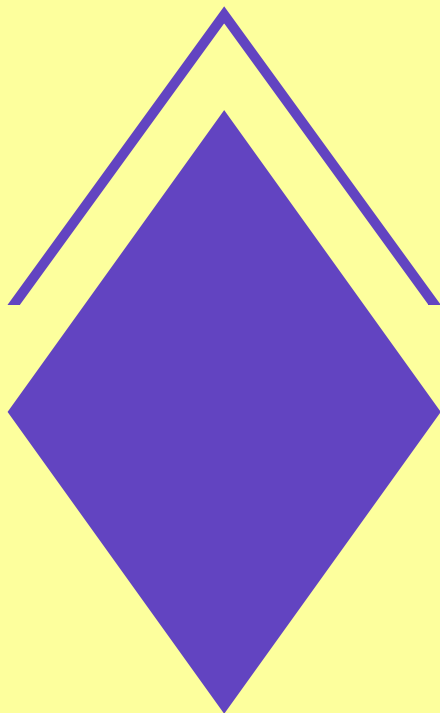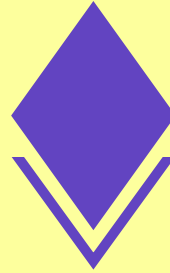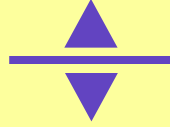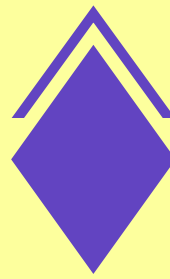# IGF 2024

**Session Report:
IGF 0 Day Event**

**Fit for Future:
A Visioning Exercise
for Digital
Cooperation**

Session Report: IGF 0 Day Event - "Fit for Future: A Visioning Exercise for Digital Cooperation"

Date: December 15, 2024
Time: 10:45 AM - 12:45 PM Riyadh time (UTC +3:00)
Format: Hybrid Roundtable
Location: Workshop Room 5, King Abdulaziz International Conference Center (KAICC)/ Online

Onsite Moderators: Anriette Esterhuysen (APC) and Valeria Betancourt (APC)
Online Moderator: Dennis Redeker (DC Internet Rights and Principles/Digital Constitutionalism Network)

The session "Fit for Future" was a visioning exercise focused on advancing global digital cooperation. Anchored in the World Summit on Information Society, 20-year review (WSIS + 20 review) and the Global Digital Compact (GDC), the session aimed to identify gaps and institutional deficits in digital governance while fostering discussions on how global cooperation can deliver digital justice. The session brought together a diverse set of stakeholders from governmental, civil society, and technical communities. The session was divided into three rounds.

Round 1. Missing Dots

During the first round of discussions, moderated by **Anriette Esterhuysen,** speakers focused on the missing links in WSIS and GDC implementation. **Isabel De Sola Criado from OSET** highlighted the progress made since WSIS in promoting digital access and inclusion, emphasizing the need to go beyond access to address equity, which has found a place in GDC. Further, Isabel pointed out that both the WSIS and GDC frameworks need to do more to promote gender empowerment and address environmental issues. **Luca Belli of FGV Law School** acknowledged the aspirational nature of the GDC but highlighted its lack of clear implementation mechanisms and multistakeholder cooperation structures. He emphasized the need for a detailed roadmap and equitable resource distribution.

Additionally, Luca expressed concern over the growing dominance of infrastructure over traditional legal frameworks in regulating technologies like AI, stressing the urgency of addressing policy fragmentation and enhancing political will to tackle systemic challenges.

Bruna Martins from the GNSO Council emphasized the need for a stronger connection between WSIS and the GDC. Bruna also expressed hope that the WSIS review would lead to a more participatory Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and called for increased stakeholder commitment, resources, and sustained advocacy to address gaps in implementation. **Chris Buckridge of Buckridge Consultants** highlighted that inclusivity is a significant concern for the technical community. He also pointed out that the increasing number of forums for discussions on digital policies, while beneficial, can hinder meaningful engagement. Additionally, he stressed the need for the IGF to better understand its role in the broader ecosystem and ensure that discussions lead to actionable outcomes in decision-making spaces. **Jimson Olufuye from AfICTA** emphasized the importance of continued cooperation and ongoing dialogue in global discussions, advocating for the creation of a diverse advisory council for the GDC to ensure a more inclusive governance framework. He stressed that achieving global peace, prosperity, and the SDGs requires clear goals and the inclusion of all stakeholders, warning that without this, processes will lack sufficient buy-in.

Round 2. Connecting Lines

The second round, moderated by **Valeria Betancourt**, focused on "Connecting Lines" to reinvigorate WSIS implementation and address emerging challenges like AI, cybersecurity, and digital sovereignty. **Gitanjali Sah from ITU** highlighted the importance of evolving the WSIS Action Lines to tackle emerging issues like AI and cybersecurity, and stressed the need for continued multi-stakeholder engagement and inclusivity, particularly for women, persons with disabilities, and older persons, in policy discussions. Additionally, she noted the significance of alignment of WSIS Action Lines with the SDGs to ensure digital technologies contribute to sustainable development.

UNESCO's Cédric Wachholz advocated for transitioning from "information societies" to "knowledge societies," emphasizing ethical AI and equitable data governance. **Renata Avila of Open Knowledge Foundation** expressed concerns about the GDC's lack of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, particularly regarding the influence of financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank on digital infrastructure investments. She critiqued the imposition of loan conditionalities that undermine national sovereignty and human rights, and called for greater transparency in decision-making and better integration of digital development with global trade policies to ensure inclusivity.

Nandini Chami of IT for Change highlighted priorities such as establishing standards for digital public goods, achieving universal connectivity, protecting media pluralism, and fostering equitable digital education. Nandini called for stronger human rights safeguards, addressing gender inequality in digital spaces, and implementing flexible governance mechanisms to ensure meaningful Civil Society participation in digital and AI governance.
Jorge Cancio Melia of the Swiss Federal Office of Communications highlighted the importance of revisiting the WSIS Action Lines and fostering cooperation, warning against exacerbating geopolitical tensions and calling for a collaborative, equitable approach to digital governance.

Round 3. Moving the Agenda

In the final round, participants discussed strategies to enhance inclusivity and effectiveness in digital governance. **Juan Alfonso Fernández González from Cuba** emphasized the relevance of WSIS action lines in integrating different approaches, while others highlighted the risks of institutional fragmentation. The importance of leveraging the IGF and Commission on Science and Technology for Development to advance GDC objectives was also underscored.

In her closing remarks, **Anita Gurumurthy of IT for Change** emphasized the need to balance geoeconomic and geopolitical priorities, advocating for a justice-oriented approach to digital transformation. She highlighted the importance of democratic ownership and equitable resource distribution as critical elements of this transformation.

Key takeaways and Action points

The session concluded with a clear recognition of the critical gaps in digital cooperation and actionable steps to address them. There is a need for stronger alignment between WSIS and GDC processes to avoid duplication and address emerging issues like data governance, AI ethics, and gender equity. Key implementation challenges, such as the lack of a clear roadmap, financing mechanisms, and inclusive participation, must be addressed to ensure effective GDC implementation and promote transparency in digital policy-making. Equitable participation, especially for the Global South and underrepresented communities, and integrating gender considerations into digital governance frameworks are urgent priorities.

Action points include developing a comprehensive GDC roadmap, addressing institutional deficits in global digital governance, strengthening civil society participation, and revitalizing WSIS action lines to ensure resources and incentives for cooperation in the face of contemporary challenges.