



6-10 July 2026
Geneva, Switzerland

Session Outcome Document
(2 pages max)
Paradigm Initiative

Monday, 6 July 2026, 11:00–11:45 (UTC+02:00)

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Key Issues discussed:

- The session provided a comparative analysis of the status of connectivity in the era of AI, in the Global South.
- The session identified gaps in policy and practice that hinder the implementation of inclusion-promoting practices. They stated that many countries have adopted policies that seek to promote universal, affordable access to the internet, yet they have not yet fully implemented these policies due to lack of provisions to ensure implementation, leaving the frameworks shelved.
- The session explored the interdependence between internet access and AI advancements, demonstrating that some countries continue to lag behind as they struggle to ensure basic connectivity, meaning that as other countries advance, the digital divide will widen and communities in underserved and rural areas will remain unconnected and will not enjoy AI's benefits if this gap is not bridged.
- The session discussed increased internet shutdowns, power outages and high data and device costs as impediments to internet access, leaving at least 2.6 billion globally unconnected and over half of Africa's population unconnected. The discussion stated that this is despite that the United Nations General Assembly, through Resolution A/RES/80/173 adopted the Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, which in paragraph 27 reinforces commitment to achieving entry-level broadband subscription costs that are accessible and affordable, through collaboration with stakeholders and adoption of mechanisms including universal service funds and community networks.
- Panelists emphasised the need to ensure access to the internet is available through public access facilities such as schools, post offices, libraries and hospitals, in making access available, including to those in vulnerable situations.
- The session highlighted the need for proactive disclosure of information on Universal Service Funds, including public information on progress and budgets and for efforts to expand connectivity, to ensure transparency and accountability.
- The session called on private-sector actors, including telecommunications firms, to fulfill their mandates and contribute to the USF.
- The session discussed the challenges arising from heavy taxation on digital technologies, which often lead to high prices for internet-compatible devices, rendering them inaccessible to vulnerable populations.
- The session provided examples of countries that are doing well in proactively disclosing

information about their implementation of the USF and connectivity projects, examples of countries that have now adopted policies to improve connectivity and examples of countries that are effectively implementing USF projects, including those that previously had implementation challenges that are now showing progress.

- The session discussed that implementing WSIS toward 2035 and the GDC follow-up should create mechanisms to assess qualitative data on use and effectiveness, rather than focusing solely on quantitative data on infrastructure availability, to ensure a balanced review.
- The session discussed that AI-enabled Digital Social Protection systems and Digital ID systems have led to discrimination and exclusion of marginalised groups.

Key Outcomes of the session

- PIN presented findings from a report that assesses the compliance of 29 countries with African Human Rights standards. The findings provide policy developments, human rights harms, regression and best practices, on 12 indicators including digital inclusion.
- PIN committed to collaborating with stakeholders to continue assessing implementation and compliance with human rights standards.
- The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) indicated interest in collaborating after we shared our findings and will share more insights into their approaches.
- Robust interactions seeking clarity on best cases were great for demonstrating what works.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Actions

WSIS Secretariat should:

- Integrate the assessment of countries' compliance with human rights standards in the tracking of the achievement of the goals set out in the WSIS Outcome document.
- Tracking of implementation of WSIS action lines should integrate assessment of qualitative data on use, effectiveness, rights upheld and harms in pursuit of closing the digital divide, compared to only assessing quantitative data on availability of infrastructure.
- Develop follow-up mechanisms for achieving the goals set out in the WSIS Outcome document.

Governments should:

- Enact policies that promote access to the internet for vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- Promote stronger alignment in policy and practice.
- Conduct human rights impact assessments to assess the impact of AI, digital IDs and emerging technologies before adoption and use.
- Adopt and implement USF projects to close the digital divide.
- Enact policies on the regulation of AI and emerging technologies.
- Provide assistive technologies to persons with disabilities.
- Promote low taxation fees on digital technologies.
- Develop economic measures to improve access to technologies