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Economic and environmental questions:
Science and technology for development

Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

This report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/46, which requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development about the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. Major developments and activities by stakeholders in 2025 are highlighted in the report. The report was prepared by the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, based on information provided by entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders.

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* E/2026/1.

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Introduction

1.   This report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/46. It includes information provided by 32 entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders in response to a letter from the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) requesting contributions on trends, achievements and obstacles in the implementation of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes.[1]

I.   Key trends

A.   Revolutionary technological progress and its implications

2.   Digitally enabled technology continues to advance rapidly, as part of a new technological revolution involving significant changes in international economic relations and international production systems. At the centre are artificial intelligence-related developments that are likely to last for decades. Applications of other frontier technologies have also continued to increase, such as cryptocurrencies and assets. In 2025, there was increased interest in stable coins, that is, cryptocurrencies pegged in value to fiat currencies and exchangeable to such currencies and that can be used for the settlement of market transactions. Stable coins are being used more often by some large firms, such as financial institutions, and their issuance is being considered by some Governments. An increasing number of countries are in the process of establishing a regulatory framework for cryptocurrencies and assets. This could help reduce the relatively high risk of investment in cryptocurrencies, which remain highly volatile and generally unregulated. Many countries and regions, such as China and the European Union, are investigating establishing a digital currency.

3.   Technological advances are concentrated in a small number of large technology companies based in innovation systems in a few countries, yet have widespread economic and social implications in communities and countries worldwide. Highly unequal access between and within countries to frontier technologies, essential digital infrastructure, digital skills and data are widening general technology and digital divides, leading to deepening global inequality. Such inequality also has the potential to reset international economic relations based on the speed and ability of countries to develop or adopt new technologies, create local innovations and effectively safeguard against and minimize related downside risks. Concerns with regard to cybersecurity continued to increase in 2025, with the increasing proliferation and cost of cyberattacks, including not only data-related hacks and cybercriminality but also the use of drones to disrupt airport security, among other issues

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[1] Association for Progressive Communications (APC); Council of Europe; Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); Economic Commission for Africa; Economic Commission for Europe (ECE); Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions; International Telecommunication Union (ITU); International Trade Centre; Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers; Internet Governance Forum (IGF) secretariat; Internet Society (ISOC); League of Arab States; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; UNCTAD; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); United Nations Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA); Universal Postal Union; World Food Programme; World Health Organization; World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); World Meteorological Organization; World Trade Organization (WTO). See https://unctad.org/publication/2025-report-secretary-general-progress-made-implementation-and-follow-outcomes-world.
Note: All websites referred to in footnotes were accessed in January 2026.

related to the harmful applications of such technology. The ethical use of frontier technologies and data remains a concern, as does the broader issue of respecting international human rights law. Directing technological advances towards positive outcomes such as helping to solve national, regional and international challenges requires the broad adoption of advances by all countries, along with effective international regulation to mitigate risks, particularly related to safety and security, and international support and capacity-building in order for developing countries to reduce technology-related gaps.

4.   The ability of developing countries to rapidly adopt and use frontier technologies is a critical development issue. The emergence of digital frontier technologies offers developing countries opportunities to diversify economies. However, digitalization also presents risks, including the potential for reshoring, which could undermine developing country participation in global value chains; reduction in demand for low-skill jobs; and a widening productivity gap, due to barriers in accessing new technologies. Coordinated international efforts are key, to leverage frontier technologies for inclusive economic diversification, including in strengthening digital infrastructure, to support developing countries in technology adoption, and financing for information and communications technology (ICT) development, a long-standing concern in many developing countries. The Sevilla Commitment, adopted at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, renews the global financing for development framework and includes action areas on support for financing for science, technology and innovation (STI), digital technologies and capacity-building in developing countries. Ensuring coherence and appropriate alignment across major multilateral initiatives addressing digital technologies is important in effective and efficient multilateral cooperation on STI and digital transformations.

B.   Digital inclusiveness and meaningful connectivity

5.   In the 20 years since WSIS, efforts have centred on increasing Internet connectivity and online services. Internet use is now integral to economic and social participation, with individuals relying on digital access for education, employment, public services and information. Despite significant advances, target 9.c under the Sustainable Development Goals, on universal and affordable Internet access, remains far from being achieved. ITU estimates that 68 per cent of the global population used the Internet in 2024, up from 53 per cent in 2019, with approximately 1.3 billion people coming online; however, 2.6 billion people remain offline and, in the least developed countries, the proportion of users is around 5 per cent, underscoring persistent connectivity gaps.[2]

6.   Meaningful connectivity has become a critical policy objective, with the following interdependent dimensions: quality of connection; availability; use; affordability; appropriate devices; digital skills; and online safety.[3] Meaningful connectivity requires deploying reliable broadband infrastructure, developing human capacity, including digital literacy and skills and ensuring affordable, accessible devices and services.

7.   Affordability challenges, particularly high device and data costs, limit adoption. Many technically connected individuals cannot fully benefit due to inadequate digital skills, lack of relevant local content or concerns related to safety and security. With regard to the gender-related dimensions of meaningful connectivity, closing the gender digital divide could unlock up to $1.5 trillion in global gross domestic product.[4] UNIDO analysis shows that the rapid development of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies risks deepening divides between countries and firms, fuelling the uneven distribution of gains, with concerns that developing countries may not keep pace with rapid technological change.[5]

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[2] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/pages/stat/default.aspx.

[3] https://www.itu.int/itu-d/sites/projectumc/home/aboutumc/.

