

REPORT

from WSIS FORUM 2016
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Geneva Internet Platform

DigitalWatch

Report prepared by the Geneva Internet Platform with support from ICANN, the Internet Society, and DiploFoundation

REFLECTING ON WSIS FORUM 2016

This year's WSIS Forum came at a significant time. It brought together the ICT for development and Internet governance (IG) communities, and offered the possibility to discuss the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the light of the WSIS Action Lines. As expected, the underlying themes were heavily linked to development, including bridging the digital divide and strengthening access, and areas related to infrastructure and the digital economy.

Other digital policy themes discussed during the week-long event – which we explore in detail in this final report – include cybersecurity, human rights, and the global IG architecture. Three main achievements of the forum stand out.

Digital mapping of the SDG field

First, the forum directly applied the WSIS-SDG matrix, which maps the WSIS Action Lines to the SDGs and their targets. Sessions and discussions were organised to address the digital aspects of the SDGs.

Anchoring digital activities in the SDG framework

Second, the forum helped participating organisations and countries to anchor their activities and plans in the context of the SDGs. Namely, in the preparation for the forum sessions, all participants were asked to describe their activities and discussions in terms of the SDGs they could have an impact on. This process meant that stakeholders could

now anchor their work in tangible goals, and therefore contribute directly to the attainment of these goals.

For example, this report of the Geneva Internet Platform (GIP) contributes to target 16.8, aimed at broadening and strengthening the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance. It is a culmination of the work of over 30 rapporteurs – many of whom are undergoing training to become curators for the *GIP Digital Watch* observatory. The training represents the GIP's efforts to empower stakeholders, especially in developing countries, to share the challenges, concerns, achievements, and developments which take place in their regions.

WSIS Forum as a sustainable innovation

Third, the forum is an example of sustainable innovation in itself. Over the last few years, it has gradually grown into a major ICT for development community event. This innovative evolution started from an initial annual gathering of loosely connected events of the WSIS Action Lines (e.g. health, education, governance).

Today, the forum provides a coherent event with high visibility and impact. It is smartly designed through a combination of the high-level track and a series of workshops, gathering participants from governments, business, civil society, the technical community, and academia. Inclusion is further strengthened by remote participation in all sessions.



Winners of WSIS Prizes 2016. The prizes are in recognition of efforts to implement the WSIS outcomes. [↗](#)

Credit: ITU/I.Wood

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This report has been prepared by the Geneva Internet Platform, with support from ICANN, the Internet Society, and DiploFoundation. Session reports and updates from WSIS Forum 2016 are available on the *GIP Digital Watch* observatory at dw.giplatform.org/wsisforum2016.

[↗](#) Click on the icon in the digital version to access additional information.

ABOUT THE WSIS FORUM

The WSIS Forum is an annual follow-up event to the World Summit on the Information Society and its ten-year review of outcomes (UNGA Resolution 70/125). It is co-organised by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in close collaboration with all WSIS Action Line Facilitators/Co-facilitators: the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO), UN Women, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations (UN), the International Trade Center (ITC), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and UN Regional Commissions.

The annual forum provides a platform to exchange information, share best practices, and provide assistance in developing multistakeholder

and public-private partnerships. This year's strong focus was on aligning the WSIS implementation and the SDGs processes by assessing the role of ICTs as enablers of SDG targets towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNGA Resolution A/70/1).

The forum's agenda was built on the official submissions received during the 2016 Open Consultation Process on the thematic aspects and innovations of the format, which ran in five phases from November 2015 to April 2016.

The week-long event was split into thematic workshops and high-level policy sessions, with facilitators representing four stakeholder groups: civil society, the private sector, the technical community, and academia. WSIS Forum 2016 was chaired by Ambassador Daniel A. Sepulveda, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy in the State Department's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (EB), United States.

