

## **Statement at the 1st WSIS+20 Stakeholder Consultation, 10 June 2025**

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Thank you to the co-facilitators and DESA for giving stakeholders the opportunity to speak here today. As others have said, hopefully in the future there will be chances for direct interaction with governments, as we had during the Tunis phase, and as we have in multi-stakeholder institutions.

Regarding substantive issues: Given the new geopolitical and UN budgetary realities, I hope we can take on board the hard lessons learned 20 years ago and limit the time that we're going to spend relitigating Internet governance and enhanced cooperation. We should instead focus on the zone of possible agreement and hence concentrate on reaffirming the WSIS outcomes in full. New issues relating to digital public infrastructure, digital governance and artificial intelligence should be handled incrementally within the existing Action Lines and resources rather than by trying to negotiate expansive new mandates that could cause extensive debate and political problems. I also would suggest that the Internet Governance Forum should be given permanent mandate, and that the Global Digital Compact should be fully integrated into the WSIS process, which enjoys broader support.

Regarding institutional and procedural issues: First, I strongly support the suggestions made in the Five Point Plan coordinated by the Global Digital Rights Coalition that was referred to earlier. It is great that we are now able to do consultations via Zoom and give many stakeholders a chance to speak. But at the same time, the WSIS Review process still falls short of actual multi-stakeholder engagement as practiced in other institutional environments that matter for global digital governance. I hope we can make further progress in trying to up the game of the United Nations.

In this respect I would in particular flag the suggestion in the Plan and its follow-up Eight Practical Recommendations about reforming the accreditation process for eligible stakeholders. It can be very difficult for those of us who are individuals and actively participate in real multi-stakeholder processes to also engage fully in these kinds of "multilateral-plus" environments where one has to be a member or professional staff of an accredited organization. Hence, the Recommendations suggest expanding accreditation beyond the WSIS+10 criteria to include participants in the national, regional, and global IGFs.

Second, I support the Swiss government's "WSIS-plus" proposals for expanding the role of the UNGIS, creating a multi-stakeholder steering group to collaborate with the UNGIS, and making the CSTD's WSIS work transparent and multi-stakeholder.

Lastly, we should think expansively about Action Line 1, and try to consider how to improve the mechanisms of multi-stakeholder participation in multilateral processes. Multi-stakeholder organizations are learning systems that continually improve their procedures and adapt to new circumstances. UN processes are in comparison rather procedurally stagnant, notwithstanding the proclamations at the Summit of the Future about reimagining multilateralism and transforming global governance. We need to reinvent the relationship between stakeholders and intergovernmental processes and learn how to do these things more effectively. Some of the suggestions made by the EU regarding policy sandboxes and a WSIS Sounding Board, and similar ideas from others, should be given full consideration in this regard.

Thank you very much.