

Session Outcome Document

Digital Transformation for all: An Information Society that respects and protects human rights
Human Rights Due Diligence as a tool to advance responsible technology use and governance

African Union, European Union and UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

10 July 2025, 14h00-14h45

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/263>

Key Issues discussed: Looking Beyond 2025

- The international community is increasingly grappling with digital technologies and their impacts on people and planet. The Geneva Declaration of Principles declared the common desire and commitment to building a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, grounded in respecting and fully upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The WSIS+10 review recognized the role of human rights in the information society.
- Human rights present a pathway that can be used to enable the responsible and inclusive development and deployment of digital technologies whilst also identifying and addressing risks.
- The UN General Assembly called upon governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders to use human rights due diligence (HRDD) as a concrete way forward to reduce risks while enabling the benefits of digital technologies. The Global Digital Compact (GDC) has a strong commitment to integrate human rights into global digital transformation and has integrated human rights due diligence as a critical approach to preventing and addressing any adverse impact on human rights.
- In May 2024, the United Nations Executive Committee adopted Guidance for [Human Rights Due Diligence for Digital Technology Use](#) for the UN System. Focusing on the private sector, the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) (UNGPs) are driving the integration of human rights due diligence across the tech life cycle, advancing the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS.
- The discussion aimed to explore how human rights due diligence can be better integrated into technology development and digital governance frameworks, specifically within the context of the WSIS+20 review process. The goal was to demonstrate that human rights considerations enhance rather than hinder technological innovation and business success, while providing practical guidance for implementation.

Tangible Outcomes of the session

- **Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) as a Framework for Technology:** Digital transformation must center human digital dignity – ensuring that individuals are not only protected online but also empowered, represented, and respected in all digital interactions. The discussion



emphasized HRDD as a systematic approach to identify, prevent, and mitigate human rights risks in technology development and deployment, with speakers describing it as a “compass” rather than an obstacle to innovation, providing a framework to surface hidden harms and make invisible impacts visible in technology development.

- **Business Case for Human Rights in Technology:** Panellists argued that respecting human rights not only complies with corporate responsibility but is also economically beneficial, with trust being fundamental to the data economy – companies that respect user rights build greater trust and achieve more sustainable business models.
- **Implementation Strategies and Best Practices:** The conversation covered practical approaches including embedding human rights considerations early in product development, requiring management support for human rights policies, conducting continuous training, and using external audits through multi-stakeholder initiatives.
- **Integration of Human Rights into WSIS+20 Review:** Participants discussed how to strengthen human rights language in the WSIS+20 review process, emphasizing that human rights should be “by default” rather than an add-on, and calling for explicit inclusion of action-oriented language on Human Rights and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- **Addressing Digital Divides and Vulnerable Populations:** The discussion highlighted the need to focus on those left behind, particularly the 2.6 billion people still unconnected globally, with special attention to children and youth, elders, persons with disabilities, women, Indigenous communities, and other vulnerable groups in the context of AI and emerging technologies.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Action Plan for the WSIS+20 Review and Beyond

- The original WSIS vision of people-centered, inclusive, development-oriented information society inherently embodies human rights principles and should guide the review process, translating human rights principles into actions.
- The WSIS+20 co-facilitators committed to strengthening human rights language in the zero draft of the WSIS+20 outcome document, building on progressive language from recent UN documents like the Global Digital Compact.
- Participants called to actively engage with written inputs for the zero draft preparation process.
- Participants called for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to have a more prominent role in future discussions of the WSIS+20, and for the improvement and strengthening of the WSIS architecture for upholding human rights on the Internet and in digital governance.
- Participants called for i) the development of a Digital Dignity Index, a rights-based global framework to measure the impact of digital policies and technologies on personal agency, data sovereignty, inclusion, and well-being – especially for marginalized and digitally disconnected communities; and ii) the drafting of an AI Rights and Inclusion Charter, affirming digital personhood, algorithmic accountability, and equitable access to AI benefits.
- Discussions highlighted the need for more case studies and documented examples of businesses making human rights-based decisions to strengthen the argument that human rights is good for business.

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**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR ALL:
AN INFORMATION SOCIETY THAT RESPECTS
AND PROTECTS HUMAN RIGHTS**

*Human Rights Due Diligence as a tool to advance
responsible technology use and governance*

**ROOM E, PALEXP0 10 JULY 2025
14.00-14.45 (UTC + 2)**



Panel

- Mr. Thibaut Kleiner, Director, European Commission
- H.E. Ms. Lavina Ramkissoon, Ambassador, African Union
- Ms. Fiona Cura-Pietre, Head of Human Rights, Nokia
- Mr. 'Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director of Paradigm Initiative, IGF Leadership Panel
- H.E. Ms. Suela Janina, Permanent Representative of Albania to the UN in New York
- H.E. Mr. Ekitela Lokaale, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the UN in New York
- Moderator: Ms. Peggy Hicks, Director, OHCHR



WORLD SUMMIT ON THE
INFORMATION SOCIETY
WSIS+20
HIGH-LEVEL EVENT 2025
7 — 11 July 2025
Geneva, Switzerland



Specific Additions from above session

Human Rights and Ethical Dimensions (Zero Draft §§77–93)

- **§77 (current opening on human rights centrality)** → *Amend*: Add reference to **digital dignity**.

“We reaffirm that human rights are central ... Digital transformation must centre **human digital dignity**, ensuring that individuals are protected, represented, and respected in all digital interactions.”

