



WSIS+20 FORUM HIGH-LEVEL EVENT 2024

**27-31 May 2024
Geneva, Switzerland**

**Highlights, Announcements, and Key Outcomes
of the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event**

Background

Two decades ago, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) established a framework for global digital cooperation during its phases in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005). WSIS envisioned building people-centric, inclusive, and development-oriented information and knowledge societies. In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, WSIS continues to hold unique potential to propel transformative action for the benefit of all.

Event Overview

Ahead of the United Nations General Assembly's twenty-year review of WSIS, the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event served as a platform for multistakeholder exchanges and a catalyst for action. It took stock of achievements, key trends, and challenges since the 2003 Geneva Plan of Action. This event was an occasion for the international community to assess opportunities for global digital cooperation and to join forces towards a forward-looking, reinvigorated shared vision, informing the UN Summit of the Future.

The WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2024 was co-hosted by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Swiss Confederation, and co-organized with UNESCO, UNDP, and UNCTAD. The Event took place from 27 to 31 May 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland. The five-day high-level event's sessions took place from Monday to Wednesday at the International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG), and on Thursday and Friday, the sessions hosted at the ITU Headquarters.

The five-day event brought together multi-stakeholder participants, including government, the private sector, academia, the technical community, and civil society. It covered a wide range of topics, including emerging technologies, WSIS+20, digital inclusion, digital governance processes, the Global Digital Compact, the Summit of the Future, digital health, universal connectivity, sustainable digital transformation, cybersecurity, digital public infrastructure, and many more.

Key Figures

- Featured nearly **200** sessions, including high-level plenary sessions, interactive sessions, knowledge cafes, exhibitions, WSIS Prizes and Special Prizes ceremonies, and a ministerial roundtable.
- Brought together **4,000+ participants** (3,000 physical and 1,000 remote) from 160 countries
- **500** High-Levels, including CEOs, Ministers, Deputies, Heads of Organisations, Ambassadors, etc.
- **80+** Ministers and Deputies, Heads of Regulatory Authorities.
- Over **100** speakers and experts who shared their insights on various aspects of the digital landscape.
- Gender participation: **57% male, 43% female.**
- **+650** participants on LinkedIn networking tool.

Highlights

- Chair Appointment: H.E. Mr. Albert Rösti, Federal Councillor, Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy, and Communications (DETEC), Switzerland, appointed as Chair of the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event.
- UN Secretary-General's Message: António Guterres shared a video message on the occasion, available [here](#).
- UN Leaders Spotlight on WSIS: Contributions in a video format by the Heads of UN Agencies: [UN Leaders Spotlight on WSIS - YouTube](#)
 1. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
 2. ILO Director-General Gilbert F. Hounsgbo
 3. FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu
 4. IOM Director General Amy Pope
 5. WIPO Director General Daren Tang
 6. UNECA Executive Secretary Claver Gatete
 7. UNITAR Executive Director Nikhil Seth
 8. UNIDO Director-General Gred Müller
 9. UNECE Executive Secretary Tatiana Molcean
 10. UN ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana
 11. UNDESA Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua
 12. UNJSPF Chief Executive of Pension Administration Rosemarie
 13. UNU Rector Tshilidzi Marwala
- The United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) reiterated its commitment to the WSIS process and the implementation of WSIS Action Lines, emphasizing the importance of aligning the WSIS and SDG processes. For the term 2024-2025, UNESCO has assumed the Chair of UNGIS, taking over from ITU and UNDP as co-chairs (2023-2024). The Vice-Chairs for this term are ITU, UNDP, UNCTAD, and ECLAC. UNGIS stands ready to be further leveraged for the good of the UN system, aiming to enhance coherence, coordination, and collaboration

within the system, particularly in support of the Global Digital Compact follow-up. UNGIS members discussed an ambitious workplan on (i) measuring the environmental impact of digital technologies, particularly AI; (ii) enhancing systematic gender equality mainstreaming across members' digital workstreams, and (iii) building the digital transformation capacities of governments on topics covered by UNGIS members towards a joint WSIS Conference – UNGIS meeting in February 2025. Building a joint database is another project to facilitate creating synergies and avoiding duplication.

- UNGIS reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the upcoming WSIS+20 review, ensuring that global efforts continue to evolve and adapt for a digitally inclusive and sustainable future.
- Announcing the nine finalists and winner of the WSIS digital services design prize for 2024. WSIS Digital Service Design Prize 2024 winner: National Information Technology Authority (NITA), Uganda and their project to UGPass.
- Presentation of three best projects of the Women in GovTech Challenge.
- [Ministerial Roundtable](#): The Ministers concluded as follows:
 - The interventions shared underscore a collective commitment to harnessing ICT for socio-economic advancement, increasing inclusivity, and ensuring that the digital transformation benefits everyone.
 - The WSIS Principles and Action Lines continue to serve as a time-tested reference for global digital discussions.
 - The outcomes of the WSIS, namely, the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action along with the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, adopted by the Heads of States and Government, remain the foundation for global digital policies and cooperation. They support our shared vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information and knowledge societies that fully respect and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
 - The upcoming WSIS+20 review offers a prime opportunity for evolving the WSIS Outcomes to encompass the latest advancements moving forward, integrating new technologies such as AI, and ensuring that the WSIS continues to support inclusive global digital governance and digital development.
 - The WSIS Forum has been the time-tested multistakeholder platform for deliberations on digital development policies, exchanging best practices, and fostering partnerships.
 - The WSIS should be leveraged for the follow-up and implementation of the Global Digital Compact (GDC). Its established Principles and Action Lines remain central in global digital discussions, as clearly demonstrated in recent declarations.
- The [Academic Roundtable](#) gathered over 20 technology and policy academic experts to strengthen collaboration on emerging trends. Scientific evidence is crucial for guiding policy making.
- Wellness Sessions: Permanent Mission of India organized yoga and mindfulness sessions for participants.
- Hosted [Network of Women Ministers and Leaders in ICT](#), joined by over 100 participants sharing views on closing the gender digital divide and empowering more women to lead, innovate, and inspire.

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024 Exhibition

The WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024 Exhibition, held from May 27 to May 31 at CICG and ITU Headquarters, featured 40 exhibitors showcasing digital projects and initiatives for sustainable

development. This year's event included the debut of the UN SG Zone, with 10 UN agencies highlighting their digital efforts towards the 2030 Agenda. The exhibition also featured WSIS Partners booths and special showcases of emerging technologies like VR and AI. Inaugurated by ITU Secretary-General Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, alongside Mr. Bernard Maissen of OFCOM and H.E. Eng. Majed Sultan Al Mesmar of the UAE's TDRA, the exhibition emphasized global collaboration and technological innovation as key drivers for sustainable development.

WSIS Stocktaking and WSIS Prizes 2024

Since 2004, the WSIS Stocktaking database, maintained by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), has documented over 15,000 ICT project submissions, promoting initiatives that drive social, cultural, environmental, and economic progress. As integral part of the WSIS Stocktaking, the WSIS Prizes 2024 received 1,049 submissions from 104 countries, with 360 nominated, 90 named champions, and 18 emerging as winners, engaging over 2.2 million votes. WSIS Stocktaking also continued to collect and promote best practices advancing healthy ageing and e-Government services. This year, at the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event in Geneva, the winners of the WSIS Healthy Ageing Innovation Prizes 2024 and the WSIS Digital Service Design Prize 2024 were announced, highlighting digital efforts towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Finally, the 8th edition of the WSIS Photo Contest took place and the winners were celebrated during the event. ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin emphasized the critical role of these technological innovations in advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The event also recognized the Swiss Confederation and the United Arab Emirates for two decades of implementing WSIS Action Lines. Congratulations to all the finalists and winners for their commendable dedication and innovation.

WSIS Healthy Ageing Innovation Prize 2024

The WSIS Healthy Ageing Innovation Prize's fourth edition focuses on ICTs that address the needs of people aged 60 and above, promoting active and engaged ageing. The WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024, in collaboration with the ITU, GCOA, and other stakeholders, invites submissions from governments, civil society, the private sector, international organizations, and academia by 22 April 2024. This year, innovators are encouraged to align their projects with the UN/WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing's Action Areas, particularly in preventative health, workforce enablement, and intergenerational connections. The Prize, which highlights digital ventures within the Silver Economy, celebrates solutions that leverage the contributions of older generations and reduce their vulnerabilities, fostering socio-economic development for healthier and wealthier inclusive societies. Submissions are open from 10 February to 22 April 2024 on the WSIS Stocktaking webpage. An Expert Panel will announce four finalists per category on 30 April, with the winner decided during a WSIS&SDG TalkX session on 8 May and announced at the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event from 27-31 May. Finalists and the winner receive financial awards and promotion on the WSIS 2024 website, with submissions also considered for the WSIS Prizes 2025. The 2024 winner, [Stitch \(https://www.stitch.net/\)](https://www.stitch.net/), addresses loneliness and isolation among older adults by fostering a community for social connections and activities, enhancing their quality of life.

Geneva Trialogue at the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024

The 6th edition of the Geneva Trialogue convened at ITU on Friday, 31 May 2024, focusing on "Artificial Intelligence and Education for the SDGs." Organized by the UNITAR Division for Prosperity and the University of Geneva SDG Solution Space, the Trialogue aimed to enhance education with AI, particularly in Model United Nations (MUN) contexts. Notably, it marked the public launch of the SDG

Olympiad and featured myMUN as a guest organizing partner. Thought leaders from academia, international organizations, and the private sector, including AICrowd and Swiss Learning Exchange, collaborated to shape actionable challenges. Lead Partner, the Direction des Affaires Internationales (DAI) of the Canton of Geneva, supported La Fabrique de la Paix at Geneva's Graduate Institute as a Thought Leader. The Trialogue builds upon previous discussions, driving innovation for education and the SDGs, exemplified by AI prototypes showcased at COP 28. By fostering collaboration and leveraging AI, the Trialogue continues to catalyze impactful solutions in support of the UN's sustainable development agenda.

