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

Reaffirmation of the WSIS vision and human rights
The WSIS vision of building a "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society" represents a framing that is a key achievement in itself. The retention of this framing, anchoring digital governance in human rights and in the multistakeholder process for digital governance, remains key for the future of WSIS. The WSIS+10 review recognized the role of human rights in the information society, and this role and the WSIS vision should guide the current review process and the zero draft.

Implementing this vision over the past two decades, the WSIS process has supported measurable progress in expanding connectivity, enhancing digital literacy, and fostering digital economic growth—particularly through multistakeholder collaboration and UN system support. These achievements should be acknowledged in the WSIS+20 review outcome as a foundation for renewed commitment.

Multistakeholder processes for governance
Since the outset, one of the strengths of WSIS has been its meaningful engagement with a broad range of stakeholders, which has been key to contextualizing debates and bringing human rights upfront. Maintaining and further improving this architecture and promoting a transparent, inclusive and participatory process is critical. The WSIS agreed working definition of internet governance, affirms the multistakeholder process and is another achievement to retain: "The development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet."

The WSIS Forum, the IGF, Regional and National IGFs are examples of the institutionalization of such approaches that anchor governance in inclusive and participatory global dialogue. These processes should be included in the zero draft with efforts to support further alignment and connection between them, for example through the recommendations offered in the draft resolution adopted by the CTSD in April 2025. OHCHR supports strengthening of the WSIS Forum, the IGF, regional and National IGFs, by enhancing participation and inclusion in decision-making processes, including by those most affected by digital technologies, and proper funding for the implementation their activities.

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 achievement of WSIS outcomes is challenged by new complexities represented by the rapid development of digital technologies involving amongst others huge advances in data-driven technologies; growing surveillance powers and means of surveillance; highly unequal benefits of data extraction, processing, analysis, and ownership; disinformation and overbroad legal responses to disinformation; growing use of internet shutdowns; and the growing entanglement of State power and digital tech businesses. At the same time, digital divides still affect billions of people, translating into widespread exclusion from essential services, participation in political and public life, and economic opportunities. Advances in artificial intelligence risk exacerbating divides between and within countries, for example with stark differences in access to computing power and data. Another challenge is how to ensure regulatory capacity of States in the digital realm while avoiding internet fragmentation, for example in the contexts of cross-border data flows and imparting and accessing information. The resulting tension between national governance efforts and the need to maintain a global, open and free internet can only be resolved based on approaches that are grounded in human rights, providing a common baseline for government interventions in the digital space.

The WSIS+20 Review should build on what has already been agreed language on human rights in the WSIS+10 Review and update this agreed language. The WSIS+10 Review (GA A/RES/70/125), already presented agreed language on human rights in the information society by (i) reaffirming the commitment of the Geneva Declaration and Tunis Agenda to the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development; (ii) recognizing Information and communication technologies (ICTs) as powerful tools for enhancing human rights, particularly in promoting access to information, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly; (iii) Reaffirming the same rights people enjoy offline must also be protected online; that communication is seen as a fundamental human need and social process, essential to participation in the information society; and that everyone, everywhere, should have the opportunity to benefit from digital inclusion, with respect for media independence and human dignity; and (iv) reaffirms the protection of freedoms and privacy in the information society concern over threats to freedom of expression and privacy. The text calls for the protection of journalists, civil society, and individuals from unlawful surveillance and data collection.

A starting point to enable achievement of WSIS outcomes against this new reality is by reaffirming the WSIS+10 review agreements on human rights in the information society and strengthening:

1) Awareness of the relevance of the international legal framework, including the international human rights law and framework to digital development;
2) Application of the international human rights law and framework to digital development;
3) Accurate interpretation of the international human rights law and framework;
4) Adequate resourcing of the international human rights system to be able to support Member States to deliver on WSIS outcomes and the achievement of human rights.

Procedurally, it would be useful for the zero draft to include metrics for measuring achievement of WSIS outcomes, mostly regarding human rights, and to enhance the role of WSIS Forum and IGF in Metrics to support the implementation of WSIS action lines.

