Session Outcome Document
(*2 pages max*)

Session 237. Common But Differentiated Responsibilities – How can we realize this principle in WSIS implementation?

Global Digital Justice Forum

Thursday, 9 July 2026, 16.00 to 16.45 (UTC + 02.00)

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2026/Agenda/Session/237

A. Key Issues discussed

- Undoubtedly, a just and sustainable digital transition is a common global concern – the environmental footprints of pan-global data and AI value chains, the risks to humanity from unregulated AI development, and the extreme consolidation of digital corporate power affect all of us. At the same time, the historical evolution of digital technologies also reflects structural exclusions that impede digital equity.
- Without the infrastructural capabilities to harness intelligence from data, developing countries end up being trapped in a neocolonial dynamic. The intangible assets of digital innovation patents accrue to the global North, while the low-paid labour of data work and the ecological costs are increasingly borne by the global South.
- Just as CBDR promotes climate justice by recognising differentiated responsibilities based on historical emissions, capabilities, and development levels, digital cooperation should advance digital justice by ensuring equitable access to the benefits of digital technologies and AI.
- Persistent—and in some cases widening—digital inequalities between and within countries should be recognised as a systemic risk requiring coordinated international action, particularly for the benefit of developing countries.
- The challenges surrounding AI and digital technologies cannot be understood in isolation from wider failures in multilateral governance and the provision of global public goods.
- Existing international governance arrangements have not merely failed to reduce inequalities—they have often exacerbated them.
- Rather than treating assistance as charity or reparations, CBDR frames the provision of global public goods as a shared international responsibility, requiring differentiated obligations based on historical advantage and capacity. Open-source AI, digital public infrastructure (DPI), and other locally developed digital public goods offer viable pathways for inclusive digital development that reduce dependence on Global North platforms. Further, data is the primary public good. Data has been

progressively enclosed through platformization and AI development, enabling a handful of companies to accumulate the data and resources needed to dominate AI.

B. Recommendations and forward-looking actions

- AI governance principles must be backed by: adequate financing; sustained political commitment; measurable and auditable outcomes; and meaningful capacity-building for developing countries.
- Global governance has favoured Big Tech. Decades of multilateral governance have produced outcomes that disproportionately benefit large technology companies, which now play a significant role in shaping international policy agendas.
- Current multilateral reforms have fallen short. Recent G20 processes have failed to deliver meaningful reforms to the international financial architecture or advance digital justice, data justice, and economic justice.
- International tax reform is a priority. Ensuring that large technology companies pay their fair share of taxes would significantly expand fiscal space for developing countries and reduce financing constraints.
- Debt relief commitments need to be honoured. The failure to implement promised debt relief has undermined developing countries' ability to fulfil CBDR and finance development.
- Global public goods require public financing and governance. Reforming multilateral institutions to finance and govern digital public goods in the public interest should be a central objective.
- Plurilateral cooperation should complement multilateralism. While multilateral reform remains essential, developing countries should also leverage alternative arrangements—such as the BRICS New Development Bank—to strengthen their bargaining power and advance shared priorities. Regional integration is particularly important for Africa. Sharing infrastructure, harmonising regulatory frameworks, and creating larger regional markets can generate the scale needed to negotiate more effectively with both multilateral institutions and major technology companies.