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

1. Enhanced Access to Information and Digital Rights
WSIS has contributed to a global increase in Access to Information laws, digital content availability, and digital literacy. Notable milestones include the inclusion of SDG 16.10 in the 2030 Agenda (2015), the endorsement of the Windhoek+30 Declaration on information as a public good, and the UNESCO Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms, promoting transparency, freedom of expression, and content diversity while addressing disinformation and hate speech.
2. Linguistic Inclusion and Multilingualism Online
WSIS supported initiatives like the introduction of Internationalized Domain Names (ICANN), reducing language barriers and encouraged the development of multilingual content on search engines and social media, promoting broader participation in the digital space, especially for indigenous and minority languages, in alignment with the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-32).
3. Ethical Governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI)
The adoption of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021) stands as a major WSIS-aligned achievement. As the first global normative framework on AI ethics, it emphasizes human rights, inclusive governance, and ethical AI deployment. It has influenced national reforms and informed global processes such as the GDC and G20/G7 discussions.
4. WSIS supported the global recognition of Media and information Literacy (MIL) as a critical skill for navigating digital environments increasingly integrated into national policies and education systems. Initiatives include MIL Curriculum (piloted 30+ countries), Global UN MIL Week and UNESCO MIL Alliance (100+ countries)
5. Strengthening Public Digital Learning Platforms
In partnership with UNICEF, UNESCO has advanced the 'Gateways Initiative' joined by 20+ countries as of July 2025, facilitating cross-border learning and content sharing.
6. Promoting Open Access
Aligned with WSIS goals, UNESCO launched a global process to develop a Global Framework on Diamond Open Access to strengthen non-commercial scholarly communication through inclusive governance, public funding, and regional infrastructure. Based on equity, multilingualism, and knowledge as a public good, the initiative followed a global consultation involving nearly 2,900 stakeholders from 92 Member States.
7. Institutionalizing Open Educational Resources (OER)
Since the 2002 introduction of the OER concept, WSIS supported its evolution into a global movement, including the Paris OER Declaration (2012), Ljubljana OER Action Plan (2017), UNESCO Recommendation on OER (2019), and Dubai Declaration on OER (2024). These frameworks have guided national and regional policies, promoted open licensing and co-creation, and strengthened digital learning infrastructure.
8. WSIS emphasized inclusive Multistakeholder engagement, including youth and civil society. An approach used to develop the UNESCO Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms (10,000+ comments from relevant stakeholders in 134 countries). It also lies at the core of UNESCO's Internet Universality R.O.A.M framework (Rights-based, Open, Accessible Internet governed through multi-stakeholder cooperation).
9. The IU ROAM-X framework and its indicators became a widely adopted tool, implemented in over 40 countries, to assess national digital environments and inform rights-based, inclusive policy reforms.
10. Capacity building on AI and Digital Transformation
WSIS shall continue to promote ethical, human-centred digital transformation and reinforcing institutional readiness for the digital age, including through initiatives such as the UNESCO AI and Digital Transformation Competency Framework for Civil Servants, the SPARK-AI Alliance of schools of public administrations. UNESCO's Judges Initiative engaged over 36,000 judicial operators across 160 countries over the past 12 years on freedom of expression, access to information, AI and the rule of law.

