

Unlocking Multistakeholder Cooperation within the UN System: Global Partnerships for Open Internet

**IT for Change's input at
WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024**

May 2024



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Input provided at WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024¹

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The 13 principles of multistakeholderism for digital governance from the [Net Mundial+10 Multistakeholder Statement](#) are a useful starting point. Institutional mechanisms that operationalize them need to adapt them to keep the spirit of democratic participation so that the processes are fit for purpose.

With the digital permeating everything, principles of multistakeholderism will need to be embedded for climate justice, food sovereignty, right to health, etc., in a historically grounded way. This is important because digitalization is affecting many traditional areas, and there are already different pathways in global policy processes in these traditional arenas of policymaking. From the perspective of civil society, there is one meta principle for democratic multistakeholderism. That is public reasoning. To define and debate issues in their political content, not by reference to some kind of ideal, but in very practical terms, comparing the impact of particular policies, and reflecting on the way things are done in the name of impartiality and fairness.

Public reason is a powerful tool, and in the AI age, we seem to have post-facto debates, a consequentialist ethics, that is really not the right way to go. By not dealing with public reasoning, we do not then deal with a very significant idea in democracy: public authority.

Modern institutions built on the constitutional theory of public authority are rooted in the doctrine of popular sovereignty, which is required for democratic legitimacy.

So, what do we take away from this for multistakeholder processes?

1. There needs to be informed, participatory, and transparent engagement. The term 'informed' was introduced in the Net Mundial+10 principles.
2. Asymmetries in power will exist and the representation of people and issues in the process must be cognizant of this.
3. Stakeholders need to know how to keep the integrity of whom they represent. That is, they need to always remember that there is a constituency they are accountable to.

¹ Know more about [IT for Change's](#) participation at the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024 [here](#).

4. In UN spaces, especially, voices of dissent need to be accommodated. Predictably, stakes and interests are ever-evolving, and hence, an approach to accommodate dissenting voices by design is crucial, especially to broaden and deepen the debate. (We see how indigenous people have done this for AI policymaking.)

5. The processes of multistakeholderism in the digital policy arena are shaped by the political economy of innovation and development, and so the question is, how do we structure and organize the present of governance for a democratic future grounded in human rights, dignity, equity, and global justice.