

Concept Note

WSIS+20 UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting : Side Event

Title: Translating Global Commitments into Regional and National Action: Towards an Inclusive Digital Society

Organized by:

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

In collaboration with: UNDESA, ITU, UN Regional Commissions, and Government of Benin

1. Background and Rationale

The **WSIS+20 Review** is a defining global process to assess two decades of progress in achieving a people-centered, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society. It also serves as a key opportunity to shape the digital future in alignment with the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The WSIS+20 Zero Draft reaffirms the role of the five UN Regional Commissions as key regional implementation mechanisms for the continued WSIS+20 follow up and the operationalisation of the Global Digital Compact.

As part of this process, **UNECA has led Africa's WSIS+20 Regional Review and Multistakeholder Consultations**, culminating in the *Cotonou Declaration on Accelerating Africa's Digital Transformation* (May 2025) underscores the region's commitment to advancing a multistakeholder (MSH) approach to Internet Governance. This approach highlights inclusive participation, shared accountability, and coordinated implementation as cornerstone.

The regional review highlighted critical policy gaps and priorities from **financing mechanisms, digital public infrastructure to AI governance, cybersecurity, and youth empowerment** while emphasizing that *effective implementation requires integrated action across WSIS, GDC, and SDG frameworks*. At the same time, the WSIS+20 process also reaffirm the **multistakeholder model of Internet governance** and the **renewal of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) mandate**, ensuring that human rights, equality, and inclusion remain central to digital transformation efforts.

As Member States increasingly refer to a **joint implementation roadmap**, this side event provides a forward-looking platform to link regional experiences with global commitments, reinforcing synergies between the **WSIS+20 outcomes**, the **Global Digital Compact**, and **Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063**. This side event will bridge Africa's regional review outcomes with the ongoing global WSIS+20 negotiations offering a space for **public institutions, governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector** to reflect on lessons learned and chart pathways for implementing the WSIS+20 outcomes in a way that advances both development and rights.

As Member States emphasize the need for a **joint implementation roadmap**, this side event offers a forward-looking platform to connect regional experiences with global commitments. It will bridge **regional WSIS+20 review outcomes** with the **ongoing global negotiations**, fostering synergies between the WSIS, the GDC, and the development agendas of 2030 and 2063. The discussion will bring together diverse stakeholders to reflect on lessons learned and identify practical pathways for implementing the WSIS+20 outcomes in ways that advance both sustainable developments.

2. Objectives

- Present key findings and institutional lessons from Region's WSIS+20 review and consultations.
- Explore strategies for translating the commitments made in the WSIS+20 regional process, as well as global commitments.
- Examine how regional and national experiences can inform **global WSIS+20 negotiations** and shape the final outcome document.

- Foster multistakeholder partnerships for digital inclusion, and discuss how **public institutions** can anchor multistakeholder collaboration, trust, and human rights in implementing WSIS+20 outcomes.
- Explore strategies to align WSIS+20 implementation with the **Global Digital Compact, Agenda 2030, and Agenda 2063**.

3. Expected Outcomes

- A consolidated **UN Regional Commissions contribution** to the WSIS+20 outcome document.
- Action-oriented recommendations on institutional reforms and financing frameworks for WSIS+20 implementation at national, regional, and global levels.
- Strengthened **regional–global linkages** between WSIS, IGF, and the Global Digital Compact.
- Strengthened multistakeholder engagement mechanisms, and enhanced dialogue among **public institutions and multistakeholder networks** on digital governance and rights.

4. Outputs

- Summary report of key messages and recommendations
- Compilation of best practices and lessons learned

5. Format/Sessions/themes

- From WSIS+20 to Action: Translating global outcomes into regional and national priorities
- Fostering Multistakeholder Collaboration
- Regional and national implementation pathways

6. Date, time and venue

- 15 December 2025, from 12:15 – 13:30 (New York Time/GMT-5)
- UN Headquarters, Conference Room 11

7. Target participants

- Policy makers
- Representatives from key stakeholders (private sector, civil society, academia, youth, women)
- UN and Development partners