Open Forum on the WSIS+20 Review at the Internet Governance Forum

WSIS at 20: Successes, Failures, and Expectations

10 October 2023

Kyoto, Japan

Concept note

Background

The General Assembly (GA) resolution A/70/125, adopted on 16 December 2015, called for a high-level meeting in 2025 to review the overall implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), known as WSIS+20 Review.

The WSIS' vision is to establish a "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society" for harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies for sustainable development. With the growing pervasiveness and rapid evolution of ICTs into digital technologies, today's information society differs greatly from what was envisaged in 2005. However, the WSIS vision still remains highly relevant. Rapid and increasingly unpredictable ICT-based technological changes require greater agility among stakeholders for sustainable development, including the capacity to address promptly unintended consequences, such as widening inequity and human rights violation, while grasping the new opportunities arising from such changes.

Since 2006, the CSTD has been carrying out its mandated to review the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, including through annual reports of the UNSG and the contribution of inputs to the WSIS+10 review in the General Assembly in 2015.

For the WSIS+20 Review, the Economic and Social Council adopted the resolution (E/RES/2023/3) in June 2023 that requests the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) to collect inputs from member States, all facilitators and other stakeholders and to organize, during its twenty-seventh session, in 2024, and its twenty-eighth session, in 2025, substantive discussions on the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit during the past 20 years, and to report thereon, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly.

An integral part of the WSIS+20 Review is the engagement of multi-stakeholders in open consultations that the CSTD secretariat will conduct from late 2023 until late 2024, including UN agencies, governments, private sector, civil society, and technical communities involved in ICT development. The launch of such consultations will take place at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Kyoto in October 2023, during an Open Forum event entitled "WSIS at 20: successes, failures and expectations".

Objectives

The objective of the discussions is to foster in-depth dialogue among stakeholders, particularly the IGF community, on the implementation of the WSIS vision and outcomes. The discussions will also provide valuable inputs to the CSTD secretariat's synthesis report that will inform the

substantive discussion at the CSTD on WSIS+20 Review as requested by the ECOSOC. The event will focus on the following topics:

1) To what extent and how has the vision of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society" evolved over the past 20 years since WSIS?
2) How will ongoing trends and emerging technologies, particularly AI, impact progress towards human development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? Moreover, how can these trends enable or hinder the realization of the WSIS vision?
3) What measures should be taken to advance international cooperation, including in terms of governance, to leverage emerging technologies for sustainable development in economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions?

Format

The event will take the form of a 90-minute interactive discussion on the second day of the IGF in Kyoto. It will bring together multi-stakeholders, including representatives from governments, civil society, private sector, academia, and technical communities involved in ICT development. The chair of the CSTD will moderate the discussions. All interventions will be made from the floor.

For more information, please write to cstd-wsis20@unctad.org.