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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

United Nations Development Programme

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.

<p>DISCLAIMER: The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the UN Trade and Development.</p>

UNDP Inputs to the SG's Report on the progress made in 2025 in the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS at the regional and international levels - October 2025

Executive Summary

Digital technologies now sit at the core of sustainable development. As they increasingly shape all aspects of life, they have risen to the top of policy agendas worldwide in 2025. This year marks several milestones that raised both ambition and urgency with regard to digital: the five-year countdown to the 2030 SDG deadline, the twentieth anniversary and review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the first full year of implementing the Global Digital Compact (GDC), and discussions around the UN80 Initiative. Across all levels – national, regional, and international – stakeholders have intensified efforts to advance a people-centered, inclusive, and sustainable digital transformation. UNDP's new Strategic Plan 2026–2029 recognizes digital and AI transformation as powerful accelerators of development and systemic change.

Throughout 2025, UNDP remained deeply engaged in the WSIS implementation and WSIS+20 review process, contributing to policy discussions, facilitation mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder consultations. As co-facilitator of WSIS Action Lines C4 (Capacity Building), C6 (Enabling Environment), and C11 (International and Regional Cooperation), UNDP supported global and regional dialogues and delivered targeted initiatives to drive progress towards WSIS outcomes.

The WSIS+20 High-Level Event, co-organized by UNDP and partners in July 2025, served as a platform to assess two decades of progress, identify persistent challenges, and chart a renewed vision for a just, inclusive, and equitable digital future. Complementing this, UNDP convened briefings with Member States and events with other stakeholders on WSIS progress, advocating for stronger digital cooperation. Across those dialogues, Member States and stakeholders acknowledge WSIS as a dynamic and continuously evolving process – one that effectively responds to the rapid pace of technological change and strengthens digital cooperation through multiple platforms, including the WSIS Forum, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and its regional forums and discussions.

UNDP also advanced dialogue on AI governance and digital cooperation through the Hamburg Sustainability Conference, Paris AI Action Summit, Internet Governance Forum, and AI for Good Global Summit. The Digital@UNGA 2025 event, jointly hosted by UNDP and ITU during the UN General Assembly, reinforced WSIS principles while highlighting capacity building, a robust enabling environment, and the implementation of inclusive and safe DPI. The forthcoming Digital@UNGA WSIS Edition, to be held on the sidelines of the WSIS+20 Review will further reinforce WSIS outcomes and showcase how digital technologies can accelerate sustainable development.

UNDP believes that leveraging existing mechanisms like WSIS in implementing the GDC is critical. As part of GDC operationalization, UNDP – through UNGIS – also contributed to developing a mapping that aligns the SDGs, WSIS Action Lines, and GDC commitments to guide coherent implementation.

Analytical Overview of Trends and Experiences in Implementation

Drawing on its digital work across more than 130 countries and its active participation in international, regional, and national digital cooperation processes, UNDP identifies the following key trends and experiences shaping WSIS implementation in 2025.

Achievements and Emerging Good Practices:

- **Capacity Building at Scale:** Capacity building remains the most in-demand area of digital support among developing countries. Systematic upskilling of public servants and institutions has moved from pilots to sustained portfolios. At the same time, capacity building broadens its meaning beyond just skills. It now captures knowledge, partnerships, and resources that enable fit-for-context digital and AI transformation.
- **Shift to Systems Thinking:** Digital transformation efforts are increasingly adopting a whole-of-society approach. Rather than focusing on isolated solutions or single-sector interventions, countries are emphasizing systems thinking – integrating digital, data, and institutional reforms to create coherent, scalable, and sustainable transformation ecosystems.
- **AI Surge:** 2024–2025 saw an exponential rise in requests from governments for UNDP’s AI Landscape Assessment, support for developing national AI strategies and advice on strengthening national data ecosystems for AI, often driven by the need to understand emerging opportunities and risks driven by the social, and economic impact of rapidly evolving AI ecosystem across other sectors.
- **Safeguards for DPI, Data and AI:** Uptake of rights-based guardrails (e.g., DPI safeguards framework, Trust and Safety Programme Offer, Data governance principles, Governance of Data Exchange Systems) is growing, embedding trust and accountability into national digital agendas and systems.
- **Cyber Resilience Mainstreamed:** National cyber strategies now link security with service continuity and data protection, and include capacity-building for incident response, critical infrastructure, and citizen awareness.

