

IMSB Notes and Reflections on the 29 July 2025 Multistakeholder Consultation

The members of the Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board welcomed the virtual consultation held on 29 July 2025, incorporating inputs from both government and non-governmental stakeholders, and applaud the innovation reflected in organising this session. Given the requests heard from the global, multistakeholder community for more integrated government and non-governmental consultations, we believe this session will contribute to building confidence in the inclusive and multistakeholder nature of the WSIS+20 review.

To assist the Co-Facilitators in their development of a WSIS+20 Outcome Document Zero Draft, we have compiled the following reflections, beginning with some general observations, and followed by more specific takeaways structured around sub-themes. Where possible and appropriate, we have endeavoured to include specific suggestions for language in the Outcome Document.

General observations

- The multistakeholder approach is at the heart of progress achievements since the WSIS Summits, and multistakeholder input and collaboration is key for effective policy design and implementation.
- Many called for:
 - Reaffirmation that the WSIS framework should be multistakeholder.
 - WSIS architecture and action lines to be strengthened through more coordination between IGF-WSIS Forum-CSTD, and analysis with a number of UN Treaty Bodies General Comments.
 - Not establishing new institutions or processes, rather a call for strengthening and evolving existing processes and platforms, including the IGF, to address any evolving issues.
 - Coordination to be strengthened through UNGIS.
 - A formal role for the OHCHR.
 - A joint GDC-WSIS implementation plan.
- Unequivocal support for the IGF (including intersessional work), not only the renewal of its mandate but making it permanent with diverse and sustainable funding, and equipping it to continue to evolve in its central role in the WSIS ecosystem as an issue-spotting and agenda-setting mechanism, especially with the rapidly evolving technologies.
- Dialogue between member states and non-governmental stakeholders during the preparations for the WSIS contribute to deepening understanding of how technologies function and the perspectives on its governance.
- Interventions noted the duality of impacts (good and bad) brought about by digital technology and mitigation of risks needed for emerging technologies – in particular in the

context of conflict and the importance of promoting their use for peace, accountability and impacts on human rights.

- A number of interventions point out in different ways that the building blocks are there but a renewed common global commitment to using digital technologies better, in a more meaningfully coordinated way in practice.
- Several interventions cautioned reopening or relitigating the debate on Enhanced Cooperation (EC). Some pointed to practical cooperation over institutional debates. IMSB advises both openness and caution in dealing with EC.
- Some interventions called for more attention to financing mechanisms for development, including public funding, tax revenue, philanthropy and blended mechanisms.
- Several interventions noted the value of the Netmundial+10 São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines (SPMG) as a tool or guide for Internet governance and digital policy processes to operationalize the multistakeholder model and evolve multilateral processes.

General suggestions

- Positive reception of quick turn-around of posting of recordings and individual statements.
- Format of consultations:
 - Welcome the non-governmental stakeholders and member states combined consultation but look forward to increasing participation of governments in these combined consultation opportunities.
 - Topic based discussions for the upcoming consultations would allow for in-depth input.
 - Earlier notice, information and announcement of speakers allow greater participation and planning from those from diverse time-zones.

Language recommendations for the Zero Draft

- Integrate GDC language and align with language of the WSIS+10 outcome document.
- Explicitly refer to existing human rights instruments. Multiple interventions mention referencing UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) etc.
- Keeping the language technology neutral and forward looking (do not include technology-specific action lines).
- Incorporate sections on gender and youth on action lines.
- In specific contexts where market-based approaches alone may not fully address digital disparities, there is value in exploring complementary strategies. These can include market diversification and the targeted use of mechanisms such as universal service funds to promote more inclusive digital access.
- More clearly define what the elements of an enabling environment are (stable policy frameworks, open and interoperable markets, a whole-of-government approach, international collaboration, and meaningful multistakeholder engagement).

Sub-themes

ICT for Development

- **Hyperlocal models with local context needed for sustainable digital transformation (diverse language, community driven and local needs).**
- Interventions noted that the potential of ICT for development is great. Bottom-up systems are key to success. Empower communities to lead their own digital journeys.
- Specific speakers also called for:
 - ensuring access to trusted, relevant, and reliable information.
 - affordability of solutions to connect the unconnected.
 - ICT to be used to empower youth to thrive.
 - a need for information integrity checks when generative and Agentic AI is used for education to reduce burden for teachers.

The Digital Economy

- Many called for the meaningful inclusion of developing countries in digital transformation so it does not come at the expense of underserved communities, marginalised populations and the environment.
- Specific speakers also called for:
 - financial barriers for digital entrepreneurship to be mitigated, especially for the Global South.
 - acknowledgment of the transformative potential of DPI and DPGs built on open standards, open technologies to empower citizens should be leveraged.
- Interventions noted challenges such as:
 - inconsistent adoption of multistakeholder governance.
 - fragmentation (structural and otherwise) being a continuing risk.
- Some solutions suggested include:
 - remedying digital divides, structural imbalances, asymmetric data flows, and institutionalising fair access.
 - system interoperability being key to mitigating fragmentation.

