

# **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**

**Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean**

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 28<sup>th</sup> 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.

<p><b>DISCLAIMER:</b> 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>
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# **Report for ECLAC on the Twenty Years in the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes**

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Role of respondent: Officer in charge of the Unit of Innovation and New Technologies

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

### *a. Mandates of your organization relevant to the WSIS implementation*

ECLAC as co-facilitator of actions lines (C1) the role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development, (C6) enabling environment and (C11) international and regional cooperation, aim its efforts to promote the implementation of the WSIS outcomes in the LAC region by fostering policy dialogue among members countries, leading researches, providing technical assistance and training, and generating statistical information about access, use and development of digital technologies. ECLAC also serves as the technical secretariat for the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC) and the Ministerial Conference on Information Society.

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

Since 2005, ECLAC has been pivotal in advancing WSIS objectives in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Ministerial Conference on the Information Society and the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC). Over nearly two decades, ECLAC has coordinated Ministerial Conferences and provided technical expertise to shape digital policies aligned with WSIS goals.

In 2005, the First Regional Ministerial Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Rio de Janeiro in preparation for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. At this Conference the first version of the Plan of Action on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2007) was approved through the Rio Commitment. This Action Plan was the document that preceded the Digital Agenda. In this context, the beginnings of the Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in

Latin America and the Caribbean were born from the preparatory process for the World Summit.

In November 2024, the Ninth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean was organized in Santiago, Chile. The results of the Conference allowed the adoption of a new Digital Agenda for the region towards 2026 (eLAC2026). This milestone commemorates 19 years since the adoption of the first action plan in 2005. The conference was attended by 23 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean and had a total of 350 participants from public organizations, the private sector, the technical community, civil society, academia and international organizations.

*c. Implementation processes and initiatives within your organization and/or in partnership with other organizations.*

ECLAC has driven WSIS-aligned projects through regional initiatives including the coordination of the regional digital agenda (eLAC), policy dialogues, technical assistance, training and other activities in partnerships with global and regional stakeholders.

Some examples of this initiatives include:

In 2022, ECLAC launched the [Digital Development Observatory](#) in Latin America and the Caribbean. The observatory aims to develop metrics and information to understand the dynamics of digitalization in LAC. Among the specific objectives of the observatory are to generate quantitative and qualitative information in different areas related to digital transformation, disseminate metrics and develop.

In 2024 ECLAC, in collaboration with the German Cooperation, launched the “Digital Transformation Lab”. The lab acts as an experimentation and innovation space where policymakers, technology experts, academics, and other actors collaborate to address the challenges associated with digitalization. We research, design and support the implementation of policies on digital transformation, providing methodological tools and technological solutions.

One of the key areas of work during the last decade was related to supporting the creation of a Regional Digital Market (RDM). In this context, ECLAC provided technical support to various integrations organizations, like the Pacific Alliance (AP) and Mercosur. The idea of a MDR seeks to promote a harmonious economic space for the exchange of services and products by digital means. A market of these characteristics can promote commercial exchange between countries, in addition to encouraging investment and development of services, applications and innovations. However, it is not only about removing barriers across borders, but also of creating confidence for companies and people to participate

actively in the digital economy. This work led to the approval of the RDM, a strategy at AP and technical studies for Mercosur. Some of this work is describe in the following publication [“A regional digital market strategy for the Alliance of the Pacific”](#).

Another example regarding the RDM is the seminar that ECLAC and Mercosur organized in 2021: [The role of Mercosur in the promotion of cross-border electronic commerce and the construction of the regional digital market](#). The seminar aimed to establish a deep dialogue between government agencies involved in areas related to electronic commerce, international organizations and marketplaces interested in actions to increase regional cross-border ecommerce, especially for SMEs. Also, ECLAC developed a study in 2024 regarding the state of broadband infrastructure in Mercosur, to try to map areas of improvement in their connectivity networks.

During this period, ECLAC promoted several training and capacity building activities, one of the most important is the [School of Digital Transformation and Innovation in Latin America and the Caribbean 2023](#). The school is organized every year, the latest version was developed from Sept 30 to October 3, 2024, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. This school was conceived as a capacity building program to provide relevant content to policymakers through lectures, mini-courses, case studies, peer learning and discussions. Also, from the 12-15 August 2024, the School of Digital Transformation and Innovation in the Caribbean was organized to help policymakers in the Caribbean to have access to this capacity building program. With ten editions executed so far, the school has evolved into a significant cooperation platform. It engages policymakers, international experts, and academics from diverse sectors to debate on the challenges and opportunities that digital transformation possies for Latin America and the Caribbean.

