Call for Inputs: WSIS+20 Review

Dear delegates,

In accordance with **ITU Council Resolution 1332**, members and other stakeholders are invited by the Chair of the CWG WSIS&SDG to **contribute their views** on the work of the ITU in the WSIS+20 review, including ideas related to the review of the WSIS Action Lines.

Your ideas and feedback are crucial to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive assessment of the WSIS process.

SUBMIT your inputs via the **online form here**, not later than
31 January 2025.

The process aims to gather valuable insights into various aspects of the WSIS+20 review process, such as:

- Achievements and challenges in implementing the Geneva Plan of Action
- Alignment of the WSIS process with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- The continuous evolution of WSIS in response to emerging trends and technologies
- The future of WSIS beyond 2025

For any queries or additional information, please contact the
CWG-WSIS&SDG Chair and secretariat at wsis-info@itu.int.

With best regards,

CWG-WSIS&SDG secretariat

The RIPE NCC Contribution to the ITU WSIS+20 Review
Submitted on 16 January 2025

Implementation of the WSIS Process
1- What are the main achievements of the implementation of the WSIS process in the past 20 years?

Main Achievements of the WSIS Process in the Past 20 Years:

- **Advancement of the Information Society:** The WSIS process has established a shared vision for the global Information Society, emphasising the role of ICTs in fostering sustainable development.

- **Creation of Multistakeholder Platforms:** WSIS has institutionalised the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance, encouraging collaboration between governments, the private sector, the technical community, academics and civil society. Platforms like the IGF have emerged as key spaces for dialogue on global Internet governance issues.
- **Focus on ICT for Sustainable Development:** The alignment of WSIS Action Lines with the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has highlighted ICTs as critical enablers for achieving the SDGs.
- **Strengthening Partnerships:** The WSIS process has improved international collaboration and partnerships. It has strengthened the cooperation among governments and the established bodies responsible for Internet standards and policy development, such as the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

2- What are ITU's main contributions towards the implementation of the WSIS Process in 20 Years?

ITU's Main Contributions Towards the Implementation of the WSIS Process in the Past 20 Years:

- **Facilitating Global Dialogues and Summits:** The ITU played a central role in organising the **WSIS Summits in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005)**, which laid the foundation for the global Information Society framework.
- **Coordination of WSIS Action Lines:** ITU has led the coordination and implementation of several WSIS Action Lines, including ICT infrastructure development, capacity building, cybersecurity, and access to information. Through its leadership, ITU has ensured the alignment of these action lines with broader global development agendas, such as the SDGs.
- **Promoting Connectivity and Infrastructure Development:** ITU has spearheaded initiatives to expand global ICT infrastructure, particularly in underserved and remote regions. Programs such as Connect 2030 Agenda and Partners2Connect have focused on fostering universal, affordable, and sustainable access to ICTs.
- **Encouraging Multistakeholder Collaboration:** ITU has facilitated partnerships between member states and private sector members ensuring inclusive participation in the WSIS process and beyond.

3- The WSIS process stands as a strong example of global digital cooperation in action for over two decades now. How can we ensure that this inclusive multistakeholder model is sustained and further strengthened?

Ensuring the Sustainability and Strengthening of the WSIS Multistakeholder Model could be sustained by:

- **Encourage Multilateral and Multistakeholder Cooperation:** Balance multilateral initiatives with multistakeholder approaches, ensuring that both work in tandem rather than as competing frameworks.
- **Strengthen collaboration between governments and existing Internet standards and policy development bodies, such as ICANN, IETF, and the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs):** This cooperation ensures a cohesive and coordinated approach to Internet governance and policy development, leveraging the technical and operational expertise of these established organisations.
- **Create stronger synergie**s between WSIS and the IGF to ensure alignment and prevent overlapping efforts.
- **Foster Inclusive Participation:** Use digital platforms and tools to facilitate remote participation, ensuring stakeholders, especially those from remote or underserved areas, can actively contribute. Develop multilingual platforms and materials to bridge language barriers in discussions and documentation.
- **Enhance Capacity Building Efforts:** Scale up training programs and initiatives to equip stakeholders with knowledge of emerging technologies and their governance implications.
- **Promote Transparency and Accountability:** Maintain open and transparent decision-making processes, with clear reporting mechanisms for WSIS initiatives.
- **Ensure Funding and Resource Availability:** Secure sustainable funding models to support WSIS activities and enable participation from underfunded stakeholders. Encourage public-private partnerships to mobilise resources and expertise.

4- What are the challenges that remain in the implementation of the WSIS process?

