

EU Non-Paper on Strengthening WSIS to Address Digital Divides: Aligning Action Lines with SDGs and GDC Commitments

Rationale

The WSIS process remains instrumental in bridging global digital divides and advancing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The WSIS+10 review already addressed the relationship between WSIS Action Lines and the SDGs, reinforcing the multistakeholder approach. The ongoing WSIS+20 review, supported by recent decisions by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), presents a critical opportunity to systematically combine Global Digital Compact (GDC) commitments and SDGs with the WSIS action lines.

The creation of development-oriented joint implementation roadmaps would effectively streamline resources and enhance UN system efficiency, maximizing the benefits of digital technologies for sustainable development. Existing initiatives such as the WSIS-SDG-GDC Matrix (<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/ungis/Content/upload/gdc/UNGIS-CompiledMatrixOfLinkages-WSIS-GDC.pdf>) provide valuable reference frameworks facilitating this integrated approach.

Objective

Building on the work already done, develop targeted, results-oriented implementation roadmaps aligning WSIS Action Lines with SDG targets and GDC commitments, emphasizing inclusive development, addressing emerging digital divides, and enhancing coherence without duplication.

Proposed Operational Steps

The WSIS+20 review outcome should mandate WSIS Action Line Facilitators, coordinated by the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), with support from relevant UN bodies (including ODET), to:

1. Undertake thematic reviews aligning each WSIS Action Line explicitly with relevant SDG targets and GDC commitments, identifying gaps, overlaps, and synergies.
2. Propose SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) actions, firmly rooted in SDGs and reflecting updated GDC principles.
3. Develop comprehensive implementation roadmaps through:
 - a. Extensive multistakeholder consultations (governments, private sector, civil society, academia, technical community).

- b. Leveraging expertise from the IGF community, Dynamic Coalitions, and national/regional IGF initiatives.
 - c. Utilizing regional and national digital development strategies.
4. Ensure roadmap validation through transparent, inclusive discussions within IGF and related regional/national initiatives.
5. Include cross-cutting enablers such as digital capacity-building, digital public goods, gender equality, linguistic diversity, and climate resilience.

Timeline

The indicative timeline to ensure timely and effective roadmap implementation is as follows:

- December 2025: Adoption of the WSIS+20 resolution.
- 29th Session of the CSTD (2026): WSIS Action Line Facilitators present the outline for roadmap development.
- WSIS Forum 2026: Multistakeholder discussion to identify gaps, overlaps, and synergies.
- IGF 2026: Presentation of the final implementation roadmaps and multistakeholder validation by the IGF community and IGF MAG.
- 30th Session of the CSTD (2027): Submission of the implementation roadmaps and progress report to the CSTD annual review.
- GDC High-Level Review (September 2027): Submission of the roadmaps and their implementation status to the GDC review; high-level event to present outcomes.
- IGF 2027: First multistakeholder review of roadmap implementation and further validation by the IGF community and IGF MAG.

Expected Outcomes

- **Institutional Strengthening and Sustainability:** Improved coherence and reduced duplication among UN entities, leading to optimized resource utilization and sustainability.
- **Enhanced Cooperation and Representation:** Strengthened coordination and participation from all stakeholders, particularly from developing regions, youth, and marginalized groups, ensuring inclusive and equitable implementation.
- **Policy Impact and Alignment with WSIS:** Streamlined and coordinated implementation of interconnected commitments, maximizing effectiveness and measurable impacts towards sustainable digital development.
- **Forward-Looking Governance:** Proactive leveraging of emerging technologies to bridge digital divides, enhancing digital inclusion through specialized literacy, infrastructure development, and international cooperation.

- **Concrete Development Outcomes:** Demonstrable advancements in digital public goods deployment, skills development, infrastructure resilience, directly contributing to inclusive and sustainable development.

Draft language proposal for WSIS+20 outcome document:

To reflect these positions within the WSIS+20 outcome document, the EU suggests the following language:

We request WSIS Action Line facilitators, coordinated by UNGIS, to develop targeted implementation roadmaps linking WSIS Action Lines to relevant SDG targets and GDC commitments. These roadmaps should ensure coherent, inclusive, and sustainable digital development, addressing both persistent and emerging digital divides and avoiding duplication of efforts. Roadmap implementation should be systematically monitored, regularly reviewed at the WSIS Forum, IGF, and CSTD sessions, and reflected in periodic progress reports.