

COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)

**Twenty-eighth session
Geneva, 7-11 April 2025**

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 and Social Commission for Western Asia

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.

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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

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

a. Mandates of your organization relevant to the WSIS implementation

ESCWA identified role at the global level is a co-facilitator of Action lines: C1, C7 and C11 (according to Tunis Agenda for the information society), and a co-facilitator for all Action Lines at the regional level.

The role of the UN Secretariat's regional dimension in digital cooperation and development, guided by the mandates of the five UN regional commissions. This includes supporting their involvement in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) follow-up, especially in alignment with sustainable development resolutions, such as Resolution 70/125, and through organizing regional forums for Internet governance and digital cooperation.

Looking forward, further support and enhancement of this regional role are necessary, particularly as we approach WSIS processes post-2025 and the Global Digital Compact implementation post-2024, with a strong emphasis on coordination across current and future initiatives.

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

Since the inception of WSIS in 2003, ESCWA has played a leading role in advancing the Information Society in the Arab region. It organized preparatory and follow-up conferences before and after the Geneva and Tunis phases, culminating in the 2004 Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society. ESCWA also established a network of ICT policymakers to foster cooperation, implement regional projects, and share best practices. In 2009, ESCWA held the WSIS+4 Review Conference to evaluate progress, which led to recommendations for policy improvement, digital literacy investment, and innovation through public-private partnerships. Additionally, ESCWA published seven biennial issues of the *Regional Profile of the Information Society* from 2003 to 2015, highlighting ICT advancements across the region. ESCWA also published a special edition of the Regional Profile of Information Society about the progress made in the Arab countries between 2003 and 2015¹ in line with WSIS.

Since 2017, ESCWA has significantly advanced digital development in the Arab region through initiatives like the Arab Digital Development Review Process, which includes national digital

¹ <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/regional-profile-information-society-arab-region-2003-2015>

development reviews and the Arab Digital Development Report. This process systematically assesses digital progress, helping countries shape evidence-based policies, monitor advancements, and address challenges in ICT infrastructure and capabilities. Collaborating with ESCWA, 12 member States have produced national reviews that informed the 2022/2023 Arab Digital Development Report, setting a baseline for updating the Arab Digital Agenda and supporting comprehensive regional digital transformation. Also launched in 2017 and convened three times to date, the Arab High-Level Forum on WSIS and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, gathers regional stakeholders to advance digital development in alignment with the SDGs. These forums focus on integrating ICTs into national and regional development strategies, with each meeting producing outcomes to support regional cooperation and policy alignment. The fourth forum is scheduled for February 2025.

In May 2024, ESCWA in partnership with the League of Arab States and the UAE's Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority, organized the Arab consultations on the WSIS+20 Review and Global Digital Compact. These sessions emphasized the need for Arab engagement in global digital negotiations, yielding recommendations that were introduced by Arab missions at the UN. Recognized for its contributions, ESCWA has been instrumental in guiding digital policy in the region, especially through the Arab IGF and the Arab Digital Agenda 2023–2033. ESCWA's coordinated workshops and consultations have facilitated alignment of national digital strategies with regional goals, advancing objectives in infrastructure, cybersecurity, and digital cooperation to support the SDGs and Global Digital Compact.

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

ESCWA implements its WSIS-related mandate through a variety of initiatives and partnerships. The most recent initiatives after 2015 includes:

- 1. The Arab Digital Agenda 2023–2033**, that was developed in collaboration with the League of Arab States, aligns regional digital development efforts with the WSIS outcomes and SDGs. This initiative promotes collaboration across Arab states and supports member states in formulating and implementing national digital agendas.
- 2. As Umbrella organizations**, ESCWA and LAS supports the regional Internet governance mechanisms through the Arab Internet Governance Forum (Arab IGF), and through the Arab High Level Forum on WSIS and 2030 Agenda (AHLF on WSIS) which fosters multistakeholder dialogue and capacity-building for member states.
- 3. Arab International Digital Cooperation and Development Forum (DCDF)** in partnership with LAS and other regional and global UN agencies
- 4. Annual Accessible Arab Region conference (AAR)**: In collaboration with the ITU, ESCWA co-organizes the AAR conference, providing a platform for governments, civil society, the private sector, and persons with disabilities to address digital accessibility challenges and advancements.