The WSIS process has been instrumental in shaping the global Information Society. Yet, significant challenges remain in its implementation, particularly as the Internet continues to evolve as a global network of networks. This interconnected system relies on open standards, unique registration services, and governance structures such as the IETF, RIRs and ICANN. These bodies develop protocols, policies, and frameworks to ensure interoperability, accountability, and stability. However, several barriers threaten this ecosystem:

- **Geopolitical Tensions and Fragmentation Risks:** Geopolitical conflicts and diverging national interests jeopardise global cooperation. Risks of Internet fragmentation and competing digital sovereignty agendas challenge the open and inclusive nature of the Internet. Mandate overreach and overly prescriptive regulations exacerbate these risks.
- **Lack of Multistakeholder Engagement:** Despite progress, the WSIS process often struggles to fully integrate private sector, civil society, academia, and technical communities into decision-making processes. Inclusive multistakeholder governance is essential to address diverse global challenges.
- **Funding and Resource Constraints:** Limited financial resources and technical capacity, particularly in developing regions, hinder progress in implementing WSIS Action Lines. These constraints prevent the deployment of infrastructure and

capacity-building programs needed to ensure equitable Internet access and participation.
- **Regulatory and Policy Gaps:** Technological advancements outpace regulatory frameworks. The absence of harmonised global policies undermines interoperability, creates inefficiencies, and complicates collaboration across regions, threatening the Internet's foundational role as a global enabler.
- **Digital Literacy and Skills Gap:** A substantial portion of the global population lacks the skills necessary to participate in the digital era effectively. Addressing this gap is critical to ensuring all individuals benefit from the Internet's opportunities.

WSIS Action Lines
5- Which specific Action Lines have had the most significant impact, and why?

- **Action Line C2: Information and Communication Infrastructure**
  This action line has played a pivotal role in expanding global ICT infrastructure, enabling greater connectivity and access to the Internet, particularly in developing regions. Investments in broadband networks and mobile connectivity have significantly bridged the digital divide, fostering economic growth and inclusion.

- **Action Line C3: Access to Information and Knowledge**
  Efforts under this action line have democratised access to information, making it easier for individuals and communities to benefit from digital resources.
  Open access initiatives and ICT-enabled public services have empowered communities to participate in the knowledge economy.

- **Action Line C4: Capacity Building**
  Focus on training, education, and skill development has strengthened the ability of individuals, especially in underserved regions, to leverage ICTs effectively.

- **Action Line C11: International and Regional Cooperation**
  This action line has facilitated collaboration and partnership among stakeholders at all levels to address national, regional and global ICT challenges.

6- Considering that the WSIS outcomes have demonstrated their relevance and applicability to new and emerging areas, how can the implementation of the WSIS principles and corresponding WSIS Action Lines be enhanced to effectively address these topics?

Enhancing the Implementation of WSIS Principles and Action Lines for New and Emerging Areas:

- **Facilitate Continuous Dialogue on Emerging Trends:** Use the WSIS Forum as a dynamic space to discuss emerging technologies and their implications, fostering proactive responses to technological evolution. Encourage sharing of best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches among stakeholders.
- **Bolster Capacity Building for Emerging Technologies:** Expand Action Line C4 (Capacity Building) to focus on education and training programs. Equip policymakers, developers, and users with the skills needed to manage and deploy emerging technologies effectively.
- **Encourage Policy Innovation and Harmonisation:** Strengthen Action Line C6 (Enabling Environment) by developing flexible, forward-looking policy and regulatory frameworks to address the unique challenges of emerging technologies. Support global and regional harmonisation of policies to ensure coherence and reduce regulatory fragmentation.

Have you any suggestions and inputs on the *WSIS+20 Review Action Lines, highlighting key milestones, challenges and emerging trends beyond 2025* prepared by the WSIS Action Line facilitators.
https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Home/About#actionLines

The WSIS+20 Review represents a critical juncture to reaffirm the foundational principles of an open, inclusive, and secure Internet. By recognising the essential role of community-driven technical governance, accelerating IPv6 deployment for enhancing connectivity, closing the digital divide, and preparing for tomorrow's technologies, we can ensure the Internet continues to serve as a catalyst for innovation, growth, and empowerment for everyone.

WSIS Action Line for advancing the SDGs
8- How can the alignment between the WSIS Action Lines and SDGs be strengthened towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

The alignment between WSIS Action Lines and SDGs can drive sustainable progress toward the 2030 Agenda.

- **Promoting Inclusive and Open Governance (C1):** Upholding multistakeholder, inclusive governance frameworks ensures that ICT policies remain equitable and development-oriented. This supports SDG 16's goals of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions.
- **Building Resilient ICT Infrastructure (C2):** Expanding IPv6 deployment and affordable connectivity remains essential for achieving SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 17 (Partnerships). Prioritising infrastructure in developing countries and underserved regions ensures equitable access and reduces the digital divide.

- **Enhancing Capacity Building (C4):** Comprehensive training and education programs empower communities with technical skills, supporting SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Targeted capacity building in emerging technologies like IPv6, AI, and IoT fosters sustainable development and local expertise.
- **Promoting Cybersecurity and Trust (C5):** Advancing secure routing and Internet, trusted digital environments, and strong cybersecurity frameworks align with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Secure networks are fundamental to digital inclusion and the sustainable Internet.
- **Fostering Regional and Global Cooperation (C11):** Strengthening partnerships between the different multistakeholder groups ensures progress toward SDG 17. National, regional and international Platforms such as the NRIs, MENOG, IGF and WSIS Forum exemplify effective collaboration in addressing shared development goals.

