

Session Outcome Document

“Unlocking Multistakeholder Cooperation within the UN System: Global Partnerships for Open Internet”

European Union

Wednesday, 29 May 2024. 15:00–15:45h (CET)

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/256>

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- **[Why]** The importance of putting the multistakeholder governance model at the center of decision-making processes related to the Open Internet principles within the UN system. Intersecting forces at UN level require collective effort to ensure that all parts of the multistakeholder ecosystem are involved in the discussion. According to Global IGF 2023 statistics, only 14% of participants came from technical communities, while the private sector accounted for 37%. Also, only 8% were original from African countries, and 7% from the Latin American and Caribbean region. The multistakeholder approach it is not a complementary mechanism to guarantee that certain demands and perspectives are channeled to the intergovernmental policy processes on Internet governance. Rather, multistakeholderism needs to be the means, ways, and goals of any Internet governance process.
- **[How: engagement methods during processes]** The methods to effectively set multistakeholderism into motion are currently existing. However, there is a need to operationalize more practical, consistent, sustained instruments, approaches and lines of engagement which lead stakeholders to participate with inclusivity, equal terms, durability, continuity, feasibility, and agility in their participation. Beyond open consultations, *ad hoc* participation and the establishment of working groups where diverse perspectives are publicly showcased, stakeholders should be part of processes throughout all phases. First, since early stages: in the agenda-setting phase, and the policy co-design of governance models. Second, in the policy formulation stage - and mostly in priority-setting negotiations-, by making sure that there is meaningful representation of all sectors and from different regions. Third, in the follow-up and review, stakeholders might assess the impact of outcomes on their sectors to provide policy recommendations on further next steps. Also, time windows for inputs should be broadened.
- **[How: capacity-building before and after decision-making processes]** Stakeholders have different capacities, workforce, knowledge, financial resources, expertise and sensitivities to participate in international processes on Internet governance. Stakeholder sectors differ in these resources, but also within the same stakeholder sector, some organizations may have wider capabilities than others (e.g. regional organizations that are capable to channel the demands from a wider network of smaller NGOs or small- and medium-sized companies). By acknowledging these differences (inter-sector and intra-sector), speakers highlighted the need to focus on the following lines of work. First, capacity-building and -development, with training programs, staff exchanges, workshops, or foundational papers. Second, especially vulnerable or ill-equipped organizations should be offered resources to have administrative and financial capacity for travel.
- **[How: incentives]** Stakeholders have different capacities and resources, but also different incentives to join Internet governance processes. Governments and UN agencies should

encourage their stakeholders to participate in these sessions, while also helping them have the resources to do so in a consistent and sustained fashion.

Towards WSIS+20 and WSIS beyond 2025, please share your views on the emerging trends, challenges, achievements, and opportunities in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines to date

- Operationalization of guidelines to help the implementation of the Open Internet principles with a truly effective multistakeholder approach, as the interventions from several members from the High-Level Executive Committee from NetMundial+10 highlighted on the São Paulo Guidelines.
- Improvement of transparency and accountability, as shown by Global IGF’s reflections on improving their multistakeholder engagement approach.

Tangible outcomes (such as key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, commitments, figures, and success stories (3-5 bullet points))

- The **European Commission** has just launched the CADE project, aimed at providing capacity development programs for civil society organizations in developing countries. Also, the European Commission is the largest donor to the SDG Digital Acceleration Agenda. In July 2023, the EU contributed 30 million euro to the Digital Transformation Window of the Joint SDG Fund for its implementation phase 2022-2025. The Joint SDG fund is an inter-agency, pooled mechanism for integrated policy support and strategic financing.
- The **International Telecommunications Union (ITU)** showcased the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition, a multi-stakeholder alliance to advance universal meaningful connectivity, that has just announced USD 4.8 billion dollars in investment commitments during the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event. These commitments will focus on affordability and adoption in the hardest-to-connect areas in some countries and for people with disabilities, among others.
- **Internet Society (ISOC)** showcased the results from their “Connecting the Unconnected” Program, by which they provide grants to help local communities build Community Networks, and how to build, main and support these networks. So far, they have supported 53 community networks.
- The **Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL)** has updated the Principles for Digital Development, and has launched the Charter for Digital Public Goods. As an example of country-level implementation, it has partnered with Sierra Leone’s government to prepare the National Digital Development Policy.
- The **B-Tech Project** at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is committed to building responsible business conduct in the technology sector since 2019 with due diligence principles, proposals for risk mitigation or remedies to victims in case of technology-related harms. They do also have two sister projects in Africa and India.
- The **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)** showed their commitment to bringing solutions to the country level. Their Digital Development Compass is the world’s largest database of digital development data, which aggregates and synthesizes over 180 public data sources.

Actionable plan and key recommendations (2-5 points)

- Development of localized capacity development projects, as highlighted by the EU, and increasing investment commitments by private companies into UN agencies’ alliances.



- Further engagement with NGOs that may provide grassroots case studies on the impact of Internet governance processes into socioeconomic rights, such as gender and environment.
- Need to have further discussions on how to connect with local organizations that will unlikely have enough resources to participate and/or contribute to international processes. Potential partnership with regional organizations with wider networks in their neighborhood.
- Multistakeholder engagement should be well-reflected in the GDC and WSIS+20 process. It constitutes the hallmark of global discussion on Internet governance and digital cooperation.

Suggestions for thematic aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2025 (one paragraph)

The multistakeholder engagement needs to **go beyond the “consultative approach”** (ad hoc participation, delivery of inputs after the policy formulation stage). A fully whole-of-the-process perspective should be promoted, from early stages of agenda- and priority-setting, to policy formulation, and further follow-up. This approach must be central to UN debate on Internet governance and digital cooperation. Also, the notion of **digital trust** is limitedly addressed in the WSIS Action Lines and in the Global Digital Compact (which pinpoints the need to have “technical trust”, but does not address “policy trust” in the processes and involved stakeholders). Moreover, **localized capacity development projects with civil society organizations (CSOs)** are an opportune pathway to guarantee practice-oriented solutions in a collaborative way between governments and supranational organizations such as the European Union, jointly with UN agencies, and the multistakeholder community. This would lead to CSOs with greater ownership and potentially larger participation in international Internet governance processes.