

Contribution to the WSIS+20 Virtual Stakeholder Consultations

Andy Richardson, Inter-Parliamentary Union

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On behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the global organization of national parliaments, let me begin with what unites us all: the transformative potential of digital technologies. We need to harness this power to support economic development, create new jobs, extend healthcare and education, and combat climate change. We need to ensure these benefits are widely distributed.

Parliaments see this potential clearly. But they also see the risks, and they're reminded of them every day by the people they represent.

In global forums, we discuss digital transformation's promise. In parliaments, elected representatives hear about its challenges. The worker worried about automation. The parent concerned about their child's online safety. The elderly person struggling with services that have gone digital. Parliaments exist in both realities simultaneously—and this dual perspective is precisely why they must be more centrally engaged in WSIS.

The IPU and parliaments worldwide strongly support the multi-stakeholder model that has defined WSIS for two decades. We support the vital work of WSIS and the Internet Governance Forum in creating spaces where diverse voices shape our digital future.

But parliaments bring something distinctive to this ecosystem: direct accountability to citizens. When people have concerns about digital governance, they don't write to technical committees. They contact their elected representatives. It's a complementary and essential mechanism of democracy.

Parliaments provide three things that strengthen digital governance: democratic legitimacy, representing citizens directly; legislative authority, turning principles into binding law; and democratic accountability, ensuring commitments are honored.

Next month, IPU will co-convene a major parliamentary conference on artificial intelligence, bringing together parliamentarians to share good practices and develop coordinated approaches. This is the kind of work that connects global dialogue with national action.

But we can do more. Drawing on Article 55 of the Pact for the Future, which recognizes the importance of United Nations engagement with national parliaments, we respectfully call for the UNGA resolution to include provisions for systematic parliamentary engagement in WSIS and IGF processes, as active partners who can signal what's feasible, what requires innovation, and what citizens are demanding.

Our wish is to strengthen the multi-stakeholder model by better connecting global forums with national democratic processes, creating clearer pathways from international consensus to domestic reality.

As we look to the future of WSIS, the IPU and parliaments worldwide are committed to deepening our engagement. The challenges ahead—from AI governance to digital rights to bridging persistent divides in access and participation—require all stakeholder groups working together, with parliaments integrated as democratic partners in shaping our digital future.