UNITED NATIONS GROUP ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (UNGIS) CONTRIBUTION TO THE

HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (HLPF) 2024

2024 Theme: "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions"

*SDGs under review: **Goal 1.** End poverty in all its forms everywhere; **Goal 2.** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; **Goal 13.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; **Goal 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and **Goal 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.*

The United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) is the United Nations (UN) system's inter-agency mechanism for advancing policy coherence and programme coordination on matters related to information and communications technologies (ICTs) in support of internationally agreed development goals. Established in 2006 after the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the UNGIS mandate includes promoting collaboration and partnerships among the members of the Chief Executives Board (CEB) to contribute to the achievement of WSIS goals, providing guidance on issues related to inclusive information and knowledge societies, helping maintain issues related to science and technology at the top of the UN Agenda, and mainstreaming ICT for Development in the mandate of CEB members. UNGIS is comprised of 38 Members and this contribution to the HLPF process is framed by the collective UNGIS experience and expertise.

UNGIS meets annually at the WSIS Forum, which has evolved to become the world's largest annual gathering of the "ICT for development" community and a multistakeholder platform for coordination, information exchange, knowledge creation, sharing of best practices, and fostering partnerships to advance development goals.

As an existing body of interagency digital cooperation, UNGIS stands ready to ensure that efforts across the UN system are coherent, connected and coordinated to achieve maximum, sustainable impact. In the Decade of Action, UNGIS is a ready platform for knowledge exchange and valuable resource base that could support UN Member States and partners in leveraging innovative tools and approaches to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To learn more about UNGIS members activities, please visit the UNGIS website.

At the mid-point toward the 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals, the global community remains off-track, and in some SDGs, progress is even regressing. In this regard, the role of digital technologies as an enabler and accelerator for the 2030 Agenda has increasingly come to the forefront in recent years. The SDG Acceleration Agenda, released by the ITU and UNDP last year, indicates that 70 per cent of the SDG targets — 119 out of the total 169 — would benefit from acceleration through digital technologies, while 13 per cent (22) of the targets even directly call for the utilization of data and digital technologies. In this regard, ICTs are crucial for and in the "effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions" to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Across the entire 2030 Agenda, UNGIS members have thus expressed the need for accelerated action towards achieving SDGs related to WSIS Action Lines, including to bridge the digital divide in ICT infrastructure and digital skill and literacy, e-employment, cybersecurity, e-government, digital economy, e-agriculture, e-health, e-science, capacity building, enabling environment, etc.

Digital connectivity and digital inclusion are some of the key areas where sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2024, considering the sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets. Digital connectivity and digital inclusion must be a priority for all governments, even as they pursue digital transformation and digital development. More than ever, there is an urgent need to create an enabling ICT policy and regulatory environment that can guarantee access and connectivity, while ensuring inclusive and rights-based digital ecosystems. The international community should also recognize the urgent need to scale up global digital capacity-building, to address growing digital divides, both within and between countries, and to "leave no one behind". This requires strong and robust partnerships, high-level political commitment and the unlocking of needed funding, finances and resources to address systemic and institutional gaps in countries' abilities to access and use ICTs meaningfully, and thus harness the potential of digital technologies. For instance, in the area of Artificial Intelligence, in all three "data, compute, talent" areas, developing countries lag far behind. And for many countries, particularly in the Global South, the success of national digital transformation projects relies heavily on the competencies of public sector officials – their capacity to develop enabling frameworks, to anticipate technology trends, to mitigate the ethical- and human rights–related risks, to understand the development of digital platforms

UNGIS remains a key platform for the UN system to work together, providing strategic guidance and facilitating coordination among stakeholders to achieve the SDGs and objectives of the WSIS process. The WSIS Forum and the WSIS Stocktaking, supported by the UNGIS members, facilitate knowledge exchange and multistakeholder engagement, contributing to the achievement of the goals, including the SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17. UNGIS members also continued to prioritize the use of ICTs to deliver support to programme countries and constituencies, particularly in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to achieve poverty eradication and the afore-mentioned SDGs.

On poverty eradication for instance, digital technologies have been shaping digital economies and playing a critical role in providing new or better economic opportunities for many. ICTs can help in the eradication of poverty, as digital identification, payments, and platforms facilitate access to public services, boost financial inclusion, and improve livelihoods through engagement in the digital economy. For example, leveraging digital platforms and infrastructure provides a chance to reduce poverty by spurring economic activity and creating new jobs.

Digital transformation leads to more information, increased productivity, better data-driven decisions, and a wider customer reach for businesses. It is especially beneficial for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) that account for about 90% of businesses, more than 50% of employment worldwide and proven as effective instruments for poverty alleviation.

