

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

**Twenty-eighth session  
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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**

**International Chamber of Commerce**

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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# **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**

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Name of respondent: Timea Suto

Role of respondent: Global Digital Policy Lead

Date of response: 15 November 2024

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

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

As the institutional representative of over 45 million businesses, reaching more than 170 countries, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) operates with a mission to make business work for everyone, every day, everywhere.

ICC is the primary voice of the real economy in a range of intergovernmental organisations, championing the needs of local business in global decision making.

Representing business views in global multilateral processes and discussions, ICC has been actively engaged on behalf of the private sector through all stages of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process. ICC was the focal point for private sector participation and input during the two phases of WSIS in 2003 and 2005, contributed extensively to its 10-year review in 2015, and looks forward to meaningfully engaging in the upcoming 20-year review. Throughout the past 20 years ICC strongly supported the WSIS vision of a “people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society” as expressed in the Geneva Declaration of Principles, the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

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

ICC's Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI) coordinated the involvement of global business at the WSIS events in 2003 and 2005. Business leaders expressed the need for continued global coordination of business interests in global processes established by the Summit. Established in 2006, following the WSIS, the

Business Action to Support the Information Society (BASIS) initiative is a project of the International Chamber of Commerce that responds to this need for coordinated business input, and is since then recognised as the de facto focal point facilitating global business coordination on Internet governance, information and communication technology (ICT) and digital policy issues in the post-WSIS activities.

Designed as a hub of multinational enterprises, SMEs and associations from around the world and across sectors, ICC BASIS is the leading voice of business in international dialogues on how ICTs and digital technologies can better serve as engines of economic growth and social development.

Since 2006, ICC BASIS has been actively engaged in all WSIS-related events and forums, present at all Internet Governance Forums (IGF), at Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) meetings, and the other annual and special WSIS follow-up events hosted by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) respectively and collectively.

ICC BASIS leverages the collective expertise of its members, the ICC Global Digital Economy Commission and the wider ICC network to engage with governments and international organisations, emphasising the impact and benefits of stakeholder inclusion in effective policymaking.

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

**ICC's BASIS initiative** leads efforts to engage business stakeholders in the WSIS outcome and follow-up activities, ensuring that the perspectives and expertise of the private sector are integrated into key decision-making processes.

More concretely, ICC BASIS has served as the de facto business focal point at the IGF since its inception in 2006. With a consistent presence at each IGF meeting and participating actively in the IGF's intersessional work, on the IGF's Multistakeholder Advisory Group and Leadership Panel, ICC has not only represented the interests of the global business community but has also provided essential insights into why and how business engagement is critical for shaping Internet governance and digital policy. By promoting a multistakeholder, bottom-up process, ICC has effectively illustrated the value of inclusive decision-making frameworks, showing that policies crafted through collaboration among governments, the private sector, civil society, and technical experts are better equipped to meet the complex challenges of the digital era.

Over the years, ICC BASIS has led panels, workshops, and roundtables at the IGF annual meetings, covering key topics such as digital inclusion, cybersecurity, cross-border data flows, and the trustworthy development of emerging technologies like

artificial intelligence. These sessions not only bring business perspectives to the forefront but also demonstrate a commitment to working alongside other stakeholders in finding solutions that promote an open, secure, and accessible Internet for all. Through its active contributions, ICC BASIS has become a trusted voice at the IGF, one that bridges the gap between policy and practice and highlights how business innovation and expertise can contribute to effective, sustainable digital policy.

Furthermore, ICC BASIS has played a key role in helping the business community understand the importance of engaging with the IGF, mobilizing its members worldwide to participate in both in the global and in national and regional IGF initiatives, and building global capacity for meaningful involvement in digital policy discussions. As a result, ICC BASIS not only advances business interests but also supports the IGF's mission to foster dialogue and collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

Similarly, ICC BASIS has consistently represented the business community at the annual WSIS Forums, facilitating dialogue between the private sector and other stakeholders to drive inclusive and impactful digital policy discussions, especially on expanding meaningful connectivity, bridging digital divides and leveraging the power of digital technologies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Through workshops, policy contributions, and partnerships with governments, civil society, and technical experts, ICC BASIS has championed the multistakeholder approach, emphasizing the private sector's role in fostering sustainable growth and digital opportunity.

**ICC's Global Digital Economy Commission**, the hub of digital policy experts across ICC's global, multi-sectoral membership, works to advance the global development of the digital economy and enable the continued growth of the technologies and business models that underpin the digital economy, through private sector policy leadership, regulatory advocacy and the promotion of best practices.

The Commission prepares member-driven and evidence-based policy products, including briefs, recommendations and reports, as well as statements to contribute to intergovernmental discussions. These contributions address areas such as connectivity and access, cybersecurity, data governance, and AI offering expert perspectives that reinforce a “people-centered, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society.”

