



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS DE BIBLIOTHECAIRES ET DES BIBLIOTHEQUES

INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG BIBLIOTHEKARISCHER VERBÄNDE UND EINRICHTUNGEN

FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE ASOCIACIONES DE BIBLIOTECARIOS Y BIBLIOTECAS

МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ ФЕДЕРАЦИЯ БИБЛИОТЕЧНЫХ АССОЦИАЦИЙ И УЧРЕЖДЕНИЙ

国际图书馆协会与机构联合会

الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات ومؤسسات المكتبات

H.E. Mr. Ekitela Lokaale,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations in New York

H.E. Ms. Suela Janina,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations in New York

16 November 2025

Your Excellencies,

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is honoured to be able to submit its comments on the revised version of the declaration from the UN General Assembly WSIS+20 High-Level Event.

IFLA itself has existed for almost a century, offering a space in which library professionals from around the world can come together to explore how most effectively to improve people's lives through access to knowledge. We have also been involved throughout the WSIS process from its inception, and are very happy to see it continue to shape policy-making around the internet to this day.

We overall welcome the second draft, recognising the efforts of the co-facilitators to increase clarity and reduce length, with a view to maximising reach and impact. Given this overall drive, we do particularly welcome the amendment to paragraph 26 to add in reference to the importance of connected schools, post offices, libraries and hospitals as public access centres.

Nonetheless, we believe that portraying such institutions as only serving vulnerable populations carries risks of stigmatising those who access the internet through such centres. It also underestimates the role of public access centres in providing complementary connectivity, for example by offering training and support, or the possibility to go online with other people. We note in particular the recent [UNESCO IFAP Brief](#) which stresses this point. This could be rectified with the following change:

*26. We are committed to achieving entry-level broadband subscription costs that are accessible to the widest section of the population. This will require collaboration between private and public sectors, including blended finance as well as innovative mechanisms including universal service funds and community networks. We recognize the continued role of public access facilities such as schools, post offices, libraries and hospitals, in making access available, **including** to those in vulnerable situations.*

Secondly, we note the absence of reference to the role of local government in the revised version of the declaration. Local governments have been strong in underlining their role in advancing digital inclusion, and in doing so have typically placed public libraries at the heart



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS
FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS DE BIBLIOTHECAIRES ET DES BIBLIOTHEQUES
INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG BIBLIOTHEKARISCHER VERBÄNDE UND EINRICHTUNGEN
FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE ASOCIACIONES DE BIBLIOTECARIOS Y BIBLIOTECAS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ ФЕДЕРАЦИЯ БИБЛИОТЕЧНЫХ АССОЦИАЦИЙ И УЧРЕЖДЕНИЙ
国际图书馆协会与机构联合会

الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات ومؤسسات المكتبات

of their work. While noting that paragraph 56 highlights the need to support local communities and strategies, this could be stronger, for example with the following additions:

*56. We note that lack of capacity is a major barrier to closing digital divides, and recommend that capacity development, including for innovation, be leveraged to empower local experts and local communities to benefit from and contribute to information and communications technology applications for development. **We recognise the key role of local and regional government and other local institutions in achieving digital inclusion.** We recognize the need to scale up international cooperation and financing for digital capacity development in developing countries and to support the development of local content and content relevant to local realities online.*

Third, we note that one of the casualties of the reduction in the length of the declaration has been much of the reference to how the spread of digital tools can help make scientific progress both faster and more inclusive. In particular, they enable the uptake of open science practices, as already urged in the Pact for the Future. Paragraph 47 would therefore be strengthened by recalling the text of Action 29 of the Pact.

*47. We recognize that science, technology and innovation are integral to digital development, **and that digital policies should support the development, deployment and sustainable use of emerging and opensource technologies and support policies towards open science and open innovation and know-how for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in developing countries.** We recognize the importance of ensuring that stakeholders in all countries are able to play a part in digital innovation, including the development and harmonisation of standards.*

Fourth, we welcome the reference to digital public goods and infrastructures in paragraph 17 of the declaration, and in particular the inclusion of recognition that open content is a digital public good. This paragraph would be strengthened by clarifying that content infrastructures, such as Wikipedia (which has officially been recognised) and open repositories run by libraries, for example to support open access or open education, also count as such. This could be achieved in the following way:

*17. We acknowledge that developing digital public goods and digital public infrastructure are critical drivers of inclusive digital transformation and innovation and recognize the need to increase investment in their successful development with the participation of all stakeholders. Digital public goods include open-source software, open data, open artificial intelligence models, open standards, **open knowledge infrastructures** and open content that adhere to privacy and other applicable international laws, standards and best practices and do no harm, empower societies and individuals to direct digital technologies to their development needs and can facilitate digital cooperation and investment. Resilient, safe, inclusive and interoperable digital public infrastructure has the potential to deliver services at scale and increase social and economic opportunities for all. We recognize that there are multiple models of digital public infrastructure, and we recognize that each society will develop and use shared digital systems according to its particular priorities and needs.*