Announcements

- #WSIS was among the top 3 trending topics in Switzerland.
- ITU's **Partner2Connect** surpassed half of its USD 100 billion goal for universal and meaningful connectivity.
- ITU — in collaboration with the OpenWallet Foundation and the support of the Swiss Government — announced their intent to launch the OpenWallet Forum, to help drive multi-stakeholder collaboration and discussions on interoperable digital wallets. The OpenWallet Forum would empower government agencies, private sector organizations, and other stakeholders to make digital wallet services more accessible, interoperable and contribute to the development of the digital public infrastructure, especially in developing countries.
- Launched WSIS Stocktaking Report 2024 and WSIS Stocktaking Success Stories 2024.
- Announcement of the DPI Summit on October 2024 in Egypt, bringing the Global DPI Ecosystem to share best practices.
- Launched of the GovStack Knowledge & eLearning Hub - GovStack Partners ITU, Estonia, GIZ Germany
 - Launched of seven eLearning self-peace courses on GovStack Building Blocks
 - Launched of the GovStack Architects Training Program - Applications are open until July 31st

Sessions Highlights

- All **WSIS Action Lines facilitations meetings** have been successfully convened. A few highlights:
 - Enabling Environment: discussed with Regional Regulatory Associations and their members the critical questions that ICT stakeholders encounter while embracing transformative technologies for greater impact. The session was conducted under the framework of the Digital Regulation Network (DRN) Initiative. The DRN launched last year to accelerate sustainable digital transformation through common approaches to collaborative digital policy, regulation and governance across economic sectors and borders working directly with Regional Regulatory Associations (RAs) and their

members at the regional and global level. The Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR-24), which will be held in Kampala, Uganda, from 1 to 4 July 2024, under the theme 'Regulation for impact', was mentioned, and the participants were invited to register.

- **E-business:** e-business welcomes the mention in the GDC of multilateral organizations as well as governments to support national digital readiness assessments and provide technical assistance. The GDC should be very deliberate in articulating the actions that various stakeholders will need to take to achieve its objectives. It will be a collaborative effort. It's important to ensure that the GDC pays adequate attention to small businesses, trade and governance to ensure equitable outcomes from digitalization. A suggestion is to ensuring coherence in the implementation of WSIS and Summit of the Future outcomes.
- E-government: Methodological updates about the upcoming United Nations E-Government Survey 2024. Application of Local Online Service Index Methodology. There is a need to develop standardized metrics for evaluating the impact of e-government initiatives, focusing on their contribution to poverty eradication, economic empowerment, and other SDGs.
- **Smart City Leaders' Talk** organised by Global Cities Hub gathered mayors and city representatives highlighting digital tools for human rights-based sustainable smart city development. There is a need to provide a dedicated space to Local and Regional Governments in general and Smart City Leaders in particular to give rise to a more inclusive multilateralism and better access to digitalization for everyone, everywhere. A mindful matching of technology's offers and the citizens' real needs is the only successful and sustainable way forward.
- The Wallonie-Bruxelles delegation in Geneva, at the Mission Permanent of Belgium, recently organized a timely workshop addressing "**AI and Disinformation: Technical and Political Solutions.**" This event is particularly relevant with over 70 global elections scheduled for 2024, highlighting AI's significant impact on democracy and the associated risk of disinformation. The workshop, linked to C9 Media WSIS Action Line 9, underscored the media's struggle to adapt to the digital age, where social media algorithms prioritize sensational content over knowledge. Additionally, the discussion emphasised the critical role of ICT in crises, as harmful information can endanger physical and psychological well-being, hinder conflict resolution, and erode trust in institutions.
- **WSIS Roundtable discussion: Small States towards meaningful connectivity: lessons learned & future perspective** organized by Lithuania and Singapore. Small States are committed to sharing experience in achieving meaningful connectivity targets and contributing to SDGs. Small States have many opportunities, which could serve as key drivers to success of digital transformation for all. WSIS process serves as a valuable time-tested platform of global digital cooperation for small states in many aspects – from practice sharing to finding solutions and partners, from promoting innovations to the rise of new digital transformations. The ITU and GDC should safeguard this direction and ensure Small States are heard and have their role to play in the future.
- **Trust in Tech: Navigating Emerging Technologies and Human Rights in a Connected World** highlighted the increasing emphasis on embedding human rights into technical standards development. Organized by ITU, OHCHR, ISO, and APC, the event addressed the significant challenge of ensuring inclusivity and equitable participation in standards development, particularly for stakeholders from developing countries.
- WSIS Knowledge café: **WSIS+20 Visioning Challenge - WSIS towards the Summit of the Future/GDC and beyond** was a highly anticipated session, with over 80 participants discussing

the achievements and future of WSIS against the backdrop of UN digital development discussions, the GDC, and the Summit of the Future 2024. Participants commended the WSIS Action Lines for being ahead of their time but recognized the need for evolution. Discussions highlighted that the WSIS Process has remained a cornerstone for global digital cooperation and governance. Looking ahead, participants emphasized the need for continued engagement, adaptation to emerging technologies, and a commitment to multi-stakeholder approaches to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of these platforms in the future.

- The **Leaders TalkX sessions**, a newly branded High-Level Policy Sessions, covered 14 crucial topics, including forging partnerships for digital development, empowering global access, bridging the skills gap, securing the digital realm, and shaping a future-fit digital world. High-level speakers, including ministers, regulators, deputies, heads of organizations, and CEOs, engaged in these discussions.
- **Strengthening the Measurement of ICT for Sustainable Development: 20 Years of Progress and New Frontiers.** Over the past two decades, progress in measuring ICT for sustainable development has been notable, but challenges persist. Data gaps, especially in developing countries, impede effective ICT intervention and monitoring. Advancing the sustainable development agenda requires new measurement areas, including digital inclusivity, ICT use by workforce, and health preparedness. National stakeholders' commitment is crucial for collecting and disseminating ICT indicators. The Partnership should continue its efforts in assisting countries enhance data availability and in improving data collection. Recognizing collaboration achievements and core ICT indicators refinement, innovative methods and partnerships can address data gaps. Donor funding is essential for capacity building and data collection in national statistics offices.
- The [Academic roundtable](#), organised by ITU gathered over 20 tech and policy academic experts to strengthen our collaboration on emerging trends. Scientific evidence is crucial for guiding policy making. Key takeaways: inclusivity, multidisciplinary approaches, and agility.

Statements

- [Key messages from the Association for Progressive Communications \(APC\)](#)
- [Civil Society Statement from the Global Digital Justice Forum](#)
- [Global Partners Digital Input](#)

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event Sponsors

The success of the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event was made possible through the commitment and generous support of various partners:

- Platinum Partner: United Arab Emirates
- Gold Plus Partner: Saudi Arabia
- Gold Partner: Digital Cooperation Organization
- Partners for Specific Activities: Japan, Huawei, IEEE
- Contributing Partners: Rwanda, Switzerland, United Kingdom, EY, ICANN, Internet Society, WHO

- Supporting Partners: Wallonia-Brussels in Geneva, Permanent Mission of Belgium to the UN, Global Coalition on Aging, IFIP

Future Engagement

- WSIS side event at HLPF 2024
- WSIS side event at IGF 2024
- All stakeholders are invited to actively participate in the WSIS Forum 2025, scheduled to take place in 9-13 June 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Session Outcomes

The session outcomes submitted by the session organisers are available at:
<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/SessionOutcomes>

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024- Ministerial Round Table summary

The Ministers provided an overview of the progress and challenges in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and emphasized that WSIS has been pivotal in uniting governments and stakeholders in the ICT domain since its creation. However, there are significant challenges ahead to connect the remaining 2.6 billion people worldwide who are unconnected.

The Ministers acknowledged the potential of technology for both positive and negative uses, prompting a call for greater responsibility and accountability from platform providers in combatting online threats. To address the evolving issues that accompany technological advancements, there is a need to strengthen digital cooperation between governments and with the private sector.

The Ministers recognized the importance of WSIS being able to adapt and integrate new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), ensuring its continued relevance in global digital governance.

Key themes from the Ministers' interventions include:

1. **Connectivity and Infrastructure Development:** The development of ICT infrastructure, such as broadband and fiber optics, is crucial for improving connectivity, especially in underserved areas.
2. **Inclusivity and Bridging the Digital Divide:** Ensuring that the benefits of ICT reach all populations, including vulnerable and rural communities, is vital for democratizing access to technology.
3. **Digital Literacy and Capacity Building:** Training and capacity-building initiatives in digital skills are essential to equip individuals and communities to use ICT effectively.
4. **Cross-border Data Flow and Cybersecurity:** Cybersecurity strategies, concerns about cross-border data flow and the role of big companies in data asymmetry are significant points of discussion for advancing the role of digital in development.
5. **E-Government and Digital Services:** Progress in e-government platforms and digital public services aims to improve government efficiency and citizen access to services.
6. **Financial Inclusion and E-Payment Systems:** Leveraging ICT for financial inclusion involves the development of e-payment and e-banking systems, particularly for remote areas.
7. **Response to COVID-19:** The pandemic has accelerated digital technology adoption and underscored the need for robust ICT infrastructure.
8. **Regulatory Frameworks and Policy Development:** Regulatory frameworks are key to managing ICT development, including data protection and AI ethics.
9. **Collaboration and Global Partnerships:** International collaboration, as facilitated by WSIS, is crucial for overcoming challenges and achieving ICT goals.
10. **Technological Innovation and Emerging Technologies:** Innovation and the adoption of emerging technologies are seen as essential for economic growth and development.

