

# **COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

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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 Industrial Development Organization

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 29<sup>th</sup> 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.

**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.



**World Summit on the Information Society**  
**UNIDO reporting on activities related to WSIS Action Lines**  
**29 October 2025**

**Executive Summary**

The rapid advancement of emerging digital technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping global value chains and competitiveness, presenting significant challenges for developing countries, which struggle to keep pace with accelerated innovation cycles. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is committed to addressing these challenges by promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development. UNIDO's motto "progress by innovation" realises tangible solutions; AI, innovation, and digital technologies are central to accelerate industrial and economic transformation to realise UNIDO's strategic priorities of supporting sustainable supply chains, limiting climate breakdown, and ending hunger.

Under its role as a co-facilitator of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Action Lines C1 (public governance and stakeholder engagement), C3 (access to information and knowledge), C4 (capacity building), and C6 (enabling environment) and as co-chair of the working group implementing the Global Digital Compact's Objective 2 (Inclusive Digital Economy), UNIDO supports the adoption of AI and other digital technologies. In its technical cooperation programmes and projects, UNIDO establishes specialized Centres of Excellence and Intelligent Manufacturing Hubs; facilitates the development and scaling of inclusive digital solutions; and supporting local Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), and innovators. Modern industrial policies are the cornerstone of an enabling innovation ecosystem. UNIDO's policy support and open innovation programmes like ScaleX establish environments to de-risk market entry for innovators. The programme offers structured test beds and policy sandboxes to accelerate technology adoption, market access and investments for MSMEs. Complementing these efforts, the Lighthouse Solution Launchpad facilitates adoption of proven AI and digital solutions from the private sector in developing countries. Flagship initiatives like the Global Alliance on AI for Industry and Manufacturing (AIM Global) and its regional chapters, such as the Alliance for Industry 4.0 and Smart Manufacturing in Africa (AISMA), create platforms for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Through these multi-stakeholder efforts, UNIDO works to ensure that the benefits of digitalization and AI are shared equitably, helping Member States harness frontier technologies to overcome the digital divide.

**Analysis of trends and experiences**

The shift brought by emerging technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), is transforming global production and innovation systems. While these developments create immense opportunities for industrial growth and sustainable development, they also present significant challenges for many developing economies seeking to keep pace with accelerated technological change. The gains from frontier digital technologies remain unevenly distributed, often concentrated in a relatively small number of firms and economies with established industrial capabilities, innovation systems, and (digital) public infrastructure. To ensure that these technologies contribute to shared prosperity, inclusive digital solutions must rapidly be scaled up through public-private partnerships, bridging divides and fostering inclusive digital transformation.

In support of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Action Lines, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is committed to advancing the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for inclusive and sustainable industrial development, with particular emphasis on Action Lines C1 (the role of public governance authorities), C3 (access to information and knowledge), C4 (capacity building), and C6 (enabling environment). These commitments, for which UNIDO is a co-facilitator, are embedded across UNIDO's programmes, partnerships, and initiatives.

**C1 The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development**

To advance the use of AI, innovation and digital technologies for inclusive and sustainable industrial development and ensure the active participation of all stakeholders, **UNIDO builds multi-stakeholder partnerships and convenes global platforms for digital cooperation**. As co-chair of the working group implementing the Global Digital Compact's Objective 2 (Inclusive Digital Economy), the Organization facilitates forums to bring together public authorities, industry leaders, and international partners to shape policy, drive collaboration and mobilize joint action.

As a recent example, UNIDO co-hosted 'AI as a Game-Changer: Private Sector Innovation for an Inclusive Digital Economy' on the sidelines of the 80<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly at the first UN Digital Cooperation Day on September 22, 2025, with UN Trade & Development, UN ODET, and the Saudi Data & AI Authority, supported by the Governments of Kenya and Ukraine. Convening over 100 global AI leaders from across government, industry, and international organizations, the event secured commitments from leading private sector organizations to collaborate on bridging the digital economic divide, announced the winners of the Global Award for Inclusive Digital Economy Solutions, and launched the UNIDO Foundation, positioning the Organization as a driving force in implementing the Global Digital Compact.

Central to translating these global commitments into action is UNIDO's [Global Alliance on Artificial Intelligence for Industry and Manufacturing](#) (AIM Global), a strategic initiative designed to foster international collaboration and drive sustainable, AI-enabled industrial development. By leveraging the power of digital transformation and AI, the Alliance aims to enhance industrial competitiveness across UNIDO Member States, committed to the core principles of transparency and accountability; inclusiveness; collaboration for innovation; reliability and safety; privacy and security.

The **AIM Global Conference 2025**, hosted by UNIDO, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China, and the Xiamen Municipal Government, launched Phase II of the AIM Global initiative (2025–2026). This new phase focuses



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on translating global collaboration into tangible AI solutions for inclusive, responsible, and sustainable industrial development, through a new governance structure, tailored regional chapters and a global call for co-establishing CoEs.

