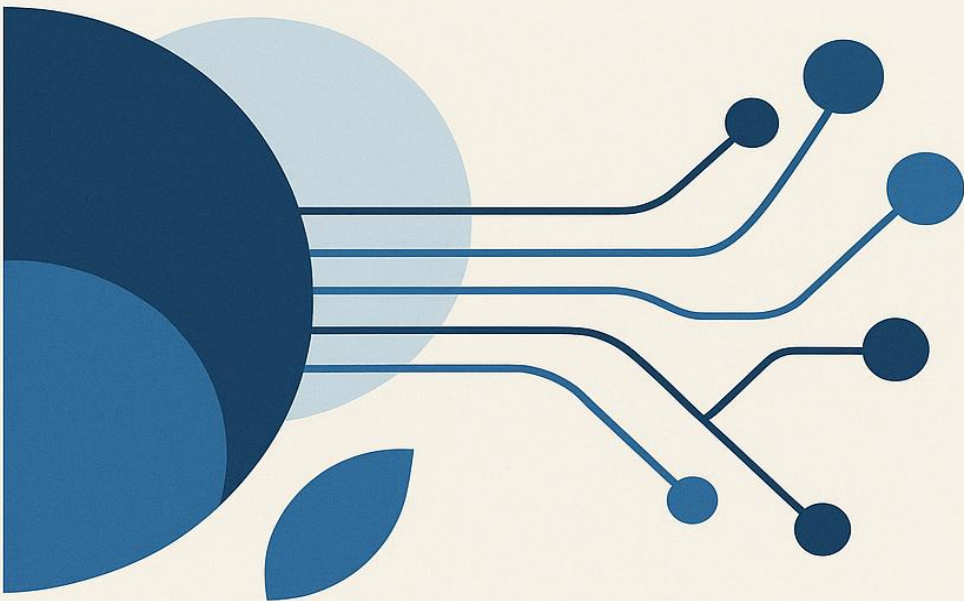# ADVANCING AFRICA'S DIGITAL AGENDA

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

An Appraisal on Rev2 released on December 3, 2025

AIFAT STAFF PAPERS

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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 Rev2 Clean Version document dated December 3, 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 Rev2 Clean Version (dated December 3, 2025), which incorporates consensus refinements from prior 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 Rev2) 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 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 Rev2 Clean Version, alignments are evident in broad recognitions: Paragraph 10 expresses concern over digital divides and calls for investment in infrastructure, affordability, and digital skills, 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, with commitments remaining general without enforcement, similar to voluntary measures that dilute G77 priorities. Exceedances include Paragraph 36's reaffirmation of school connectivity by 2030 and emphasis on multilingualism/Indigenous languages (Paragraph 27), building on AIFAT's inclusion focus but extending to global metrics and urban-rural stats (Paragraph 20). 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 models (e.g., POPIA-like), explicit "sovereign" language in AI frameworks, protections against dependency, human-centered oversight, and environmental sustainability in ICTs (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 Rev2 shows mixed progress: Paragraph 4 reaffirms sovereign equality and meaningful participation, aligning with AIFAT's human oversight via a human-centric approach (Paragraph 13) and counters violence/misinformation (Paragraph 56). Data governance emphasizes interoperability and a CSTD working group (Paragraph 82), synergizing with GDC as AIFAT recommends. However, shortfalls include no explicit "digital sovereignty" term or POPIA references, which AIFAT notes as opposed in prior negotiations by EU/UK/JPN. Lacks strong multilateral controls on data flows or anti-dependency measures (e.g., BOP-focused security). Environmental clauses (Paragraphs 41-46) address sustainability but not AIFAT's specific AI/ICT linkages or sovereign controls. Exceedances include a Global Mechanism on ICT Security (Paragraph 55) and calls for international cooperation on cyber risks (Paragraph 54), going beyond AIFAT's focus to include physical infrastructure risks and UN-centered mechanisms like the OEWG report. G77 pushes for developing country participation in governance provide leverage, aligning 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).

