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

Since its inception, WSIS has significantly contributed to global internet access by promoting public-private partnerships and encouraging private sector leadership in connectivity infrastructure. However, whilst a market-driven approach has successfully connected millions of users, recent over-reliance on commercial operators has resulted in persistent digital divides. Private companies lack incentives to invest in informal settlements and remote rural areas, leaving these communities digitally isolated despite growing connectivity needs. Alternative regulatory approaches have begun empowering civic actors, including community network cooperatives, local NGOs, and municipal initiatives—to bridge connectivity gaps. However, these community-driven solutions require substantial additional support beyond financial resources alone. Governments must fundamentally reframe internet access as a public good through regulatory reform, ensuring civic stakeholders can access essential infrastructure components: internet resources, universal service funds, radio spectrum allocation, and public satellite capacity. Only through such comprehensive support can these alternative providers deliver truly universal and meaningful connectivity to those the market has left behind.

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? *

Since its inception, WSIS has significantly contributed to global internet access by promoting public-private partnerships and encouraging private sector leadership in connectivity infrastructure. However, whilst a market-driven approach has successfully connected millions of users, recent over-reliance on commercial operators has resulted in persistent digital divides. Private companies lack incentives to invest in informal settlements and remote rural areas, leaving these communities digitally isolated despite growing connectivity needs. Alternative regulatory approaches have begun empowering civic actors, including community network cooperatives, local NGOs, and municipal initiatives—to bridge connectivity gaps. However, these community-driven solutions require substantial additional support beyond financial resources alone. Governments must fundamentally reframe internet access as a public good through regulatory reform, ensuring civic stakeholders can access essential infrastructure components: internet resources, universal service funds, radio spectrum allocation, and public satellite capacity. Only through such comprehensive support can these alternative providers deliver truly universal and meaningful connectivity to those the market has left behind.

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? *

Develop meaningful connectivity metrics – Move beyond internet penetration statistics to measure quality, affordability, and productive use of digital services. RIA's After Access methodology provides a model for demand-side assessment that examines how people use technology, disaggregated by gender, age, income and dwelling location.
Address affordability systematically: Implement comprehensive alternative affordability strategies, including device financing, progressive data pricing, and public access programmes that enable productive use rather than basic connectivity.
Public financing mechanisms and reporting for meaningful connectivity: Building on the Task Force on Financing Mechanisms in the Tunis Agenda, the WSIS can broaden the base of mandatory contributions and long-term incentives for investments in digital inclusion. WSIS can also prioritise improving the technical capacity of national managers and institutions administering connectivity and universal services funds.
Whilst respecting fiscal sovereignty, WSIS action lines should require transparency and accountability on public financing for meaningful connectivity. This includes reporting on connectivity and digital inclusion investments.

Equity in digital economy opportunity - There is a need for structural justice as digital economy opportunities are met with persisting equity challenges. Working together in the multistakeholder WSIS format, actors must evolve existing digital economy policy frameworks to provide a cross cutting framework for economic, innovation and data justice that is a new paradigm for governance, prioritising equity and representation in digital economy opportunity at the macro and micro levels, It includes specific mechanisms for youth led small enterprises, micro targeting the needs of local communities, promoting trust in digital economy.

Beyond mis and disinformation, provide adequate and relevant responses to a broad set of potential online harms through information integrity interventions: Big tech capability is evolving at an unprecedented rate. This includes the evolution of data analytical capability in AI technologies that presents a range of new online harms and systematic suppression of dissent. Responding to these online harms requires abiding principles for information integrity at the multilateral level, commitments to transparency for big and frontier tech, catalogue of policy and legal intervention and investments in societal adaptation (critical AI literacy including how AI works, AI coding, learning about prompting and learning about critical thinking). Country-specific information integrity policy and legal interventions should prioritise: providence and privacy of data, means of contestation and challenging information integrity and prohibitions on microtargeting of specific vulnerable groups.

Alignment between GDC and WSIS at a time for international data solidarity: Considering the call for alignment between GDC and WSIS, there is an opportunity to jointly use the platforms to enhance and align international cooperation and strengthen the role of CSTD as intergovernmental platform - especially on issues of governance of emerging technologies, AI, and data governance. In the conception of issues and adequacy of governance mechanisms, both the WSIS should assess the mechanisms to assess and respond to future governance challenges, including through investments in research that employs foresight methodologies to anticipate governance challenges for sustained resilience and safeguarding.
Prioritise digital skills development – Invest in contextually relevant digital literacy programmes that enable productive use, not just basic access. It includes entrepreneurial skills, content creation, and platform literacy.
Support local content ecosystems/ digitalising MSMEs – Promote local language content, culturally relevant services, and local innovation to ensure digital technologies serve diverse communities needs

