Call for Inputs: WSIS+20 Review - i2Coalition Response

The Internet Infrastructure Coalition (i2Coalition) offers the following input as the organization's response to the ITU's Council Working Group on WSIS Call for Inputs on WSIS+20 Review.

The Internet Infrastructure Coalition (i2Coalition) represents companies and associations that provide critical services to maintain the global Internet infrastructure, ensuring its ongoing growth, innovation, and accessibility. In this capacity, we have closely observed the evolution of the Information Society, as envisioned by the Geneva Declaration of Principles. Our members are integral players in the development and maintenance of the digital landscape, fostering open access to the Information Society for users across the globe.

Implementation of the WSIS Process

1. ***What are the main achievements of the implementation of the WSIS process in the past 20 years?***

The Internet Infrastructure Coalition (i2Coalition) represents businesses that provide essential services for the Internet's global infrastructure. Our members have played a critical role in the ongoing evolution of the Information Society, as guided by the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles. We have been instrumental in advancing the technologies that expand access to the Information Society for people worldwide while also ensuring the Internet remains open, secure, and inclusive.

A "people-centered, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society" is best achieved through the participation of a broad ecosystem, bringing together governments, businesses, technologists, civil society, and the voices of Internet users. The risks of fragmentation in the digital space increase when decisions are made in isolation, without the involvement of all stakeholders. The i2Coalition is committed to preserving a multi-stakeholder model that ensures decisions are made collaboratively and transparently, safeguarding the Internet as a global resource.

Reflecting on 20 years since the WSIS process began, we have witnessed tremendous growth in Internet-driven innovation across sectors. However, there are significant challenges ahead, particularly as the speed of innovation outpaces regulatory frameworks, and as governments sometimes move to regulate the Internet without consulting critical stakeholders. The i2Coalition

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supports the development of emerging Internet technologies and services and believes that multi-stakeholder collaboration is vital to addressing risks like fragmentation. We are dedicated to working with our partners to ensure the future of the Internet remains open, secure, and accessible to all.

2. What are ITU's main contributions towards the implementation of the WSIS Process in 20 Years?

The Internet Infrastructure Coalition (i2Coalition) acknowledges the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) crucial role in advancing the WSIS goals, particularly in partnership with key organizations like UNESCO, UNCTAD, and UNDP. One of its main contributions is the ITU's work on coordinating the WSIS Action Lines and aligning them with the broader global development agenda. We recognize the ongoing work aligning WSIS goals with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing sustainability, inclusion, innovation, and digital collaboration.

As advocates of the Internet infrastructure sector, the i2Coalition strongly supports the emphasis WSIS places on the involvement of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) across all industries. We agree that broad ICT engagement is vital for achieving the sustainable development goals of the Information Society.

Internet infrastructure is at the heart of the digital economy and serves as a foundation for the global exchange of information and innovation. Our sector works towards a goal where all individuals, businesses, and governments—especially in emerging economies and rural areas—have the connectivity they need to participate in the Information Society.

Connectivity is essential to the goals of affordability, accessibility, and inclusivity, and the i2Coalition members are dedicated to supporting sustainable Internet infrastructure that drives economic growth and prosperity.

In this context, it is critical that all stakeholders, including the Internet infrastructure sector, maintain open communication on how sustainable development goals can be achieved and continue to collaborate to enhance the global reach of the Information Society.

3. The WSIS process stands as a strong example of global digital cooperation in action for over two decades now. How can we ensure that this inclusive multistakeholder model is sustained and further strengthened?

The WSIS process has demonstrated the power of global digital cooperation over the past two decades. To ensure the ongoing success of this inclusive multi-stakeholder model, it is crucial that we continue to foster open collaboration between all sectors involved in Internet

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governance. This model has been foundational in addressing the complex challenges facing the digital landscape.

The United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is one of the most significant outcomes of the WSIS process, serving as a key forum where stakeholders—including governments, businesses, the technical community, academia, and civil society—can come together to share insights, address common challenges, and work toward achieving sustainability goals. The i2Coalition strongly supports the continuation of the IGF as a platform for dialogue and collaboration, allowing stakeholders to exchange best practices on an equal footing.

We believe that preserving the IGF's role as an inclusive, consultative body is essential to maintaining the openness and flexibility of Internet governance. While there is no formal push to transform it into a global decision-making body, it is important to remain vigilant in ensuring that any future evolution of the IGF does not inadvertently undermine the multi-stakeholder approach. This model has been highly effective in fostering innovation, maintaining the security of the Internet, and ensuring its continued growth as a tool for global development.

