

CCAOI Statement to the UN Informal Interactive WSIS Stakeholder on the Zero Draft of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20)

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Thank you for this opportunity.

I will be speaking on behalf of CCAOI, a civil society organisation from India.

At the outset, we would like to commend the Zero Draft for grounding itself in continuity by reaffirming the Geneva Declaration, the Tunis Agenda, and subsequent UN resolutions, including the Global Digital Compact. This continuity reflects a strong commitment to multistakeholderism, meaningful cooperation, human rights, and a development-oriented approach.

However, we are concerned that Paragraph 83 of the draft leans too heavily on voluntary cooperation, without establishing a clear framework for accountability. While it calls on the private sector to respect human rights, it does not set out how compliance will be monitored or enforced. To strengthen this, the paragraph could require not merely encouraging the private sector and other stakeholders to integrate respect for human rights throughout the entire lifecycle of emerging technologies. Member States should establish independent oversight bodies, at national or regional levels, to monitor compliance, investigate abuses, and apply penalties where necessary. Voluntary commitments alone are not enough; binding obligations and accountability are essential for a responsible digital transformation.

We also note that Paragraphs 4, 5, and 35 rightly acknowledge the challenges faced by developing countries. Yet, these provisions do not sufficiently address the deep power imbalances that continue to limit meaningful participation. True inclusivity requires more than open invitations, it requires redistribution. Mechanisms for technology transfer, capacity building, and equitable representation in decision-making spaces are crucial so that the Global South can participate on an equal footing and share fairly in the benefits of digital cooperation.

Finally, Paragraph 115's recognition of the Internet Governance Forum as a permanent UN forum is a major step forward. However, the draft should clarify how the IGF will coordinate with other UN digital cooperation structures, such as the WSIS process and the Global Digital Compact. To avoid duplication and ensure coherence, the text should explicitly state that the IGF will serve as a permanent, inclusive platform, working in structured coordination with these frameworks to advance shared goals of inclusion, equity, and accountability.

In conclusion, WSIS must go beyond voluntary commitments. It must embed accountability, address systemic inequities, and strengthen coordination within the UN's digital governance architecture. Only then can we ensure a digital future that is inclusive, fair, and rights-respecting for all.

Thank you.

Shradhanjali Sarma
Legal Consultant, CCAOI