

Advancing Africa's Digital Agenda

A Comparative Analysis of AIFAT
Propositions and WSIS+20 Negotiations
with Recommendations for
Pan-African Diplomacy

An intermediate proposal



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Abstract

This position paper evaluates the propositions advanced by the AI for Africa Taskforce (AIFAT) in recent weeks against the current state of WSIS+20 negotiations, as reflected in the Rev1 Compilation document dated November 21, 2025. Structured around AIFAT's five core pillars—Connectivity and Affordability; Digital Sovereignty, Data Governance, and Security; Protecting Human Rights and Digital Freedoms; Finance and Investment; and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and Innovation—the analysis highlights alignments, shortfalls, and exceedances, with expanded positioning on Group of 77 (G77) priorities. It underscores expanded synergies with the Global Digital Compact (GDC), adopted in September 2024, which reinforces G77 demands for equitable access, technology transfer, and inclusion in the Global South, while avoiding duplication through integrated roadmaps and UN-centered mechanisms. Drawing from Pan-African priorities, such as actionable targets, sovereign controls, and integration with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the paper incorporates complementary Global South perspectives, including human-AI symbiosis and innovative financing models. As a reference benchmark, it integrates Brazil's BRICS digital positions from 2025, including the BRICS Leaders' Declaration on Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence and the Rio de Janeiro Declaration, which emphasize digital sovereignty, multipolar AI distribution, and South-South cooperation. The analysis also notes Japan's (JPN) positions in negotiations, often aligning with Western brackets to dilute G77 proposals. It concludes with expanded substantive recommendations for African nations to strengthen their diplomatic stance through strategic alliances with the G77 and BRICS partners, emphasizing BOP-centric (Bottom of the Pyramid) triangulation, debt-linked mechanisms, and ethical AI governance to ensure equitable digital outcomes aligned with the 2030 Agenda and GDC.

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Introduction

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)+20 process, culminating in the high-level meeting scheduled for December 16-17, 2025, in New York, represents a critical juncture for global digital governance. As negotiations evolve, the AI for Africa Taskforce (AIFAT) has consistently advocated for a Pan-African diplomatic position that prioritizes actionable, financially backed, and rights-respecting commitments to bridge digital divides in Africa and the Global South. Over the past couple of weeks, AIFAT's propositions—detailed in assessments of WSIS+20 Rev1 and proposed revisions for Rev2—have emphasized Africa-centric lenses, including concrete targets like 2% Gross National Income (GNI) per capita for 2GB mobile data, sovereign data models inspired by South Africa's Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), blended finance with debt-linked instruments, lifecycle human rights safeguards, and interoperable DPI aligned with AfCFTA.

This paper compares these propositions to the current negotiation state, as captured in the WSIS+20 Rev1 Compilation (dated November 21, 2025), which incorporates brackets reflecting positions from groups like the G77, EU, US, and Japan (JPN). The G77, a coalition of 134 developing nations including a majority of African countries, plays a pivotal role in amplifying Global South voices, advocating for sovereignty, multilateralism, enhanced cooperation (as per Tunis Agenda paragraphs 69-71), technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, financing reforms to close the \$4 trillion annual development gap, and the right to development (Group of 77, 2025a; Group of 77, 2025b). These priorities align closely with AIFAT's agenda, providing a strategic platform for African diplomacy to counter oppositions from developed nations, such as JPN's resistance to "right to development" inclusions and EU/US deletions of mandatory commitments.

As a reference benchmark, the paper draws on Brazil's 2025 BRICS positions, as host of the XVII BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro (July 6-7, 2025) under the theme "Strengthening Global South Cooperation for a More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance." Key documents include the BRICS Leaders' Declaration on Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence (launched June 2025) and the Rio de Janeiro Declaration, which emphasize digital sovereignty, multipolar AI distribution, ethical governance to protect vulnerable groups, resilient digital infrastructure, and South-South cooperation to mitigate inequalities (BRICS, 2025a; BRICS, 2025b). Brazil's influence promoted intergovernmentalism, civil society inclusion, and UN-centered approaches, aligning with Global South demands for equitable tech access and countering big tech dominance.