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

Through the CSTD's work on Global Digital Compact data governance, WSIS can take several actions:
Provide for data justice and algorithmic accountability – As AI and automated decision-making systems proliferate, developing countries risk being subject to algorithmic systems designed elsewhere without meaningful participation in their governance. RIA uses a Just AI Framework of Inquiry to analyse the impacts of policies, strategies and AI innovation on society, pursuing just, equitable and fair AI outcomes for all.
Platform governance – The dominance of a few global platforms creates dependencies that may not serve local development needs. Alternative models of platform governance should be explored.
Digital economy participation – Moving beyond access to examine how developing countries and marginalised communities can participate meaningfully in the digital economy, not merely consume digital services.
Evidence-based policy making – Strengthen capacity for collecting and analysing demand-side data to inform policy decisions about digital development interventions.
Fair Data Cross-Border Data Flows Countries - WSIS should prioritise issues of better international cooperation on data flows and fix the current unfair system. At present, LEDCs have little data to develop AI systems, whilst MEDCs benefit most from global data flows. We need evidence-based policies that protect people's rights whilst ensuring fairer access to data.
Establish Data trusts and Stewardship - Communities whose data is collected should participate in how it's used. Least Developed Countries and small businesses in LEDCs should get improved access to data
Data as a Public Good - To treat information as a public resource, WSIS should foster norms that promote the proactive and open sharing of information, including data. Digital public services, beyond mere efficacy, must generate value for the communities they serve. This can be achieved by openly sharing data while upholding human rights safeguards and ensuring democratic governance, thereby empowering diverse stakeholders to derive meaningful value from it.
Encouraging organisations and government agencies to share information openly
Regulating data as a non-rivalrous public good
Advanced capacity building for stakeholders to make value out of data
Setting up public systems that help charities and community groups use data for good causes
This approach would shift data governance away from purely commercial interests towards fairer access, community control, and public benefit.

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

On digital IDs and Public ICT services, WSIS should encourage:

Enhanced cooperation on safety: The unequal technological landscape means that while some nations can quickly adapt to new security paradigms, others remain trapped in outdated and ineffective protection mechanisms. Threats of post-quantum computing in the Age of IoT and AI expose the global majority to human rights harms, attacks on critical infrastructure. There is an opportunity for WSIS to advance global standards development aimed at bridging the inequalities of cybersecurity capacity and resilience.
Inclusive Citizen Identification: Systematically remove identification barriers for marginalised communities through flexible digital ID systems that allow for diverse means of identification and eliminate discriminatory registration processes.
Democratic Data Governance: Establish transparent, rights-centred frameworks for digital infrastructure that prioritise human rights, human dignity, ethical and legitimate data access, and robust protection mechanisms for digital identities.
Civic Tech for Good: Advance public interest innovation towards achieving SDGs, especially civic tech with the potential to bridge digital divides. This involves developing solutions such as open data platforms that promote transparency, open journalism platforms that serve as information for public good, and non-governmental tech initiatives working to deliver essential public information on health.
Specifically:
Paragraph 27 -Device longevity and repair ecosystems are crucial for environmental sustainability. Many users rely on second-hand devices and local repair networks. Where possible, environmental strategies should support existing circular economy practices rather than assuming access to formal recycling systems. Furthermore, RIA's research on the Just AI energy transition in Africa highlights the importance of implementing decentralised models where data centres are situated in regions with better access to renewable energy across the continent. It also emphasises establishing clear frameworks that protect the environment while supporting effective AI adoption in the energy transition. Encourage policy development that carefully balances energy allocation between AI systems and other essential needs, especially in resource-constrained settings. Additionally, our work underscores that sustainability standards must recognise that Africa has significant deposits of the resources needed for AI adoption, the extraction of which imposes unequal environmental and social burdens on African communities.
Paragraph 35 and 38 - RIA's policy research shows that regulatory frameworks often address infrastructure without considering demand-side realities. The After Access methodology demonstrates that measuring digital divides requires moving beyond binary connectivity indicators to examine the quality of use. We recommend WSIS adopt multidimensional metrics that capture affordability barriers, device limitations, digital skills gaps, and the productive use of digital services.
Paragraph 42 - Financing gaps exist not just in infrastructure but in demand-side enablers. Funding is needed for device financing schemes, digital literacy programmes, digitalising MSMEs and for the collection of expansive data required to measure progress towards SDGs.
Paragraph 74 - RIA's research on data flows and digital economies demonstrates growing sensitivity that developing countries often generate data but lack capacity to derive value from it. We join the African Declaration in Benin to call for a more advanced capacity building that responds to the current era of data-driven technologies. The declaration recognises that while digital literacy has been enhanced on the continent since the first WSIS, the capacity to take advantage of data-driven technologies as well as to respond to advanced cybersecurity threats needs urgent attention to bridge the existing divide and prevent new ones.

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

Paragraph 59 of the elements paper, which addresses internet governance as a multilateral process involving stakeholders, is derived from a previous WSIS document. However, it lacks the original context provided by the definition of internet governance in earlier documents. This omission risks undermining the multistakeholder approach to internet governance, a foundational principle of WSIS.llenge

Strengthen the IGF to be able to respond to the current realities of tech governance. This includes strengthening the National and Regional Initiatives, renewing the IGF to have a permanent mandate and support more evidence-based work. The IGF and the WSIS frameworks at large should also complement other emerging processes such as the GDC. The forum can be strengthened by developing linkages and cross-feedback between the IGF and ODET processes.

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

Liz Orembo from Kenya on behalf of my organisation based in South Africa, Academia

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

Please enter an email