The Ministers concluded as follows:

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- The WSIS Principles and Action Lines continue to serve as a time-tested reference for global digital discussions.
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support our shared vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information and knowledge societies that fully respect and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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Leaders TalkX Outcomes and Executive Brief

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: Summaries of Leaders TalkX

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WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: Summaries of Leaders TalkX

Introduction

At the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024, moderated Leaders TalkX took place on the 27th and 28th of May. These 14 sessions, moderated by High-Level Track facilitators nominated and identified by WSIS stakeholders, gathered High-ranking officials of the WSIS Stakeholder community, representing the Government, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia and International Organizations.

A list of High-Level Participants is available: <https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/HighLevel>

A compilation of All High-Level Statements will be available in a comprehensive document shortly.

Leaders TalkX 1 Forging Partnerships: Shaping the “Digital for Development” Landscape

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Karen McCabe, Senior Director, Public Affairs & Marketing, IEEE

UN Representative:

Mr. Mario Maniewicz, Director, Radiocommunication Bureau, ITU

1.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Ms. Marsha Caddle**, Minister, Ministry of Industry, Innovation, Science & Technology, BARBADOS,
- **H.E. Mr. Mohamed Adam Moalim**, Minister, Ministry of Communications and Technology, SOMALIA
- **H.E. Mr. Mousa Abu Zaid**, Chairman, General Personnel Council, STATE OF PALESTINE
- **Mr. Trairat Viriyasirikul**, Deputy Secretary General Acting Secretary General, Office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, THAILAND
- **Ms. Deemah AlYahya**, Secretary General, Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO)
- **Ms. Carol Roach**, Chair of the UN IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group, Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

1.2. Introduction

This Leaders TalkX session underscored the pivotal role of governments and stakeholders in driving ICTs for development. It emphasized the need for cooperation; the impact of effective participation of all entities; and provided examples of local and national strategies and actions.

1.3. Key Observation

- The recognition of the significant role of digital technology in development, notably in a rapidly changing world, as it provides opportunities for helping to improve socio-economic challenges; and how technology serves as means to uplift communities, drive innovation, and promote sustainable development.
- This journey toward digital development for good requires collective action and partnerships at both national and international levels.
- ICTs are more than connectivity or information access. They are not only about network coverage or service quality but seen as through the lens of a regulation or a strategy, they can help promote sustainability and their use for development to ensure that people can fully benefit from ICTs.
- More work needs to be done as in 2024, despite rapid advancement in the digital world, 2.6 billion people—approximately one-third of the global population—still are unconnected to the internet.
- There are rising challenges and opportunities with the introduction of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence.
- Green ICT is important as ICTs can help with climate and sustainability monitoring.

1.4. Example of Actions

- In Somalia, the Digital Inclusion Policy, aligned with the country's 2019-2024 National ICT Policy and Strategy, which encompasses working with local groups to improve healthcare, education,

and financial access through technology and building 4600 kilometers of infrastructure to provide affordable internet, especially in rural areas.

- In Thailand, the Thailand 5G Smart Ports project aims to study the potential of smart port development by using 5G and green technologies, while preparing employees for digital transformation. In this project, three main semi-automated ports in Thailand are expected to transform into Green Automation ports by using 5G and green technologies for their port logistics.
- DCO's groundbreaking digital marketplace promotes multilateral partnership and cooperation within the DCO ecosystem, which facilitates knowledge exchange among DCO Member States, cultivating digital ecosystems, and enhancing capabilities for effective government transformation. The platform promotes the adoption of digital solutions to improve government operation and service delivery, foster economic growth, innovation, investment attraction, and job creation.
- The UN Internet Governance Forum Multi Stakeholder Group (MAG), progression and growth where it convenes over 9000 participants from around the world to address digital policy issues and provide action-based insights for addressing the complex challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age.

Leaders TalkX 2 The Connectivity Imperative: Laying the Foundation for Inclusive Information Access

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Prof. François Grey, Associate Professor & Dean of Studies, Geneva School of Economics and Management, University of Geneva

UN representative:

Ms. Nur Sulyna Abdullah, Chief, Strategic Planning and Membership, and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General, ITU

2.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Dr. Aminata Zerbo Sabane**, Minister, Ministry of Digital Transition, Posts and Electronic Communications, BURKINA FASO
- **H.E. Dr. Mohammad Khansari**, Deputy Minister of Communications, Ministry of Information and Communications Technology, IRAN
- **H.E. Dr. Agnė Vaiciukevičiūtė**, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Transport and Communications, LITHUANIA
- **Mr. Garegin Baghramyan**, Chairman, Public Services Regulatory Commission, ARMENIA
- **Ms. Lina María Duque Del Vecchio**, Executive Director, Comisión de Regulación de Comunicaciones, COLOMBIA
- **Ms. Aline Minko Mi Etoua**, Secretary General, Ministry of Digital Economy and New Information Technologies, GABON
- **Ms. Rose Jackson**, Director, Tech and Democracy Initiative, Atlantic Council

2.2. Introduction

Leaders TalkX 3 Gateway to Knowledge: Empowering Global Access Through Digital

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Lori Schulman, Senior Director, Internet Policy, INTA

WSIS Action Line Facilitator:

Dr. Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, UNESCO

3.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Ms. Mayra Arevich Marín**, Minister, Ministry of Communications, CUBA
- **H.E. Dr. Hayam Al-yasiri**, Minister, Minister, Ministry of Communications, IRAQ
- **Mr. Ir Haji Jailani bin Haji Buntar**, Chief Executive, Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM
- **Ms. Cinthya Arias Leitón**, President of the Board, Superintendencia de Telecomunicaciones (SUTEL), COSTA RICA
- **Ms. Nele Leosk**, Ambassador-at-Large for Digital Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ESTONIA
- **Mr. AHM Bazlur Rahman**, Chief Executive Officer, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)

3.2. Introduction

This session highlighted that access to information is not only about connectivity but the integrity and reliability of the information we receive online. The United Nations Representative set the context for the session by describing the current state of inequality in access and usage of the internet. The divides are particularly noticeable among men and women and urban and rural users. Women outnumber mail non-users by 17%. And urban users greatly outnumber rural users. 81% of Urban users have access to the internet. Rural users do not.

3.3. Challenges

The issues of access are not limited to technical access. There are issues of language barriers and the quality of information that is found online. There are 10 Languages used on the Internet although globally there are over 7,000 languages. This is of particular concern given that the UN General Assembly has declared 2022-2032 the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. Further, the issue of misinformation is a key component of ensuring reliable access to knowledge.

3.4. Country Examples

Cuba responded by affirming that ICTs are the catalyst for social and political equality. Safe Access must be a priority of Government. There is increasing access to the Internet for personal and professional development. Cuba has made significant headway despite the limitations and challenges created by the Blockade. Cuba seeks to ensure accessibility to all in the digital space on a non-discriminatory basis. It has established a centre for intermediation for persons with disabilities so that all persons can be at the center of the country's digital transformation. Cuba seeks to create a more egalitarian society online.

Iraq's efforts have yielded a high number of Wi-fi users through the implementation of fiber optic chains, employing submarine cables and investing in connectivity infrastructure for others through Iraq. As a result, 3.5 million homes have fiber optics. Iraq is implementing licenses for 4G and 5G. They are promoting home use of 4G and other connectivity measures. Iraq has also implemented an electronic national identity program tied to electronic visas. All ministries have implemented and support a government network that allows internet access and affords free internet access to certain schools through public-private sector partnerships. 6000 official departments are now networked. Iraq has requested that the ITU focus on content on the internet as well as infrastructure. The issue of social media and respecting local society ethics is a big challenge for Iraq.

The Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry (AITI) **Brunei-Darussalam** noted that reliability of data continues to build trust and confidence in the digital world. Therefore, Brunei Darussalam is adopting Data Protection Directive for the use and processing of data by private sector and transfer across borders. Brunei-Darussalam continues its awareness and capacity building programs in this space. Cybersecurity Brunei has been established to address cybercrimes. Brunei-Darussalam has committed to align with the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) 700 MHz band plan.

Access to information is one of main prerequisites to building a digital state and **Estonia** has been working on access to information laws for last 25 years. Estonia adopted legislation for government institutions to have websites and provide basic information. This legislation includes institutions like schools as well as government authorities. The challenge now is how should the Government manage personal data. There is also increasing reliance on AI in the provision of Government Services. Estonia is currently working on governmental chatbots and information services. This includes increasing public awareness of these services. Estonia is also providing global contributions in raising awareness as well.

Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) has been continuously engaged in the WSIS action lines since 2006. Action lines C1 – C11 have contributed to digital infrastructure and inclusivity. Global dynamics and global corporations create roadblocks to cultural consumerism, unsustainable and isolated interests. Civil rights in digital world being eroded by disinformation, misinformation, fake news and hate speech. Ownership concentrated and access limited to those who can pay for services. Important to promote diversity and cultures, licensing of copyrighted material, open-source software and content and a public digital infrastructure.

