IT for Change's input at the WSIS+20 Plenary
December 17, 2025
Esteemed delegates

The WSIS Geneva Declaration articulates the abiding values of digital society, underlining that technology and innovation are but instruments – and their purpose at all times is to foster societal well-being and human rights.

The data and AI blitzkrieg has rewritten the script. We are now enamored, and our cognition enslaved by the heady wares of platform capitalism. People and planet are now instruments for innovation. And we have indeed lost the plot.

Consider this… A worker in India folds hand towels hundreds of times a day with a camera mounted on their head – generating training data for an AI that will never problem-solve for their embedded reality. This is the platformization of work, a story of precarity and indignity of data labour.

An estimated 96% of global deepfakes are non-consensual intimate content, targeting women and girls. Yet, Generative AI is heralded as an unequivocal story of civilizational success.

As overall emissions and water usage skyrocket due to AI infrastructure, the most powerful corporations have simply walked away from their carbon neutrality commitments. The feverish race for AI expansion trumps even existential climate threats.

This, tragically, is our innovation economy – built on dispossession, dehumanization and disenfranchisement.

But people from the South are reclaiming the internet and its promise. They are resisting the new epoch of data extractivism, saying NO to unjust trade deals. They are calling for an embodied and embedded knowledge society – and a return of innovation to the edges where the digital commons thrive with digital public infrastructures.

Respected colleagues – it is time to affirm this alternative imagination. Another innovation paradigm – South-led decentralized, small, agentic -- is possible.

And it hinges on concrete actions for redistributive justice – contributions for digital infrastructure from major transaction levies on technology companies, respect for the right of all countries to tax cross-border digital services, and reform of international trade.

It also needs a normative framework for AI – an international AI constitution predicated on global democracy, and a Global Technology Assessment Mechanism to govern all emerging technologies.

We close our contribution with a big thank you to the WSIS action line holders. The wealth of networks belongs to the people. Let us pledge to restore it.