

WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS) FORUM CONTRIBUTION TO THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (HLPF) 2025

HLPF 2025 Theme: *Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind.*

SDGs under review: The HLPF in 2025 will conduct in-depth reviews of: **SDG 3.** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; **SDG 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; **SDG 8.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; **SDG 14.** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; and **SDG 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

General Introduction

The UN General Assembly [Resolution 56/183](#) (21 December 2001) endorsed the holding of the **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)** in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and the second phase took place in Tunis, from 16 to 18 November 2005. The goal of WSIS is to achieve a common vision, desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information.

Through the Summit's first phase in 2003, a framework for an inclusive information society was created as set out in the Geneva Plan of Action¹. Since 2015, the WSIS Process and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are being aligned by stakeholders to integrate information and communication technologies (ICTs) into their approaches in implementing the activities/initiatives to support the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

In line with UN [Resolution A/70/1](#) and [Resolution A/70/125](#), ITU, UNESCO, UNDP and UNCTAD, in collaboration with more than 47 UN organizations, are continuously working towards strengthening the alignment of the WSIS Process implementation activities with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, thereby highlighting the direct linkages between WSIS Action Lines and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

About the WSIS Forum

The annual WSIS Forum serves a platform for multistakeholder dialogue and action on global digital governance and implementation of digital for good at global, regional, and national level. For over two decades, WSIS has a global reach and impact, bringing governments, international organizations, the private sector, academia, and civil society. The Forum is co-organized by ITU, UNESCO, UNDP and UNCTAD, in close collaboration with all WSIS Action Line Facilitators/co-facilitators. The WSIS Forum has proven to be an efficient medium for coordination of

¹ The Plan of Action sets forth a clear commitment to translate these principles into practice and to meet concrete and tangible targets with the aim of promoting sustainable development.
<https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/promotional/brochure-dop-poa.pdf>

multistakeholder implementation activities, information exchange, creation of knowledge, sharing of best practices and foster partnerships to advance development goals.

The WSIS Forum 2025 branded as the WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025 will take place from 7 to 11 July 2025 at Palexpo in Geneva, Switzerland, co-hosted by the ITU and the Swiss Confederation. As a key milestone in the lead-up to the WSIS+20 overall review by the UN General Assembly in December 2025, the event will facilitate multistakeholder dialogue and drive action by assessing achievements, key trends, and challenges since the 2003 Geneva Plan of Action. It will also provide a crucial platform for the international community to build on the outcomes of the Summit of the Future and strengthen global digital cooperation for a renewed, forward-looking vision.

WSIS Action Lines and SDG Matrix

The WSIS-SDG Matrix developed by WSIS Action Line Facilitators serves as the mechanism to map, analyze and coordinate the implementation of WSIS Action Lines, and more specifically, ICTs as enablers and accelerators of the SDGs. The Matrix draws direct linkages of the WSIS Action Lines with the SDGs to continue strengthening the impact of ICTs for sustainable development (<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/sdg/>).

a. Assessment of the impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17

The interconnected global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, conflicts, and humanitarian emergencies, have highlighted the critical role of digital technologies in advancing the SDGs. The *SDG Digital Acceleration Agenda*² report highlighted that digital technologies can directly accelerate progress on nearly 70% of SDG targets. However, the persistent digital divide, driven by a lack of basic access and affordability, remains a significant barrier. This divide exacerbates inequalities and impedes progress across key areas, including health (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), life below water (SDG 14), and global partnerships (SDG 17).

The digital divide cuts across multiple societal dimensions, deepening existing inequalities and limiting resilience. While some regions have made progress in digital connectivity, millions still lack access to affordable and reliable infrastructure. Even in areas with internet access, many cannot fully benefit from digital tools due to insufficient digital literacy, restricting their participation in the digital economy and access to essential services.

The divide manifests across multiple dimensions, including gender, generational, economic, urban-rural, and basic access to digital technologies. Women face barriers in leveraging digital tools, limiting their participation in economic, educational, and social activities. Older populations face challenges adapting to technology, while younger generations benefit more easily. Rural areas, often lacking the infrastructure of urban settings, are further isolated, limiting access to essential services.