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? *

1. A major challenge is the viability crisis of media, threatening diversity, pluralism, and freedom of expression. The financial sustainability of independent journalism is undermined by digital platform dominance, loss of advertising revenue, and AI-driven content distribution. This weakens access to public interest information and erodes trust in media, while online harassment—especially targeting women and marginalized voices—further restricts civic space.
2. Inequitable Access to Scientific Knowledge
Particularly in the Global South, many countries lack high-performance computing, open access repositories, and discovery platforms, limiting their ability to contribute to and benefit from global scholarship. Digital infrastructures often lack quality and credibility indicators, hindering trust in open scientific resources. The Diamond Open Access model faces funding gaps, limited institutional support, and lack of recognition in academic systems.
4. Underrepresentation of Science and Emerging Technologies
Basic science, quantum technologies, and metrology remain insufficiently integrated into digital policy agendas, limiting their contribution to digital transformation and innovation.
5. Many Indigenous and minority languages are excluded from language technologies such as speech recognition and translation tools. This digital marginalization contributes to language extinction and exacerbates digital inequality.
6. Fragmented Governance and Human Rights Oversight
Efforts around digital inclusion, multilingualism, and AI fairness are fragmented. There is a need for coherent global governance and institutionalized tools like Ethical Impact Assessments (EIA) to ensure human rights are upheld in digital environments. Weak implementation of frameworks—especially in the Global South—risks a digital ethics divide. Strengthening human rights oversight on digital issues by supporting the Universal Periodic Review process of the UN Human Rights Council is essential including raising capacities of all stakeholders.
7. The rise of digital platforms has fueled disinformation, hate speech, and gender-based violence, undermining democratic processes and human rights. Regulatory responses are often fragmented or overly restrictive, including internet shutdowns and misuse of hate speech laws, which shrink civic space and threaten freedom of expression.
8. The rapid evolution of digital technologies demands urgent investment in Media and Information Literacy.
9. Difficulties protecting Cultural Rights and Intellectual Property
While digital platforms democratize cultural expression, artists face challenges in protecting intellectual property due to piracy, inconsistent legal enforcement, and opaque compensation models. AI-generated content further raise unresolved legal and ethical issues.
10. Uneven Digital Learning and Educational Equity
Many countries lack robust public digital learning platforms with high-quality, inclusive, and multilingual content. Teachers often lack training in effectively using digital tools and OER. More coordinated efforts, including South-South cooperation, are needed to build resilient and equitable digital education systems.
11. Internet Universality ROAM-X assessments have underscored critical gaps in infrastructure, affordability, and digital inclusion. In parallel, concerns around privacy, data protection, and freedom of expression remain pressing, with emerging challenges like the ethical governance of AI and the environmental impact of the digital sector demanding stronger global cooperation and integrated, rights-based policy responses.
12. Strengthen Public Sector Capacity for Rights-Based Digital Governance
A key challenge is the limited capacity of governments, judiciaries, and parliamentarians to engage with AI and emerging technologies in ways that uphold human rights and people-centred governance. rapid technological change often outpaces policy and regulatory readiness, risking exclusion and misuse

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. Ensuring equitable participation in e-science
• Align with the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science to close gaps.
• Integrate open science into science, technology, and innovation (STI) systems to democratize access to enabling technologies and foster inclusive innovation.
• Support initiatives like UNESCO's Remote Access to Laboratory Equipment to empower researchers in underserved regions.
• Invest in STEM and frontier-tech literacy, especially for youth and educators, within frameworks like the International Decade of Sciences for SD and the Int. Year of Quantum Science and Tech (IYQ2025).
2. Advance inclusive access to scientific knowledge, through Regional and Multilingual Models
• Develop a Global Policy Framework on Diamond Open Access: Promote public, non-commercial scholarly communication.
• Focus on capacity-building in underrepresented regions to reduce systemic bias and promote inclusive global research collaboration.
3. Promote Linguistic Diversity and Local Content, by addressing the dominance of a few languages online by supporting digital tools and resources for Indigenous and minority languages.
• Ensure AI models are trained on diverse linguistic and cultural data to avoid reinforcing biases and to preserve oral traditions and cultural nuances.
• Develop technologies rooted in local languages and cultures through open resources and community collaboration.
4. Ensure Human Rights-Based Digital Governance
• Implement UNESCO's Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms: Adopt governance models that uphold freedom of expression and access to information, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and multistakeholder participation, including through independent regulatory systems.
• Address Online Harms: Develop and adopt policies aligned to international human rights standards, due diligence, that include gender-responsive and inclusive measures to protect vulnerable groups and promote fairness in digital platform governance.
• Use Ethical Impact Assessment tools to align AI systems with human rights and societal values.
• Strengthen evidence base and visibility of digital rights within the UPR: Promote accountability, policy coherence, ensuring digital transformation efforts are aligned with international human rights standards.
5. Adopt AI Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM) and support countries, especially in the Global South.
• Encourage open-source AI models and responsible AI use in science and development.
6. Address the financial crisis facing independent media through coordinated international support and principles such the "Media Viability Manifesto."
• Recognize MIL as a core digital competency, integrating it into education, public service, and community programs, with a focus on AI, data privacy, and ethical tech use.
7. Enhance Cultural Data Collection: Use mechanisms like UNESCO's Quadrennial Periodic Reporting to understand cultural participation and access.
• Empower Cultural Stakeholders: Build capacity among governments, institutions, and communities to shape digital technologies.
• Adapt Policies for Cultural Rights: Safeguard cultural diversity and intellectual property while mitigating algorithmic bias.
8. Expand Access to Digital Public Goods
• Implement open licensing and interoperable platforms to ensure inclusive access, especially for marginalized groups.
• Leverage Emerging Technologies: Use AI for multilingual translation and accessibility in education.
9. Strengthening Digital Capacity through Global Cooperation
• Align digital development with ROAM-X principles : UNESCO's IUI empower nations to assess and enhance their digital ecosystems, fostering inclusive global cooperation and sustainable digital capacity building
• Empower educators, support inclusive digital ecosystems: Using tools like UNESCO's ICT Comp Framework for Teachers and the Gateways project.
Develop and implement Digital and AI Competency Frameworks, targeted training and int.l coop platform

