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 the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS during the past 20 years

Submission by

Digital Public Goods Alliance

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the CSTD secretariat that will inform the substantive discussion at the CSTD on the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS during the past 20 years during its 28th annual session in April 2025, in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution E/RES/2023/3, to the CSTD to conduct such substantive discussions and to report thereon, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly.

United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development

Twenty years in the implementation of outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

WSIS+20 Reporting Template

Name of organization: Digital Public Goods Alliance
Name of respondent: Jameson Voisin/Jon Lloyd
Role of respondent: Director, Programs & Communications/Director of Advocacy
Date of response:Nov. 08/2024

I. What is your organisation's formal role and responsibilities concerning WSIS implementation?

<u>a. Mandates of your organization relevant to the WSIS implementation</u>

The Digital Public Goods Alliance (DPGA) is a multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the development, discovery, use of, and investment in open-source that have been recognized as digital public goods. Digital public goods are technology solutions that include open-source software, open datasets, open AI systems and open content collections that adhere to privacy and other applicable laws and best practices, do no harm, and help attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A list of recognized DPGs can be found on the [DPG Registry](#).

The DPGA brings together countries, private sector technology experts, think tanks, governments, philanthropic donors, international implementing organisations, and UN agencies to collectively create a thriving global ecosystem for digital public goods (DPGs).

Specifically, this relates to the following WSIS Action Lines:

1. The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development: Cooperation among stakeholders, Multi Stakeholder Partnership (MSP)

2. Information and communication infrastructure: An essential foundation for an inclusive information society: Accessibility, Affordability, Assistive technologies, Digital inclusion, Enabling and competitive environment, Investment, Universal access/service
3. Access to information and knowledge: Digital public libraries and archives, Open source, proprietary and free software
4. Capacity building: Distance learning, Education/training, E-literacy, Gender, Research and development (R&D), Teacher training, Training ICT professionals, Youth
5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs: Authentication, Building confidence and security, Cyber-security, Data protection, Online transaction security, Privacy, Secure and reliable applications
6. Enabling environment: Dispute settlement, E-government strategy, Entrepreneurship, Intellectual property, Internet governance, Legal, regulatory and policy environment, Privacy, Standardization
7. ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life: Disaster recovery, E-applications, E-agriculture, E-business, E-commerce, E-employment, E-environment, E-government, E-health, E-publishing, E-science, Sustainable production and consumption, Transparency
8. Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content: Digital archive, Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, Language-related ICT tools, Linguistic diversity, Local languages
9. Media: Combatting illegal and harmful content in the media
10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society: Common good, Ethics, Human rights, Preventing abusive uses of ICTs, Values
11. International and regional cooperation: Financing of ICT networks and services, International mechanisms, UN Global Compact
12. Digital solidarity agenda (Plan of Action, Section D): Digital divide, National e-strategies, Technology transfer

14) Follow-up and evaluation (Plan of Action, Section E)

- Success stories

  b. Brief History of your organization's contribution to the World Summit on the information Society (WSIS)

The Digital Public Goods Alliance (DPGA) has contributed to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) by advocating for open-source solutions that support a number of shared values including enhanced access to technology, transparency, digital public infrastructure and digital inclusion. Since its founding, DPGA has

collaborated with WSIS stakeholders to emphasize the role of digital public goods in advancing sustainable development goals. Through policy recommendations and resource sharing, the DPGA has worked to align global efforts toward safe, inclusive, and interoperable digital systems.

> c. Implementation processes and initiatives within your organization and/or in partnership with other organisations

The DPGA was formed from the Secretary General's roadmap on digital cooperation to help achieve the SDGs, indicating that DPGs are key to achieving sustainable development. DPGs are open-source software, data, AI models, standards, and content that can be used and adapted freely. They can help people and societies use digital technologies to meet their development needs.

The Global Digital Compact recognized digital public goods (DPGs) as key to achieving sustainable development. DPGs are open-source software, data, AI models, standards, and content that can be used and adapted freely. They can help people and societies use digital technologies to meet their development needs.

The DPGA comprises over 40 members, including UN organizations, UN member states, civil society organizations, countries, and funders working to advance the DPGA's strategic goals and contribute to all 17 SDGs through digital public goods.