[4] UN-Women and Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2025, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2025* (United Nations publication, New York).

[5] https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/unido-publications/2024-10/IID%20Policy%20Brief%2012_0.pdf; https://www.unido.org/events/unido-side-event-22nd-session-high-level-committee-south-south-cooperation.

C. Governance of artificial intelligence

8.   The development of artificial intelligence has entered a more advanced stage, with progress in generative artificial intelligence leading to the design of agentic models capable of producing complex multimodal outputs, including audio and video components, with increased autonomy and minimal human intervention. This represents a move towards greater artificial intelligence autonomy that could lead to broader applications and impacts across the economy and society. The potential for further development and the increasingly large scope of applications has created a boom in international investment in artificial intelligence-related infrastructure, such as in increased power generation and distribution capacity, greater computing and storage capacity and greater bandwidths. Expectations of future market value created by artificial intelligence and related technologies are rapidly increasing, driving market growth in key industries related to the application of artificial intelligence. In 2025, exponentially increasing demand for advanced microchips for artificial intelligence outpaced the supply capacity of manufacturers. Similarly, data centres proliferated, yet increased demand for data-storage capacity has outstripped supply capacity. This proliferation has created substantially higher demand for energy and water to run data centres and increased the environmental footprint of the digital economy. The global digital communications system market was valued at $238 billion in 2025 and is expected to reach $449 billion by 2032. [6] The increasingly wide scope for the application of artificial intelligence across industries and use by Governments and individuals provides fundamentals for greater investment and creates expectations of the impending transformative impact in many economic activities for the countries and companies able to harness the benefits. Those unable to do so may, in the coming decades, experience competitive disadvantages in production and trade relative to early adopters. However, the increase in the value of artificial intelligence technology companies has led to debate on whether related investment has become a bubble rather than a fundamentals-led boom, with comparisons to the "irrational exuberance" concerning the dot-com bubble in the 1990s.

9.   As highlighted by UNCTAD, an artificial intelligence public disclosure mechanism could promote accountability and contribute to transforming commitments into tangible impacts. Further, a global shared infrastructure could provide equitable access to artificial intelligence infrastructure. Open innovation, through open data and open source, can help democratize knowledge and resources, fostering inclusive innovation and international collaboration. Strengthening capacity-building through international networks of exchange, technical assistance and regional centres of excellence could enable developing countries to build robust innovation ecosystems, to harness the benefits of artificial intelligence and other frontier technologies. [7] The United Nations has increased efforts to establish a shared global governance of artificial intelligence. In 2024, the General Assembly adopted the Pact for the Future, including the Global Digital Compact (see chapter III).

II. Implementation and follow-up at the regional level

10.   United Nations regional commissions, as co-conveners of WSIS preparatory committees at each juncture of the process since 2002 and as one of the main facilitators of WSIS action lines, have a critical role in implementation; they have set national and regional digital development strategies, supported national and regional implementation reviews and follow-ups, convened regional WSIS forums and supported measurement and monitoring in their regions.

A. Africa

11.   The Economic Commission for Africa supports digital governance, cybersecurity and policy development across the continent, including through the Digital Transformation

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[6] https://www.coherentmarketinsights.com/industry-reports/digital-communication-system-market.

[7] UNCTAD, 2025, *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development* (United Nations publishing, Sales No. E.25.II.D.1, Geneva).

Strategy of the African Union. UNDP and the Group of 7 under the presidency of Italy launched an artificial intelligence hub for sustainable development, to drive sustainable artificial intelligence-based growth in Africa.

B. Asia and the Pacific

12. ESCAP promotes digital inclusion and transformation through Action Plan for Implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway 2022–2026; facilitates multi-stakeholder dialogue; and conducts research in key areas of digital development, including inclusion, infrastructure and artificial intelligence, with studies informing the digital maturity framework for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). ESCAP initiatives support the implementation of WSIS outcomes on climate action in Pacific island countries, women's digital entrepreneurship and institutional capacity-building for digital data governance.

C. Western Asia

13. Arab Digital Agenda for 2023–2033, developed by ESCWA and the League of Arab States, provides a framework for regional digital development, and electronic-government (e-government) enhancement. It is supported by the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform and the government electronic and mobile services initiative, addressing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Regional cooperation has advanced through the Digital Cooperation and Development Forum and related initiatives promoting policy alignment and implementation of the Arab Digital Agenda. UNRWA implements digital hubs and e-government services in Lebanon, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, driving digital transformation in education, health and humanitarian services amid local challenges.

D. Europe

14. ECE coordinates the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), developing transparent digital standards and trade facilitation recommendations for government and commercial activity; maintaining a shared environmental information system and indicators; and managing the Aarhus Clearing House for participation in environmental decision-making.[8] The Council of Europe promotes public policies and laws; provides capacity-building in human-rights based digital governance, freedom of expression, privacy, cybersecurity, digital literacy and equal access to justice; and strengthens regulation and international cooperation on cyber issues through the following: Convention on Cybercrime; Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law; and Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data.[9]

E. Latin America and the Caribbean

15. Digital Agenda 2026 for Latin America and the Caribbean, developed by ECLAC and adopted at the ninth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society, promotes meaningful connectivity, digital infrastructure, governance, security and innovation, particularly in artificial intelligence for sustainable development.[10] ECLAC coordinates working groups on the digital economy, meaningful connectivity and artificial intelligence, as well as a Caribbean group and a measurement commission, to track implementation. Other regional frameworks, such as the Digital Transformation Lab, the Digital Development Observatory and the School of Digital Transformation, help strengthen capacity-building and technical

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[8] https://unece.org/shared-environmental-information-system; https://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/.

