

WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024: High-Level Outcomes and Executive Brief

Leaders TalkX: Local Voices, Global Echoes: Preserving Human Legacy, Linguistic Identity and Local Content in a Digital World

Recording: <https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/502>



Moderated by High-level Track Facilitator:

Ms. Daniella Esi Darlington, ITU Youth Advisory Board member and Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer at Copianto AI

UN Representative:

Dr. Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, UNESCO

Speakers:

1. **Guinea:** H.E. Ms. Rose Pola Pricemou, Minister, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy
2. **Gambia:** H.E. Mr. Ousman A. Bah, Minister, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy
3. **Denmark:** Ms. Anne Marie Engtoft Meldgaard, Tech-Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4. **EC MEDICI Framework:** Prof. Alfredo Ronchi, Secretary General
5. **CMAI Association of India:** Prof. NK Goyal, President
6. **International Trademark Association (INTA):** Ms. Dana Northcott, President

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Executive Summary by High-Level Track Facilitator

Fresh Priorities

- Digitalizing local archives and cultural content to make them accessible online: (H.E. Mr. Ousman A. Bah, Minister, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy).
- Empowering local content creators to develop content in indigenous languages to preserve cultural diversity and history: H.E. Ms. Rose Pola Pricemou, Minister, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy.
- Developing multilingual tools and platforms to facilitate cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Integrating local languages into education sector curriculum to promote linguistic identity: (Gambia)
- Continuing collaboration with partners to develop human capital for local content and digital solutions in local languages (Gambia).
- Organizing global conferences on language technologies to address the linguistic divide in the digital age: (Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)).

Emerging Trends

The vast majority of the world's languages are missing from the digital world. While there are over 7,000 languages spoken globally, only a handful are currently represented online. UNESCO's Tawfik Jelassi emphasized this gap. To bridge the divide, speakers from Gambia, India and Denmark proposed using technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning to digitize archives, translate content, and develop tools that make local languages more accessible online.

Opportunities

Digitizing local content and indigenous manuscripts can help preserve cultural heritage. A key theme that emerged across various speakers was the importance of promoting multilingualism in the digital space. Prof. NK Goyal from India specifically emphasized this point, along with the need for creating digital content in local languages and facilitating access to digital tools and infrastructure for local communities. He also highlighted the importance of collaboration, raising awareness and leveraging communication channels. Ms. Dana Northcott, representing the International Trademark Association, provided an international perspective. She discussed the importance of multistakeholder collaboration, including efforts by ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) to expand the use of non-English characters online. This highlights the need for international cooperation to create a truly inclusive digital space.

Key Challenges

- The large linguistic divide that exists digitally, with only a few dozen languages present online while over 7000 languages are used globally. This poses a major challenge to inclusion.
- Homogenization of online content, with most content produced in a few dominant languages, posing a threat to cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Lack of local language content and tools, making internet access difficult for those who don't speak dominant languages.

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CMAI ASSOCIATION OF INDIA



Prof. NK Goyal
President

Question:

With varied culture language around globe, what do you suggest for digital empowerment?

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