The DPGA Secretariat also champions several initiatives relevant to WSIS, including:

- Coordinating the 50-in-5 Campaign, which aims to bring 50 countries together over five years to implement safe, inclusive, and interoperable digital public infrastructure.
- Convening experts and industry leaders to identify ways digital public goods can make meaningful and positive contributions to priority areas such as AI, climate change, and mis- and disinformation.
- Mobilizing funders and investments for sustainable digital public good creation and implementation.
- Stewarding the DPG Standard, which operationalizes the UN SG's definition of digital public goods, and the DPG Registry as a resource for stakeholders to learn about recognized digital public goods.

The DPGA's work touches on most aspects of the WSIS action lines

II. What have been your organization's main contributions to the direct implementation of the WSIS outcomes and related areas of digital development since the Summit, particularly since 2015?

> a. WSIS Action Lines (as lead, co-facilitator or supporting participant)

The DPGA has contributed to the WSIS outcomes in the following ways:

1. **The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development**: Cooperation among stakeholders, Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP)
   Lead/Co-facilitator: The DPGA is a lead in this work; in its composition, it is a multistakeholder alliance that aims to advance cooperation among DPGA members and stakeholders to achieve its five-year goals. The DPGA co-coordinates the 50-in-5 campaign, aiming to have 50 countries in five years implement safe, inclusive, and interoperable DPI in a safe, inclusive, and interoperable manner, encouraging learnings and best practice exchanges between the participating countries.
2. **Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive information society**: Accessibility, Affordability, Assistive technologies, Digital inclusion, Enabling and competitive environment, Investment, Universal access/service
   Supporting participant: The DPGA is a supporting participant in the above areas in action area 2, which is done via the advocacy of digital public goods which can be used for this action line.
3. **Access to information and knowledge:** Digital public libraries and archive, Open source, proprietary and free software
   Lead: The DPGA provides a publicly accessible registry of all digital public goods, including open software, open content, open datasets, and open AI models in the DPG Registry.
4. **Capacity building**: Distance learning, Education/training, E-literacy, Gender, Research and development (R&D), Teacher training, Training ICT professionals, Youth
   Supporting organisation: The DPGA's members and product owners contribute to capacity building through the above-noted examples, additionally digital public goods often serve as the platforms that can help enhance this action line.
5. **Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs**: Authentication, Building confidence and security, Cyber-security, Data protection, Online transaction security, Privacy, Secure and reliable applications

Lead: The DPGA ensures that all products found on the DPG registry has first been assessed against the DPG standard, the baseline requirements to become a digital public good. In addition to being open source, solutions adhere to privacy and other applicable best practices, do no harm, and are highly relevant for attaining the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This standard is designed to complement other relevant principles, such as the Principles for Digital Development, as well as do no harm by design features, and these apply to DPGs across all sectors of the SDGs. The DPG Standard is itself an open project, open to contribution on GitHub and developed in collaboration with organisations and experts.

6. **Enabling environment**: Dispute settlement, E-government strategy, Entrepreneurship, Intellectual property, Internet governance, Legal, regulatory and policy environment, Privacy, Standardization
Supporting organisation: The DPGA's members contribute to the enabling environment for ICT through the above-noted examples.

7. **ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life**: Disaster recovery, E-applications, E-agriculture, E-business, E-commerce, E-employment, E-environment, E-government, E-health, E-publishing, E-science, Sustainable production and consumption, Transparency
Supporting organisation: Solutions in the DPG Registry support many diverse use cases and can be adopted and adapted to meet the different needs of whoever is implementing the solutions.

8. **Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity, and local content**: Digital archive, Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, Language-related ICT tools, Linguistic diversity, Local languages
Supporting organisation: The DPGA supports and promotes work from all countries globally, including in the above ways.

9. **Media**: Combatting illegal and harmful content in the media
Lead/Co-facilitator: The DPGA aims to reduce the impact of "information pollution" through the discovery, development, and use of solutions specifically designed to enhance information integrity and reduce misinformation and other harmful content online. Digital public goods that collect, store, or distribute content must have policies identifying inappropriate and illegal content, such as child sexual abuse materials, and processes for detecting, moderating, reporting, and removing inappropriate/illegal content as part of the DPG standard.

10. **Ethical dimensions of the Information Society**: Common good, Ethics, Human rights, Preventing abusive uses of ICTs, Values
Lead: The DPGA ensures that everything in the DPG Registry has first been assessed against the DPG Standard to ensure a baseline set of requirements are met in order to do no harm by design.

