Summary of the WSIS+20 Open Consultation session with Co-Facilitators
During the 20ᵗʰ Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Norway

Overview

This document summarizes the key points from the **WSIS+20 Open Consultation session with Co-Facilitators** held on Wednesday, 25 June 2025, from 10:30 to 11:45 (UTC+2:00), during the 20th Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Lillestrøm, Norway. The session was co-facilitated by H.E. Ms. Suela Janina (Albania) and H.E. Mr. Ekitela Lokaale (Kenya), as part of the preparatory process for the WSIS+20 High-Level Meeting at the UN General Assembly in December 2025. The session aimed to gather stakeholder input on the WSIS+20 elements paper and identify expectations regarding the scope and priorities of the outcome document.

Key Outcomes

1. Maintaining Multi-Stakeholder Model and Inclusivity

There was strong consensus that the multi-stakeholder model is fundamental to internet governance and must be preserved, strengthened, and clearly articulated in the WSIS+20 outcome documents. Participants reaffirmed the model as encompassing governments, civil society, the private sector, the technical community, and academia. Speakers stressed the need to strengthen the multistakeholder language in the elements paper, noting that it must reflect more recent agreements, including the WSIS+10 outcome and the Global Digital Compact (GDC). There was broad support for joint consultations involving both member states and non-governmental stakeholders, including hybrid formats. The contributions of Dynamic Coalitions, National and Regional IGFs (NRIs), and youth IGFs were highlighted as critical for inclusive, locally grounded participation.

2. Strengthening the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

There was high-level consensus on the need for a permanent mandate for the IGF, supported by sustainable funding. Speakers emphasized that the IGF is not merely one issue among many but a vital platform for global digital policy dialogue. Participants argued that a permanent IGF mandate would ensure long-term trust, institutional stability, and better planning and investment. The IGF's unique multi-stakeholder nature and its national and regional initiatives were recognized as essential for bridging global debates with local realities. Several speakers also called for strengthening the IGF Secretariat.

3. Upholding and Expanding Human Rights Online

Multiple stakeholders called for strengthening the human rights language in the elements paper. Specific calls included explicit references to international human rights law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Participants urged the reaffirmation of freedom of expression, privacy, and protection for vulnerable groups, including women, children, and journalists. Proposals included incorporating a standalone gender action line and strengthening the role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human

Rights (OHCHR) in digital governance. There was shared concern that the elements paper should not adopt a punitive tone but rather reaffirm rights-based protections.

4. Integration of the Global Digital Compact (GDC)

There was strong agreement that the GDC should be implemented through the existing WSIS architecture to avoid duplication of efforts and governance fragmentation. Several stakeholders endorsed a joint implementation roadmap between WSIS and the GDC, emphasizing the compatibility and flexibility of WSIS Action Lines to integrate new digital governance themes. Speakers stressed the need to align institutional responsibilities, maintain WSIS as the central implementation platform, and ensure coherence with the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) and the UN Group on the Information Society.

5. Addressing Digital Divides

All speakers acknowledged that despite advances in digital infrastructure, persistent digital divides—in access, affordability, and capacity—remain a central challenge. Participants called for prioritizing universal and meaningful connectivity through inclusive mechanisms such as community networks and Internet Exchange Points (IXPs). The importance of digital access for underserved populations and the need for increased investment in inclusive digital infrastructure were highlighted. Stakeholders emphasized that bridging the digital divide is a foundational pillar of the WSIS+20 review process.

6. Governance of Emerging Technologies

Participants stressed the importance of inclusive governance for emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) and data governance, involving the broadest set of stakeholders. The discussion revealed differing views on how WSIS+20 should address these issues. Some expressed uncertainty about including separate sections on AI and data governance, while others called for explicit alignment with the GDC and recognition of existing processes such as the CSTD Working Group on Data Governance. There was shared recognition that AI development and data governance require global inclusion and a rights-based approach.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The WSIS+20 Open Consultation session demonstrated broad and meaningful engagement from diverse stakeholders across all sectors. There was strong alignment on core principles, including the need for a permanent IGF mandate, preservation of the multi-stakeholder model, integration of the Global Digital Compact through the WSIS framework, and the strengthening of human rights protections in digital governance.

The session also brought renewed attention to the governance of emerging technologies and the need to close persistent digital divides. Stakeholders welcomed the co-facilitators' commitment to continued dialogue—through written submissions, regional engagement, and hybrid consultations—and emphasized that the success of WSIS+20 will ultimately depend on how meaningfully these contributions are reflected in the zero draft and the outcome document.