### **C3 Access to information and knowledge**

In line with WSIS Action Line C3, UNIDO facilitates access to information, knowledge and solutions. To counteract the concentration of technology development in a small number of regions and companies, UNIDO works to enhance access to industrial knowledge, data, and technological innovation across developing economies, by offering public and private sector stakeholders a neutral platform to engage.

The **Alliance for Industry 4.0 and Smart Manufacturing in Africa (AISMA)** for example, AIM Global's regional chapter for Africa, serves as a think tank and cooperative network to unlock the potential of smart manufacturing in Africa. The **NextGen Manufacturing Summit Africa 2025** in Morocco, co-organized by AISMA, highlighted the strategic importance of Smart Factory Hubs in driving Africa's digital transformation and supporting SMEs.

Further fostering access to information, knowledge, and technology, **UNIDO's Centres of Excellence and Intelligent Manufacturing Hubs further reinforce access to expertise**, bridging the gap between the potential of emerging technologies and the on-the-ground capacities of Member States. Established through multi-stakeholder partnerships, they serve as crucial hubs for technology and solution transfer, skills development, and knowledge sharing, creating an enabling environment for sustainable industrial growth. For instance, the **AIM Global Centre of Excellence** in Shanghai is dedicated to accelerating the responsible adoption of industrial AI, empowering developing countries to harness its benefits for equitable transformation. Similarly, tripartite initiatives like the **China-Africa-UNIDO Centre of Excellence** in Addis Ababa will focus on promoting sustainable industrialization and skills development across Africa. Through this global network, UNIDO ensures that industrial advancement is inclusive and contributes to the implementation of the Global Digital Compact's Objective 2, the WSIS Action Points and the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **C4 Capacity building**

UNIDO is committed to strengthening capacities in developing countries to adopt frontier technologies and ensure all countries benefit from the digital transformation.

UNIDO actively promotes the **adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital technologies to support sustainable value chains, limit climate breakdown, and end hunger in developing countries**. Across several regions, the Organization is piloting practical, high-impact AI solutions — such as machine learning tools for assessing rice quality in Ghana, digital traceability systems in Cameroon's cocoa and coffee sectors, and AI-driven platforms for beehive monitoring in Egypt. In Namibia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UNIDO projects combining AI and geographic information systems (GIS) have improved water management, supported land restoration, boosted crop yields, and increased the profitability of local agro-industries.

Recognizing that technology transfer must be paired with local capacity development, UNIDO and UNCTAD, as Co-Chairs of Objective 2 of the Global Digital Compact, work to bridge the digital and AI gap and realize the promise of a more inclusive digital economy whose benefits are accessible to all. In July 2025, UNIDO and its partners launched a **global call for inclusive digital economy solutions** to identify and support innovative initiatives that empower underserved communities and advance inclusivity in the global digital economy. Supporting Objective 2 of the Global Digital Compact, this initiative aims to highlight existing solutions that demonstrate strong scalability potential, and encourage the formulation of new approaches, to deliver solutions where they are needed most. Through its Centres of Excellence and Intelligent Manufacturing Hubs, UNIDO also focuses on enhancing national ecosystems for digital transformation and provides specialized training for policymakers, industry leaders, and technical experts, equipping local talent with the necessary skills to sustain digital transformation.

### **C6 Enabling environment**

In support of WSIS Action Line C6, UNIDO assists Member States in creating an enabling environment that supports innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital industrialization. Industrial policy is critical for digitalizing the industrial sector, especially in countries with limited capabilities. UNIDO supports countries in strengthening their **national innovation systems (NIS)** to better absorb frontier technologies and locally develop digital solutions to foster growth. UNIDO's **Industrial Policy Labs** and **EQuIP (Enhancing the Quality of Industrial Policies) toolkit** are designed to help member states formulate, implement, and evaluate effective industrial and innovation policies. Through the **ScaleX open innovation programme**, the Organization aims to de-risk market entry and facilitate the scaling of innovative industrial solutions from Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs). A key feature of the ScaleX programme is its structured approach to fostering commercial adoption and investment readiness. This is achieved through two primary mechanisms: **real-world testbeds** provide a platform for startups and MSMEs to validate their technologies and business models in live market conditions; **policy sandboxes** enable regulatory experimentation, assisting governments in adapting their policies to create a more conducive environment for innovation. In parallel, the Lighthouse Solution Launchpad methodology facilitates the adoption of proven AI solutions from the private sector, by connecting digital and AI innovations with the priorities of developing countries, and enabling solution identification, pilot deployment, and large-scale implementation.

By connecting public institutions, industry actors, and technology innovators, UNIDO supports Member States in building the foundations for smart and sustainable industrial transformation, ensuring that the benefits of frontier technologies are shared globally and equitably.