

Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board (IMSB) Final Report: Reflections and Recommendations

12 February 2026

The Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board (IMSB) wishes to express our deep gratitude to the Co-Facilitators of the WSIS+20 review process—Ambassador Suela Janina of Albania, and Ambassador Ekitela Lokaale of Kenya—for their vision, trust and their commitment to engaging all stakeholders, and establishment of the IMSB.

The WSIS+20 Secretariat has provided consistent and comprehensive coordination and support throughout the process to the Co-Facilitators and the IMSB. UN DESA (WSIS+20 Secretariat) Reflections on IMSB can be found in Annex A. We sincerely thank the UN DESA for their dedicated support as the Secretariat.

As an innovation of the Co-facilitators, IMSB is a unique pilot and perhaps the first effort to embed the multi-stakeholder approach in UN processes. It was recognized that consultation of non-governmental stakeholders in selected UN policy processes is crucial. IMSB is fortunate to have the Co-Facilitators leading the process, being open and flexible to adjust and we mutually sought to learn and benefit from the IMSB as part of the process. We offer these observations, reflections and some recommendations for future multistakeholder mechanisms or multistakeholder sounding board-type models that can enhance UN and other multilateral processes whether in Internet Governance and digital policy processes or other relevant processes. The categories below are not exclusive, and seek to reflect observations by IMSB members or observations heard from stakeholders.

Background:

The IMSB was established by the Co-Facilitators of the WSIS+20 process, following proposals received from Member States during the First WSIS+20 Preparatory Meeting and Stocktaking Session on 30 May 2025, based on clear [Terms of Reference](#).

In mid-June 2025, volunteers were sought from among members of the 2025 Internet Governance Forum Multistakeholder Advisory Group and Leadership Panel. Eleven individuals were selected and the IMSB met with the Co-Facilitators for the first time on 11 July, in the sidelines of the WSIS+20 High-Level Event in Geneva. For speed of action, it was fortuitous that volunteers could be drawn from a pool of active multistakeholders (MAG, LP) but future IMSBs in other contexts might find it appropriate to draw from a wider pool.

Annex B details the work done by the group between its formation in July and the conclusion of the WSIS+20 High-Level Meeting in December 2025, including meetings, stakeholder engagements, consultation sessions, and outputs. IMSB members also assisted in the coordination of the Co-Facilitators' stakeholder consultation sessions, and were able to informally provide perspective to the Co-Facilitators and their staff on contentious issues at various points throughout the process.

Governance: Mandate, Terms of Reference, Charter:

- Clear documentation of function, terms and criteria of what such mechanisms/groups are responsible for. For example, they are not to replace - direct engagement with multistakeholder groups and communities, both in national contexts as well as built into the process.
- Such multistakeholder mechanisms should retain independence of analysis and expression.
- Agility and readiness to adapt to changing timelines and situations as necessary to meet mandate and responsibilities.
- Time-limited mandate and time-requirement for scope of work, enables appointees to dedicate time for term and mandate. That is, an open-ended process may limit availability of representation needed.

Working methodology, process and outputs:

- Close communication and coordination with Co-Facilitators and team (and Secretariat for the process) ensures alignment to needs of co-facilitators; respect for processes; information flow; and efficient, timely and effective working methodology to meet needs.
- Close collaboration with the Secretariat team is important to retain strong communications and coordination with UN institutional actors and co-facilitators.
- Transparency and accountability of process and outputs are foundational conditions to building trust, confidence and legitimacy. It also serves as a critical bridge between UN multilateral systems and multistakeholder processes and mechanisms that shape the subject area. To the greatest extent possible, such mechanisms should be open for public observation, and outputs published on record (see Annex A for a list of IMSB outputs).
- Modalities of the process should also take into account the function and mandate of such sounding boards to be effective in bridging information and input gaps, as such visibility of the process (i.e., silent observer status) in terms of intergovernmental processes should be enabled as much as procedures allow.

Engagement:

- Any sounding board-type mechanism/group should be empowered to organize direct communications between state and non-state actors in the context of the process and in support of the Co-facilitators. Fostering dialogue between state and non-state actors creates openness so that the diversity of perspectives can be revealed and inform the negotiation processes, without diluting differences and divergences.

- Proactive engagement with and fostering cross-dialogue between all stakeholder groups in the methods best suited for each, functioning as a connective layer between intergovernmental negotiations and distributed multistakeholder knowledge ecosystems:
 - Attending and participating in stakeholder groups meetings and events (virtual, hybrid and physical; local, national, regional, and global) to share information and understand views;
 - Hosting consultations with different levels of formality and procedure to effectively gather comprehensive input across all stakeholder communities (from regular office hours hosted across different time zones, to specialized topic consultations or deep dives on high-interest topics (i.e., financing), to formal consultations around a particular draft of a document (i.e., IMSB stakeholder consultations on Rev2 of the WSIS+20 outcomes document))
 - Being responsive to the wider multistakeholder community needs and remaining open and agile on ways and formats to take in input.

