The Internet Service Providers and Connectivity Providers (ISPCP) offers the following input as the Constituency's response to the ITU's Council Working Group on WSIS&S Call for Inputs on WSIS+20 Review.

The ISPCP Constituency of ICANN represents companies and associations that operate Internet backbone networks and/or provide access to Internet and related services to End Users. More information on the Constituency can be found at https://www.ispcp.info/.

November 2024

*Call for Inputs: WSIS+20 Review*

## Implementation of the WSIS Process

### 1.What are the main achievements of the implementation of the WSIS process in the past 20 years?

The ICANN Internet Service and Connectivity Provider Constituency (ISPCP) represents businesses that provide much of the world's Internet connectivity and, in that capacity, have been witness to the continued evolution of the Information Society, as envisaged by the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles. Our members have been active participants in not only the advancement of technology that has aided in the broadening of the Information Society but also the important work to broaden access to the Information Society to all people in all areas of the globe.

The "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society" is best supported by an entire ecosystem of players and is at its most effective when supported by multistakeholder decisions made up of the voices of not just governments, but businesses, technologists, civil society, and the voices of Internet users. Risks of fragmentation that drive us away from this vision tend to come out of environments not driven by a true multistakeholder process but by governments who may seek minimal advice from these other essential stakeholders.

Over the 20 years since WSIS, we have been party to developments of all kinds and have seen the vision of the envisioned Information Society realized in some instances and at risk in plenty of others. The Internet has become such a fundamental part of all of our lives that, as a general resource, it is itself the largest global platform for innovation and growth. The ISPCP supports innovation and the development of emerging services, including those that are taking place at the edge of the network. We will continue our support of multistakeholder groups in identifying those emerging services that have the potential to cause technical internet fragmentation so that we can work together on solutions that ensure the ongoing security and interoperability of the global Internet.

1. Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

Impact: A WSIS outcome fostering multistakeholder collaboration on Internet governance.

Relevance: Promotes inclusive decision-making.

2. Connect 2030 Agenda

Impact: ITU-led initiative accelerating ICT-driven SDG progress.

Relevance: Supports global connectivity, especially in underserved areas.

3. ITU Broadband Commission

Impact: Advocates broadband as a key SDG enabler, shaping policies and funding.

Relevance: Advances digital inclusion and infrastructure expansion.

4. E-Waste & ICT Sustainability

Impact: ITU initiatives addressing environmental sustainability in ICTs.

Relevance: Aligns ICT development with sustainability goals.

5. Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA)

Impact: Strengthens international cyber cooperation and resilience.

Relevance: Enhances trust and security in ICTs.

6. ICT Measurement & Data Initiatives

Impact: Standardized data collection for ICT-driven development policies.

Relevance: Ensures measurable progress and informed decision-making.

7. ITU Digital Skills Toolkit

Impact: Guides digital literacy programs worldwide.

Relevance: Reduces the digital divide through skill-building.

8. Multilingualism & IDNs

Impact: Enables Internet access for non-English speakers.

Relevance: Promotes inclusivity and cultural diversity.

9. Community Network Initiatives

Impact: Grassroots projects expanding Internet access in underserved regions.

Relevance: Supports equitable digital connectivity.

10. Digital Innovation Hubs (UNESCO)

Impact: Boosts digital creativity and entrepreneurship in developing economies.

Relevance: Drives innovation and economic growth.

## 2.What are ITUs main contributions towards the implementation of the WSIS Process in 20 Years?

The ISPCP acknowledges the ITU's significant contribution towards WSIS outcomes as it has worked diligently toward its vision alongside groups such as UNESCO, UNCTAD, and UNDP. We acknowledge the work being done to align WSIS goals with the implementation of the 2030 sustainable development goals based on the specific goals of sustainability, inclusion, innovation, and digital collaboration.

As representatives of the Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) sector, the ISPCP supports the WSIS goal of highlighting the importance of ICT involvement in all sectors and acknowledges that this is a prerequisite to meeting the sustainable development goals of the Information Society.

ICTs are facilitators in all e-strategies and provide resources that open the doors for individuals to create and participate in the Information Society's sustainability development goals, especially for emerging economies. ICTs are intrinsically involved for users everywhere, especially those living in rural areas that require access to the Internet. Connectivity is key for enabling the continued building of the Information Society, and the ICTs understand their role in

ensuring affordability, equitability, and universality. ICTs understand the importance of connectivity to benefit the economic growth of countries.

In this context, it is important for ICTs to communicate with all other stakeholders about how sustainable development goals should be advanced.

**3.The WSIS process stands as a strong example of global digital cooperation in action for over two decades now. How can we ensure that this inclusive multistakeholder model is sustained and further strengthened?**

The United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) has been a positive result of WSIS as a key multistakeholder forum for sharing views and collaboration with other stakeholders, including government, business, the technical community, academia, and civil society on common issues, including sustainability goals. The ISPCP supports the continuation of the IGF as a multistakeholder forum for parties to come together to establish best practices, and strongly opposes efforts to transform it into a global decision-making body on internet governance issues.

**4.What are the challenges that remain in the implementation of the WSIS process?**

The ISPCP recognizes and shares the concern expressed by many that there are a number of geopolitical activities driving the potential for "Internet fragmentation", a term for which there is currently no commonly agreed-upon global definition. With this lack of a global definition in mind, the ISPCP is most concerned about technical aspects of Internet fragmentation that could have an impact on the underlying infrastructure that impede the ability of network systems to be fully interoperable and exchange data packets, and of the internet to function consistently at all end-points.

We believe that the WSIS outcomes at their best would aid in addressing concerns related to Internet fragmentation through its ongoing support of the multistakeholder process for internet governance.  It is notable that the loudest voices opposing the multistakeholder approach often express disappointment in the timing or outcome of the best practices adopted and decisions-making process.  In contrast, our view is that the Internet is best served when governance processes avoid sharp changes and reflect the views of the entire multistakeholder community.

Accordingly, we strongly support a WSIS outcome that reaffirms the multistakeholder process for Internet governance.

ISPs have an interest in the Internet fragmentation issues being debated in venues such as the Policy Network on Internet fragmentation (Policy Network) at the United Nations (UN) IGF. The IGF is a positive example of a multistakeholder process resulting from the WSIS forum. The Policy Network is raising awareness of the intended and unintended effects of technical, policy, legal, and regulatory actions on the basic features of the Internet as an open, interconnected and interoperable network of networks. These discussions are contributing to global discussions focused on providing clarity on the diverse perceptions of what may be the cause of fragmentation, including those related to the technical concerns of ISPs.

To ensure that the IGF continues to play this essential role, its long-term funding stability must remain a priority. The IGF is currently funded on a voluntary basis through ITU contributions, which raises concerns about predictability and sustainability. While some view this model as appropriate for maintaining the IGF's role within the ecosystem, others worry that uncertain funding could weaken the IGF's ability to provide a neutral and effective space for multistakeholder discussions. Ensuring a stable and sustainable financial foundation for the IGF will be key to its continued success in addressing Internet fragmentation and broader governance challenges.

Convergence of views on technical topics also takes place in globally accepted internet standards development bodies, including the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). ISP's and consumers alike benefit from a secure and interoperable global internet. We believe that ICANN's multistakeholder model has proved itself to be an effective means to maintain the security, stability, and resilience of the Internet DNS and meets the needs and expectations of global customers and partners of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) services while maintaining the openness of the global Internet.

## WSIS Action Lines

### 5.Which specific Action Lines have had the most significant impact, and why?

The ISPCP believes the WSIS outcomes were notable not only as targets to be met but perhaps more importantly as directions where effort was to be made and progress necessary. In that spirit, the very fact that those outcomes were taken over by the various WSIS forums that were convened since WSIS has marked the intention of the Internet community to not let these outcomes go unheeded. The Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Commitment across its numerous dimensions served as roadmaps for a number of governments and stakeholders, both individually and collectively through the various organizations involved.

