**International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Council Resolution 1332 resolves to invite the members and other stakeholders to contribute views on the work of the ITU in the WSIS+20 re view including ideas related to the review of the WSIS Action Lines through the CWG WSIS&SDG.**

These comments were submitted on January 31, 2025 by Telecommunities Canada (tc.ca). TC's mandate is to ensure that all Canadians are able to participate in community-based communications and electronic information services by promoting and supporting local community network initiatives and to represent and promote the Canadian community networking movement at the national and international level.

# Implementation of the WSIS Process

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

1. Advancing digital inclusion
The recent pandemic rapidly accelerated the use of ICTs and as a result, implementation of some WSIS outcomes. The world moved online for work, school and play. Small and under-resourced groups seamlessly pivoted to the Internet to connect internally and externally. This has positively affected and expanded the lives of communities and citizens around the world. It also changed urban/rural work scenarios which expanded economic opportunities in rural and remote areas, breathing new life into remote communities. The WSIS guidelines promoting equitable access to the Internet along with enabling infrastructure were instrumental in the acceleration and the adoption of ICTs around the world.

2. Establishing an early a baseline for the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance
The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society 2003 identified a multistakeholder model of governance for the Internet that has served as a foundation for ongoing work on Internet governance processes. This was a major achievement but 20 years on, it has become clear that the concept needs to evolve and be refined. The Internet Governance Forum and ICANN are engaged in this work and the Netmundial process has developed principles and guidelines toward improved implementation of multistakeholder governance models.

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

Facilitating international dialogues including the WSIS summits in 2003 and 2005

Promoting international cooperation to improve connectivity in underserved and remote regions

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?

1. Encourage multistakeholder governance processes that enable meaningful participation.

Relative power differences between and among stakeholder groups within a multistakeholder model must be addressed. Balancing the power between civil society/ enduser/ citizen groups vs. governments vs. the private sector will be the key to sustaining and the strengthening multistakeholder models in their various contexts.

2. Commit more resources to multistakeholder fora like the IGF and strengthen their voices in international relations discussions on Internet policy

As noted in the NETmundial+10 multistakeholder statement(May 2024): "To strengthen multistakeholder spaces for participation, it is necessary to improve mechanisms for building consensus and producing guidelines and recommendations in such a way that communities' voices have an impact on multilateral and other decision-making processes, so that effective solutions to the challenges we face can be found and implemented."
https://netmundial.br/pdf/NETmundial10-MultistakeholderStatement-2024.pdf

3. Knowledge building to enable participation at the community level

More emphasis on community and community development in the next iteration of WSIS and more focus on this issue at the IGF level is necessary. Facilitating knowledge building to enable such participation is an essential element. We note that the IGF's Dynamic Coalition on Community Connectivity (DC3) presented its report at the 2023 IGF meeting in Kyoto. It concluded that community owned broadband was essential to socio-economic development. We applaud this but look for a follow-up. How are these ideas moved forward out of IGF and into practice?

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

1. Erosion of trust is an overarching issue. We are just discovering the many ways information pathways can be abused – misinformation, disinformation, spam, Internet scams, deep fakes, etc. Originally bad actors were faking domain names to enable spams and scams. Now they are faking voices and circulating fake videos of unsuspecting people. The question is now "who do you trust, how do you trust, how do you verify what you can trust?" Within what was originally a very trusting internet infrastructure with all its positive potential, it has now become necessary to use every educational platform possible to teach users how to spot harmful content. To deal with this issue, digital and media literacy education must be a priority. Some threats, such as DNA abuse, might be addressed more vigorously by the technical community

2. Digital literacy and media literacy will continue to be issues whose challenges seem to be constantly outstripping society's ability to address them. Without adequate knowledge, people are easily exploited. In a world of endlessly repeated misinformation and disinformation, citizens need much more knowledge and support about the negative aspects of the online world. We support the following WSIS priority as one of the ways of meeting this crucial need but much more is required:
 "22. Supporting providers of public access in the local communities such as libraries to help people access information resources they need and develop information literacy skills to improve their lives."
(Priority areas to be addressed in the implementation of WSIS beyond 2015)

3. New jurisdictional issues, including extraplanetary developments, have arisen in the last 20 years. Satellite internet, now ubiquitous and on a very large scale, is still very costly. In addition, since satellites operate outside any national or international jurisdiction, there are no rules for decisions concerning who is served, how and with what. There is a valid concern about the ability of satellite owners to function as power brokers enabling and disabling connectivity at will. The fact that this is not already a top concern around the world points to the lack of capacity of our society to respond to such a substantive issue that affects everyone's future around the globe.

