WSIS+20 Zero Draft Review: Global South inputs

Submitted by Global South Organisation

We are organisations/ actors in Africa and the Middle East –Global South, we embrace the principles in the WSIS+20 Zero draft as well as commend the efforts of the co-facilitators for ensuring Multi-stakeholders participation in the decision-making processes.

We, Global South actors and organizations, hereby make this submission to present a series of proposed textual amendments and additions to the WSIS+20 Zero Draft, grounded in the principles and priorities of the Global South. The recommendations are informed by research and policy analysis from a collective of experts in legal, technical, and developmental fields, they aim to address digital cooperation challenges from a rights-based, development-centered, and sovereign perspective.

The following proposed texts address persistent digital divides, data asymmetries, the need for equitable AI access, and inclusive governance mechanisms, ensuring the WSIS+20 outcome is people-centric and rights-respecting.

As a Global South collective, we submit the following text proposal to shape the development of the WSIS+20 Zero draft review. Our text proposals are based on the following eight themes alongside recommendations for the process:

Theme	Text Proposal for WSIS+20 Zero Draft	Supporting Reference(s)
Information and communications technologies for development	[new paragraph] **1.1.** We recognize that the development of sustainable, locally-driven ICT ecosystems is a prerequisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We commit to supporting a "development-centered digital transformation" that prioritizes upskilling and reskilling programs, invests in local innovation hubs, and fosters the creation of Digital Public Goods relevant to the socio-economic context of the Global South.	Global Digital Compact

| | [new paragraph]

1.2. We emphasize the need for a balanced approach to safeguarding data in the public interest, including appropriate protection of intellectual property rights and copyright against unauthorized use by AI systems to prevent exploitative data extraction and violation of privacy. | Global Digital Compact |

	[new paragraph] **1.3.** We push for the creation of AI systems that are culturally inclusive and tailored to the needs of the Global South, including addressing the lack of diverse datasets and minimizing biases. We request the Secretary General to promote the development of local AI research institutions and training programs to build capacity in the Global South, ensuring that AI development is inclusive and not dominated by a few powerful nations. We stress the need to ensure the bridging of digital divides through targeted international cooperation, ensuring equitable access to ICTs in developing countries, including rural and underserved regions. We support resilient digital public infrastructure projects that are adaptable to local needs and scalable. Such infrastructure should be open-source, accessible, and aligned with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). We encourage the development of digital public goods (open-source software, open data, etc.) that prioritize local needs and preserve digital sovereignty, ensuring that	[Global Digital Compact](#) Objective 1, [WSIS+20](#) Preamble.

	digital economies are not only driven by the Global North but also by the South. We stress the need to push for enhanced investments in digital literacy and technical skills to create a workforce capable of driving digital innovation. This aligns with the Global Digital Compact's aim to empower people through digital skills and knowledge.	

Bridging digital divides	[new paragraph] **2.1.** We reaffirm the commitment to bridging the digital divide, recognizing it is not merely a gap in connectivity, but also in affordability, digital literacy, and the accessibility of relevant, multilingual content. We call for targeted international cooperation and investment to develop affordable and resilient high-speed internet infrastructure in underserved communities. We also call for commitment to improving last mile and device infrastructure that enables easy access to AI evolution in underserved communities.	[Global Digital Compact](#)

	[new paragraph]	Global Digital Compact
	2.2. We recognize that closing **persistent digital divides** between and within countries remains a central, unfulfilled challenge of the WSIS process, compounded by **data asymmetries** and unequal access to emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence. To ensure digital inclusion truly serves the **Global Majority**, we commit to adopting a holistic view of the digital divide that moves **beyond mere connectivity** indicators. This must include promoting affordable, reliable access to essential digital devices and fostering digital literacy skills, alongside recognizing and amplifying **regional-specific priorities (for example from Africa and the Middle East)** to ensure contextual relevance.	