It is also worth noting that the Digital Agenda eLAC includes dedicated working groups that serve as essential forums for cooperation across Latin America and the Caribbean. These groups are created with specific mandates and operate under the coordination of appointed leaders, with participants designated by each country. Their core functions include fostering network formation and cooperation mechanisms, promoting dialogue, and enabling the exchange of experiences and best practices. Additionally, the working groups are instrumental in building capacities, generating knowledge, and conducting in-depth analyses, all of which strengthen the digital capabilities of member nations. They also play a crucial role in establishing institutional links with other forums and organizations, thereby enhancing regional collaboration. Through these efforts, the working groups actively support the development of regional projects and initiatives that align with eLAC’s overarching goals of digital inclusion, innovation, and sustainable development in the region.

**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)*

ECLAC has acted as co-facilitator and participant in action lines (C1) the role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development, (C6) enabling environment and (C11) international and regional cooperation.

ECLAC promoted the implementation of the WSIS action lines through its role as the technical secretary of Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC), working alongside various stakeholders on numerous activities. The year 2024 marks 19 years since the adoption of the first action plan on the information society in 2005. This plan aimed to consolidate a common vision on the role of digital technologies in promoting development. This space has been successful in renewing its agreements nine conferences so far. This platform also promotes the exchange of best practices, capacity building, public and private dialogue, and knowledge generation through the generation of reports and studies.

*b. WSIS-related Projects*

Key initiatives include the Digital Development Observatory, capacity-building programs like the School of Digital Transformation, and the Digital Transformation Lab, which provides experimental tools for policy design in areas such as regulatory sandboxes and data science.

It is worth remembering that the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean won the WSIS award in the category of international and regional cooperation in 2015.

*c. Indicators used to measure the impact of ICT in the achievement of the SDGs in your organization's area of work*

ECLAC has been a member of the Partnership for the Measurement of ICTs for Development. As part of this membership, he promoted the adoption and production of all measurement indicators determined by the Partnership, including those indicators that have been used to measure the achievement of the SDGs. This includes 7 ICT indicators covering 6 targets under Goals 4, 5, 9, and 17:

- Indicator 4.4.1: Proportion of youth and adults with ICT skills, by type of skills
- Indicator 5.b.1: Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
- Indicator 9.c.1: Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology
- Indicator 17.6.1: Fixed Internet broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, by speed

- Indicator 17.8.1: Proportion of individuals using the Internet

In this regard, ECLAC has promoted the statistical harmonization of these indicators through the production of statistical manuals and compendiums and the organization of training workshops for officials of national statistical offices. This work was also linked to the Conference on Statistics of the Americas coordinated by ECLAC.

All this work resulted in the establishment of the Digital Development Observatory, mentioned above. It should be noted that this effort was preceded by the Information Society Observatory (OSILAC) and the Broadband Observatory that ECLAC also promoted.

*d. What assessment has your organization made of its engagement in WSIS-related work and digital development in its areas of responsibility?*

ECLAC, with the establishment of the Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, has a close link with the WSIS process. The Conference was established as a preparatory process for the Summit. In this way, ECLAC has always actively participated in all WSIS spaces, including the annual forums, reports, prizes, etc. Likewise, all the agreements that have resulted from the Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, both the political declarations and the regional agendas and plans recognize the WSIS process as a global framework for its work.

ECLAC has also actively participated in various mechanisms related to WSIS. One of these is the Partnership for Measuring ICT for Development. Another space is UNGIS, where he currently assumes one of the vice-presidencies. Similarly, ECLAC has close collaboration with organizations that have been leading the WSIS process, such as ITU and UNCTAD.

### **III. What does your organization see as the main achievements, problems and emerging issues arising from WSIS and from 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?*

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) has made significant strides in promoting digital development globally. It established a shared vision through a multi-stakeholder, people-centric approach focused on building an inclusive information society, as outlined in the Geneva Declaration and Tunis Commitment. WSIS has heightened global awareness about the critical role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in development, emphasizing digital access, skill-building, and the creation of enabling environments. Furthermore, WSIS has driven innovation by encouraging ICT integration in

sectors such as education, healthcare, governance, and e-commerce, spurring technological progress worldwide.

In fostering international cooperation, WSIS has strengthened partnerships and initiatives dedicated to digital development, enhancing global collaboration on ICT-related challenges and opportunities. Its impact is evident through concrete outcomes, including the establishment of the WSIS Forum, a continuous platform for dialogue, and the WSIS Prizes, which recognize outstanding ICT projects that contribute to sustainable development goals.

