



**WSIS
FORUM 2026**

**6-10 July 2026
Geneva, Switzerland**

Session Outcome Document

(2 pages max)

WSIS+20 follow-up - from Milestones to Momentum: what comes next?

**Internet Society United Kingdom Chapter; Internet Society Swiss Chapter;
Internet Society Serbian Chapter; Internet Society German Chapter**

9 July 2026 - 14:00–14:45 (UTC+02:00)

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2026/Agenda/Session/233>

Key Issues discussed: (5–8 bullet points summarizing the main discussion points)

- How the WSIS+20 review outcomes should translate into concrete implementation over the coming years, and what "success" should look like beyond declarations
- The relationship between WSIS and the Global Digital Compact (GDC): whether they reinforce each other or risk fragmenting into parallel tracks
- The evolving role and expanding ecosystem of the IGF (NRIs, Dynamic Coalitions, Policy Networks, Best Practice Forums) following its permanent mandate
- Financing gaps for implementation, particularly meaningful connectivity and the role of the new Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing
- Integration of AI governance into existing WSIS/IGF/GDC structures rather than creating separate silos
- The technical community's role in ensuring policy proposals are operationally feasible
- Developing-country implementation priorities, including multistakeholder policymaking at national level and regulatory sandboxes
- Institutional/legal challenges facing IGF-related initiatives operating without legal personality, limiting their ability to contract or receive funding

Key Outcomes of the session (concise bullet points capturing the concrete results of the session)

- key insights and findings

- Broad consensus that the WSIS+20 review was a success, exceeding what many expected mid-negotiation, with reaffirmation of the Tunis Agenda and the IGF's permanent mandate as headline wins
- Financing was repeatedly flagged as the most significant unresolved gap in the WSIS+20 outcome
- Many IGF-adjacent initiatives lack legal personality, creating practical barriers to funding and contracting
- Speakers agreed AI governance should be integrated into existing multistakeholder structures rather than treated as a separate track
- announcements, launches, or new initiatives presented during the session
 - Reference to the newly established Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing as a vehicle to rethink implementation funding
 - Mention of preparations underway for the second UN Global AI Dialogue in 2027
 - An Internet Society discussion paper was presented proposing implementation roadmaps for the WSIS Action Lines, with measurable targets and accountability mechanisms
- agreements, collaborations, or commitments made
 - Shared commitment across panellists to avoid institutional fragmentation between WSIS, the GDC, and AI governance processes
 - Convergence on the need to broaden the IGF's ecosystem role as "glue" connecting multiple governance processes rather than allowing separate silos
 - General agreement that multistakeholder institutions themselves should be funded through multistakeholder approaches

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Actions (2–5 bullet points outlining practical and actionable recommendations to support WSIS implementation towards 2035)

- Develop clear implementation roadmaps with measurable targets and regular accountability mechanisms for the WSIS Action Lines, building on the Internet Society's proposed framework
- Strengthen the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing by analysing past funding shortfalls, centering recipient (not donor) perspectives, and designing innovative, sustainable financing mechanisms inclusive of civil society
- Expand participation in future IGFs — especially from G77 countries, SMEs, women, and youth — with the Kenya IGF identified as a key test case
- Address the legal/institutional gap facing voluntary IGF initiatives (NRIs, Dynamic Coalitions, etc.) so they can access funding and enter contracts, without undermining their bottom-up character
- Embed AI governance monitoring within IGF/GDC coordination structures ahead of the 2027 UN Global AI Dialogue, ensuring new mechanisms complement rather than duplicate existing institutions

— Full Summary of session — (optional)

The panel examined how the outcomes of the WSIS+20 review should have been translated into concrete implementation over the coming years. Speakers assessed the significance of the renewed WSIS mandate, the relationship between WSIS and the Global Digital Compact (GDC), the evolving role of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), financing challenges, AI governance, and the need for practical implementation roadmaps. Throughout the discussion, participants repeatedly emphasised avoiding fragmentation while preserving the multistakeholder model that had characterised Internet governance for two decades.

