COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)

Twenty-ninth session
Geneva, 20-24 April 2026

Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2025 to implement the outcomes of the WSIS

Submission by

Secretariat of the Internet Governance Forum

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General 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 levels" (to the 29th session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

UNITED NATIONS   NATIONS UNIES

Report on the Implementation of the Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

2025 Input from the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

31 October 2025

Part One:

Executive Summary

Since the 2012 CSTD Working Group report on improvements to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the Forum has used its recommendations to advance implementation of its mandate under the Tunis Agenda, supported by global initiatives such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the UN Secretary-General's digital cooperation processes such as the Global Digital Compact (GDC). In preparation for the 20-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20), the IGF has strengthened strategic coordination, multistakeholder engagement, and intersessional work, while expanding participation, visibility, and financial sustainability.

Persistent digital divides, gender gaps, and the risks of Internet fragmentation remain key challenges, yet the IGF community continues to make tangible progress through inclusive mechanisms linking global, regional, and national levels. The network of national, regional and youth IGF initiatives (NRIs) has grown to 177, collectively engaging over 15,000 stakeholders annually. The 20th IGF, hosted by Norway in June 2025, brought together more than 9,000 participants from 165 countries to address various topics such as digital inclusion, AI, cybersecurity, human rights, and information integrity, producing actionable "Lillestrøm Messages."

Intersessional initiatives, including Policy Networks on AI, Meaningful Access, and Internet Fragmentation; 32 Dynamic Coalitions; and the Best Practice Forum on Cybersecurity, have advanced concrete policy outcomes. Capacity-development programmes expanded through targeted grants, travel support, and engagement of and with youth, judiciary and parliamentarians, with particular attention to the Global South. The IGF also introduced innovative tools, including AI-assisted reporting and repositories for documenting outputs.

Looking ahead, the IGF will continue to serve as an inclusive multistakeholder platform aligned with various ongoing UN processes, and beyond. Future priorities include strengthening capacity development initiatives, scaling equitable and meaningful participation, deepening multistakeholder cooperation, and ensuring that IGF outputs inform broader UN policy implementation across development, human rights, emerging technologies and sustainability agendas.

Part Two

Analytical Overview

Since the 2012 CSTD Working Group report on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the Forum has used its recommendations as a framework to advance implementation of its mandate under the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. These efforts have been reinforced by complementary global processes, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, Our Common Agenda, and the Pact for the Future with its Global Digital Compact (GDC).

In the lead-up to the WSIS+20 Review and the assessment of the IGF mandate, the Forum has focused on more strategic and coordinated preparations. Continuous improvements, driven by community demand through bottom-up stocktaking and open consultations, have strengthened outcomes and visibility, refined working modalities across the Secretariat, Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), and the IGF Leadership Panel, and expanded participation, capacity development, and financial stability.

Persistent digital and gender divides, rapid technological change, and the risk of Internet fragmentation remain among the major challenges in fulfilling the IGF's mandate. Nevertheless, through strong multistakeholder support, the Forum has made tangible progress in overcoming these, particularly by developing meaningful mechanisms for implementing the IGF's values and procedural framework at the local, regional, and global levels.

Since 2006, the network of national, regional and youth IGFs (NRIs) has grown organically, expanding from a few dozen by 2011 to 177 worldwide today, forming an inclusive ecosystem that channels the digital policy priorities of diverse communities into global discussions within and beyond the UN system. Collectively, the NRIs engage approximately 15,000 stakeholders annually in over 1,000 sessions and other forms of intersessional work. Current discussions indicate that the most prominent areas of interest in this IGF cycle include digital inclusion, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, human rights, and the digital economy.

The annual IGF meetings have continued on a high trajectory. In June 2025, the 20th IGF meeting was hosted by the Government of Norway in Lillestrøm, drawing more than 9,000 participants from over 165 countries and featuring over 250 community-led sessions. Discussions covered issues such as digital inclusion, cybersecurity, human rights online, trustworthy AI and data governance, information integrity, and Internet fragmentation. The Lillestrøm IGF Messages, as the meeting's major outcome, consolidated the discussions from all sessions into a set of actionable recommendations for multistakeholder decision-making and to inform other relevant processes.

Beyond the annual meeting, a rich array of intersessional, community-driven activities continued throughout the year. This included robust policy networks on AI, Meaningful Access, and Internet Fragmentation; a Best Practice Forum on Cybersecurity focusing specifically on conflict zones; and 32 Dynamic Coalitions addressing topics such as the interplanetary Internet, digital rights, online gaming, data and health, and more. These initiatives are developed through open, inclusive, bottom-up consultations, fostering a multidisciplinary approach to globally significant digital policy issues.

The IGF's mandated capacity development activities continue to expand. In addition to ongoing substantive support for national, regional, and youth IGF initiatives (NRIs), the Secretariat allocated 11 grants to NRIs with a focus on communities in the Global South. Together with the Host Country, Norway, the IGF supported over 130 stakeholders from the Global South to participate in person at the Lillestrøm meeting. A dedicated newcomer orientation was also provided for first-time participants. In addition, more than 35 remote hubs received substantive support, amongst them 7 were financially supported, enabling virtual participation in the annual meeting of groups – in communal settings like schools and workplaces – across the Global South.