*b. What problems, obstacles and constraints have been encountered?*

Some of the WSIS outcomes are hindered by limited resources, coordination difficulties, and monitoring challenges. Furthermore, emerging issues like cybersecurity threats, privacy concerns, misinformation, and AI ethics require more attention in the process. Also, progress is sometimes hampered by a lack of political will, conflicting interests among stakeholders, and lack of coordination. Overcoming these obstacles needs stronger international cooperation. WSIS+20 offers a chance to address these challenges and reaffirm the global commitment to an inclusive information society.

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

Since the WSIS summits in 2003 and 2005, the digital landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation, presenting both exciting new opportunities and complex challenges that require careful consideration. One issue is the new emerging topics related to digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data protection and so forth. These advancements raise critical questions about ethical development, responsible use, and the potential impact on human rights and societal values.

On the other hand, countries need more tools to help them navigate the complex scenario of digital policies. This includes:

**Capacity building:** Many nations, particularly developing countries, require assistance in developing the necessary skills to effectively harness the benefits of the digital revolution. For example, emerging technologies, including AI and 5G, offer new potential for development but require updated regulation and governance models.

**International cooperation:** Addressing global challenges like cybercrime, data governance, and the digital divide needs strengthened collaboration between countries. Sharing best practices and developing common standards are crucial.

Multistakeholder engagement: Effective digital policy requires input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including governments, civil society, the private sector, and technical experts. Fostering inclusive dialogue and collaboration is essential.

By addressing these challenges and embracing opportunities for collaboration, WSIS stakeholders can work towards a future where digital technologies empower individuals and communities worldwide.

#### **IV. Lessons learned in the implementation of the Summit outcomes in your organisation's specific areas of responsibility**

ECLAC has observed that multi-stakeholder approaches and international cooperation are essential in overcoming digital disparities. Consistent monitoring of digital progress, capacity-building for policymakers, and collaboration across sectors have been key to advancing the region's digital agenda.

A fundamental aspect of our perspective is the ability to adapt and bring the global WSIS process closer to the regional context. The eLAC Digital Agenda offers a strategic space where countries can share common challenges, exchange experiences and establish joint initiatives, thus facilitating cooperation and the development of solutions aligned with the specific needs of Latin America and the Caribbean. This regional framework allows for better policy coordination, fosters knowledge transfer, and strengthens local capacities to meet the challenges of the digital age.

#### **V. Observations or recommendations concerning the future of WSIS and digital development, considering the outcomes of the Summit of the Future in September 2024**

The Summit of the Future and the Global Digital Compact provide a crucial foundation for shaping the future of WSIS and digital development. To ensure its continued relevance, WSIS must adapt to the evolving digital landscape, characterized by new challenges like AI and the digital economy. This requires reinvigorating the WSIS Action Lines to reflect current priorities, such as AI governance and promoting the participation of everyone in the digital economy. Enhancing multistakeholder participation, particularly from the private sector and civil society, is crucial. Furthermore, aligning WSIS processes with the Global Digital Compact will ensure coherence in global digital cooperation. Also, WSIS should promote its interaction and linkages with other political processes at regional, sub-regional and national level. By embracing these adaptations, WSIS can continue to play a vital role in shaping a future where digital technologies contribute to sustainable development and social progress for all.



Moving forward, ECLAC recommends deepening cooperation among Latin American and Caribbean countries to address governance and regulatory alignment, digital economy policies, adoption of IA and meaningful connectivity.

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

Relevant ECLAC publications include:

**Digital Economy for Structural Change and Equality**

<https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/35408-economia-digital-cambio-estructural-la-igualdad>

**The New Digital Revolution: From the Internet of Consumption to the Internet of Production**

<https://repositorio.cepal.org/entities/publication/10e92fcb-3367-41f8-bfc6-376ab0206f7d>

**Data, Algorithms and Policies: Redefining the Digital World**

<https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/43515-data-algorithms-and-policies-redefining-digital-world>

**Digital technologies for a new future**

<https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46817-digital-technologies-new-future>

**A Digital Path for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean**

<https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/48461-digital-path-sustainable-development-latin-america-and-caribbean>

**Overcoming the Development Traps of Latin America and the Caribbean in the Digital Age: The Transformative Potential of Digital Technologies and Artificial Intelligence**

<https://conferenciaelac.cepal.org/9/es/documentos/superar-trampas-desarrollo-america-latina-caribe-la-era-digital-potencial-transformador>

**Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean eLAC2026**

<https://conferenciaelac.cepal.org/9/es/documentos/agenda-digital-america-latina-caribe-elac2026>