.	[new paragraph] **2.3.** We stress the need for the digital connectivity policies to focus on affordability for marginalized groups in developing countries. This includes tackling infrastructure gaps and reducing the costs of devices and services, which hinder access. We reiterate the need to encourage the creation of locally relevant content, including educational resources and government services, in local languages to empower populations in the Global South.	WSIS+20 Preamble, Global Digital Compact Objective 1.
Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs	[new paragraph] **3.1.** We underscore the importance of promoting a human-centric approach to cybersecurity and digital security that respects international human rights law and the digital sovereignty of nations of the Global South. This includes empowering countries to regulate their digital space in line with national policies and priorities, while upholding universal human rights.	*GDRC-WSIS Written Input to Elements Paper-*

	[new paragraph] **3.2.** We are committed to addressing the dangers of misinformation and the misuse of generative AI through the promotion of robust digital and media literacy programs, with a focus on empowering users to evaluate information and combat algorithmic manipulation critically. We also encourage building systems with safety by design at all stages of their development, keeping in mind vulnerable users of such systems, like children and other elder populations of our society.	
	[new paragraph] **3.3.** We propose for stronger global frameworks on data privacy and cybersecurity, tailored to the needs of developing countries, ensuring that technologies deployed respect human rights, especially in vulnerable communities. We propose policies that allow developing nations to have control over their data and digital assets, which aligns with their broader economic and development goals.	WSIS+20 Preamble, Thematic Input on Data Governance.

Financial mechanisms	[new paragraph] **4.1.** We call for the establishment of sustainable and predictable financial mechanisms to support digital transformation in the Global South. This includes facilitating the transfer of both financial resources and technology to ensure fair and equitable access to essential computing infrastructure, thereby removing barriers to the adoption and development of AI systems.	Global Digital Compact (recognizes the challenges of limited resources in developing countries).
	[new paragraph] **4.2** Recognizing that dedicated financing is crucial for translating digital cooperation principles into tangible development outcomes, we agree to explore the establishment of a **Dedicated Financing Window, such as a WSIS+20 Digital Equity Facility.** Furthermore, we stress the importance of enhancing the legitimacy and inclusivity of all follow-up processes by ensuring **funded participation for civil society, academia, and governments from the Global South** in all preparatory and intergovernmental negotiations. To build trust and accountability in data supply chains, we support piloting a **Dataset Provenance Registry** in	

	multiple Global South regions.	
	[new paragraph] **4.3**. We request the Secretary General to establish and implement blended financing models (public-private partnerships) to support the development of digital infrastructure in the Global South. These should focus on low-interest loans, grants, and direct investments in digital transformation projects. We stress the need to push for the creation of financial mechanisms within UN frameworks that support capacity building and technological development in the Global South, ensuring no country is left behind in the digital economy.	[Global Digital Compact](#) Objective 4.
Human rights and ethical dimensions of the Information Society	[new paragraph] **5.1.** We resolve to explicitly anchor all digital cooperation in international human rights law. We call for the adoption and enforcement of a comprehensive rights-based framework in all AI and data governance, embodying principles such as **Fairness, Accountability, Transparency, Equity, and Rights (FATER)**.	*[GDRC-WSIS Written Input to Elements Paper-](#)* (states that the WSIS+20 review should be anchored in international human rights law). *Rights Respecting AI Governance* (proposes the FATER framework). *AIandHRConvention_WhitepaperFINAL20-2-25.pdf* (calls for a comprehensive framework under international law).

	[new paragraph] We stress the need to ensure that the WSIS+20 process incorporates international human rights law, emphasizing the protection of rights such as privacy, freedom of expression, and non-discrimination online. We underscore the need to prioritize policies that address the specific needs of vulnerable groups in developing countries, including persons with disabilities, women, children, and marginalized communities. We advocate for a Global South perspective in AI ethics, emphasizing the need for transparency, accountability, and fairness, especially in areas such as health, education, and social services.	Global Digital Compactt Objective 3, Munich Convention on AI and Human Rights.

	[new paragraph] **5.2.** We stress the importance of ensuring the meaningful and continuous participation of all stakeholders, particularly civil society and underrepresented communities from the Global South, in all stages of digital governance processes, from policy development to implementation and review.	*GDRC-WSIS Written Input to Elements Paper-* (advocates for meaningful multistakeholder engagement). *IGF_2025_Summary_Report* (emphasizes inclusive, multistakeholder approaches to AI governance).
Data governance	[new paragraph] **6.1.** We commit to a human-centric approach to data governance that protects against the risks of "data colonialism" and prioritizes the collective rights and interests of communities over commercial exploitation. We call for international standards that mandate the documentation of data provenance for all training datasets used in AI models, particularly those originating from the Global South.	*Artificial Intelligence and Ethical Implications in Africa* (raises the issue of "data colonialism"). *Towards A Rights-Respecting Artificial Intelligence Policy for Nigeria* (advocates for a human-centric approach to data governance). *Multimodal_Data_Provenance* (Data Provenance Initiative).

