

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

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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.

<p>DISCLAIMER: The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the UN Trade and Development.</p>

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: UNODC

Name of respondent:

Role of respondent:

Date of response: 30 October 2024

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

a. Mandates of your organization relevant to the WSIS implementation

- Drug use prevention

As the United Nations agency with a mandate to support countries in the implementation of three UN conventions on drugs, UNODC supports Member States increasing access to evidence-based drug use disorder treatment and care, in line with the [UNODC-WHO International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders](#). Through its work, UNODC also aims to put the potential of knowledge and information and communication technologies (ICTs) at the service of development, and to promote the use of information and knowledge for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, which contributes to the WSIS Objectives of the Geneva Plan of Action.

- Counter-terrorism

As per [A/RES/78/226](#) of December 2023, UNODC is requested to, “*within its mandate and in cooperation with other relevant entities of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, to continue to support innovative measures and approaches to build the capacity of Member States, upon request, in relation to the challenges and opportunities that new technologies provide, including human rights aspects, in preventing and countering terrorism*”.

- Anti-corruption

UNODC serves as the secretariat for the Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption. This role encompasses facilitating the adoption of resolutions that enhance the implementation of the Convention, including the critical use of technology. Notably, [Conference resolution 6/7](#) focuses on promoting the use of information and communication technologies to further the Convention's goals, specifically under Article 13 (Participation of society). This includes the deployment of

online platforms for public consultation and ensuring access to information, which are integral to our efforts in advancing the implementation of the WSIS outcomes.

- Transnational organized crime (TOC)

UNODC is the guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and Protocols thereto. The importance of international instruments to facilitate international cooperation in criminal matters is even more important nowadays where all forms of transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking shift ever more to being dependant on or incorporating online aspects, including the misuse of virtual assets. Its broad scope of application and possibility to be used directly as legal basis for mutual legal assistance, make UNTOC highly relevant to prevent and fight TOC worldwide, including when it is committed in the online space.

- The use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes

UNODC serves as the secretariat of the Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes, established by the General Assembly in its [resolution 74/247](#).

At the same time, the most recent [draft United Nations Convention against Cybercrime](#) on “Strengthening international cooperation for combating certain crimes committed by means of information and communications technology systems and for the sharing of evidence in electronic form of serious crimes” noted that *“information and communications technologies, while having enormous potential for the development of societies, create new opportunities for perpetrators, may contribute to the increase in the rate and diversity of criminal activities, and may have an adverse impact on States, enterprises and the well-being of individuals and society as a whole”*.

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

N/A.

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

- According to the [2023 UNODC World Drug Report](#), inequality and social and economic disparities continue to drive and be driven by the drug phenomenon, threatening public health and human rights. Disparities between the global North and South, urban and rural settings, and across subpopulations all contribute to the harms from drugs.
- UNODC has harnessed the benefits of ICT tools to address the global drug use disorder treatment gap whilst also closely monitoring the safety and effectiveness of these digital interventions.
- UNODC has collaborated with academia and non-governmental organizations to link people with drug use disorders to available treatment services in the community.

- UNODC launched the Global Initiative on Handling Electronic Evidence Across Borders in close collaboration with the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to support Member States in strengthening capacities to combat crimes committed through the use of ICTs, in particular those involving e-evidence, in an interconnected and holistic manner. Additionally, UNODC contributes to the UNODC-wide [SHERLOC Electronic Evidence Hub](#).
- UNODC has supported the establishment of regional networks of preventing violent extremism (PVE) practitioners for Central Asia, South-East Asia, South Asia, and the Sahel. Through these regional networks of PVE practitioners, UNODC has devoted specific attention to addressing online radicalization, the use of online technology as part of early warning and response mechanisms, and the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in online radicalization.

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)

In line with the WSIS Action Lines, UNODC has implemented the following initiatives:

C1: The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

The UNODC-WHO Informal Scientific Network is of informal nature and aims to provide a space for the academic world to be in dialogue with international policymakers on the most urgent and crucial issues about the science of drug use prevention, treatment and care of drug use disorders. It has also addressed the benefits of technology to increase access to drug use disorder treatment services, whilst closely monitoring their efficacy and safety in its 2021 Statement on "[Recommendations on Prevention, Treatment, and Care of Substance Use Disorders in Times of COVID-19](#)" that was presented to Member States in the Plenary of the 64th Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

C2: Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive information society

In 2023, a web application of WHO's Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST) was developed by the University of Cape Town to assess and remove barriers to evidence-based practices for substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery services in South Africa. UNODC is now exploring the adaptation and dissemination of the web ASSIST tool and technology transfer in the African region in collaboration with the University of Cape Town.