- **New §77 bis (after §77)** → *Insert HRDD by default*:

“We affirm Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) as a default principle in digital transformation, ensuring systematic identification, prevention, and mitigation of human rights risks across the technology lifecycle. HRDD is a compass for innovation and trust, surfacing hidden harms rather than obstructing progress.”

- **New §81 bis (after §81, which discusses safeguards)** → *Insert Digital Dignity Index*:

“We call for the development of a **Digital Dignity Index**, a global rights-based measurement framework assessing the impact of digital policies and technologies on well-being, inclusion, agency, and data sovereignty, especially for marginalized and disconnected communities.”

- **§84 (current mention of OHCHR)** → *Amend*: Strengthen OHCHR role.

“...We strengthen the role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as a permanent and central actor in digital governance processes, ensuring that human rights are integrated **by default** into WSIS+20 architecture and follow-up mechanisms.”

- **New §85 bis (after §85, which affirms freedom of expression)** → *Add Business & Human Rights narrative*:

“We recognize that respecting human (includes children, youth, etc) and AI rights separately are also business imperative. Trust is the foundation of the digital economy, and companies that embed human rights across their operations achieve greater resilience and sustainability.”

- **§92–93 (on gender & children’s rights)** → *Amend & expand*: Add explicit groups (elders, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, unconnected).

“...We reaffirm that full, equal, and meaningful participation must extend to women, children, elders, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and the 2.6 billion still unconnected worldwide.”

Children’s Digital Rights (expanded)

- **§93 (current text: children & youth rights in digital space)** → *Amend + expand*:

“...We commit to strengthen legal and policy frameworks to protect and advance the **digital rights of children and young people**, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes ensuring their rights to participation, protection, education, play, and privacy in the digital environment, with safeguards against exploitation and harmful content.”

- **New §93 bis** → *Insert forward-looking commitment*:

“We call for the establishment of a **Children’s Digital Rights Framework**, co-created with youth, to guide States, businesses, and civil society in upholding the best interests of the child online. This framework should embed principles of safe-by-design technology, child data protection, and equitable access to digital opportunities.”

AI Rights – Mature Governance Layer

- **§97 bis (new, already proposed AI Rights & Inclusion Charter)** → *keep as rights-focused baseline*.
- **New §98 bis** → *Insert higher-level AI Rights framing*:

“We recognize the need for a **Mature AI Rights Framework** that sets global baselines on algorithmic accountability, transparency of automated decision-making, human oversight of critical AI applications, and the right to explanation and redress. This framework should ensure that AI systems remain subject to democratic oversight and cannot override fundamental human rights.”

(This goes beyond the Charter — it’s about enforceable norms & governance, not only principles.)

Truth & Information Integrity on the Internet

- **§91 (currently about manipulation/misinformation)** → *Amend & expand*:

“...We will work together to promote information integrity and strengthen the right to access reliable knowledge. This includes commitments to **truth in the digital space**, ensuring that people can trust the information they rely on for democratic participation, health, education, and livelihoods. We will encourage transparent standards for algorithmic amplification, fact-checking collaboration, and accountability for disinformation campaigns.”

- **New §91 bis** → *Insert future safeguard:*

“We call for a global dialogue on the **Principle of Digital Truth**, exploring mechanisms to uphold accuracy, authenticity, and accountability in online information flows, while fully respecting freedom of expression. This includes examining emerging technologies that can authenticate sources, watermark synthetic content, and empower citizens with tools to critically evaluate digital information.”

Artificial Intelligence (Zero Draft §§97–102)

- **§97 (acknowledges AI)** → *Amend:*

Add: “...AI governance must be rooted in **human dignity, algorithmic accountability, and equitable benefit-sharing**, consistent with international human rights law.”

- **New §97 bis (after §97)** → *Insert AI Rights & Inclusion Charter:*

“We propose the drafting of an **AI Rights and Inclusion Charter** affirming digital personhood, protections against algorithmic bias, transparent and accountable AI systems, and equitable access to AI benefits, particularly for marginalized groups.”

- **§100–101 (on AI research + fellowships)** → *Keep but strengthen:* Explicitly link to Global South empowerment.

“...with a particular focus on ensuring meaningful participation from the Global South in global AI governance.”

- **§102 (on independent AI panel & dialogue)** → *Amend:*

Add: “...This panel will coordinate closely with the proposed AI Rights and Inclusion Charter process to ensure science-based, rights-based guidance.”

Monitoring & Measurement (Zero Draft §§132–138)

- **§135 (on ICT metrics)** → *Amend:*

“...We commit to strengthen internationally agreed targets, indicators, and metrics, including **human rights-based metrics such as the proposed Digital Dignity Index**, alongside connectivity and affordability indicators.”

- **New §135 bis (after §135)** → *Insert explicit alignment:*

“We request the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development to explore methodologies for integrating the Digital Dignity Index into its work, ensuring that digital transformation is measured not only by access, but also by dignity, inclusion, and rights-based outcomes.”

How This Reflows Thought Process

- **§93 → §93 bis** = Elevates *children’s digital rights* from protective to proactive (a framework).



- **§97 bis → §98 bis** = Establishes a layered AI rights narrative: *Inclusion Charter (equity) + Mature Governance Framework (oversight & redress)*.
- **§91 → §91 bis** = Strengthens *information integrity* from general misinformation concerns into a **principle of digital truth**, balancing rights with safeguards.

Ambassador Lavina Ramkissoo

Co-Chair African Union ASRIC / ASTRC

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