

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

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), through its foundational documents, the Geneva Declaration of Principles (2003) and the Tunis Agenda (2005), established the foundation for a development-oriented and multistakeholder model of the Information Society. Twenty years later, the vision and model of the WSIS remain relevant.

The technology-neutral approach of WSIS has been key to its achievements. Rather than focusing on specific technologies or applications, it has focused on the building blocks of the Information Society, such as an enabling environment, the role of public governance authorities, and infrastructure, making it adaptable to various national realities and applications.

Connectivity has risen dramatically since the adoption of the WSIS, and several programmes and initiatives have played an important role in bringing online, inter alia, rural areas, schools, and Least Developed Countries. In acknowledging this achievement, the Zero Draft could recognise the need to focus future efforts of WSIS on closing the gaps that keep over 2.5 billion people still offline. These include, for instance, closing the disparities in affordability of Internet connections, demand-side initiatives, including to advance basic digital skills, and ensuring that connectivity infrastructure can cope with increased demand.

A core achievement of the WSIS has been consolidating and strengthening multistakeholder governance of the Internet. Most notably, it established the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) that, for the last two decades, has served as the primary multi-stakeholder platform for the discussion of Internet governance issues.

Such a role of the IGF, reiterated in the Global Digital Compact (para 28), should also be acknowledged in the Zero Draft. Moreover, the ecosystem of national and regional IGFs (NRIs) has created meaningful spaces for engagement and information exchange, and their role could be recognised.

The Zero Draft should uphold the multistakeholder model for Internet governance, maintain the development-oriented vision of WSIS, build on successful applications in areas such as connectivity, and preserve its technology-neutral vision to safeguard its relevance.

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. Closing remaining gaps in implementing the WSIS agenda

The Information Society has changed dramatically over the past two decades. Its impact on our society and economy has never been greater and may not be this small ever again.

In 2005, five times fewer people were connected to the Internet. Smartphones did not exist, nor did social media. Only a few technology companies, mostly focused on hardware, were among the 'Fortune 500', and none of them were in the top ten. Internet spam, as recognized in the Tunis Agenda, was a growing problem that merited leaders' attention.

Despite significant commitment and great progress in closing the connectivity gap, the digital divide has widened in several ways, including in data, innovation, and capacity.

As new opportunities expanded through technology, so did the risks. Online spaces amplified existing risks and created new ones: from financially motivated cybercrime to cyber-dependent crimes, to online harassment, discrimination, misinformation, disinformation, and child sexual exploitation\* and\* abuse.

Two additional challenges deserve special attention.

2. Focusing on delivering

The first challenge relates to how WSIS can be more visibly impactful. Amidst rapid technological change, it has proven increasingly challenging to establish a causal link between the WSIS commitments and real-world impact. A more robust monitoring and reporting effort within the WSIS architecture could improve our knowledge of how the WSIS agenda delivers.

A more incisive WSIS would keep prioritizing core areas of its mandate such as:

- Fostering and expanding connectivity;
- Preserving and strengthening the multistakeholder model of Internet governance;
- Building confidence in the use of ICT;
- Promoting access to relevant local and multilingual content;
- Strengthening capacity-building initiatives to ensure digital skills for all.

As suggested above, and further explained in the following paragraphs, the Zero Draft can also

- Address new challenges to online safety and to Internet governance;

- Strengthen the human rights dimension in alignment with the Global Digital Compact;
- Better spelling out the role of ICT in advancing inclusive sustainable development. On this latter issue, the upcoming 'Report of the Secretary-General on the Impact of Rapid Technological Change on the Sustainable Development Goals and targets' can be illustrative.

3. Addressing new challenges to Internet Governance

New pressures on Internet Governance have emerged that challenge the Internet and its governance. The Zero Draft should acknowledge the continued importance of the Internet Governance Forum as the primary multi-stakeholder platform for the discussion of Internet governance issues.

It should also focus IGF efforts on addressing these challenges, including, but not limited to, pressure on Internet infrastructure due to higher demand from AI tools, the emergence of new forms of online harm, and improving access to online material to strengthen capacity-building.

Ensuring synergies and non-duplication with existing efforts

Finally, WSIS+20 could complement and rely on the Global Digital Compact, adopted by world leaders in September 2024, to move the needle in areas including the digital economy, data governance, and artificial intelligence.

The implementation of the Compact has already begun, and a wide range of initiatives and processes spanning areas including AI standards, industrial development, information integrity, data governance, and AI governance are already ongoing.

The Zero Draft should reference the Compact and align reporting mechanisms for both agendas, where possible. By doing so, it will ensure resources are used effectively and in a non-duplicative manner.

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? \*

WSIS+20 is an opportunity to reboot the vision of Geneva and Tunis, rallying support and new momentum to their achievement.

The persistent digital divides identified in the WSIS+10 Review Outcome document review (General Assembly resolution 70/125) still prevent people and countries, mostly in developing and least developed countries, from achieving their full potential, as mentioned above.

These include affordable digital connectivity, access to content in local languages, a predictable and non-discriminatory regulatory and policy environment, and multistakeholder governance of the Internet that safeguards human rights.

By prioritizing those areas and emphasizing the need for public-private investment to fill the digital infrastructure and skills gap, we can come one step closer to meeting the goals of the WSIS vision.

The WSIS review offers Member States and all stakeholders an opportunity to accelerate delivery towards its goals and, in turn, contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

In practical terms, the structure of the WSIS+10 outcome document remains relevant for the WSIS+20 outcome document.

The areas mentioned above as challenges are also the priorities that should serve as a compass for the WSIS+20.

The development-oriented paradigm of the WSIS, the urgency of ensuring human rights and respected online, and the need to ensure adequate financial support to these goals are guiding principles that should be mainstreamed throughout.