Digital technologies and digital public infrastructure also allow for the scaling up of social protection services and financial inclusion programs, broaden coverage, and reach people who are previously underserved or at risk of being excluded through better targeting and faster, safer disbursal of payments. Last year's adoption by the G20 of a consensus approach to digital public infrastructure is important in providing a global boost to such efforts to use digital technologies at scale, but with important safeguards and effective governance.

Finally, Goal 17 on Partnership lies at the heart of UNGIS' agencies efforts to harness ICTs and digital technologies to achieve the SDGs, including through incorporating ICTs for capacity-building within the LDCs. From efforts to achieve high-level political consensus on digital public infrastructure and promoting the use of digital public goods, public-private partnerships to ensure universal meaningful connectivity, inclusive digital transformation of societies, economies and livelihoods, UNGIS agencies remain committed to supporting this Goal and all others within the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, UNGIS, as an existing interagency mechanism, stands ready to help ensure that efforts across the UN system are coherent, connected and coordinated so that we can collectively ensure delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.

As an example of specific actions, policies and measures that are most urgently needed to effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to eradicate poverty and reinforce the 2030 Agenda, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs, UNGIS' continues contributing to the ongoing global discussions, including HLPF.

Harnessing the power of digital technologies is critical to enabling and accelerating the achievement of the SGDs. The utilization of ICT and emerging technologies as enablers for achieving SDGs and related targets necessitates intentional interventions and collaboration among various stakeholders. In this regard, the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action and Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, as the outcomes of the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS), remain the only inter-governmentally agreed global documents on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital technologies adopted by the Heads of States and Government. These represent the foundation of global digital policies and cooperation supporting our shared vision of people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information and knowledge societies that fully respects and upholds the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In accordance with UNGA Resolution A/70/125, since 2015, the WSIS Process has been aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, so as to ensure the integration of ICTs into all stakeholders' approaches in implementing the activities/initiatives to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The WSIS Outcomes highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming as a cross cutting theme across all WSIS Action Lines. There should be a continued emphasis on gender equality as well as an effort mainstream gender perspectives, so as to draw attention to how digital governance decisions can advance equality - particularly women's and girls' rights in the digital age - and expand efforts to close the gender digital divide.

The WSIS Process principle of capacity development for individuals, institutions and for countries - particularly for developing countries, should continue to be at the heart of global discussions on digital, as it enables enabling the realization of our shared vision of building and consolidating inclusive global knowledge societies that benefits all. Special attention could be given to building governments' institutional capacities to lead digital transformation processes in ways that leverage innovation to ensure harmonious, fair and equitable development for all, while addressing related risks.

It is imperative for digital cooperation, data, and internet governance processes, including WSIS and its outcomes (especially the IGF and WSIS Forum) and ongoing processes such as the Global Digital Compact (GDC), and discussions within the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies on digital, to function cohesively. This coherence not only prevents fragmentation and duplication of efforts but also ensures effective resource utilization. Importantly, it helps prevent countries from the global South from being left behind in the digital governance journey.

UNGIS hosted an Open Forum session at the IGF-23, focusing on the strategic ways governments and partners leverage ICTs, raising key challenges and gaps, identifying digital capacities to prioritize based on needs on the ground, and the synergies necessary to support those. The discussions addressed the two major challenges of advancing the world's digital transformation: achieving universal connectivity and enabling meaningful connectivity.

In response to the <u>letter from the GDC Co-Facilitators</u> dated 2 February 2024, UNGIS has prepared a <u>statement</u> to contribute to the informal consultations with stakeholders held on 13 February 2024. <u>Update on the Roadmap to Global Digital Compact (GDC) Negotiations</u> by Co-Facilitators of the GDC — H.E. Anna Karin Eneström, Permanent Representative of Sweden to UN; and H.E. Chola Milambo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zambia to UN, was presented to UNGIS members on 7 December in Geneva.

During the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5), UNGIS organized a side event — <u>ICTs for accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) – from potential to prosperity</u>, while during the ECOSOC Partnership Forum 2023, UNGIS hosted a side event — <u>WSIS Cooperation for Accelerating Progress on the SDGs</u>.

Also, in this regard, the WSIS+20 Review in 2025 to be facilitated by the General Assembly is an opportunity to assess the global progress and challenges over two decades since the inception of WSIS, in view of the outcomes of the Pact for the Future and the GDC, while reaffirming the continued relevance of the WSIS outcomes and WSIS Action Lines. The WSIS+20 process has also already started through discussions at the UN CSTD and at the WSIS Forum 2022 and 2023; as well as through the guidance received through ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2022 that resolved that ITU should continue to coordinate with the relevant United Nations organizations, where appropriate, to support the UNGA overall review of the WSIS outcomes in 2025 and to play an active role in the process according to ITU's WSIS+20 roadmap, and the decision made by the UNESCO 42nd General Conference tasking the Organization to fully engage in preparations towards a renewed, forward-looking WSIS+20 review.

