

GSMA™

# International Relations Handbook 2024



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# Introduction

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The GSMA engages with a wide range of international organisations, leveraging their influence and public platforms to amplify the mobile industry's profile and impact, and with their committees and working groups to represent the sector's interests in policy debates.

Some of these organisations are intergovernmental institutions; others are multi-stakeholder groups. Some freely welcome engagement with industry, while others engage on a pay-to-play model.

This handbook describes the nature of the relationships that the GSMA holds with each of these organisations.

It also provides guidance for GSMA members on how they can increase the level of their own engagement with these organisations – either directly or through the GSMA – so that together we can amplify the voice and maximise the impact of the mobile industry on the global stage.

The International Organisations Task Force is the GSMA forum where operator members coordinate their engagement with these supra-national bodies and develop common positions for multilateral policy-making processes. Interested stakeholders can request to join the Task Force by contacting the External Affairs team.

# Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI)

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**Founded in 2009, the Alliance for Financial Inclusion brings together members and partners, central banks and other financial regulatory institutions from more than 80 developing countries to make financial services more accessible to unbanked people across the world. AFI members are actively engaged in advancing financial inclusion policy at national, regional and international levels through partnerships and cooperative arrangements with other regulators, as well as with international organisations and private sector leaders.**

## Engaging with the AFI

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The GSMA is one of five private sector institutions which contribute knowledge, resources and expertise to the AFI's global and regional programmes and activities.

Through the GSMA, members may participate in AFI regional and global public-private dialogues to share knowledge on financial inclusion or market insights on mobile money. The GSMA can also assist members in sharing case studies and best practices.

# Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development

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**Established by the ITU and UNESCO, the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development aims to promote broadband and its role in driving sustainable development. More than 50 Commissioners drawn from the public and private sectors work to push broadband up the international policy agenda and expand broadband access and adoption in every country.**

## Engaging with the Broadband Commission

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With the GSMA Director General serving as a Broadband Commissioner, the GSMA participates in the annual Broadband Commission milestones: its Spring

Meeting (generally hosted by a Commissioner in their home country) and Autumn Meeting (held within the premises of the UNGA).

The GSMA frequently chairs and participates in Broadband Commission working groups, influencing their output deliverables and contributing information and data for case studies. GSMA engagement covers a broad range of topics including infrastructure investment, digital health, the digital gender divide, digital entrepreneurship, connectivity for MSMEs, child online protection and handset affordability.

With GSMA support, members can engage in Broadband Commission activities, participate in working groups and contribute to their outputs.



# Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO)

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**The Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation is the oldest and largest Commonwealth organisation dedicated to information and communications technology. Its members, drawn from a socio-economically and geographically diverse range of countries, use the CTO as a forum to ensure effective coordination at international milestones, including the ITU World Radiocommunication Conference and the ITU Plenipotentiary.**

## Engaging with the CTO

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The GSMA provides speakers for CTO London-based workshops (which are attended by policy and regulatory professionals from a range of Commonwealth countries) when this can support broader international advocacy priorities. GSMA representatives also participate in topic-specific seminars and larger CTO events, such as the annual CTO Forum.

GSMA members can join the CTO as associate members, which can offer an opportunity to influence national ICT policy development and implementation in Commonwealth countries.





# International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

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**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is a global humanitarian movement comprising 192 National Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network.**

## **Engagement with the IFRC**

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The GSMA partners with the IFRC to demonstrate and facilitate the use of mobile technologies for humanitarian purposes. The GSMA has a memorandum of understanding with the IFRC and, through the Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation Fund, enables solutions to challenges associated with forced displacement and complex humanitarian emergencies.

# International Trade Centre (ITC)

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**The ITC is a United Nations agency which aims to foster inclusive sustainable economic development through trade and international business development. It is the only development agency that is fully dedicated to supporting the internationalisation of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in developing economies, helping them become more competitive and connect to international markets for trade and investment.**

## **Engaging with the ITC**

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The GSMA engages with the ITC to foster and showcase the use of mobile technologies to enable international trade and growth for companies in developing markets. The GSMA partners with the ITC on digital inclusion of MSMEs, entrepreneurship, gender and specific projects, attends ITC events and invites the ITC to GSMA events.





