"Declaration & Roadmap"

AI-Forward Summit 2025

A Unified, Multi-Level Path to coherent & impactful Results

December 2025

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II.   Introduction :

In 2005, the world gathered in Tunis for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), united around a global mission: bridging the Digital Divide, expanding universal connectivity, and strengthening information security. That vision shaped the early decades of the 21st century and laid the foundations for today's digital ecosystem.

Two decades later, the global landscape has fundamentally shifted. If 2005 marked the era of Connectivity, then 2025 marks the rise of Intelligence. The challenges now extend beyond access to technology, centering instead on the emergence of the Intelligence Divide. The design of algorithms, the governance of data, and the ethical principles guiding artificial intelligence will determine whether the future of intelligence becomes a universal opportunity or remains concentrated among a limited group of nations.

Building on the legacy of the Tunis Agenda, the AI-Forward Summit 2025 positions the Arab region and Africa to advance from digital adoption to digital leadership. The Summit serves as a global strategic platform and an inter-regional mandate to accelerate responsible, ethical, and sustainable AI development aligned with international frameworks.

Given that the AI-Forward Summit represents a unified, multi-level pathway toward meaningful results, this document captures the collective insights, commitments, and forward-looking vision emerging from this pivotal moment. It calls on all stakeholders to engage with new realities, deepen cooperation, and help shape an intelligence-driven future that is inclusive, secure, and transformative.

The document is structured around four interconnected components:

1.   **The Arab Intelligence Society: Unified Pathway and Roadmap Declaration**
2.   **The Ministerial Outcome Declaration: WSIS+20 Outcomes and Future Directions Towards the "Intelligence Society"**
3.   **Nine (9) key takeaways that synthesize the Summit's core messages and priorities.**
4.   **From Declaration to Delivery: Concrete steps and actions for an Arab Intelligence Society**

Together, these components form a coherent narrative and an integrated framework that advances a shared regional and global vision for responsible and impactful AI development serving All.

III. The Arab Intelligence Society: Unified Pathway for the Roadmap & Declaration

The "**AI Forward Summit 202"5** marks a historic shift "From Information Society to Intelligence Society". The shared ambition is to position the Arab region as a global leader in AI innovation, embedding ethical, social, and human values at the core of digital, economic, and societal development to ensure that AI technologies serve all and leaving no one behind. This transition is directly aligned with the outcomes of the WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025 and the call for renewed global and regional guidance to navigate the shift to Intelligent/Smart Societies.

Forged over two days of intensive, high-level dialogue, this **Roadmap declaration** captures the consensus and insights of distinguished regional and international experts and is directly shaped by the strategic recommendations of our partners."

It articulates a **shared strategic vision** for building an **inclusive, innovative, and globally competitive Arab Intelligence Society**. It defines **key milestones, flagship initiatives, and regional collaboration frameworks**, offering a **comprehensive pathway** for achieving sustainable digital transformation, advancing AI-driven innovation, and fostering cross-border cooperation and collaboration.

Our roadmap is anchored in the following **five interdependent strategic pillars**, which are essential for building a human-centered and trustworthy Intelligence Society and ensure a smooth transition. The journey is guided by core components and reinforced through concrete, impactful key initiatives.

Strategic Pillars and Initiatives:

1. Pillar 1: Unified Regional AI Strategy and Governance

This pillar focuses on aligning national AI strategies with broader regional and international objectives, ensuring interoperability, trust, and a coherent pan-regional approach.

- **Core component 1: Arab AI Initiative:** Advance the objectives of the Arab AI Initiative, to harness AI as a driver for sustainable development and regional prosperity.
- **Key Initiative:** Establish a regional "**AI Research and Innovation Fund"** to support cross-border AI projects addressing priority sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, and education.

- **Core component 2: Policies & Regulation Harmonization:** Forge innovative pathways for aligning national AI policies and regulation and plans with broader regional objectives and international standards, ensuring interoperability and trust.
- **Key Initiative:** Develop a **Pan-Arab AI Regulatory Framework Toolkit** that provides member states with practical guidance to adopt harmonized policies, ethical standards, and compliance mechanisms, drawing from the Arab AI Charter, UNESCO's AI Ethics Recommendation, and other relevant national, regional, and international regulatory frameworks.
- **Core component 3: Pan-Regional Dialogue and Interoperable Governance:** Commit to developing coherent governance frameworks that foster collaboration, mutual trust, and seamless interoperability and integration across Arab countries and with other countries, and move beyond fragmented policies toward pan-regions actions.
- **Key Initiative:** Launch an **"Arab AI Governance Cooperation Mechanism"** to facilitate dialogue among policymakers, regulators, and AI experts, and to establish joint working groups for harmonized cross-border AI Governance initiatives.