[Considerations related to 'emerging trends' and the scope of the Zero Draft are in the following section (4)]

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

The Zero Draft should consolidate the items for discussion in the Elements Paper by focusing on the areas where the WSIS framework could be more impactful.

In practice, this would translate into a shorter list of areas, but with stronger, action-oriented language. This would ensure the 20-year review contributes to closing persistent gaps identified in Tunis and in the +10 review.

We recommend building on the language of the WSIS+10 Review Outcome Document and structure. Language can be sharpened in the following areas, as mentioned above:

I. Internet governance – by referencing current challenges to the Internet and its governance, how the IGF could help address these, and the multistakeholder model;

II. A stronger reference to 'Information and communications technologies for development';

III. Addressing social and cultural development by emphasising, for instance, the need to promote access to local and multilingual content, and supporting training and learning opportunities at all levels, especially for children, women, and girls;

IV. Strengthening the human rights and ethical dimensions, especially in connection with new forms of online harm.

The current WSIS Action Lines are technology-neutral, and it is recommended that they are not reopened or modified to address any specific new or existing technology.

The Global Digital Compact already complements the existing WSIS agenda by committing governments, the UN system, and all stakeholders to deliver on several actions in areas including

- Digital economy
- Data governance
- Artificial intelligence.

Several of these commitments are already being implemented both through intergovernmental processes within the UN (para 48, 56), collaborations among different stakeholders, and Member States-led actions.

Rather than reopening consensus language agreed to by the General Assembly and currently being implemented, the Zero Draft should reference the objectives and goals of the Global Digital Compact.

In doing so, it would ensure that WSIS remains technology-neutral and adaptable beyond the High-Level Review of the Global Digital Compact at the 82nd session of the General Assembly, while the level of ambition and ongoing actions of the Compact in areas such as data, AI, and digital public infrastructure and the digital economy would be safeguarded.

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

The Zero Draft should avoid duplicating the commitments and actions agreed by Member States in the Global Digital Compact.

By doing so, further emphasis could be placed on implementing the WSIS agenda that is still unfinished in many parts of the world, especially in developing and least developed countries.

The Global Digital Compact, which will be reviewed during the 82nd session of the General Assembly, expands digital cooperation into urgent areas for action, such as AI governance and capacity-building, data governance, digital public infrastructure, and addressing information integrity.

The human rights paragraphs strengthen existing WSIS language and could be deepened by making sure the rights of vulnerable groups are acknowledged, and appropriate oversight and remedies are in place to protect human rights online.

Considerations on data governance and artificial intelligence can be subsumed into an introductory section that summarizes the technological advancements of the last decade. The WSIS+10 outcome document may provide an instructive model.

Recognizing and referencing the Global Digital Compact while avoiding renegotiating its achievements and commitments before the High-Level Review would avoid duplications and situate the WSIS+20 review in the broader digital cooperation ecosystem.

The Global Digital Compact aligns with WSIS both in its vision (para 5), implementation mechanisms (68, 70), and reporting (71, 74). By doing so, it leverages existing mechanisms and establishes a clear continuity between different pillars of the digital cooperation agenda.

The WSIS+20 review outcome document should reference the GDC both in its preambular paragraphs and in its follow-ups, for instance, by ensuring that the High-Level Review of the Compact (para 74) can serve advancing the goals of the WSIS.

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

The initiatives, coordination mechanisms, and fora that originated from the WSIS foundational documents have played a good role in supporting the delivery of their goals.

Moving forward, it will be important to make sure they are fit for purpose, do not duplicate existing efforts, and ensure complementarities with other relevant initiatives.

- WSIS Action Lines -

The WSIS Action Lines remain relevant. Their technological neutrality, as described above, must be preserved. There is room for sharpening the reporting mechanism, for instance by introducing quantitative indicators and ensuring better connection to the local level.

- United Nations Group on the Information Society -

At para 103 of the Tunis Agenda, Member States invited the UN Secretary-General, in consultation with UN system Chief Executives Board for coordination (CEB), to establish, within the CEB, a group to facilitate the implementation of WSIS outcomes.

As a coordination mechanism, UNGIS could be updated by making sure both its membership and governance reflect the institutional landscape and its working methods focus on an impactful delivery of WSIS. UNGIS could, for instance, provide more regular follow-up and dynamic reporting to the Action Lines.

The Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies, established in 2024 by resolution A/RES/79/258 and whose operational functions include ensuring system-wide coordination and follow-up to the Compact, can play an important role in ensuring there are no gaps in the digital cooperation agenda.

The Working Group on Digital Technologies, co-chaired by ITU and the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies, ensures coordination among over 40 UN entities in supporting Member States' delivery of the Compact and Chapter 3 of the Pact for the Future and implementation of actions mandated to the United Nations system.

An updated UNGIS could seamlessly integrate its activities with the Working Group on Digital Technologies. The Working Group will finalize its tasks before the GDC High-Level review.

- Internet Governance Forum -

The role of the Internet Governance Forum as the primary multistakeholder platform for discussion on Internet governance issues should be safeguarded.

Its mandate should be extended and its functioning underpinned by adequate resources.

Its profile could be further raised by featuring more prominently in its programme discussions about the most pressing topics and emerging trends in Internet governance (as mentioned above, these include increased pressure on infrastructure, changes to the business model of web search due to artificial intelligence, online harms, access to diverse content, training, etc.).

These should include both high-level segments and working-level discussions animated by the findings of NRIs and other stakeholders.

Finally, IGF could contribute to connecting the WSIS and GDC agendas in areas such as human rights, online safety, and digital skills. The national and regional IGFs can play an important role alongside Resident Coordinators and UN offices locally to ensure a more effective implementation on the ground, starting by translating the GDC into local realities.

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

n/a

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

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

Please enter an email