

IT for Change's Statement to the co-facilitators of the preparatory process for the Summit of the Future

My name is Merrin Muhammed Ashraf, and I represent IT for Change, an India-based not for profit organization, working on digital technologies and global justice.

The WSIS Declaration underscores the importance of engaging all actors – governments, civil society, technical community, and the private sector - in their appropriate roles and responsibilities in shaping the future of global digital governance. Governments have a legitimate public policy role in determining the global digital governance roadmap, but this legitimacy is earned through public consultations that engage civil society. As a member of the Global Digital Justice Forum, an alliance of civil society organizations from the global South, we would like to reiterate that a new social contract for our data and AI future cannot be negotiated without civil society at the table.

The Summit of the Future needs to affirm the vital opportunity presented by the WSIS+20 review in 2025. It must call out unequivocally the injustice and extractivism of the mainstream digital economy and recognize the need for an inclusive, equitable and just global governance regime for data and AI.

We underscore the criticality of two aspects:

One – The place of public financing and ODA for the development of data infrastructural capabilities in the Global South, so that 50% value from the digital economy accrues to the bottom 50% globally, by 2030, and

Two – The need for a high level Working Group that reports to the General Assembly to recommend a binding global governance regime for data -- straddling economic and non-economic issues, operating from the principles of data flows with human rights and equity, and recognizing development as inextricably linked to people's data sovereignty.