Costa Rica is focused on 5G implementation in rural areas. There is a first draft of a public enquiry document includes obligations to the winning bidder to focus on development of infrastructure in 134 high priority districts that currently have little to no connectivity. Information is a tool. Greater emphasis is being placed on Information Companies. Costa Rica is part of the Freedom Online Coalition of Governments (FOC). The FOC seeks to ensure that the challenges and opportunities relating to Internet freedom and digital technologies are on the policy agenda to drive concrete policy changes and outcomes, shape global norms to promote a rules-based, democratic, and inclusive world where human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld in online and digital contexts.

3.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the issues of physical infrastructure, equal access, quality of data, quality of content, language and social barriers are challenges that governments, the private sector, and NGOs encounter as technology accelerates. While we have a long way to go, the panel's interventions demonstrates that we have come a long way in providing gateways to knowledge at the local and global levels. The message is positive is despite the continuing challenges.

Leaders TalkX 4 Bridging the Skills Gap: Building Capacity for the Digital Age

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Dr. Konstantinos Komaitis, Resident Senior Fellow, Global and Democratic Governance, DFRLab, The Atlantic Council

UN Representative:

Ms. Susan Teltscher, Head of the Capacity and Digital Skills Development Division, ITU

4.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Ms. Léocadie Ndacayisaba**, Minister, Ministère de la Communication, des Technologies de l'Information et des Médias, BURUNDI
- **H.E. Dr. Makara Khov**, Secretary of State, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, CAMBODIA
- **Ms. Jūratė Šovienė**, Chair, Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania, LITHUANIA
- **Dr. Aminu Maida**, Executive Vice Chairman, Nigerian Communications Commission, NIGERIA
- **Dr. Gift Kallisto Machengete**, Director General, Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe, ZIMBABWE
- **Ms. Isabelle Mauro**, Director General, Global Satellite Operators Association (GSOA)

4.2. Summary

There is imperative to ensure universal access to ICT skills and literacy for all individuals. We should emphasize the need for domestic policies integrating ICTs into education and lifelong learning, eradicating illiteracy through ICT programs, and promoting e-literacy skills. Additionally, it is important to highlight initiatives to empower disadvantaged groups, address gender disparities in ICT education, and enhance local communities' capacity in ICT use. The discussion about ensuring that people are digitally literate also underscores the importance of regional and international cooperation in capacity-building efforts and the role of volunteering in promoting ICT skills development.

Ensuring that every citizen has the required digital skills to actively and equitably participate in the digital economy is critical for the advancement of societies. There is an urgency in creating such capacity in order to bridge the existing divides. To do so, the infrastructure supporting communication technologies should be robust and resilient as well as affordable.

As the world looks towards 2030, it is imperative to accelerate programs and policies that provide the necessary initiatives for citizens to actively participate in digital skill development.

For the past twenty years, the WSIS Action Lines have been a compass towards achieving the ambitious goals that were set in 2003. The fact that we are now able to address the divides related to digital skills is because of the vision and commitment of WSIS. As we move forward with the Summit for the Future, as well as next year's WSIS+20 Review, it is important to remember the role that WSIS has played.

The renewed discussion about technology and development is creating a challenge on how to make sure that WSIS remains relevant. It also presents us with an opportunity to demonstrate not only its relevance but also its agility in adapting to the new digital realities.

Two priorities were identified:

- Cross-government and cross-stakeholder collaboration: bridging the divide on digital skills is not the job of one entity – it is a collective responsibility.
- Policy measures: governments should be enacting policy measures that seek to incentivise and create the conditions for people to want to participate. Education should start early on.

The renewed interest in the way technology facilitates development has presented both opportunities and challenges. Challenges include issues of infrastructure and, in particular, how robust the infrastructure supporting communication should be. Another challenge has to do with aligning under a coherent policy the various objectives to address issues of divide.

Both these challenges however present opportunities. The main thing is for policy makers to ensure they enact policies that provide the necessary incentives and are based on collaboration. They also need to view issues of divide more holistically and address such issues like infrastructure security.

- Links to WSIS Action Lines and Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Related Action Lines:

- C3: Access to information knowledge
- C4: Capacity building
- C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- C6: Enabling environment
- C7 ICT Applications
- C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- C10: Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Related Action Lines:

- C2: Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for the information society
- C3: Access to information knowledge
- C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- C6: Enabling environment
- C7 ICT Applications
- C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- C10: Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.

Related Action Lines:

- C2: Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for the information society
 - C3: Access to information knowledge
 - C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
 - C6: Enabling environment
 - C7 ICT Applications
 - C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
 - C9: Media
 - C10: Ethical dimensions of the Information Society
-
- Case Examples

ITU/UNESCO: Giga Project

Lithuania: No One is Left Behind

Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC): Critical National Infrastructure Project

Cambodia: Digital Skill Development Roadmap 2024-2035

Leaders TalkX 5 Securing the Digital Realm: Collaborative Strategies for Trust and Resilience

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Moira Whelan, Director, Democracy and Technology, National Democratic Institute

WSIS Action Line Facilitator:

Mr. Preetam Maloor, Head, Emerging Technologies Division, ITU

5.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Ms. Léocadie Ndacayisaba**, Minister, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, NAMIBIA
- **H.E. Mr. Marash Dukaj**, Minister, Ministry of Public Administration, MONTENEGRO
- **Mr. Dick Christophe Ng Sui Wa**, Chairman, Information and Communication Technologies Authority, MAURITIUS
- **Dr. Jacek Oko**, President, Office of Electronic Communications, POLAND
- **Mr. Dan Sjoblom**, Director General, Swedish Post and Telecom Authority, SWEDEN
- **Mr. Andrew Sullivan**, President and CEO, Internet Society

5.2. Key Issues Discussed

The cost of cybercrime has skyrocketed, and a cyber attack happens every 30 seconds around the globe. New threats such as AI driven cyberthreats, scrambling to be ready for a post-quantum world as well as the physical security of subsea cables and satellite systems are rising.

The ITU Global Cybersecurity Index in 2017 stated that 128 countries lacked cybersecurity standards and 110 countries didn't have a cybersecurity strategy. This number reduced to 88 and 67, respectively in just 5 years.

Given the borderless nature of cyber security-related incidents, international cooperation is increasingly vital in cultivating trust and internet regulators play a critical role in setting the tone for collaboration within governments to ensure confidence and security with the private sector and the public.

Sharing information among countries and regulators creates working procedures for resilience and lessons learned, which are essential for the success of trade and the prosecution of cybercrimes.

Cybersecurity collaboration at a high level brings information between different stakeholders, such as organizations, government agencies, industry associations, and security professionals. By pooling knowledge and resources, we can increase cybersecurity readiness and improve security measures.

5.3. Emerging Trends, Challenges, Achievements, and Opportunities

Trust in the system is the most essential element of cybersecurity. Citizens must trust that the system not only works, but that their data is safe. COVID is an example of how much faith was lost in governments not simply from a health perspective, but also when it came to digital rights. The common element of enabling this resilience across governments are multistakeholder and collaborative frameworks.

Artificial intelligence is becoming a key factor in the transformation of the entire global society and plays a key role in improving IT security through analysis of large amounts of data to detect and prevent security threats. Challenges such as an insufficient number of experts and finances are an obstacle for small countries. Enabling the interoperability of the global system is key to allowing small countries to share resources.

5.4. Success Stories

Mutually Agreed Norms for Routing Security (MANRS) demonstrates what can be achieved with collaboration. MANRS is a global, community-driven initiative to improve the security and resilience of the Internet's global routing system that uses the Border Gateway Protocol (BGP). MANRS was created in 2014 by a small group of network operators who recognized the need to join forces to improve the system and has grown to a community of more than 1,000 participants. The MANRS community comprises network operators, Internet exchange points (IXPs), content delivery networks (CDNs), cloud providers, and equipment vendors who have committed to taking MANRS actions and reducing common routing threats.

The 5G Tactics programme focuses on the issue of cybersecurity and trust in 5G networks among several countries. The programme aims to foster cooperation between national authorities to include Montenegro and private service and equipment providers, in particular innovative European SMEs, network operators and specialized technology providers based on Open RAN

The Swedish government took steps to address Spoofing through advising telecommunications companies to block Swedish phone numbers from abroad to prevent fraud. This has resulted in a significant number of phone numbers used in fraud to be blocked.

5.5. Tangible Outcomes

ACHIEVEMENT: Despite the arrival of more than a million new people from Ukraine into Poland in less than 10 days, mobile operators, with the regulator's assistance, were able to ensure the smooth operation of services to a whole host of new customers by rapidly expanding network capacity. When people needed it most, reliable, safe and trustworthy connectivity enabled survivors—across borders—to respond and act in a crisis.

ACHIEVEMENT: The WSIS system enables regulators to stay on the cutting edge of technology. In Mauritius, the ICT regulator developed a blockchain-based license verification system as the risk of forged, fake or invalid ICTA licenses in circulation which are being used fraudulently is a reality. The Mauritian ICT regulator launched this new verification service so as to give added assurance to the different stakeholders and the public using licenses issued by the regulator. This verification system makes use of smart contracts on the Ethereum blockchain to store cryptographic proof of the ICTA licenses.

5.6. Actionable Plan and Key Recommendations

Education of citizens is a key need. Most individuals don't know how to protect themselves online and more work must be done to empower people to protect themselves. Internet regulators must be at the center of this and address it in a multistakeholder way. Sweden hosts Digital Today to inspire an increase in digital skills. It currently has 375 partners and goal for this year is 1 million partners working

together to enable digital skills of citizens in all municipalities. Greater funding is needed throughout the world to address this issue.