## **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)**

Since the WSIS+10 review in 2015, ICC has actively contributed to the implementation of WSIS outcomes by championing key initiatives that support a “people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society.”

Below is an overview of ICC's campaigns and policy papers developed over the years and shared as contributions to relevant intergovernmental discussions and processes, driving bottom-up action to advance the WSIS action lines, notably: (C1) The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development, (C4) Capacity building, (C5) Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs, (C6) Enabling environment, (C10) Ethical dimensions of the Information Society, (C11) International and regional cooperation.

- **ICC's White Paper on Delivering Universal Meaningful Connectivity** explores the various barriers to meaningful connectivity and showcases innovative approaches to overcome them. It is built on real-life case studies: projects across the world implemented by businesses and private-public partnerships to provide meaningful connectivity to unconnected or underserved communities of different demographic, geographic and economic circumstances. Based on the learnings and strategies derived from the private sector's experience, the paper offers basic principles for policymaking highlights priority areas for improvement where governments, in collaboration with businesses worldwide, should act to incentivise rapid and efficient action to close the connectivity gap.
- **ICC's Digitalisation for People, Planet and Prosperity campaign<sup>1</sup>** draws on the experience and evidence of businesses of all sizes and sectors to showcase how the private sector drives digitalisation for sustainable development. Based on business case studies, the campaign showcases how investment, innovation, and capacity-building projects by private companies to deliver digital infrastructure, services and skills enable:
  1. *Digitalisation for people* by expanding meaningful connectivity, providing access to essential applications, content in local languages and services from health and education to social services and financial inclusion, and equipping populations with skills, with special focus on gender inclusion to use the Internet safely and productively.

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<sup>1</sup> [ICC Campaign on Digitalisation for People, Planet and Prosperity](#).

2. *Digitalisation for the planet* by driving green transition through innovative digital services, aiming to reduce carbon emissions and preserve biodiversity and climate.
3. *Digitalisation for prosperity* by bridging digital divides to enable inclusive growth, incentivise job creation and entrepreneurship and fuelling innovation.

The campaign identifies barriers that might stand in the way of achieving these objectives and offers concrete recommendations on how to address them, as well as a comprehensive model for holistic policymaking. (C1, C4, C6, C11)

- **ICC's cybersecurity policy paper series** looks into the various challenges, best practices and considerations for safeguarding the cyberspace and increasing cyber resilience, aiming to: **(1)** draw attention to the escalating cyber threats facing businesses and communities, urging governments to uphold international law and norms, adopt multistakeholder approaches, and bolster cross-border cooperation to strengthen cybersecurity<sup>2</sup>, **(2)** inform the development of effective international provisions to help curb cybercrime<sup>3</sup>, **(3)** inspire coordinated international and multistakeholder action to enhance global cybersecurity for development<sup>4</sup>, and **(4)** address the multifaceted challenges in securing critical infrastructures and their supply chains, emphasizing the need for public-private collaboration and alignment of standards across jurisdictions and sectors to enhance resilience against cyber threats<sup>5</sup>. (C4, C5, C6, C11)
- **ICC's policy guidance on data governance**<sup>6</sup> offers private sector insight and recommendations on policy considerations relating to both personal and non-personal data, especially in the context of cross-border data flows. ICC's reports **(1)** highlight the multifaceted role of global data flows in sustaining the global digital economy, **(2)** address the causes and impacts of the lack of trust in cross-border data flows, offering practical recommendations for a holistic approach to trusted government access to personal data held by the private sector, and **(3)** advocating for policies that enable trusted and secure flows of non-personal data, balancing the benefits these transfers can provide with the with the level of risk they might present to drive positive economic and social impact. (C5, C6, C10, C11)

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<sup>2</sup> [Call for government action on cybersecurity \(ICC Cybersecurity Issue Brief #1\).](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Implementing norms and rules for states and international cooperation \(ICC Cybersecurity Issue Brief #2\) and Annex to ICC Cybersecurity Issue Brief #2: Substantive considerations on an international instrument on cybercrime.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Towards a common implementation framework of the cybersecurity acquis: shared goals for cyber action.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Protecting the cybersecurity of critical infrastructures and their supply chains \(ICC Cybersecurity Issue Brief #3\).](#)

<sup>6</sup> [ICC White Paper on Trusted Government Access to Personal Data Held by the Private Sector, and ICC Policy Primer on Non-Personal Data.](#)

- **ICC's Overarching Narrative on AI<sup>7</sup>**, presents a four-pillar framework outlining business considerations for the global governance of AI, drawing on business case studies that respond to existing guidelines, and address current challenges, showcasing the effectiveness of industry and multistakeholder initiatives to addressing ethical, legal, and societal implications of AI technologies. The Narrative supports the widespread adoption and harmonisation of responsible AI practices globally and the establishment of consistent standards, avoiding fragmented regulatory environments and promoting a shared vision on trustworthy AI. (C1, C11)

Through efforts such as these, ICC aims to provide business views and showcasing the role of the industry in driving the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, taking stock of best practices and progress made, while addressing existing barriers through practical guidance that expands meaningful connectivity, enhances cybersecurity resilience, fosters trust in cross-border data flows, and enables the uptake of human-centric AI.

