WSIS+20 Informal Stakeholder Consultations

ETC Group
soledad@etcgroup.org

Thank you, co-facilitators, excellencies, and colleagues,

I speak on behalf of **ETC Group** and the **Global Digital Justice Forum (GDJF)** to address paragraph 27 of the text and offer concrete proposals to reduce the environmental footprint of the digital sector.

We must challenge the dominant narrative that portrays digital technologies as dematerialized and inherently green. In reality, the infrastructure behind digitalization — from semiconductor supply chains to data centers — imposes severe material, environmental, and social costs. The Global South provides the minerals, energy, and land, but has little control over the technologies or the value they generate.

A just and sustainable digital transition demands more than energy efficiency or recycling. We offer six forward-looking priorities:

1. **Ensure device longevity and the right to repair**. Governments must adopt binding standards that ban planned obsolescence, enable repairability, and promote hardware reuse and upgradability.
2. **Regulate the expansion of data centers**. Their location must be subject to environmental and social impact assessments, with the free, prior, and informed consent of local communities. Water, biodiversity, and livelihoods must not be sacrificed for digital infrastructure that primarily serves corporate interests abroad.
3. **Rebalance energy and environmental priorities in developing countries**. Public resources should not be diverted from essential services like drinking water, health care, or sustainable agriculture in order to subsidize energy-intensive digital infrastructure.
4. **Avoid the use of dangerous or environmentally harmful energy sources** — such as nuclear power and large-scale hydroelectric dams — in powering the digital economy. The digital economy must be aligned with truly renewable, community-centered energy systems.
5. **Acknowledge that data processing and storage are environmentally costly activities, and must be recognized as significant contributors to climate change, not as neutral or clean by default.**
6. **Advance a meaningful circular economy**. Circularity must go beyond recycling, and address the full digital value chain — from extraction to e-waste — guided by principles of environmental justice, intergenerational equity, and ecological limits.

In sum, there can be no sustainable digital future without democratic governance, corporate accountability, and respect for the communities and ecosystems afected by the whole digital value chain.

Thank you.