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 against the backdrop of increased contestation, OHCHR notes the need for decisive efforts to strengthen human rights – both through unambiguous language and in the operationalization of human rights in the zero draft. This can be done regardless of whether the Action Lines are reopened, and should include the integration of universal human rights principles into action across all of the WSIS action lines, through incorporation into any new section related to emerging concerns, and through an overall strengthening of the WSIS architecture for upholding human rights on the internet and in digital governance.

Internationally agreed human rights law, anchored in the idea that the dignity of human beings is central to our future – which is one of the three pillars of the United Nations, can and should serve as signposts in how UN Member States engage in digital cooperation. In this connection, agreed language from the WSIS+10 Review GA Resolution, the Global Digital Compact, as well as recent Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions can be further leveraged for the zero draft.
In addition, strengthening the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, in particular from low to middle income countries, should be a of high priority, building on existing multi-stakeholder commitments from the WSIS process. Integrating the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines in the WSIS process could help improve participation, leading to better outcomes.

OHCHR stands ready to support implementation and to join as co-facilitator of the Action Lines, both in general and particularly in relation to Action Line 10 ("Human Rights and Ethics"). As the UN Human Rights Office, OHCHR has the mandate within the UN system to advance human rights, including in the context of digital technologies. OHCHR furthermore has the mandate to mainstream human rights across the work of the UN system.

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

To strengthen the integration of human rights, OHCHR would like to suggest the inclusion of:

• Specific references to international human rights law- including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention no the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and recognition of the international human rights law framework as a pathway that should be used to enable the responsible and inclusive development and deployment of digital technologies, addressing digital divides and identifying and addressing risks. The protection and promotion of rights should be the starting point, rather than an overemphasis on restrictions.

• Specific reference to the WSIS agreed working definition of internet governance

• Human Rights Due Diligence as a concrete way/methodology to reduce risks while enabling benefits of digital technologies. The UN General Assembly has called upon governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders to use human rights due diligence (HRDD) as a concrete way forward to reduce risks while enabling the benefits of digital technologies. Digital transformation must center human digital dignity – ensuring that individuals are not only protected online but also empowered, represented, and respected in all digital interactions. HRDD is a systematic approach to identify, prevent, and mitigate human rights risks in technology development and deployment.

• Specific references to the role and responsibilities of companies, including the responsibilities of businesses to conduct human rights due diligence and human rights impact assessment throughout the lifecycle of digital technologies, and references to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

• Technical standard-setting as a way to embed human rights considerations early in product development, as stated in Human Rights Council Resolution on New and Emerging digital technologies and human rights (HRC/59/11, paras 28 and 29)

• Addressing digital divides and exclusion and considering vulnerable populations from a human rights perspective, including focus on equality and non-discrimination and on the structural barriers that hinder meaningful connectivity and inclusion in the digital age

• Human rights and information society training: Capacity building efforts and technical cooperation should integrate human rights considerations as part of the overall technical capacity building.

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

OHCHR welcomes the reference to digital divides and structural inequities and that the WSIS+20 is an opportunity to close these gaps. It is essential that a human rights based approach is used to identify and close these gaps, OHCHR also welcomes the explicit recognition that a global, open and interoperable internet is essential to achieve the WSIS outcomes. OHCHR recommends strengthening this language and the human rights dimension by integrating agreed language from the Human Rights Council resolutions on the promotion and protection of human rights on the internet, which has stressed the importance of a "free, open, interoperable, reliable and secure Internet" (A/HRC/RES/57/29) and "...encourages all States to take the necessary and appropriate measures to promote free, open, interoperable, reliable and secure access to the Internet, and in a manner that complies with their international human rights obligations..."(A/HRC/RES/47/16). Similarly, General Assembly resolution on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of digital technologies stresses "...the importance for all Member States, and stakeholders as appropriate, to promote universal, free, open, interoperable, safe, reliable and secure use of and access to the Internet...." (A/RES/78/213)

OHCHR will in a separate submission offer language proposals for the below paragraphs that build on existing agreed language, but would like to highlight the following:

Para 43: OHCHR welcomes the recognition that ICTs can both enable the enjoyment of human rights and pose risks. OHCHR recommends adding that it is not merely the use of ICTs that can pose risks, but also the way in which they are regulated, and standards are built.