II. What have 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)

Since 2015, ESCWA has played a significant role in facilitating and supporting the implementation of WSIS Action Lines at the regional level, particularly by:

Action Lines C1 (The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development) we worked on National and regional strategies and policies, particularly on the Arab Digital Agenda 2023-2033; as well as the National Digital Development Agendas (NDDAs) also as part of the Arab Digital Agenda cluster 1

Action Line C2 (Information and Communication Infrastructure) through the development of regional and national frameworks, including the Arab Digital Agenda and collaboration with Arab member states to strengthen digital infrastructure; also as part of the Arab Digital Agenda Cluster 2

Action Line C3 (Access to Information and Knowledge): ESCWA has actively worked to enhance **digital inclusion** and bridge the digital divide across the Arab region; also as part of the Arab Digital Agenda cluster 4 on Inclusiveness. ESCWA has been a leader in advocating for and advancing digital inclusion, particularly for marginalized groups, through initiatives like ADIP and its national-level digital accessibility policies. Furthermore, ESCWA was very active in promoting Digital Arabic Content (DAC) in the Arab region to bridge digital content gaps. ESCWA implemented many projects and initiatives on digital Arabic Content.

Action Line C4 (Capacity Building): ESCWA has supported member states in the development of several digital capacity-building initiatives, and on national digital agendas and the Arab Digital Development Review. ESCWA's extensive efforts in capacity-building workshops and regional consultations, particularly around the Arab Digital Agenda and Internet governance, have bolstered regional cooperation and increased national capacities for implementing digital development policies.

Action Line C7 (ICT Applications – E-Government): ESCWA has promoted e-government policies and strategies in the Arab region since 2003. Additionally, ESCWA has supported member states in the development of e-government services and in measurement the GEMS index. Currently, ESCWA is encouraging Arab countries to use emerging technologies and innovation for advancing digital government transformation and improving operations and services of Arab public institutions.

Action Line C8 (Culture and Media) Joint work with ICANN and others on Arabic domain names and dot Arab Top Level Domain Names; also as part of the Arab Digital Agenda cluster 5.

Action Line C11 (International and regional cooperation); we have been working on the Arab Digital Agenda, on Internet Governance, WSIS+20, and on the Global Digital Compact

(GDC) negotiations by Arab countries and the Summit of the Future.; as part of ADCD.ASAP project Immediate Results #3, #4 and Result #5.

b. WSIS-related projects

ESCWA has been involved in several key projects directly contributing to WSIS outcomes since 2003. The most recent projects since 2015 and that are still undergoing:

1. Arab Digital Agenda (ADA) 2023–2033: is a long-term strategic framework designed to guide Arab states in their digital development efforts over a significant period spanning from 2023 to 2033, essentially acting as a roadmap for sustained digital transformation across the region. Developed by the ESCWA in partnership with the League of Arab States and a wide range of UN, international, and Arab organizations, **ADA aims to leverage digital technologies to achieve the SDGs within the Arab region..** The agenda promotes cross-sectoral cooperation, fosters digital inclusion, and strengthens national digital transformation strategies.

2. Arab States Action Programme on Advancing Digital Cooperation and Development: This ongoing project aims at enhancing national and regional capacity for pursuing digital development in a continuously evolving global digital era context, by strengthening national and regional knowledge base, capacity development, boosting inclusive digital transformation and digital economy, as well as coordinated policy design and greater regional cooperation, through the development and implementation of national and regional digital development agendas and programme, so to reap the benefits of digital development and maximize its contribution to the national and regional economies in the Arab region.

