

Implementing the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation

JULY 2022 UPDATE

"The vision of an open, free, and secure digital future underpins my Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. And my recent report on Our Common Agenda proposes a Global Digital Compact, aimed at bringing governments, the private sector and civil society together in support of this vision."

António Guterres.

Secretary-General of the United Nations at the Internet Governance Forum,
December 2021

The Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation put forward action-oriented proposals in key thematic areas such as achieving universal connectivity and digital inclusion, protecting human rights online, and strengthening digital capacity-building. Following the establishment of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology in early 2021, the Office issued an update note on Roadmap implementation coinciding with the High-Level Thematic Debate on Digital Cooperation and Connectivity, organized by the President of the 75th Session of the General Assembly in April 2021. This second update contains highlights of the Office's work since then, which includes the coordination of various cross-regional multistakeholder roundtable groups organized around the recommendations of the Roadmap, as well as the Office's work in preparation for the forthcoming Global Digital Compact. The Office acts as a hub at the core of the UN system to enhance coherence in the UN activities in the digital environment and as a first port of call for external stakeholders.

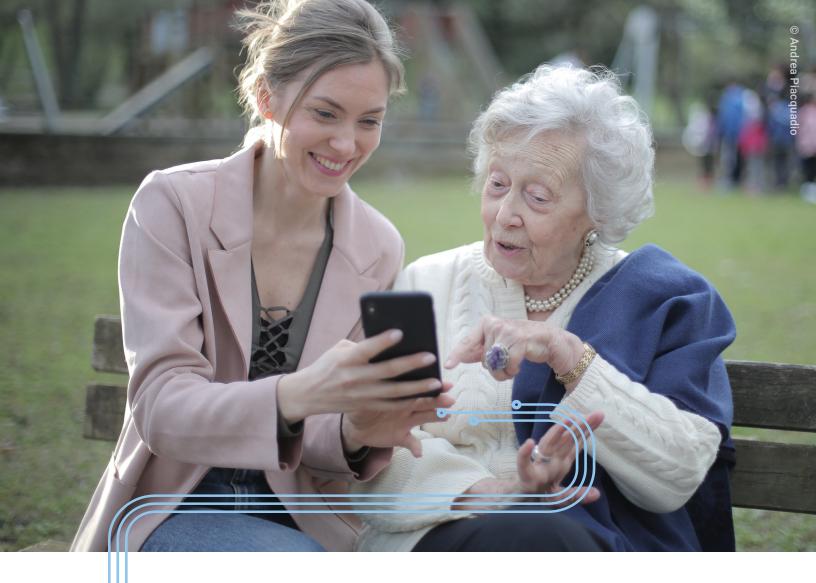
Connecting the Unconnected to Leave No One Behind in the Online Space

To achieve the Roadmap's goal of ensuring that every person has safe and affordable access to the Internet by 2030, including meaningful use of digitally enabled services, implementation of its recommendations on global connectivity has focused on ensuring a "people-centered" approach in leaving no one behind. In this regard, achieving universal and meaningful digital connectivity—the possibility for everyone to enjoy a safe, satisfying, enriching, productive and affordable online experience-is key for enabling digital transformation and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

In fulfillment of the Roadmap, following an extensive multistakeholder engagement and review process, the Office and the International Telecommunication Union, working with multistakeholder partners, have established a set of aspirational targets for 2030 to help countries prioritize interventions, monitor progress, evaluate policy effectiveness, and galvanize efforts around achieving universal and meaningful connectivity by the end of the decade. This work builds also on the seven 2025 Advocacy Targets of the Broadband Commission for national and international action in broadband development. A first assessment of progress towards the targets was conducted in the 2022 Global Connectivity Report released in June.

ITU has also launched the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition, a multistakeholder alliance, in close cooperation with the Office, in line with the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, to foster meaningful connectivity and digital transformation globally, with a focus on but not limited to hardest- to-connect communities in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).





To date, the groundbreaking P2C Coalition has mobilized over USD\$ 25 billion in almost 400 pledges from over 200 entities to connect and support the hardest to reach communities. The Office is now in discussions with the ITU as to the next steps for the Coalition, including in connection with the Global Digital Compact.