Furthermore, the analysis expands synergies with the Global Digital Compact (GDC), which commits to closing digital divides through universal connectivity, equitable AI governance, and increased financing for developing countries (United Nations, 2024). The GDC's emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnerships, human rights due diligence, and technology transfer resonates with G77 and BRICS demands for inclusive digital transformation, offering opportunities to harmonize WSIS+20 outcomes without duplication—e.g., through joint implementation roadmaps (Paragraphs 104, 111, 120 in Compilation) that integrate GDC's AI Panel and Global Dialogue with WSIS Action Lines. BRICS benchmarks, such as the Data Economy Governance Understanding for ethical data sharing and the 2025-2030 Action Plan for innovation, provide practical models for WSIS-GDC alignment, ensuring sovereignty-respecting frameworks that amplify Global South priorities. The comparison reveals partial alignments in broad principles (e.g., inclusion and GDC integration) but significant shortfalls in specificity, sovereignty, and Africa-focused mechanisms, often due to Western brackets. It employs AIFAT's Spatial Positioning Matrix to assess narrative articulation and structural placement, while highlighting how G77 and BRICS proposals can bolster Pan-African advocacy.

Comparative Analysis of AIFAT Propositions and Current Negotiations

Pillar I: Connectivity and Affordability

AIFAT's core proposition demands concrete targets, such as the 2% GNI per capita benchmark for 2GB mobile data, blended finance for infrastructure, and community networks to address rural-urban divides (Mamun et al., 2025a). Proposed revisions for Rev2, integrating AIFAT with human-centered approaches, enhanced paragraphs 10, 16, 20, 25, 26, 28, 36, and 40 to include AI-optimized supply chains and affordability safeguards for vulnerable groups, including marginal farmers via predictive analytics.

In the current Rev1 Compilation, alignments are evident in broad recognitions: Paragraph 10 expresses concern over digital divides and calls for investment in infrastructure, affordability, and digital skills, with brackets supporting linguistic diversity and capacity-building. Paragraph 25 commits to incentives for the unconnected, including universal service funds, while Paragraph 26 emphasizes blended finance and public-private partnerships. These echo G77 priorities for addressing connectivity gaps in developing countries (Group of 77, 2025c), synergizing with GDC commitments to universal broadband by 2030 and resilient infrastructure for the Global South, as well as BRICS' Rio Declaration emphasis on interoperable digital public infrastructure to avoid fragmentation and foster inclusive growth (BRICS, 2025b). However, shortfalls persist—no explicit 2% GNI target is adopted, and Africa-centric references

(e.g., AfCFTA integration) are absent, partly due to JPN and US brackets favoring voluntary measures over binding ones. Exceedances include Paragraph 36's reaffirmation of school connectivity by 2030 and emphasis on vulnerable groups, but these remain general without measurable mechanisms. G77 proposals, such as enhanced international cooperation and technology transfer, provide leverage for AIFAT, aligning with GDC's focus on equitable access and BRICS' calls for knowledge sharing in ICTs for agriculture and manufacturing to close divides exacerbated by uneven progress.

Pillar II: Digital Sovereignty, Data Governance, and Security

AIFAT advocates for sovereign data governance, referencing POPIA-like models, explicit "sovereign" language in AI frameworks, and protections against technological dependency (Mamun et al., 2025a). Rev2 proposals strengthened Paragraphs 78-84 with AI fellowships for the Global South, human-centered oversight, and BOP-focused security, while reinstating Zero Draft Paragraph 52 for environmental sustainability in ICTs.

The Compilation shows mixed progress: Paragraph 4 reaffirms sovereign equality but brackets "digital sovereignty" (opposed by EU, UK, JPN), with G77 pushing for intergovernmental roles and enhanced cooperation to enable governments' equal footing in Internet policy (Group of 77, 2025a). Paragraphs 81-83 on AI governance include ethical considerations and capacity-building, with brackets for transparency and bias mitigation—aligning with AIFAT's human oversight demands and GDC's commitments to inclusive AI frameworks with risk assessments for developing countries. Paragraph 14 recognizes confidence-building in ICTs, with EU additions for voluntary standards and interoperability. Shortfalls include no explicit POPIA references or sovereign controls in data flows; RF and G77 brackets emphasize national sovereignty and multilateralism, synergizing with GDC's support for data governance that respects national policies and fosters cross-border flows with trust, and BRICS' AI Declaration advocacy for multipolar AI distribution to challenge big tech concentration and protect Global South sovereignty (BRICS, 2025a). Exceedances appear in Paragraph 95's focus on IGF activities for affordable technology, preventing "digital debt," which echoes AIFAT's BOP triangulation and G77's calls for technology transfer, though without Africa-specific ties. JPN's streamlining proposals risk diluting G77's emphasis on sovereignty, but BRICS benchmarks like state-led AI norms offer a counter-reference for WSIS-GDC harmonization.