Regarding the technical Governance of the Internet as part of the Tunis agenda and acknowledging the Internet as a major element of the infrastructure of the Information Society, the ISPCP recognizes ICANN as an organization that has embodied the ability of the technical

community, and that of all stakeholders to come together, to define technical and public policies for the management of the Internet resources, as well as a structure that has been able to review and reform itself structurally over these 20 years to fulfill this mission. After 20 years and despite numerous challenges, its actions since WSIS along with those taken by the international organizations in charge of development of Internet-related technical standards and relevant policies, has helped maintain the integrity of the Internet and avoid fragmentation of the Domain Name System (DNS), which in the ISPCP's view remains central to maintaining "one Internet for all Internet users".

***6.Considering that the WSIS outcomes have demonstrated their relevance and applicability to new and emerging areas, how can the implementation of the WSIS principles and corresponding WSIS Action Lines be enhanced to effectively address these topics?***

The ISPCP recognizes the continued relevance of the WSIS Action Lines, particularly in addressing emerging challenges such as closing the digital divide and supporting sustainable digital growth. To enhance their implementation, it is essential to focus on fostering a secure, interoperable Internet that prioritizes connectivity, affordability, and equitable access for underserved regions. As the foundation of global communication and innovation, ISPs and connectivity providers emphasize the importance of the multistakeholder model in ensuring that technological advancements—such as AI, machine learning, and IoT—are developed and deployed in ways that preserve the integrity and inclusiveness of the global Internet. Strengthened collaboration among governments, technical experts, civil society, and private sector stakeholders will ensure WSIS principles adapt effectively to new challenges while maintaining alignment with global sustainable development goals.

***7.Have you any suggestions and inputs on the WSIS+20 Review Action Lines, highlighting key milestones, challenges and emerging trends beyond 2025 prepared by the WSIS Action Line facilitators.***
**https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Home/About#actionLines**

The ISPCP highlights critical challenges within the WSIS+20 Action Lines, including infrastructure and funding constraints, fragmented regulatory approaches, and the persistent digital divide, particularly in underserved and rural areas. These obstacles hinder the equitable development of a robust and interoperable Internet. For ISPs and connectivity providers, addressing these

issues is paramount to ensuring universal access, strengthening cybersecurity, and promoting trust in digital systems.

Emerging trends, such as AI, 5G and the upcoming 6G, and IoT, present significant opportunities but also demand careful consideration of their technical and societal impacts. ISPs remain committed to advancing digital inclusion and ensuring that new technologies align with the principles of the multistakeholder model, supporting a secure, sustainable, and globally connected Internet. Strengthening collaboration among all stakeholders, alongside adaptable policies and strategies, is essential to overcoming challenges and achieving the shared goals of WSIS beyond 2025.

## WSIS Action Line for advancing the SDGs

**8.How can the alignment between the WSIS Action Lines and SDGs be strengthened towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**
At a high level, policymakers that prioritize preservation of human rights for individuals, whether they are online or offline, will support the WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society. With this in mind, we encourage policymakers to continue to take concrete steps that enable Internet access for all individuals through initiatives that support connectivity such as infrastructure growth and internet exchange point provisioning.

An inclusive approach to Internet governance ensures that the relevant parties whose work and views are critical to achieving the WSIS goals are considered as critical to ensure the policy outcome is acceptable by the members of the entire Internet ecosystem through a multistakeholder consensus-driven process. This approach is foundational to produce policy outcomes that preserve interoperability and end to end connectivity for the end-users, and avoid outcomes that, intentionally or unintentionally, result in a technical fragmentation of the Internet.

The ISPCP believes current trends in technology can have a significant impact on the progress toward human development, the reduction of digital divide and the achievement of the 17 UN SDGs. Internationalization of the Internet as a driver for economic growth will help progress a number of these goals, and Internet-based technologies will continue to support a globally interoperable network where everyone accessing the network may innovate for the benefit of their local community and beyond. Continued deployment of specific technologies related to the Internet of Things or Artificial Intelligence will play a role in achieving goals such as Climate actions, smart sustainable cities and communities, and affordable and clean energy. The need for a strong model of cooperation such as the multistakeholder model has never been more critical to develop commonly-agreeable technical evolutions and public policies.

