



CSTD open consultation in the African region in collaboration with ECA

WSIS at 20: Successes, Failures, and Expectations

09:00 – 11:00, 11 October 2024, (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, UTC+3h)
Julius Nyerere International Conference Centre (JNICC), Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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 violations, while grasping the new opportunities arising from such changes.

Since 2006, the CSTD has been carrying out its mandate to review the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, including through annual reports of the United Nations Secretary-General 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. It requests the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) to collect inputs from Member States, all facilitators and other stakeholders as well as 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 at global and regional levels from late 2023 until late 2024, in partnership with the ITU, UNESCO and UNDP, and jointly with UN regional economic commissions. They include governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical and academic communities involved in ICT development, and international organizations. The launch of the open consultations took place during the 18th Internet Governance Forum held in Kyoto, Japan in partnership with ITU, UNESCO and UNDP. Further consultations so far include those held during UNCTAD's eWeek in December 2023 in the same partnership as in Kyoto, during the “Arab Consultative Conference on WSIS+20 Review and GDC processes” in Dubai, 22 May 2024 (jointly with ESCWA and League of Arab

States), during the EuroDig Forum 2024 and recently during the 2024 Asia-Pacific Conference on Digital Inclusion and Transformation in Astana, 4 September 2024 (jointly with ESCAP, and ITU).

The consultation in Africa, which will be the fourth regional consultation of the CSTD, will take place during the "WSIS+20 Review and GDC" in Harare, Tanzania from 9 to 11 am, 11 October 2024. It will be held jointly with ECA.

Objectives

The objective of the discussions is to foster in-depth dialogue among stakeholders in the region 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?
4. How the processes, and forums (e.g. the IGF and WSIS Forum) emanating from the WSIS can support the contribution of all stakeholders to Compact implementation?

Format

The event will take place in hybrid format. The two-hour discussions will be moderated by **Mr. Mactar Seck**, Chief of Emerging and Frontier Technologies, Innovation and Digital Transformation Section, ECA. **H.E. Mr. Muhammadou M O Kah**, Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of Gambia in Geneva, Switzerland and Chair of the 28th CSTD will deliver opening remarks.

Registration is mandatory for both physical and remote participation. A meeting link will be sent to remote participants in due course.

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