WSIS Forum 2016 in numbers

1800+	stakeholders participated in the forum
150+	countries represented
150+	sessions organised
115+	submissions on thematic aspects and innovations to the format
85+	ministers and deputies, ambassadors, CEOs and civil society leaders attended
5 phases	in the open consultation process in preparation of the forum

Source: Outcome Document of WSIS Forum 2016

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS \ WSIS ACTION LINES LINKAGES

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	e-gov	e-bus	e-lea	e-hea	e-emp	e-env	e-agr	e-sci	C8	C9	C10	C11
SDG 1																		
SDG 2																		
SDG 3																		
SDG 4																		
SDG 5																		
SDG 6																		
SDG 7																		
SDG 8																		
SDG 9																		
SDG 10																		
SDG 11																		
SDG 12																		
SDG 13																		
SDG 14																		
SDG 15																		
SDG 16																		
SDG 17																		

Source: WSIS - SDG matrix

UPCOMING EVENTS

9-13 MAY
19th Session of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development - CSTD (Geneva)

6-7 JUNE
Annual Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (New York)

11-20 JULY
High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: Ensuring that No One is Left Behind (New York)

17-22 JULY
14th Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development - UNCTAD (Nairobi)

HIGH-LEVEL POLICY SESSIONS: 16 SESSIONS, 14 THEMES

During WSIS Forum 2016, high-level policy sessions discussed 14 themes based on the Geneva Plan of Action, [\[2\]](#) and in particular, the WSIS Action Lines. The sessions, which took place on 3-4 May, were moderated by High-level Track Facilitators, nominated from different stakeholder groups.

Common elements in the high-level policy sessions included the importance of addressing the SDGs; the need for constant capacity building; the need to develop local content; cross-policy platform sharing; infrastructure; development; investments and costs; and the need to diminish different divides and dichotomies.

Session One on **WSIS Action Lines and the 2030 Agenda** (facilitated by Dr Tomasz Janowski, United Nations University) focused on the need to align these processes, especially concerning the issues of infrastructure, services, legislation, innovation, and entrepreneurship and capacity building.

Session Two on **Knowledge Societies, Capacity Building and eLearning** (facilitated by Dr Shailaja Fennell, University of Cambridge) referred to the key vision that the knowledge society needs to have to be socially inclusive, but also to look at social justice in order to achieve the SDGs. The importance of working with youth and the need for regular upgrading in our dynamic setting was also noted.

Reporting on Session Three, on the **WSIS Action Lines and SDGs**, facilitator Ms Karen McCabe (IEEE) stressed the importance of 'a friendly platform for investment in infrastructure, so that we can enable new and emerging technologies that come into the ICT space', noting case studies of collaboration between governments and citizens, and cooperation between commercial and non-commercial stakeholders.

Session Four on **Inclusiveness, Access to Information, and Knowledge for All** (facilitated by Mr Klaus Stoll, Global Knowledge Partnership), discussed diverse approaches to four commonalities: local content is a prerequisite for meaningful access; diversity and language are indispensable; ICT is relevant for all SDGs; and awareness raising and capacity building should range from basic literacy to coding and involvement in high-level IG processes.

Ms Chinmayi Arun (National Law University Delhi), facilitator of Session Five on **Bridging the Digital Divide**, noted that the digital divide remains a critical issue, with contributing factors including problems of infrastructure, affordability, skills and awareness, and relevant content. She noted that the WSIS+10 outcome document [\[3\]](#) contains a strong commitment to bridging the digital divide.

Session Six, facilitated by Mr Pablo Hinojosa (APNIC) stressed **Inclusiveness** as a means of eliminating poverty and marginalisation in all forms, through the creation of jobs, and the democratisation of access to the Internet in all areas of national territories. The promotion of ICTs through awareness raising was also mentioned as a means of bridging the gender gap.

Session Seven on the **Enabling Environment** (facilitated by Ms Anriette Esterhuysen, APC) discussed an enabling environment as a cross-cutting issue; it is the action line that underpins all the other action lines and the integration of SDGs as we move beyond Agenda 2030.

Session Eight on **ICT Applications and Services** (facilitated by Ms Elizabeth Thomas-Raynaud, ICC) referred to the importance of better communication, of leveraging ICTs, of a citizen-centred approach to e-government, and of user-targeted technology.

The key point which emerged from Session Nine on **WSIS and SDGs** (moderated by Mr Nigel Hickson, ICANN) was the vicious circle created as we use ICTs: as the take-up of ICTs accelerates, it reduces the digital divide and enhances our ability to meet the targets of the SDGs.

Reporting from Session Ten on **Digital Economy and Trade**, facilitator Ms Marilyn Cade (mCADE LLC) said that it was clear that the digital economy and trade are essential for the success of all of the SDGs as we clearly cannot solve poverty, food, and other problems 'unless we also are engaged in embracing the digitisation of the economy and the complete integration of digitisation that is transforming the world today'.