Persistent Challenges and Implementation Barriers:

- **Lack of Sustained Funding:** Many digital transformation initiatives face fragmented or short-term financing, making it difficult to maintain momentum, scale successful pilots, or ensure continuity beyond project cycles. Limited domestic budget allocations and dependence on donor funding hinder long-term institutionalization and sustainability of digital efforts.
- **Balancing Innovation with trust, safety, and good governance:** The rapid uptake of AI and digital technologies has intensified policy debates around ethics, accountability, and human-centric governance. Many countries are seeking guidance, together with methods, and concrete tools to balance innovation incentives with safeguards for privacy, security, and fairness.
- **Customization and Delivery Bottlenecks:** Increasing demand for context-specific support – particularly for refined AI assessments, and strategies – has lengthened delivery timelines. Complex coordination among government stakeholders, private sector, and civil society underscores the need for streamlined operational processes and flexible program design.

- **Political and Institutional Volatility:** Frequent leadership transitions, cabinet reshuffles, and evolving national priorities disrupt implementation cycles. New administrations often require renewed engagement and re-alignment of digital strategies with updated policy visions.
- **Lack of localization, data gaps, and limited interoperability:** Many developing countries lack high-quality, diverse, disaggregated datasets and localized tools. Even when data is available, limited interoperability between systems often prevents sharing and reuse.

Innovative Policies, Programmes and Projects Undertaken to Implement the WSIS Outcomes

Some examples of innovative policies, programmes and projects related to WSIS action lines & themes which were initiated, launched, or expanded by UNDP in 2025:

Enabling Environment (C6):

Assessments and National Strategy work:

- In 2025, UNDP conducted its Digital Readiness Assessment and/or its national digital strategy advisory work in 10 countries during the year (Mauritius, Malawi, Ghana, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Belarus, Montserrat, El Salvador and Bolivia) with growing demand for subnational and institutional Digital Readiness Assessments to be delivered in late 2025/2026.
- UNDP has conducted AI Landscape Assessments (AILA), a comprehensive analysis of national AI ecosystems, infrastructure, capacities, policy and regulatory frameworks, and ethical approaches, in 8 countries since the product launched (Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Vietnam, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Ecuador, Rwanda), with more than 17 additional countries underway or set to launch AILA or AI Strategy processes in 2025-26 under the UNDP's AI Sprint, a corporate-wide initiative to invest in AI foundations and capacities to support AI-enabled development.

AI and data ecosystems:

- In June 2025, UNDP launched the AI Hub for Sustainable Development, powered by the Ministry of Entreprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT). The Hub focuses on accelerating local private sector innovation and public, and private sector partnerships to advance AI for sustainable development in Africa. Several key commitments and partnerships were announced during the Launch Event, and operationalized in 2025 including:
 - AskHub: A gateway for innovators to access AI resources and support, with personalized guidance, comprehensive resource library, and readiness assessments.
 - The Africa Green Compute Coalition (AGCC): A flagship of the AI Hub, working with core design partners from G7, Italy and Africa: Alliance4AI, Axum, Kytabu and Cineca to exponentially enable access to scalable, sustainable, and affordable AI compute infrastructure – understanding and partnering with both supply and demand - to precisely target climate positive innovations and industrial development across Africa.
 - Compute Accelerator Programme: A six-month programme providing African AI innovators with cloud credits, GPU access, technical training, and partnership support to scale their solutions. Supporting 120 participants through two tracks: compute-ready organizations with market-ready solutions, and early-stage organizations building toward compute readiness.