As part of UNODC's efforts to support the United Republic of Tanzania in its work to improve the capacity of health and social practitioners in providing ethical, evidence-based and humane treatment to persons with drug use disorders, the Huru App, a mobile-based application for people with drug use disorders, family members and peers to find available treatment services in Muheza and Tanga, was successfully launched. Most importantly, the collaboration with Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences arose, allowed for a

research component to show effectiveness and feasibility of the implementation of the Huru App in urban, rural and community settings in combination with an information, education and communication campaign and Universal Treatment Curriculum trainings. As a result of these activities, one new satellite medically assisted treatment clinic was opened in the Tanga region in the fourth quarter of 2021.

Moreover, in 2021, UNODC collaborated with Indonesia's National Narcotics Agency (BNN) and Indonesia's Association for Addiction Counsellors (IKAI) in the development of a mobile app, Rehab.Net, that included a list of available treatment services where people with drug use disorders, families and peers can be linked with.

C4: Capacity-building

To ensure an even a wider reach of professionals on evidence-based treatment and care of drug use and drug use disorders around the globe, UNODC has developed an e-learning tool "[Treatnet Family](#) - Elements of Family Therapy for Adolescents with Substance Use Disorders, including those in contact or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System" and another e-learning module on basic counselling, which are both available in numerous languages.

UNODC is also in the process of developing a third e-learning module on alternatives to conviction or punishment for people in contact with the criminal justice system that was launched at the 33rd session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2024.

C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

Through its [Global Programme on Cybercrime](#), UNODC provides broad range of capacity-building support to Member States, including in the areas of preventive measures, digital forensic, digital evidence, and investigation. At the normative level, universal binding standards are needed to address these evolving challenges related to the criminal use of ICTs.

C7: ICT applications e-health: benefits in all aspects of life

UNODC published a tool on "[Prevention of Drug Use and Treatment of Drug Use Disorders in Rural Settings](#)" that highlights the potential use of tele-health and other technologies to enhance prevention programming and outreach, given the limited resources and access to prevention and treatment services in rural settings as well as the travel barriers imposed by living in isolated rural areas. At the same time, informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and safety also need to be guaranteed for remote/online service provision to ensure no harm is done.

b. WSIS-related projects

N/A.

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

N/A.

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

N/A.

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?

- Improved data reporting on Africa

Better data leads to stronger decision-making and policy formulation, enabling Member States and policymakers to gain essential insights on drugs and crime issues and facilitating the formulation of effective responses to address these challenges. Over recent years, UNODC has conducted several in-person workshops to fill the data gap. For instance, in 2023, UNODC organized workshops in West and Southern Africa that were attended by more than 50 participants from 16 countries, resulting in an increase in the number of Member States from the region reporting data to UNODC.

- Leveraging AI models

UNODC is leveraging AI models to process open data and identify relevant drug seizure events, enhancing real-time analysis and supporting the creation of statistical reports. Strengthening the ability to quickly generate snapshots of drug trafficking threats is essential for building more accurate analytical insights, guiding operational responses and supporting the development of evidence-based policies.

- Guidelines for statistical capacity-building

UNODC has developed guidance and tools to help Member States standardize crime and criminal justice statistics, most notably the International Classification of Crime for Statistical purposes (ICCS), which was endorsed by both the UN Statistical Commission and the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2015. Additionally, UNODC has recently published a series of guidelines to support the development and governance of interoperable administrative data systems for statistical purposes within the criminal justice system.

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

Several challenges affect data availability in Member States related to UNODC's mandated data collections on drugs, crime and criminal justice. In many countries, the production of statistical data in these areas is less developed than "traditional" statistics such as demographic and economic statistics. Key challenges include poor coordination among responsible agencies, limited implementation of relevant statistical standards and insufficient capacity to design and implement reliable surveys or manage administrative data collections. These issues hinder the collection, production, dissemination, use and reuse of high-quality statistics in this area.

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

Over the past two decades, new and emerging technologies have significantly changed the terrorism landscape, as highlighted in the eighth review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy ([A/RES/77/298](#)), which “expresses concern over the potential use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes, and in this regard calls upon all Member States to consider additional measures to counter the use of such technologies for terrorist purposes, including but not limited to artificial intelligence, 3D printing, virtual assets, unmanned aircraft systems, as well as weaponization of commercial drones, consistent with their obligations under international law, while strengthening international cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism”.

In recent years, UNODC identified information technology as an essential tool for innovation in anti-corruption efforts, in particular in the development of new approaches and solutions to strengthen transparency and accountability, increase public participation and build trust in government. Information technology has been used to digitalize national procurement systems and e-government services, to foster international cooperation as well as to develop e-learning and e-training modules.