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

1. The WSIS+20 Review should emphasize the strategic role of ICTs in ensuring the continuity of scientific research during crises. This includes protecting scientific infrastructure and personnel, enabling open access to scientific data, and deploying digital tools that support emergency response, resilience, and recovery—especially in post-conflict and fragile contexts.
2. A dedicated paragraph should be added under the "Bridging digital divides" section, following para 30, to address gender disparities in digital access and use. Suggested:
"Gender equality should be mainstreamed in the post WSIS+20 implementation in order to bridge the gender digital divide and foster meaningful connectivity of women and girls in the digital and AI age. Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in today's digital landscape by fostering gender-responsive and transformative policies are paramount for digital inclusion and the 2030 SDGs."
3. While recognizing the role of independent and public service media in fostering an inclusive information society, the Elements Paper should also call for concrete measures to support media viability. It should address threats to journalist safety, including online and offline harassment, privacy violations, technology-facilitated violence (especially gender-based), and increasing censorship pressures.
4. Multilingualism and Local Content as Cross-Cutting Themes across all WSIS Action Lines. This includes embedding multilingualism and cultural relevance in infrastructure, capacity building, cybersecurity, and e-governance policies, ensuring inclusivity across the digital ecosystem.
5. Building on UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, WSIS+20 should reaffirm the importance of ethical frameworks in digital governance. Ethical principles—transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and sustainability—should guide digital education, cybersecurity, and ICT infrastructure development across all WSIS Action Lines.
6. MIL should be explicitly recognized as a foundational enabler across all WSIS Action Lines. Its role in promoting information integrity, combating online harms, supporting public interest journalism, and fostering trust in digital environments is essential for inclusive digital development.
7. Recognizing that information integrity is critical to protect democratic processes and society, the Elements Paper should recognize it as a cross-cutting element, highlighting the need for WSIS to reposition itself and play a greater role in facilitating and strengthening international cooperation to address misinformation, disinformation and hate speech online, and safeguard information as a public good, in line with international human rights laws and the Windhoek+30 Declaration.
8. Recognize the preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage as a strategic emerging issue. Under UNESCO's Memory of the World, efforts such as the archiving and preservation of software and the digitization of analogue heritage are vital. These initiatives support education, youth engagement, and intercultural dialogue. The responsible use of AI in managing and preserving heritage should be explored for its potential to bridge digital divides and advance the SDGs. Integration of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies, including preventive preservation and secure digital backups, is also crucial to protect heritage from natural and human-induced threats.
9. In Education, the WSIS framework should broaden its scope to include:
• responsible integration of AI and emerging technologies in education;
• recognition and promotion of OER as digital public goods to ensure equitable access to knowledge;
• sustainability of digital learning ecosystems through coherent policies, adequate funding, and capacity support.
The Dubai Declaration on OER (3rd UNESCO World OER Congress) offers actionable strategies aligned with 2030 Agenda to ensure inclusive access to knowledge

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

• The Elements Paper should place stronger emphasis on information integrity, which is an indispensable prerequisite for ensuring the safety of journalists, as well as the sustainability and diversity of independent and pluralistic media. This remains crucial for protecting and promoting freedom of expression and freedom of the press, particularly considering the challenges posed by new technologies.