[9] https://www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime/the-budapest-convention; https://www.coe.int/en/web/artificial-intelligence/the-framework-convention-on-artificial-intelligence; https://www.coe.int/en/web/data-protection/convention108-and-protocol.

[10] https://conferenciaelac.cepal.org/9/en/documents/digital-agenda-latin-america-and-caribbean-elac2026.

cooperation. ECLAC leads high-level policy dialogues, such as the European Union and Latin America and Caribbean Digital Alliance Policy Dialogues.

III. Implementation and follow-up at the international level

A. United Nations Group on the Information Society

16.   The United Nations Group on the Information Society coordinates the inter-agency implementation of WSIS outcomes and their alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals across the United Nations system. The Group brings together 31 United Nations entities and 17 observers, to promote policy coherence and digital cooperation. In 2025, the Group coordinated inputs to the WSIS+20 review, building on existing structures such as the WSIS Sustainable Development Goals matrix and strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement; and contributed to the high-level political forum on sustainable development and Global Digital Compact processes.[11] The General Assembly requested the Group to prepare a joint implementation road map in 2026.[12]

B. General Assembly and Economic and Social Council

17.   In adopting the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes, the General Assembly stated that "strengthened international cooperation and enabling policy environments are required to address gaps in and challenges to participation in the information society"; and requested action line facilitators to "develop targeted and result-oriented implementation road maps for their respective action lines and the outcomes of the present resolution, linking the World Summit action lines with relevant Sustainable Development Goal targets and Global Digital Compact commitments".[13] The next high-level meeting on the overall review will be held in 2035 and the Secretary-General is requested to submit a biennial report on progress. In 2025, the General Assembly established the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence, to issue evidence-based assessments on the risks and impacts of artificial intelligence, and the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance, as a platform to discuss international cooperation, share best practices and lessons learned, and facilitate discussions.[14] The Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution on the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to WSIS outcomes, taking note of the report prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat in this regard.[15]

C. Commission on Science and Technology for Development

18.   At its twenty-eighth session, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development discussed diversifying economies in a world of accelerated digitalization; technology foresight and technology assessment for sustainable development; and progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of WSIS, including the 20-year review thereof. At the intersessional panel meeting, the Commission examined STI in the age of artificial intelligence. The Commission established a dedicated working group on data governance at all levels as relevant for development, which held four meetings in 2025 and will report on progress to the General Assembly at its eighty-first session. Four intersessional

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[11] https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/sdg/; https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/ungis/.
[12] A/RES/80/173.
[13] Ibid.
[14] A/RES/79/325.
[15] E/RES/2025/18; UNCTAD, 2025, *Implementing World Summit on the Information Society Outcomes: A Twenty-Year Review* (Geneva).

tracks were created, to discuss fundamental principles of data governance; interoperability; sharing the benefits of data; and data flows.[16]

D. Facilitation and coordination of multi-stakeholder implementation

19.   The WSIS+20 Forum was held alongside the ITU Artificial Intelligence for Good Global Summit, with over 11,000 participants from 169 countries in over 200 sessions. Discussions addressed the role of the United Nations as a key platform in implementing the Global Digital Compact and focused on the following priorities in digital cooperation: universal connectivity; sustainability and green technology; ethical artificial intelligence and emerging technologies; and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The WSIS Stocktaking Platform features over 19,000 entries, with a record 973 submissions for the 2025 WSIS prizes. The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development assessed progress and regional developments towards its seven advocacy targets.[17]

E. Civil society, business and multi-stakeholder partnerships

20.   There has been a continued increase in the number of multi-stakeholder partnerships and civil society organizations addressing digital opportunities and risks. Among the latter, Access Now defends digital rights for at-risk communities and hosts the Rights Conference. APC, an international network focused on development, human rights and gender, helped advance digital justice advocacy through an edition of *Global Information Society Watch* focused on WSIS+20.[18] The Diplo Foundation, through its Geneva Internet platform, provides policy debate infrastructure, with an observatory, discussion space and capacity-building programmes. Technical governance bodies include the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, promoting digital access through libraries and exploring artificial intelligence-enhanced services;[19] the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, coordinating the domain name system of the Internet; and ISOC, implementing a 2030 strategy for universal access and online security. The World Wide Web Consortium addresses Internet standards under the 2025–2028 strategic objectives.[20] Data corporations remain central in artificial intelligence and infrastructure innovation. The International Chamber of Commerce represents business interests through an initiative on shaping global policy.[21]

F. Action lines and selected implementation of activities of United Nations entities

1. Implementation of action lines

21.   The implementation of WSIS outcomes is aligned with implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through General Assembly resolutions 70/1 and 70/125. In 2005, 11 action lines were agreed for multi-stakeholder implementation of the outcomes. Facilitators review implementation annually using an agreed matrix of the action lines and the Goals, and prepared summaries of developments under each line for the high-

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[16] https://unctad.org/meeting/commission-science-and-technology-development-28th-session; https://unctad.org/meeting/commission-science-and-technology-development-2025-2026-inter-sessional-panel; https://unctad.org/topic/commission-on-science-and-technology-for-development/working-group-on-data-governance.

[17] https://www.broadbandcommission.org/advocacy-targets/; https://www.broadbandcommission.org/publication/state-of-broadband-2025/.