Social and Cultural Development

- Fair cultural and social development is imperative, improvement to e-government and other digital services with underserved, vulnerable populations, marginalized peoples, and indigenous communities is crucial.
- Specific speakers noted that
 - Human rights of future generations should not be jeopardized.
 - a need to strengthen corporate accountability and liability for human right violations, and environmental impacts.
 - strengthening of Action Line C3 - open knowledge and open licenses are not peripheral to progress.

Environmental impacts

- The benefits of AI are global, however the burden on the environment impacts developing countries more.
- Many called for mainstreaming environmental sustainability across the WSIS action lines.
- Multiple interventions, including youth voices, called for a truly/meaningful circular economy, e-waste management, environmental justice, and responsible resource management.
- Specific speakers noted:
 - the need to break the narrative of digital technologies as inherently green. Promote green-by-design, efficient AI algorithms. Measure progress by energy saved, emissions reduced, etc.
 - text suggestions to Elements Paper para 27 called out the right to repair (against planned obsolescence), regulation of expansion of data centres in the context of impacts to biodiversity and water resources, and renewable community centred model to energy infrastructures.

Bridging Digital Divides

- Many interventions noted the essential to recognize that the digital divide is a persistent challenge, especially for women and girls, youth, marginalized groups, indigenous communities and underserved populations requiring coordinated action by all stakeholders.
- Interventions also called for the reaffirmation that the WSIS framework should be multistakeholder and that digital inclusion should be embedded in all action lines.
- Addressing the digital divide and unequal distribution of advanced technological capabilities needs a multistakeholder and multidimensional approach, including:
 - more concrete, context-specific, locally responsive, open-source where possible solutions that take into account the entire digital ecosystem (infrastructure, application and services, and skills) and address both the connectivity and the usage gaps.
 - more inclusive approaches, in particular of women, youth, marginalized groups and to be mindful of multilingual and multicultural contexts and systemic barriers.
 - more proactive government (especially from the Global South) participation in multistakeholder approaches and representation.
 - strengthening the IGF and its regional, sub-regional, national, sub-national, and youth initiatives to provide localised solutions
 - noting national strategies in all WSIS action lines.

The Enabling Environment

- Interventions noted a need to clearly define what the elements of an enabling environment are, including:
 - stable policy and regulatory frameworks,
 - legal and human rights framework,

- whole-of-government approach,
- open and interoperable markets, data flows,
- international collaboration and local initiatives,
- and meaningful multistakeholder engagement, better coordination and collaboration.
- Multiple interventions also mention referencing existing instruments such as UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), etc.

Financial Mechanisms

- Interventions highlighted that challenges such as the growing debt burden and outdated fiscal frameworks can contribute to widening digital inequalities. That there are inadequate mechanisms for the Global South to benefit from digital dividends and Indigenous people remain excluded from digitalisation strategies.
- Some called for addressing the public financing deficit as a priority. Suggestions include:
 - establishing a dedicated global task force to explore blended flexible financing mechanisms grounded in local context.
 - more public investment, increase in corporate accountability, and diverse approaches to achieve fiscal justice and digital equality.

Human rights and ethical dimensions

- Interventions advocated for a balanced framing of human rights, affirming the transformative benefits and mitigating risks and negative impact, fostering a digital environment that is inclusive and equitable, people-centric and rights respecting, leaving no one behind.
- There was a significant level of convergence on the need to strengthen the Human Rights language for the WSIS+20 outcomes and to embed the agreed upon human rights language from the GDC (in particular paragraph 22).
- Several speakers also called for:
 - anchoring the language in international human rights law and standards.
 - reaffirming the obligations of states to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.
 - reasserting the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the responsibilities of the private sector to respect human rights throughout the technological lifecycle, including through human rights due diligence and impact assessments.
 - emphasizing that all stakeholders have a duty to respect rights throughout the technology lifecycle, guided by instruments like the UDHR, CRC, and UNGPs. Any limitations must be legitimate, transparent, proportionate, necessary, and non-discriminatory.
 - special attention to be given to protecting children and journalists.
 - building on the OHCHR's work and assigning the OHCHR a formal role in the future implementation of the WSIS framework.

Confidence and Security

- Many interventions noted that building confidence and trust is critical for digital society, and called for the global Internet and architecture to remain unfragmented, open, global, interoperable, stable and secure.
- Interventions called for implementation of security and data protection by design and support the open standards development approach (in the IETF, IAB, ICANN etc.) as fundamental to maintaining an open interoperable platform.
- Specific speakers also called for:
 - WSIS Action Line C5 on Building trust in cyberspace to be reinforced, and serve as an implementation hub for security issues at all levels.
 - the need to ensure that digital developments are evidence based and recognise the layered nature of the Internet in policy making.
 - explicit identification of the technical community and academia as distinct and essential stakeholder groups in the WSIS Outcome Document.
- Several interventions called for more awareness and global multistakeholder cooperation incorporating the Netmundial+10 São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines (SPMG).

