GNSO Participation in WSIS+20 and Action Lines – Overview

Preamble:

The World Summit on the Information Society was conducted in two phases in 2003 and 2005, resulting in foundational governing documents such as Geneva Declaration of Principles, Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda. The WSIS framework is organised along 18 Action Lines, each focusing on a specific area of Information and communication technologies (ICTs). See more in the Annex I

The upcoming WSIS 20 Review process will evaluate achievements and challenges since the original summit. The WSIS +20 Review modalities have been established and agreed to on March 12, 2025 by the UNGA resolution as detailed in resolution A/79/L.62: https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/ltd/n25/066/55/pdf/n2506655.pdf

In this context, this document outlines various activities and potential contributions of the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) at ICANN to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)+20 process, structured by the relevant WSIS Action Lines. Each action line is mapped with GNSO's policy-related work to highlight areas of engagement. (It is worth noting that ICANN related activities started a long time before the WSIS.)

WSIS Action Lines and GNSO Contributions

WSIS Action Line	GNSO Contribution
C1: Stakeholder Governance in promotion of ICTs for development	Manage development of policies for generic top-level domains (gTLDs) such as .com, .org, and newer domain extensions like .bank and .city. These domains help businesses, governments, and organizations establish an online presence while ensuring global coordination through ICANN. Governments participate via the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) to ensure public interest concerns, such as consumer protection, are addressed. With respect to the element of "Multistakeholder portals for indigenous peoples", the GNSO policy development which led to the Applicant Support Program for the 2026 round of new gTLDs establishes eligibility for indigenous tribes and indigenous small business located on those lands to obtain training and major discounts in connection with new Top Level Domain applications. The GNSO Council has already started incorporating the Global Public Interest Framework developed by the ICANN Board in every GNSO Policy Development Process, beginning with the adopted charter of the Latin Diacritics PDP (19 December 2024).

C2: Infrastructure	DNS is a part of the Internet's core infrastructure. The GNSO and the Council oversee the policy development aspects of the allocation of domain names in the DNS to maintain a stable and secure Internet. With respect to the "Affordability" element of this action line, GNSO Policy Development for the 2026 Applicant Support Program includes specific major discounts (between 75 and 85%) for qualified new applicants.
C3: Access to Information	Manages the Policy Development Process for policies that enable internet users worldwide to register domain names in multiple languages and scripts (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Cyrillic), ensuring linguistic diversity online. Governments support these efforts by promoting digital inclusion and ensuring national regulatory frameworks facilitate internet accessibility for all citizens.
C4: Capacity building	With respect to the "Capacity Building" element of this action line, the Applicant Support Program developed through a GNSO Policy Development Process (PDP) and a subsequent GNSO Guidance Process provides outreach, training, pro bono service and mentoring connections to underserved regions and peoples across the world. In addition, GNSO members were active in the development of the ICANN Grant Program where grants will be made in 2025. The Grant Program includes the following specific goals: (1) Benefitting the development, distribution, and evolution of the services and systems that support the Internet's unique identifier systems. (2) Providing capacity development. (3) Advancing developments, innovation, and open standards for the benefit of the Internet community. (4) Contributing to diversity, participation, and inclusion across stakeholder communities and geographic regions." The GNSO also participates in the Fellows and NextGen programs, integrating a number of participants in the program.

C5: Security & Confidence	Manages the development of policies for preventing cyber threats such as phishing, malware, and other forms of DNS abuse. This includes frameworks like WHOIS/RDAP, which while maintaining privacy, allow law enforcement agencies and other legitimate stakeholders to request access to domain registration [Private and sensitive] data for cybersecurity and investigative purposes. Governments rely on these policies to enforce national security and digital crime prevention measures. With respect to the "Authentication" element of this action line, the GNSO Council has met with the GAC and the Board to discuss the processing of Urgent Requests for registration data by Law Enforcement Agencies and has written to the ICANN Board formally requesting reconvening of the Implementation Review Team which is assigned to revisit the timelines for such requests. Members of the GNSO are also participating in the section of the GAC Public Safety Working Group which seeks to establish an authentication procedure for Law Enforcement Agencies to facilitate the timely handling of Urgent Requests for registration data. Separately, the GNSO Council has also solicited input from the community in relation to a possible need to resume work in this area. Based on responses to a Council questionnaire, a small team on Registration Data Accuracy is now resuming work. The work on DNS abuse is ongoing and the Council will resume its work through the DNS Abuse small team.
C6: Enabling Environment	Manages the development of policies governing domain name transfers, dispute resolution mechanisms (such as the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy - UDRP), and data protection compliance (worldwide e.g., GDPR). These policies help ensure that domain names are allocated fairly, intellectual property rights are protected, and privacy regulations are upheld. Governments contribute by providing legal frameworks and ensuring compliance with international regulatory standards. With respect to the "Consumer Protection" element of this action line, work by the Council's DNS Abuse small team resulted in amendments to contracts to require improved enforcement measures against DNS abuse. The Council has also reconvened its DNS Abuse small team to assess this possibility. Alongside these more permanent policies, there are a number of Sunrise and Landrush policies to prioritise access to Rights owners, local priorities (in case of Geo & Communities), etc.