[18] https://www.giswatch.org/2024-special-edition-wsis20-reimagining-horizons-dignity-equity-and-justice-our-digital-future.

[19] https://repository.ifla.org/items/f197f327-dc49-4743-bb57-0a373505da8b.

[20] https://www.w3.org/2025/06/w3c-2025-2028-strategic-objectives-and-initiatives/index.html.

[21] https://iccwbo.org/policy-commission.

level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes.[22]

(a) *The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of information and communications technologies for development (C1)*

22.   The General Assembly undertook commitments under the Global Digital Compact. In 2025, implementation included the High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence report on governing artificial intelligence for humanity, noting the development of new institutional frameworks for governance at the national and multilateral levels. Under the steering committee for the implementation of the Pact for the Future, chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General, the working group on digital technologies completed the Global Digital Compact implementation map (July), including priority actions, responsible stakeholders and timelines for the achievement of objectives.[23]

23.   The Department of Economic and Social Affairs helps strengthen institutional capacity and whole-of-government digital strategies, supporting people-centred public sector transformation through initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goal 16 Conference and sessions of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration. ESCWA supports regional digital governance and multi-stakeholder cooperation through the Arab Digital Agenda. UNIDO assists multi-stakeholder digital cooperation through the Global Alliance on Artificial Intelligence for Industry and Manufacturing (AIM) and the related conference, supporting international collaboration and sustainable artificial intelligence-driven industrial development. [24] UN-Women highlighted needs related to gender-responsive digital governance.[25]

24.   The Council of Europe promotes governance-related conventions addressing privacy, cybercrime and artificial intelligence; the number of signatories of the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence has increased to 17.

25.   APC promotes transparent and inclusive digital governance, building on the Net Mundial+10 guidelines and, with the African Union Commission and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology of the United Republic of Tanzania, hosted the African School on Internet Governance; the outcomes informed the working group on data governance under the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.[26]

(b) *Information and communication infrastructure (C2)*

26.   The Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies and the Office of Information and Communications Technology supported open-source digital public infrastructure and Sustainable Development Goals-related progress through United Nations Open Source Week 2025.

27.   ESCWA supports regional digital governance through the Arab Digital Agenda and a project on expediting the use of technology and innovation for enhanced operations in Arab public institutions. ITU leads the Partner 2 Connect digital coalition, to boost connectivity for hard-to-connect communities, with $54 billion in funding by year-end, and serves as the C2 facilitator. The joint UNICEF and ITU Giga initiative helps Governments connect schools through ICTs. WFP leads the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, including the development of Sphere-aligned connectivity-as-aid standards and minimum technical guidelines, establishing the first humanitarian benchmarks for ethical, rights-based connectivity. WTO supports digital infrastructure and connectivity through e-commerce work, promoting international standard discussions on critical technologies and supporting countries in closing connectivity and regulatory-infrastructure gaps.

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[22]   https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/review/reports/twenty-year.html.

[23]   https://www.un.org/en/ai-advisory-body; https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/gdc_implementation_map_en.pdf.

[24]   https://aim.unido.org/; https://www.unido.org/events/aim-global-conference-2025.

[25]   UN-Women and Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2025.

[26]   https://afrisig.org/afrisig-2025.

28.   APC, through the Local Access Programme and the Local Networks initiative, helps develop and sustain community-owned networks in marginalized regions; and partners with ISOC and ITU to expand community networks, develop sustainable connectivity financing and introduce open-hardware tools. ISOC helps advance infrastructure-building through community connectivity grants, Internet exchange point development, the Open Fiber Data Standard secretariat and global Internet measurement through the Pulse platform.

(c)   *Access to information and knowledge (C3)*

29.   ECE enables access to environmental information through the Shared Environmental Information System, national reporting under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus [Denmark] Convention) and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and organizes e-learning courses for stakeholders on the effects of air pollution; the public–private partnerships and infrastructure evaluation and rating system enables Governments to mobilize private-sector resources for infrastructure project financing.[27] ESCWA promotes digital inclusion and access to information resources through the Arab Digital Agenda and the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform. UNESCO promotes access to information through the Roam-X Internet universality indicators; launched the Global Road Map on Multilingualism in the Digital Era; partnered with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers on the universal acceptance of multilingual content; completed a global consultation on Diamond Open Access; and expanded the Information for All Programme issue brief. UNICEF increased the use of artificial intelligence in translations, to help make information and civic engagement more accessible in underserved languages in Central and West Africa. UNIDO enables access to industrial knowledge and technologies through AIM Global regional chapters, centres of excellence and intelligent manufacturing hubs. WIPO, partnering with other institutions, facilitates access to scientific, technical and patent information through technology and innovation support centres, the Access to Research for Development and Innovation Programme and the Access to Specialized Patent Information programme; and helps broaden international access to intellectual property laws and judgments through the Lex portal.

30.   The Council of Europe promotes universal access to official documents through the Convention on Access to Official Documents; and the Commission for the Efficiency of Justice has issued guidelines for access to legal knowledge and court decisions.[28]

31.   APC works on community networks, sustainable financing for connectivity and open-hardware tools, including the Hermes long-distance communication system, and provides access to infrastructure, content and skills. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions and Electronic Information for Libraries promote public access to the Internet and information through the Public Library Innovation Programme and the Internet Manifesto, advocating for meaningful connectivity.[29] The ISOC Foundation expanded a grant programme in 2025, investing an additional $2.7 million towards economic inclusion and educational opportunities.[30]

(d)   *Capacity-building (C4)*

32.   Many intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder agencies work to build the capacity of digital professionals and digital literacy among the public.