• Para 60 under "Internet Governance" should not only recognize the role of IGF but all the intersessional activities and NRIs with suggested text as follows:

"The IGF, including NRIs (National and Regional IGFs) and intersessional activities including Dynamic Coalitions (now over 30) and Policy Networks, which provide channels for proactive deep dives into emerging digital issues and deliver concrete outcomes, should play a bigger role in digital cooperation worldwide including capacity building in Global South."

• Suggested Insertion after Paragraph 81: "Strengthening capacity development through the strategic use of OER and openly licensed content constitutes a key enabler for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable digital transformation."

• Paragraph 21 refers to disaster preparedness and paragraph 22 addresses crisis preparedness. It would be valuable to highlight the important role that ICTs can play in providing concrete solutions for Science in Crisis situations, including protecting scientists and research infrastructure, ensuring continued access to scientific data, and providing digital tools that enable scientific work to continue during crises. For para 22, "cultural engagement" should be replaced by "cultural diversity".

• Paragraph 59 should replace the multilateral Internet governance model for multistakeholder. It would also be valuable if it recognized the need to ground it in universal values and evidence-based policymaking: "The governance of the Internet should be multistakeholder, transparent, and democratic, with the full involvement of governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community, academia, and international organizations. It should be grounded in universal values and informed by evidence-based, inclusive policymaking."

• Paragraph 65: It would be valuable to add at the end: "This evolving data landscape highlights the urgent need for coherent, rights-based data governance models. The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development - co-chaired by UNESCO, UNDP, ITU, and the African Union Commission – has developed a new resource, the Data Governance Toolkit: Navigating Data in the Digital Age, which offers a practical, rights-based guide to help governments, institutions, and stakeholders make data work for all".

• Paragraph 66: suggestion to add: To help countries overcome institutional, legal, and technical barriers to effective data use, the Data Governance Toolkit: Navigating Data in the Digital Age offers actionable frameworks across the entire data lifecycle. It includes tools to strengthen institutional capacity and cross-sector coordination; adaptable guidance on legal frameworks, privacy, digital self-determination, and interoperability; and a modular format featuring self-assessment instruments, curated resources, and training support.

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, it is essential to enhance UN system-wide coordination by capitalizing on the complementary mandates of UN agencies, funds, and programmes. UNGIS provides a coordination platform including through UN regional commissions to foster coherence through a more integrated approach across WSIS Action Lines, the WSIS Forum, and the IGF. Mechanisms such as the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence (IAWG-AI), and the CSTD Working Group on Data Governance can be leveraged to promote joint programming, shared accountability frameworks, and cross-agency knowledge exchange.
- Encourage interlinkages with UNESCO's global science programmes: Including the Open Science Recommendation, STEM strategy, science clubs, and youth-focused innovation ecosystems.
- MIL should be more systematically embedded in the WSIS framework using UNESCO's Global Media Partnership to drive multi-stakeholder collaboration and implementation.
- Advocate for greater support for the use of ICT for Science in Crisis initiatives.
- Promote the value added of synergies between the WISIS frameworks and the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (2024-2033).
- Strengthen Participation of Linguistic and Minority Communities in the IGF and WSIS Forum: Support greater inclusion of Indigenous peoples, linguistic minorities, and grassroots groups in WSIS processes, aligning efforts with the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032).
- Mainstream ethical frameworks into WSIS follow-up mechanisms, including the WSIS Forum and IGF. This includes integrating AI ethics, algorithmic transparency, and human rights safeguards into digital cooperation dialogues, building on the normative tools developed by UNESCO.
- Under para 32, reference can be made to "online services and cultural expressions"
- Under para 37, reference can be made to "in aligning and reinforcing digital governance".
- Integrating OER into national education and training frameworks enhances institutional capacities, supports the localization and contextualization of learning materials, and fosters the co-creation of multilingual, accessible, and culturally relevant resources. Moreover, the promotion of user-generated content—exemplified by platforms such as Wikipedia, reinforce participatory approaches, knowledge equity, and international cooperation in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Developement.
- Grounding Internet governance in evidence-based frameworks based on universal values.

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

- UNESCO's science programmes show that building an inclusive, development-oriented information society requires investing in people's ability to both use and create scientific knowledge. Digital transformation must therefore be tightly coupled with science capacity-building, especially in underserved regions.

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

Davide Storti, UNESCO

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

Please enter an email