Internet Governance

- **Unequivocal support for the IGF (including intersessional work), not only the renewal of its mandate but making it permanent with diverse and sustainable funding, and equipping it to continue to evolve in its central role in the WSIS ecosystem as an issue-spotting and agenda-setting mechanism, especially with the rapidly evolving technologies.**
- Specific suggestions include:
 - institutional strengthening in the UN system: strengthening the IGF Secretariat (including appointing a dedicated IGF Secretariat director).
 - leveraging IGF and its Intersessional work (National, Regional, Sub-regional, Youth Initiatives (NRIs), Dynamic Coalitions (DCs), Policy Networks (PNs), Best Practice Forums (BPFs) for implementation of GDC commitments and WSIS outcomes.
 - streamlining of the WSIS framework by building strong connections across CSTD – WSIS Forum – IGF.
 - structure and program evolution of the IGF, including multi-year thematic tracks, stakeholder tracks, and structural review.
 - supporting capacity building for greater participation from stakeholders from developing countries and marginalized groups.
- Specific speakers also called for:
 - capacity building for developing country governments to participate equally in Internet governance processes.
 - a formal advisory role for OCHCR on human rights in the digital space.

- recognition of the Netmundial+10 São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines (SPMG) as a tool or guide for Internet governance and digital policy processes to operationalize the multistakeholder model and evolve multilateral processes.
- Several interventions cautioned reopening or relitigating the debate on Enhanced Cooperation (EC). Some pointed to practical cooperation over institutional debates. IMSB advises both openness and caution in dealing with EC.

Data Governance

- Interventions noted the work of CSTD WG on Data Governance and suggested closer alignment to the implementation of WSIS action lines.
- Speakers noted that data governance should be cross-cutting across all WSIS action lines and aligned with the Global Digital Compact to enable safe, trusted and interoperable data flows.
- Specific speakers also called for:
 - a need for harmonisation of regulatory mechanisms of data governance globally.
 - a suggestion to set up a Global Data reliability body.
 - establishment of global data standards aligned with human rights, considering not only privacy but broader human rights impact on social protection, labour rights, education and health, ensuring interoperability, transparency and fairness, with meaningful participation from developing countries and the OHCHR.

Artificial Intelligence

- Interventions called for the WSIS review to engage on AI through existing action lines and mechanisms.
- On meaningful oversight, governance, accountability and transparency, specific speakers called for:
 - the UN to play a facilitating role in enabling agile multistakeholder governance in relation to AI.
 - a role for OHCHR, governance frameworks to align with existing human rights instruments such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and safeguards established to prevent further negative impacts on marginalized communities.
 - mandatory human rights impact assessments before technology deployment and any interference to the right to privacy to be necessary and proportionate.
 - decolonial approaches to AI and emerging technologies.

Capacity Building

- Capacity building is seen as central not only to skills development, but to bridging digital divides, participating in the digital economy, participating in international policy discussions (including operationalising enhanced cooperation), and opening doors to leadership.

- Meaningful capacity building is an enabler for transformation, specific interventions call for:
 - scalable, equitable and sustainable capacity building programs for youth, women, LGBTQIA+ communities, persons with disabilities, underserved and marginalized communities with the respective communities and populations involved with the development of the training materials prioritizing local context, local language and needs.
 - dedicated space for meaningful youth engagement.
 - sustainable resourcing, such as private-public partnerships and other sustainable models.
 - creation of a WSIS helpdesk to support capacity building.
 - the WSIS review to factor in capacity building progress.

Monitoring and Measurement

- Interventions have noted that the WSIS framework and action lines remain relevant, and implementation of action lines should be strengthened instead of creating new action lines and a joint implementation roadmap for GDC and WSIS.
- Specific speakers also called for the following to enable all including developing countries to measure progress:
 - transparency, interoperability and accountability.
 - uniformity in data collection and reporting mechanisms.
 - specific targets for emerging issues/areas beyond 2025.
 - track youth (defined as 18-35) engagement on all WSIS action lines.

Follow-up and Review

- Several interventions noted the lack of mechanisms to integrate monitoring and follow up of the implementation of action lines at national levels. Specific speakers suggested:
 - a multilayer follow-up mechanism including an annual national review, and a midterm 5-year review, rather than a 10-year review of WSIS.
 - using global indicators plus indicators that reflect the reality of particular groups
 - specifically for IGF: thorough measurement of participation, funding, and contributions.
- Specific speakers also noted:
 - the global necessity for capacity building.
 - inclusive and evolved hybrid models for consultations should continue to be explored and implemented.
 - multilateral processes should evolve (Netmundial+10 São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines (SPMG)), ensuring diversity and ensuring robust multilateral processes.