In line with the WSIS vision, ICC continues to support and emphasise the responsibility of all stakeholders in implementing the WSIS action lines and addressing the challenges tied with Internet governance and digital policy matters.

### **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?**

There were two main considerations reached at WSIS twenty years ago. First, that information and communication technologies, the Internet and digital technologies hold an enormous potential for inclusive social and economic growth. And second, that this potential can only be truly unlocked through multistakeholder cooperation between governments, businesses, civil society and the technical and academic community.

These have held true over the years, with multistakeholder collaboration, anchored in in the WSIS Actions Lines and Tunis Agenda, continuing to enable partnerships to spread meaningful connectivity across the globe.

In recent years, substantial progress has been made in driving digital development and implementing WSIS outcomes, aligning with the vision of an inclusive Information Society. ICTs, the Internet, and digital technologies have proven crucial for fostering innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable economic growth. Recognised as a critical enabler of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), digitalisation has provided solutions across diverse sectors, including agriculture, energy, healthcare, manufacturing, and education.

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<sup>7</sup> [ICC Overarching Narrative on AI](#)

Business takes its role in advancing the global agenda very seriously, working with governments and stakeholder communities around the globe to inform and partner for better policy and outcomes to serve our shared interests. The private sector has been and continues to be an important factor in deploying Internet related infrastructure, innovating and delivering a wide range of ICT applications and services, as well as supporting skilling and capacity building initiatives.

It's on these investments that local and global digital ecosystems have flourished. Sustainable private sector investment will continue to be a principal factor in pursuing further economic and social development. Aligning public policies that promote rather than deter investment in infrastructure, technologies, applications, and services is paramount.

Multistakeholder collaboration is a pivotal enabler to this progress, particularly in developing the policy frameworks that allow for continued and inclusive digitalisation and address the potential challenges that come with it. By supporting participation from all relevant stakeholders, governments can generate policies that are timely, scalable, and innovation enabling.

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

Despite significant progress, a critical challenge persists: 2.6 billion users remain unconnected. One in three individuals who could go online, do not, as estimated by the International Telecommunication Union. Inequalities in connectivity are closely correlated with location, economic opportunity, education, gender as well as social and cultural norms and governance approaches.

Stakeholders must continue to collaborate effectively in the pursuit of delivering universal meaningful connectivity. Beyond maintaining and strengthening our current, well-working methods and systems, reaching the next billions will require innovative thinking, flexible regulations, new business models, and unconventional partnerships. The challenges ahead require a commitment to exploring fresh strategies that go beyond the confines of conventional methods. By fostering creativity, embracing regulatory adaptability, and forming unexpected alliances, stakeholders can unlock the transformative potential needed to extend connectivity benefits to all, ensuring that no one is left behind.

These barriers can be grouped in three main categories: financial, technological and regulatory aspects, as follows:

- Financial barriers refer to factors that impact public and private investment in connectivity, affect costs of developing, deploying or maintaining networks, or inhibit alternative business models to deliver connectivity.



- Technology barriers refer to factors that limit the development or deployment of new technologies or pose barriers to investment in innovation, research and development that would enable connectivity, especially in remote and hard-to-reach areas.
- Regulatory barriers refer to norms, policies, laws and regulations that limit the deployment of networks (especially through new and innovative technologies, methods), disincentivise investments, or inhibit the uptake and use of the Internet for certain segments of the population.

At the same time, persisting approaches that fuel restrictive policy and regulatory measures show that despite the 20-year progress marked since the WSIS process, the multistakeholder model, as the key ingredient to implementing the WSIS vision, is not effectively used nor universally embraced.

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

In the 20 years of implementing WSIS outcomes, stakeholders have operated under two core considerations: that ICTs, the Internet, and digital technologies are vital for inclusive social and economic development and are essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda; and their full potential can only be realized through multistakeholder collaboration across governments, businesses, civil society, and technical and academic communities. As the WSIS+20 review approaches amid a rapidly evolving digital landscape, it is essential to keep these core principles in focus.

