

Lebanon IGF Additional Contribution to the WSIS+20 Zero Draft

Subject: Strengthening WSIS+20 Outcomes through Context-Specific Insights from Lebanon

The Lebanon Internet Governance Forum (IGF), as part of the global network of National and Regional Initiatives (NRIs), welcomes the Zero Draft of the WSIS+20 Review. We commend the recognition of the Internet Governance Forum as a permanent UN platform and the strong emphasis on bridging digital divides, promoting multistakeholderism, and aligning WSIS with the Global Digital Compact.

Building on these foundations, Lebanon IGF proposes the following additions and refinements, informed by the unique challenges and opportunities in Lebanon and the wider region:

1. Information and Communications Technologies for Development

Lebanon and similar countries' ongoing economic and financial crisis has severely impacted affordable and meaningful connectivity, with electricity shortages and high service costs limiting digital access.

Proposed Add-on (after para 18 of Zero Draft): **WSIS+20 should explicitly recognize the vulnerability of crisis-affected and fragile economies and call for special international support mechanisms, including concessional financing and regional partnerships, to sustain connectivity and digital transformation.**

2. Bridging Digital Divides

The fragile economies' chronic power shortages and high service costs underscore the need for resilient and sustainable solutions.

Proposed Add-on (under paras 22, or para 28): **The outcome should call for investment in decentralized, renewable energy-powered infrastructure and community-based connectivity models, ensuring that infrastructure in fragile states is sustainable, resilient, and adapted to resource-constrained environments.**

Proposed Add-on (after para 26): **WSIS+20 should ensure that universal access extends to all, including displaced populations, and host communities, with NRIs serving as inclusive platforms to design solutions in cooperation with national and international partners.**

3. The Digital Economy

In contexts where financial institutions have lost public confidence, digital tools can provide a lifeline for citizens.

Proposed Add-on (under paras 33–38): **WSIS+20 should highlight digital financial inclusion tools (mobile payments, digital wallets, remittances) as critical for resilience in fragile states.**

4. Social and Economic development

In challenged contexts, digital inclusion supports social cohesion, trust in institutions, and counters misinformation.

Proposed Add-on (after para 47): **WSIS+20 should affirm the role of ICT in peacebuilding, stability, and crisis recovery, particularly in countries facing political instability, conflict, or humanitarian crises and affirm the critical need for good governance, transparency, and accountability, to position ICTs as key drivers for economic and social development.**

5. Capacity Development

The region, including Lebanon's young population, faces mass emigration of skilled workers due to limited opportunities.

Proposed Add-on (around paras 66–70): **WSIS+20 should include commitments to retain and empower digital talent in developing countries, through remote work opportunities, innovation hubs, and international fellowships.**

6. Internet Governance

National and Regional Initiatives (NRIs) are not only policy dialogue spaces but also practical hubs for resilience in crisis situations.

Proposed Add-on (after para 113 or 117): **National and Regional Initiatives (NRIs) should be recognized as practical mechanisms for implementing and localizing WSIS outcomes. Beyond their role as dialogue platforms, NRIs can act as hubs for resilience and coordination in times of crisis, especially in developing and fragile contexts, ensuring that multistakeholder approaches reinforce digital stability and recovery.**

Conclusion

The Lebanese IGF believes that integrating these perspectives into the Zero Draft will enrich the WSIS+20 outcome document by ensuring it responds not only to global aspirations but also to the lived realities of communities in conflict and crisis-affected states. Countries similar to Lebanon show that digital inclusion, resilience, and multistakeholder cooperation are not only development priorities but also vital elements of stability and human dignity.