Organisations like RIPE NCC contribute to these objectives by fostering collaboration, capacity building, and securing Internet infrastructure to support global development goals.

Future Vision and WSIS Beyond 2025

9- How can we further strengthen multistakeholder platforms such as the WSIS Forum as the platform for digital development and IGF as the platform for governance and policy issues?

To ensure platforms like the WSIS Forum and IGF effectively address digital development and governance challenges, it is crucial to adopt strategies that build inclusivity, foster synergy, and enhance collaboration, while respecting and recognising the unique role of Internet organisations such as the IETF, ICANN, and Regional Internet Registries (RIRs).

Enhance Inclusivity and Diversity: Multistakeholder platforms must actively involve underrepresented groups, including women, youth, marginalised communities, and stakeholders from LDCs. Providing financial and logistical support, such as travel grants and advanced remote participation tools, ensures equal access and diverse representation. This inclusivity strengthens the legitimacy and effectiveness of decision-making processes.

Promote Synergy Between WSIS Forum and IGF: Linking the WSIS Forum's focus on digital development with the IGF's emphasis on Internet governance and policy issues fosters stronger collaboration.

Respect and Recognise the Unique Role of Internet Bodies:
Strengthening these platforms requires acknowledging the critical roles played by bodies like the IETF, ICANN, and RIRs. Their expertise in developing standards, ensuring unique resource allocation, and creating governance frameworks must be integrated into discussions. Multistakeholder platforms should amplify the voice of these technical communities and align efforts to preserve the Internet's openness, stability, and resilience.

Enhance Collaboration Between UN Platforms: Building stronger linkages between the WSIS Forum, IGF, and UN agencies like ITU, UNESCO, and UNDP can align digital development and governance priorities. Mechanisms for cross-platform collaboration and information sharing can enrich discussions, avoid duplication, and create a unified approach to addressing global digital challenges.

10- How can the implementation of the WSIS process and the Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact be aligned to achieve shared goals?

Aligning the WSIS process with the Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact offers an opportunity to unify efforts toward shared goals of inclusivity, sustainability, and responsible digital transformation. Both frameworks emphasise bridging the digital divide, equitable access, global cooperation, collaborative governance and ethical use of technology, making their alignment natural and impactful.

A key area of convergence is inclusivity. Both prioritise bridging the digital divide by expanding connectivity, enhancing digital skills, and promoting gender equality in ICT access. Coordinated efforts can amplify impact and ensure marginalised communities benefit from digital opportunities.

Internet governance provides another point of synergy. The WSIS process complements the Compact's call for multistakeholder Internet governance. Integrating WSIS mechanisms, such as the IGF and regional dialogues, into the Compact's implementation can create inclusive, representative policies. Respect and recognition for the unique role of bodies such as the IETF, ICANN, and the Regional Internet Registries, which develop protocols, establish policies, provide technical operational support, and create frameworks to ensure coordination, accountability, and the robust functioning of the Internet, are essential. These entities underpin the Internet's open and interoperable nature, making their involvement central to the success of both frameworks.

By fostering alignment through these shared priorities and recognising the critical contributions of Internet bodies, the WSIS process and the Compact can drive a unified, inclusive, and sustainable digital future.

11- What are the key emerging digital trends and topics to be considered by ITU in the WSIS+20 review and future vision beyond 2025?

The WSIS+20 review and future vision must address key challenges and opportunities to ensure an open, inclusive, and secure Internet. Key priorities include strengthening Internet infrastructure resilience, emphasising IPv6 adoption, routing security, and equitable connectivity to bridge the digital divide. ITU plays a critical role in driving these priorities to support connecting the remaining 2.6 billion unconnected.

Ensuring that means of communication remain unaffected by domestic political disputes, international conflicts, or wars is paramount. This includes safeguarding the provision and registration of Internet numbering resources, ensuring operational continuity and the resilience of global Internet infrastructure. ITU's involvement in advocating for these principles reinforces its commitment to an open and interoperable Internet.

Preserving the open, borderless nature of the Internet while balancing national sovereignty and global interoperability remains a pressing challenge. ITU can provide a platform for dialogue and collaboration, supporting member states in aligning their policies with the technical community's expertise to uphold global interoperability and inclusivity.

By fostering multistakeholder collaboration, ITU can enhance alignment between the efforts of governments, technical communities, and other stakeholders. Through its leadership, ITU can ensure that WSIS+20 advances a secure, inclusive, and sustainable Internet for all. RIPE NCC stands ready to contribute its expertise to these shared goals, ensuring the Internet remains a vital resource for global development and innovation.