Through the IGF's intersessional work, dozens of capacity development workshops and webinars have been held this cycle, on topics such as AI, quantum computing, the Internet governance ecosystem, cybersecurity for peace, and Internet fragmentation.

As part of its 2025 capacity development objectives, the IGF also strengthened engagement with parliaments, parliamentary associations, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). A dedicated parliamentary track involved over 150 legislators and parliamentary staff from 50 countries, through collaboration with regional IGFs, including the African IGF (Tanzania), Asia-Pacific regional IGF (Nepal), and Latin American and Caribbean IGF (Argentina), as well as during the 20th annual meeting in Norway.

Youth engagement likewise remained a priority, with thousands of young stakeholders participating through dedicated youth tracks at the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) (France), the African IGF (Tanzania), the Asia-Pacific regional IGF, and the Latin American and Caribbean IGF (Argentina). The outcomes of these activities, focusing on social media regulation and age verification, were consolidated into Messages from Youth for broad dissemination. As mentioned, further support was extended to developing country communities through workshops, targeted NRI and remote hub grants, and travel assistance to ensure equitable participation.

As digital technologies evolve, so does the IGF structure, too. In view of the WSIS+20 Review, a specific MAG was appointed by the UN Secretary-General, comprising former MAG and Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) members, to strategically guide the IGF toward a more empowered process. The IGF Leadership Panel complements this, including with continued work on its "Internet We Want" framework, engaging stakeholders globally to steer the Forum toward greater strategic relevance and impact.

Within the UN system, the IGF continues to strengthen cooperation with various entities and initiatives, advancing the integration of development, human rights, and sustainability perspectives. The MAG Working Groups on Strategy, Workshops, Youth, and Multilingualism align IGF processes with Our Common Agenda, the GDC, and WSIS+20 objectives. Financial sustainability has improved through a diversified fundraising strategy that broadens the donor base and increases in-kind contributions, including staff secondments to the IGF Secretariat. Collaboration with key institutions and initiatives has deepened, including cooperation on youth engagement with the Governments of France and India for the AI Action Summit ; with the German Development Fund (GIZ) to support youth and parliamentary participation and strengthen the IGF's outreach; Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on engagement of and with legislators; UNESCO on implementation of the Internet universality indicators, and participation in the European Commission's High-Level Group on Internet Governance, as well as the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS).

Part Three

(a) Innovative Policies, Programmes and Projects

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) continues to strengthen inclusivity and participation, particularly from developing countries, through its expanding network of National, Regional and Youth IGFs (NRIs). Operating independently yet aligned with the IGF's multistakeholder, bottom-up, and open principles, the NRIs have grown from 43 in 2015 to 177 in 2025. They have become integral contributors to intersessional activities, joint workshops, and youth-focused programmes. Regular coordination meetings ensure that local and regional perspectives meaningfully inform global IGF deliberations.

The IGF's Policy Networks on Artificial Intelligence (PNAI), Meaningful Access (PNMA), and Internet Fragmentation (PNIF) have advanced issue-specific policy cooperation, while the Best Practice Forums (BPFs) and Dynamic Coalitions (DCs) continue to produce practical outputs and foster cross-community collaboration. In 2025, 32 active DCs addressed topics ranging from cybersecurity and data governance to

gender, public access in libraries, and emerging issues such as the interplanetary Internet. Beyond their substantive work, the intersessional activities this year also focused on strategically enhancing their overall impact long term. As a result, dedicated repositories linked to the PNMA were established to document and share outcomes more systematically.

The IGF continuously analyses stakeholder participation across all its activities to identify gaps by region, country, stakeholder group, and discipline. Consequently, targeted efforts have been made to engage underrepresented sectors such as the creative, entertainment and film industries, the judiciary, social media platforms, and standard-setting organizations. The 20th IGF meeting in Lillestrøm marked significant progress in this regard, with representatives from these sectors actively contributing to the high-level track and other sessions.

The 20th IGF agenda was further streamlined and consolidated by reducing the number of parallel session tracks from eleven to eight, thereby sharpening the thematic focus and coherence of the overall programme.

This year also saw innovation in reporting mechanisms. An AI-assisted reporting system - developed jointly by the IGF Secretariat, the Host Country Norway, and the DiploFoundation - was introduced to complement the traditional human-based reporting conducted by rapporteurs.

Finally, to illustrate the results and outcomes of its 20 years of work, the IGF Secretariat produced a paper highlighting concrete impacts and achievements at all levels over the years. Together with the IGF Messages, the Achievement Report will inform the WSIS+20 preparations and the UN General Assembly deliberations.

(b) Future Actions and Initiatives

Looking ahead, the IGF with its firm well developed mechanisms and robust community stands ready to serve as an inclusive platform for other UN processes, including the recently established Global Dialogue on AI Governance and Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, supporting transparent, equitable multistakeholder policy discussions.

Priorities include scaling equitable participation through expanded travel and remote-hub support, strengthening multilingual accessibility, and developing AI-assisted website enhancement, Internet governance repository as well as the reporting tools to improve efficiency and inclusiveness.

The Forum will also strengthen its capacity development initiatives for the Global South, as well as parliamentary and judicial engagement in partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UNESCO, and continue collaboration across the UN system and beyond, ensuring that IGF outputs inform policy implementation across development, human rights, security, and sustainability agendas, fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).