WSIS+20 Virtual Stakeholder Consultation

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ARTICLE 19

Excellencies, colleagues, thank you for this opportunity.

My name is Anna Oosterlinck and I speak on behalf of ARTICLE 19, a local to global human rights organisation, focusing on free speech and related rights.

Given the time limit, I will focus on three core asks for the WSIS+20 review in relation to the second and third questions for today's session: (1) human rights; (2) multi-stakeholder governance; and (3) inclusion.

(1)   Human rights:

We recommend anchoring the WSIS framework in universal human rights and explicitly bolstering the role of the OHCHR within WSIS processes. The WSIS framework should explicitly reaffirm all fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly, rights to privacy and data protection, and rights to equality and non- discrimination, with gender equality at its absolute core. As often reaffirmed by the General Assembly and other UN bodies, the same rights apply offline and online.

- We recommend prioritising combatting digital authoritarianism, promoting rights-respecting regulation, and safeguarding against human rights abuses such as surveillance, Internet shutdowns and restrictions (such as website blocking

and filtering), online censorship, and attacks on independent media and journalists, and on civil society actors.
- The WSIS framework needs to ensure technology private sector actors effectively implement their responsibilities as per the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and it should consider how to address market concentration.
- It should support small, community and non-profit operators to offer complementary connectivity for rural and remote communities currently overlooked by traditional telecommunication infrastructure.
- Through the WSIS implementation, we recommend increasing digital, media and information literacy for all, as set out in the WSIS+10 outcome document.

(2)   Multi-stakeholder governance:

The WSIS framework should fortify the existing inclusive, human rights-based and human-centric multistakeholder model of Internet governance and further expand this across broader digital governance processes. Multi-stakeholder governance assists in ensuring a **free, open, global, safe, accessible, and interoperable Internet**. It assists in promoting universal and meaningful connectivity, closing digital divides, and accelerating sustainable development.

- We recommend strengthening the current multi-stakeholder model through implementing the Sao Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines.
- We need a permanent, reinforced and even more inclusive IGF, increasingly integrating with the work of the national and regional IGF's, and receiving stable long-term funding.
- As for the Global Digital Compact, we support Switzerland's proposal to develop a joint implementation roadmap integrating GDC commitments within WSIS implementation work, ensuring coordinated action on connectivity, human rights, and emerging technologies.

(3)   Inclusion:

Inclusion *is* the heart of the WSIS project. Please listen - listen to all voices across the globe and integrate their perspectives throughout the review process. To this end, ARTICLE 19 has co-authored the Eight Practical Recommendations for an Inclusive WSIS+20 review and the related Five-Point Plan with concrete steps to meaningfully engage with stakeholders.

But it cannot stop in December 2025. Going forward, genuinely integrate into your discussions a wide range of voices— from underrepresented regions and vulnerable communities to under siege civil society activists— for more equitable, accessible, responsive, transparent, accountable, and context-aware governance frameworks.

Thank you