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS DE BIBLIOTHECAIRES ET DES BIBLIOTHEQUES

INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG BIBLIOTHEKARISCHER VERBÄNDE UND EINRICHTUNGEN

FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE ASOCIACIONES DE BIBLIOTECARIOS Y BIBLIOTECAS

МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ ФЕДЕРАЦИЯ БИБЛИОТЕЧНЫХ АССОЦИАЦИЙ И УЧРЕЖДЕНИЙ

国际图书馆协会与机构联合会

الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات ومؤسسات المكتبات

Fifth, we appreciate the work of the co-facilitators to take a balanced approach to regulatory questions, and promote an evidence-based approach to this. One challenge that we too regularly see is however that regulation is passed that treats all actors as being the same, when this is not the case. For example, large tech companies are far better placed to deal with platform regulation or network usage fees than libraries or other non-commercial actors. This question could be addressed through the following changes:

*14. We also recognize that building confidence and security in ICTs is critical to ensuring the implementation of WSIS goals, and that advancing digital inclusion requires a predictable and transparent enabling environment that encompasses policy, legal and regulatory frameworks that support innovation, protect consumer rights, nurture digital talent and skills, promote fair competition and digital entrepreneurship, **recognise the specific needs of public and community-owned infrastructures and actors**, and enhance consumer confidence and trust in the digital economy.*

*48. We note the importance of legal and regulatory frameworks concerned with the deployment of digital services including those concerned with market structure, digital transactions, data protection and data privacy, consumer rights and intellectual property, human rights and environmental impacts. We recognize that experience since the World Summit has demonstrated the effectiveness of certain approaches in promoting investment, bridging digital divides and fostering development. We support international, regional and national efforts to develop enabling environments for digital transformation, including predictable and transparent policy, legal and regulatory frameworks, and sharing of best practices. **We recognise the need for well-designed and proportionate regulation that accounts for the needs of public and community-owned infrastructures and actors.** We call on all stakeholders, where requested, to provide technical assistance to developing countries, in line with national digital transformation policies and priorities.*

Sixth, we note the reference to the importance of legal and regulatory frameworks concerned with the deployment of digital services, and its reference to intellectual property. At the same time, we recall that too often, the transition from the analogue to the digital has led to an unbalancing of relations, in particular between copyright holders and users. It would therefore be welcome to see the following change, also to paragraph 48.

*48. We note the importance of legal and regulatory frameworks concerned with the deployment of digital services including those concerned with market structure, digital transactions, data protection and data privacy, consumer rights and intellectual property **(including exceptions and limitations to this)**, human rights and environmental impacts. We recognize that experience since the World Summit has demonstrated the effectiveness of certain approaches in promoting investment, bridging digital divides and fostering development. We support international, regional and national efforts to develop enabling environments for digital transformation, including predictable and transparent policy, legal and regulatory frameworks, and sharing of best practices. We call on all stakeholders, where requested, to provide technical assistance to developing countries, in line with national digital transformation policies and priorities.*



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS DE BIBLIOTHECAIRES ET DES BIBLIOTHEQUES

INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG BIBLIOTHEKARISCHER VERBÄNDE UND EINRICHTUNGEN

FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE ASOCIACIONES DE BIBLIOTECARIOS Y BIBLIOTECAS

МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ ФЕДЕРАЦИЯ БИБЛИОТЕЧНЫХ АССОЦИАЦИЙ И УЧРЕЖДЕНИЙ

国际图书馆协会与机构联合会

الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات ومؤسسات المكتبات

Seventh, we note that the revised version has narrowed references to the materials to which internet users have access in paragraph 38, shifting from 'information' to 'cultural resources'. This risks discounting the value of access to other resources which many will not see as cultural, such as research outputs. This could be resolved through the following amendment:

*38. We note that information and communications technologies have had substantial impacts on diversity of cultural expression and development of the cultural and creative sectors. We urge all stakeholders to recognize the importance of ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage and access to cultural **and knowledge** resources.*

Eighth, we welcome the references in particular to Articles 19 and 12 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. However, there is a risk that not including also Articles 26 and 27 (dealing with access to education, research and culture), that the importance of internet governance for achieving these is discounted.

*71. We reaffirm our commitment to article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that no person shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, consistent with countries' obligations under international human rights law. **Similarly, we recognise the particular relevance of digital policies for the achievement of articles 26 and 27 of the Declaration.***

Finally, we note with appreciation the inclusion of reference to the importance of Dynamic Coalitions in the new paragraph 96 of the Declaration, and strongly hope that this will be retained.

We are, once again, very grateful to the co-facilitators for the opportunity to contribute, and wish you well in your work going forwards.

Yours faithfully,

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions