Digital Inclusion for All

Shaping our Digital Future
Online Global Dialogue
16 February 2021, 9am-11am
United Nations New York

Background

By adopting the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States committed to achieving sustainable development for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. The Agenda is based on the ideals of inclusiveness and shared prosperity and Member States pledged to leave no one behind and to endeavor to reach the furthest behind first.

Digital technologies - the internet, mobile phones, and all the other tools to collect, store, analyze, and share information digitally - have spread rapidly in much of the world. Many of us depend on them to work, to educate the young, and reach out to our friends and family. These technologies have enabled digital public services, digital payments, online learning, telehealth, online shopping and more. However, about half the world's people access and use the Internet, the other half do not. Millions of people cannot work or go to school remotely or access technology and its benefits. Many of the unconnected live in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states, and within countries in rural and remote areas or uban impoverished areas.

Digital divide still persists between more and less connected countries, communities, and people. Enabling all the world´s people to access and use digital technologies (the Internet including mobile technologies) - and closing digital divides - remains a challenge that needs to be addressed if the world community is to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The COVID-19 pandemic is accelerating the pace of digital transformation and is demonstrating that digital inclusion is now fundamental to promoting equality and equity. It is important to promote digital opportunities for all, particularly for those who are disadvantaged and marginazlied or at risk of being left behind. To avoid exacerbating inequalities, governments, in partnership with all stakeholders, are called upon to devise innovative solutions to promote digital inclusion, and evidence-based national strategies to connect people who are unconnected. At the same time, more traditional forms of public outreach remain necessary to reach some segments of the population, including older persons or people living in homeless, who do not have easy access to mobilephones or internet connections to respond to surveys for public services.

In June 2020, the Secretary-General presented his Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, which proposes his vision for how the international community should engage on digital issues. The Roadmap proposes key areas for action and presents ideas and initiatives. As never before, there is an urgent need for all actors in the digital space to cooperate and act together.

In preparation of the 59th session of the Commission for Social Development, UNDESA in partnership with ITU and UNCTAD, organized an Expert Group Meeting on the priority theme of "Socially just transition towards sustainable development: The role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all" (August 2020).

Building on the outcome of the meeting UNDESA, in partnership with ITU, is organizing an online global dialogue on **"Digital Inclusion for All".** The event gathers high-level technical experts, as well as representatives of Governments, civil society, academic institutions and the private sector to discuss the urgency of addressing digital inclusion for all.

Objectives and Outcomes

The objectives of the online global dialogue are as follows:
1. Raise awareness on the importance of digital inclusion for the well-being of all people;
2. Identify gaps and challenges;
3. Share innovative solutions and good practices;
4. Propose concrete recommendations and way forward to accelerate the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development to overcome poverty (SDG 1), reduce the digital divide (reducing inequalities SDG 10) and promote social inclusion (promote inclusive societies SDG 16);
5. Encourage all stakeholders to provide learing opportunities, services and expertise to enhance the digital skills of disadvantaged and marginalized gropus and people in vulnerable situations.
6. Create partnerships (SDG 17) to achieve universal access for all to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

Format

The event will consist of an interactive virtual dialogue (webinar) among experts, government officials, adacemia, civil society organizations, and the private sector, followed by questions from the audience. The event will focus on concrete strategies that have proven to be effective in tackling the digital divide to ensure that everyone benefits from the digital transformation and actions to be taken to recover better from the COVID 19 crisis.

Guiding Questions

• What is the role of digital technologies in improving the lives of people including vulnerable groups?
• What best digital inclusion strategies are necessary to ensure that no one is left behind to build more inclusive societies?
• What are some of the effective innovative solutions that have proven to reduce the digital divide?
• What measures of digital cooperation would be necessary to enable countries to promote digital inclusion for all and well-being?
• How can we harness digital technologies to recover and build back better from the COVID-19 crisis?

Agenda

Details	Date/Time
Opening Remarks Facilitator: **Mr. Amine Lamrabat**, Information Officer, Division for Inclusive Social Development, UNDESA • **H.E. Ms. María del Carmen Squeff,** Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the UN and Chair of the 59th Commission for Social Development • **Ms. Daniela Bas**, Director, Division for Inclusive Social Development, UNDESA • **Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin,** Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau • **Ms. Shamika N. Sirimanne ,** Director of the Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD • **Ms. Yu Ping,** Senior Programme Officer, Office of the Envoy on Technology **Online Discussion on digital inclusion for all** Moderated by **Ms. Kristen Saloomey**, Correspondent at Al Jazeera English New York • **Ms. Laia Bonet Rull** Deputy Mayor of Barcelona for the 2030 Agenda: Digital Transition and International Relations • **Dr. Julia Glidden,** Corporate Vice President for Microsoft Worldwide Public Sector • **Ms. Alison Gillwald**, Executive Director, Research ICT Africa, Adjunct Professor at University of Cape Town • **Ms. Nicol Turner Lee,** Senior Fellow, Center for Technology Innovation, The Brookings Institution • **Ms. Komal Ahmad,** Founder & President of Copia • **Ms. Nnenna Nwakanma,** Chief Web Advocate, World Wide Web Foundation • **Mr. Jan A.G.M. van Dijk,** Professor of communication science at the University of Twente, the Netherlands	**16 February 2021** 9:00am – 11:00am
Conclusion of the Dialogue	
Closing by Ms. Daniela Bas, Director, Division for Inclusive Social Development, UNDESA	