- AI Infrastructure Builder Programme: Supporting African entrepreneurs building the AI infrastructure that will power the continent's future, connecting Africa's AI Infrastructure builders to an integrated network of government and financing where they can shape the partnerships that the continent needs with the G7, Italy, and the EU.
- UNDP launched the Local Language Accelerator in 9 countries (Serbia, Ghana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Namibia, Lesotho, Algeria, Peru, Mexico) to expand the benefits of AI innovation to communities speaking under-resourced languages, support local AI ecosystems and pilot new community-driven means of data collection and governance.
- Under UNDP Trust and Safety Reimagination Lab, 17 teams of global innovators, selected from our global open call, will be co-designing a portfolio of tactical solutions to address the world's most pressing AI risks and harms and complement ongoing research and policy efforts related to fostering trustworthy AI advancement.
- UNDP's SGBV Digital Observatory Hub in Malawi, recognized among the WSIS Prizes 2025 nominations in C6 (Enabling Environment) category for its contribution to gender-responsive data systems and digital protection.

Digital Public Infrastructure and open-source:

- UNDP supported 25 countries in DPI and DPG advisory and implementation in 2025.
- To ensure that DPI is safe, trusted, and inclusive for all, UNDP is supporting the in-country implementation of the DPI Safeguards framework, which was launched alongside the UN Office of Digital and Emerging Technologies during last year's UNGA.
- To further support countries on their journey towards safe and inclusive DPI, UNDP officially launched the Governance Assessment framework for Data Exchange Systems in November 2025. The framework has been piloted in Guatemala and is currently being implemented in South Africa, with more plans to scale to more countries in the upcoming years.
- This year, 4 more countries joined the 50-in-5 initiative that UNDP and its partners (the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Digital Public Goods Alliance, Co-Develop) lead to help 50 countries design, launch, and scale components of their digital public infrastructure by 2028. The 50-in-5 campaign and the DPI Safeguards initiative jointly announced the activation of their DPI Safeguards Accelerator and a comprehensive DPI learning exchange for countries on their DPI journeys.
- To further empower local and regional public and private actors to effectively adopt open-source technologies for delivering digital government services, UNDP is also collaborating with ITU on the Open Source Ecosystem Enabler (OSEE) project with funding from the EU, designing and staffing 2 full-scale national-scale Open Source Programme Offices (OSPOs) - in Kenya as well as Trinidad and Tobago, and running a network of 25 additional countries interested in their own OSPO, whereof OSPO assessment missions and trainings are taking place in Kazakhstan and Cambodia in November 2025.
- To increase understanding of safe and trusted DPI, the inaugural "DPI in Practice" training was undertaken for 35+ government officials in Panama (with UNDP Digital Capacity Lab).

Capacity-building (C4):

- UNDP is actively working on strengthening institutional and human capacities by providing human-centered training and advisory support on data, AI, and digital innovation. Throughout 2025, UNDP has continuously supported digital capacity-building efforts in 40+ countries,

preparing governments to govern and deploy AI and other emerging technologies safely and effectively.

UNDP Digital Capacity Lab:

- The Digital Capacity Lab at UNDP delivered successful training programs for governments and parliamentarians with a Net Promoter Score of 9.1/10. A total of 800+ participants have been trained through several initiatives, including:
 - Future Smart Ethiopia 2025: Transforming Ethiopia's public sector through six digital capacity building initiatives, across several months.
 - Digital and AI for Government: Engaged 40+ policymakers through a hands-on training on AI fundamentals in Ethiopia, as well as 280 public servants in the British Virgin Islands.
 - Ghana Ministerial AI Bootcamp: Trained 100+ senior government officials to operationalize Ghana's National AI Strategy
 - AI for Parliamentarians: Trained 40 members of parliament and senior staff on AI policy, regulation, and oversight
 - Digital Design Sprint for Government: Led 42 senior government officials through a design thinking sprint in Argentina.
 - Design Thinking for Municipalities and CSOs: Built feasible prototypes for citizen-centric digital solutions with 30+ civil society representatives in Ethiopia.
 - Women's Digital Champions Training: Trained 69 women in the public sectors to become leaders and trainers in digital transformation. 139 public servants have already been trained by the Women's Digital Champions in Ethiopia.
 - Digital Safety/ Online Gender Based Violence training: Trained 200+ women in digital safety skills and gender-inclusive cybersecurity policy.
 - Leadership and Governance in this Digital Era (FOSS): Facilitated a training hosted by the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Singapore and the UNDP Singapore Center for 30 senior government officials and diplomats on digital transformation.

