



Statement at the Follow-up WSIS+20 Informal Stakeholder Consultation Session - 29 July 2025

Distinguished statement by AHM Bazlur Rahman, Chief Executive Officer of the Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication and the Bangladesh Internet Governance Forum,

At the outset, after two decades of implementing the WSIS Action Lines, we recognise the tremendous opportunities presented by widespread connectivity, enhanced mobility, user-friendly interfaces, and emerging transaction channels. These advancements encourage us to expand government services beyond traditional online and mobile platforms.

It's concerning to see the emergence of a significant aspect of the digital divide, which is unfolding alongside our access to information and knowledge. Unfortunately, this divide appears to be widening each day, rather than improving. We need to acknowledge this challenge and collaborate to find solutions that enable everyone to benefit from the digital world.

The Access to Information and Knowledge sector is now fully commercialized and entirely dominated by the corporate sector, as observed after 20 years. Therefore, where are the voices of underserved communities in Access to Information and Knowledge? But voices need to be heard. This situation is regrettable for us, given our two decades of collaboration with the corporate sector.

The essential objectives of the WSIS mandate have yet to be fully realised, as outlined in the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda for Action.

There is a pressing opportunity to enhance the WSIS Forum to address both longstanding and emerging challenges better. Such an improvement would facilitate the exploration of potential solutions and support localisation efforts, while also fostering active engagement with the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) at the country level.

Currently, a notable gap appears to exist between the UN Resident Coordinator's office and the issues concerning WSIS and the IGF at the country level. Strengthening this link could foster greater collaboration and enhance the effectiveness of our initiatives.

What is urgently needed is a permanent, reinforced, and even stronger WSIS and IGF Secretariat, with sustainable funding at both the Secretariat and country levels through three areas.

- Develop a localised action plan that aligns global WSIS commitments with national priorities.
- Capacity Building and Awareness (Promote ICT education and digital skills.
- Encourage the use of ICTs for inclusive development & run awareness campaigns on the benefits of an information & knowledge society.
- Create a multi-stakeholder engagement platform that facilitates regular consultations, shares progress updates, and fosters innovation and collaboration.