

2019 WSIS Forum concludes highlighting contributions of tech in achieving SDGs

The recently concluded 10th World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum emphasised the importance of the WSIS Action Lines as a key United Nations framework for progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Round table participants also highlighted the need for sharing of scarce resources, as well as strengthening collaboration to build confidence and security in the use of technology for good and digital skills so more people can benefit.



WSIS Forum 2019. Image source: [ITU Pictures/Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/itu/1511111111/)

"Ten years on, we are joined by more than 30 agencies of our extended United Nations family. People's lives have been transformed. With the emergence of artificial intelligence, the internet of things, 5G and other new technologies, the next decade will continue to bring enormous opportunities," said Houlin Zhao, ITU secretary-general.

The outcomes of the WSIS Forum contribute to global processes:

- United Nations regional commissions committed to strengthen regional WSIS action through multi-stakeholder platforms and a series of face-to-face meetings. It is anticipated that WSIS Action Lines will be included in the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism and will become one of the pillars of the regional SDG Forums. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) was appointed as the chair of the WSIS UN Regional Commission.
- The United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) reiterated its commitment to the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines towards the SDGs, with a joint statement to be released during the United Nations High-Level Political Forum 2019, to be co-chaired by ITU and the United Nations Development Programme. UNESCAP was appointed as the vice-chair representing the UN regional commissions.

This year's more than 300 sessions, fully crowdsourced following an open consultation process, highlighted the contributions of tech in SDG priority areas such as accessibility, education, employment, environment, gender empowerment, health, hunger, tech infrastructure and innovation and youth.

Youth voices are crucial to UN processes and policy-making to advance tech for good. Hence, the track on youth explored

the key role of young people in building digital economies, from dedicated coding sessions for school children to workshops on digital skills for decent jobs for youth.



WSIS Forum 2019. Image source: [ITU/Wood](https://www.itu.int/ITU-W/WSIS/2019/)

Tech for good initiatives from UN family agencies include:

- Millions of people are impacted each year by war, civil conflict, drought, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, crop failures and natural disasters. Over the past two years, the World Food Programme (WFP) has been using innovative technologies, notably blockchain, to enhance its ability to provide effective, efficient food assistance. The benefits include: The beneficiary refugees are empowered to feed themselves and their family; no money is sent upfront to potentially unstable entities; cost savings on local banking fees.
- To date, despite significant efforts and investments in digital technologies and applications for development, amounting to billions of dollars worldwide, progress has been hampered by a lack of coordination, in particular from not taking a whole-of-government approach to digital investments. ITU and the Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL) launched an SDG Digital Investment Framework that helps governments address key strategic investment questions and choose effective, scalable technology-based solutions with maximum return on investment.
- Assistive technologies have proven to be life-changing for persons with disabilities or special needs. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) discussed the effectiveness of the Marrakesh Treaty which provides exceptions to copyright law for the production of works that are accessible to persons who have difficulty reading print. The final session of the WSIS Forum Accessibility Day, 'Universal Design for Sustainable Development', outlined some of the societal changes needed to ensure that technologies are not just inclusive for persons with disabilities, but are universal in their use and applications.

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