With approximately 2.6 billion people still offline³ and lacking internet access, remote and underserved areas are most affected, stifling growth and hindering recovery. This lack of connectivity

² SDG Digital Acceleration Agenda: <https://www.sdg-digital.org/>

³ ITU's Measuring digital development: Facts and Figures 2024: <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/facts-figures-2024/>

prevents access to vital services such as healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, further impeding progress on SDGs 3, 5, and 8.

The rapid evolution of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing, presents new opportunities for sustainable development. However, these advancements risk exacerbating the digital divide unless inclusive access and an equal distribution of benefits are ensured. Emerging technologies require robust infrastructure, advanced skills, and investments that many communities currently lack, perpetuating the gap between connected and disconnected populations.

The WSIS Forum plays a critical role in addressing these challenges by providing a collaborative platform for diverse stakeholders. It fosters multistakeholder collaboration to ensure that digital transformation benefits all communities, promoting innovation that meets diverse needs and leaves no one behind.

b. Three key areas where sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2025, also bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.

Digital technologies are enablers in advancing sustainable development, ensuring no one is left behind. As we approach the 2025 review of the SDGs, particularly those under review, it is essential to highlight key areas where data-driven digital solutions are already making an impact. The WSIS Forum showcases these solutions, bringing together stakeholders to demonstrate how digital technologies, powered by data, are advancing sustainable development and contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

- **Digital Health and Well-being for All (SDG 3)**

Digital health technologies, supported by robust data, are revolutionizing access to quality healthcare, especially in underserved regions. At the WSIS Forum, initiatives like the *Hackathon on Ageing Better with ICTs*—aligned with the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing—demonstrate how data-driven innovations can promote healthy aging, independence, and social inclusion for older persons. The Forum also features a special track on ICTs and Older Persons, showcasing how technology can empower older adults to live fuller, more connected lives. These efforts align with WSIS Action Line C7: e-Health, emphasizing the role of digital tools in breaking down barriers to healthcare access and improving well-being for all.

- **Bridging the Digital Gender Divide and Promoting Inclusive Growth (SDGs 5 & 8)**

Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme across the WSIS Action Lines, addressing both opportunities and challenges in achieving the SDGs. The WSIS Forum promotes gender balance, aiming for 50:50 participation, and tackles the digital gender gap through sessions on digital inclusion and women in tech. Initiatives like the ICTs and Gender special track, the WSIS Stocktaking Repository of Women in Technology, and the WSIS Gender Trendsetters connect women in ICT, advocating for gender equality in the industry. Events like the Network of Women ministers & leaders in ICTs further amplify these efforts, inspiring greater participation of women in tech-related fields. By leveraging data to identify gaps and opportunities, these efforts contribute to inclusive growth and the empowerment of women and girls worldwide.

- **Technology for Environmental Sustainability and Global Partnerships (SDGs 14 & 17)**

The WSIS Forum fosters discussions on clean technologies and environmental sustainability, including climate action and ocean conservation. Sessions on big data, AI, and satellite monitoring highlight how digital tools can track ocean health, manage resources sustainably, and address pressing environmental challenges. The *ICTs and Environment* special track, aligned with WSIS Action Line C7: e-Environment, showcases innovative solutions for protecting the planet and building a greener, more resilient future. These efforts underscore the importance of global partnerships in leveraging technology for environmental sustainability and achieving the SDGs.

The WSIS Forum serves as a global platform for showcasing data-driven, science-based solutions that address the interconnected challenges of sustainable development. By fostering collaboration among stakeholders, the Forum ensures that digital transformation benefits all communities. Through initiatives like the [WSIS Forum](#), the [WSIS Stocktaking](#), the [WSIS Prizes](#), and the [WSIS&SDG TalkX](#), the Forum highlights real-world examples of innovation and partnership, demonstrating how digital technologies can drive progress toward the SDGs while addressing the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

- c. **Three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale (food security, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), building on interlinkages between SDGs to ensure cohesive progress.**