The IGF, as a unique driver of multistakeholder collaboration, enables open, inclusive and bottom-up discussions, and the sharing of experiences, expertise and best practices that inspire action towards a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society. It is therefore important to renew and strengthen the mandate of the IGF as a vehicle towards interoperable policy approaches in Internet governance and digital policy matters.

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

The Geneva Declaration of Principles and the Tunis Agenda set out tools to help reach the vision for people-centric, sustainable digitalisation: multistakeholder collaboration and enabling, interoperable policy environments. These are as, if not more relevant today than 20 years ago.

It is crucial to continue to build a shared understanding around the importance of an open, stable and trusted Internet, as a prerequisite to the functioning of public services, human interaction, and business operations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For this, a few considerations must be in place:

- Policy frameworks should be built on stable legal and regulatory grounds, based on light-touch approaches, and consider the value of the entire communications and digital services ecosystem. They should encourage competition and the entry of new players into the ICT ecosystem to foster innovative products, services, and business models.
- Data and cross-border data flows underpin every aspect of today's global economy, supporting day-to-day business operations, facilitating the delivery of essential government services, and enabling international and multilateral cooperation. To sustain this development, policies should support the global movement of data built on trust, ensuring that users have adequate privacy, security, and IP protections. These protections should be implemented in a manner that is transparent, non-discriminatory, and not a disguised restriction on trade.
- When drafting policy frameworks, policymakers should consider the multi-layered nature of the digital ecosystem and take a holistic approach across economic, technical, socio-cultural, and over-arching governance factors.
- Multistakeholder engagement is key for the development of informed policies leveraging expertise from the entire digital value chain. The IGF, amongst the key outcomes of the WSIS, has been a pioneering example and an enabler bottom-up discussions among all stakeholders, allowing them to share their knowledge and expertise, thus inspiring the co-creation of interoperable policy approaches, that reap the benefits that the Internet and, more broadly, digital environment have to offer. The unique convening role of the IGF is a central asset to be leveraged in addressing the challenges towards the implementation of the WSIS outcomes going forward.

## **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**

The very nature of the global Internet as an interoperable and interconnected network of networks, necessitates an effective multistakeholder governance model to be at its core. All stakeholders must engage both individually and collaboratively to address Internet-related issues, strengthen cooperation and promote alignment across work programmes where appropriate. This approach has supported the delivery of meaningful connectivity and fostered partnerships that deliver advanced infrastructure, state-of-the-art digital services, and capacity-building initiatives.

Despite this progress, the multistakeholder model is not embraced or considered by all. As we approach the WSIS+20 review, it is critical to reinforce the valuable lessons and outcomes from the WSIS process. The IGF, a core achievement of the WSIS, has provided an exemplary platform for bottom-up discussions, enabling diverse stakeholders to contribute knowledge and expertise to collaboratively shape policy

approaches that harness the Internet's potential for global benefit. The IGF's unique convening role is a central asset for advancing the WSIS vision.

In its nearly 20 years of operation, the IGF and its numerous national and regional initiatives (NRIs) have advanced cooperation, enhanced technical expertise, and produced intersessional output in the form of best practices and policy insights bringing together stakeholders at national, regional, and global levels to address policy issues inclusively.

It is therefore crucial to renew and strengthen the mandate of the IGF as a vehicle towards interoperable policy approaches in Internet governance and digital policy matters.

The objectives outlined in the Global Digital Compact (GDC) adopted at the Summit of the Future, also necessitate a bottom-up governance model fit to promote this culture of cooperation. The GDC recognises, and commits to the spirit of the WSIS outcomes, as strong foundations to build upon to enable global digital cooperation. To support this, the follow-up and implementation process of the GDC must be inclusive, bottom-up, and transparent, allowing for all stakeholders to meaningfully support and offer their expertise. This not only fosters legitimacy and credibility, but also flexibility to rapidly adapt to changing technologies and issues and avoid unintended consequences.

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

- [Call for government action on cybersecurity \(ICC Cybersecurity Issue Brief #1\)](#)
- [Implementing norms and rules for states and international cooperation \(ICC Cybersecurity Issue Brief #2\)](#)
- [Annex to ICC Cybersecurity Issue Brief #2: Substantive considerations on an international instrument on cybercrime](#)
- [Towards a common implementation framework of the cybersecurity acquis: shared goals for cyber action](#)
- [Protecting the cybersecurity of critical infrastructures and their supply chains \(ICC Cybersecurity Issue Brief #3\)](#)
- [ICC White Paper on Delivering Universal Meaningful Connectivity](#)
- [ICC Paper on Digitalisation for People, Planet and Prosperity](#)
- [ICC White Paper on Trusted Government Access to Personal Data Held by the Private Sector](#)
- [ICC Policy Primer on Non-personal Data](#)
- [ICC Overarching Narrative on AI](#)