



**Speech for World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Side event on the
20th as part of the Action Days at the Summit of the Future**

WSIS in Action: Shaping the Future of Digital Cooperation

Distinguished Leaders, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General of the ITU, Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, for this invitation. South Africa is honoured to be a co-sponsor of this event.

Since its inception in 2003, the WSIS has been a cornerstone for global digital cooperation and development.

We expect that the WSIS+20 Review will be vital in evaluating our progress, confronting the challenges we have faced, and reaffirming our collective commitment to harnessing ICTs for the advancement of information and knowledge societies. In addition, it will directly contribute to the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

South Africa remains committed to the SDGs not only because of their intent but because of the enormous stakeholder buy-in they have from across governments, the private sector and civil society. In an environment where multilateralism sometimes appears at risk, the SDGs represent a powerful global consensus which we cannot take for granted.

This review also aligns with the objectives of the Global Digital Compact, aiming to forge a shared vision for digital cooperation and governance.

In particular, digital governance should champion human rights by mitigating harmful risks that arise from private and state actors.

I feel, due to the legacy of our past, South Africa is one of those nations somewhat charged with a special duty in the global arena to be a champion of human rights.

It is important to recognise that as we speak, there are state driven abuses of technology targeted at political opponents, the limiting of freedom of speech, surveillance, and abuses targeted against minorities and diverse communities.

The world looks up to us as global leaders to ensure that digital governance provides a check on government abuses of power in the use of technology as much as it does corporate abuses.

South Africa considers the WSIS process an essential framework for achieving our national digital transformation goals. Our commitment is reflected in our major national strategies.

These include the National Development Plan, the report of the Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (PC4IR), and the Digital Economy Masterplan. These strategies align with the WSIS action lines by advocating for robust digital infrastructure, a skilled workforce, and a supportive regulatory environment.

Following the instructs of the ITU Council, as the Chair of the ITU Council Working Group on WSIS and SDGs, Ms Lesufi from South Africa launched a call inviting members and stakeholders to share their perspectives on the ITU's role in the WSIS+20 review

Today's meeting provides a crucial opportunity to translate the WSIS process into tangible actions. I urge everyone to discuss how we can better coordinate initiatives to support an inclusive and people-centered approach to digital transformation that champions human rights.

Let us also explore ways to harmonize local and regional efforts with the WSIS framework and the commitments under the Global Digital Compact.

If we are all truly committed to global digital inclusion, then we must find each other to finalize the negotiations for the Global Digital Compact. As South Africa, we believe

that any further delay to the finalisation of the Global Digital Compact negotiations will perpetuate the ongoing global digital divide.

I look forward to our continued collaboration in this vital endeavour and to working together towards the vision of WSIS beyond 2025.

Thank you