

Africa Regional Consultation on the WSIS+20 Outcomes Implementation: Operationalizing WSIS+20 and the GDC

Concept Note

Venue: United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa

Date: July 1-2, 2026

Organizers: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

1. Introduction

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) marked its 20th anniversary in 2025, culminating in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) High-Level Meeting held from 16–17 December 2025. The meeting formally concluded the twenty-year review and resulted in the adoption of UNGA Resolution A/RES/80/173, the outcome document of the WSIS+20 review process. The resolution reflects global consensus to extend the WSIS mandate through 2035, while embedding the Global Digital Compact (GDC) as a guiding framework for an inclusive, secure, and sustainable digital future. Therefore, the 2026 Africa Consultation aims to operationalize the Africa 2035 Digital Implementation Roadmap by translating the 127 paragraphs of UNGA Resolution A/RES/80/173 into a prioritized regional work plan aligned with Africa’s socioeconomic realities.

2. Background and Rationale

WSIS was established as a two-phase United Nations initiative to bridge the global digital divide. The first phase, held in Geneva in 2003, laid the political foundation for a people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society and established the 11 WSIS Action Lines. The second phase, held in Tunis in 2005, focused on implementation, financing mechanisms, and the creation of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). For over two decades, this framework has served as the primary multi-stakeholder platform for aligning ICT development with global goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The regional journey toward the 20-year milestone was anchored by a series of consultations aimed at assessing progress and defining a unified forward-looking agenda. A key outcome was the WSIS+20 Africa Regional Review Meeting held in Cotonou (14–16 May 2025), co-organized by the ECA and the Government of Benin. The meeting marked a strategic shift from retrospective assessment to forward-looking implementation, culminating in the Cotonou Declaration, which calls for the continuation of WSIS processes, including the IGF and WSIS Forum, through 2035. It further emphasizes the need to operationalize WSIS and the Global Digital Compact (GDC) in a complementary manner to advance Africa’s digital transformation agenda.

Building on the outcomes of Cotonou, ECA and strategic partners advanced Africa’s regional priorities during the WSIS+20 processes in Geneva and at the UNGA high-level side event, “Translating Global Commitments into Regional and National Action.” The discussions emphasized that the next decade must be implementation-driven, supported by a Joint Implementation Roadmap to harmonize WSIS and GDC workstreams into a coherent African

implementation agenda. This momentum contributed to the adoption of UNGA Resolution A/RES/80/173 on 17 December 2025, which recognizes regional outcomes and mandates UN Regional Commissions to support regional operationalization through strengthened technical assistance and capacity-building. The resolution also introduces new priorities, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), while confirming the permanent mandate of the IGF through 2035.

3. Objectives

Building on the mandates of UNGA Resolution A/RES/80/173 and to support Africa's preparation for the 2026 Joint Implementation Roadmap, as well as the 2030 Interim Review, biennial progress reviews, and the 2035 stocktaking process, the Forum aims to:

- a. Present and discuss the Africa 2035 Digital Implementation Roadmap, to operationalize a coordinated WSIS+20 and Global Digital Compact (GDC) implementation approach.
- b. Strengthen coordination among Regional Commissions and multistakeholder partnerships to support coherent implementation, monitoring, and reporting of WSIS+20 outcomes across Africa.
- c. Explore national updates and regional perspectives on the implementation of WSIS+20 outcomes and emerging digital governance priorities.
- d. Provide policy recommendations to strengthen Africa's role in global digital governance and advance a coherent, inclusive, and implementation-oriented digital transformation agenda.

4. Expected Outcomes

The workshop is expected to generate the following outcomes:

- a. Enhanced understanding of progress in the implementation of WSIS+20 outcomes across Africa, supported by shared national updates and regional evidence.
- b. A comprehensive Joint Africa 2035 Digital Implementation Roadmap aligning WSIS Action Lines with the Global Digital Compact (GDC) to support Africa's digital transformation agenda.
- c. A harmonized reporting framework and mechanisms integrating key thematic priorities, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), in line with UNGA Resolution A/RES/80/173.
- d. Policy Declaration

5. Target Audience

The Forum will bring together key stakeholders essential for translating global digital governance into national action, including policymakers, ICT experts, RECs and IGOs, representatives of regional and international organizations, Telecommunications operators, private sector, civil society, academic and research institutions, and others.

6. Work Languages

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

7. Contacts

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