# International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

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**The ICC is the world's largest business organisation. It helps businesses of all sizes and in all countries to operate both internationally and responsibly, promotes international trade and investment as vehicles for inclusive growth and prosperity, and champions multilateral solutions to global economic and financial challenges.**

## Engagement with the ICC

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The GSMA works closely with the ICC to advance its policy advocacy with governments, firms and economic development organisations, as well as

to influence multilateral policy-making processes. The ICC's ICT policy priorities primarily relate to internet governance and digital trade. Given the wide, cross-sector membership, the ICC can hardly be leveraged as a vehicle to drive policy advocacy that is specific to the mobile sector, but it serves as a platform to represent broader private sector interests internationally.

ICC delegations regularly participate in fora such as the UN, ICANN, IGF and ITU. The GSMA is a paid member of the ICC Business Action to Support the Information Society (BASIS).



# Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

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**The OECD is a multilateral organisation made up of 38 developed economies across Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Americas. The OECD provides a forum in which governments can work together to share experience and seek solutions to common problems. Compared to other international organisations (particularly those under the UN umbrella), OECD policy discussions tend to be less political and more evidence-based and business-friendly.**

## Engagement with the OECD

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The GSMA engages with the OECD on issues including broadband infrastructure investment, artificial intelligence, environmental sustainability, taxation, competition, privacy and child online protection.

The key venue for GSMA engagement at the OECD is the Digital Policy Committee (DPC) and its sub-committees, the Working Party on Communication Services and Infrastructure (WP CSI) and the Working Party on Artificial Intelligence Governance (WP AIGO). The GSMA regularly contributes to these committees to advance the mobile industry's policy priorities and disseminate economic data on the sector in partnership with GSMA Intelligence.

The GSMA engages with the OECD both through Business at OECD (BIAC) – the industry grouping that serves as the formal vehicle for private sector input to the organisation – as well as through direct advocacy with the OECD Secretariat.

Industry positions and advocacy strategies on the topics dealt with by the OECD are discussed and agreed within the GSMA's International Organisations Task Force.



# Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology (OSET)

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**The OSET was established as the primary UN platform for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on digital technology. The Office works closely with all United Nations entities to ensure non-duplication of efforts. It participates in inter-agency and United Nations systemwide processes and collaborates with ongoing international activities such as the Internet Governance Forum.**

## Engagement with the OSET

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The GSMA acts as a conduit between the mobile industry and the OSET. Industry positions on a range of topics dealt with by the OSET, from digital connectivity to internet governance, are discussed and agreed within the GSMA's International Organisations Task Force and relayed to the OSET through bilateral engagement and written submissions.

# Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

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**The IGF is the primary UN discussion forum for internet-related public policy issues. It brings diverse groups of stakeholders together as equals in discussions which do not result in negotiated outcomes. The forum is designed to provide a venue for policymakers from the public and private sectors to confront perspectives, exchange information and share good practices.**

## Engagement with the IGF

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The GSMA attends the annual IGF meeting and contributes speakers to advocate and promote mobile industry messaging in policy areas including net neutrality, cybersecurity, connectivity, digital rights, digital inclusion, bridging the digital gender divide and capacity building.

By attending the annual IGF meeting, GSMA members can provide their perspective on how the internet should be governed and engage directly with governments regulators and other stakeholders in the digital ecosystem. Appointment on the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) that governs the IGF is determined by election and is open to all.



# International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

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**The ITU is the specialised UN agency which deals with information and communications technologies. It has a mandate to connect people across the world – wherever they live and whatever their means – and to protect and support everyone’s fundamental right to communicate. Its key activities involve allocating global radio spectrum and satellite orbits, developing the technical standards that ensure networks and technologies seamlessly interconnect and working to improve ICT access among underserved communities worldwide.**

## Engagement with the ITU

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The GSMA is a paid Sector Member of all three ITU Sectors, actively participates in the work of formal ITU conferences and Study Groups, attends the annual ITU Global Symposium for Regulators, the World Summit on the Information Society, and is a pledge-maker to the ITU-led Partner2Connect Digital Coalition. These fora provide excellent opportunities to advocate mobile industry messages to government and regulatory audiences.

GSMA members can contribute to the development of GSMA strategies and positions for ITU meetings by participating in the GSMA’s International Organisations Taskforce (for ITU-D and ITU-T) and/or Future Spectrum Group (for ITU-R).

