

UN WSIS Forum 2023

High-Level Policy Session 9 on ICT Applications and Services / Climate Change, scheduled on Wednesday 15 March, 10:00 – 11:00 CET

POLICY STATEMENT World Summit Awards

Prof. Peter A. Bruck, WSA Chairperson

Moderator:

Prof. Bruck, the World Summit Award was initiated in 2003 at the first WSIS Conference as an Austrian UN membership initiative and is now the longest running, continuous civil society WSIS activity implementing Geneva Declaration of Principles. What best practices in ICT Applications and Services stand out from among the over 900 WSA winners regarding Climate Change?

Prof. Dr. Peter A. Bruck, WSA Chairperson, Austria

If one reads the Geneva Declaration of Principles from 2003 on Building the Information Society and seeing the global challenge in the new Millennium, one can conclude: they say nothing wrong. To the contrary, one could state them again today.

Not the words are wrong, but the actions that followed are wrong.
Because they do not match the words.

Everyone at this WSIS Forum knows that “We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator”, as UN Sec Gen Guterres said at the COP27 Summit four months ago in Sharm el-Sheikh.

The very idea of the World Summit Awards as a civil society and mandated UN member states’ initiative was not to produce more words for WSIS. Not to feed energy into more declarations. But to show what actions are taken. Positive actions which can serve as models for translating good words into better realities.

Today, 20 years after the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society WSA makes a gift to all delegates and all WSIS interested parties and stakeholders: WSA can present a record of over 900 good actions which are taken in transforming the words of section B7 of the Geneva Declaration and our topic today “ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life”.

These over 900 good actions are winners in a sophisticated, transparent, open process of close to 20.000 registered nominations from 187 UN member states, evaluated and judged in a three-round process by over 1200 experts.

3 CLIMATE WINNERS

The categories of the WSA are used to scout and select best practices in digital solutions and they reflect and consistently implement section C7 of the WSIS Tunis Action Plan from 2005.

What can we do today at this WSIS Forum2023 with this “gift from WSA” of digital solutions working towards achieving the SDGs and supporting the global transformation to a true Knowledge Society?

I suggest three steps:

1. change the way we meet from words to action, that is, let us tell each other our experience of actions, failures, and successes
2. let us give prime attention to those digital solutions which work, let us transform WSIS into a trade fair of what in the WSA community is called “social franchising” – let us at the very least add this to the WSIS Forum
3. Let us draw on the examples of the WSA winners to discern effective, efficient and sustainable solutions to meet the challenges set out in the Geneva Declaration.

Why? Because today we are no longer dealing with “Climate Change” as stated in the naming of our session. We are dealing with a Climate Crisis and are on the way to Climate Hell. It is time for more radical thinking and behavior.

Let me add a generational point:

During the past years as WSA chairperson I was privileged to meet and learn from young people, young creatives, creators, and entrepreneurs who don’t accept the status quo.

They use their skills and creativity to make a positive impact for their local communities and act on societal challenges and crisis.

In the past 5 years, WSA received every year more applications and digital solutions offering ways to act on the climate catastrophe.

Be it ways to use solar energy or other ways to produce, measure and manage sustainable energy sources, avoiding food waste, educating society how to take climate friendly actions, measurement tools for CO2 production, support in agriculture or preserving our forests and oceans.

I could talk about for hours about the winning projects of WSA, but let me share some details about three of them, showing the diversity:

- **Defenders of the Earth Campaign from the UK**

<https://wsa-global.org/winner/defenders-of-the-earth-campaign/>

Who are tracking, verifying, monitoring and reporting about the killings of environmental and land activists globally. The team is working with in-country partners in some of the worlds most dangerous countries to be a land and environmental defenders. Supporting and protecting those, protecting our planet.

- A completely different solution is **Treconomy from Canada**

<https://wsa-global.org/winner/treeconomy-earth-observation-and-ai-to-revolutionise-forest-carbon-markets/>

Their team is on a mission to combat climate change, restore biodiversity, and improve livelihoods by accelerating the responsible deployment of nature-based solutions. Focussing on forests, Treconomy revolutionizes the voluntary forest carbon offsetting market and address the fundamental financial barriers that oppose reforestation at the landowner level. In short, Treconomy is working to align personal incentives and planetary well-being to effectively scale ecosystem restoration

- **Okra Solar from Cambodia**

800M people do not have reliable energy access. Okra Solar from Cambodia offers an advanced digital monitoring, billing and mesh-grids to energies these underserved communities, and makes rural electrification more affordable, bankable and ensures longevity through modular design. The Okra pod offers 1.2kw of clean productive energy, enabling households to enter the digital economy.

These young people act. We need to listen to them, we need to do everything possible to support them and finance their solutions, helping them scale.

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Section B7 of the Geneva Declaration

"The usage and deployment of ICTs should seek to create benefits in all aspects of our daily life. ICT applications are potentially important in government operations and services, health care and health information, education and training, employment, job creation, business, agriculture, transport, protection of environment and management of natural resources, disaster prevention, and culture, and to promote eradication of poverty and other agreed development goals. ICTs should also contribute to sustainable production and consumption patterns and reduce traditional barriers, providing an opportunity for all to access local and global markets in a more equitable manner. Applications should be user-friendly, accessible to all, affordable, adapted to local needs in languages and cultures, and support sustainable development. To this effect, local authorities should play a major role in the provision of ICT services for the benefit of their populations."