	[new paragraph] **6.2.** We stress the need to ensure that countries in the Global South have full control over their data governance policies, enabling them to benefit economically from their data without exploiting their populations. We recognise the need to propose strong data protection regulations aligned with international standards, promoting trust and accountability in digital systems, especially in areas critical to human rights.	UN Global Dialogue on AI.
Artificial intelligence	[new paragraph] **7.1.** We affirm that global AI governance must be a development-centered process that fosters local AI ecosystems. We call for international cooperation to prioritize the development of local language AI models and culturally relevant datasets to address algorithmic bias and ensure inclusivity.	*IGF_2025_Summary_Report* (highlights the need for local language AI and culturally relevant datasets).
	[new paragraph] **7.2.** We propose the establishment of an Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence that includes equitable and balanced geographic representation, with a specific focus on	UN Global Dialogue on AI (proposes an independent international scientific panel with balanced geographic representation).

	ensuring the inclusion of experts from the Global South to provide context-specific insights into global AI governance.	

	[new paragraph] **7.3** To ensure Artificial Intelligence (AI) development is rights-respecting, equitable, and contributes meaningfully to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we commit to concrete actions that address the current structural disadvantages faced by the Global South. This includes: 1. Establishing mechanisms to ensure **equitable compute access pools** and technical resources for researchers and innovators from developing countries. 2. Prioritizing the development of **local language models** and culturally relevant, **multilingual datasets** to mitigate bias and support linguistic diversity. 3. Mandating **transparency documentation for AI systems** deployed in critical public sectors. 4. Advocating for the prohibition of digital surveillance practices, such as **biometric mass surveillance**, that	

	are inconsistent with international human rights law. 5. Fostering the institutionalization of **community-led AI audits** with meaningful public participation to ensure local accountability. 6. Prioritizing safety by design to prevent misuse of systems that can harm vulnerable populations, especially children.	

	[new paragraph] **7.4**. We stress the need to push for the creation of AI systems that are culturally inclusive and tailored to the needs of the Global South, including addressing the lack of diverse datasets and minimizing biases. We request the Secretary General to promote the development of local AI research institutions and training programs to build capacity in the Global South, ensuring that AI development is inclusive and not dominated by a few powerful nations.	UN Global Dialogue on AI, BRICS AI Governance Declaration.
Monitoring and measurement	[new paragraph] **8.1.** We commit to developing a framework for monitoring and measurement that moves beyond basic connectivity metrics. This framework should incorporate context-specific targets for the Global South, measuring progress in digital skills, economic inclusion, reduction of algorithmic harm, and the equitable distribution of digital benefits. We commit to strengthening national and regional statistical capacities to collect this data. We commit to push for building standards and practices that take into account the needs of the global south, and ensure adoption of safe standards for improved monitoring,	*GDRC-WSIS Written Input to Elements Paper-* (highlights the need for contextualized targets and metrics). *WSIS-10+*(calls for the inclusion of ICT statistics in national strategies).

	reporting and measurement across systems and solutions.	
	[new paragraph] **8.2.**We propose Impact Assessment and to promote the use of AI and digital technologies to conduct real-time impact assessments on social, economic, and environmental outcomes in the Global South.	OECD AI Policy Framework.
Process Recommendations	We reaffirm the need that the WSIS+20 review and its future follow-up must be anchored in **international human rights law** and standards. The preparatory process must be inclusive, transparent, and meaningfully engage stakeholders, including through regional-focused consultations like those being hosted for **African and Middle Eastern stakeholders**, to ensure that the outcomes reflect context-specific needs and priorities.	

	We advocate for more significant participation from Global South stakeholders in the decision-making processes of digital governance. Ensure fair representation in international bodies like the UN and in multilateral forums. We push for a more robust international governance system for AI and ICT, where developing countries are not mere consumers but also co-creators of global digital policies.	

This submission is endorsed by the following organisations:

1.   Knowledge House (KHA)

2. Dr. M. Sabarimalai Manikandan, India

3. Marina Cortês, Chair, P3395 IEEE-SA Working Group, "Standard for the Implementation of Safeguards, Controls, and Preventive Techniques for Artificial Intelligence (AI) Models"

4. Prasanna Vijayanathan, (Trustee, Applied AI Consortium, Lead, IEEE Standards Working Group P3462, Vice Chair, IEEE Standards for Impact Assessment framework for Sustainable Mobility Systems).