# ITU Development Sector (ITU-D)

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**The ITU-D fosters international cooperation in the delivery of technical assistance and in the creation, deployment and improvement of telecommunication and ICT equipment and networks in developing countries.**

## Engagement with ITU-D

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The GSMA represents mobile industry interests within ITU-D Study Groups and at the ITU-D main milestone, the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), which takes place every four years and determines the scope of ITU-D activities. The GSMA also engages in the ITU-D annual flagship event – the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) – which brings together heads of national

telecom/ICT regulatory authorities from around the world to share their views and experiences on pressing regulatory issues.

The ITU-D also acts as the Secretariat of EQUALS, the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age, of which the GSMA is a founding member. EQUALS’s mission of bridging the gender digital divide is carried out through three areas of action: access, skills and leadership.

Members interested in the use of ICT in development contexts can work with the GSMA International Relations Team to determine GSMA positions and input case studies and best practices into ITU-D processes.

# ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R)

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**The ITU-R plays a vital role in the global management of the radio-frequency spectrum and satellite orbits. It aims to ensure the rational, equitable, efficient and economical use of the radio-frequency spectrum by all radiocommunication services, including those using satellite orbits, and to carry out studies and approve recommendations on radiocommunication matters.**

## Engagement with ITU-R

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The GSMA actively engages in the ITU-R's main milestone, the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC), which gathers every four years to revise the Radio Regulations, an international treaty governing the cross-border use of frequencies and determining future spectrum availability for mobile services.

Engagement includes advocacy for the entirety of the WRC preparatory process, which takes place in parallel within ITU-R study groups (which develop technical studies) and Regional Organisations (which harmonise country positions for the conference).

ITU-R Study groups develop technical recommendations informing member states' frequency assignments. The GSMA covers ITU-R Study Group 1 on spectrum management, Study Group 3 on propagation issues, Study Group 4 on satellite services, Study Group 5 on terrestrial services (including mobile broadband), Study Group 6 on broadcasting services and Study Group 7 on space science services.

Members who participate in the GSMA's Future Spectrum Group regularly can contribute to policy positions developed in advance of ITU-R milestones.





# ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T)

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**The ITU-T brings together government, regulators and the private sector to develop international standards, known as ITU-T Recommendations, which inform interoperability and development of ICT equipment, networks and services.**

## Engagement with ITU-T

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The GSMA contributes to the work of the ITU-T to ensure that its outputs are informed by the mobile industry perspective and do not overlap or conflict with standards developed by other industry-led organisations. Engagement at the ITU-T focuses on a variety of policy areas including next generation networks, tariffs and pricing, OTTs, numbering, mobile money, counterfeit,

quality of service and artificial intelligence.

The GSMA represents mobile industry interests at the ITU-T main milestone, the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA), which takes place every four years and determines the scope of ITU-T activities. Engagement within ITU-T Study Groups is prioritised based on input from GSMA members and currently covers Study Group 3 on Economic Policy, Study Group 5 on EMF and Health and Study Group 11 on Protocols (including the IMEI database).

Member operators can contribute to the development of GSMA strategies and policy positions for ITU-T meetings by participating in the GSMA's International Organisations Task Force.

# UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

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**UNESCO is the UN entity seeking to promote international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture. It encourages scientific programmes and policies as platforms for development and cooperation, and helps countries adopt international standards on scientific matters.**

## Engagement with UNESCO

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The GSMA works with UNESCO primarily on Artificial Intelligence and was invited to join the UNESCO Business Council on AI to support the implementation of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI. The Business Council was launched in 2023 and is co-chaired by Microsoft and Telefonica, with members representing other technology companies.

In parallel, UNESCO also encourages digital transformation of governments, digital inclusion and the promotion of digital skills and education. UNESCO is also a member of the Broadband Commission.





# UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

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**UNICEF works to protect the rights and wellbeing of children, with a focus on the most disadvantaged ones: those living in fragile contexts, those with disabilities, those who are affected by rapid urbanisation and those affected by environmental degradation.**

## **Engagement with UNICEF**

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The GSMA’s engagement with UNICEF is focused on children’s rights and business and on child protection in the digital environment. The GSMA and UNICEF also work together at a regional level on an ad hoc basis, collaborating on capacity building and advocacy around children’s online rights.