SMS can be altered easily and is being used to mislead users to believe it is sent by an authority such as a government or a bank and regulators must. It is a key indicator or a space where regulators can't operate without the cooperation of other entities, but is a tangible and persistent problem that must be addressed to allow people to trust the technology and the system.

5.7. Suggestions for Thematic Aspects - might be Included in the WSIS Forum 2025

Although at its origin, the WSIS system did not conceive of many of the challenges identified, the open and collaborative process has allowed countries to quickly scale best practices to address emerging technologies in an inclusive, multi stakeholder fashion that is central to resilience and security. A greater priority should be placed on the role of regulators in this process and their responsibility to help grow the system, especially fostering Small and Medium providers access to tools and best practices and the essential nature of multistakeholder models increasing the security and resilience of countries' digital infrastructure should be elevated.

The topic of cable cuts—and the number of challenges seen in 2024— should be addressed in WSIS Forum 2025 as it illuminates the need to prioritize resilience and trust through the internet system itself. The ultimate objective is to get data to its final destination. The Internet works best --it is most robust-- when its many different, independent operators have many ways to achieve their goal through manifold connections. That makes the Internet more trustworthy in that its users can rely on it to be available all the time.

Leaders TalkX 6 When Policy Meets Progress: Shaping a Fit for Future Digital World

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Timea Suto, Global Policy Lead, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

WSIS Action Line Facilitator:

Ms. Sophie Maddens, Head, Regulatory Market and Environment Division, ITU

6.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Mr. Karim Bibi Triki**, Minister, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, ALGERIA
- **Mr. Philip Marnick**, General Director, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, BAHRAIN
- **Ms. Ekaterine Imedadze**, Commissioner, Georgian National Communications Commission and Outgoing Chairperson, EaPeReg EU Eastern Partnership, GEORGIA
- **Mr. Javier Juárez Mojica**, Acting Chairman, Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT), MEXICO
- **Mr. Steve Lang**, Deputy Assistant Secretary, United States Department of State, UNITED STATES
- **Ms. Bernadette Lewis**, Secretary General, Commonwealth Telecommunication Organization (CTO)

6.2. Introduction

The Leaders Talk entitled When Policy Meets Progress: Shaping a Fit for Future Digital World took place on Tuesday, 28 May 2024 and discussed the crucial importance of creating enabling policy environments to foster innovation, bridge digital divides, and enhance socio-economic development.

The session kicked off with an overview of the topic delivered by ITU, highlighting the need to create synergies between all stakeholders, remain agile and flexible, and streamline regulations to be able to create fit-for-purpose policy frameworks that help respond to the ever-changing world of digital technologies and fully reap the opportunities they offer and address any potential challenges this rapid transformation may bring. Panellists then discussed how their countries and organizations approach the topic, what are some of the best practices and lessons learned for the broader WSIS community to build on, and what the road ahead looks like.

6.3. Vision

The session underscored the need for greater collaboration and multistakeholder dialogue. Participants emphasized the importance of a shared vision, common objectives and joint action across government agencies, the entire digital ecosystem and all impacted stakeholders to devise effective solutions and improve cooperation so that all can share in the benefits of the information society.

6.4. WSIS+20: 20 Years of Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

Participants noted the WSIS+20 Forum as a significant milestone, offering the opportunity to renew commitments in line with the efforts and initiatives undertaken by the international community to

advance the information society, and celebrate two decades of progress and achievement of the objectives set in the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda.

6.5. Towards the Summit of the Future / GDC and Beyond

The discussion highlighted the importance of reflecting on and taking stock of past achievements to inform future progress. They noted how WSIS, particularly the Geneva Plan of Action, provides an ambitious roadmap to leverage ICTs for sustainable development and social inclusion, highlighting the importance of international and multistakeholder collaboration and innovation. They noted the need to build on this roadmap in upcoming discussions at the Summit of the Future.

6.6. Fresh Priorities

Participants stressed the importance of policies and regulations keeping pace with rapidly evolving technologies. This requires a nimble policy-making and regulatory process, embracing regulatory sandboxes, and fostering a culture of innovation that allows for testing and learning from both successes and failures. They also highlighted the need for awareness-raising, information sharing, and capacity-building initiatives to build trust among users, businesses, and governments.

6.7. Emerging Trends

In sharing their own projects, initiatives and lessons learned, participants noted the need for:

- Holistic view of the digital ecosystem:

Policies should foster investment, competition, and innovation in the development and deployment of broadband services and connectivity devices, with the aim of expanding affordable access. At the same time policies should facilitate investment in and enable the development of content and services that helps drive and sustain adoption, including through expanded e-government services. Governments should also invest directly in digital literacy and skills development.

- Political will:

Strong, and forward-looking commitments are necessary only to set strategies and visions, but to effectively implement them and ensure long-term planning;

- Agility:

Given the large variety of barriers to connectivity to be addressed, as well as the speed at which new services, players and business models appear, it is vital that regulatory regimes are flexible, forward-looking, adjust to rapidly evolving markets and encourage innovation. Regulators should focus on critical societal objectives and introduce flexible, light-touch approaches to achieve them, being cautious not to regulate prescriptively at too granular a level, which may limit the flexibility needed to consider or capitalise on innovative potential.

- Evidence-based policymaking:

Policymaking and regulation should be evidence-based, transparent, inclusive of all stakeholders.

- International cooperation:

The interconnectedness of today's world demands robust international collaboration to tackle digital challenges and opportunities that transcend borders. Participants emphasized that global cooperation is essential to address issues such as fostering trust and security, ensure cross-border data flows, and the interoperability of policy approaches and regulatory frameworks. Collaborative efforts can also facilitate the sharing of best practices and coordinated responses to global digital divides.

- Multistakeholder approach:

A diverse and inclusive approach involving all stakeholders is crucial for effective digital policy-making. Participants highlighted that incorporating multiple perspectives leads to more comprehensive and resilient policy frameworks that are better equipped to address the complex and multifaceted nature of digital transformation.

- Capacity building:

Participants underscored the need for continuous capacity-building initiatives that focus on digital literacy, technical skills, and regulatory expertise. This includes providing training and education programs to enhance the digital skills of the workforce, empowering individuals to use digital tools effectively, and equipping policymakers with the knowledge to craft informed and forward-looking regulations.

6.8. Opportunities

Participants in the session highlighted how access to ICTs and digital technologies and bridging the digital divides is not the goal in itself, but a means to unlocking broader development goals. Meaningful connectivity opens opportunities for economic and social growth such as financial inclusion, broad access to education and healthcare and improved avenues for public services to reach all citizens and enhanced entrepreneurship and growth opportunities for small businesses

6.9. Challenges

Participants identified several key challenges to creating an enabling policy environment for ICTs and digitalization. These include bridging the digital divide, particularly in developing countries and rural and hard-to-reach areas, and building trust in digital technologies. Policy and regulatory frameworks often lag behind rapid technological innovation, necessitating agile and adaptable regulations. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts and international collaboration to maximize the benefits of digital technologies.

6.10. Links to WSIS Action Lines and Sustainable Development Goals

This session explored WSIS Action Line 6, and was also strongly linked with WSIS Action lines 2, 3 and 5 as well as all 17 SDGs.

Leaders TalkX 7 ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital - Part I

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Mr. Shaharyar Jawaid, Senior ICT Specialist, Islamic Development Bank

WSIS Action Line Facilitator:

Ms. Sally Radwan, Chief Digital Officer, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

7.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Mr. Zunaid Ahmed Palak**, Minister, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology, BANGLADESH
- **Mr. Hassan Al-Sayed**, Minister's Advisor, Chairman of the AI Committee, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, QATAR
- **Eng. Bassam Salem Hussein**, Head of Commissioners, Communications and Media Commission, IRAQ
- **Mr. Mahmut Esat Yıldırım**, Head of Information Technologies Authority Department, TURKIYE
- **Prof. Anna Matamala**, Director of AccessCat Network, Professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

7.2. Vision / Priorities

The session highlighted fresh priorities of Government of Bangladesh evolving from Digital Bangladesh in 2009 to aspiring to become Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041, where Bangladesh plans to establish good governance, maintain accountability and transparency, promote innovation, and reduce inefficiency. The goal is to build a prosperous and happy Bangladesh, where technology serves as a catalyst for sustainable development and social progress.

7.3. Emerging Trends:

The Digital Agenda 2030 of Qatar outlines a comprehensive roadmap for Qatar's digital future, focusing on six key pillars: digital infrastructure, digital government, digital economy, digital technology, digital society, and a robust database system. These pillars will accelerate technology adoption, foster digital economic growth, enhance innovation, and deliver excellent government services, all while empowering our society to thrive in an increasingly digital world. Qatar is aspiring to become a global technology hub leveraging the latest advancements such as 5G networks, artificial intelligence, digital twinning, cloud computing, and big data.

7.4. Opportunities / Key Challenges

Opportunities:

Republic of Iraq's efforts call for cooperation between the public industrial sector and the private sector in the field of technology to use artificial intelligence as a means. The government facilitates these partnerships through a wide range of joint research between key institutions and provides support and technical support to projects involved in the development of artificial technology. Moreover, the government is adopting technology transfer programs and converting academic

subscriptions into marketable commercial services. This is done by providing financial and technical support to emerging companies and small pioneering projects that enable them to use artificial technology in their products and services.

Key Challenges:

ICT applications can provide benefits in many aspects of our lives: public administration, health, education, transport, culture, among others. However, there is one key aspect that needs to be considered to guarantee we all benefit from ICT applications: accessibility. Access to information and communication, which is directly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals, should be a driving force in digitalization. The needs of diverse users in terms of languages, cultures and formats should be considered. Some users communicate with spoken words, some with sign language, others with written text. However, access is still limited for persons with disabilities, language barriers or low digital literacy. In this context Academia initiatives like AccessCat play a key role. Academia can contribute through education, research and knowledge transfer to build --quoting the first lines of the WSIS Declaration of Principles-- a “people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society”.

7.5. Case examples

Türkiye's National Mobile Alert System is an important part of the country's disaster management strategy, providing critical information to the public during emergencies. The system covers urban, rural, and remote areas nationwide and offers multilingual alerts to address various population groups. Authorized users send geo-targeted alerts to mobile devices over mobile operator infrastructure using methods such as the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS), SMS, Cell Broadcasting (CBS), and Pre-Call Announcement. Real-time alert distribution provides immediate warnings in emergencies and continuous updates as situations evolve. The system integrates data from government agencies and real-time sources to ensure accuracy and relevance. Users can set the types of alerts they want to receive and their priority level, making notifications more meaningful and personally relevant. Geo-targeting ensures that users receive the most relevant information based on their location, enabling a more effective response to emergencies.

Leaders TalkX 8 Click to Govern: Inclusive and Efficient E-services

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Mei Lin Fung, Co-Chair, People-Centered Internet

WSIS Action Lines Facilitator:

Mr. Robert Opp, Chief Digital Officer, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

8.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Mr. Ivan John Uy**, Secretary Department of Information and Communications Technology, PHILIPPINES
- **H.E. Dr. Emilija Stojmenova Duh**, Minister, Ministry of Digital Transformation, SLOVENIA
- **Ms. Mary Mungai, CBS**, Chairperson of The Board of Directors, Communications Authority, KENYA
- **Mr. Mustafa Yasin Sheikh**, Director General, National Communications Authority, SOMALIA
- **Ms. Fatou Binetou Ndiaye**, Secretary General, Ministry of Communication, Telecommunications and Digital Economy, SENEGAL

8.2. Summaries

Challenges for governments are high in providing good e-services that responsively meet citizens' needs

- **Constantly improving reliable responsive eServices** ease of access/ease of use
- **Bridging divides** language & digital literacy, age, urban/rural, physical/mental spectrum
- **Serving all inclusively, appropriately and fairly** with Safety, Privacy, Dignity and Respect
- **Earning and keeping the trust** of citizens and their families, communities, businesses
- **Encouraging participation and engagement** with citizens by responsively receiving feedback
- **Finding the finance for building infrastructure for delivering e-Services**

8.3. Highlights in Meeting these Challenges

The **Philippines** is improving quality of life of citizens with “Bayang Digital ang Bagong Pilipinas” —the New Philippines is a Digital Nation – cutting redtape so citizen feedback quickly gets to the person who can act on it

Slovenia stands out for people-centred digital services increasingly responsive to the needs of underserved people like the elderly and differently abled, and proactively improving by sharing and learning with other countries.

Kenyan eServices show citizens they are valued and cared for. Integrating culture by practical public-private partnerships, the government creates awareness of digital opportunities by practically improving citizens' daily lives.

Senegal sets up regulatory sandboxes to participatively design, rapidly test and deploy secure eServices that strives to earn and keeps the trust of citizens by deep attention to local culture, values & responsively acting on feedback.

8.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the increasing maturity of eGovernment in Asia, Africa and Europe is clearly demonstrated in this session devoted to WSIS Action Line 7. The value of the WSIS forum in bringing together countries from around the world to exchange practical stories of how they are addressing solving common challenges is enhanced by the structure of numbered WSIS Action lines – each country can find the specific issue they want to address and look at all the way that countries are solving them. Each year at WSIS the encyclopaedia of practice grows by hundreds of stories creating a practical playbook for digital transformation that speeds up success and reduces the wasted funds and frustration of trial and error. WSIS is a trading post and social network which delivers value all year around.

Leaders TalkX 9 Digital Advancing Sustainable Development: A Trusted Connected World

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Prof. Tim Unwin, Emeritus Professor of Geography and Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in ICT4D Royal Holloway University of London

9.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Mr. Gobind Singh Deo**, Minister, Ministry of Digital, MALAYSIA
- **Dr. Konstantinos Masselos**, President Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission, GREECE
- **Dr. Mercedes Aramendia Falco**, Presidenta de Directorio Unidad Reguladora de Servicios de Comunicaciones (URSEC), URUGAUY
- **Dr. Charles Noir**, Vice-President, Community Investment, Policy & Advocacy, Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA)
- **Ms. Lise Fuhr**, Director General, European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO)

9.2. Vision

Much has been achieved, but much remains to be done if we are to use digital tech sustainably to serve the needs of the world's poorest and most marginalised people and communities. At the heart of our future vision is the need to build trust between all those of good intent working with and through the Internet.

Digital infrastructure and networks of the future will be about the new services these networks will make possible – and as we progress towards offering new, complex, and socioeconomically transforming services, as we integrate these services in our day-to-day activities, the importance of cyber-security will truly shine to its full potential

9.3. WSIS+20: 20 Years of Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

The oral and written presentations crafted for this session focused especially on the success achieved by the countries and organisations represented, with highlighted examples noted below:

- *Achievements*

CIRA provides cybersecurity services to over 500 organizations across Canada and DNS and registry services to organizations globally.

ETNO has championed a multistakeholder approach

Uruguay is a leader in the adoption of renewable energy and is working on decarbonizing transport and industry, developing a green hydrogen economy, and making more efficient use of the electricity system.

The development of telecommunications infrastructures globally has seen extraordinary progress

Important role played by the technical community in advancing sustainable development.

- *Challenges (many of these are also opportunities)*

The continuing need to focus on meaningful connectivity

Cybersecurity is essential to protect networks, systems, and data, and to ensure trust in the use of digital technologies.

It is essential to distinguish between the coverage gap and the usage gap.

We need universal quality connectivity and affordable access to devices.

We need to do more to ensure that all genders can access and use digital tech safely, wisely and securely.

- *Opportunities*

IGF Leadership working on the *Internet We Want* principles (whole and open, universal and inclusive, free-flowing and trustworthy, safe and secure and rights-respecting)

Potential for, global DNS infrastructure in progress towards SDG objectives.

Governments, academics, civil society, the private sector and the technical community—to continue to meaningfully shape the governance of global network

Education and development of digital skills are essential – and offer many opportunities for new technology deployments.

The future of employment requires new skills and retraining.

Regulation has to be adequate, adaptable, and flexible to facilitate and promote digital innovation, empowering people and putting them at the center.

In the European Union the investment needs to achieve the EU Digital Decade Policy Programme connectivity targets of 2030 are optimistically estimated to be larger than 200 Billion euros – many opportunities for investment and deployment.

9.4. Towards the Summit of the Future / GDC and Beyond

The GDC was not a topic discussed explicitly, but there was an underlying current that any new processes should not reinvent the wheel. Existing processes such as WSIS, IGF and NET Mundial seem to be working quite well. The lack of any detailed discussion on the GDC might suggest that its potential benefits remain unclear.

9.5. Fresh priorities

Much has been achieved, but greater (and more novel) emphasis could be placed on

Conceptualising sustainability in terms of environmental, financial and social-economical sustainability

It is crucially important that we move beyond a “carbon” and “climate change” focus to a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the interactions between digital technologies and the physical environment

Policy and regulatory action are required to address investment challenges and achieve digital infrastructure deployment targets

Cybersecurity is becoming ever more important for trust to be maintained and needs to become prioritised by governments, the private sector, civil society organisations and individual citizens.

9.6. Emerging trends

There are many emerging trends, but two seem to be particularly important:

For economic growth, it is important to maximise the opportunities for competition. In principle, the most important driver in a market remains competition as it creates incentives for innovation, investment in infrastructure and better services to consumers.

AI and Quantum Computing provide very serious threats with respect to cybersecurity, but they also provide opportunities to mitigate these potential harms. Building trust is essential for ensuring that everyone can benefit from digital tech.

9.7. Links to WSIS Action Lines and Sustainable Development Goals

The session addressed most WSIS Action Lines and all SDGs (explicitly in one response) especially quality education (SDG 4), economic growth (SDG 8) and climate action (SDG 13).

9.8. Case Examples

Many examples of good practices were shared, but two specific cases are worth noting:

- [Plan Ceibal](#) (Uruguay)
- European Commission White Paper "[How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?](#)" which introduces a number of regulatory proposals to address digital infrastructure deployment, to attract investment and foster innovation including

Leaders TalkX 10 ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital - Part II

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Dana Ramadan, Senior Analyst, Access Partnership

10.1. Panellists

- **India:** Mr. Anil Kumar Lahoti, Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
- **Portugal:** Prof. Sandra Maximiano Chair of the Board of Directors Autoridade Nacional de Comunicações (ANACOM)
- **South Africa:** Mr. Mothibi Ramusi, Chairperson, Independent Communications Authority
- **Germany:** Ms. Noémie Bürkl, Deputy Chief Digital Officer, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
- **eWorldwide Group:** Prof. Salma Abbasi, Chairperson and CEO
- **EY:** Mr. Timothy Grosser, Technology Consultant for International Development for Europe Middle East, India and Africa, EY
- **Huawei Technologies Co, Ltd:** Ms. Wenji (Nora) Cao, Vice President of Global Government Affairs

10.2. Introduction

The panel discussion on "ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital - Part II" brought together experts from diverse backgrounds, sectors (public and private), and geographies to explore the impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The panellists delved into the opportunities, challenges, and emerging trends shaping the digital landscape, offering perspectives on how ICTs can accelerate sustainable development and drive societal transformation.

