

Africa WSIS + 20 Review: Success, Challenges & Prospects

CONCEPT NOTE

09- 11 October 2024

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Julius Nyerere International Conference Centre (JNICC)

Background

The World Summit on the Information Society¹ (WSIS) process has been instrumental in shaping the global information society by developing a common understanding of the key principles that harness the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to support development objectives. In 2003, WSIS established a vision for the international multistakeholder community of "people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented information society" aligned with the United Nations Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To achieve this vision, 11 Action Lines (AL) were agreed upon in 2005².

The information society has undergone a profound transformation since 2005, emerging as a more complex, interconnected, and digital ecosystem that diverges significantly from its original conception. The rapid proliferation of digital technologies has reshaped the landscape, yielding a global digital ecosystem and a corresponding Global Digital Compact. Although the WSIS Principles and Action Lines remain pertinent, they continue to address global digital challenges by aligning with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promoting inclusive development through multi-stakeholder approaches.

As the 20th anniversary of WSIS approaches in 2025, the [General Assembly resolution A/70/125](#) calls for a high-level meeting to review the overall implementation of WSIS outcomes, known as the WSIS+20 Review. As a result, it is expected that the WSIS+20 will provide the opportunity to reflect and discuss on the evolution of the WSIS implementation process. The review will assess the progress made in the first quarter of the century, spanning the last 20 years. It will examine what has been achieved, what has fallen short, and the lessons learned. Additionally, it will explore how to fulfill the vision outlined by WSIS nearly 20 years ago, aiming to create information and knowledge societies where everyone can harness the opportunities offered by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and benefit from their transformative power.

Therefore, In September 2020, the United Nations adopted a political declaration on its 75th anniversary, leading to the release of the Secretary-General's report, Our Common Agenda, in September 2021. This report proposes a Global Digital Compact (GDC) to be endorsed at the Summit of the Future in September 2024. The GDC aims to revitalize global multilateral institutions for the 2030s and beyond through a technology track involving all stakeholders, including governments, the UN system, the private sector, civil society, grassroots organizations, academia, and individuals, particularly youth.

¹ <https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/basic/about.html>

² <https://publicadministration.un.org/wsis10/WSIS-Action-Lines-and-Facilitators>

The Compact is expected to outline shared principles for 'an open, free, and secure digital future for all', addressing issues such as: Digital connectivity, Preventing Internet fragmentation, Data privacy and usage options, Applying human rights online, Promoting a trustworthy Internet through accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content, and Regulating Artificial Intelligence (AI) to align with shared global values. After over two years of negotiations, the Global Digital Compact is now in its final stage.

In this context, UNECA is co-organizing the Africa WSIS+20 Review Workshop with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and other key stakeholders to assess the summit's progress, challenges, and prospects and Africa's particular contribution to the Global Digital Compact. This workshop provides a crucial platform for African stakeholders to convene, deliberate, and formulate a unified position on WSIS+20, enabling them to realize the WSIS vision and build a more inclusive and sustainable digital society in Africa. Through this platform, stakeholders will address critical questions, including:

1. To what extent have African Member States realized the WSIS vision for a "people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented information society" over the past 20 years?
2. How effectively do the current WSIS Action Lines respond to contemporary digital governance trends and emerging technologies?
3. How can the WSIS+20 process be better aligned and coordinated with the Global Digital Compact and the Summit of the Future to avoid duplication of existing multistakeholder processes

Objectives

The objective of the workshop is to foster in-depth dialogue among African stakeholders on the implementation of the WSIS Vision, including:

1. **Review Progress:** Evaluate the achievements and shortfalls in the implementation of WSIS action lines in Africa over the past two decades.
2. **Identify Challenges:** Discuss the specific challenges faced by African countries in building people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented information society.
3. **Share Best Practices:** Highlight successful initiatives and practices that can be replicated across the continent.
4. **Policy Recommendations on WSIS+20 and alignment with the Global Digital Compact:** Develop actionable recommendations for policy makers, other stakeholders, and international partners to foster an inclusive and sustainable information society in Africa.
5. **Enhance Collaboration and cooperation:** Strengthen partnerships among stakeholders for effective WSIS implementation.

Expected Outcomes

1. **Comprehensive Review Report:** An evidence based detailed report on the progress and challenges in implementing WSIS action lines in Africa.
2. **WSIS+ 20 Policy Recommendations:** Actionable recommendations to be submitted to UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD).

Date, Venue and Participants

The meeting will be held in a hybrid format from October 09 to 11, 2024, at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania at Julius Nyerere International Conference Centre (JNICC). The event will bring together a diverse group of WSIS stakeholders, including Policymakers, ICT experts, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Inter-governmental Organizations (IGOs), Representatives of regional and international organizations, Telecommunications operators, Private sector entities, Civil society organizations, Academic and research institutions and Other relevant stakeholders.

Outputs

The primary outputs of the Review will be a comprehensive report detailing the proceedings and featuring policy recommendations for scaling up the implementation of WSIS Action Lines in Africa, as well as priorities for the Africa Global Digital Compact (GDC).

Working language

The working languages of this meeting are English and French. Simultaneous interpretation services will be provided for both languages, ensuring that all participants can fully engage in the discussions.

Agenda

Provided Separately