Dar es Salam Declaration on Africa WSIS +20 Review

We, the representatives of 37 Member States, gathered in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from October 9-11, 2024, for the Africa WSIS Annual Review Workshop, convened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in collaboration with the Government of Tanzania and other key stakeholders. A diverse group of 150 participants, both online and in-person, comprised parliamentarians, international organizations, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), civil society, academia, government, private sector, technical community, and continental organizations

Acknowledgment of Key Issues
As we mark the 20th anniversary of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), we commit to a comprehensive review of progress, challenges, and opportunities since the Geneva Plan of Action.

UNECA, in partnership with the CSTD secretariat, hosted the Africa regional consultation for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). The focus was on the "WSIS+20 Review and Global Digital Compact (GDC)," aiming to facilitate in-depth dialogue among regional stakeholders on implementing the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) vision and outcomes. This initiative responds to the Economic and Social Council resolution (E/RES/2023/3), fostering collaborative efforts to bridge the digital divide and drive sustainable development.

We Acknowledge the critical role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital transformation in driving Africa's growth and achieving Agenda 2063's vision – 'The Africa We Want'.

We Acknowledge also the critical role of digital transformation to enable efficient delivery of government services, financial inclusion, and job creation, and accelerates the implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063.

We Commend the various initiatives being taken by UNECA to empower Africa's sustainable development pathway through inclusive, innovative and secure digital possibilities.

Commitment to Action

We reaffirm our commitment to the WSIS vision of a people-centered, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society. We dedicate ourselves to the Pact for the Future, encompassing the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations.

Building on our commitment to the Pact for the Future, adopted at the Summit of the Future on September 22, we recognize the critical role of WSIS Action Lines in advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa's Agenda 2063 aspirations, "The Africa We Want".

This commitment entails addressing emerging digital governance trends and technologies while enhancing coordination with the Global Digital Compact through processes like WSIS and IGF. Our goal is to foster a continent that is prosperous, integrated, and peaceful.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Recognizing the vital role of inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships – encompassing governments (i.e. the executive, Judicial, Legislative), civil society, the private sector, and international organizations – in propelling the digital transformation agenda forward.

We call for enhanced cooperation among governments, civil society, the private sector, parliamentarians, policymakers, and international organizations to achieve the Global Digital Compact objectives, including:

1. Closing digital divides and accelerating progress across the SDGs
2. Expanding inclusion and benefits from the digital economy for all
3. Fostering an inclusive, open, safe, and secure digital space

4. Advancing responsible, equitable, and interoperable data governance approaches
5. Enhancing international governance of artificial intelligence

Monitoring and Evaluation

We emphasize the importance of strengthening digital infrastructure, developing e-government solutions, and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for WSIS Action Lines and GDC objectives.

As we move forward

We recognize the urgent need to bridge the digital divide across Africa, ensuring equal access to technology for all. To achieve this, we must strengthen digital infrastructure, including broadband connectivity and affordable ICT services, fostering resilient societies and digital economies.

We recognize that Artificial Intelligence (AI) and innovations in generative AI have transformative potential to boost African economies through effective financial inclusion, employment creation and enhanced public service delivery.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is vital for Africa's development, driving sustainable growth, innovation, improved governance, and inclusive access to healthcare, education, and finance, while promoting environmental sustainability.

There is a need to enhance data sharing and management in digital technologies across the continent.

WE HEREBY DECLARE THAT:

We urge African countries to prioritize capacity building, education, and digital skills development, unlocking the potential of AI and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for a prosperous Africa.

We encourage African countries to digitalize their government services to enhance citizen engagement, reduce corruption, improve the ease of business and enhance domestic resource mobilization.

We call for policies and initiatives supporting entrepreneurship, particularly among underserved groups - youth, persons with disabilities, and women - to cultivate a vibrant digital economy.

We request UNECA to map existing WSIS goals with the priorities outlined in the Global Digital Compact to foster coherence and reinforce joint commitments.

Member states should foster collaboration with the private sector, civil society, and international partners to leverage digital public goods, open standards, and innovative solutions for DPI development, focusing on: Identity, Payments, Data Exchange, Financing, Cybersecurity and etc

Member states should harmonize legal and policy framework to support cross-border data sharing and e-commerce as well as to build a vibrant digital ecosystem.

Member states should put in place supportive policies to regulate the use of AI and also avert its risks and robust infrastructure to tap the limitless opportunities of Artificial Intelligence to leapfrog its development

All stakeholders, especially governments and the private sector, must conduct cybersecurity maturity assessments and ensure data protection compliance.

All stakeholders in line with the Global Digital Compact objectives, principals, actions and commitment should work together to tackle the widening digital divides between and within countries to ensure that no one is left behind development and application of emerging technologies including AI.

We call upon Member States, with the support of UNECA, the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and other partners, to adopt multistakeholder processes to fast-track the implementation of key initiatives, including
1. African Centre for the Coordination and Research in Cybersecurity (Rep.of Togo)
2. African Research Center on Artificial Intelligence (Rep. of Congo)
3. African Steam Center (Rep. of Rwanda)
4. African Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention)
5. AU Data Policy Framework
6. AU AI Continental Strategies
7. African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement
8. AU Digital Single Market Framework
9. WSIS Action Lines adaptation to the Global Digital Compact and Pact for the Future

We encourage continued collaboration and contributions to the WSIS process at the national and regional levels, ensuring that all stakeholders are involved in building a prosperous, integrated, and peaceful Africa.

We urge all stakeholders to commit to the collaborative efforts outlined in this Declaration, driving the agenda towards a more connected and equitable digital society that prioritizes inclusion, innovation, and security for all.

Done in Dar es Salam, United Republic of Tanzania on 11 October 2024