Session Eleven on **Bridging the Digital Divide** (facilitated by Mr Greg Shannon, Carnegie Mellon University) referred to access as a key component of the digital divide, with relevant content and effective use essential for meaningful access. Shannon said that 'innovation is the solution to bridging digital divides and the bridging of those divides will also improve innovation.'

Session Twelve on the **Enabling Environment, Cybersecurity, and Climate Change** (facilitated by Ms Anna Slomovic, George Washington University) included delegates from four continents representing governments, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs, and the private sector, demonstrating and expressing that ICTs can be used to bridge the digital divide, and that a multistakeholder approach can ensure that resources are sustainable and available for generations to come.

Facilitating Session Thirteen on **Bridging the Digital Divide**, Dr Cisse Kane (African Civil Society on the Information Society) shared the view that overcoming the digital divide means including those who 'do not speak the languages of the computer', stressing that we must take into account local languages and local cultures.

Reporting from Session Fourteen on **SDGs, Financing, and the Role of ICTs**, facilitator Ms Iffat Gill (ChunriChoupaal, The Code To Change) synthesised two priorities - zero poverty and knowledge - as a powerful catalyst for the uptake of ICTs, with knowledge being the key to uplifting underserved communities from poverty.

Session Fifteen on **Enabling Environment** (facilitated by Mr Frank Mc Cosker, Microsoft) focused on the importance of legislation, access, trust between governments and civil society, and human rights, bringing in many case studies from different countries.

Session Sixteen on **Media, Cultural Diversity and Heritage, Linguistic Diversity and Local Content** (facilitated by Ms Lori Schulman, INTA) concluded that the availability of local content in local languages, and the possibility of accessing and creating such content should be at the core of all discussions on access.

[Read separate reports from the Moderated High-Level Policy Sessions: Sessions One, Three, Five, and Seven; [\[4\]](#) Sessions Two, Four, Six, and Eight; [\[5\]](#) Sessions Ten, Twelve, Fourteen, and Sixteen; [\[6\]](#) and Sessions Nine, Eleven, Thirteen, and Fifteen. [\[7\]](#)



Dr Jovan Kurbalija, DiploFoundation director and head of the Geneva Internet Platform, during a Moderated High-Level Policy Session on Day 2 (3 May). Credit: ITU/R.Farrell

INTRODUCTION

This year's WSIS Forum was closely intertwined with the SDGs. The 2015 matrix, linking the SDGs and the WSIS Action Lines, provided a concrete background against which the discussions at the forum took place. The next section summarises the WSIS Forum discussions by theme, following the taxonomy used on the *GIP Digital Watch* observatory, [including](#) development, infrastructure, cybersecurity, human rights, and e-commerce. The summaries are based on comprehensive session reports. [↗](#)

As many of the sessions addressed cross-cutting topics, the thematic focus is analysed transversally. ICT for development, access

to the Internet, and infrastructure-related topics were underlying themes throughout the discussions. For example, access to the Internet was not only discussed as an end in itself, but also as a tool for development and a means of achieving sustainable development targets.

Additionally, other topics - such as the relevance of data and ICT indicators - were discussed in relation to measuring progress towards the 2030 development agenda and were also common themes throughout most discussions.



DEVELOPMENT

ACCESS AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Nearly half of the global population still lacks broadband Internet access, while the importance of the Internet in society has grown. The whole planet should work hand-in-hand to permit everybody to have a fair share of this latest revolution, which would require the support of all relevant stakeholders (session 225 on the **Global Connect Initiative** [↗](#)). Governments not only need to put in place effective policies, but they should also change their perception of broadband, recognising it as a core infrastructure that is as important for economic growth and development as the transportation and power infrastructures.

Action Line C6 (Enabling Environment) - Affordable Access for Sustainable Development (session 119 [↗](#)) highlighted the need to adopt the right policy and regulations. The affordability of the Internet and related regulations was analysed from the viewpoints of different regions, including West Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific. The session further underlined the importance of collaborations between governments and the industry. Affordability was also highlighted during the **WSIS Action Line Facilitators Meeting** (session 236 [↗](#)) and solutions might be found in enhancing mobile infrastructure.

