



“IGF 2025 on ‘Building Digital Governance Together’: The road to WSIS+20 and beyond”

New York, 6 May 2025 (Organized by: Government of Norway, UN DESA)

Background

The side event titled “IGF 2025 on ‘Building Digital Governance Together’: The road to WSIS+20 and beyond” was held on 6 May 2025 during the 10th annual Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Forum at UN Headquarters in New York. Co-hosted by the Government of Norway, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), and the IGF Secretariat, the session provided a strategic preview of the upcoming Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2025 in Lillestrøm, Norway, and its pivotal role in shaping the twenty-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20). With participation from senior UN officials, diplomats, and digital governance leaders, the event offered insights into the thematic priorities of IGF 2025 and its contribution to broader global digital cooperation.

The event directly aligned with the 2024 STI Forum’s theme of “Science, technology and innovation for reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises.” In an era marked by rapid technological transformation and widening digital divides, the session highlighted how inclusive digital governance—anchored in multistakeholder cooperation—can serve as a powerful enabler for sustainable development. The discussion underscored the importance of human-centric digital transformation, digital trust, and responsible innovation as key drivers for aligning digital policy with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the context of the evolving global governance ecosystem represented by the WSIS+20 review, the Global Digital Compact, and the IGF.

Key issues discussed

- **Strategic Vision for IGF 2025:** Norway presented its ambitions for IGF 2025 under the theme “Building Digital Governance Together,” emphasizing the Forum’s role as a global platform for addressing today’s digital challenges and showcasing inclusive, innovative digital governance.
- **Linkage to WSIS+20:** Participants underscored the unique opportunity IGF 2025 offers to feed into the WSIS+20 review process, reflecting on the legacy of WSIS while envisioning a renewed framework that responds to current and emerging digital realities.
- **Multistakeholder Model:** Reaffirmation of the IGF’s multistakeholder approach as vital to inclusive digital governance, with emphasis on the need to lower participation barriers and amplify voices from the Global South and underrepresented groups.
- **Human-Centric Governance:** Consensus on the importance of a human-centric digital future grounded in human rights, including privacy and freedom of expression, with technology serving people—not the other way around.

- **Institutional Strengthening of the IGF:** Calls to renew and enhance the IGF mandate beyond 2025, including stronger institutional linkages, improved funding, and better accessibility of outcomes for policymakers.
- **Digital Policy Coherence:** Recognition of the need for better alignment between WSIS, the Global Digital Compact, and the 2030 Agenda to avoid fragmentation and improve the effectiveness of global digital cooperation.
- **Local to Global Linkages:** Highlighting the role of National and Regional IGF Initiatives (NRIs) in bringing digital governance closer to communities, ensuring context-specific relevance and capacity-building at grassroots levels.
- **Trust and Inclusion Amid Technological Change:** Acknowledgment of growing digital inequalities and trust gaps, reinforcing the importance of inclusive forums like the IGF to foster shared understanding and cooperation in a fast-evolving digital landscape.

Key recommendations for action

- **Closing Digital Divides:** Participants reaffirmed that connecting the remaining 2.6 billion people worldwide remains an urgent global priority. Bridging digital divides—particularly in underserved regions and among marginalized populations—must remain at the core of digital governance agendas.
- **Renew and Institutionalize the IGF Mandate:** There was a strong, shared call for the renewal of the Internet Governance Forum’s mandate beyond 2025. Participants urged that the IGF be integrated into the regular UN budget to ensure its sustainability, institutional legitimacy, and ability to support long-term, inclusive digital cooperation.
- **Strengthen Multistakeholder Participation:** Stakeholders emphasized the need to reinforce the IGF’s multistakeholder model by ensuring more meaningful participation from the Global South, youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, and other underrepresented groups, both in policy processes and leadership roles.
- **Enhance the Utility of IGF Outputs:** A key recommendation was to make IGF outcomes more accessible, actionable, and useful for policymakers at national and international levels. This includes clearer framing of messages, policy summaries, and stronger follow-up mechanisms.
- **Align Global Digital Policy Frameworks:** Participants stressed the importance of coherence and coordination among digital governance processes, including WSIS+20, the Global Digital Compact, and the 2030 Agenda. Strengthening linkages among these efforts can amplify their impact and reduce fragmentation.
- **Promote Human-Centric, Rights-Based Governance:** A renewed WSIS framework should prioritize people over technology, ensuring digital governance is grounded in the protection and promotion of human rights, such as privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information.