

Salzburg, 30.09.2025

## World Summit Award - Civil Society Feedback to WSIS+20 Review - Zero Draft Written Input

The perspectives of World Summit Awards (WSA) global community – multi-stakeholder, rooted in truly local content, and with global reach – was built on the WSIS vision and resonates strongly with the aspirations of the Global Digital Compact.

In particular, WSA community illustrates how inclusive digital innovation and diverse content creation can meaningfully contribute to closing digital divides and ensuring that technological progress supports human rights and sustainable development.

### Background - WSA part of WSIS process since preparatory phase 2002:

1. WSA was initiated in 2002-2003 as an Austrian membership initiative at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). It is a civil society initiative entirely run by volunteers globally.
2. WSA has implemented and contributed to the Tunis Action Plan by applying a global award system to identify and highlight digital solutions within WSIS Action Line C7 - e-Applications.
3. WSA has a footprint in 182 UN Member States with over 900 volunteer national experts, 600 volunteers expert jurors and over 400 national contact points and participating organizations and institutions.
4. in 22 years of WSIS implementation, WSA has built up a unique community of digital innovators and best practices entrepreneurs who created 14.586 juried concrete, replicable, digital solutions implementing the WSIS Action lines and contributing to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. 1.088 global winners demonstrate have digital transformation does create a positive local impact.
5. WSA's accumulated experience suggests that there is a need for a new format for digital cooperation to the shared effort of building an open, safe, and secure digital future for all.

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### Feedback on Zero Draft - Failing the Vision of WSIS:

6. The Zero Draft is failing the WSIS vision and the aspirations of the global community in two important points process has failed.
7. FIRSTLY: The WSIS follow up actions have abandoned and the ZEO Draft does not refer to the original WSIS vision of the transformation into a knowledge society. The zero draft does not even mention the term anymore. In the Geneva Declaration of principles, it is clearly stated that “We trust that these measures will open the way to the future development of a true knowledge society”.
8. The vision of the “Knowledge Society” puts human and their ability to reason at the center and thus goes significantly beyond the vision of “Information Society” which puts technology at the center.



9. A “Knowledge society” puts technologies at the service of people and communities. It goes beyond just having information and emphasizes the creation, sharing, interpretation, use & application of knowledge for societal benefits. It’s about turning information into something actionable.
10. “Knowledge Society” includes social, cultural, ethical, political, economic dimensions (education, culture, participatory governance, human capacity building) and does NOT make them afterthoughts of technological innovation.
11. “Knowledge Society” focuses on inclusion and ensuring that people not only have access to information, but also the skills, opportunities, institutional support to use it meaningfully.
12. The rapid and every accelerating tech progress of AI make the omission of the terms and vision of “Knowledge society” a fatal flaw and irresponsible omission in the Zero Draft.
13. SECOND: The WSIS process and the Zero Draft fail to take into account that the real drivers of the digital transformations are acting entirely outside of its framework.
14. The WSIS follow up process including the Internet Governance Forum have failed to address the political economy of that development of convergent digital industries and their consequences.
15. The ICT world today does not resemble that of 2003 or 2005 and the Zero Draft implication of continuity is false.
16. Digital technologies are not just transforming, they are rupturing the social, economic and also political fabric of societies in all UN member states.
17. Digital technologies have led to a historically unprecedented concentration of technological and economic power in the hands of fewer than two hands full of global companies who act in ignorance and violation of the WSIS goals and SDGs.
18. This power concentration is turning the world order on its ear. The continuous accumulation of trillions of monies have led to a global shift in agency to shape the future of humankind.
19. Rather than to face this reality the Zero draft maintains and nourishes illusions that a imagined “we” of multi-stakeholders exist who could be actors while in fact “we” are passengers on a vessel which alters its nature while we travel.
20. Governments are reduced to damage control, business struggle to adapt, civil society is invited to repair and offer band aids.

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**Input on Zero Draft - Update with Vision of Knowledge Society and address the concentration of techno- economic power:**

21. The WSA global community advocates strongly that the vision of knowledge society is made central to the Zero Draft in the preamble and the introduction.
22. The key issues to be addressed are less to build high-speed internet everywhere and have AI integrated on every hand-held phone.
23. The Zero Draft has to centrally focus on and ensure people know how to use digital tools, support skill training and competence development on a new level, ensures relevant local content with editorial accountability, promotes innovation sharing in communities, addresses privacy issues and block data grabbing, focus on inclusion and gender equality, compliance by design and responsible engineering etc. These are the issues which are made central with the Vision of a “Knowledge Society”.
24. The WSA global community views that the Zero draft and the WSIS+20 Review needs to address that technology development takes place largely undirected by the framework and values of WSIS.
25. The concentration of power is not just an economic and technological one. But the political legitimacy of governments, the fairness of elections, the competitive functioning of markets, the self-organizations of civil society, the funding of academic research all are shaped by few companies and their technological platforms and innovations. The facts are staggering and cry out loudly.
26. The two handful of companies act largely untaxed and fight most if not all attempts to regulate. They ignore rules and law (viz. copyright in training AI models) and accumulate data for free.
27. The Zero Draft needs strong language on the issue to be relevant to the future.
28. A people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Knowledge Society requires that the Zero Draft be revised.

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For the WSA global community



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