The i2Coalition is committed to supporting initiatives like the IGF that empower all stakeholders to engage in shaping the future of the Internet while ensuring that decisions are made through broad-based, inclusive cooperation. The i2Coalition proposes creating better linkages between the WSIS Forum and the IGF forum to strengthen digital cooperation and the inclusive multistakeholder model.

4. What are the challenges that remain in the implementation of the WSIS process?

The Internet Infrastructure Coalition (i2Coalition) recognizes the significant challenges that remain in the ongoing implementation of the WSIS Action Lines, including regulatory gaps, disparities in digital literacy skills, and the unequal pace of technology adoption between the Global North and South. Addressing these issues is essential to ensuring that the WSIS process remains effective in fostering a truly inclusive and sustainable digital future.

One growing concern in this landscape is "Internet fragmentation." While there is no universally agreed-upon definition of this term, we are particularly focused on the technical aspects of fragmentation that could disrupt the core infrastructure of the Internet. Specifically, fragmentation poses a threat to the full interoperability of network systems, the seamless exchange of data, and the consistent functioning of the Internet across all endpoints.

The i2Coalition believes that the WSIS outcomes, when fully realized, can address concerns related to Internet fragmentation by reinforcing the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance. The multi-stakeholder approach ensures that diverse voices, including those from the technical community, governments, and civil society, contribute to the development of best practices. Though some critics may be frustrated by the pace or outcomes of multi-stakeholder processes, we believe that the Internet is best served when governance avoids sudden shifts and considers the input of all relevant stakeholders.

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We strongly advocate for WSIS outcomes that reaffirm and strengthen the multi-stakeholder model as the foundation of Internet governance. The issue of Internet fragmentation is particularly important to the i2Coalition's members, and we welcome the discussions happening at venues like the United Nations (UN) IGF's Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation. These discussions are critical to addressing the intended and unintended impacts of technical, policy, legal, and regulatory actions on the Internet's core features—specifically, its openness, interconnection, and interoperability.

Global forums like the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) also play a crucial role in achieving consensus on technical standards, ensuring that both businesses and consumers benefit from a secure and interoperable global Internet. Furthermore, the i2Coalition believes that ICANN's multi-stakeholder model has been a proven and effective mechanism for maintaining the security, stability, and resilience of the Internet's Domain Name System (DNS). This model successfully meets the needs and expectations of the global community while preserving the openness and integrity of the Internet.

WSIS Action Lines

5. Which specific Action Lines have had the most significant impact, and why?

The Internet Infrastructure Coalition (i2Coalition) believes that the WSIS Action Lines were significant not only as specific targets but, more importantly, as guiding principles for where efforts needed to be focused and progress made. While challenges remain—with only 17% of the Action Lines fully achieved over the past 20 years—their continued attention through the various WSIS forums underscores the commitment of the Internet community to ensuring these goals are not overlooked. The Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Commitment have served as key roadmaps, guiding the work of governments and stakeholders across a wide range of dimensions.

One of the most impactful aspects of the Tunis Agenda has been the recognition of the Internet as a foundational element of the Information Society's infrastructure. In particular, the i2Coalition acknowledges ICANN as a prime example of how the technical community, alongside other stakeholders, has come together to manage the Internet's critical resources. ICANN's structure and its ability to reform and adapt over the past two decades have been vital in shaping technical and public policies that preserve the Internet's integrity and stability.

The work undertaken by ICANN, along with international organizations responsible for developing Internet-related technical standards, has played a crucial role in maintaining the unity and security of the Domain Name System (DNS). This effort has helped prevent fragmentation and ensured that the Internet remains a cohesive and accessible global network. In the i2Coalition's view, the continued integrity of the DNS is central to maintaining "one Internet" for all users, a key goal of the WSIS process.

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Another significant outcome has been the formation of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). Last year the UNGA adopted the Pact of the Future, recognising the IGF as the primary platform for discussion of Internet governance issues. (see Global Digital Compact, Art 28 - Annex to the Pact of the Future).