The digital divide, separating those connected to the Internet and those who lack Internet access, exists between countries and regions, as well as between different groups in society. **Action Line C2 (ICT Infrastructure) - Evolving Affordable Broadband Infrastructure for Bringing ICT to All** (session

121 [↗](#)) indicated some of these divides, including the rural vs urban divide and the divide between developing and developed countries. The challenge of enhancing Internet connectivity in Africa, in particular related to infrastructure and multistakeholder collaboration, was highlighted in **WSIS+10 and Beyond: Where do we Stand in Africa?** (session 140 [↗](#)). Accessibility was also discussed from a human rights perspective (see more below).

One particular part of the 'access' debate concerns the need for access to information. In **Establish an Inclusive, Shared and Open Information Environment, Ensure All Enjoy Information Civilization** (session 184 [↗](#)), panellists discussed ways to have everyone benefit from communication facilities, including the elderly and disabled persons. Access to knowledge was also addressed in **Action Line C3 (Access) - Access to Scientific Knowledge** (session 115 [↗](#)), which focused on scientific knowledge and the need to break down 'knowledge monopolies'.

In general, the forum highlighted not only that governments have a responsibility to design effective policies and provide a suitable regulatory environment, but that the Internet industry can also play an important role by designing new business models and crafting innovative ideas. The underlying sentiment was that efforts to increase access and close the digital divide are driven by a wide range of stakeholders who need to create an enabling environment, so that everyone can benefit from the advantages of connectivity.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity development depends on, but also complements efforts to, bridge the digital divide and ensure equal and inclusive access. ICT was unanimously described as a great enabler to bridge gaps between and within countries. Many panellists emphasised the importance of multistakeholder cooperation, private-public partnerships, and achieving local buy-in for successful capacity building.

The **Moderated High-Level Policy Session** (session 204 [↗](#)) underscored the crucial importance of capacity development by linking it to the wellbeing of populations, economic and social development, justice, equality, and social inclusion.

A number of panels stressed that capacity building is about expertise but also inclusion. **Gender Equality and e-Skills Gap** (session 178 [↗](#)) emphasised gender equality and highlighted examples of individual capacity building initiatives that aim to enable women to enter digital professions. Similarly, **Acceleration of Girls Education and Rights to Ensure Sustainable Gender Empowerment Through ICTs** (session 157 [↗](#)) explicitly stressed the need to achieve gender equality in education and to include ICT skills in school curricula. SDG 4, calling for inclusive and equitable quality education, was the focus of **Action Line C7 (E-learning) - Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promoting Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All** (session 189 [↗](#)), which also

WSIS ACTION LINES



directly addressed WSIS Action Lines 4 (capacity building) and 7 (ICT applications, especially e-learning). Looking at Action Line 4, the **WSIS Action Line Facilitators Meeting** (session 236 [🔗](#)) argued that it is not the infrastructure we need to focus on but rather improving people's abilities to use applications. Inclusion in the IG process was the topic of **Engaging Under-Represented Communities in Regional and Global Internet Governance Debates** (session 138 [🔗](#)) which focused on challenges to participating in regional and global debates and suggested ways to better engage underrepresented countries and communities. Funding participation in national and regional IGFs and supporting local initiatives were important topics in the **IGFSA Informational Session** (session 227 [🔗](#)).

Examples of capacity building, including regulatory capacity and projects to build knowledge societies, were shared in **Capacity Building, a Gateway for Development** (session 156 [🔗](#)). From the perspective of the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) and the International Professional Practice Partnership (IP3), **The Contribution IFIP IP3 Makes to WSIS SDGs** (session 170 [🔗](#)) addressed issues of building capacity for a professional ICT workforce.

A number of sessions outlined key issues to be addressed to support capacity building. **Advancing Internet Governance Principles and Practice** (session 107 [🔗](#)) stressed the importance of developing IG principles. Existing principles need to be communicated and disseminated so that they are well understood at the local level, and the drafting of these principles needs to be inclusive. Focusing on the African context, **How to Develop Appropriate Strategies for Linkages Between ICT and SDGs** (session 171 [🔗](#)) emphasised the importance of creating infrastructure for access to ICT. Building institutional capacity needs to include African diplomats and leaders as well as NGOs, businesses, and universities. **WSIS+10 and Beyond: Where do we Stand in Africa?** (session 140 [🔗](#)) also addressed capacity building in Africa and focused in particular on infrastructure needs. **Engaging Digital Actors, Fostering Effective Digital Policy and Monitoring Digital Governance** (session 167 [🔗](#)) stressed the need for and value of synthesised knowledge on capacity building and discussed the key contributions of the *GIP Digital Watch* observatory [🔗](#) in detail. With similar intentions, session 130 [🔗](#) showcased the work of the **Global Internet Policy Observatory Tool**. [🔗](#)



