

# Implementation of WSIS outcomes



## Report on progress made in 2024

October 2024

## 1. Executive summary

The Internet Society supports and promotes the development of the Internet as a global technical infrastructure, a resource to enrich people's lives, and a force for good in society. Our efforts at the regional and international levels align with our goals for the Internet to be open, globally connected, secure, and trustworthy. This is reflected in our interventions to advance the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

In 2024, the Internet Society has continued its work at the local and international levels in cooperation with various stakeholders to promote and support the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, create Internet infrastructure to connect those who are not yet connected, facilitate access to information and knowledge, build capacity, and enhance confidence and security in the use of the ICTs. With one-third of the world's population still unconnected and serious risks to the Internet on the rise, including increasing trends of Internet shutdowns and fragmentation, we strongly believe that it is more important than ever to work with our community, partners, and other stakeholders in shaping how the world accesses and benefits from the Internet. Our efforts and achievements in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes showcase how the open, globally connected, secure, and trustworthy Internet and its multistakeholder governance model are essential for achieving the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

## 2. Overview of trends and experiences

Despite all the achievements in increasing Internet connectivity, a third of the world remains unconnected. Progress in global connectivity varies widely. This uneven development exposes the different forms of digital divides, which leave women, girls, and people in low-income countries at a disadvantage.

Alongside this incomplete and uneven connectivity, there are significant new threats to the open Internet that could harm it and what makes it work, which we refer to as the Internet's "critical properties." Some threats pose a serious risk to the Internet as we know it today and its future, including but not limited to Internet shutdowns and Internet fragmentation.



Internet shutdowns are a major concern, as they have become an increasingly common tactic for governments to restrict connectivity at both national and sub-national levels, often for primarily political reasons. According to the Internet Society's Pulse platform (see <https://pulse.internetsociety.org/shutdowns>), there were 121 Internet shutdowns from January to October 2024, with 6 incidents ongoing at the time of writing. The Internet Society believes Internet shutdowns harm societies, economies, and the technical infrastructure of the global digital economy. Internet shutdowns constitute a significant risk for many businesses and investors, including those who are building infrastructure and/or developing services.

Another trend is Internet fragmentation, where the Internet is carved up along political, economic, and technological boundaries in a fundamental contradiction to the original principles of the globally connected Internet, where data flows freely and securely across the world. A growing number of government and corporate decisions around the world have the potential to adversely impact the open and interoperable global Internet, often with unintended consequences. The Internet Society is gravely concerned about this trend and continues to work with its community of stakeholders worldwide to support sustaining the single, globally interoperable, open Internet.

## Part 3. Internet Society's role

The Internet Society provides extensive experience and expertise in connectivity, inclusiveness, and capacity building to sustain the single, open, globally connected Internet. In relation to the WSIS Action Lines, the Internet Society's ongoing project-based work in 2024 includes:

### **WSIS Action Line C1: The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development**

- **Supporting the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF)**, which we consider a crucial element of the Internet ecosystem and a platform that reinforces cooperation between different stakeholder groups. We remain committed to strengthening its multistakeholder mechanisms. In 2024, we continued providing financial support to the organization of the UN IGF Secretariat-recognized National and Regional Initiatives (NRIs) through the Internet Society Foundation's Internet Governance Forum (IGF) funding program. We supported 40 NRIs and committed more than \$265,000 to them. In addition, we continue supporting the Global IGF by contributing \$100,000 to the IGF Trust Fund.
- **Promoting awareness of multistakeholder governance models that support open, globally connected, secure, and trustworthy Internet.** Our ongoing work on building and improving community-centered connectivity solutions to provide affordable connectivity in remote rural areas reflects the value of the multistakeholder approach. Another successful example of stakeholder collaboration is our efforts in routing security: after ten years of developing and incubating a project on routing security—Mutually Agreed Norms for

Routing Security (MANRS)—in 2024, we successfully transitioned the secretariat and MANRS Observatory to our partner organization Global Cyber Alliance.

## WSIS Action Line C2: Information and Communication Infrastructure

- **Enabling communities to independently create and sustain local connectivity solutions.** We offer open, publicly available resources, such as a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) toolkit, a Community Network Readiness Assessment, and online training about building community-centered networking solutions. In October 2024, in collaboration with the Association for Progressive Communications, we organized a side event on exploring innovative financing mechanisms for community-centered connectivity at the CSTD 2024-2025 Inter-sessional Panel.
- **Growing a sustainable peering ecosystem.** We support emerging and existing Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), and help strengthen local technical communities globally as a vehicle to bolster interconnection to enable an Internet that is more affordable, faster, and more resilient. In 2024, the Internet Society Foundation offered grant funds to build new and enhance existing IXPs through our Sustainable Peering Infrastructure (SPI) Funding Program and strong technical communities through our Sustainable Technical Communities (STC) program. Both efforts are partially supported by our trusted donors.
- **Supporting the development of innovative methods, technologies, and infrastructure that enhance Internet connectivity and access.** The Internet Foundation’s BOLT Grants Program aims to support teams of creatives, technologists, researchers, and social/cultural workers to design and build prototypes and pilots that will bring into reality innovative solutions to Internet connectivity, particularly among communities where current technologies are unavailable or not readily accessible. In the 2024 cycle, the BOLT Grants Program offered grants of up to \$300,000 USD for projects up to 18 months in duration.
- **Advocating against non-technical Internet shutdowns.** These advocacy efforts are driven by valuable and actionable data and insights provided through Internet Society’s Pulse platform, which measures and analyzes the health, availability, and evolution of the Internet.