2. Pillar 2: Innovation and Ecosystem Development:

This pillar focuses on creating a unified regional ecosystem that nurtures AI innovation, facilitates R&D, and fosters deep synergy among all stakeholders to fuel entrepreneurial initiatives.

- **Core component 1: Regional AI Innovation Ecosystem:** Build/Establish a unified regional approach to AI, facilitating a region-wide ecosystem that nurtures AI innovation, research, and commercialization.
- **Key Initiative:** Establish a "**Pan-Arab AI Innovation Hub Network**" linking national innovation centers to promote joint R&D projects, technology transfer, and commercialization of AI solutions.
- **Core component 2: Synergy of Stakeholders:** Foster/Promote deep synergy and collaboration between policymakers, industry, academia, startups, investors to fuel and advance research, elevate and retain talent, and catalyze innovative entrepreneurial initiatives.
- **Key Initiative:** Launch an Arab AI Stakeholders Network/Forum, a collaborative platform for co-designing initiatives, sharing best practices, and funding cross-sector AI projects.
- **Core component 3: Empowering the "Future Leaders of AI":** Connect young innovators and startups to resources, mentorship, and multistakeholders dialogue platforms such as the AI NextGen Stage to scale their impact.

- **Key Initiative:** Establish a "**Regional AI NextGen Accelerator";** a project-driven program that provides targeted funding, innovation support, mentorship, and access to regional AI governance and innovation platforms to empower promising young innovators and AI-focused startups.

3. Pillar 3: Capacity Building and AI Leadership:

This pillar is dedicated to strategic investment in talent development and concrete measures for gender equity and inclusive leadership to position the Arab region as a leader in the knowledge and intelligence economy and society.

- **Core component 1: AI Talent Development:** Invest strategically in education, applied research, and professional development to position the Arab region as a leader in the knowledge economy and Intelligence society.
- **Key Initiative:** Launch a **"Pan-Arab AI Academy"** offering accredited courses, research fellowships, and professional certification programs to develop highly skilled AI professionals across the region.
- **Core component 2: AI Women's Empowerment and Leadership:** Implement actionable measures to ensure not only gender equity and inclusivity but also the meaningful leadership and active participation of women in AI and digital transformation initiatives.
- **Key Initiative:** Launch the **"Arab Women AI Leadership Program and Network"**, providing mentorship, leadership training, and high-level networking opportunities for female AI professionals and decision-makers.

4. Pillar 4: Ethics, Sovereignty, and Security:

This pillar commits to ensuring the responsible, transparent, and secure deployment of AI systems in alignment with cultural values and international standards, while also securing technological independence.

- **Core component 1: Ethical Deployment:** Implement the principles of the Arab AI Ethical Charter, complemented by the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, to ensure that AI systems are deployed responsibly, transparently, and in alignment with both international standards and Arab cultural values.
- **Key initiative:** Launch a Regional AI Ethics Certification / "Arab AI Ethics Label" Program for AI systems and projects, ensuring compliance with

ethical standards and alignment with values and culture across Arab countries.

- **Core component 2: AI data security governance :** build an AI data security governance framework, establish and improve AI data management mechanisms, formulate AI data security standards, refine AI data processing rules and security requirements, and develop and enhance data security standards for AI datasets, with reference to the international standards ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 42 and SC 27.

- **Key Initiative:** Establish a "**Pan-Arab AI Data Protection Program**" to develop unified guidelines and frameworks, oversee compliance, and provide secure data-sharing infrastructure for regional AI projects.

- **Core component 3: Technological Sovereignty:** Develop a unified, ethical, and competitive Arab AI ecosystem to secure technological independence and bridge the digital and Intelligence divides.

- **Key Initiative:** Create an "**Arab AI Open-Source Platform**" that hosts regional AI tools, algorithms, and datasets to foster local innovation, reduce dependency on external technologies, and promote collaborative development.

5. Pillar 5: Sustainable Regional and International Partnerships :

This pillar seeks to strengthen coordination and joint action across all sectors to harness AI for societal benefit, driving smart, sustainable, and human-centric development.

- **Core component 1: Collaborative AI Advancement:** Enhance coordination and joint action among governments, regional bodies, research institutions, the private sector, and civil society to drive smart, sustainable, and human-centric AI development, delivering scalable solutions across the Arab region while fostering impactful engagement at the global level.