WSIS+20 as a successful outcome requiring practical implementation

Opening the discussion, Paul Gaskell characterised the WSIS+20 review as a significant success, noting that less favourable outcomes had appeared possible earlier in the negotiations. He highlighted both the inclusive multistakeholder review process and several substantive achievements, including:

- reaffirmation of the Tunis Agenda principles;
- confirmation of the Internet Governance Forum as the primary forum for Internet governance dialogue;
- establishment of the IGF's permanent mandate.

Looking ahead, he argued that success over the next year should have been measured not by declarations but by broader participation, particularly from G77 countries, small and medium-sized enterprises, women, and younger participants. He identified the upcoming IGF in Kenya as an important opportunity to demonstrate expanded participation from developing countries.

Aligning WSIS, the Global Digital Compact, and emerging governance processes

Joining remotely, Matthew Shears argued that the Global Digital Compact and the WSIS framework overlapped substantially and should have reinforced one another rather than developed as separate policy tracks.

He pointed to Article 68 of the GDC, which explicitly recognised both the IGF and the WSIS framework as core implementation mechanisms, calling this an opportunity that should not have been squandered. The greatest risk, he said, was institutional fragmentation, with separate processes evolving independently rather than being coordinated.

Rather than treating WSIS, the GDC, AI governance, and Internet governance as isolated discussions, he encouraged stakeholders to broaden the IGF agenda to address newer policy themes introduced through the GDC while preserving the multistakeholder model that had gained increasing legitimacy internationally.

He emphasised that the period leading to 2030 was relatively short, making coordinated implementation essential.

The IGF ecosystem after receiving a permanent mandate

Markus Kummer reflected on the evolution of the IGF since its creation, arguing that the WSIS+20 review recognised that the IGF had become much more than an annual meeting.

He noted that today's ecosystem included:

- National and Regional IGF Initiatives (NRIs);
- Dynamic Coalitions;
- Policy Networks;
- Best Practice Forums;
- extensive intersessional work.

For Kummer, this wider ecosystem was one of WSIS+20's major achievements.

He rejected attempts to distinguish Internet governance from broader digital governance, arguing that the accepted Internet governance definition already encompassed infrastructure, naming and addressing systems, Internet use and abuse, and now naturally extended to AI-related issues.

Rather than creating separate governance silos, he argued that the IGF should have served as the "glue" connecting multiple processes.

He also identified an important organisational challenge: many IGF-related initiatives operated entirely through voluntary collaboration without legal personality, making it difficult to enter contracts or receive funding. He suggested future work should have focused on strengthening institutional stability while preserving the bottom-up nature of the IGF ecosystem and avoiding top-down control.

Financing remained one of the largest unresolved challenges

Speaking from the civil society perspective, Valeria Betancourt welcomed several WSIS+20 outcomes—including the permanent IGF mandate and better integration with the GDC—but identified financing as one of the review's most significant shortcomings.

She focused on the newly established Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing, arguing that it represented an opportunity to rethink how implementation had been funded.

According to Betancourt, the task force should have:

- analysed why previous financing approaches had fallen short;
- examined implementation from the perspective of recipients rather than donors;
- identified funding gaps affecting meaningful connectivity;
- recognised the role played by civil society organisations, especially where state capacity was weak;
- developed innovative funding mechanisms capable of supporting local implementation.

She stressed that meaningful connectivity remained unavailable to a large portion of the world's population and argued that implementation of both the WSIS Action Lines and the Global Digital Compact could not have succeeded without sustainable financing ecosystems that included public, private, and community-based resources.

The technical community's contribution

Representing the technical community, Charles Noir welcomed explicit recognition of the technical community as a distinct stakeholder group in the WSIS+20 outcome document.

He explained that organisations such as RIPE NCC contributed practical operational expertise to policy discussions, helping governments understand which proposals were technically feasible and ensuring that policy outcomes could ultimately be implemented within Internet infrastructure.

He argued that the multistakeholder ecosystem already contained specialised organisations—including ICANN, Internet Society, and regional Internet registries—that collectively possessed the expertise needed to translate policy into operational reality.