33.   ECE provides capacity-building support, focused on the environment, through the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, and on modernizing, disseminating and reusing digital environmental information systems. ESCWA focuses on measurement, digital skills and facilitating policy capacity development, through the Arab Digital Agenda, Arab digital development reviews and technology and innovation

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[27] https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation/aarhus-convention/text; https://piers.unece.org/.

[28] https://www.coe.int/en/web/access-to-official-documents.

[29] https://eifl.net/programmes/public-library-innovation-programme; https://www.ifla.org/g/rights-based-information-society/internet-manifesto/.

[30] https://www.isocfoundation.org/grant-programme/scills-grant-programme/.

measurement for evidence-based policies and strategies. The ITU digital skills toolkit helps build capacity and guidance among policymakers and other stakeholders; ITU leads the Digital Transformation Centres initiative and training programmes, hosts the ITU Academy platform, leads relevant formation courses and provided support to WSIS+20 contributions, including road maps, reports and guidance.[31] UNDP focuses on strengthening institutional and human capacity by providing human-centred training and advisory support on data, artificial intelligence and digital innovation, reaching over 40 countries; in 2025, such support included Digital Capacity Lab programmes for government officials, expansion of the Data to Policy Initiative, joint UNDP–ITU training under the Capacity Development for Digital Transformation project and contributions to the data governance toolkit of the Broadband Commission. UNIDO promotes the adoption of artificial intelligence and digital technologies, to support the ending of hunger, climate action and sustainable value chains in developing countries. UNRWA digital hubs in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory have served as innovation and skilling centres for refugees, supporting local capacity; and, in partnership with KfW Development Bank, expanded foundational capacity by equipping over 3,200 health and education staff.[32]

34. The Council of Europe supports the implementation of projects on media freedom and freedom of expression, privacy, action against cybercrime, the digital transformation and judiciary strengthening.[33]

35. APC contributes to capacity-building through the African School on Internet Governance and by implementing ITU training programmes for ICT network managers among Indigenous Peoples and in rural and remote communities in Africa and Latin America.[34] ISOC leads youth, early-career and mid-career fellowships and expanded the peering fellowship into an international programme.

(e) *Building confidence and security in the use of information and communications technologies (C5)*

36. The Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies and UNDP expanded the Digital Public Infrastructure Safeguards Framework, with endorsements, training and guidance.[35]

37. The ESCWA Arab Digital Agenda supports trust, cybersecurity and an enabling policy environment through regional WSIS implementation. ITU strengthens cyberresilience, supporting national computer (security) incident response teams, offering toolkits and drills, updating the Global Cybersecurity Index and supporting child online protection, privacy initiatives and international security standards with regard to emerging technologies.[36] WIPO leads the Alert platform that notifies authorities and advertisers of copyright-infringing sites; and a study on the effectiveness of website-blocking orders helped support online intellectual property enforcement.[37]

38. The Council of Europe hosts the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime and instruments against online racist and xenophobic offences, as well as the Octopus Cybercrime Community, and provides guidance on generative artificial intelligence

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[31] https://www.itu.int/en/itu-wsis/Pages/Roadmaps.aspx.

[32] https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/unrwas-journey-toward-digital-transformation.

[33] https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/co-operation-projects; https://www.coe.int/en/web/data-protection/cooperation; https://www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime; https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/digital-transformation; https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/ongoing-projects.

[34] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Indigenous-Peoples/Pages/Training-Programme-for-ICT-Network-Managers-in-Indigenous-and-Rural-Communities-in-the-Africa-Region.aspx; https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Indigenous-Peoples/Pages/Blended-Training-Program-for-ICT-Network-Managers-in-Rural%2C-Remote%2C-and-Indigenous-Communities-of-Latin-America-2025%E2%80%932026.aspx.

[35] https://www.dpi-safeguards.org/.

[36] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/global-cybersecurity-index.aspx.

[37] https://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/doc_details.jsp?doc_id=641183**.

for judicial professionals and capacity-building on generative artificial intelligence, equality and non-discrimination.[38]

39.   APC focuses on addressing online gender-based violence through advocacy, research, capacity-building and policy engagement, including a framework for gender-responsive cybersecurity policy.[39] ISOC advocates for encryption and user empowerment, supporting the Global Encryption Coalition; and launched the Online Trust and Safety Programme.

(f)   *The enabling environment (C6)*

40.   ESCWA supports legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks for digital transformation through the Arab Digital Agenda. ITU convenes the Global Symposium for Regulators, supports the ITU and World Bank digital regulatory platform; and issues tools and toolkits that support policy, legal and regulatory frameworks.[40] UNDP launched, with the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy, the artificial intelligence hub for sustainable development, to strengthen artificial intelligence and data ecosystems; conducts artificial intelligence landscape assessments and digital readiness assessments; supports 25 countries with digital public goods and digital public infrastructure implementation; and, in cooperation with ITU, under the European Union-funded Open Source Ecosystem Enabler project, helps countries develop national open-source ecosystems. UNICEF focuses on digital issues affecting children's rights and protection, including through the artificial intelligence governance in motion review and policy notes.[41] UNIDO supports enabling environments for digital industrialization through industrial policy labs and toolkits and helps countries absorb frontier technologies and strengthen the investment readiness of microenterprises and SMEs.[42] WIPO hosts the Conversation on Intellectual Property and Frontier Technologies,[43] leads the artificial intelligence infrastructure interchange initiative and issues tools and guides on intellectual property in the digital world.