## WSIS Action Lines C3: Access to information and knowledge

- **Championing inclusive, community-centered ways to connectivity** to facilitate access to information and knowledge, especially in areas unserved or underserved by traditional Internet providers.
- **Offering funding to improve access to information and knowledge.** The Internet Society Foundation’s Strengthening Communities/Improving Lives and Livelihoods (SCILLS) grant program aims to contribute to economic inclusion and increase educational opportunities by supporting individuals and communities in using the Internet more knowledgeably and

skillfully. The 2024 cycle of the SCILLS program offered grants of up to \$250,000 USD for projects of 24 months in duration.

#### WSIS Action Line C4: Capacity building

- **Empowering our chapters, special interest groups, and organization members** to take concerted action to build and protect the open, globally connected, secure, and trustworthy Internet. We continue to put our community at the center of our efforts and aim to keep it engaged and equipped with the right tools, opportunities, and knowledge.
- **Developing future Internet leaders today** by equipping professionals and learners with the experience, skills, knowledge, and connections they need to make the biggest possible impact on the Internet. In 2024, we continue delivering our youth ambassador program, early career fellowship, and mid career fellowship, which are the key to identifying and developing Internet leaders. We also launched a new fellowship supporting interconnectivity and Internet resilience in Africa, preparing 15 fellows from across the continent to support an affordable and resilient Internet. Our alumni network counts 355 Internet champions equipped with the necessary skills, competencies, and knowledge to take action in their areas of expertise and within their communities through advocacy, community development, or local project implementation.
- **Offering training and e-learning to provide advanced education** to specific audiences, including government officials, journalists, and technical communities. Our Learning @ Internet Society training and professional development program has offered learning opportunities to over 13,000 people across the globe. Course topics include Advanced Network Operations 2.0, Community Network Readiness Assessment, Privacy, Internet Governance, and many others. Another example of the ongoing successful effort is our Policymaker Program, which provides training to policymakers with a focus on the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), the premier standards development organization for the Internet. In 2024, we are offering this program at three IETF meetings: with the first two meetings attended by 25 policymakers, we expect the number of participants in this program in 2024 to be up to 40.

#### WSIS Action Line C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

- **Promoting effective encryption to keep people safe and secure online.** In 2024, we continued educating policymakers about the importance of strong encryption and collaborated with our partners to mitigate threats to encryption worldwide. We also continued our steering committee role within the Global Encryption Coalition to strengthen the efforts of advocates globally to promote and protect a secure and trustworthy Internet. The Global Encryption Coalition consists of over 430 members united by a shared commitment to promote and defend encryption.

- **Measuring and analyzing the health, availability, and evolution of the Internet** through our Pulse Platform to provide accurate data and analysis to understand how the Internet is evolving to protect it from threats and build and maintain its resilience.
- **Continuing our advocacy for more and better routing security** after the successful transition of the secretariat and MANRS (Mutually Agreed Norms for Routing Security) Observatory to our partner organization, Global Cyber Alliance, in 2024. As a part of this effort, we keep operating the training programs that emerged from MANRS.

Currently, one-third of the global population lacks access to the Internet while also facing significant threats such as increasing Internet shutdowns and fragmentation. This situation necessitates a collective effort among communities, partners, and stakeholders to enhance global connectivity and optimize the benefits derived from the Internet. Our dedication to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes reflects our conviction in fostering an open, secure, and trustworthy Internet. By adopting a multistakeholder governance model, we can contribute positively toward achieving the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. It is imperative that we collaborate to transform a connected future into a reality for all.

As the United Nations works to realize the objectives of the Global Digital Compact (GDC), the Internet Society believes that its follow-up and implementation must be multistakeholder, transparent, and inclusive. We strongly call to fully leverage existing mechanisms such as the CSTD, WSIS Forum, and the IGF to avoid duplicative efforts that would divert resources for international and multistakeholder cooperation.

The Internet Society remains committed to continuing its work to grow the Internet for everyone and protect it from threats. We will do this in coordination with our community and collaboration with other stakeholders. We hope for an open and inclusive process for the WSIS+20 review, and urge it to confirm the commitment to the multistakeholder model of Internet governance and the IGF as the crucial platform for cooperation between stakeholders.