- **Key Initiative:** Launch a "**Regional AI Transformation Taskforce**" to coordinate cross-sector projects, facilitate knowledge and best-practice sharing, monitor progress on AI-driven digital transformation initiatives across Arab countries, and promote active collaboration with international partners and global AI players.

- **Core component 2: AI for Good and for All:** Harness AI for societal benefit, exploring regional initiatives that leverage technology for sustainable development, social equity, and human welfare.

- **Key Initiative:** Establish a "**Pan-Arab AI for Impact Program**" to fund, support and scale projects that address key societal challenges,

> including healthcare access, education equity, climate action, and disaster response, while aligning with global initiatives such as ITU's AI for Good Summit.

VI.   Ministerial Commitments (WSIS+20 panel) :

The strategic blueprint above is strongly supported by the outcomes of the Ministerial Panel on "WSIS+20 Outcomes and Future Directions Towards the 'Intelligence Society'", which emphasized the following:

Ministerial Outcome Integration:

*   **Transition to Intelligence Society:** Reaffirms the shift from the Information Society to Intelligent/Smart Societies, recognizing the new phase driven by AI and data systems.
*   **WSIS as a Foundational Framework:** Reaffirms commitment to the Geneva and Tunis outcomes, emphasizing the need for renewed guidance grounded in WSIS principles for navigating the AI era.
*   **Regional Initiatives Support:** Welcomes the initiatives emerging from the Arab region with support from ITU and AICTO, as aligned with WSIS principles and future-oriented digital development.

Specific Regional Commitments (Supported by Ministerial Panel):

Commitment	Alignment with the Roadmap
Annual Regional Initiative: "From Information Society to Intelligent/Smart Society" (To be Led by AICTO)	Directly supports the overall vision and provides a platform for reviewing WSIS outcomes in the context of AI, strengthening cooperation, and advancing youth/gender inclusion (Pillar 3 & 5).
Regional Repository of Emerging Technology Initiatives (To be created, hosted/Managed by AICTO)	Directly supports all pillars by capturing and showcasing regional AI innovations, facilitating knowledge exchange, and providing evidence-based insights to inform policymaking.

Kindly refer to the full document outlined below of the Ministerial Outcome Declaration: WSIS+20 Outcomes and Future Directions Towards the "Intelligence Society".

IV.   Key Takeaways from the "AI-Forward Summit 2025" :

1. **AI Unified Regional & Global Vision:** Decisive commitment to safe, ethical, and development-driven AI (Pillar 1 & 4).

2. **The Arab AI Initiative:** Driving collaboration and harmonizing strategies (Pillar 1).

3. **WSIS+20 as a Strategic Catalyst:** Propelling the region from "Information Society" to "Intelligence Society" (Overall Vision).

4. **From Principles to Action:** Emphasis on turning commitments into concrete results and measurable impact (All Pillars).

5. **Powerful Partnerships for Lasting Impact :** Strong collaboration among all stakeholders driving transformative programs (Pillar 2 & 5).

6. **AI for Tangible Development Impact:** Using AI solutions to advance critical sectors (Pillar 5).

7. **Championing Youth and Women Leadership:** Advancing the role of women and youth as leaders and innovators to drive inclusive and sustainable AI-based development (Pillar 3).

8. **Celebrating Regional Success Stories:** Showcasing replicable models and inspiring scale-up (Pillar 2 & Ministerial Panel).

9. **Guiding the Journey to 2026 and Beyond :** Setting a clear path for coordinated strategies ahead of the next edition of the Summit (Overall Structure).

V. From Declaration to Delivery : Concrete steps and actions for an Arab Intelligence Society

Through the "AI Forward Summit 2025" roadmap declaration, **Ministers, decision-makers, stakeholders, contributors and participants** affirmed their collective commitment to realizing a collaborative vision for the Arab region. This vision dictates an irreversible shift: transforming the Arab region from a capable Information Society into a thriving, inclusive, and responsible Intelligence Society.

They pledge to advance an ethical, sustainable, and innovation-driven digital future through concrete, collaborative pathways. This commitment is not merely regional; it is meticulously coherent with the principles of the Global Digital Compact and firmly founded upon the enduring spirit and principles of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

This declaration is a strategic blueprint and an open invitation for all our partners to join us in implementing this roadmap and to pave the way to AI-Forward Summit 2026 and beyond. **Turning vision into action, we agreed to advance together through the following concrete steps :**

1. Convene and elevate the Annual "AI-Forward" Summit

Convene the annual flagship "AI-Forward" Summit as the high-level international forum for **strategic alignment, innovation showcase, and progress accountability** in the transition to an intelligent society.