Capacity Development for Digital Transformation Project with ITU:

- With support from the EU, UNDP and ITU launched the Capacity Development for Digital Transformation global project, aiming to train at least 5,000 government officials and policymakers involved in digital transformation efforts worldwide until 2027.
 - To date, UNDP has trained 305 professionals across 60+ developing countries and island states through 7 courses on the topics of digital transformation, data governance, DPI & DPGs, AI, and digital services, equipping public sector professionals with the knowledge and skills to design and implement digital policies and programmes effectively.

Data to Policy Initiative with GIZ:

- In 2025, The Data to Policy Initiative, developed by UNDP in collaboration with GIZ on behalf of BMZ (Data Lab) and the EU, also expanded:
 - The Data to Policy Navigator, as of Q4 2025, has more than 40,000 active users across governments, the private sector, academia and CSOs. Recently, the Navigator was

updated to include new content on AI for Public Policy, which aims to bridge the AI knowledge divide.

- The Data to Policy Training: a modular 4-day in-person training program; upskilled 100+ mid-level policymakers from 3 countries (Ethiopia, Guatemala and Malawi).
- The Data to Policy Champions Community: a newly established community that builds on the success of the Network created under the Initiative in 2024; provided on-going support and peer-to-peer exchange for 100+ policymakers who participated in the Data to Policy Training.

Other capacity building programmes and initiatives:

- UNDP has provided data governance training and delivered Data Governance Recommendation Report in 1 country (Uzbekistan) to bridge data equity gaps.
- The Broadband Commission Working Group on Data Governance – co-chaired by UNESCO, ITU, UNDP, and the African Union – has developed the Data Governance Toolkit: Navigating Data in the Digital Age, a practical resource designed to support governments and institutions in building inclusive, rights-based, and future-ready data governance frameworks.
- Leveraging its presence in over 170 countries and territories, UNDP will be supporting the Global AI Skills Coalition, an initiative of ITU, to deliver AI capacity-development directly to partner countries.

International and regional cooperation (C11):

WSIS mechanism processes:

- The WSIS+20 High-Level Event, co-organized by UNDP and partners in July 2025, served as a platform to assess two decades of progress, identify persistent challenges, and chart a renewed vision for a just, inclusive, and equitable digital future.
- UNDP convened briefings with Member States and events with other stakeholders on WSIS progress and WSIS+20 Review, advocating for stronger digital cooperation.
- UNDP is co-chair of the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS).

GDC implementation:

- UNDP is participating in the Working Group on Digital Technologies (WGDT), which is currently engaged in working toward milestones agreed in the Pact workplan and a GDC Implementation mapping exercise. UNDP co-leads the WGDT sub-group on GDC Objective 1, closing digital divides, with ITU.
- UNDP is an observer in the Working Group on Data Governance at All Levels, established by the UN CSTD as requested in the GDC.

Other interagency and multistakeholder forums and processes:

- UNDP remains actively engaged in global partnerships around using digital and ICT to address global challenges, including the Broadband Commission, the Edison Alliance on Digital Inclusion,

the Digital Public Goods Alliance, and the Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability (CODES).

- UNDP is a part of the Global AI Skills Coalition, an initiative of ITU, to deliver AI capacity-development directly to partner countries.
- In collaboration with Italy's G7 Presidency, UNDP launched the AI Hub for Sustainable Development to drive sustainable AI-based growth in Africa.
- UNDP, together with BMZ has led the development and implementation of the Hamburg Declaration on Responsible AI for the SDGs that was endorsed at the second Hamburg Sustainability Conference (HSC) in June 2025, establishing a shared global framework for ethical, inclusive, and equitable AI. HSC is an initiative of BMZ, UNDP, the Michael Otto Foundation, and the City of Hamburg that brings together global leaders to advance solutions for sustainable development.
- The Digital@UNGA 2025 event, jointly hosted by UNDP and ITU during the UN General Assembly 2025, brought together thousands of participants through its Anchor Event and 45 affiliate sessions hosted in New York, across the UN system, and online around the world.