The project has five immediate results of which:

- the first aims at availing access to updated digital cooperation and development toolkits for assessments of digital development status and formulating digital development agendas (regional public goods);
- the second looks into sharing an understanding of the latest status of digital development at the national & regional levels & build consensus on prioritized changes to policies, required to stimulate digital development in the region (NDDRs/ADDRs/ADA/NDDAs);
- the third revolves around establishing forums for policy-advocacy, dialogue, peer-learning and capacity building; convened on Information Society, Internet Governance, Digital Transformation and Digital Economy issues (DCDF/AIGF..etc.) informing and enabling communities to be more digital secure and resilient;
- the fourth aims to develop a dedicated online hub/knowledge repository on information society, digital development and digital cooperation (Digital Cooperation and Development Online Platform “DCD-OP”) accessible to stakeholders in member states;

- and the fifth to help member states benefit from improved coordination and coherence of efforts undertaken at the national level, with those at the regional and global levels - pertaining to information society, digital cooperation and development. (liaison/advocacy).

3. National Digital Development Reviews: ESCWA has coordinated reviews in 12 Arab countries, which serve as a primary input for digital development reporting at both regional and international levels, including the Arab Digital Development Report.

4. ESCWA Digital Arabic Content (DAC) Award for Sustainable Development: Launched in 2021, this award recognizes digital projects supporting sustainable development goals (SDGs), directly contributing to the **implementation of WSIS outcome**. Prior to this important Award, ESCWA had an initiative for promotion digital Arabic Content through Incubation and was targeting Arab youth. This initiative was successfully implemented in more than 10 Arab countries and many DAC start-up were launched based on this initiative.

5. Enhancing digital policies in the Arab region: ESCWA launched this project entitled to provide the requested technical assistance in policy development in digital government transformation and emerging technologies. ESCWA has assisted several Arab countries in developing their own national plans and strategies in digital transformation and emerging technologies. In the same context, ESCWA conducted several capacity building workshops in digital transformation, and emerging technologies.

6. E-Government Director Meetings: To enhance regional cooperation in the digital transformation area, ESCWA conducted regular e-Government Program Directors Meetings, and 11th meeting was held in 2024. The main objective of the meetings is to exchange best practices among Arab countries in the implementation of digital government and to seek opportunities for bilateral cooperation opportunities among Arab countries.

7. Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP): Launched in 2020, the ADIP aims to enhance digital accessibility in the Arab region through strategic achievements and international alignment. ADIP offers an accessible online repository of toolkits, best practices, and resources, creating a robust community of practice. policies and strategies. Recognized as a WSIS Prizes champion in 2022, ADIP develops national policy templates and technical guidelines for accessible digital solutions, particularly benefiting people with disabilities and older people.

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

ESCWA uses a combination of international and regional indicators to assess the impact of ICT on the achievement of SDGs in its area of work. Some of the key indicators / models include:

1. ESCWA's Digital Development Measurement and Monitoring Model: This model was created to evaluate digital development progress across Arab countries, identifying gaps and strengths. It includes a curated selection of indicators, aligning with both WSIS outcomes and the SDGs, to track national and regional progress.

2. Government Electronic and Mobile Service (GEMS) Maturity Index: The GEMS Index is used to assess the maturity of digital government services across Arab countries. It evaluates aspects such as service development, user satisfaction, and government efforts in digital transformation. In 2024, ESCWA published the results of the fourth assessment of this index that took place in 2023 in 17 Arab countries. This year (2024), a new evaluation of the index is still undergoing, and the results are expected to be announced in the first quarter of 2025.

3. SDG-specific ICT indicators: ESCWA integrates ICT-specific indicators into its Digital Development Monitoring and Measurement Model (DD_MMM), such as the proportion of schools with internet access, proportion of youth and adults with ICT skills, proportion of individuals using the Internet, mobile broadband subscriptions, and e-government development, to track progress toward the SDGs, particularly Goal 4 (Quality education), Goal 5 (Gender equality), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

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

In 2018, ESCWA developed an innovative “DD conceptual model” that reflects intersection of all WSIS Action Lines and all SDGs. That was used in ESCWA's assessment at the national and regional levels in assessing WSIS for 2030 Agenda policy areas, and also in advancing these intersections. ESCWA's internal assessments reflect a positive and sustained contribution to WSIS outcomes, particularly in the whole areas of assessment: Digital Infrastructure, Digital connectivity, Digital legislations, Digital Economy, Digital inclusion, Digital Transformation, Digital culture and Media.