Pillar III: Protecting Human Rights and Digital Freedoms

AIFAT calls for lifecycle safeguards, ends to shutdowns, protections for underserved groups, explicit human rights integration across Action Lines, and commitments against violence amplification (Mamun et al. 2025a). Rev2 enhancements to Paragraphs 8, 65-77, and 73 include duties under UDHR Article 29 and media independence.

Rev2 strongly commits to human rights online/offline (Paragraphs 66-79), including lifecycle safeguards (Paragraph 69), no shutdowns (Paragraph 75), and counters to violence/hate speech/misinformation (Paragraphs 56, 69, 77). It integrates rights into Action Lines (Paragraph 112) and protects vulnerable groups (e.g., women/girls in Paragraph 78, children in Paragraph 79), aligning with AIFAT's GDC synergies and private sector due diligence (Paragraph 70). However, shortfalls include no prescriptive enforcement against censorship or "right to development" (opposed in negotiations by EU/JPN/US). Remains general on redress mechanisms, without AIFAT's explicit anti-shutdown enforcement or Africa-specific safeguards for vulnerable groups. Exceedances include media independence/journalist protections (Paragraph 76) and democratic integrity focus (Paragraph 77), adding to AIFAT's scope. G77's advocacy for

upholding multilateralism strengthens AIFAT's position on rights-respecting commitments, with BRICS' ethical AI protections for vulnerable groups offering a benchmark for WSIS integration (BRICS 2025a).

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

AIFAT demands blended finance beyond loans, debt-linked instruments, "Dual Core Finance" for MSMEs, and task forces for innovative financing/climate-resilient ICTs (Mamun et al. 2025a). Rev2 enhancements to Paragraphs 26, 59-64 include a 2026 task force report.

Rev2 calls for sustained investment (Paragraphs 61-63), blended finance/public-private partnerships (Paragraph 26), and a task force for future mechanisms (Paragraph 65). It welcomes the Sevilla Commitment (Paragraph 64) for financing gaps, aligning with AIFAT's G77/D bis references and GDC mobilization. However, shortfalls include no debt-linked specifics, "Dual Core Finance," or Africa-centric benchmarks (e.g., MSMEs). Oppositions in negotiations (US/EU/JPN to urgent reforms) influenced Rev2's general tone, lacking predictable funding or overrides for voluntary approaches that AIFAT critiques. Exceedances propose a 2026 task force report (Paragraph 65) and ties finance to DPI/digital public goods (Paragraph 64), extending to climate resilience (Paragraph 64) beyond AIFAT's core focus. 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 (BRICS 2025b).

Pillar V: Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and Innovation

AIFAT proposes Africa-centric/interoperable DPI for AfCFTA, youth/women entrepreneurship, local content, and AI linkages (Mamun et al. 2025a). Rev2 revisions to Paragraphs 17, 32, 56-58, 62, 76 include AI-specific fellowships.

Rev2 recognizes DPI as transformative (Paragraph 17), supports interoperability (Paragraph 62), and ties to innovation/youth/women (Paragraph 32). It aligns with AIFAT's G77 pushes for developing country participation (e.g., new Action Lines in Paragraph 111) and GDC open-source commitments. However, shortfalls include no AfCFTA integration, sovereign DPI controls, or Africa-led AI fellowships. Remains broad on innovation (Paragraph 47), without AIFAT's ethical governance or BOP focus. Exceedances add AI-specific fellowships (Paragraphs 85-86) and a Global Dialogue (Paragraph 87), going beyond to include compute access/open models (Paragraph 84), enhancing Global South capacity. 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 (BRICS 2025a).

Substantive Recommendations for African Nations

To advance Africa's priorities, 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 (Paragraphs 69-71), with POPIA as a model in Paragraphs 81-83. Reinstate environmental clauses (Paragraphs 41-46) 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 75 with enforceable anti-shutdown mechanisms and lifecycle safeguards in Paragraph 112. Align with GDC for violence countermeasures (Paragraph 56), 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 (Paragraph 64) and predictable funding in Paragraphs 59-63, incorporating "Dual Core Finance" as a scalable model for MSMEs. Leverage GDC's 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 (Paragraph 111). Propose Africa-led AI fellowships in Paragraphs 85-86, 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 119-127), advocate G77's integration of GDC into WSIS via intergovernmental roadmaps (Paragraph 122), 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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