# UN Development Programme (UNDP)

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**UNDP works to facilitate the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion. It assists countries in developing policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and in building resilience to sustain development results.**

## **Engagement with UNDP**

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The GSMA partners with UNDP to promote the use of digital technologies in fostering sustainable socio-economic development. Joint engagement ranges from digital inclusion to women’s empowerment, MSME digitisation, digital financial services and humanitarian solutions. GSMA Mobile for Development has an active Memorandum of Understanding with UNDP to promote digital development. In addition, the GSMA Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation programme is a co-member of the Early Warnings for All Initiative on Warning Dissemination and Communication.

# UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

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**ECOSOC is responsible for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues. It serves as the central mechanism for the activities of the UN system and its specialised agencies.**

## Engagement with ECOSOC

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The GSMA has a special consultative status with ECOSOC which allows it to access ECOSOC's discussions and deliberations as well as other relevant UN processes. With this status, the GSMA can facilitate direct engagement opportunities for operators such as attendance and participation in UN events and processes.

# UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

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**UNCDF aims to make public and private finance work for the poor in the world's 47 least developed countries. It offers 'last mile' finance models that unlock public and private resources to reduce poverty and support local economic development.**

## Engagement with UNCDF

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The GSMA partners with UNCDF to promote digital inclusion through the use of mobile technology. It also collaborates with UNCDF through its Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation Programme, sharing research and analysis related to humanitarian cash transfers using mobile money.

GSMA members can engage with UNCDF by contributing to multistakeholder working groups on digital transformation and by becoming signatories of the Mobile for Humanitarian Connectivity Charter.





# UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

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**UNCTAD supports developing countries in accessing the benefits of a globalised economy. To do this, it provides analysis, facilitates consensus-building and offers technical assistance to help developing countries trade, access finance and leverage technology as vehicles for inclusive and sustainable development.**

## **Engagement with UNCTAD**

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The GSMA monitors UNCTAD policymaking processes related to digital trade and development. The GSMA attends UNCTAD events including the eWeek and Digital Trade for Africa.

# UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

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**UN DESA holds up the development pillar of the UN Secretariat. It works to promote development through its Capacity Development Office. UN DESA also collaborates closely with its partners at regional and country levels in helping countries to formulate and implement national development strategies.**

## **Engagement with UN DESA**

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The GSMA collaborates with DESA's Sustainable Development Division to convene stakeholders and share GSMA content and knowledge. The GSMA also contributes to high-level forums initiated by DESA, including the Science, Technology and Innovation Forum and the Business Forum.

# UN Foundation

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**The UN Foundation works to help the UN mobilise the ideas, people and resources it needs to deliver and grow a diverse and durable constituency for collective action. It focuses on issues at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals, builds initiatives across sectors to solve problems at scale and engages influencers and citizens who seek action.**

## Engagement with UN Foundation

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The UN Foundation is one of the GSMA's partners for awareness-raising events and to liaise with the UN. It drives advocacy on different topics, including supporting the UN mission, driving gender equality and empowering youth. GSMA members can support these initiatives by contributing financially or partnering in campaigns.

# UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

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**UNHCR is the UN entity with the mandate to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people, and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country. In times of forced displacement, UNHCR seeks to influence governments, non-governmental partners and the public at large to adopt practices that ensure the protection of those in need.**

## Engagement with UNHCR

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The GSMA has a Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR which covers joint research and advocacy activities, convening and information sharing. In partnership with UNHCR, the GSMA has produced joint research studying the role of connectivity for forcibly displaced people and advocates for policies and environments which enable digital inclusion for these communities.

GSMA members can engage with UNHCR by becoming signatories of the Mobile for Humanitarian Connectivity Charter, committing to work together on building a digital humanitarian future, and by supporting in-country joint-advocacy with national regulators.





# UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

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**OCHA seeks to strengthen the UN's response to complex emergencies and natural disasters. It is not directly engaged in the delivery of humanitarian programmes, but acts as a broker and facilitator.**

## **Engagement with OCHA**

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OCHA is a member of the GSMA's Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation (M4H) Programme advisory group and supports the GSMA's Humanitarian Connectivity Charter, which enables and enhances coordination between the mobile industry and humanitarian agencies, providing connectivity and effective disaster preparedness and response.