**9.How can we further strengthen multistakeholder platforms such as the WSIS Forum as the platform for digital development and IGF as the platform for governance and policy issues?**

To strengthen multistakeholder platforms like the WSIS Forum and IGF, the ISPCP emphasizes the need to prioritize topics relevant to ISPs and connectivity providers, such as AI governance, digital inclusion, and the technical and policy challenges of sustaining a secure, interoperable Internet. Regular updates to the agenda that reflect these emerging trends will ensure continued relevance.

Fostering broader participation, particularly from underserved regions and underrepresented groups, is essential to addressing global digital challenges equitably. Enhanced regional engagement and capacity-building initiatives will empower stakeholders to contribute meaningfully. Improved synergies between the WSIS Forum and IGF, alongside mechanisms for evaluating their impact, will solidify their roles as effective forums for collaboration and governance. For ISPs, maintaining a focus on inclusivity and alignment with the multistakeholder model is critical to supporting a resilient and open Internet in the face of rapid technological evolution. Referencing the NETmundial 2014 Internet Governance Process Principles may serve as a valuable framework for reinforcing stakeholder engagement and accountability in these platforms.

**10.How can the implementation of the WSIS process and the Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact be aligned to achieve shared goals?**

The ISPCP underscores the importance of aligning the WSIS process, the Pact for the Future, and the Global Digital Compact to achieve shared goals, particularly in fostering an open, secure, and inclusive Internet. For ISPs and connectivity providers, the focus should remain on ensuring robust network infrastructure, advancing digital inclusion, and preserving the multistakeholder model of governance.

Key strategies include harmonizing objectives across these frameworks to create a unified vision for digital development, fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, and prioritizing

capacity-building initiatives that address the digital divide. Aligning policies to support ethical AI, cybersecurity, and sustainable ICT development is vital to mitigating fragmentation risks and ensuring interoperability. Regular monitoring and evaluation will ensure progress remains transparent and adaptable, enabling these platforms to drive meaningful outcomes for the global Internet community.

### 11.What are the key emerging digital trends and topics to be considered by ITU in the WSIS+20 review and future vision beyond 2025?

Key emerging digital trends include the widespread adoption of wireless Internet access and the continuous evolution of cellular technologies (3G, 4G, 5G, and the upcoming 6G). These advancements, combined with privacy-preserving technologies such as encryption and secure protocols like DNSSEC and BGP, are essential to maintaining a secure and interoperable Internet. Efforts to promote Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and Universal Acceptance have further enhanced accessibility, enabling a multilingual Internet that bridges digital divides.

From a broader perspective, the generalization of wireless Internet access—whether through Wi-Fi or cellular networks—and the incremental introduction of successive generations of cellular technologies (3G, 4G, 5G, and soon 6G) have been instrumental in Internet growth over the past two decades. Similarly, the rise of smartphones, coupled with increasing computational power, has enabled widespread adoption of IP-based communications, such as VoIP, instant messaging, and video conferencing. These developments have fueled the growth of social networks and more recently facilitated the emergence of cloud architectures and platforms.

Critical breakthroughs in technology and engineering have underpinned these advances. Technologies that preserve privacy and personal data, such as encryption, have played a vital role. Similarly, initiatives like DNSSEC and secure Border Gateway Protocols (BGP) have strengthened the Internet's security while maintaining its ecosystem's steady growth. Notably, actions to sign the DNS root and Top-Level Domains (TLDs), led by ICANN and country code TLD managers, have bolstered trust in the Domain Name System.
Internationalization technologies, such as Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) as defined by the IETF, and the Universal Acceptance program championed by ICANN, have significantly advanced multilingualism on the Internet. These efforts ensure that users who do not rely on ASCII characters can access and benefit from the Internet.

It is important to note that these advances have been achieved through incremental improvements with backward compatibility, minimizing disruptions to existing technologies and infrastructure. This steady, inclusive approach has enabled sustainable growth while maintaining the Internet's core principles of openness, interoperability, and global connectivity.