10.3. Vision

The overarching vision that emerged from the panel centred on harnessing the power of digital technologies to create a more inclusive and sustainable future. The panelists emphasized the need for global and local collaborative efforts among governments, the private sector, and grassroots communities to unlock the full potential of ICTs and digital public goods, fostering innovation and driving progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

WSIS+20: 20 Years of Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

The panel reflected on the achievements, challenges, and opportunities that have shaped the digital landscape over the past two decades, from the perspective of their respective governments and companies.

10.4. Fresh Priorities

One of the priorities emphasized during the panel was the importance of digital public goods (DPGs), such as free and open-source software. DPGs (or digital public infrastructure) can accelerate digital and societal transformation by providing accessible and cost-effective solutions to address challenges. Other priorities include robust regulatory frameworks which are needed to ensure cybersecurity and responsible data handling in traditional industries transformed by ICT.

10.5. Emerging Trends

Several emerging trends are shaping the digital landscape, including the uptake of Internet of Things (IoT) in traditional industries, the increase in e-employment, and talent upskilling. The panel highlighted the transformative impact of these trends, enabling new business models, enhancing efficiency, and driving innovation. With that said, negative trends were also highlighted, such as the rise of disinformation through AI, the digital divide between urban centers and rural areas including skill-gaps, and challenges associated with remote work.

10.6. Opportunities & Key Challenges

The panellists emphasized the need for collaborative efforts and innovative solutions to address these challenges. The panel identified numerous opportunities presented by ICTs, such as access to essential services like healthcare and education, financial inclusion, and empowerment of employees and marginalized communities. While acknowledging the immense potential of ICTs, the panelists also addressed key challenges that must be addressed. These included talent upskilling, data protection and cybersecurity, and the persistent digital divide

- **International Collaboration:** The persistent digital divide and risks posed by tech misuse demand concerted efforts and international cooperation to ensure a socially just, ecological, and inclusive digital future for all. International collaboration is crucial to harness the potential of ICT for global development. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is a key forum for such cooperation.
- **Private Sector Partnerships & Multistakeholder Engagement Framework:** While limitations exist in current models, innovative models of partnership with the private sector demonstrate the collaborative solutions required to drive meaningful change at the grassroots level. A need for a paradigm shift was thus highlighted, with an emphasis on a holistic, bottom-up approach grounded in local realities and inclusive multistakeholder engagement.
- **Challenges from the Industry Perspective:** Talent upskilling, data protection, and cybersecurity were identified as key industry concerns.
- **Digital Public Goods (DPGs) and the SDGs:** DPGs were highlighted as crucial opportunities for maximizing impact towards the SDGs. Benefits of DPGs:
 - Faster time to market for technology solutions.
 - Reduced risk.
 - Increased transparency through use of standardized products.
 - Scalability and reusability.
- **ICT Transforming Traditional Industries:** The Internet of Things (IoT) and robust infrastructure are key opportunities to drive ICT-enabled transformations in traditional industries.

10.7. Links to WSIS Action Lines and Sustainable Development Goals

The panel implicitly highlighted the strong links between ICT applications and the WSIS Action Lines, and explicitly, their contribution to the SDGs. It emphasized how digital technologies can facilitate

progress in areas such as quality education (SDG 4), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9).

10.8. Case Examples

The panel discussion was enriched by various case examples shared by the panellists.

Harnessing ICT for Socio-Economic Growth

- **India:** A thriving ICT sector is a cornerstone of India's growth strategy. Initiatives like Digital India and JAM trinity (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile) promote financial inclusion, digital identity verification, and welfare delivery.
- **Germany:** The "FAIR Forward" initiative in Uganda exemplifies how digital tools can support green energy solutions and economic development, including empowering small business owners.

Telecommunications and the Rise of E-Employment

- **Portugal:** The national communications regulatory authority is taking measures to ensure reliable connectivity, promote competition in the telecom sector, and bridge the digital divide. Telecom infrastructure advancements like high-speed internet, 5G networks, and cloud computing are enabling the growth of e-employment and remote work.

Digital Public Goods

- India's national ID system (nearly 100% penetration)
- DHIS2 health information system (used in 75 countries)

10.9. Conclusion

The Leaders TalkX 10 on ICT Applications Unlocking the Full Potential of Digital Part II explored the power of digital technologies and their potential to drive sustainable development. The panel emphasized the need for collaborative efforts, innovative partnerships, and a holistic approach to address challenges and unlock the full potential of ICTs. By leveraging digital public goods, fostering talent development, and ensuring inclusivity, the panellists envisioned a future where digital technologies create a more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable world for all.

Leaders TalkX 11 Looking Ahead: Emerging tech for building sustainable future

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Dr. Liberato C. Bautista, President, Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO)

WSIS Action Line Facilitator:

Mr. Dino Cataldo Dell'Accio, Chief Information Officer, UNISPF

11.1. Panellist

- **Mr. Niraj Verma**, Additional Secretary Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications, INDIA
- **Dr. Sharon Weinblum**, Delegate General Wallonia-Brussels, Permanent mission of Belgium to the UN in Geneva, WALLONIA-BRUSSELS
- **Mr. Ernst Noorman**, Ambassador at Large for Cyber Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NETHERLANDS
- **Dr. Pol Vandembroucke**, Vice President of Global Government Affairs, Shionogi / GCOA
- **Ms. Maya Plentz**, Executive Director, THE UN BRIEF

11.2. Summary

This Leaders TalkX theme was “Looking Ahead: Emerging Tech for Building Sustainable Futures. The session reaffirmed the WSIS Principles and Lines of Action as main reference points for global digital discussions, especially in developing and using emerging technology to build sustainable futures. The panel was reminded of 2024 and 2025 being pivotal for the governance of the internet, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies. These were evident across the interventions by all six high-level speakers from governments (3), from the United Nations (1), and from civil society (2), who touched upon the session theme’s multiple aspects.

The moderator impressed the panelists and the audience with the fact that the title of the high-level session indicated not just a singular future but of futures—in the plural. He then underscored that none of us have a franchise of the future—not in our imagining and not in our acting. But imagining and acting together on our “futures,” not the least through multistakeholder processes like WSIS, is most desirable to understand better what the future holds about technology, digital futures, and more.

The intersections of ongoing intergovernmental processes were spotlighted, particularly the negotiation of the texts for the Global Digital Compact, the Pact for the Future, and the Summit of the Future, just ahead of 2025’s WSIS+20 review. It was pointed out that these processes leading to digital governance are “increasingly complex and politically charged.” Even as various stakeholders are grappling with the fast-moving emergence of ICTs, lagging is the governance architecture that is crucial in technologies that equally have the potential to undermine the cultural diversity, social fabric, and cohesion of society. (Wallonie-Bruxelles, The UN Brief), Netherlands)

The universality of human rights and their protection and safeguarding—online and offline—were underscored as crucial principles for all digital technologies and internet governance. Aside from human rights, other ethical dimensions of ICTs were addressed variedly by the panelists. The

warning was sounded out that “the ethos of breaking things and moving fast has to be put to rest, as we have seen how it breaks our societies, from the divisiveness of our online public square to the pollution of our ecosystems with online toxic exchanges and dissemination of mis- and disinformation, that spill to the real world.”(Netherlands, Belgium, The UN Brief)

The panelist presentations underscored the transformative power of information and communication technologies, which have profoundly changed and impacted how various sectors of society work and deliver their goals. This includes the governance aspects of already available technologies and emerging ones and their use and application in fields like education, aging, healthcare delivery, health research, gathering news and distributing information, and culture and the arts. Innovations and strategies in artificial intelligence are plentiful, and national and global governance mechanisms must be implemented now rather than later. Even as AI is being developed, incentivized by its potential to transform (improve) economies, and portrayed as a social good, it is desired that these strategies square with principles already enunciated by WSIS, particularly the Tunis principles. The panel was made aware that cultural diversity must be factored into the roles assigned to technology, especially AI and other emerging technologies. An example was given: AI development and use present numerous opportunities for the cultural sector, starting with generative AI tools for artistic creation. Still, significant discoverability issues (the ability of online content to be discovered) of cultural content exist, which influence multilingualism and cultural diversity. (GCOA, India, Netherlands, Wallonie-Bruxelles)

The panelists collectively emphasized a robust public-private partnership, a cornerstone of collective efforts needed in both governance (policy) and implementation. Such partnerships, however, must enhance and uphold the multistakeholder partnerships that ITU has modeled in conducting the business of the WSIS Process. This resonated with the Tunis principles of “effective cooperation among governments, the private sector, civil society, the UN, and other international organizations, each according to their different roles and responsibilities, and leveraging their expertise. (UNJSPF, Netherlands, The UN Brief)

This multistakeholder partnership that WSIS already models is also enhanced by broader geographic collaboration (i.e., interregional), ensuring that strategies to address complex issues related to emerging technologies benefit from a variety of perspectives, ensuring inclusivity which is essential in the development of robust and adaptable policies that can withstand the test of time and technological innovation. But this “variety of perspectives” is under attack by emerging technologies (Generative AI) that undermine public interest in news media organizations and when multilingualism is not promoted in social media applications, including those using AI. The audience was made aware that “the referencing methods on search engines and platforms may already tend to reinforce the visibility of linguistically majority content, therefore in English.” (Netherlands, GCOA, The UN Brief, Wallonia-Bruxelles)

This panel highlighted the urgent need to incentivize innovation in ICTs, underlining their crucial role in shaping sustainable futures. The digital frontier, largely uncharted and expansive open for exploration, if not also abuse and mis- and disinformation, is a minefield for innovation and the emergence of ICTs. (India, GCOA, The UN Brief)

Leaders TalkX 12 Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Jennifer Chung, Director of Corporate Knowledge, DotAsia Organisation

WSIS Action Line Facilitator:

Mr. Sameer Chauhan, United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC)

12.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Mr. Hubert Vargas Picado**, Vice Minister of Telecommunications, Ministry of Science, Technology and Telecommunications, COSTA RICA
- **H.E. Mr. Grigoriy Borisenko**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media, RUSSIAN FEDERATION
- **Dr. Kyoung Yul Bae**, President, Korea Information Society Development Institute (KISDI), KOREA (REP. OF)
- **Ms. Ana Neves**, Head, Internet Governance Office, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia Vice-Chair, Bureau of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

12.2. Summary

This session looked at universally held values and ethical dimensions into the digital and focused on collective responsibility of all stakeholders to foster an Information Society that champions the common good, safeguards privacy, and actively combats abusive and discriminatory behaviors enabled by digital technologies.