11. **International and regional cooperation**: International mechanisms, UN global compact
    Lead: The DPGA contributed heavily to the UN's global digital compact by making submissions and contributions as the secretariat and encouraging DPGA members to make their own submissions to ensure the role of digital public goods was recognized in safe and inclusive technology. Articles 14-17 in the adopted version of the GDC heavily mention digital public goods and open-source solutions as a result of this advocacy.
12. **Digital solidarity agenda (Plan of Action, Section D)**: National e-strategies, Technology transfer
    Lead and Supporting organisation: The DPGA helps inform the digital solidarity agenda through its advocacy work on not just adopting DPGs but ensuring the correct enabling environment is in place (e.g., open-source policies as part of national e-strategies). By nature, digital public goods help with technology transfer as open source is easily accessible, adoptable, and adaptable, and encourages collaboration among all stakeholders who use the solutions.
13. **Follow-up and evaluation (Plan of Action, Section E)**: Success stories
    Lead: The DPGA collects and disseminates stories from its members on successful implementations of solutions to meet many of the goals listed above.

c. Indicators used to measure the impact of ICT in the achievement of the SDGs in your organization's area of work
The DPGA assesses its performance against four objectives set out in its five-year strategy.

The five-year objectives of the Digital Public Goods Alliance are:

- Digital public goods with high potential for addressing critical development needs in low- and middle-income countries are discoverable, sustainably managed, and accessible to government institutions and other relevant implementing organisations.
- UN institutions, multilateral development banks, and other public and private institutions highly relevant for implementing digital technologies in low- and middle-income countries have the knowledge, capacity, and incentives to effectively promote and support adopting DPGs that address critical development needs.
- Government institutions in low- and middle-income countries have the information, motivation, and capacity to effectively implement DPGs that address critical development needs, including planning, deployment, maintenance, and evolution of their digital public infrastructures.
- Low- and middle-income countries have vibrant commercial ecosystems to

create, maintain, implement, and incubate DPGs locally.

d. What assessment has your organization made of its engagement in WSIS-related work and digital development in its areas of responsibility?
The DPGA hosts the DPG Roadmap, which serves as a tracking tool for the public to better understand what DPG-related activities DPGA members are undertaking and their progress.

III. What does your organization see as the main achievements, problems, and emerging issues arising from WSIS and digital development in its areas of responsibility since the Summit, particularly since 2015?

a. What have been the main achievements of WSIS and digital development?

- Increased cooperation between countries and stakeholders
- Rights-centered approaches to digital development

b. What problems, obstacles, and constraints have been encountered?
1. Ensuring that digital development projects are adequately resourced beyond just their implementations. This includes:

- funding solutions throughout their lifecycle
- capacity building within countries to support the ongoing maintenance and development of digital solutions

2. A need to better advocate for platforms that can facilitate transparency and interoperability needed, like digital public goods.

c. What new opportunities and challenges have emerged over the years since WSIS which need to be addressed?

A significant opportunity and challenge lies in protecting the term "digital public good" to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of DPGs and to prevent "open-washing," where solutions with limited openness are misrepresented as fully open. The term serves as a de facto trust mark for solutions that not only go beyond being open-source but also adhere to other parts of the DPG Standard, including the "do no harm by design" principle and actively contribute to advancing the SDGs.

IV. Lessons learned in the implementation of the Summit outcomes in your organization's specific areas of responsibility
There is an increased desire to collaborate between countries, regardless of income

level, geography, or digital maturity status.

V. Observations or recommendations concerning the future of WSIS and digital development, taking into account the outcomes of the Summit of the Future in September 2024

- More on the DPI agenda.
- Changing the narrative on AI to move away from a giant, amorphous, scary thing to showing how it can be incorporated as a tool for good if the right best practices are in place - including to better embrace opportunities for open sourcing AI systems and for them to become DPGs.
- Using DPGs, DPI and other technologies to address the climate crisis.
- Highlighting how DPGs are within themselves a tool for digital cooperation.

VI. Please identify publications, reports, and other documents by your organization which you consider can contribute to the work of the review.

- https://www.digitalpublicgoods.net/digital-public-goods-alliance-strategy-2023-2028
- https://www.digitalpublicgoods.net/registry
- https://www.digitalpublicgoods.net/standard
- https://www.digitalpublicgoods.net/annual-reports

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