ICANN's Submission to CWG WSIS & SDGs Call for Inputs on WSIS+20 Review

ITU Council Resolution 1332 resolves to invite the members and other stakeholders to contribute views on the work of the ITU in the WSIS+20 review including ideas related to the review of the WSIS Action Lines through the CWG WSIS&SDG.

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.

Deadline 31 January

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is pleased to respond to the call for inputs on the WSIS+20 review by the ITU Council Working Group on WSIS&SDGS. As a Sector Member of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector or ITU-D, we support the ITU's commitment to digital inclusion and collaborate jointly with the ITU on activities such as promoting meaningful connectivity and capacity building.

Implementation of the WSIS Process

1. **What are the main achievements of the implementation of the WSIS process in the past 20 years?**

Digital inclusivity and multilingualism: A vast majority of the world's population are non-native English speakers. Digital inclusion enables people to use the Internet in their native language allowing them to fully realize the Internet's full potential and benefits. Significant progress has been made toward multilingualism and digital inclusivity. Collaboration within the ICANN community has led to the delegation of 151 Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) supporting 37 languages across 23 scripts, and established rules for 26 commonly used scripts, spanning over 350 languages.

Multistakeholder model: Over the past 20 years, the WSIS process has achieved significant milestones, including the successful implementation of the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, which continues to drive the Internet's development and it remains central to achieving the WSIS outcomes beyond 2025.

Over half of the world's population is online: Internet access has expanded significantly over the past two decades, with two-thirds of the global population now online, underscoring the Internet's vital role as an enabler for the achievement of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals.

Spurred new innovations and technologies: The digital transformation enabled by Internet technologies has impacted various sectors, such as healthcare, education, finance, and government - fostering innovation, new livelihoods, and services. Efforts to create a more inclusive digital landscape have supported meaningful connectivity

such as through multilingualism and IDNs, while enhanced security and privacy measures have bolstered trust in the digital ecosystem.

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

Promoting global connectivity: The ITU facilitates cooperation that has been instrumental for the growth and development of the telecommunications infrastructure, which serves as the backbone for communications, including the Internet. Additionally, the ITU develops technical telecommunication standards that have enabled interoperability and global connectivity of telecommunication systems.

Promoting universal and meaningful access: Facilitates the exchange of best practices and experiences among ITU members to cultivate a strong enabling environment that promotes universal and meaningful Internet access. Over the past two decades, ITU Telecommunication Development Sector's Study Group reports have captured members' best practices and experiences, advancing local and national digital connectivity. The ITU Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet) maintains a consultation repository of multistakeholder best practices and experiences on capacity building, digital inclusion, and an enabling environment.

The WSIS framework recognizes that multistakeholder collaboration is necessary for building an information society and advancing digital transformation. The ITU has fostered multistakeholder collaboration through efforts such as the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition to promote universal and meaningful access. For example, ICANN joined the ITU Partner2Connect Digital Coalition to provide capacity development support to African country code top-level domain (ccTLD) registries to prepare them for competition in the domain industry, which can spur their economic growth.

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**?

The WSIS process has demonstrated the power of global digital cooperation through its inclusive multistakeholder model over the past two decades. To preserve the model and ensure its sustainability and growth, it is crucial to protect its inclusivity by broadening representation to include all voices, especially from low and middle income countries. Furthermore, efforts should also focus on improving perceived weaknesses of the multistakeholder model, such as lengthy decision-making process and integrating it into other frameworks to highlight its ability to coexist with alternative approaches rather than compete with them. Sustaining the multistakeholder model requires garnering support for existing multistakeholder spaces such as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and National and Regional Initiatives (NRIs) that have generated practical ideas to address Internet policy related issues.

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

Despite its successes, the WSIS process faces several ongoing challenges in its implementation. Geopolitical tensions remain a significant barrier, as competing national interests can hinder consensus and global cooperation on digital policies. Additionally, the enactment of rules and regulations without a thorough understanding of their technical implications can result in unintended consequences, such as Internet fragmentation or creating inefficiencies in digital systems.

WSIS Action Lines

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

WSIS Action Line C1 recognized that all stakeholders, not only governments, play a role in advancing ICTs development. Multistakeholder collaboration remains an important driver for ICTs development, fostering partnerships, investments, facilitating knowledge sharing and capacity building, and providing innovative and alternative ICTs connectivity approaches.

WSIS Action Lines C1, C2, C3, C6, C8, which are focused on development and the widespread adoption of ICTs have profoundly shaped the modern digital landscape.

The integration of ICTs has also driven digital inclusion, connecting rural, remote, and underserved communities, empowering individuals with new skills and tools for participation in the global digital economy. These impacts underscore the transformative power of ICTs as a cornerstone of the WSIS process.

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?**

The relevance and applicability of WSIS outcomes to new and emerging areas highlight the importance of enhancing the implementation of its principles and Action Lines. To address these topics effectively, the multistakeholder model of Internet governance should continue to be leveraged, with a focus on improving its effectiveness in fostering timely responses and identifying sustainable solutions. This involves streamlining decision-making processes, ensuring diverse stakeholder participation, and fostering inclusivity to represent a broad range of perspectives.

7. **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

On WSIS Action Line C11 - International and Regional Collaboration may not be limited to government-to-government collaborations, as nongovernment stakeholders could share implementable insights and solutions. In addition, formalizing how to bring in the multistakeholder collaboration within the structure of the multilateral processes could help improve predictability in the long-run.

On WSIS Action Line C5 - as the U.N. will continue to be a critical fora for cyber discussions, it is important for it to embrace multistakeholder participation to ensure the availability of technical expertise when dealing with cyber-related issues.

For WSIS Action Line C11, enhancing international and regional collaboration should go beyond government-to-government engagements. Nongovernmental stakeholders, including the technical community, private sector, academia, and civil

society, bring valuable insights and innovative solutions that can be effectively implemented. Formalizing mechanisms to integrate multistakeholder collaboration within multilateral processes would improve predictability and coherence in addressing global digital challenges.

Under WSIS Action Line C5, the U.N. will remain a vital platform for discussions on cybersecurity. To enhance its effectiveness, the U.N. should embrace multistakeholder participation, ensuring that technical expertise is readily available to inform decisions on complex Internet-related issues. This inclusive approach would strengthen global efforts to promote cybersecurity and trust in the digital ecosystem. By fostering broader collaboration and expertise, the WSIS Action Lines can remain relevant and impactful in addressing emerging trends and challenges.

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

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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?**

Existing multistakeholder platforms should be leveraged to cover new issues, instead of creating competing platforms. Maximize on the experience and expertise of diverse stakeholder groups in these platforms. In addition, processes should be established to channel outcomes and learning points from these platforms, so that the information may be taken into consideration by policymaking processes.

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**?

WSIS, and its related platforms like the IGF, have been designed to be broad enough to accommodate future digital developments. As such, the key elements of the Pact

of the Future and the Global Digital Compact should be mapped against WSIS action lines and be aligned. Duplicating processes will widen the digital divide as stakeholders, including governments, are increasingly struggling to keep up with various workstreams due to limited resources.

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?

Keeping in mind the ITU's relevant co-facilitator roles on some of the WSIS action lines, inclusion and meaningful connectivity should continue to be focus areas for the WSIS+20 review and beyond 2025. The WSIS+20 review provides an opportunity to celebrate the progress made over the past two decades in closing the digital divide. However, more work needs to be done to close the gap even further and bring the 2.6 billion people who are still unconnected online. We need to stop reinventing the wheel and instead reinvigorate our efforts and energies in proven multistakeholder processes and approaches.