

Summary of Side Event:

WSIS Action Lines for Advancing the Achievement of SDGs

30 Jan 2024, 8:15 - 9:30 AM (EST, New York time) / 14:15-15:30 (CET, Geneva Time)

Background on the event (one paragraph)

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) still stands as a strong example of global digital cooperation in action for over two decades, with its WSIS Action Lines withstanding the test of time. They are still relevant today to provide a robust framework for addressing digital challenges and opportunities.

Characterized by its multistakeholder approach, WSIS serves as a model in fostering global cooperation and leveraging information and communication technologies (ICTs) to address contemporary challenges and drive sustainable progress.

In alignment with the theme of the 2024 ECOSOC Partnership Forum ‘‘Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions’’, this side event focused on sharing the strategic work related to the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines, which guide tangible actions for sustainable development and resilience-building, with a crucial emphasis on the central role that partnerships play in achieving these goals.

This side event sought to facilitate a meaningful dialogue on the role of WSIS, emphasising its commitment to addressing the digital divide and broader socio-economic challenges. The side-event featured perspectives from representatives of international organizations, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The enduring relevance of the WSIS process and its Action Lines spanning over two decades underscores the necessity for continuous adaptation to tackle evolving digital and societal challenges.
- Recognizing the value of a multistakeholder approach, WSIS emphasizes the involvement of its diverse stakeholders—international organizations, governments, private sectors, civil society, technical community, and academia—in driving digital transformation efforts and initiatives.
- WSIS stakeholders can accelerate closing digital divides and achieving SDGs by implementing Action Lines and leveraging collaborative frameworks.
- Holistic approaches are necessary for addressing digital challenges, encompassing connectivity, enabling environments, skills development, legal frameworks, financing, and trade arrangements.

- Accessibility was highlighted as a crucial aspect that organizations should prioritize, and it is integrated across all 11 WSIS Action Lines.
- Acknowledged the WSIS Forum as a multistakeholder platform for catalyzing partnerships, fostering collaboration.
- ITU, UNDP, UNESCO, and UNCTAD have been coordinating the implementation of the WSIS process with more than 39 UN agencies and stakeholders to highlight the role of digital in accelerating the achievement of the SDGs.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- The WSIS process provides a framework for the ICT ecosystem through the WSIS Action Lines and the WSIS-SDG Matrix to align WSIS efforts with the SDGs. The interlinkage between WSIS Action Lines and the SDGs and targets can be a reference for ongoing global digital governance processes, such as the Summit of the Future, Global Digital Compact, etc.
- Encouraged all participants to highlight digital and the WSIS framework within global digital governance discussions.
- There was a call to update the WSIS Action Lines to address contemporary global challenges, including climate change and emerging technologies to reflect the digital upheaval and revolution of recent years, ensuring relevance to current developments and aligning with upcoming WSIS+20 review discussions.
- All stakeholders should contribute to the upcoming WSIS+20 review that will take stock the achievements of the WSIS process and identify the opportunities and challenges in implementing the WSIS Action Lines.