2. Establish and activate the AI Policy & Innovation Platform"

Establish and activate the **AI Policy & Innovation Stock-Taking and Collaboration Platform** to map, assess, and benchmark national, regional, and international AI policies, initiatives, and innovations, while enabling ongoing collaboration, knowledge sharing, and joint development among stakeholders across sectors and countries.

3. Assess and Strengthen the Regional AI-Ready Infrastructure

Initiate and execute a comprehensive **"Regional AI Readiness Audit and Acceleration Program"** to systematically assess, de-risk, and strategically fortify and strengthen the three critical pillars of regional infrastructure required for scaled, sovereign AI deployment: **Compute, Data, and Security.**

4. Launch and activate AI Co-Creation Hubs and "Lighthouse Pilots"

Launch active **AI Co-Creation Hubs**: dynamic, cross-sector expert networks, to drive and enable continuous knowledge sharing, fast-track standards alignment, and co-develop scalable, open-source AI solutions through multi-national Lighthouse Pilot Projects.

5. Call for AI Strategic Projects and Initiatives Funding

Invite **financial institutions, development partners, and investors** to support high-impact strategic **AI projects and initiatives across the region**. This funding will accelerate research, innovation, infrastructure development, and talent empowerment, ensuring a coordinated and sustainable implementation of the regional AI roadmap.

VI. Annex:

Ministerial Outcome Declaration:
WSIS+20 Outcomes and Future Directions Towards the "Intelligence Society"

We, Ministers and high-level representatives participating in the Ministerial Panel "WSIS+20 Outcomes and Future Directions towards the 'Intelligence Society'", convened in Tunis on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), gather to reflect on two decades of progress, to assess emerging challenges, and to chart the way forward for an inclusive, safe, and sustainable digital future.

We recall with deep appreciation that it was Tunisia that first proposed the organization of the World Summit on the Information Society at the 1998 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Minneapolis (Resolution 73), which ITU brought to the United Nations and placed WSIS on the agenda of the United Nations

We recall that United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/56/183 endorsed the two-phase approach of the Summit held in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005), and entrusted the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with lead responsibility and secretariat functions for the organization of the Summit in cooperation with all relevant UN agencies, international organizations, and stakeholders.

We reaffirm our strong commitment to the Geneva Declaration of Principles, and Plan of Action, and the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, which remain foundational frameworks for the digital development landscape. These documents champion universal access, capacity building, human rights, enabling environments, bridging the digital divide, and, crucially, enshrined the multistakeholder approach that has become a global model for digital governance.

Since their adoption in 2003 and 2005, the WSIS outcomes have guided global digital policies and national ICT strategies. Over the past two decades, the WSIS process has generated one of the most enduring and effective ecosystems for ICT for development, grounded in collaboration, inclusiveness, and shared responsibility. We highlight the following achievements:

- The WSIS Action Lines, facilitated by UN agencies, have proven to be among the most adaptable digital development frameworks in the United Nations system.

- The WSIS Forum, hosted by ITU and co-organized with UNESCO, UNPD and UNCTAD, has evolved into the leading global platform for multistakeholder dialogue on ICT for development, enabling cooperation, partnership-building, and the sharing of global best practices, reporting on the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines, and reviewing the WSIS Action Line Roadmaps. The WSIS Forum

2025, rebranded as WSIS+20 High-Level Event, engaged over 11,000 participants from 169 countries. The WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025

- WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025 Outcome Document:
  http://itu.int/go/WSISForumOutcomes2025
- WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025 Chair's Summary:
  http://itu.int/go/WSISForumOutcomes2025
- WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025 High Level Outcomes and Executive Brief:
  http://itu.int/go/WSISForumOutcomes2025
- Presentations by UN WSIS Action Lines facilitators on WSIS+20 Review Action Lines Milestones, Challenges and Emerging Trends beyond 2025:
  https://itu.int/go/wsis20review
- 20-Year Reports on the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes – country and stakeholder reports:
  https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/review/reports/twenty-year.html

- The WSIS Stocktaking database, launched during the Tunis phase and maintained by the International Telecommunication Union, has become the world's largest repository of ICT-related development initiatives, cataloguing nearly 20,000 projects that document impact at the grassroots level and support evidence-based policymaking.
- The WSIS Prizes, managed by ITU since 2012, have emerged as a prestigious global recognition program, celebrating excellence and impact in digital innovation aligned with WSIS Action Lines and the SDGs.
- The United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) has strengthened system-wide coherence by aligning the work of UN entities on ICT for development, supporting coordinated action and shared understanding across agencies, with rotational chair and co-chairs between ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD and UN Regional Commissions, with ITU serving as its permanent secretariat.

