

Fact Sheet: WSIS+20

What is WSIS+20?

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is a global initiative that aims to foster dialogue, collaboration, and promotion of information and communication technologies as aligned with the UN [sustainable development goals](#) (SDGs) and human rights. The WSIS twenty-year review will build on the 2003 [Geneva Declaration of Principles](#) and [Plan of Action](#), the 2005 [Tunis Agenda](#), the 2015 [WSIS+10 outcomes](#), and the [Global Digital Compact](#) (GDC) adopted as part of the UN Pact for the Future in 2024.

For decades, the WSIS has served as a platform to advance multistakeholder collaboration and achieve a “*people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society*,” through the [WSIS Action Lines](#) framework and [Internet Governance Forum](#) (IGF).

What’s at Stake?

As the UN is about to start reassessing the WSIS principles, the main challenge will be to preserve and build upon a model that has successfully delivered positive outcomes for decades. There has been significant progress in advancing connectivity, as close to 700 million people were globally connected in 2003, compared to 5.8 billion today.

What is at stake is not only the future of the multistakeholder approach, which is essential to Internet governance and digital cooperation. Concerns about unequal participation, especially from developing countries, about the impact of digitalisation on their economies and societies and the extent to which developing countries will have a say in how digital society develops highlight broader global inequalities. These must be met during the review with further capacity, transparency, and resources provided to ensure the model truly reflects the global Information Society.

Renewed collective efforts are urgently needed to connect those unconnected, bridge the widening digital divides, and prepare for tomorrow's technologies in a more equitable way. Although the WSIS Action Lines remain relevant today, we must revitalise cooperation and strengthen multistakeholder participation to address global challenges more effectively. Renewing both the WSIS framework and the IGF’s mandate is a key priority.

WSIS+20 provides a critical opportunity to reaffirm the foundational principles of an open, inclusive, and secure Internet. This is a pivotal moment to ensure the Internet continues to serve as a catalyst for innovation, inclusive growth, and empowerment while fostering future governance that promotes universal access, resilience, and trust.

To create effective governance mechanisms that can support future technological developments, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of the Internet’s technical architecture and the essential role of community-driven technical governance. This understanding will be instrumental to fostering the collective effort needed to address persistent digital divides and ensure progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Key Milestones & Next Steps

The WSIS+20 review was kick-started with the “open consultation process” held in 2024 and the adoption of the [Progress Report on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS](#) by the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) in April 2025.

On 25 March, the UNGA adopted the [WSIS+20 Review Modalities](#). On 23 April, the UNGA President [appointed](#) two co-facilitators to lead the review of the implementation of the WSIS outcome. Individual UN Agencies will also undertake their own reviews.

Key milestones ahead include the WSIS Forum High-Level Event in Geneva from 7-11 July and the two-day High-Level UN General Assembly (UNGA) meeting in New York, scheduled for December 2025, where a resolution should be agreed upon.



The Way Forward: Renew the WSIS and IGF Mandates

The WSIS+20 review provides a crucial opportunity to reaffirm the WSIS Action Lines and strengthen their alignment with SDGs. It is a key moment to solidify the role of the IGF, the institution WSIS created, notably with a permanent mandate, to continue to act as “the premier platform for Internet governance discussion” as outlined in the GDC. The WSIS mechanism, including the IGF, can serve as an effective vehicle to implement the GDC Principles and Commitments.

A renewed permanent IGF mandate, alongside a reinforced WSIS mechanism and the enduring relevance of technology-neutral Action Lines, will establish a stable, inclusive platform for continued dialogue, shared responsibility, and alignment with broader frameworks like the GDC and the SDGs.

In particular, IGF multistakeholder National, Regional, and Youth initiatives (NRIs) can be strategically leveraged to collect information, gather insights, and monitor progress towards SDGs and 2030 targets. Since 2006, the IGF has evolved into a living and dynamic global ecosystem of 176 NRIs. In addition, the work of Dynamic Coalitions, Best Practice Fora, Schools of Internet Governance, and Policy Networks Initiatives demonstrate the IGF’s expansive and intersessional reach well beyond its annual global forum.

WSIS+20: Our Vision & Contribution

The Internet as Global Infrastructure

To understand the Internet, we highlight two core concepts it is built upon. One is protocol standardisation, which defines how devices communicate over network infrastructure using a common set of protocols and formats. This ensures interoperability across the thousands of interconnected networks that comprise the Internet. Organisations like the [Internet Engineering Task Force \(IETF\)](#) play a crucial role in maintaining the Internet's technical stability, global interoperability, and security.

The second concept is the registration of names and addresses, or [Internet identifiers](#), including IP address blocks, Autonomous System Numbers (ASNs), domain names, and port numbers. These are managed through globally coordinated processes led by organisations such as the five Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), Public Technical Identifiers (PTI), and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) that are fundamentally open and non-commercial. Unlike most proprietary platforms and applications built on top of the Internet's core functions, these systems are designed to serve the public interest, meaning the interest of everyone using the Internet.

Together, these core elements of protocols, parameters, and unique identifiers have established the Internet as a permissionless, global platform for innovation.