ESCWA's work on digital government transformation, supported by the GEMS Index and Arab Digital Development Reviews, has helped member states strengthen their digital infrastructures and enhance service delivery.

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?

- Acknowledging the efforts made by ESCWA, the League of Arab States and relevant stakeholders in shaping public policies for the internet globally and regionally, especially through the Arab Internet Governance Forum, and the work to develop its components in line with international developments, especially the road map for digital cooperation issued by the United Nations, and the Global Digital Compact process and the Future Summit, in shaping public policies for the internet globally and regionally, especially through the Arab Internet Governance Forum; and encouraging all governments, the private sector and civil society in the region to actively participate in the meetings and events of the Arab Internet Governance Forum and its various committees.
- Highlighting the distinguished regional efforts achieved through the joint project of ESCWA and the League of Arab States in partnership with UN organizations and other regional entities, alongside Arab countries and governments, which led to the development and adoption of the Arab Digital Agenda 2023-2033 and its goals that are consistent with the region's priorities in the field of information and communication technology to enhance sustainable development goals and the 2030 agenda, and emphasizing activating partnerships for a bright Arab digital future.

ESCWA has made notable strides in advancing the WSIS outcomes and digital development in the Arab region, particularly in:

1. Advancing Digital Inclusion: ESCWA has been instrumental in promoting digital inclusion through initiatives like the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP), which supports the creation of national e-accessibility policies to ensure equal access to ICT for persons with disabilities, older persons, and other marginalized groups.

2. Establishing the Arab Digital Agenda 2023–2033: One of ESCWA's most significant achievements has been the successful development and launch of the Arab Digital Agenda, which sets the regional vision and goals for digital transformation across Arab states. The Agenda serves as a roadmap for achieving sustainable digital development and aligns regional efforts with the WSIS goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Through its 35 diverse set of goals, ADA is set to play an important role in advancing the WSIS outcomes and digital development in the Arab region, particularly in:

A. **Strengthening Digital Infrastructure, Connectivity and Access:**

ADA Goals 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 4.1 directly address the need for improving telecommunications services, Internet speed, and network infrastructure, all of which are fundamental for digital connectivity. The focus on enhancing broadband Internet access at reasonable prices (Goal 4.1) and developing the infrastructure of Internet networks, including national and regional Internet Exchange Points (Goal 2.5) ensure that the Arab region will benefit from faster, more reliable, and widely accessible Internet services.

ADA Goal 4.5 aims at improving access to the Internet in rural and remote areas, which is crucial for ensuring digital inclusivity and ensuring that economic, social, and educational opportunities enabled by digital connectivity reach every corner of the Arab region, particularly for underserved populations in both urban and rural areas.

B. Fostering Regional Digital Cooperation:

ADA Goals 1.2 and 2.2 emphasize the importance of enhancing cooperation and regulatory coordination between Arab countries. This cooperation will play a pivotal role in facilitating cross-border digital services, regional digital trade, and the seamless flow of data. By strengthening digital services at the regional level, ADA will help create a more interconnected Arab region, where countries can mutually benefit from shared digital infrastructure and policies.

C. Boosting Cybersecurity and Trust in Digital Systems:

Ensuring that users can connect to the Internet and use digital services safely is an essential component of digital connectivity. ADA addresses this with goals like 2.7 and 2.8, which focus on protecting personal data and enhancing cybersecurity across the region. By fostering trust in digital systems, these goals will encourage greater adoption of digital services, contributing to a more digitally connected society.

Activating the use of digital signature services and electronic transactions (Goal 2.6) also plays a critical role in facilitating secure online interactions, further enhancing the confidence of individuals and businesses in engaging with digital platforms.

