United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)
Twenty-seventh Annual Session

High-level Panel on
"Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international level"

Wednesday 17 April 2024, 10:00-13:00 (Geneva time)
Geneva

Concept Note

Background

In accordance with the mandate received from the General Assembly and the ECOSOC, the twenty-seventh session of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) will undertake its annual system-wide review of progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international level. For this purpose, a High-level Panel will be held in the afternoon of April 17, 2024, to review the major developments and activities by stakeholders in 2023 on advancement of information and communications technologies (ICTs) for achieving the WSIS vision of a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society towards the progress in achieving 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This panel will also discuss WSIS+20 in accordance with the ECOSOC resolution E/RES/2023/3, adopted in June 2023, which calls for the CSTD to organize, during its twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions, 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 for its WSIS+20 review in 2025.

ICTs have become pervasive in all aspects of human society, including in protecting the environment and addressing climate change. Growing access to ICT and its use continues to be accompanied by severe inequalities or 'digital divides' between and within countries. Internet usage varies significantly with economic development, as seen in the varying proportions of users across different income levels and regions. There is also a persistent gender digital divide in many countries, particularly lower-income countries.

Recent developments in digital technology, including rapid advances in artificial intelligence show that digitalisation now impacts substantially in every public policy domain. It is imperative for new international norms and standards to adapt to the rapidly changing digital landscape. Hence dialogue between the digital sector and those who concerned with other domains is more crucial to sustainable development. Addressing the opportunities and risks posed by digital ubiquity requires the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all sectors.

Objectives

The Panel aims to assess the progress made in 2023 in implementing the WSIS outcomes. It also provides an opportunity to discuss WSIS' alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and consider the interaction between the WSIS and other international processes, particularly the Global Digital Compact being negotiated, and the Sumit of Future to be held in September 2024.

Guiding questions for discussion

- How will ongoing trends and emerging technologies, particularly AI, enable or hinder the realization of the WSIS vision?

- What indicators could be used to measure the contributions of the WSIS to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals?

- How should WSIS interact with other UN processes, particularly the Global Digital Compact being negotiated, and the Summit of Future to be held in September 2024?

Format of the High-Level Roundtable

After an introduction of both the Report of the Secretary-General and the outline of the WSIS+20 Review, by the CSTD secretariat, panelists will make their presentations (maximum 10 minutes each). This will be followed by an interactive discussion among panelists and the participants (maximum 10 minutes each). Thereafter an informal discussion on Global Digital Compact will follow.

Supporting documents

- Report of the Secretary-General: Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels (A/79/62 – E/2024/3), available at: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/a79d62_en.pdf

- Resolution 2023/3: Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, available at: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ecosoc_res_2023d3_en.pdf

- Resolution A/RES/78/132: Information and communications technologies for sustainable development, available at: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/A_res_78_132_en.pdf

- Documents available on the website of the CSTD: https://unctad.org/meeting/commission-science-and-technology-development-twenty-seventh-session