4. The challenges of enabling meaningful participation in Internet governance by enduser and civil society stakeholders whose voices are often muted as they lack the resources to engage at the same level as government and private sector actors.

5. Maintaining openness at the technical level: Along with our commitment to collaboration and shared responsibility, we recognize the essential role of the technical community as guardians of TCP/IP and the invariant principles in Internet governance. An open, inclusive and secure digital ecosystem is essential to addressing emerging challenges.

6. Managing the roll-out of AI for social good: We do live in a digital age, yet don't fully take into account the Internet's importance to that definition. The Internet is the RNA that transcribes an AI's capacity to learn and grounds the extended cognition of an individual's mind in the maintenance of their humanity. The connections that inform extended consciousness, now and in the future, depend on sustaining the invariants that define what the Internet does. It connects for the purpose of transmitting bits. It is not involved in the content of the bits, or what the connected do with the bits when they get them. Its indifference is the guarantee of autonomy in how the endpoints use what connections provide. It merely amplifies interconnections and relational capacity. Ignoring the invariants risks threatening the autonomy of choice in connection that working together requires. Without the continuation of its governance as a common pool resource, the phase spaces where self-organizing individuals and artificial agents learn through experience are subject to enclosure.

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

Action line C1 -- The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

The internet is a global resource that must be managed for social good. These new technologies and their effects are so vast and and overarching, no single stakeholder group can handle the challenges alone. The WSIS Tunis Agenda led the way to establishing multistakeholder governance as a way forward in managing such a global resource.
As a result, multistakeholder governance principles are currently an accepted part of the Internet governance ecosystem as reflected at the Internet Governance Forum and ICANN.
Establishing this multistakeholder model was key to moving forward with ICTs for development.

Action line C3 and C4 -- Access to information and knowledge/ Capacity building

There has been an exponential increase in the amount of information available, which has irrevocably changed the way citizens engage socially and economically and can be an enabler of a broad range of human rights.

Action line C1. The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

We believe that adherence to the NETmundial+10 Internet Governance Process Principles would enhance Internet governance and enable issues to be addressed effectively when they appear. These principles state that processes must be:
● Multistakeholder
● Open, participative, consensus driven
● Transparent
● Accountable
● Inclusive and equitable
● Distributed
● Collaborative
● Enabling meaningful participation
● Access and low barriers
● Agility
https://netmundial.br/pdf/IGPP-NETMUNDIAL2014.pdf

We also support the expansion of the multistakeholder model to specifically include endusers as was done in the 2014 NETmundial Internet Governance process Principles: "Internet governance and digital policy processes should fully involve academia, civil society, government and international organizations, private sector, technical community and end users. The named parties are also acknowledged as stakeholders and this needs to be retained."

Action lines C3 and C4 -- Access to information and knowledge/ Capacity Building
Because ICTs have become so integral to social, political and economic life, they come with a corresponding need for citizens to remain current as technologies evolve. There is a constant need for digital literacy programs at the community level. Access to digital technologies goes beyond providing the hard infrastructure. Skills are also required and should be part of any access package.

As indicated on Action line 3, there is also a disproportionate increase in incomplete, false, and misleading information as well as the overload of unverifiable information. However, there does not appear to be a commensurate increase in the availability, visibility, prominence, and engagement with verified information itself.  As noted in our response to Question 4, this has led to an erosion of trust both in information and information providers. With the new deep fakes enabled through AI, this situation is poised to become a lot worse. Rebuilding trust in information providers and platforms, not to mention institutions, will be the challenge of the next few decades. Digital and media literacy education must be a priority. Some threats, such as varous forms of DNA abuse, might be addressed more vigorously by the technical community.

