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## The Crucial Role of NGOs at WSIS+20 and Policymaking on ICTs

Intervention by Liberato Bautista<sup>1</sup>

**SPECIAL WSIS+20 FORUM HIGH-LEVEL EVENT SESSION**

**26 March 2024 | 14:00 -15:00 CET | ITU Geneva**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

1. The Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO) reaffirms its commitment to the WSIS Process. We attended the two world conferences in Tunis and Geneva and the subsequent WSIS Forums. We confirm our participation in the WSIS+20 High-Level event. It is a commitment and a recognition of the critical role of civil society and non-governmental actors in the WSIS Process.
2. We engage in the WSIS Process, recognizing that “ITU and WSIS have established exemplary procedures enabling a most open and transparent participatory process that could well be emulated elsewhere throughout the UN System” (C. Ritchie). The Open Consultation Process has been crucial to the inclusive and participatory character of the multistakeholder platform modeled by the WSIS Process.
3. We join the Swiss Ambassador’s statement at this meeting, reiterating the WSIS Process as the global venue and forum for information, communication, and digital technology policy. CoNGO has made several interventions at WSIS Forums on many action lines, especially the ethical dimensions and challenges that ICTs bring.
4. We engage the WSIS process because, at CoNGO, we prioritize access to the UN's substantive agenda, including digitized information and knowledge and access to the UN's physical premises and meetings. The ICT regime currently in place within the ambit and mandate of WSIS is foundational to this direction toward digital and communications

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justice. The involvement of NGOs and civil society actors in such a direction is critical.

5. CoNGO welcomed the action taken on 11 March by UN General Assembly entitled “Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development” (A/78/L.49 ). In this GA resolution, the WSIS Process and relevant documents related to it is amply acknowledged. CoNGO looks forward to contributing to the overall review of the “progress made since the World Summit on the Information Society” in 2025.
6. This coming April, CoNGO’s Regional Committee in Asia-Pacific will meet in Bangkok during the annual meeting of UN ESCAP. It will also convene a panel on “*Artificial and Yet Real: Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Development and Humanity.*” This event will engage the ITU-led Artificial Intelligence for Good Platform.
7. I look forward to meeting as many of you in Geneva this May at the WSIS+20 High-Level event.

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