Pillar III: Protecting Human Rights and Digital Freedoms

AIFAT calls for lifecycle safeguards, ends to disproportionate restrictions (e.g., Internet shutdowns), and protections for underserved groups, with explicit human rights integration across Action Lines (Mamun et al., 2025a). Rev2 revisions bolstered Paragraphs 8, 65-77, and 73 with commitments against shutdowns, private sector due diligence, and AI-specific guidelines against violence amplification.

Current negotiations align strongly here: Paragraph 8 commits to an open, safe digital space respecting human rights, with EU/ROK additions for full promotion offline/online, while G77 insists on the “right to development” (opposed by EU, JPN, US). Paragraph 73 addresses shutdowns, and reinstated Zero Draft Paragraph 64 counters violence, hate speech, and misinformation—mirroring AIFAT’s demands and GDC’s protections against abuses amplified by technology. Paragraph 110 requests OHCHR involvement in Action Lines for human rights facilitation. Shortfalls: No prescriptive enforcement against censorship, and G77’s “right to development” faces opposition, yet it synergizes with GDC’s human rights due diligence and safeguards for vulnerable groups in the Global South, as well as BRICS’ AI Declaration focus on protecting women, minorities, and youth from AI risks through ethical standards and disinformation countermeasures (BRICS, 2025a). Exceedances include Paragraph 67-68’s lifecycle safeguards and GDC synergies, but brackets (e.g., HS deletions on gender-based violence) risk dilution. G77’s advocacy for upholding multilateralism strengthens AIFAT’s position on rights-respecting commitments, with BRICS’ emphasis on human-centered AI as a benchmark for WSIS integration.

Pillar IV: Finance and Investment: Closing the Digital Funding Gap

AIFAT demands blended finance beyond loans, debt-linked instruments, and explicit mechanisms for African funding gaps, with models like “Dual Core Finance” for MSMEs (integrated from Mamun, 2025b). Rev2 enhanced Paragraphs 26, 59-64 with task forces for innovative financing and climate-resilient ICTs.

The Compilation partially matches: Paragraph D bis (G77) welcomes the Sevilla Commitment for closing financing gaps, emphasizing multilateral reforms and urgency in mobilizing resources—aligning with AIFAT and GDC’s calls for enhanced financing through blended mechanisms and development assistance for digital inclusion. Paragraph 64 proposes a task force—exceeding AIFAT by prioritizing climate resilience. Paragraph 25 ties financial protocols to divides. Shortfalls: No debt-linked specifics or “Dual Core Finance” incorporation; US/EU/JPN oppose G77’s urgent financing reforms, favoring

voluntary approaches. Exceedances include Paragraph 59-64's sustained investments, synergizing with GDC's mobilization for connectivity and DPI in developing countries, and BRICS' Rio Declaration support for innovative financing instruments via the New Development Bank (NDB) and addressing debt vulnerabilities to enable tech transitions (BRICS, 2025b), but without Africa-centric benchmarks. G77's focus on predictable funding provides a synergy point for AIFAT to advocate debt relief tied to digital development, using BRICS' 2025-2030 Action Plan as a model for WSIS-GDC alignment.

Pillar V: Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and Innovation

AIFAT proposes Africa-centric, interoperable DPI models for AfCFTA, youth/women entrepreneurship, and local content (Mamun et al., 2025a). Rev2 revisions to Paragraphs 17, 32, 56-58, 62, and 76 linked DPI to innovation, including AI for agriculture and marginal farmers.