This issue is also addressed in Action line #10 - Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society

We believe the upcoming WSIS+20 review must reaffirm the overarching importance of maintaining an open, secure and inclusive internet governed by the processes outlined in Netmundial Internet Governance Process Principles.
https://netmundial.br/pdf/IGPP-NETMUNDIAL2014.pdf

We encourage education and training programs to facilitate the effective use of new technologies at all levels, but especially in communities where it is accessible to endusers.

## WSIS Action Line for advancing the SDGs

Reaffirm multistakeholder governance principles

Find ways to connect the local with the global through the support of community internet infrastructure and decision making processes.

Support education and training programs that empower citizens to use the internet for social good

## Future Vision and WSIS beyond 2025

We reiterate our belief that the NETmundial+10 Internet Governance Process Principles affirmed by Netmundial+20 (May 2024) offer valuable guidance towards strengthening multistakeholder platforms. These platforms must be:
● Multistakeholder
● Open, participative, consensus driven
● Transparent
● Accountable
● Inclusive and equitable
● Distributed

● Collaborative
● Enabling meaningful participation
● Access and low barriers
● Agility
https://netmundial.br/pdf/IGPP-NETMUNDIAL2014.pdf

We also agree with the NETmundial statements that advocate for more tangible outcomes from the Internet Governance Forum and that, following from the Tunis Agenda, these should be in the form of policy recommendations. In addition, the Internet Governance Forum should be strengthened and provided with more stable funding. As noted in the NETmundial+10 multistakeholder statement(May 2024):

"To strengthen multistakeholder spaces for participation, it is necessary to improve mechanisms for building consensus and producing guidelines and recommendations in such a way that communities' voices have an impact on multilateral and other decision-making processes, so that effective solutions to the challenges we face can be found and implemented."
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## 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?

We believe that the WSIS process has served as a stable mechanism for promoting bottom-up multistakeholder Internet governance and this process should be strengthened and prioritized where needed. We are concerned about the potential duplication of fora, competing decision-making processes, New York vs.Geneva bureaucracies all adding to the difficulty of navigating the Internet governance ecosystem.

## 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?

1. Over the past 20 years, we suggest that the Information Society envisioned has actually moved away from a people-centered, inclusive, development-oriented society towards a corporate-centered profit-oriented society. The Information Society is still about people but, in the shift from people in a community context to people in a market context, we have allowed market values to drive human values, leaving out a broad spectrum of human values that exist in communities. There is an urgent need to move to a more balanced society in which communities represent the organizational capacity, identity and form that can countervail some of the impacts of market-driven policies.

2. Internet gatekeepers: A dwindling number of international Internet gatekeepers are a significant threat to community participation and the ability of people to fulfill their desires to create and share content. Youtube can arbitrarily put up and take down videos using opaque rules. Facebook, through the Internet.org initiative, offered free access to limited services in underdeveloped areas – leading human rights organizations to accuse Facebook of offering the world's poorest people a "walled garden". The ability of a platform like Facebook to make policy decisions like delinking traditional media as a retaliatory move against impending national legislation or making fact checking a

community responsibility, clearly shows the power international gatekeepers have over information flow and their ability to control that flow. Although there are now some examples of individuals and groups moving away from the major private gatekeeper platforms and the problems they represent, there need to be many more alternatives, especially non-profit alternatives, available to users

3. Malicious use of ICTs: There are increasing attempts to use the Internet to conduct surveillance, engage in censorship and spread misinformation and propaganda. There is increasing evidence of interference with democratic elections. Cyberattacks, often ransomware attacks. are regularly hitting public institutions and private enterprises including hospitals and schools. There is an ever present danger that this kind of attack will soon be targeting essential infrastructure like electricity grid

4. Avoiding Internet fragmentation: An open and inclusive Internet can be splintered into increasingly smaller non-interoperative networks as different jurisdictions develop and enforce different rules. Maintaining openness, especially at the technical level, will require constant vigilance.