The WSIS+20 Forum High-level Event in Geneva will take place from 27 to 31 May 2024 and will serve as a platform for the WSIS+20 review to provide multistakeholder discussions and to take stock of the achievements and key trends, challenges and opportunities since the Geneva Plan of Action. A Global Conference on Digital Transformation will take place in Paris (UNESCO, HQ) from 18 to 20 February 2025, offering a GDC follow-up and an opportunity to translate some of the GDC commitments into reality.

The links between the WSIS process and the SDGs are highlighted by the <u>WSIS Action Lines and SDG matrix</u> produced by the UN Action Line Facilitators. This tool is developed by a number of United Nations agencies, all members of UNGIS, based on their expertise and mandate to map how ICTs contribute to the implementation of the new SDGs.

Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 HLPF

Member States should consider the linkages between the WSIS and the Summit of the Future, including how the WSIS and its Action Lines could be leveraged to translate the principles and outcomes agreed to in the Pact for the Future and the GDC into concrete and actionable impact. This could include reaffirmation of the role played by the Internet Governance Forum, which was established by the WSIS, as well as key players in the WSIS ecosystem, including the CSTD. This important collective effort could then also serve as a contribution to the review process for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognizing the importance of digital technologies as an enabler and accelerator for the internationally agreed Development Goals.

UN agencies can support Member States' review of and where necessary, updating of WSIS and its Action Lines, processes, structures and workstreams. In addition, UNGIS offers a valuable knowledge and resource base that has been developed in the past decade on a multi-stakeholder basis and can assist through:

- Consultative engagement across bodies tasked to shepherd and support SDG implementation and processes; as well as across relevant groups within the UN system, including at the regional level and within the UN Sustainable Development Group,
- Providing informal advice to Member States, specifically as they reflect on lessons learned in the 20 years since WSIS and how these can help guide SDG acceleration efforts as well as support ongoing discussions and processes
- Making technical advisory services available to Member States, through coordinated UNGIS engagement in development and implementation of SDG roadmaps, specifically as they relate to digital development and transformation as pathway to sustainable development.

WSIS ACTION LINES AND SDGs MATRIX

WSIS Action Lines	SDGs
ACTION LINE C1 — The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development	Goal 1, 3.8, 3.d, Goal 5, 10.c, 16.5, 16.6, 16.10, 17.18
ACTION LINE C2 — Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for the information Society	1.4, 8.2, 9.1, 9.a, 9.c, 11.5, 11.b
ACTION LINE C3 — Access to information knowledge	Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 4, Goal 5, Goal 6, Goal 7, Goal 8, Goal 9, Goal 10, Goal 11, Goal 12, Goal 13, Goal 14, Goal 15, Goal 16, Goal 17
ACTION LINE C4 — Capacity building	1.b, 2.3, 3.7, 3.b, 3.d, 4.4, 4.7, 5.5, 5.b, 6.a, 12.7, 12.8, 12.a, 12.b, 13.2, 13.3, 13.b, 14.a, 16.a, 17.9, 17.18
ACTION LINE C5 — Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs	1.4, 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 5.b, 7.1, 7.a, 7.b, 8.1, 9.1, 9.c, 11.3, 11.b, 16.2, 17.8
ACTION LINE C6 — Enabling environment	2.a, 4.4, 5.b, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.c, 10.3, 11.3, 11.b, 16.3, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 16.b, 17.6, 17.14, 17.16
ACTION LINE C7 — ICT Applications: e-government	9.c, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 17.8
ACTION LINE C7 — ICT Applications: e-employment	4.5, 8.5, 10.2, 12.6, 17.9
ACTION LINE C7 — ICT Applications: e-environment	9.4, 11.6, 11.b, 13.1, 13.3, 13.b, Goal 14, Goal 15
ACTION LINE C7 — ICT Applications: e-agriculture	1.5, 2.3, 2.4, 2.a, 3.d, Goal 4, 6.5, 8.2, 9.1, 9.c, 12.8, 13.1, 13.3, 17.16, 17.17
ACTION LINE C7 — ICT Applications: e-science	1.5, 4.7, 6.1, 6.a, 7.a, 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 14.a, 15.9, 17.6, 17.7
ACTION LINE C7 — ICT Applications: e-business	1.4, 2.3, 5.b, 8.3, 8.9, 8.10, 9.3, 17.11
ACTION LINE C7 — ICT Applications: e-learning	Goal 4
ACTION LINE C7 — ICT Applications: e-health	1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, Goal 3, 3.3, 3.8, 5.6, 5.b, 17.6, 17.19
ACTION LINE C8 — Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content	2.5, 4.7, 6.b, 8.3, 8.9, 11.4, 12.b
ACTION LINE C9 — Media	5.b, 9.c, 12.8, 16.10
ACTION LINE C10 — Ethical dimensions of the information Society	1.5, 2.3, 3.8, 4.7, 5.1, 8.6, 9.1, 10.2, 10.3, 11.3, 12.8, 13.3, 16.7, 16.10, 17.6, 17.7, 17.8, 17.10, 17.18
ACTION LINE C11 — International and regional cooperation	17.9, 17.16, 17.17