41.   The Council of Europe, in cooperation with the European Union, works on risks linked to online gambling and gaming under the technical support instrument programme, offering tailored support to member States.

42.   APC contributes to enabling policy and regulation for community-centred connectivity through the African School on Internet Governance.

(g)   *Information and communications technology applications (C7)*

E-government

43.   The Department of Economic and Social Affairs supports ethical and human-centred digital public services through its local and national e-government toolkits, which facilitate capacity-building and digital maturity assessments.

44.   ESCAP, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, convened a regional capacity-building workshop in Bangkok, assessing data governance readiness using the United Nations E-Government Development Index. ESCWA supports the enhancement of e-government services through the government electronic and mobile services initiative and the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform. UNRWA led the development of the emergency system e-government platform in the Gaza Strip, managing multisectoral humanitarian response through this crisis-ready resource.

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[38] https://www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime/second-additional-protocol/-/asset_publisher/isHU0Xq21lhu/content/opening-coecyber2ap; https://www.coe.int/en/web/octopus; https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/cepej-working-group-cyber-just.

[39] https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/framework-developing-gender-responsive-cybersecurity-policy.

[40] https://app.gen5.digital/benchmark/about; https://app.gen5.digital/unified-framework/about.

[41] https://www.unicef.org/documents/artificial-intelligence-governance-motion; https://www.unicef.org/documents/policy-note-drawing-line-digital-spaces.

[42] https://www.unido.org/learning-resources/equip-project; https://scalex.unido.org/; https://www.unido.org/solutions.

[43] https://www.wipo.int/about-ip/en/frontier_technologies/frontier_conversation.html.

45.   The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers focuses on Internet stability, security and interoperability, facilitating its global reach and supporting e-government services.

E-business

46.   United Nations entities coordinated at a WSIS+20 Forum high-level event on improving digital cooperation and implementation alignment. The e-business action line facilitators continue to collaborate through the eTrade for all initiative; UNCTAD has a role in implementing the Global Digital Compact; and the International Trade Centre, UNCTAD and UPU, as C7 facilitators, support digital trade through e-trade readiness assessments, policy briefs, e-commerce strategies and the e-trade reform tracker tool for project management and monitoring. International Trade Centre digitalization programmes and the UNCTAD e-trade for women initiative globally supported policy alignment, digital connectivity and inclusivity among microenterprises and SMEs.[44]

47.   ECE coordinates UN/CEFACT, providing policy recommendations, standards and initiatives, to simplify and harmonize sustainable and digital cross-border trade procedures and operations. UPU supports innovative digital economy solutions in the postal sector; a proposed digital postal network is aimed at increasing participation by microenterprises and SMEs in global trade and e-commerce logistics. WTO, under the work programme on e-commerce, addresses issues related to digital infrastructure and connectivity, with committees facilitating dialogues on standards, emerging technologies and ICT-related measures under e-business; WTO capacity-building efforts, technical assistance and research include the digital trade for Africa project, courses on digital trade and updated statistics through the Global Services Trade Data Hub; and, in 2025, the public forum and *World Trade Report* focused on artificial intelligence, inclusivity and the digital economy.[45]

E-learning

48.   UNESCO promotes learning platforms and open educational resources, reinforced by the Dubai Declaration on Open Educational Resources and the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education courses on generative artificial intelligence and open education resources,[46] as well as the UNICEF–UNESCO gateways to public digital learning initiative. UNICEF supports the digital transformation of education systems through programmes that help strengthen education strategies, education management information systems and system capacity in countries; leads the development of "EdTech for Good Framework"; and helps enhance educational outcomes through digital learning and accessible digital textbooks.[47] The Giga initiative helps Governments connect schools to the Internet and showcased school-as-a-hub models for community-led digital inclusion at the WSIS+20 Forum. The United Nations Environment Programme hosts "Digital4Sustainability Learning Path", developed with the United Nations System Staff College; co-developed a national curriculum with the Kenya School of Government; and, in partnership with UN-Women, formalized collaboration with 15 digital innovation hubs in Kenya. UNRWA centralized platforms support e-health and e-learning.

49.   ISOC delivers training to over 24,000 learners worldwide and, under the policymaker programme, offered Internet-focused training at three Internet Engineering Task Force meetings in 2025.

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[44] https://unctad.org/topic/ecommerce-and-digital-economy/etrade-readiness-assessments; https://www.etradereformtracker.org/; https://etradeforall.org/et4women.

[45] https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/serv_e/serv_2502202416_e/serv_2502202416_e.htm; https://www.learning.wto.org/; https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/services_trade_data_hub_e.htm; https://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/public_forum25_e/public_forum25_e.htm; https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/wtr25_e.htm.

[46] https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/119505; https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/114424.

[47] https://www.unicef.org/digitaleducation/tech4ed; https://www.learningcabinet.org/edtech-for-good-framework/; https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/reports/making-digital-learning-work.

E-health

50.   UNICEF has developed a draft community health worker digital adaptation kit; contributes to developing target software standards; supported the first Gavi Alliance-wide human resources for health strategy; and supports recruitment, upskilling and performance improvement among community health workers in 13 countries in Africa through digital interventions, including supporting the development and implementation of geolocated workforce registries, digital learning, digital literacy and the electronic Community Health Information System. UNRWA deploys centralized platforms, including a digital learning platform and an e-medical record system, to help improve the equity and efficiency of essential services, which require continued investment in skills and infrastructure to ensure long-term sustainability.