Over the last 20 years the IGF made huge contributions to WSIS Action Line C11 on international and regional cooperation. Over the years, the IGF has fostered critical multi-stakeholder discussions and shaped policies that promote an open, secure, and inclusive Internet. A major testament to its impact is the proliferation of over 174 national, regional, and youth IGF initiatives—including 111 national IGFs, 24 regional and sub-regional IGFs, and 40 youth IGFs. This growing ecosystem of governance dialogues underscores the global commitment to collaborative Internet policy development and ensures that diverse voices are represented in shaping the digital future.

Taken together, these developments demonstrate that WSIS Action Lines have provided a strong foundation for sustainable progress, and their continued refinement and implementation will be essential for addressing emerging challenges in Internet governance and digital inclusion.

6. Considering that the WSIS outcomes have demonstrated their relevance and applicability to new and emerging areas, how can the implementation of the WSIS principles and corresponding WSIS Action Lines be enhanced to effectively address these topics?

The i2Coalition recognizes the continued relevance of the WSIS Action Lines, particularly in addressing emerging challenges such as closing the digital divide and supporting sustainable digital growth. To enhance their implementation, it is essential to focus on fostering a secure, interoperable Internet that prioritizes connectivity, affordability, and equitable access for underserved regions.

One concrete way to strengthen implementation is by expanding work on Action Line C4 (Capacity Building) to prioritize training and education on emerging technologies such as AI, machine learning, and IoT. The WSIS Forum and the IGF can serve as key platforms for scaling capacity-building efforts, ensuring that new and emerging technologies are developed and deployed in ways that uphold the integrity, security, and inclusiveness of the global Internet.

Strengthened collaboration among governments, technical experts, civil society, and private sector stakeholders will ensure that WSIS principles remain adaptable to new challenges while maintaining alignment with global sustainable development goals.

7.Have you any suggestions and inputs on the *WSIS+20 Review Action Lines, highlighting key milestones, challenges and emerging trends beyond 2025* prepared by the WSIS Action Line facilitators.

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The WSIS Action Lines remain as relevant today as they were 20 years ago.

On milestones, ICANN has made a significant contribution to Action Line C8 by enabling greater linguistic diversity and local content through the implementation of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs). This has been a critical step in making the Internet more accessible to non-Latin script users and supporting multilingualism online.

Regarding challenges, significant progress has been made under Action Lines C2 and C3, connecting billions of people to the Internet since 2003. However, 2.6 billion people remain offline, underscoring the need for continued and collaborative efforts from all stakeholders. No single entity can bridge this gap alone, and a renewed focus on digital inclusion is essential.

To further strengthen the alignment between WSIS Action Lines and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is important to ensure that gender considerations are more prominently reflected in existing frameworks, particularly in alignment with SDG 5 (Gender Equality). While the WSIS Action Lines remain as relevant today as they were 20 years ago, in hindsight, there are opportunities to enhance them by more explicitly addressing gender disparities in digital access and participation, as well as the impact of emerging technologies on inclusion and equity.

Looking beyond 2025, emerging trends should be expanded to include Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Quantum technologies, as these advancements will play a defining role in shaping the future of digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and global connectivity. However, we need to ensure that the WSIS Action Lines remain "technology neutral" and prioritize the impacts of technology.

WSIS Action Line for advancing the SDGs

8.How can the alignment between the WSIS Action Lines and SDGs be strengthened towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

The Internet Infrastructure Coalition (i2Coalition) believes that strengthening the alignment between WSIS Action Lines and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is critical for the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At a high level, policymakers must prioritize the preservation of human rights, both online and offline, as a foundational principle to support the WSIS outcomes and the progression toward an inclusive Information Society. Key to this is ensuring that concrete steps are taken to enable universal Internet access, which can be achieved through initiatives that promote infrastructure development and the provisioning of Internet exchange points (IXPs) in developing countries.

An inclusive approach to Internet governance is also essential in strengthening the alignment between WSIS Action Lines and SDGs. The multi-stakeholder model ensures that all relevant parties—including governments, businesses, civil society, and the technical community—are involved in policy development. This process helps ensure that outcomes are acceptable to the

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entire Internet ecosystem and avoid unintended consequences, such as technical fragmentation, that could harm the network's global interoperability.

The i2Coalition believes that current trends in technology will play a significant role in advancing human development, closing the digital divide, and achieving the 17 SDGs. The internationalization of the Internet continues to drive economic growth, with Internet-based technologies supporting a globally interoperable network that fosters innovation on both local and global scales. Emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be key drivers in achieving goals like climate action, the development of smart, sustainable cities, and the expansion of affordable and clean energy solutions.