C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content	To support cultural diversity and a multilingual Internet, in coordination with work in different parts of ICANN and the IETF, the GNSO Council manages the development of policies for Internationalised Domain Names (IDNs) such as ابوظبي. (Abu Dhabi in Arabic). These non-ASCII character sets at the Top Level enable Internet users to register domains in their local languages and scripts. The GNSO and the ccNSO (country code Names Supporting Organisation) keep each other informed in developing relevant IDN policies and procedures to ensure solutions for gTLDs and ccTLDs do not contradict each other. Examples include the recently adopted policy recommendations from the IDN Expedited Policy Development Process, and the current Latin Diacritics Policy Development Process. In accordance with the policy for the 2026 round for new gTLDs developed in a GNSO-managed Policy Development Process, IDNs will have priority of processing for new applications in a ratio designed to put IDN applications first when requested by the applicant.
C10: Ethical dimensions of the Information Society	HR impact assessment of developed policy: Re the Human Rights element of this action line, the GNSO Council has endorsed the application in the Policy Development Process of a Human Rights Checklist developed through a process designed to implement ICANN's Human Rights Core Value.
C11: International and regional cooperation	ICANN's multistakeholder model depends on international and regional cooperation to ensure inclusive participation in global Internet governance. The Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO), along with the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) and its five Regional At-Large Organizations (RALOs), fosters structured engagement across geographic regions and stakeholder groups. This cooperation is reflected in: Joint outreach and policy sessions during ICANN meetings, involving GNSO, ccNSO, ALAC, and the GAC. Regional engagement through AFRALO, APRALO, EURALO, LACRALO, and NARALO, each providing local input into global ICANN policy processes. At-Large initiatives such as the Cross-Regional Capacity Building Working Group, which promotes knowledge-sharing and leadership development. Active participation in global forums like the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), WSIS Forum, and regional IGFs (e.g., EuroDIG, LACIGF), where ICANN communities present and collaborate on issues beyond the DNS.

	Efforts in translation, remote participation, and outreach to underrepresented regions are also key to expanding ICANN's reach and reinforcing its global legitimacy.

Annex I

WSIS Action Lines and Facilitators

WSIS Action Line	Moderators/Facilitators	Co-Facilitators
C1. The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development » C1 in the Geneva Plan of Action	UN DESA	ECOSOC/UN Regional Commissions/ITU/[UN DESA]
C2. Information and communication infrastructure » C2 in the Geneva Plan of Action	ITU	

C3. Access to information and knowledge » C3 in the Geneva Plan of Action	UNESCO	ITU /[FAO/UNIDO]
C4. Capacity building » C4 in the Geneva Plan of Action	[ITU]	UNDP/UNESCO/ITU/ UNCTAD/[UN DESA/FAO/UNIDO]
C5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs » C5 in the Geneva Plan of Action	ITU	
C6. Enabling environment » C6 in the Geneva Plan of Action	ITU	UNDP/UN REGIONAL COMMISSIONS/UNC TAD/[UN DESA/UNIDO/APC]
C7. ICT Applications » C7 in the Geneva Plan of Action		
E-government	UN DESA	
E-business	UNCTAD	UPU/ITC
E-learning	UNESCO	
E-health	WHO	
E-employment	ILO	
E-environment	WMO	
E-agriculture	FAO	
E-science	UNESCO	
C8. Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content » C8 in the Geneva Plan of Action	UNESCO	

C9. Media » C9 in the Geneva Plan of Action	UNESCO	
C10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society » C10 in the Geneva Plan of Action	UNESCO	ECOSOC/[WHO/ECPAT Int'l]
C11. International and regional cooperation » C11 in the Geneva Plan of Action	UN DESA	UN Regional Commissions/ UNDP/ITU/UNESCO/ ECOSOC

Key Words WSIS Phase I WSIS Action Lines -

In order to assist you in selecting the WSIS action lines, the following keywords are provided to show some of the themes covered under each of the WSIS action lines. Plan of Action was adopted at the end of Phase I in 2003.