Negotiations align broadly: Paragraph 17 recognizes DPI as transformative, Paragraph 62 supports interoperability, and Paragraph 32 includes youth/women—echoing G77's development-oriented WSIS reaffirmation (Group of 77, 2025b). Shortfalls: No AfCFTA integration or sovereign DPI controls; G77 pushes for developing country participation in governance (102 bis) and new Action Lines in CSTD. Exceedances: Paragraph 81-83's AI capacity-building and Paragraph 103's multistakeholder reaffirmation, synergizing with GDC's open-source DPI and AI partnerships for the Global South, as well as BRICS' emphasis on resilient, sovereignty-respecting DPI and data economy governance for inclusive innovation (BRICS, 2025a; BRICS, 2025b), though US/JPN deletions risk weakening synergies. G77's calls for ethical AI and fair access align with AIFAT's BOP focus, with BRICS' AI forums as benchmarks for WSIS-GDC harmonization.

Substantive Recommendations for African Nations

To advance AIFAT's agenda, African nations should adopt a unified diplomatic strategy in remaining negotiations, leveraging G77 alliances and BRICS benchmarks (e.g., Brazil's 2025 positions on sovereign AI and South-South tech cooperation) to amplify voices against Western oppositions. Recommendations are expanded with actionable steps, including coalition-building, amendment proposals, and follow-up mechanisms:

- 1. Connectivity and Affordability:** Align with G77's enhanced cooperation proposals to push for mandatory 2% GNI targets in Paragraphs 10 and 25, integrating AfCFTA for regional networks. Propose amendments mandating AI-optimized community infrastructure for rural areas, drawing on Mamun's (2025b) farmer-

focused analytics, and synergize with GDC's 2030 broadband goals. Form BRICS-inspired working groups (e.g., modeled on Brazil's Digital BRICS Forum) for knowledge sharing on resilient ICTs, advocating joint investments to prevent fragmentation.

2. **Digital Sovereignty and Security:** Support G77's retention of "digital sovereignty" in Paragraph 4 and enhanced cooperation (102 bis), with POPIA as a model in Paragraphs 81-83. Reinstate environmental clauses (Paragraph 52) with climate-resilient DPI, emphasizing BOP triangulation to counter dependency, and highlight GDC synergies on data governance. Benchmark against BRICS' AI Declaration for multipolar frameworks, proposing Africa-BRICS dialogues on ICT security norms to counter JPN/EU dilutions.
3. **Human Rights and Freedoms:** Bolster G77's "right to development" in Paragraph 8, strengthening Paragraph 73 with enforceable anti-shutdown mechanisms and lifecycle safeguards in Paragraph 110. Align with GDC for violence countermeasures (Paragraph 64), countering JPN/EU oppositions through multilateral advocacy. Expand via BRICS' ethical AI protections for vulnerable groups, recommending Pan-African-BRICS seminars on disinformation and digital literacy.
4. **Finance and Investment:** Champion G77's Sevilla Commitment (D bis) and predictable funding in Paragraphs 59-64, incorporating "Dual Core Finance" as a scalable model for MSMEs. Leverage GDC's financing mobilization to demand debt-linked instruments, forming coalitions to override US/EU reservations. Draw on BRICS' NDB expansions and innovative instruments, proposing joint financing facilities for Global South DPI.
5. **DPI and Innovation:** Insert AfCFTA-specific language in Paragraphs 17 and 62 for interoperable, sovereign DPI, supporting G77's new Action Lines (102 ter). Propose Africa-led AI fellowships in Paragraphs 78-84, focusing on youth innovation and ethical governance, synergizing with GDC's open-source commitments. Benchmark BRICS' Data Economy Understanding, recommending South-South pilots for ethical data sharing.
6. **Cross-Cutting:** In follow-up sections (Paragraphs 102-125), advocate G77's integration of GDC into WSIS via intergovernmental roadmaps (104 bis), with CSTD reviews emphasizing sovereign equality. Counter JPN streamlining by building G77-BRICS coalitions for side events, ensuring Africa's leadership in Global South advocacy. Establish

ongoing mechanisms like an Africa-BRICS Digital Taskforce for monitoring WSIS-GDC synergies, focusing on AI risks and equitable benefits.

These recommendations, if pursued collectively with G77 and BRICS partners, can transform WSIS+20 into a platform for equitable digital futures, prioritizing Africa's leadership while harnessing GDC synergies and Brazil's BRICS benchmarks.

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