Feedback from stakeholders:

Respondents broadly welcomed the IMSB and viewed it as a useful innovation, while suggesting several practical ways to strengthen its role, composition and working methods in future WSIS or related UN processes. Please refer to Annex C for the full WSIS+20 Stakeholder Feedback Survey on the IMSB.

Stakeholder feedback consistently converged around the following themes:

- **Broaden and rebalance representation.**
 - Many respondents called for more geographically and stakeholder-balanced membership, particularly greater inclusion of the Global South, under-represented communities and additional stakeholder groups.
- **Clarify the mandate and influence of the IMSB.**
 - Several respondents stressed the need for clearer articulation of the IMSB's role, scope of work and how its inputs are used in drafting and decision-making
- **Engage the IMSB earlier and more systematically.**
 - Respondents emphasized that the IMSB should be involved earlier in the process and consulted more regularly across key milestones, rather than on an ad hoc basis.
- **Strengthen feedback loops and responsiveness.**
 - A recurring suggestion was to make clearer how IMSB inputs are reflected in drafts, discussions and outcomes, including through formal feedback or written responses.
- **Improve structure, transparency and working methods.**
 - Respondents suggested more predictable meeting schedules, clearer agendas and follow-up, greater transparency around membership and outputs, and improved logistical arrangements.
- **General support for continuing and building on the IMSB model.**
 - A number of respondents expressed overall satisfaction with the IMSB and encouraged building on what already works.

Closing reflection:

As the multistakeholder forms of engagement have evolved throughout the WSIS process, there continues to be the opportunity to further evolve this to complement and provide additional means to institutionalise multistakeholder participation within the framework of intergovernmental processes. This evolution affords the opportunity to both provide concentrated or consolidated avenues without replacing existing mechanisms, such as through multistakeholder sounding board-type models, while at the same time affording stakeholders the ability to incorporate and engage in the different priorities and interests of the government blocs, and diversity of nonstate groups. Importantly, these avenues don't replace other mechanisms or processes, and should not be to build consensus within the Board but to add voice and diversity and deeper understanding of contentious issues from diverse stakeholder communities to inform multilateral negotiations.

Future multistakeholder sounding boards should therefore be designed not as parallel negotiating spaces, but as structured instruments for sense-making, risk identification and informed decision-support in complex global policy processes.

Annex A

UN DESA (WSIS+20 Secretariat) Reflections on IMSB

10 February 2026

The Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board (IMSB) was established, at the initiative of the WSIS+20 co-facilitators, to support multistakeholder engagement in the WSIS+20 review process and to informally advise the co-facilitators. Convened alongside the formal review architecture, the IMSB was intended to serve as a space for structured reflection and feedback from a range of non-Government stakeholders, complementing Member State deliberations and contributing perspectives not always captured through traditional multistakeholder consultations. Its role was advisory in nature, with a view to enhancing the overall inclusiveness and transparency of the WSIS+20 process.

From the perspective of the WSIS+20 Secretariat, the IMSB represented a genuinely experimental mechanism, operating in a manner consistent with its pioneering mandate. Throughout the review process, the IMSB demonstrated flexibility and responsiveness, testing different engagement strategies and adjusting its working methods as the process evolved. Its informal character enabled it, at key moments, to move beyond traditional institutional modes of engagement, helping to widen participation and bring in perspectives that are often harder to integrate into intergovernmental proceedings. This openness to experimentation was one of the IMSB's defining strengths and contributed to its relevance across the WSIS+20 cycle.

The Secretariat particularly valued the consistency with which IMSB reflection documents were produced in response to the progressive revisions of the WSIS+20 outcome document, providing timely and structured inputs. The Board also played a constructive bridging role through its dialogue with Member States on 25 November, which helped surface areas of convergence between state and non-state actors. In addition, the IMSB's open office hours proved to be a novel and accessible modality for engaging with the public, reinforcing transparency and creating a barrierless and maximally open forum for discussion.

At the same time, the Secretariat's experience suggests several areas where similar mechanisms could be strengthened in future processes. More regular and strategically focused meetings with the Co-Facilitators could further enhance the value of such boards, particularly where discussions are framed around specific thematic or procedural issues requiring concise, constituency-informed perspectives. In parallel, the informal nature of the IMSB could be leveraged more fully to allow for more immediate, issue-specific advice as challenges arise, whether through the full Board or through targeted engagement with members best placed to address particular topics. Consistent with feedback received through the stakeholder survey, future boards would also benefit from a composition more deliberately oriented toward addressing representational gaps, including greater participation from the Global South in general, and, in particular, from small island developing States, countries with emerging digital markets, and under-represented communities such as persons with disabilities.

Overall, the Secretariat considers the IMSB to have made a meaningful and positive contribution to the WSIS+20 review and welcomes this report as an important record of the Board's impact. Based on this experience, the Secretariat would support the establishment of similar multistakeholder sounding board-type mechanisms in analogous intergovernmental processes, tailored to their specific contexts and needs. When designed with clarity of purpose, appropriate flexibility and inclusive representation, such boards have the potential to create more reliable pathways for civic engagement in UN processes, strengthen public trust in multilateral decision-making, and help reinvigorate intergovernmental negotiations through sustained dialogue with diverse stakeholder communities.