The panelists highlighted the importance of awareness and education in the use of digital technologies and discussed the implementation of laws and preventive measures to ensure a respectful, secure digital environment.

12.3. Key Takeaways

- Mr. Sameer Chauhan

UNICC noted that ethical use of ICTs needs to be operating in a secure digital environment under the highest security guarantee, and innovation should be facilitated while keeping cybersecurity front and center in frontier technologies. UNICC has recently launched a cybersecurity fund for the UN family to ensure that all UN systems have a consistent level of cybersecurity measures.

- H.E. Mr. Grigoriy Borisenko

The Russian Federation has a National AI Development Strategy for up until 2030 which establishes general ethical principles and standards of behavior that guide voluntary signatories (360 organizations and counting) in the field of AI. The country uses a concept of hybrid regulation (some issues are resolved by regulations, others by means of “soft” law) and has already approved 13 experimental legal regimes in the field of operation of drone systems and unmanned vehicles, as well as in the field of healthcare.

- Dr. Kyoung Yul Bae

Dr. Bae contrasted the European approach on tight AI regulations on ethical dimensions versus the American non-regulatory approach which favors AI innovations and business. For the Republic of Korea, the country is ready to enact ethical regulations, in a more focused manner on specific segments, e.g. self-driving cars, generative AI, manufacturing parts, small and big entrepreneurs.

- Ms. Ana Neves

The CSTD Vice-chair highlighted that ethics is about responsibility and integrity, and informs responsible solutions for critical challenges in policy, regulations, and designing functional ICT strategies. In addition, public policy has to ensure every stakeholder in the design and development of intelligent and autonomous systems is educated, trained and empowered to prioritize ethical considerations. Empowerment is key for citizens and also for institutions. Common values and principles from UNESCO, EU, OECD, WEF, Council of Europe, IEEE, Netmundial+10 highlight using the multistakeholder approach in digital transformation to maximize digital policy processes for the common good.

- H.E. Mr. Hubert Vargas Picado

Costa Rica shared two pivotal initiatives: The National Cybersecurity Strategy - a comprehensive public policy document that articulates a strategic vision for cybersecurity via an efficient institutional model and fostering the engagement of all stakeholders. The pending National strategy for AI - which will allow Costa Rica to enhance the well-being of its citizens through the prudent application of frontier technology. Costa Rica strives to ensure free access to information, promotes digital literacy and civic participation through online platforms, and full connectivity for indigenous populations before 2030.

Leaders TalkX 13 Partnership Pivot: Innovating International Cooperation to Scale Digital Inclusion

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Helen Harris, Public Policy Manager, Amazon

WSIS Action Line Facilitator:

Dr. Bilel Jamoussi, Deputy-Director Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB) International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

13.1. Panellists

- **H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Yoshida**, Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination (International Affairs), Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, JAPAN
- **Dr. Irina Soeffky**, Director for National, European and International Digital Policy, Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport, GERMANY
- **Eng. Gloria Carvalho**, President of the Foundation Institute of Advanced Studies, Ministry of Popular Power for Science and Technology, VENEZUELA
- **Ms. Tripti Sinha**, Chair of the ICANN Board, Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)
- **Mr. Bocar BA**, Chief Executive Officer, Samena Telecommunications Council

13.2. Key Takeaways

- Digital transformation is a multidisciplinary activity. As such, its implementation requires cooperation and collaboration from various departments (across the UN / within governments).
- Furthermore, digital inclusion is not limited to merely access to digital technology, but also a matter of ensuring that individuals have access to digital spaces in their local languages. This provides access to information, empowers local communities and integrates their insights into global discussions, thereby catalyzing local innovation and development.
- The multi-stakeholder process remains a priority and a key mechanism for international cooperation on digital issues. The importance of WSIS—including IGF—has not changed, and these frameworks should be leveraged for the implementation of the GDC. The IGF, given its multi-stakeholder nature and its adaptability—is the right place to have global, inclusive, human-rights respecting discussions about governance of the Internet and digital technologies. Multistakeholder spaces, such as IGF and ICANN, bring together diverse perspectives and ensure that digital policies benefit from a broad base of expertise and meet the varied needs of global users.
- Industry plays an important role, as it is a key player in the development (and deployment) of technology and services. Consequently, it is necessary to deepen the involvement of industry in promoting international cooperation. But in order to secure industry's active participation, government's need to develop flexible, technology-neutral regulatory frameworks that encourage investment and innovation.

Leaders TalkX 14 Local Voices, Global Echoes: Preserving Human Legacy, Linguistic Identity and Local Content in a Digital World

High-Level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Daniella Esi Darlington, ITU Youth Advisory Board member and Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer at Copianto AI

WSIS Action Line Facilitator:

Dr. Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, UNESCO

14.1. Panellist

- **H.E. Ms. Rose Pola Pricemou**, Minister, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy, GUINEA
- **H.E. Mr. Ousman A. Bah**, Minister, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, GAMBIA
- **Ms. Anne Marie Engtoft Meldgaard**, Tech-Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DENMARK
- **Prof. Alfredo Ronchi**, Secretary General, EC MEDICI framework
- **Prof. NK Goyal**, President, CMAI Association of India
- **Ms. Dana Northcott**, President, International Trademark Association (INTA)

15.1. Fresh Priorities:

- Empowering local content creators to develop content in indigenous languages to preserve cultural diversity and history: H.E. Ms. Rose Pola Pricemou, Minister, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy.
- Digitalizing local archives and cultural content to make them accessible online: (H.E. Mr. Ousman A. Bah, Minister, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy)
- Developing multilingual tools and platforms to facilitate cultural and linguistic diversity
- Integrating local languages into education sector curriculum to promote linguistic identity: (The Gambia)
- Continuing collaboration with partners to develop human capital for local content and digital solutions in local languages: (The Gambia)
- Organizing global conferences on language technologies to address the linguistic divide in the digital age: (Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO))

15.2. Emerging Trends:

The vast majority of the world's languages are missing from the digital world. While there are over 7,000 languages spoken globally, only a handful are currently represented online. UNESCO's Tawfik Jelassi emphasized this gap. To bridge the divide, speakers from Gambia, India and Denmark proposed using technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning to digitize archives, translate content, and develop tools that make local languages more accessible online.

15.3. Opportunities:

Digitizing local content and indigenous manuscripts can help preserve cultural heritage. A key theme that emerged across various speakers was the importance of promoting multilingualism in the digital space. Prof. NK Goyal from India specifically emphasized this point, along with the need for creating digital content in local languages and facilitating access to digital tools and infrastructure for local communities. He also highlighted the importance of collaboration, raising awareness and leveraging communication channels. Ms. Dana Northcott, representing the International Trademark Association, provided an international perspective. She discussed the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, including efforts by ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) to expand the use of non-English characters online. This highlights the need for international cooperation to create a truly inclusive digital space.

15.4. Key Challenges:

- The large linguistic divide that exists digitally, with only a few dozen languages present online while over 7000 languages are used globally. This poses a major challenge to inclusion.
- Homogenization of online content, with most content produced in a few dominant languages, posing a threat to cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Lack of local language content and tools, making internet access difficult for those who don't speak dominant languages.
- Risk of certain indigenous and minority languages becoming endangered or extinct if not preserved digitally.
- Heavy consumption of foreign content in some countries poses challenges to promoting local cultures and languages.
- Gender biases and online harassment amplified by technologies, disproportionately impacting women.
- Potential for "meta life" to blur boundaries with real life and shape public perceptions in harmful ways.
- Ensuring local voices and perspectives are reflected in technology development and policymaking to avoid marginalization.

15.5. Case Example:

- UNESCO initiatives like creating a word atlas of languages, promoting multilingualism, and organizing a global conference on language technologies.
- Guinea developing multilingual tools/platforms, regulating content, digitizing archives, and promoting local creators.
- The Gambia prioritizing digital library, integrating local languages in education, and promoting indigenous digital solutions.
- India's government has built the Bhashini-Translation's ASR software to simultaneously translate content into local languages globally.
- Denmark promoting local perspectives to shape digital futures and ensure diversity online.
- INTAs advocacy for universal acceptance of non-ASCII domain names to enhance accessibility.

- Technological advancements like AI/ML to digitize archives, translate content, and develop local language tools.
- Countries like Gambia and Guinea are taking a proactive approach to bridge the digital divide. They've implemented national policies emphasizing inclusive connectivity, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and local content development. For instance, Gambia's Entrepreneurship Policy and the ICT Agency Act 2019 both prioritize the development of local digital solutions and content, ensuring their citizens have access to information and tools in their native languages.