



WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS+20) REVIEW

Intervention by Nick Ashton-Hart on behalf of APCO Worldwide during the Consultations with Member-States and Stakeholders, 13th October 2025

Excellencies, colleagues, APCO Worldwide works on international digital economy policy with and for companies from many vertical markets and we're pleased to be able to comment today.

Firstly our thanks to the co-conveners and the Secretariat for running such a broadly consultative and open process which is a new gold standard model for UNGA negotiations on digital policy. Thanks also for remembering Peter Major, a tireless advocate for the WSIS vision and a dear friend to many of us personally.

We support the statements of ICC, CCIA, GNI, AfriCTA, ISOC and Microsoft among others and welcome the draft overall. It is comprehensive, recognizes the centrality of development outcomes to the WSIS vision, the success and value of multistakeholderism, human rights, and the value of the IGF and its ecosystem by endorsing a permanent mandate for it which we strongly support.

The draft could use improvements in practical measures in several areas, especially key given that funding to address key priorities is shrinking, while needs are not. Mainstreaming GDC implementation through the action lines is a welcome and logical start.

Digital Divide: Lack of affordable connectivity should be a relic of history. The fact it is not should be seen as a critical global priority. The draft should recognize the clear linkage between best practice in telecom regulation and affordability of connectivity. We have decades of evidence for this; ITU have literally written the book on it. It should also recognize that affordability of ICTs impacts access and use especially by vulnerable groups, and that very high tariffs exist in many countries on ICT goods – averaging over 35% in many.

On financing: we suggest that the World Bank, IMF, regional development banks, private foundations and other funders should be engaged more in the action lines. Inviting them to intensify their participation and to surface their programmes relating to each action line to make it easier for countries to find assistance is one way to do that, and for all to see what areas of implementation require more resourcing options.

On building confidence and security: the document should recognize the norms of responsible state behavior in cyberspace adopted by consensus by UNGA, and call on all member-states to both observe and implement them.

Improving the value of institutions: The IGF, WSIS Forum, and CSTD should work more closely together without changing their mandates or focus. The objective should be to improve how each leverages the work of the other two so that participation in each process has more value and impact.

Finally we welcome paras 100 and 101, these were good ideas when they were proposed in previous negotiations, and we hope this time they'll get adopted as we know how important these are to developing countries.

Thank you for your kind attention.