These mechanisms have transformed WSIS from a Summit into a sustained global process — turning ambition into action, and connecting technology, people, and development across every region and sector.

Despite these achievements, we note with concern that the digital divide remains profound. Today, 2.6 billion people — nearly one-third of the world's population — remain offline. Many more lack the skills, infrastructure, affordability, or enabling environments required to fully participate in the digital economy. This is not only a technological gap but a development gap, and addressing it is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, reducing inequalities, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

We observe that today's rapidly evolving technological landscape—driven by the emergence of Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, data-driven systems, and frontier digital technologies—is reshaping societies, economies, and governance. We recognize that the world is entering a new phase, transitioning from Information

Societies to Intelligent or Smart Societies, presenting both unprecedented opportunities and complex risks.

We acknowledge that this moment mirrors the early 2000s, when WSIS was conceived to guide the transformation toward digital inclusion and cooperation. We therefore emphasize that renewed global and regional guidance, grounded in WSIS principles, is essential for navigating emerging challenges, fostering trustworthy and human-centred AI, and enabling sustainable digital development.

We take note of ECOSOC Resolution E/RES/2025/18, which calls for the integration of the Global Digital Compact (GDC) within the existing WSIS architecture, and emphasize the need for coherence, complementarity, and strengthening of WSIS as a long-standing and effective framework for digital development.

We recall the Report by the ITU Secretary-General – "WSIS+20 Report: Building a digital future for all" which documents ITU's contribution to the implementation of and follow-up to the WSIS outcomes and its role in advancing the SDGs. We welcome the Secretary-General's assessment of ITU's leadership and the roadmap provided in support of the WSIS+20 review and future action.

Recognizing that regional strategies can accelerate progress and respond to local needs, we welcome the initiatives emerging from the Arab region, with the leadership of Tunisia and with support from ITU and AICTO, aligned with WSIS principles and future-oriented digital development.

In this spirit, participants express their support for the following initiatives:

1. **Establishment of an annual regional initiative titled "From Information Society to Intelligent/Smart Society." This initiative will serve as a regional platform to:**
   - review WSIS outcomes in the context of AI and emerging technologies;
   - strengthen cooperation and exchange between countries of the region;
   - advance youth empowerment, gender inclusion, skills development, and innovation;
   - support alignment with global AI initiatives, including ITU's AI for Good platform;
   - contribute to regional digital integration.

   Participants acknowledge that AICTO may take the lead in coordinating this initiative.

2. **Creation of a regional repository of emerging technology initiatives, projects, and good practices in the Arab region, using the WSIS Stocktaking database structure, to:**
   - document and showcase regional AI innovation;
   - support knowledge exchange across countries;
   - increase visibility of regional progress and priorities;
   - inform policymaking, capacity building, and responsible AI development.

Participants welcome Tunisia's intention to establish this platform and note that AICTO could serve as its host and manager.

We reaffirm that the WSIS multistakeholder model—bringing together governments, UN agencies, private sector, civil society, academia, technical communities, and youth—remains as effective and relevant today as it was when pioneered in 2003. We recognize that the challenges and opportunities of AI and emerging technologies can only be addressed through inclusive, transparent, and collaborative governance frameworks.

Looking Ahead to the Next Phase of WSIS and the Intelligence Society

Building on 20 years of achievements and lessons learned, we commit to working together to ensure that WSIS continues to serve as a cornerstone for global digital development. We affirm our determination to shape the transition toward Intelligent Societies in a way that is:

- people-centred, ensuring technology serves human dignity;
- development-driven, advancing sustainable growth and inclusion;
- multistakeholder, drawing on the contributions of all actors;
- innovative and future-focused, embracing emerging opportunities while mitigating risks;
- coherent with global frameworks, including the Global Digital Compact
- responsible and human-centric in the deployment of Artificial Intelligence, ensuring ethical, transparent, and inclusive uses that safeguard rights and empower individuals.

We call upon all stakeholders to deepen cooperation, accelerate digital inclusion, and ensure that the benefits of Artificial Intelligence and digital transformation are shared equitably across all countries and communities.

In marking the 20th anniversary of WSIS in Tunis—the birthplace of the WSIS vision Tunis Agenda—we look forward to a renewed era of global collaboration. Together, we will continue to build Information Societies, accelerate the transition to Intelligent Societies, and harness digital innovation for sustainable development, prosperity, and peace for all.