To achieve these goals, the i2Coalition strongly advocates for the continued use of the multi-stakeholder model, which facilitates collaboration and consensus on both technical evolutions and public policy. As we move toward 2030, cooperation among stakeholders has never been more critical in ensuring that the Internet remains a tool for sustainable development and human advancement.

Future Vision and WSIS beyond 2025

9.How can we further strengthen multistakeholder platforms such as the WSIS Forum as the platform for digital development and IGF as the platform for governance and policy issues?
Strengthening multistakeholder platforms like the WSIS Forum and IGF is essential to ensuring inclusive, effective, and sustainable Internet governance. The i2Coalition supports enhancing collaboration and synergy between these platforms, ensuring that discussions remain relevant to the evolving digital landscape.

A concrete way to improve alignment is by establishing stronger linkages between the IGF and the WSIS Forum, such as incorporating insights from the IGF's annual report into WSIS Action Lines and discussions. This would help streamline priorities, avoid duplication, and reinforce global digital policy efforts.

Additionally, fostering greater inclusivity remains critical. Expanding regional engagement and capacity-building initiatives—particularly for underrepresented stakeholders and emerging economies—will help ensure that multistakeholder governance reflects diverse perspectives and needs.

As new challenges such as AI governance, cybersecurity, and digital inclusion take center stage, ensuring that WSIS and IGF remain agile, impactful, and truly representative will be key to their continued success in shaping the future of the global Internet.

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10.How can the implementation of the WSIS process and the Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact be aligned to achieve shared goals?

Alignment between the WSIS process, the Pact for the Future, and the Global Digital Compact is essential to effectively advancing shared goals for an open, secure, and inclusive Internet. This presents an opportunity to leverage existing WSIS mechanisms, such as the IGF, in the Compact's implementation.

An evolved IGF can serve as a platform to review and monitor both WSIS Action Lines and the Global Digital Compact's implementation, ensuring continuity, accountability, and multistakeholder engagement in shaping digital policies. By integrating these processes, we can foster greater coherence and collaboration in global Internet governance efforts.

11.What are the key emerging digital trends and topics to be considered by ITU in the WSIS+20 review and future vision beyond 2025?

From the perspective of the Internet Infrastructure Coalition (i2Coalition), several key emerging digital trends and technologies are reshaping the landscape of the Internet and must be considered by the ITU in the WSIS+20 review and beyond 2025.

First, the widespread adoption of wireless Internet access, through both Wi-Fi and cellular technologies, has been a driving force in Internet development over the last two decades. The evolution of cellular networks, from 3G to 4G and 5G, with 6G on the horizon, has enabled more people than ever to access the Internet through smartphones and other devices. This increase in connectivity, coupled with advances in processing power, has led to the generalization of IP-based communications, such as Voice over IP (VoIP), instant messaging, video communications, and the explosion of social networks. More recently, cloud computing has further transformed the way we interact with the Internet, providing new platforms for collaboration, storage, and service delivery.

Several technological and engineering breakthroughs have played a critical role in these advancements. Encryption technologies have been key in preserving privacy and personal data, while initiatives such as domain name security (e.g., DNS Security Extensions or DNSSEC) and IP address certification have contributed to a more secure Internet ecosystem. Efforts to secure the Domain Name System (DNS), including actions taken by ICANN and country code TLD (ccTLD) managers to sign both the DNS root and top-level domains (TLDs), along with protocols like Secure Border Gateway Protocol (BGP), have all contributed to making the Internet more resilient and trustworthy.

The trend toward 'internationalization' is another major development to consider. Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), as defined by the IETF, and efforts like ICANN's Universal Acceptance program are facilitating multilingualism online, enabling non-ASCII users

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to engage with the Internet in their native languages. This process has been essential in ensuring that the Internet is truly global and accessible to all.

It's important to note that many of these advancements have been made through incremental improvements, maintaining backward compatibility with minimal disruption to existing technologies and infrastructure. This approach has allowed the Internet to grow steadily while preserving the stability and security of the systems in place.

Looking beyond 2025, the i2Coalition emphasizes the importance of continuing to focus on these foundational technologies while also preparing for new challenges and opportunities in areas such as 6G networks, AI-driven innovations, and the increasing demand for privacy and security in the digital age. By building on the success of past efforts and ensuring a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach, we can continue to advance toward a more inclusive and sustainable Internet.

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