Para 48: OHCHR notes that the language should better mirror the right to freedom of expression under international human rights law and the conditions for its restriction. OHCHR proposes that the phrase be modified: "International human rights law guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Only as a matter of exception can the right to freedom of expression be restricted, if provided by law and necessary and proportionate to protect the rights or reputations of others, national security or public order, public health or morals."

Para 49: OHCHR is concerned that the language in this paragraph is overbroad and may be used to justify undue restrictions to human rights. OHCHR further notes that the paragraph appears to treat illegal content in the same manner as content that may raise concern but that is not illegal and should not be restricted under human rights law.

Para 50: OHCHR welcomes the idea in this paragraph reflecting the duty of States to promote an enabling information space, and independent and diverse media landscape. However, OHCHR is also concerned that the language in this paragraph is not sufficiently precise or aligned with international human rights law and may be used to justify measures that would unduly restrict the right to freedom of expression.

Para 59: OHCHR believes that the characterization of internet governance in para. 59 would benefit from reflecting more clearly the reality that the internet is shaped by a multitude of processes with the participation of actors from a large range of backgrounds. Framing internet governance as primarily multilateral ignores that many relevant technical and norm-setting processes are in fact driven by a variety of actors, including States, technical communities, businesses and civil society. Relevant protocols and standards, for example, are developed by engineers, State representatives, businesses, academics, civil society organizations, consumer rights organizations. OHCHR suggests to include language in the element paper that reflects this reality. It could, for example, take inspiration from the WSIS+10 outcome document which recognized "that the management of the Internet as a global facility includes multilateral, transparent, democratic and mu

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

The Geneva Declaration of Principles and the Tunis Agenda placed human rights front and centre as foundational to the Information Society. As technology has evolved and grown to impact more and more of our lives, it is more important than ever to step up efforts to centre human rights for achieving the vision set out in WSIS to ensure that the diffusion of technology benefits people, planet and human rights. With growing dependence of societies on the digital products, services and infrastructure of companies comes increased urgency for ensuring that these companies respect human rights, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (which had been just adopted at the time of the WSIS+10 review).

A growing concentration of power, key technology and expertise in the hands of few companies makes the need to act even more important. An explosion of data generated and exploited brings about immense opportunities for the realization of human rights but also comes with a huge range of new threats for the right to privacy, human dignity, new barriers to access essential services, and new forms of discrimination and exclusion. At the same time, one third of the world's population remains unconnected to the internet, facing enormous obstacles to enjoy the opportunities to participate in the benefits of the information society including access to information and economic opportunities to name but a few.

Reflecting these new opportunities and challenges, the international community has recognized the growing importance of human rights as a foundation for the governance of the digital realm. Resolutions of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and other bodies have reaffirmed this numerous times, and recently, the GDC confirmed the protection and promotion of human rights as one of its guiding objectives. The WSIS+20 outcome should build on these acts and anchor strong commitments to advancing human rights. Human rights should be fully integrated across action lines (similar to the many references to human rights across the GDC).

The need to enhance the role of human rights in the governance of digital technologies requires strengthening human rights institutions. The UN human rights system, including OHCHR, has developed an extensive relevant body of work (see A/HRC/56/45), shedding light on how human rights must be a part of the solutions for the many challenges ahead. This wealth of information, analysis, knowledge and guidance should guide the next phase of developing the WSIS framework. Recognizing UN human rights actors and their contributions in the WSIS+20 review outcome would be an important step to make this a reality. OHCHR stands ready to step into a formalized role to help integrate human rights into the WSIS action lines by supporting Member States and all stakeholders in achieving the transformative vision set out in WSIS.

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

No

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

Tim Engelhardt and Azin Tadjdini, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR

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

Please enter an email