

Elements Paper Submission Deadline 25 July

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

Over the past two decades, WSIS has laid the foundation for inclusive, people-centred digital development. It has provided a structured governance model and mobilized multistakeholder engagement across the global digital landscape. Key achievements include:

- **Governance Framework:** The Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda, supported by the Action Lines, CSTD, UNGIS, and the WSIS Forum, have created a robust institutional architecture that enables coordinated engagement among stakeholders and UN bodies.
- **Multistakeholder Model:** WSIS has promoted an inclusive model of governance, placing people at the centre of digital transformation and emphasizing human rights, universal access, and the ethical use of technology.
- **Internet Governance Forum (IGF):** A flagship WSIS outcome, the IGF has become a global platform for inclusive dialogue on digital policy. This aspect should be reflected more in its name and more awareness on the role of the IGF should be shared. Strengthening its mandate, resourcing, and outputs—as well as better integrating its work with WSIS and the Global Digital Compact (GDC)—is essential. Its intersessional components (NRIs, Dynamic Coalitions, Policy Networks, Best Practice Forums) should be more prominently reflected.
- **Synergy with GDC:** WSIS structures—especially the IGF—offer a foundation for the implementation of the Global Digital Compact, reinforcing multistakeholder collaboration.

Looking forward, reinforcing synergies and collaboration between WSIS, IGF, and GDC will be vital and is the keyword to building a more coherent, inclusive, and development-oriented digital future.

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?

Despite notable achievements, WSIS must address several persistent gaps and emerging challenges that are relevant:

1. **Persistent Digital Divides:** Over 2.6 billion people remain offline. Gaps persist in infrastructure, affordability, digital literacy, and content relevance, especially affecting women, rural populations, and the Global South.
2. **Weak Integration with the SDGs:** Although Action Lines are mapped to SDGs, their contribution to sustainable development is not sufficiently leveraged. Stronger alignment—especially post-2030—is essential.
3. **Fragmented Digital Governance:** The coexistence of WSIS, GDC, and other initiatives risks duplication. A more coherent governance ecosystem is needed to ensure synergies, especially for developing countries with limited capacity.
4. **Lagging Adaptation to Emerging Technologies:** WSIS was not designed for AI, blockchain, quantum computing, or digital public infrastructure. New mechanisms—such as thematic working groups or integration of the current Action Lines—are needed.

5. **Gaps in Data Governance and Online Safety:** Issues such as data protection, disinformation, algorithmic transparency, and online harms (including gender-based violence) are not adequately addressed within current WSIS structures.
6. **Structural Challenges of the IGF:** The IGF needs institutional reinforcement, including:
 - Formal recognition as a permanent, well-resourced UN platform;
 - Greater visibility of its intersessional work;
 - A Secretariat strengthened by a stakeholder liaison function;
 - Possible introduction of a Governmental Track;
 - Better coordination with WSIS, SDGs and GDC through joint implementation roadmaps.
7. **Limited Inclusivity:** Youth, women, SMEs, Citizens, and underrepresented regions are often excluded from decision-making. Suggestions include:
 - Establishing a Youth and Citizens' Council;
 - Appointing gender focal points in UNGIS;
 - Supporting linguistic and cultural diversity, including Indigenous languages.
8. **Weak Monitoring and Accountability:** WSIS lacks clear mechanisms to track progress. The WSIS+20 framework should introduce:
 - Targets and indicators for each Action Line;
 - Annual reporting and independent evaluations;
 - Inclusive stakeholder feedback mechanisms.

NRIs could help collect implementation data and present it at IGF meetings.

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 advance WSIS's vision, key priorities should include:

1. Expanding affordable, meaningful connectivity, **capacity building** and **digital literacy**. The DC Internet Governance Schools could support capacity building and digital literacy activities.
2. Safeguarding rights and safety online, particularly in relation to misinformation and digital gender-based violence.
3. Updating the WSIS framework to address emerging technologies like AI and DPI.
4. Fostering stronger cooperation among WSIS, IGF, and the GDC.
5. Enhancing inclusive participation, particularly of youth, women, and marginalized groups.
6. Establishing robust accountability mechanisms, including clear indicators and feedback systems.

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

To enhance its relevance and forward-looking scope, the Elements Paper should include:

1. **Digital Sovereignty and Geopolitics:** Address tensions between national control and global interoperability.
2. **Platform Work and Labour Rights:** Protect digital platform workers through fair policies and algorithmic transparency.
3. **Digital and Climate Justice:** Leverage digital tools for climate adaptation and support climate-vulnerable communities.
4. **Emerging Tech Beyond AI:** Cover ethical concerns tied to quantum, biometric, and neuro-technologies.
5. **Digital Colonialism and Local Innovation:** Mitigate digital dependency and promote local innovation in the Global South.
6. **Youth in Digital Governance:** Enhance youth participation in policymaking and innovation.
7. **Health Data Governance:** Include data ethics in digital health infrastructure.
8. **Digital Resilience in Crisis:** Build digital infrastructure that withstands conflict, disaster, and cyber threats.

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

Following are additional thoughts related to the WSIS implementation.

Many countries have launched national initiatives to support ICT development in the Global South. For example, Italy's "Piano Mattei" demonstrates a model of targeted support that could be replicated. A centralized UN repository of such initiatives would improve coordination and visibility. Additionally, ICT providers could be encouraged to invest in underserved areas via framework agreements that offer legal and operational clarity.

Moreover, global voluntary databases of best practices across the 11 Action Lines could promote replication of successful models. These could include simplified partnership templates and shared tools to facilitate cooperation among states and stakeholders.

Regarding social and cultural development (points 21/24 of the Elements Paper), national and regional IGFs should provide mechanisms for stakeholders to register projects contributing to the WSIS Action Lines and GDC objectives. A GDC portal would be crucial for monitoring such progress, but must be interoperable with WSIS structures and national-level inputs. Standardized data collection templates and quality checks are recommended.

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

To strengthen the WSIS framework:

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Create mechanisms to track implementation of the Action Lines across national and regional levels.

- **IGF Integration:** The IGF should act as a bridge between multilateral and multistakeholder processes. More dynamic links between the IGF, WSIS, and GDC are essential.
- **Interoperability and Data Sharing:** A dedicated IGF session could collect national and regional data on WSIS and GDC progress. This would allow for bottom-up accountability and a "global snapshot" of digital governance.
- **Post-IGF Activation:** The IGF's closing session should launch calls to action based on outcomes, aimed at UN agencies (e.g., UNESCO, ITU, OHCHR), governments and other stakeholders.
- **Agenda-Setting Role:** The IGF should facilitate input into multilateral bodies, provide regular updates, and use its NRI network for global consultation. It must evolve into a platform capable of framing global digital governance agendas and fostering meaningful coordination.

Conclusion

The WSIS+20 process represents a pivotal moment to strengthen the digital cooperation ecosystem. By addressing structural gaps, embracing new themes, and empowering all stakeholders—including the IGF, NRIs, and local actors—WSIS can renew its relevance and ensure that digital transformation supports equitable, sustainable development worldwide.

The input is being submitted by Concettina Cassa, AgID (Agency for Digital Italy of Prime Minister Office) in her personal capacity.

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