D. Affordable Digital Connectivity and Inclusive Digital Access for All Segments of Society:

ADA Goals 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 focus on ensuring that digital connectivity reaches all segments of society, particularly women, youth, and persons with disabilities. By promoting Internet access for these groups, the ADA not only aims to reduce inequalities but also enhances the social and economic potential of digital inclusion. Digital connectivity is further strengthened when access is equitable and extends to marginalized groups, ensuring no one is left behind in the digital era.

E. Encouraging Digital Economy and Innovation:

ADA's emphasis on the digital economy is another key driver of connectivity. Goals 3.6 and 3.7 aim to enhance the use of ICT in various productive sectors and promote the export of ICT goods and services. As these sectors grow, they will demand better connectivity infrastructure, pushing governments and the private sector to continue investing in ICT networks.

In addition, goals 3.2 and 3.3, which encourage investment in ICT companies and research and development (R&D), are likely to drive innovation in connectivity solutions.

F. E-Government and Digital Public Services:

The development of integrated e-government infrastructure and services (Goal 4.7) will not only improve the efficiency of government operations but also enhance the overall digital ecosystem by requiring robust, secure, and widespread connectivity to function effectively. This, along with efforts to increase the efficiency and quality of infrastructure used for e-government services (Goal 4.8), will ensure that citizens across the region can access essential public services online.

3. Strengthening Digital Government: ESCWA's work on e-government transformation has been a major achievement, particularly through the **Government Electronic and Mobile Service (GEMS) Maturity Index**, which helps Arab states assess and improve their digital public services.

4. Expediting the use of technology and innovation for enhanced operations in Arab public institutions (ENACT):² This project focuses on the strategic and innovative deployment of emerging technologies to expedite the implementation of adopted strategies and plans in the public sector and enhance the responsiveness, inclusiveness, trustworthiness and effectiveness of Governments and their services. The work supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. ESCWA realized through the implementation of this project, the importance of focusing on emerging technologies and innovation in the future as per their enormous potentials and benefits for government and other stakeholders.

5. Supporting National Digital Agendas: ESCWA has supported several member states in developing national digital agendas, including Palestine, Libya, and the UAE, ensuring that they align with global WSIS outcomes. These national agendas have enhanced digital governance and ICT infrastructure.

5. Hosting Regional Consultations and Capacity-Building: ESCWA has organized numerous regional consultations and workshops, including the Arab consultative conference on the WSIS+20 Review in Dubai (2024), fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing among Arab states on issues like Internet governance, AI, and cybersecurity.

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

Despite these achievements, ESCWA has faced several key challenges in the implementation of WSIS outcomes:

1. Persistent Digital Divide: One of the biggest challenges remains the unequal access to ICT across and within Arab states. Some countries have made significant progress, while others continue to struggle with limited infrastructure, especially in conflict-affected and low-income countries.

² <https://www.unescwa.org/enact-project>

2. Limited Financial Resources and Investment: Many Arab countries face constraints in terms of financial resources, hindering their ability to invest in advanced ICT infrastructure and to scale up digital transformation initiatives. This affects efforts to bridge the digital divide and implement e-government services effectively.

3. Legislative and Regulatory Barriers: The lack of harmonized policies and regulatory frameworks across the Arab region poses a challenge to regional cooperation in areas like cybersecurity, data protection, and Internet governance. Fragmented regulatory approaches can slow down digital development and cooperation.

4. Data collections Capacity Gaps: While ESCWA has made progress in data collection and related capacity-building, many member states still face gaps in data collection institutional capacity. These gaps hinder the full implementation of digital development initiatives and the achievement of WSIS goals. DD Indicators observatories need to be in place.