CYBERSECURITY

As the demands of ICT-related SDGs need to be met with capacity-building initiatives, cybersecurity was identified as one of the eight core digital skills people need in the twenty-first century. **Internet Governance, Security, Privacy and the Ethical Dimension of ICTs in 2030** (session 150 [🔗](#)) suggested that the interpretation of vast amounts of information and big data that Internet of Things (IoT) will bring could result in an innovative multi-trillion-dollar economy. Examples of solutions that can both boost the economy and increase security were raised in **From Cybersecurity to 'Cyber' Safety and Security** (session 172 [🔗](#)); these included the use of social media for managing disasters.

Ensuring trust in cyberspace through collaboration between governments, the industry, and users was outlined as fundamental for utilising economic opportunities necessary for fulfilling the SDGs during discussions in **Action Line C5 (Building Confidence and Security in the Use of ICTs) - National Cybersecurity Strategies for Sustainable Development** (session 120 [🔗](#)). Such cooperation in the area of cybersecurity, however, should be built on trust between the public and private sectors. **A Trusted Internet Through the Eyes of Youth** (session 151 [🔗](#)) warned that trust on the Internet is highly fragmented due to the diverse interests of stakeholders, and especially due to surveillance programmes. Multistakeholder dialogue and shaping policies by consensus were mentioned as ways to strengthen mutual trust. [🔗](#)

When it comes to practical suggestions for improving cooperation in cybersecurity, panellists of session 120 [🔗](#) also suggested cooperation in incident response that can include both compulsory and voluntary reporting on cyber-incidents. Session 170 [🔗](#) invited companies to invest more in education, professionalism, and security. Providing good quality legal and technical information and data to decision-makers was added to the list of suggested measures by the discussants of **From Cybersecurity to 'Cyber' Safety and Security** (by the discussants of session 172 [🔗](#)).

In **Cyberlaw, Bitcoins, Blockchains, Cybercrimes & Darknet** (session 161 [🔗](#)), it was underlined that the enforcement of existing national cy-

ber-related laws faces various obstacles, such as multiple jurisdictions applying to cloud and web content (especially the Dark Web) and generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs) and Internationalised Domain Names (IDNs), the unclear ownership of personal data collected by gadgets such as wearables and stored in the cloud, and the criminal misuse of new technologies like bitcoin and cryptocurrencies.

Various emerging risks were also discussed in several sessions. Emerging economies face several challenges related to spam, as noted in **Spam: Understanding and Mitigating the Challenges Faced by Emerging Internet Economies** (session 152 [🔗](#)). Session 172 [🔗](#) raised concerns about the emerging face of terrorism which increasingly uses new technologies including commercial drones.

Internet Governance, Security, Privacy and the Ethical Dimension of ICTs in 2030 (session 150 [🔗](#)) warned that big data should be accompanied by 'big judgment' and awareness of communities of the risks of 'ubervigilance' - becoming possible due to brain-to-computer interfaces (BCIs) and sub-dermal implants - that can have an irreversible impact on society. On the other hand, session 120 [🔗](#) commented on encryption as a useful concept that can enhance individual security, and suggested that law enforcement agencies can benefit greatly from other digital evidence.

When it comes to the protection of children online, panellists in **Child Online Protection: The Road Ahead** (session 144 [🔗](#)) admitted that constant innovations are hard to keep up with. As with other areas, emergent patterns of crime - such as cyberbullying, risky self-generated material, and cyber blackmail (also discussed in **Student Self-Immune Awareness Program & Addressing the Rising Trend of Cyber Blackmail** - session 185 [🔗](#)) - present a challenge to law enforcement and to industry. Online child sexual exploitation material remains a problem. Interpol's network rescues more than six children every day, with many of the victims of sexual abuse being pre-pubescent and pre-speech children.





HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights and accessibility for all were addressed as cross-cutting issues throughout the forum. Particular sessions addressed specific minority groups (persons with a disability, women, children) and challenges such as freedom of expression in more detail. These sessions shared emphasis on the need for awareness raising and education as key strategies to achieve the SDGs.

The role of ICTs in promoting and accelerating access to education for girls and women was explored in **Harnessing ICTs for Greater Access to Education for Girls and Women** (session 116 [🔗](#)). The importance of the gender gap, support for choices, and the roles that parents and women play in supporting choices were discussed, among other important topics. UNESCO projects, the Africa Engineering Week, and other examples highlighted increasing possibilities for girls. **Acceleration of Girls Education and Rights to Ensure Sustainable Gender Empowerment Through ICTs** (session 157) pointed out the importance of including ICT skills in educational system curricula to give girls equal opportunities in ICTs from an early age. Getting to school in the first place, learning about ICTs, mastering the skills, and gaining the confidence to enter the related fields were all mentioned as steps to ensuring a healthy environment for all children. **Harnessing ICTs for Greater Access to Education for Girls and Women** (session 176 [🔗](#)) stressed the importance of women's access to online education.

Panellists in **The Role of Web Accessibility in Digital Inclusion** (session 142 [🔗](#)) presented possibilities to address the serious challenge that only 10% of EU websites are accessible to people

with disabilities. They presented practical examples such as the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), [🔗](#) guidelines, [🔗](#) links for checking websites for accessibility, [🔗](#) and other possibilities to promote solutions for improvement. **Making ICT Accessibility a Reality** (session 118 [🔗](#)) and **Leave No One Behind** (session 182 [🔗](#)) also focused on ways to make ICTs accessible to persons with a disability.

Action Line C9 (Media): Promote Media Freedom and Internet Universality at the Heart of Achieving SDG Target 16.10 (session 114) highlighted the goal to 'ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements'.

Freedom of expression, access to information, and the safety of journalists were stressed as important foundations to achieving this goal. Cooperation among different stakeholders was emphasised as crucial support for a strategy to implementation of Action Line C9 (Media).

Global Kids Online - Children's Rights in the Digital Age (session 145 [🔗](#)) showcased the perspectives of UNICEF's Global Kids Online (GKO) project, research in Latin America (*Risks and Safety on the Internet: Comparing Brazilian and European Children* (2013) [🔗](#) and *Net Children Go Mobile* (2014) [🔗](#)), ITU statistics on children's use of the Internet, and policy initiatives to give practical examples of how research can contribute to global and national policies in support of children's rights.



INFRASTRUCTURE

While developing countries represent around 80% of the world's population, the rate of Internet adoption in developing countries (39%) is significantly low. Various ways of increasing the adoption rate - including strengthening the infrastructure, enabling cross-industry cooperation, and creating new business models - were discussed.

Mobile infrastructure can play a major role in narrowing the digital divide. The global mobile revolution is a key success factor, one panellist explained in **Action Line C2 (ICT Infrastructure) - Evolving Affordable Broadband Infrastructure for Bringing ICT to All** (session 121 [🔗](#)). One suggestion was to provide ultra-efficient and solar-powered base stations suitable for rural towns, with local communities providing a secure space where to host the station and other equipment. Government subsidies could support the effort. At the same time, broadband connectivity is also important.

In **Action Line C6 (Enabling Environment) - Affordable Access for Sustainable Development** (session 229 [🔗](#)), the panellists described

the concept of infrastructure sharing in their regions. For example, in West Africa, providers are required to share their infrastructure, including the grounds, the antennae, and even active components within their networks, therefore passing the reduced cost of setting up new infrastructure on to the end user. In the Maldives, infrastructure sharing is embraced by the main industry players. Healthy competition levels helped make the networks more efficient in terms of cost and distribution.

Enabling a Trusted Connected World (session 111 [🔗](#)) discussed the vision of a trusted information infrastructure which would ensure that information running on the infrastructure is safe.

In addition, addressing the issues related to proper regulation and interoperability could contribute to a trusted, connected world. Infrastructure-related challenges were also discussed in other sessions related to development, access, the digital divide, and e-commerce.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





E-COMMERCE

ICTs are an effective tool for raising productivity, improving access to consumers and suppliers, and connecting least developed countries (LDCs) to the global value chain. In LDCs, e-commerce is crucial for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). However, challenges - such as poor connectivity, complexities related to import and export, and other trade barriers - need to be tackled. **Action Line C7 E- business - Leveraging ICT to Support the SDG on Trade Growth for Least Developed Countries** (session 116 [🔗](#)) discussed these challenges, while sharing experiences of businesses in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Zambia.