M4H contributes to the Connecting Business initiative (CBI), jointly managed by OCHA and UNDP, which aims to engage the private sector in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

# UN Women

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**UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented for the benefit of women and girls worldwide.**

## Engagement with UN Women

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Within UN Women, the GSMA advocates for closing the mobile gender gap and for digital gender equality overall. The GSMA is a UN Women Empowerment

Principles Signatory and engages with UN Women primarily through the EQUALS and the UN Women-led Generation Equality process.

The GSMA also attends the annual Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW), where it advocates on digital gender gap matters with decision-makers and organises side events.

GSMA members can engage in relevant UN Women processes through the GSMA International Organisations Task Force and can make commitments to the Generation Equality process.

# World Bank Group (WBG)

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**The WBG is the largest economic development organisation in the world, providing loans, credit and grants to low- and middle-income countries. In addition, the WBG supports in-country capacity development.**

## Engagement with the WBG

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The GSMA has deep, cross-cutting ties with several teams in the World Bank Group. It engages with both the World Bank, which provides services to governments, and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which focuses on private sector development.

The GSMA collaborates with the WBG to address critical barriers to digital inclusion, such as financing for mobile broadband deployment, digital and energy transition and, importantly, device affordability. The GSMA can also partner with the World Bank through capacity building.

The GSMA is one of the only private sector members of the World Bank's Digital

Development Partnership, a multilateral fund established to coordinate World Bank Group activities and financing on digital economy matters, allowing it to help shape the strategic direction of the World Bank's digital development activities.

In 2023, the World Bank Group, including the IFC, joined the GSMA Handset Affordability Coalition.

The World Bank has also set up a separate Trust Fund on Cybersecurity.

In addition, the GSMA Director General sits on the World Bank Advisory Council on Gender and Development, where he provides advice and strategic guidance on the WBG's work in this area.

Members can leverage GSMA relationships to disseminate case studies and best practices to the WBG. It is also possible to contribute to the development of GSMA strategies and policy priorities for WBG engagement by participating in the GSMA's International Organisations Task Force.

# World Food Programme (WFP)

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**The WFP is the world's largest humanitarian organisation and the largest provider of humanitarian cash. WFP development projects focus on nutrition, and especially for mothers and children.**

## Engagement with the WFP

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The GSMA and the WFP have a global partnership to accelerate digital humanitarian assistance, with a focus on delivering digital cash transfers to save lives in global emergencies including natural hazards, conflict, food insecurity and pandemics.

The WFP is a GSMA's Humanitarian Connectivity Charter supporter and the chair of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), of which GSMA is a member. GSMA's Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation Programme also works with the World Food Programme on policy issues such as gender and financial inclusion in humanitarian contexts.

# World Health Organization (WHO)

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**The WHO is the UN specialised agency for international public health. Its primary role is to guide member states on public health matters and to lead partners in global health response.**

## Engagement with the WHO

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The GSMA engages with the WHO around the issue of electromagnetic fields, contributing expertise to the development of an international database of EMF exposure limits and to national activities promoting evidence-based harmonised EMF policies.

Where GSMA members are experiencing EMF challenges, the GSMA can act as a bridge between national authorities and the WHO for the provision of advice on scientific topics and policy development.





# World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

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**The annual WSIS Forum is a global multi-stakeholder event for information exchange, with the aim of promoting sustainable and inclusive digital development. The WSIS Action Lines are closely aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals.**

## **Engagement with the WSIS Forum**

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The GSMA attends and provides speakers to the annual WSIS Forum, seeking to promote mobile industry policy positions and messaging in areas including internet governance, digital inclusion, women's access to and use of mobile internet and capacity building.

By attending the WSIS Forum, GSMA members can access some level of visibility in front of governments and regulators.

# World Trade Organization (WTO)

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**The WTO provides governments with a forum to settle trade disputes and negotiate agreements, with the overarching goal of ensuring that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible.**

## **Engagement with the WTO**

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Since formal negotiations are limited to states only, the GSMA engages with the WTO through the ICC's trade working group and its business group. Through the GSMA, members can provide input to ICC advocacy with the WTO.

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