Annex B

[IMSB webpage](#)

[IMSB Terms of Reference](#)

Number of IMSB meetings held:

- Working meetings: 24
- Meetings with the Co-facilitators: 4
- Bilaterals: 4

Number of public consultations:

- IMSB hosted Office hours: 6
- IMSB hosted stakeholder consultations on Rev2: 1
- IMSB hosted briefing for member states and other stakeholders: 1
- IMSB attended stakeholder consultations on drafts: 3

Number of community-led meetings and events attended by IMSB members:

- 22 - [calendar of events and meetings](#)

IMSB output documents:

- [Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board \(IMSB\) Reflections on the WSIS+20 Elements Paper](#)
- [Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board \(IMSB\) reflections on the WSIS+20 Zero Draft](#)
- [Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board \(IMSB\) reflections on Revision 1](#)
- [Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board \(IMSB\) reflections on Revision 2](#)
- Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board (IMSB) Final Report: Reflections and Recommendations (current document)

IMSB blog posts: (for blog posts, please refer to IMSB webpage link above)

- IMSB Blog: First update on the WSIS+20 Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board
- IMSB Blog: On the Zero Draft
- IMSB Blog: Upcoming Consultations & 'Office Hours'

IMSB contributions to the WSIS+20 High-Level Event:

- UNGA speech
- WSIS+20 High-level Event: side events

IMSB membership:

- Valeria Betancourt (Ecuador), Civil Society – Latin America and the Caribbean
- Chris Buckridge (Australia), Technical Community – Western European and Others Group
- Amrita Choudhury (India), Civil Society – Asia Pacific
- Jennifer Chung (China), Technical Community – Asia Pacific

- Hossam Reda Elgamal (Egypt), Private Sector – Africa
- Maria Fernanda Garza (Mexico), Private Sector – Latin America and the Caribbean
- Tereza Horejsova (Czechia), Civil Society – Eastern Europe
- Wolfgang Kleinwächter (Germany), Civil Society – Western European and Others Group
- Jimson Olufuye (Nigeria), Private Sector – Africa
- Theresa Swinehart (United States), Technical Community – Western European and Others Group

Ex Officio

- Vinton Cerf (United States), At-large – Western European and Others Group – Chair of the IGF Leadership Panel
- Lise Fuhr (Denmark), Private Sector – Western European and Others Group (Alternate)

Annex C

Full WSIS+20 Stakeholder Feedback Survey results: <https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/2025/WSIS%2B20%20Stakeholder%20Feedback%20Report.pdf>

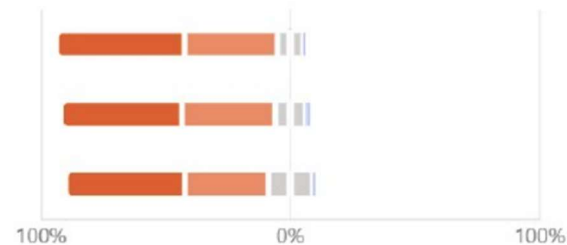
INFORMAL MULTISTAKEHOLDER SOUNDING BOARD

● Strongly agree ● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree

The WSIS+20 Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board (IMSB) provided a useful channel for conveying stakeholder perspective...

The IMSB contributed positively to the transparency, inclusiveness and responsiveness of the WSIS+20 review.

Inputs and perspectives conveyed through the IMSB were meaningfully reflected in the WSIS+20 review discussions and...



SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON STRENGTHENING THE IMSB

Respondents broadly welcomed the IMSB and viewed it as a useful innovation, while suggesting several practical ways to strengthen its role, composition and working methods in future WSIS or related UN processes.

- **Broaden and rebalance representation.**
Many respondents called for more geographically and stakeholder-balanced membership, particularly greater inclusion of the Global South, under-represented communities and additional stakeholder groups.
"More representation from the Global South and from under-represented communities."
- **Clarify the mandate and influence of the IMSB.**
Several respondents stressed the need for clearer articulation of the IMSB's role, scope of work and how its inputs are used in drafting and decision-making.
"Clarify the mandate and concrete role of the IMSB in influencing outcomes."
- **Engage the IMSB earlier and more systematically.**
Respondents emphasized that the IMSB should be involved earlier in the process and consulted more regularly across key milestones, rather than on an ad hoc basis.
"Engage the IMSB earlier in the process, not only once key decisions are already made."
- **Strengthen feedback loops and responsiveness.**
A recurring suggestion was to make clearer how IMSB inputs are reflected in drafts, discussions and outcomes, including through formal feedback or written responses.
"Show explicitly how IMSB feedback influenced drafts or decisions."
- **Improve structure, transparency and working methods.**
Respondents suggested more predictable meeting schedules, clearer agendas and follow-up, greater transparency around membership and outputs, and improved logistical arrangements.
"More structured agendas and clearer follow-up on action points."
- **General support for continuing and building on the IMSB model.**
A number of respondents expressed overall satisfaction with the IMSB and encouraged building on what already works.
"The IMSB is a good initiative and should be continued."