E-commerce has the potential to reduce costs for SMEs and integrate small economies into the international trade system. **How the Internet Enables Sustainable Development: Incorporating Data-Driven Policies to Measure Impact** (session 149 [🔗](#)) referred to the mobile revolution, the importance of accountability at governmental level, and the need to foster private-public partnerships at national and international levels. **ICT4SDG: Digital Economy for Development** (session 179 [🔗](#)) shared best practices for economic development and inclusion, and highlighted the potential opportunities for engagement

mainly through advertising and marketing, education, and entertainment.

Innovation is a key factor in strengthening e-commerce. Panellists in **New Frameworks for Policy Experimentation Fostering ICT4D** (session 134 [🔗](#)) said that innovation is the missing link between the analogue and the digital economies. SMEs and the middle class of communities can disappear if local regulations do not promote a good balance between local-global players and analogue-digital businesses.

In a session dedicated to the postal network - **Putting Public Assets to Work** (session 159 [🔗](#)) - panellists discussed the role that the postal network can play in linking the physical world with the digital world, and in addressing issues such as financial inclusion.

The session also highlighted the work that several UN organisations - including the ITU, the WTO, UNCTAD, and the UPU - as well as many other entities, are undertaking in the area of e-commerce, with the aim of encouraging economic development.

IG

GLOBAL INTERNET GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE

Although mostly focused on ICT for development, the WSIS Forum also included discussions on issues related to the broader IG ecosystem, such as the IGF, ICANN, or the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation (WGEC).

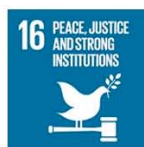
In **Enhanced Cooperation and Internet Governance** (session 168 [🔗](#)), the discussion revolved around enhanced cooperation and IG; it was said that, instead of trying to (re)define the terms, efforts should be focused on developing recommendations and mechanisms that can help IG and enhanced cooperation processes be more inclusive, effective, transparent, and responsive to the public interest. **Advancing Internet Governance Principles and Practice** (session 107 [🔗](#)) discussed the development and effectiveness of IG principles. A point was made that, although these principles are incorporated into non-binding guidelines, they are useful in informing internationally binding agreements such as the UN Human Rights resolutions.

The importance of the IGF [🔗](#) as an open, inclusive, and multistakeholder forum for discussions on IG issues was stressed in the **IGF 2016 Information Session** [🔗](#). As the forum continues for another ten years, it needs to engage more stakeholders (especially from developing countries) in its activities. **Engaging Underrepresented Communities in Regional and Global Internet Governance Debates** (sessions 138 [🔗](#)) and the **IGFSA Informational Session** [🔗](#) looked

at emerging national and regional IGF initiatives, their potential to influence Internet policy at local level, and their connections with the global IGF.

Aspects related to the Internet architecture were also touched on. **Internet Fragmentation** (session 169 [🔗](#)) discussed the need to maintain an open, unique, and global Internet, and looked at various types of risks (of technical, governmental, or commercial nature) than can lead to Internet fragmentation. The expansion of the DNS [🔗](#) with over 1000 new gTLDs was the focus of **ICANN New gTLD Program Reviews and Lessons Learned** (session 141 [🔗](#)). ICANN [🔗](#) is currently undertaking reviews of the new gTLD programme (its impact on competition, consumer choice, rights protection, etc.). These are expected to inform a decision on whether and when there will be a new round of the programme.

In **CCWG Accountability** (session 186 [🔗](#)), the discussion focused on the IANA stewardship transition process and the related work on enhancing ICANN's accountability, [🔗](#) both processes being described as a remarkable example of a working multistakeholder model. The transition and accountability proposals were seen as a compromise reached by various stakeholders who shared the same goal: ensuring that, as the transition takes place, Internet technical functions continue to work well and ICANN becomes more accountable to the community.