E-employment

51.   ESCAP promotes digital inclusion and transformation through regional cooperation mechanisms, notably, the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative and the 2022–2026 Action Plan, aligned with many action lines, including C7. The UNWRA job creation programme digitalizes a cash-for-work cycle, enhancing transparency and efficiency in providing critical income support.

E-environment

52.   ECE provides updated information on e-tools for access to environmental information and Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. UNICEF supports artificial intelligence-powered air quality monitoring in the Lao People's Democratic Republic; and the first cohort for climate action under the Venture Fund culminated in 2025. The United Nations Environment Programme promotes digital technologies for environmental protection and sustainable resource use and works on global environmental data platforms, a global environmental data strategy, capacity-building, guidance on green digital policy and infrastructure and international cooperation through the Coalition for Sustainable Artificial Intelligence; in 2025, the United Nations Environment Programme highlighted ongoing structural challenges, including the limited integration of digital issues into environmental processes.

53.   Among APC members, in Cameroon, Protege QV drafted a memorandum of understanding on e-waste management; and, in Colombia, Colnodo launched the Transformative Environmental Alert Systems project.

E-science

54.   UNESCO focuses on science and scientific infrastructure, including as part of the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology (2025) and through the Remote Access to Lab Equipment initiative and free massive open online courses on the impacts of emerging technologies.

(h)   *Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content (C8)*

55.   ESCWA, through the Arab Digital Agenda and the Digital Arabic Content project, promotes Arabic digital content, linguistic diversity and cultural identity online. UNESCO helps strengthen policies and regulatory frameworks on cultural and linguistic diversity, providing monitoring and reporting mechanisms. WIPO provides technical assistance and information to countries, local communities, cultural institutions and Indigenous Peoples and, under the training, mentoring and matchmaking programme, supports women-led entrepreneurship, innovation and the effective use of intellectual property tools in traditional knowledge and cultural expression.

56.   The Council of Europe hosted a conference on ensuring quality education in the artificial intelligence era, introducing a compass for artificial intelligence and education; and develops ICT tools for multi-perspective history teaching, including a digital hub, tutorial series and a toolkit for classes, addressing historical manipulation and online disinformation.

57. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, under the New Generic Top-Level Domains programme, supports the continued expansion, diversity, competition and utility of the domain name system; the next round of applications will be held in April 2026.

(i) Media (C9)

58. UNESCO supports policy and regulatory frameworks strengthening community and indigenous media in line with the Windhoek+30 Declaration; supported a sector-wide media viability manifesto; issued a report on world trends in freedom of expression and media development; held multi-stakeholder forums; and convened international experts under the global priority on gender equality, discussing technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

59. The Council of Europe hosts the Campaign for the Safety of Journalists 2023–2027, aimed at improving the protection of journalists and media freedom across the continent, providing support to member States.

60. IGF analyses stakeholder participation across its activities, identifying gaps by region, country, stakeholder group and discipline and engaging underrepresented sectors.

61. APC focuses on the safety of women journalists, conducting research on gendered disinformation and organizing regional consultations, seminars and workshops.

(j) Ethical dimensions of the information society (C10)

62. ESCWA works on ethical and responsible digital transformation frameworks through the Arab Digital Agenda. UNESCO supports the national implementation of ethical artificial intelligence governance, through readiness assessment methodology and ethical impact assessments; contributes to Group of 7 and Group of 20 frameworks; hosted the third Global Forum on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, launching two global platforms for expert and social oversight of artificial intelligence development; and supported standard-setting efforts through the Recommendation on the Ethics of Neurotechnology. UNICEF, in updated guidance on artificial intelligence and children, reflected advances in technology and policy, addressing safety, education, privacy and development; and, in a report on childhood in the digital age, focused on children's digital access, skills, screen time and mental health.

63. The Council of Europe advocates for the ethical use of digital tools and artificial intelligence through the ethical charter of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice, supported by an assessment tool.

64. APC released a joint WSIS and human rights statement with the Global Digital Justice Forum and the Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS; and, under the Women's Rights Programme, participated in the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and UN-Women expert group meetings.

(k) International and regional cooperation (C11)

65. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs supports international cooperation through the United Nations Group on the Information Society, IGF and South–South exchanges and strengthens institutional innovation and digital governance through the Public Service Forum and foresight tools such as the Global Horizon Scanning platform. The Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies supports regional and international cooperation by advocating for alignment between the Global Digital Compact and WSIS, building on regional-level mechanisms for Global Digital Compact implementation, supported by the Digital Cooperation Portal.

66. ECE, with ESCAP, supports countries participating in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, providing a platform for Government collaboration across multiple areas, including digital-related development. ESCWA works on regional coordination, partnerships and cooperation mechanisms through the Arab Digital Agenda, the Digital Cooperation and Development Forum and the WSIS+20 process. UNDP supports regional and international dialogues on WSIS outcomes; co-organized a WSIS+20 Forum high-level event on reviewing progress toward an inclusive digital future; works in partnership with, among others, the Broadband Commission and the Global Artificial

Intelligence Skills Coalition; and co-leads with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, the Hamburg Declaration on Responsible Artificial Intelligence for the Sustainable Development Goals.

67.   The Council of Europe participates in and supports Internet and digital governance forums, to support global cooperation on artificial intelligence and, in 2025, hosted the European Dialogue on Internet Governance.