SDGs AND WSIS ACTION LINES MATRIX

Sustainable Development Goal	Relevant WSIS Action Line
GOAL 1 — End poverty in all its forms everywhere (1.4, 1.5, 1.b)	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C7 E-business, C7 E-health, C7 E-agriculture, C7 E-science, C 10
GOAL 2 — End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.A)	C3, C5, C7 E-business, C7 E-health, C7 E-agriculture, C9, C10
GOAL 3 — Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (3.3, 3.7, 3.8, 3.B, 3.D)	C1, C3, C4, C7 E-health, C7 E-agriculture, C10
GOAL 4 — Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7)	C3, C4, C5, C6, C7 E-learning, C7 E-employment, C7 E-agriculture, C7 E-science, C8, C10
GOAL 5 — Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (5.5, 5.6, 5.B)	C1, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7 E-business, C7 E-health, C7 E-agriculture, C9, C10
GOAL 6 — Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (6.A, 6.B)	C3, C4, C7 E-science, C8
GOAL 7 — Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (7.1, 7.A, 7.B)	C3, C5, C7 E-science
GOAL 8 — Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.9, 8.10)	C2, C3, C5, C6, C7 E-business, C7 E-employment, C7 E-agriculture, C8, C10
GOAL 9 — Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (9.1, 9.3, 9.4, 9.a, 9.c)	C2, C3, C5, C6, C7 E-government, C7 E-business, C7 E-environment, C7 E-agriculture, C9, C10
GOAL 10 — Reduce inequality within and among countries (10.2, 10.3, 10.c)	C1, C3, C6, C7 E-employment, C10
GOAL 11 — Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (11.3, 11.4, 11.5, 11.6, 11.b)	C2, C3, C5, C6, C7 E-environment, C8, C10
GOAL 12 — Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (12.6, 12.7, 12.8, 12.a, 12.b)	C3, C4, C7 E-employment, C7 E-agriculture, C8, C9, C10
GOAL 13 — Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.b)	C3, C4, C7 E-environment, C7 E-agriculture, C7 E-science, C10
GOAL 14 — Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (14.a)	C3, C4, C7 E-environment, C7 E-science
GOAL 15 — Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	C3, C7 E-environment, C7 E-science
GOAL 16 — Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (16.2, 16.3, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 16.a, 16.b)	C1, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7 E-government, C9, C10
GOAL 17 — Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (17.6, 17.8, 17.9, 17.11, 17.14, 17.16, 17.17, 17.18, 17.19)	C1, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7 E-government, C7 E-business, C7 E-health, C7 E-employment, C7 E-agriculture, C7 E-science, C10, C11

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS \ WSIS ACTION LINES LINKAGES

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	e-gov	e-bus	e-lea	e-hea	e-emp	e-env	e-agr	e-sci	C8	C9	C10	C11
SDG 1	■	■			■	■		■		■			■				■	
SDG 2			■	■	■				■	■	■		■		■		■	
SDG 3	■		■	■	■								■				■	
SDG 4			■	■				■	■		■		■			■		
SDG 5	■		■	■				■		■			■			■		
SDG 6			■										■	■				
SDG 7			■	■	■													
SDG 8		■	■		■	■		■			■		■		■		■	
SDG 9		■	■	■	■		■					■	■	■	■		■	
SDG 10	■		■		■							■					■	
SDG 11		■	■		■							■			■		■	
SDG 12			■	■	■						■		■				■	
SDG 13			■									■	■	■				
SDG 14			■	■								■		■				
SDG 15			■									■		■				
SDG 16	■	■	■	■	■	■	■									■	■	
SDG 17	■		■	■	■	■		■		■	■		■	■			■	■

Methodology: UN Action Line facilitators have created a direct link and have derived all possible linkages between the Action Lines and the SDGs. The matrix presented below maps the linkages with a rationale for each. Please read the complete document at www.wsis.org/sdg