- Making affordable and universal digital connectivity a fundamental pillar of sustainable development policies. Ensuring access to digital tools and services for marginalized communities, including women, youth, and rural populations, is essential to bridging the digital divide. The WSIS Stocktaking platform serves as a comprehensive global repository of ICT-related development projects, showcasing best practices. By facilitating knowledge exchange, it enables policymakers and stakeholders to replicate and scale successful initiatives, advancing SDGs related to infrastructure, education, and economic growth.
- Fostering multistakeholder partnerships to accelerate investments in digital infrastructure and ensure equitable access for all. The annual WSIS Forum serves as a key platform in highlighting emerging trends, innovative ICT projects, and initiatives aligned with WSIS Action Lines.
- Promoting responsible and sustainable digital innovation to address global challenges. The WSIS Forum provides a platform for showcasing cutting-edge digital solutions through its exhibition and special sessions, encouraging collaboration on scalable ICT-driven initiatives that tackle pressing global issues.

d. Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- The WSIS process has long recognized digital technologies as cross-cutting enablers of sustainable development. In this context, the WSIS process and its action lines have been aligned with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda through the [WSIS-SDG Matrix](#) (with UNGIS members and observers facilitating various action lines) and with the 2024 Summit of the Future through the [WSIS Process follow-up on the Summit of the Future Outcome Documents - GDC Matrix](#).
- The WSIS+20 Review in 2025, facilitated by the UN General Assembly, presents an opportunity to evaluate global progress and challenges over the past two decades. It will reflect on the outcomes of the Pact for the Future and the Global Digital Compact, while reaffirming the continued relevance of WSIS outcomes and Action Lines in shaping the future of digital governance and sustainable development.
- The WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025, scheduled to take place from 7 to 11 July 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland will serve as a key platform for the WSIS+20 review discussions. This event will be a key milestone in the WSIS+20 Review. It will provide a platform to discuss the progress and achievements of the WSIS process over the last two decades, reflecting on how WSIS Action Lines have contributed to the achievement of the SDGs. It will be crucial in reviewing the progress of the WSIS process, assessing its alignment with other digital governance initiatives, including the Global Digital Compact.
- The WSIS+20 Review will not only celebrate the successes of the WSIS process but will also address the challenges encountered in implementing digital initiatives for sustainable development. It will foster a forward-looking dialogue on how the digital ecosystem can evolve to better meet global sustainability needs and address emerging challenges. This dialogue will focus on enhancing multistakeholder collaboration, policy innovation, and actionable solutions for scaling digital transformation that is inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

e. Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025HLPF.

- Prioritize digital technologies as key enabler of development. It is essential to maintain a strong focus on digital technologies as essential tools for advancing the 2030 Agenda and achieving other internationally agreed development goals.
- Reaffirm support for the WSIS process, which was initiated at the ITU's Plenipotentiary Conference in 1998, marking a commitment to global digital development. The two phases of the Summit, Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005, marked critical milestones in this journey. Since then, ITU has remained at the forefront of WSIS implementation, working in collaboration with UN organisations, including UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD serving as co-

organisers of the annual WSIS Forum, and stakeholders to advance the WSIS Action Lines and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Strengthen the WSIS process, which has demonstrated its enduring relevance since its first phase in 2003 and has stood the test of time, serving as a UN multistakeholder coordination mechanism that continues to leverage digital and emerging technologies for sustainable development.
- Promote and implement the WSIS model of multistakeholder cooperation and engagement, which has been foundational to the advancement of information and knowledge societies. Its principles continue to serve as a blueprint for inclusive digital development.
- Reaffirm the commitment to the multistakeholder approach that has been central to WSIS, fostering a collaborative environment where diverse voices can contribute to shaping the digital future.
- Recognize the WSIS+20 Review as an opportunity to assess the role of the WSIS process and its alignment with other key mechanisms such as the UNGIS, IGF, CSTD, and Global Digital Compact. This review provides a chance to strengthen coordination across the UN system and better leverage digital technologies for sustainable development.
- Member States and stakeholders should consider the synergies between WSIS and the Summit of the Future, exploring how WSIS Action Lines can be leveraged to translate the principles and outcomes from the Pact for the Future and the GDC into meaningful, actionable impact.
- The WSIS process has maintained its relevance by adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities. Its longevity provides a reliable platform for continuous dialogue, assessment of progress, and ongoing adaptation to the rapidly evolving digital landscape.