Technical Coordination and Internet Governance

The Internet is a general-purpose network of interconnected networks that underpins digital innovation and inclusion. In that sense, it is a global resource that requires a multistakeholder approach to run most effectively. The key operational tasks, coordination, insights, and expertise from the technical community are instrumental to keeping the Internet's core infrastructure stable, resilient, secure, and interoperable worldwide.

RIRs play a key role in maintaining core technical functions of the global Internet and so contribute to the multistakeholder approach in Internet governance discussions with the perspectives of the technical community. The RIPE NCC, one of the five RIRs, allocates Internet number resources (IP addresses and ASNs) in Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia. It fulfils an essential technical and administrative role by registering number resources to ensure their [uniqueness](#) and shaping policies governing and facilitating global Internet routing. This work enables the foundational environment on which digital services operate, including new technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics.¹

¹ The RIPE NCC's contributions to external consultations, including to the ITU WSIS+20 Review, are available at: <https://www.ripe.net/community/internet-governance/multi-stakeholder-engagement/ripe-ncc-contributions-to-external-consultations/>

This coordination role is essential to maintaining the Internet protocols and open standards enabling global [interoperability](#), decentralised management and a single distributed routing system, and registration services that ensure the uniqueness of Internet identifiers.

Alongside our key [technical community partners](#) including other RIRs, ICANN and the IETF, we promote the stability, security, and neutrality of the Internet's core infrastructure through a bottom-up and open policy development process, and through coordination with all relevant stakeholders across governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector.

Maintaining an Open, Inclusive and Secure Internet

As a membership-based organisation and secretariat for the [RIPE community](#), the RIPE NCC operates as an open, inclusive, and community-driven organisation. In addition, we aim to strengthen collaboration with international and regional partners with a view to promote evidence-based and well-informed public policy and governance mechanisms.

For example, the RIPE NCC [recently signed a Joint Declaration](#) with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to support capacity-building in Internet infrastructure development and accelerate the transition towards latest-generation Internet protocols. As an active member of the ITU-D and ITU-T sectors, we [strongly support](#) the Internet's long-term scalability through the allocation, registration and promotion of [IPv6 deployment](#), which vastly increases the available address space as demand grows.

We also aim to foster secure connectivity through Internet routing security and the implementation of [Resource Public Key Infrastructure \(RPKI\)](#), which allows network operators to mitigate risks of routing incidents. Resilience is also further enhanced by the [allocation and registration of ASNs](#), which enable redundancy through multihoming, peering, and the creation of robust interconnection between networks.

Together, these activities ensure that the Internet remains globally interoperable, secure, and resilient, evolving to meet the needs of a digital future built on continuous innovation. Finally, we provide capacity-building programmes in our service region covering 76 countries. In addition, we are an active contributor to the ITU's USD 73 billion [Partner2Connect Digital Coalition](#) and to the IGF Trust Fund.

In conclusion, WSIS+20 provides the opportunity to reflect on and reinforce the foundational principles of the Internet: its open, distributed, and globally interoperable architecture, which has enabled innovation and connectivity for billions of users. To safeguard these principles, Internet governance must be truly inclusive, integrate bottom-up processes, and guarantee the impartiality and interoperability necessary to ensure a well-functioning Internet globally.

Call to Action

- 1. Safeguard the interoperability, availability, and integrity of the global Internet:** As the backbone of digital transformation, the Internet must remain a stable and unified platform. Preserving its core architectural elements is essential to achieving the WSIS Action Lines and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- 2. Recognise the role of Internet coordination structures like the IETF, ICANN, and the RIRs:** These are fundamental to the technical coordination that underpins a secure and globally interoperable Internet. Supporting their open, transparent, and inclusive processes is critical to the Internet's long-term viability.
- 3. Strengthen the technical community's role and collaboration with governments:** Deepening ties between technical experts and policymakers will foster evidence-based governance and informed decision-making, ensuring digital policies are technically sound and future-proof. This can be achieved by improving information-sharing and direct collaboration, particularly between the technical community, government, and public sector entities.
- 4. Understand the capacity-building efforts of upscaling network connectivity:** Investments in training, infrastructure, and knowledge-sharing, especially in underserved regions, will help close connectivity gaps and support inclusive and equitable Internet access for all.
- 5. Re-focus global attention on closing the digital divide while preparing for tomorrow's emerging technologies:** The Internet must evolve to support not just current users but also future innovation in AI, quantum computing, and robotics. Bridging digital divides today ensures readiness for tomorrow.
- 6. Ensure the Internet continues to serve as a catalyst for innovation, growth, and empowerment:** A resilient, secure, and open Internet is essential for progress across all SDGs and one digital agenda. Coordinated governance, from Internet Coordination, to Internet Governance, to broader Digital Governance, is key to a digital future that empowers everyone.
- 7. Recognise the Internet's layered nature in digital governance:** Effective digital governance must respect the boundaries between the Internet's technical functions and the regulation of the application and content layers above it. While these layers are interdependent, they serve different purposes and require distinct approaches. Aligning policy interventions with the appropriate layer helps avoid unintended consequences and supports the global interoperability and resilience that make the Internet a global resource.