Looking ahead, he expressed hope that future IGFs would increasingly focus on practical implementation and measurable outcomes.

Developing-country implementation priorities

Jimson Olufuye emphasised the importance of full implementation of the WSIS+20 outcome document, particularly for developing countries.

He argued that multistakeholder policymaking should have become standard practice at national level, encouraging governments to involve stakeholders when developing regulations rather than working exclusively within ministries.

He pointed to regulatory sandboxes as one useful mechanism for achieving smarter regulation across sectors including telecommunications, finance, agriculture, and health.

Olufuye also highlighted several additional priorities:

- sharing implementation success stories among developing countries;
- improving blended financing mechanisms;
- strengthening national statistical systems;
- measuring meaningful connectivity rather than simple coverage statistics.

Using Nigeria's national payment infrastructure as an example, he illustrated how practical implementation could have promoted digital inclusion while generating lessons for other countries.

Integrating AI governance

Drawing on discussions from the Global AI Dialogue, Dr Yik Chan described how the GDC had already generated several new AI governance mechanisms alongside existing UN structures.

She summarised key themes emerging from the dialogue:

- new mechanisms should have complemented rather than replaced existing institutions;
- implementation should have moved from abstract principles toward operational governance;
- inclusive participation, interoperability, multistakeholder engagement, and multilateral cooperation remained essential.

She noted that preparations were already underway for the second UN Global AI Dialogue in 2027 and argued that the IGF should have worked closely with new UN digital governance bodies to monitor implementation of the Global Digital Compact.

Like Markus Kummer, she concluded that the IGF itself had to strengthen its governance structures, leadership arrangements, and financing if it was to perform this coordinating role effectively.

Internet Society roadmap proposal

During audience discussion, an Internet Society representative introduced a recently published discussion paper proposing implementation roadmaps for the WSIS Action Lines.

The proposal argued that while the IGF itself was functioning effectively, implementation of the Action Lines required considerably greater attention. Clear roadmaps, measurable targets, and regular accountability would have helped transform political commitments into concrete annual progress.

Audience discussion: accountability and coordination

Audience questions focused on two related themes.

One asked how implementation could have remained accountable to WSIS values as governance shifted toward more operational structures.

Another questioned whether the expanding range of intersessional activities and external processes required changes to the organisation of the IGF itself in order to better coordinate relationships with other institutions.

Responding, Markus Kummer pointed to the UN interagency coordination mechanism and the ongoing work of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), describing institutional evolution as an ongoing process rather than one requiring immediate structural overhaul.

Valeria Betancourt argued that accountability required more than procedural multistakeholderism. She called for a more realistic understanding of power asymmetries, stronger national implementation roadmaps, and sustainable financing systems capable of supporting public-interest work across stakeholder groups.

Closing reflections

In concluding remarks, panellists converged on several common themes.

Jimson Olufuye encouraged participants to become "WSIS champions" who actively promoted implementation of the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines.

Dr Yik Chan reiterated that the IGF remained the UN system's only fully multistakeholder governance mechanism and therefore had a unique responsibility to help ensure accountability for AI governance implementation.

Charles Noir argued that accountability should have been exercised collectively through the multistakeholder model itself.

Paul Gaskell called for greater emphasis on practical, focused outcomes at future IGFs, beginning in Kenya, while also observing that multistakeholder institutions should themselves have been funded through multistakeholder approaches.

Matthew Shears concluded that the IGF faced both unprecedented opportunities and significant coordination challenges, stressing that stronger engagement from national and regional IGFs would have been essential if global implementation was to succeed.

Returning to his earlier theme, Markus Kummer reiterated that the IGF's greatest value lay in connecting diverse initiatives rather than allowing them to fragment into competing governance processes.

Closing the session, moderator Desiree Miloshevic encouraged participants to continue working through Internet Society chapters, technical organisations, civil society, governments, and other stakeholders to jointly develop the implementation roadmap needed to transform the WSIS+20 commitments into measurable action.