2.   Implementation of themes

(a)   Financing mechanisms

68.   Financing gaps persisted in 2025, particularly in developing countries, including small island developing States and the least developed countries, where limited, unstable or short-term funding constrains the scale and sustainability of digital initiatives.

69.   UNDP highlighted that fragmented, short-term funding undermined continuity, institutionalization and digital transformation; the artificial intelligence hub for sustainable development helps expand access to sustainable digital industrial development in Africa.

70.   Other international actors advanced financing models for digital development. The Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund provides an investment window on digital transformation for development.[48] APC and partners issued a report on financing solutions and APC co-organized a Group of 20 and Think 20 side event on financing community-centred connectivity, to explore investment for underserved regions.[49]

71.   With regard to digital trade, International Trade Centre activities in China and South-East Asia leveraged platforms such as the Global Digital Trade Expo and the International Trade Centre–Hangzhou Centre for Digital Innovation in order to expand market access. The ICT Development Fund of ITU supports infrastructure development in the least developed countries and countries with particular development needs, with recent implementation focused on Asia and the Pacific.[50]

(b)   Internet governance

72.   The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society recognized the need for enhanced cooperation on international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. The General Assembly has noted the work of the working group on enhanced cooperation of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the need for continued dialogue.

73.   The twentieth meeting of IGF (Norway, June 2025), on the theme "Building governance together", included sub-themes on digital trust and resilience, sustainable and responsible innovation, universal access and digital rights and digital cooperation.

74.   Other international forums are concerned with different aspects of Internet development, such as the Council of Europe, on rights-based artificial intelligence governance and cybersecurity; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, on digital security for prosperity; and the Internet Engineering Task Force, on technical developments of protocols.[51]

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[48] https://www.jointsdgfund.org/.

[49] https://comconnectivity.org/self-sustaining-financing-solutions-for-community-connectivity/;
https://www.apc.org/en/news/call-action-unlocking-investment-community-connectivity.

[50] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Projects/Pages/ICT-DF.aspx?ICTDF=1.

[51] https://www.coe.int/en/web/north-south-centre/lisbon-forum-2025;
https://www.oecd.org/en/networks/global-forum-on-digital-security-for-prosperity.html;
https://www.ietf.org/proceedings/35/ietf-overview.html.

(c)   *Measuring information and communications technology for development*

75.   The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development brings together 14 United Nations and international entities, to assess trends, propose indicators in support of the information society and link ICT indicators to the Sustainable Development Goals.[52]

76.   ITU maintains the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators database, with data summarized on the data hub, and issues the ICT Development Index.[53] In 2025, ITU organized expert group meetings, including the sixteenth meeting of the expert group on telecommunication/ICT indicators and the thirteenth meeting of the expert group on ICT household indicators.[54]

77.   UNCTAD leads the development of methodologies for e-commerce and digital economy statistics, collaborating with the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and WTO on capacity-building in developing countries. UNESCO revised the Internet universality indicators, which provide a framework with which to assess rights, openness, access and multi-stakeholder participation in Internet development. WTO, in *Global Trade Outlook and Statistics*, provides estimates of exports of digitally delivered services.

IV.   Findings and suggestions

78.   The WSIS process has provided the framework for international discussion and the monitoring of implementation with regard to the information society and digital development for 20 years, following the inception of WSIS at meetings held in 2003 and 2005. Many significant meetings were held in 2025 to review implementation progress, including the twenty-eighth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (April), IGF (June), WSIS+20 Forum (July), consultations conducted by UNESCO and other regional and international conferences and meetings, as well as contributions from action line facilitators. These events culminated in the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes and the adoption of the outcome document.

79.   Over the past 20 years, WSIS has evolved into a cornerstone of international digital cooperation, grounded in the principles of inclusivity, development and shared responsibility. The overall WSIS vision of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society", consistent with human rights and sustainable development, should remain valid. It has become a central goal among broader discussions of digital development and the facilitation of international cooperation. There is broad agreement that the WSIS process should continue to be the central platform in advancing digital cooperation. The principle of multi-stakeholder participation, pioneered at WSIS, has become a core feature of international discourse on digital development that has been widely endorsed over time, including in resolutions of the General Assembly.

80.   A number of facets of WSIS require strengthened efforts to address, including a focus on closing all digital divides between and within regions, countries and communities; the need for multilateral digital collaboration; the importance of an enabling environment for investment and for STI; the need for ICT use to be consistent with international human rights law; the need to build capacity in developing countries to close digital divides; and the need to further increase financing and investment in ICT infrastructure, content and services, in line with the Sevilla Commitment. Efforts should also be made to improve the monitoring and measurement of progress on WSIS implementation by further developing internationally agreed targets, indicators and metrics for universal, meaningful and affordable connectivity and digital development. Building synergies and coherence between WSIS and Global Digital Compact implementation is equally important, to ensure a more efficient use of resources and greater impacts.

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[52]   https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/intlcoop/partnership/default.aspx.
[53]   https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/idi2025/.
[54]   https://www.itu.int/itu-d/meetings/egti2025/; https://www.itu.int/itu-d/meetings/egh2025/.

81.   Data has a critical role in addressing national, regional and international challenges. Responsible and interoperable data governance is essential in order to advance development objectives. The establishment of the working group on data governance under the Commission on Science and Technology for Development offers stakeholders a neutral platform, to discuss fundamental principles and other dimensions of data governance in order that the power of data can be harnessed for good.

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