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

- The World Summit on the Information Society framework has proven adaptable, successfully incorporating emerging technologies over the past two decades, such as e-commerce, Web 2.0, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things. Integrating new advances like artificial intelligence and the metaverse presents both an opportunity and a challenge in addressing evolving digital issues.
- **Challenges and Gaps:**
Despite progress, ESCWA's assessments acknowledge that significant challenges remain, particularly regarding digital inequalities, infrastructure gaps and affordability, policy harmonization across member states, cyber security and personal data protection. ESCWA continues to address these challenges through collaborative projects and partnerships.

Since WSIS, several new opportunities and challenges have emerged that ESCWA and its member states need to address:

- **Emerging Technologies:** The rise of artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and 5G presents significant opportunities to enhance public services, improve decision-making, and foster innovation across the Arab region. ESCWA has begun addressing these opportunities through new reports and initiatives aimed at helping governments leverage emerging technologies especially for advancing digital government and e-Accessibility.

- **Innovation for development³:** Innovation is essential with the acceleration of technology progress, and it should be widely promoted in developing countries, especially for the deployment

³ <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/arab-horizon-2030-innovation-perspectives-achieving-sdgs-arab-region>
<https://www.unescwa.org/publications/innovation-policy-inclusive-sustainable-development-arab-region>

and use of emerging technology for accelerating the achievement of SDGs. Additionally, developing countries including Arab countries should strengthen the innovation policies and the development of national innovation eco-system with focus on R&D enhancement.

- **Digital Cooperation:** Regional cooperation through frameworks like the Arab Digital Agenda and global initiatives such as the Global Digital Compact (GDC) provides new platforms for fostering collaboration on issues like data governance and Internet stability. **The knowledge, experience and leadership of ESCWA in specific and of regional commissions in general in review and assessing of the progress in WSIS, Information Society and Information Society for 2030 Agenda (Digital Development), suggests using this capacities in also follow-up and review of the GDC.**

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

- Despite the progress in implementing the outcomes of the Tunis Agenda and the items related to the implementation and follow-up of the World Summit on the Information Society action lines, it is essential to emphasize the continued efforts to support the implementation of the other components of the Tunis Agenda, especially the items related to the financial mechanism and the Internet governance processes outlined in the agenda, which have only been partially implemented.
- When reviewing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, it is necessary, to maintain and adhere to a clear and coordinated approach that upholds and reinforces the strengths and successful record of the existing processes and the ongoing cooperation between established structures, while providing consensus-based solutions for the components of the Tunis Agenda that have not yet been initiated or completed.
- Highlighting the importance of coordination among various stakeholder groups at all levels, nationally, regionally and globally, within transparent frameworks and processes that ensure an open, free, inclusive, and secure digital space; engaging all stakeholders in policy coordination at the regional and cross-border levels, and ensuring that policies are centered around people, human development, and achieving sustainable development goals, by giving the highest priority to ensuring inclusion, enhancing digital accessibility, investing in infrastructure development and capacity building, developing effective frameworks for data management and privacy, and strengthening cybersecurity and the ethical and responsible use of
- The knowledge, experience and leadership of ESCWA in specific and of regional commissions in general in review and assessing of the progress in WSIS, Information Society and Information Society for 2030 Agenda (Digital Development), suggests using these capacities in also follow-up and review of the GDC.
- ESCWA underscore the critical role of inclusivity in advancing digital accessibility in the Arab region, and the value of supporting policymakers in national policy development for e-Accessibility, emphasizing the role of emerging technologies to enhance accessibility, especially for older persons and individuals with disabilities.
- Customized intervention in the countries is very important, thus ESCWA will continue its technical assistance activities in the upcoming years in Digital government transformation and digital development agendas; Policies/Strategies for emerging technologies, such as IoT, AI and cloud computing and Innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem improvement.

