognized as a new dimension of the economic and social divisions that limits the universal access to knowledge and information in our own languages.

The Summit allowed this topic to move out of the technical debate at the expert level and become a political issue of concern to the international community.

More than two decades later, it has been proven beyond a doubt, that the Information and Communication Technologies in general and the internet in particular are essential tools for the development of the countries.

But it has also been confirmed that this beneficial impact of ICTs and the internet is significantly lower in developing countries compared to developed countries.

Today it is worth remembering this fundamental objective of the WSIS to put ICTs at the service of development, which continues to be an aspiration for a large part of humanity.

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? *

The main obstacle to achieving what was agreed upon at the WSIS is the unjust international economic order, undemocratic and hegemonic, that prevails in the world despite repeated calls from the majority of States for the establishment of a new, more just, inclusive, and democratic international order.

The unjust international order is one of the main reasons why the sources of financing for development are insufficient. The need to create sources of financing for the development of the information society in Global South countries was a highly debated topic in both phases of the WSIS and remains unresolved today.

Not only has the commitment established at the 2002 Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development—that developed countries allocate 0.7% of their GDP to Official Development Assistance—not been fulfilled, but the total amount of such aid also decreased by 7.1% in 2024, thereby increasing the deficit of the financing for development.

To the existing unjust international economic order is added the inequity in the payment of the international internet connection, which favors the developed countries where the internet backbone networks are located, and which implies that developing countries must pay one hundred percent of the traffic of their internet connection, although the information flows in both directions.

In addition, the main e-commerce sites are located in developed countries, which means that the net financial flow on the internet is from developing to developed countries.

This economic unbalance is accentuated with the actions of the monopolistic internet companies, mostly from the United States, which amass vast fortunes, mainly through the commercialization of the personal data of their users.

On the other hand, in developing countries, non-commercial and public interest internet sites are not economically sustainable and must subsist through private donations or through government subsidies.

All this is because, on the internet, markets prevail without any restrictions, and States and intergovernmental institutions, such as those of the United Nations system, have ceased to fulfill their roles as guarantors of the public interest.

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? *

1. It must be reaffirmed that the building of the Information Society should be oriented towards development, and in particular towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. All activities, processes, and mechanisms for review and follow-up of the WSIS and the GDC must have this aspect at the core of their actions.

2. An intergovernmental space should be established so that all Member States can submit their priorities and concerns for discussion.

3. A fund should be established to finance the Information Society in developing countries, sourced from the exorbitant profits of monopolistic ICT and internet companies that monetize the information and data contributed by billions of people worldwide, and most countries do not benefit from this wealth, some of which was created based on the contributions of their own citizens.

4. Work to substantially reduce digital divides between countries, populations, people, among others.

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

A clear rejection of the application of unilateral coercive measures that prevent the full achievement of the economic and social development of the population of the affected countries and undermine the well-being of their citizens must be included.

In this regard, paragraph 46 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles should be recalled:

46. "In building the Information Society, States are strongly urged to take steps with a view to the avoidance of, and refrain from, any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, and that hinders the well-being of their population."

And also paragraph 94 of the Tunis Agenda:

94. "We acknowledge that everyone should benefit from the potential that the Information Society offers. Therefore, we invite governments to assist, on a voluntary basis, those countries affected by any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, and that hinders the well-being of their population."

It should be highlighted that a paragraph similar to the previous ones has been included in all the reports on "Assessment of progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society" which the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) sends annually to the United Nations General Assembly where it is adopted.

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

Not at this time.

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

No new mechanisms and processes should be created for the implementation and follow-up of WSIS and the Global Digital Compact (GDC):

The increase in the amount of governance mechanisms and processes of the digital world makes it difficult for many Member States, particularly developing countries, to participate. This diminishes the inclusiveness of these mechanisms and processes, as many countries and regions of the world would not be adequately represented.

The WSIS, in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, established an implementation and follow-up mechanism at the national, regional and international levels that must be used for the GDC, without the need to create new mechanisms and processes, as the existing ones provide an adequate framework for the follow-up of all issues related to the digital world, including those related to emerging technologies.

For example, the follow-up of actions related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be carried out in a new Action Line, with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNESCO as moderators/facilitators.

The existing processes and forums of the WSIS implementation and follow-up mechanism at the international level should continue:

The Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) should continue the annual review of the follow-up of the implementation of WSIS outcomes, to which must be added the examination of the status of the implementation of the GDC. In addition, it must be the place where, in an intergovernmental framework, decisions relevant to the digital world are taken, among which it may be, the proposal of new Action Lines, for example, for data governance and AI.

The Lines of Action are the cross-cutting thematic mechanisms where all the actions carried out at the international level on a particular issue converge, regardless of its origin. This allows all stakeholders to discuss the processes related to each Action Line that are carried out in the UN agencies and in the Committees of the General Assembly, as well as those of the IGF and the CSTD, thus achieving important synergies.

The World Summit on the Information Society Forum should focus on the follow-up of the Action Lines, including the accountability of the UN agencies acting as moderators / facilitators of each of them.

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and its national and regional initiatives, should be maintained as platforms for all stakeholders to carry out a dialogue on policies that concern the digital world.

It is important to improve the way in which these processes are carried out:

The unique characteristics of each process must be enhanced to avoid duplication of functions and achieve complementarity, while respecting the respective mandates. In this regard, formal channels of communication should be established between these processes and others in the United Nations system related to the digital world, whether in the Committees of the General Assembly or in its agencies, and even with those that take place at the regional level in the United Nations Regional Commissions.

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

In the mechanisms and processes for the implementation and follow-up of the WSIS and the Global Digital Compact (GDC), attention should be paid to the use and development of artificial intelligence and its impact on the information society, including ways to prevent the misuse of this technology for malicious purposes.

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

Isabel Greenup, Director of International Relations and Foreign Trade, Ministry of Communications, Republic of Cuba Avenida Independencia No.2 entre 19 de mayo y Araguren, Plaza de la Revolución, La Habana, Cuba, Código Postal 10600 Tel.: +537 8828096

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

Please enter an email