

# UN Regional Commissions Submission on WSIS+20 Review (Paper 1 of 2)<sup>1</sup>: Roles and Mandates

This document focuses on the foundational, ongoing and forward-looking roles of the UN Regional Commissions within the WSIS process, and reaffirms a reinforced role for them in the forthcoming phase of WSIS beyond 2025, particularly in relation to complementarity with the GDC.

## The Foundational, Ongoing and Forward-Looking Roles of the UN Regional Commissions

The five UN Regional Commissions have played a critical role during the inception of the WSIS process; and since then, they have been ensuring that the WSIS vision and WSIS outcomes are translated into actionable policies at the regional and national levels. This role has been consistently reaffirmed by the General Assembly and ECOSOC through key resolutions (refer to the last section on Mandates verbatim). As such, the following are the specific direct roles of the UNRECs in relation to WSIS process:

### Core Roles

**1. Policy Integration and Regional Agendas:** support the implementation of all WSIS Action Lines at the regional level in alignment with the SDGs (since 2015) and with the GDC objectives (since 2024). Embed WSIS Action Lines within regionally adopted Agendas and Strategies [such as the *Arab Digital Agenda 2023-2033 (ADA1.0)*, *Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC)*, *Africa's Digital Transformation Strategy*, and *the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway*].

**2. Intergovernmental Platforms and Multistakeholder Dialogues:** Convene intergovernmental and multistakeholder forums to foster consensus on regional priorities and policy coherence. [e.g. *Ministerial Conference on Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean*; *ESCWA's [Arab International Digital Cooperation and Development Forum \(DCDF\)](#)*, which combines the *ADA HL partners conference*, the *Arab WSIS* and the *Arab IGF*; *ECA's Africa Science Technology and Innovation Forum*; *Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information Communications Technology (STC-CICT)*]

**3. Knowledge Production, Capacity Building and Technical Assistance:** Develop periodic flagship publications, such as regional guidelines, policy toolkits, and provide technical assistance for digital transformation. [e.g. *ECLAC's School of Digital Transformation and the Digital Transformation Policy Laboratory -experimental space for policymakers to design digital policies-* *ESCWA's [National digital development reviews in 2021: Guiding template](#)*, *ESCWA's [Arab Digital Development Report 2022: Towards Empowerment and Inclusion for All](#)*].

**4. Data for Evidence Based Policies, Monitoring and Reporting:** Conduct periodic measurements of the status of the WSIS implementation progress in each region. Contribute to global ICT statistics and develop regionally adapted and harmonized digital indicators [e.g. *ECLAC's Observatory of Digital Development*, *Latin America AI Index (ILIA)*, *ESCWA's [Digital development measurement and monitoring model](#)*, *ECA's Africa Digital Index*], enriching the work of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. Contribute to the report of

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<sup>1</sup> For complementary observations on the WSIS+20 Elements Paper, please refer to the companion document: 'UNRECs Observations on the WSIS+20 Elements Paper.'

the UN Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of WSIS at the regional and international levels, including the 20-year review thereof, through CSTD.

**5. Proximity to Regional Political and Mandates Setting Bodies of Member States:** Collaborate with regional organizations to create mandates, foster collaboration and policy coherence [e.g. *the African Union (AU)*, *League of Arab States (LAS)*, *ESCAP's Committee on ICT and STI* and *ASEAN* to align digital strategies with WSIS and GDC priorities; ECLAC maintains a strategic relationship with the *Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)*, the *Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR)*, the *Pacific Alliance*, the *Caribbean Community (CARICOM)*, the *Andean Community (CAN)*, and the *Mesoamerica Integration and Development Project (PM)*, and collaborates with the European Union through the *EU-LAC Digital Alliance* to foster transregional digital cooperation; ESCAP supports a number of subregional cooperation arrangements, such as the *Pacific Islands Forum*, *SAARC*, *ECO..*]

**6. Mobilizing Partnerships and Financing:** Facilitate resource mobilization and build regional partnerships to address various digital divides [e.g. ESCWA's [Digital Development Collaboration and Partnership Framework](#)].

### Forward-Looking Operational Priorities

- Continue to operationalize WSIS Action Lines and GDC objectives through integrated regional strategies.
- Strengthen monitoring and accountability frameworks, including digital development measurement models.
- Support regional intergovernmental review processes feeding into WSIS+20 and GDC follow-up.
- Expand capacity-building, technical assistance and resource mobilization for comprehensive digital development and inclusive digital transformation.
- Encourage the sharing of best practices, mutual learning, and collaborative approaches, peer learning between member states within the same region and across different regional contexts, to address emerging digital challenges and opportunities.

### Recommendations for the final WSIS+20 Outcome Document

The UN Regional Commissions seize this opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to actively contribute to the WSIS+20 Review and the implementation of the next phase of the process at the global, regional, and national levels. Consistent with earlier UN General Assembly resolutions, it is essential that the forthcoming WSIS+20 outcome document of December 2025 considers explicitly emphasizing and strengthening the roles of the Regional Commissions beyond 2025, by:

- *Reaffirming the mandates of the five United Nations Regional Commissions to serve as regional mechanisms for WSIS follow-up and to support the operationalization of the Global Digital Compact objectives.*
- *Recognizing their continuous role in harmonizing policy frameworks, facilitating intergovernmental and multistakeholder dialogues, and integrating WSIS and GDC objectives into regional agendas.*
- *Encouraging them to build on their existing mechanisms to further monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the progress of national and regional digital strategies.*
- *Calling for adequate resources to enable the Regional Commissions to scale up technical assistance, capacity-building, and partnerships.*

## Mandate Basis (UNGA Resolutions): Verbatim References

### **A/RES/70/125 (2015) – WSIS+10 Review:**

- **Paragraph 67:** “Encourages the regional commissions to continue to play a facilitative role in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional level, fostering policy dialogue and regional cooperation, and assisting Member States in integrating WSIS outcomes into national development strategies.”
- **Paragraph 68:** “Calls upon the regional commissions, in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities and stakeholders, to strengthen their platforms for regional follow-up to WSIS outcomes and to provide inputs to global review mechanisms, including the WSIS Forum.”

### **A/RES/76/189 (2021):**

- **Paragraph 20:** “Encourages the regional commissions to promote the integration of information and communications technology policies into national development strategies and to assist in building capacities to bridge the digital divide.”

### **A/RES/77/150 (2022):**

- **Paragraph 21:** “Recognizes the role of the United Nations regional commissions in facilitating regional cooperation and policy dialogue on digital technologies for sustainable development.”

### **A/RES/78/132 (2023):**

- **Paragraph 22:** “Requests the regional commissions to continue their efforts in fostering regional partnerships and supporting Member States in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

### **A/RES/79/194 (2024):**

- **Paragraphs 11, 31:** Acknowledges the progress achieved by United Nations system entities in implementing the action lines of the World Summit on the Information Society, encourages alignment of these action lines with the objectives of the GDC for effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and recognizes the important role played by regional commissions facilitators.