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

- Support the collaboration between existing and newly established international processes in digital development, in order to reach comprehensive integration between them and avoid duplication in frameworks and governance institutions, and to achieve practical and coherent solutions that can effectively address newly emerging challenges.
- The necessity of extending the World Summit on the Information Society and its processes for an additional 10 to 15 years with periodic reviews, due to the evolving nature of this process, its reliance on all United Nations organizations, and its guidance by annual United Nations General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions.
- It is essential to stipulate the need to respect the cultural, religious, and ethical principles of each society without imposing any concepts that do not align with them.
- Encourage the transfer of knowledge, expertise and technology between developed and developing countries, and encourage initiatives and mechanisms that promote technology transfer for accelerating the achievement of global Agenda.
- Widen the scope of information society to knowledge society and thus integrate R&D, Innovation, Entrepreneurship and SME within the scope of WSIS+20.
- Consider funding mechanisms and region's tailored capacity building opportunities to keep pace with emerging technologies on one side and give due consideration to national data privacy and sovereignty.

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

ESCWA has produced the following several key publications and reports that can significantly contribute to the WSIS+20 review, providing evidence-based insights into regional progress, challenges, and recommendations for the future:

1. Arab Digital Agenda 2023–2033: This regional strategic framework outlines the digital development roadmap for the Arab region, with concrete goals, actions, and targets that align with WSIS outcomes and SDGs.
2. The Arab Digital Development Report (ADDR 2.0) links ICTs with sustainable development under the theme "towards empowerment and ensuring inclusion for all," supporting the 2030 Agenda. It assesses digital transformations, emerging technologies, and their role in digital development, highlighting the synergy between digital technologies and strategic policy areas. Based on the National Digital Development Reports, ADDR 2.0 reviews regional digital progress, identifies gaps, and proposes policy options to foster sustainable digital transformation. Addressing challenges in the Arab region, it aligns with global trends and ECOSOC's HLPF themes.
3. [Regional Profile of Information Society in the Arab Region \(2003-2015\)](#): This report depicts the progress made in the Arab countries in the development of information society between 2003 and 2015. It provides synthesis of regional challenges and recommendations in line with the WSIS action lines.
4. Government Electronic and Mobile Services (GEMS) Maturity Index Reports (2023 and 2024)⁴: These reports measure the maturity of e-government services across selected Arab countries, offering an in-depth analysis of digital public services and their alignment with WSIS Action Lines.
5. Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) Reports⁵: These publications provide insights into digital accessibility and inclusion efforts across the Arab region, particularly focused on the needs of persons with disabilities and older persons. The platform includes the following reports:
 - National Technical Guidelines on e-Accessibility for the Arab Region
 - National e-Accessibility Policy Template for the Arab Region
 - Technical guidelines on e-accessibility for older persons
 - Technical paper on e-accessibility through new and emerging technologies
6. ESCWA's Digital Development Measurement and Monitoring Model (2024): This model, which includes detailed indicators for tracking digital development in the Arab region, offers valuable tools for data gathering on how ICT has impacted socioeconomic progress in alignment with WSIS and SDGs.

⁴ <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/government-electronic-mobile-services-gems-maturity-index-2023>

⁵ <https://www.unescwa.org/arab-digital-inclusion-platform>

7. ENACT project reports⁶ on leveraging emerging technologies and innovation for advancing Arab public institutions. This includes:

- The role of emerging technologies and innovation in enhancing effectiveness and decision-making in Arab public institutions⁷
- InnoCook: An innovation model to enhance the operations and services of Arab public institutions⁸
- Leveraging emerging technology and innovation for enhancing public institutions⁹.

Useful reference links:

Geneva and Tunis outcome documents from WSIS -

<https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/outcome/booklet/index.html>

The General Assembly's ten-year review report -

<https://publicadministration.un.org/wsis10/Portals/5/N1543842.pdf>

The CSTD ten-year review -

https://unctad.org/system/files/officialdocument/dtlstict2015d3_en.pdf

Contributions should be submitted by **15 November 2024** to the CSTD Secretariat at cstd-wsis20@unctad.org. They will be made available on the CSTD website for consideration by the Commission unless contributors specifically request that their submissions should not be published.

⁶ <https://www.unescwa.org/enact-project>

⁷ <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/emerging-technologies-innovation-arab-public-institutions>

⁸ <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/innocook-innovation-model-enhance-operations-services-arab-public-institutions>

⁹ It will be published soon.