1) The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

• Cooperation among stakeholders • Millennium Declaration • Mainstreaming ICTs • Multi Stakeholder Partnership (MSP) • Multi-stakeholder portals for indigenous peoples • National e-strategies • Public/Private Partnerships (PPP).

2) Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive information society

• Access • Accessibility • Affordability • Assistive technologies • Broadband network infrastructure • Digital inclusion • Enabling and competitive environment • ICT backbone • ICT connectivity • ICT equipment • ICT services • Infrastructure • Internet exchange points • Investment • Satellite • Traditional media • Remote and marginalized areas • Ubiquitous computing/communications • Universal access/service • Wireless.

3) Access to information and knowledge

• Access to public official information • Access to scientific knowledge • Digital public libraries and archives • ICTs for all • Multi-purpose community public access points • Open source, proprietary and free software • Public access to information • Public domain information.

4) Capacity building

• Basic literacy • Distance learning • Education/training • E-literacy • Gender • Combating illiteracy • Life-long learning • Research and development (R&D) • Self-learning • Teacher training • Training ICT professionals • Volunteering • Youth

5) Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

• Authentication • Building confidence and security • Consumer protection • Countering misuse of ICTs • Countering spam • Cyber-crime, • Cyber-security • Data protection • Information security and network security • Network integrity • Online transaction security • Privacy • Real-time incident-handling and response • Secure and reliable applications.

6) Enabling environment

• Consumer protection • Dispute settlement • Domain name management • E-commerce • E-government strategy • Entrepreneurship • ICT forums • Intellectual property • Internet governance • Legal, regulatory and policy environment • Privacy • Radio frequency spectrum • Regional root servers • Secure storage and archival • Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) • Standardization

7) ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life

• Disaster recovery • E-applications • E-agriculture • E-business • E-commerce • E-employment • E-environment • E-government • E-health • E-publishing • E-science • ICT waste disposal • Sustainable production and consumption • Teleworking • Transparency.

8) Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content

• Cultural diversity • Cultural exchange and information • Cultural heritage • Cultural industry • Cultural policy • Digital archive • Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups • Indigenous peoples • Internationalized domain names • Language-related ICT tools • Linguistic diversity • Local languages • Traditional knowledge.

9) Media

• Combatting illegal and harmful content in the media • Diversity of media ownership • Gender portrayal in the media • Media independence and pluralism • Reducing international imbalances • Role of media in the Information Society • Traditional media • Training of media professionals .

10) Ethical dimensions the Information Society

• Common good • Ethics • Human rights • Preventing abusive uses of ICTs • Values.

11) International and regional cooperation

• Financing of ICT networks and services • Infrastructure development projects • International mechanisms • Progress evaluation • Regional action plan • UN global compact.

Nota bene: items 12- 15 have been integrated since WSIS Phase II

12) Achieving the WSIS targets (Plan of Action, Section B)

• To connect villages with ICTs and establish community access points; • To connect universities, colleges, secondary schools and primary schools with ICTs; • To connect scientific and research centres with ICTs; • To connect public libraries, cultural centres, museums, post offices and archives with ICTs; • To connect health centres and hospitals with ICTs; • To connect all local and central government departments and establish websites and email addresses; • To adapt all primary and secondary school curricula to meet the challenges of the Information Society, taking into account national circumstances • To ensure that all of the world's population have access to television and radio services; • To encourage the development of content and to put in place technical conditions in order to facilitate the presence and use of all world languages on the Internet; • To ensure that more than half the world's inhabitants have access to ICTs within their reach.

13) Digital solidarity agenda (Plan of Action, Section D)

• Debt burden • Digital divide • Digital solidarity fund • Financing mechanisms • Monterrey Consensus • National e-strategies • Poverty reduction strategies • Technology transfer

14) Follow-up and evaluation (Plan of Action, Section E)

• Benchmarking • Community connectivity indicators • Gender-specific indicators • ICT Development Index • Information Society indicators • International performance evaluation • Monitoring the digital divide • Statistics • Success stories

15) Towards WSIS Phase 2 (Tunis) (Plan of Action, Section F)

• Elaboration of final appropriate documents • Partnerships among stakeholders • Preparatory process • Stocktaking • Task Force on Financial Mechanisms • Working Group on Internet Governance