Over the last decade, the world has witnessed an exponential increase in digital connectivity. This development also impacts the modus operandi of organized criminal groups. The fact that all forms of transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking are increasingly dependant on, or incorporating, online aspects, combined with the growing use of virtual assets, enables organized criminal group to operate with greater anonymity and evade traditional law enforcement measures. This evolution underscores the need for comprehensive responses, including robust preventive strategies and regulatory frameworks, to effectively address these emerging threats.

Expected to be adopted by the General Assembly by the end of 2024, the [draft United Nations Convention against Cybercrime](#) will constitute the first global treaty on cybercrime and will provide for strong international cooperation, technical assistance and capacity-building measures to support States parties more effectively prevent and combat cybercrime worldwide. Among the offences addressed by the treaty are illegal access, illegal interception and interference with electronic data and with ICT systems, online child sexual abuse or child sexual exploitation material and the solicitation or grooming for the purpose of committing a sexual offence against children.

The differential pace of technological development and political economy analysis and/or social impact assessments and human rights research poses a challenge to realizing the internationally agreed commitments to seize the benefits of technology while mitigating risks. Exponential advancements in the development of frontier technologies such as AI, neurotechnology, and quantum computing have outpaced efforts to study the consequences of the adoption of these technologies in all spheres of human endeavour, including in the criminal justice sector. Addressing this research gap requires resources and time for multi-sectoral consultation and rigorous empirical research to develop a nuanced understanding of the differential impacts of these technologies on specific individuals and groups. This is essential work to ensure that the benefits of technology are seized, while mitigating risks.

The increasing involvement of the private sector in the development and promotion of justice technologies is another area in which human rights monitoring and compliance is particularly important. This includes attention to the likelihood that the increased involvement of corporate actors, including technology companies, will lead to further increases in the privatization of essential services within the field of crime prevention and criminal justice.

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

N/A.

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

- Consider focusing on the risks associated with terrorists misusing new and emerging technologies, such as AI, the metaverse, 3D printing, and virtual reality, among others.
- Adopted by the General Assembly on 22 September 2024 as part of the Pact for the Future, the [Global Digital Compact](#) underscores the importance of the United Nations as providing a critical platform for global digital cooperation. The objectives of the Global Digital Compact are to:
 1. Close all digital divides and accelerate progress across the Sustainable Development Goals;
 2. Expand inclusion in and benefits from the digital economy for all;
 3. Foster an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space that respects, protects and promote human rights;
 4. Advance responsible, equitable and interoperable data governance approaches;
 5. Enhance international governance of AI for the benefit of humanity.
- While there is considerable awareness about the importance of these goals in other sectors, there is a specific need to address these priorities within the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, where procedural and human rights are engaged including the presumption of innocence, the right to a fair trial, privacy rights, and the right to life. The challenge is to ensure that the adoption of technology in the administration of justice is underpinned by an evidence-based, multisectoral, and human rights aligned approach, to harness the benefits of technology, while mitigating risks. This is consistent with the international commitment enumerated in the Kyoto Declaration, the first General Assembly resolution on “Equal Access to Justice for All” ([A/RES/78/227](#)), and the Secretary-General’s report on “Human Rights in the Administration of Justice” ([A/79/296](#)), submitted pursuant to a General Assembly resolution of the same name ([A/RES/77/219](#)).

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

- UNODC-WHO International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders: https://www.unodc.org/documents/drug-prevention-and-treatment/UNODC-WHO_International_Standards_Treatment_Drug_Use_Disorders_April_2020.pdf
- UNODC Training Materials on elements of family therapy for the treatment of adolescents with drug and other substance use disorders: https://www.unodc.org/documents/drug-prevention-and-treatment/UNODC_Treatnet_Family_brochure_190320.pdf
- UNODC-WHO Informal Scientific Network Statement 2021 Recommendations on Prevention, Treatment, and Care of Substance Use Disorders in Times of COVID-19: https://www.unodc.org/documents/drug-prevention-and-treatment/UNODC_WHO_Informal_Scientific_Network_Statement_2021.pdf
- Prevention of drug use and treatment of drug use disorders in rural settings: https://www.unodc.org/documents/17-01904_Rural_treatment_ebook.pdf
- UNODC, jointly with OHCHR, supported the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly to develop and publish Principled guidance for the human rights-compliant use of digital technologies in the context of peaceful protests: [Microsoft Word - Digital Annex - 5 March FINAL formatted.docx](#)
- The discussion guide for the Fifteenth Crime Congress includes a summary of the priority areas for discussion during the workshop, scheduled for April 2026, on turning the digital age into an opportunity: promoting the responsible use of technologies in crime prevention and criminal justice ([E/CN/15/2024/CRP.1](#)).
- Draft United Nations convention against cybercrime on strengthening international cooperation for combating certain crimes committed by means of information and communications technology systems and for the sharing of evidence in electronic form of serious crimes: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/v24/055/06/pdf/v2405506.pdf>