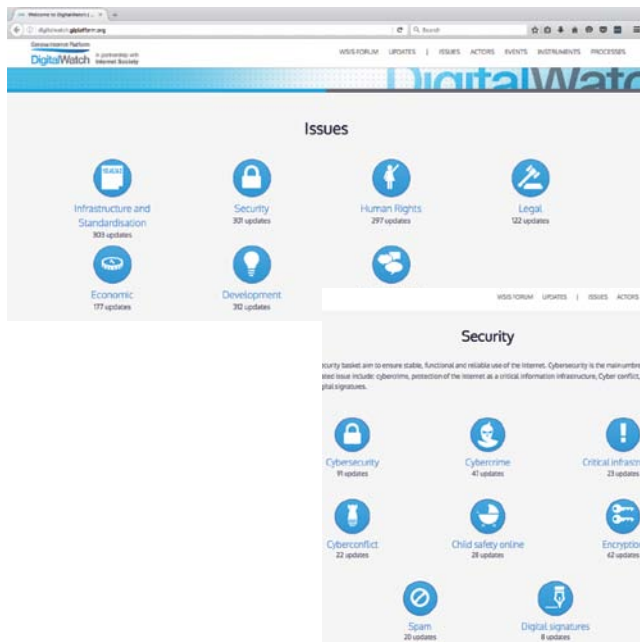


THE GIP DIGITAL WATCH OBSERVATORY

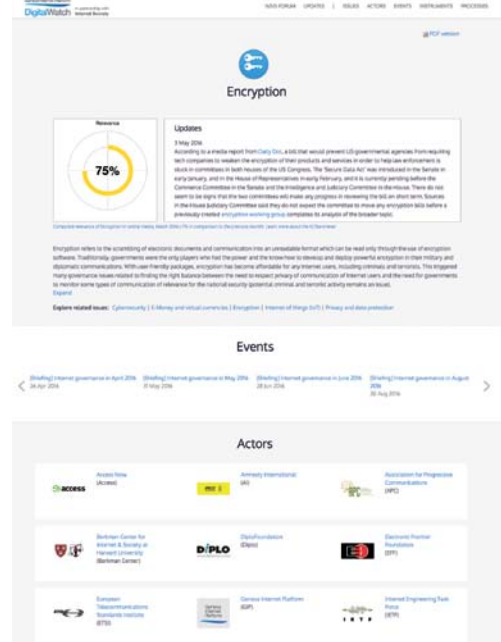
The *GIP Digital Watch* observatory, at digitalwatch.giplatform.org, is a neutral one-stop shop for live developments, overviews, and explanatory texts, events, resources, and other content related to IG and digital policy. The observatory is a product of the Geneva Internet Platform (GIP; operated by DiploFoundation) in partnership with the Internet Society. It builds on DiploFoundation's resources developed over the past 15 years. The GIP's international reach and the Internet Society's network of chapters help shape localised content. Content on the observatory is carefully curated by a team of knowledge curators and data scientists.

How to use the observatory in two steps

1. Visit dw.giplatform.org and browse the issues



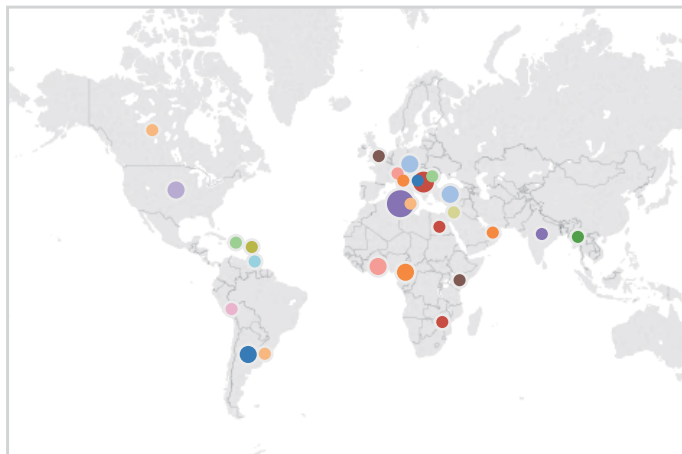
2. For each issue, explore updates, events, main actors, instruments, resources, and more...



THE TEAM BEHIND GIP'S REPORTS

Over 35 rapporteurs were involved in the GIP's just-in-time reporting from WSIS Forum 2016. Many of the rapporteurs have been undergoing training to join the team of curators at the *GIP Digital Watch* observatory.

The GIP thanks all the rapporteurs, and the support team behind this initiative, for their dedication and professionalism.



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