The Office works closely with key UN agencies to pursue important initiatives to achieve global connectivity. 'GIGA', the UNICEF-ITU initiative to connect all schools around the world to the Internet, which was highlighted in the Roadmap, continues to make important progress. As of June 2022, GIGA has mapped the location of over one million schools on their open-source platform (www.projectconnect.world) of which over 40% do not yet have connectivity. The Office is now working closely with UNICEF and the ITU to ensure school connectivity is a key outcome of the upcoming Transforming Education Summit in September 2022.

As part of the global effort for connectivity, the Office is also working to accelerate discussions on connectivity as part of emergency preparedness, responses and aid, including working through the inter-agency Emergency Telecommunication Cluster. The group of partners, including but not limited to ITU, ETC, UNHCR and GSMA, working on this actionable framework that guides inclusive and meaningful connectivity in the context of emergency preparedness, resilience, and response.

Narrowing Digital Divides by making Digital Technology & Solutions Available to All



Narrowing the digital divides remains at the heart of Roadmap implementation, underpinning efforts at promoting digital inclusion and strengthening global digital capacity-building. This requires more coordinated and systematic all-of-UN efforts to support digital transformation, particularly at the national level.

As called for in the Roadmap, the Office of the Envoy on Technology, together with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), has undertaken an UN-internal mapping exercise to obtain an overview of digital-related initiatives across the UN system, in order to foster greater collaboration among UN entities in harnessing digital technologies towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Over 500 submissions from 40-plus entities were received.



Together with UN DESA, the Office presented initial results and analysis of the mapping exercise at a side-event at the 6th Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum) in May 2022. The event also showcased digital programmes by different UN agencies (including ITU, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, WFP and others) and focused on UN efforts at the country level, including perspectives of the UN Resident Coordinators in Cabo Verde and Mongolia. The Office is now working to bring this mapping online through an interactive public database.

In the 2020 Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, the United Nations Secretary-General identified digital public goods (DPGs) as a key mechanism for accelerating attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Digital Public Goods Alliance (DPGA), a multi-stakeholder initiative co-hosted by UN Agencies UNICEF and UNDP in partnership with other bilateral governments, Germany, Norway and Sierra Leone, has made important progress in advancing the DPG agenda. The Office has continued to work closely with the DPGA, including in ensuring that the Alliance's flagship five-year strategy is aligned with United Nations priorities in accelerating the attainment of the SDGs. The DPGA, in partnership with UNDP, has organized a series of mobilization events to increase awareness on and funding for how all countries can be supported to build safe, trusted, and inclusive digital public infrastructure (DPI), leveraging DPGs to help catalyse collaboration and global action to pressing challenges of today. On 1 June 2022, the DPGA, the Governments of Norway and Sierra Leone and UNDP organized a high-level event in support of DPGs, that mobilized additional DPGA memberships and multi-million funding commitments for DPGs. New bilateral government members announced include India, Uganda, Rwanda, Bangladesh and USAID. A similar high-level event is being planned for the 77th UN General Assembly in 2022.

The Office has made progress in promoting the use of open-source technologies and DPGs within and outside the United Nations system in collaboration with its partners, an issue that has been increasingly recognized by the Member States as a priority, including in a new resolution on the use of open source technologies adopted by ECOSOC in summer 2021, where the Office played a key role in advising member states as well as enhancing UN-agency coordination. The Office is now actively collaborating with other departments to explore how best to build the UN Secretariat's internal capacity to develop and use opensource technologies, including working with GitHub to explore the specific needs within the UN Secretariat on open source.





Addressing Digital Challenges and Online Risks

While recognizing the urgency to connect all and realize the benefits of digital technologies, the Roadmap also stresses that people must remain safe and secure online, with concerted action to address key challenges and online risks.

The Roadmap thus calls for the development of further guidance on how human rights standards apply in the digital age, for Member States to place human rights at the center of regulatory frameworks and legislation on the development and use of digital technologies, and for technology leaders to urgently and publicly acknowledge this as well as to take clear, company specific actions to protect the right to privacy and human rights online.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is continuing to coordinate United Nations entities in the development of UN system-wide guidance on human rights due diligence and impact assessments in the use of new technologies. The digital human rights recommendation group, working on the implementation of the Secretary-General's Roadmap, also continues to undertake a range of activities to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights online, including through a draft action plan with a series of planned actions for each of the relevant Roadmap recommendations.

Within the United Nations, working groups have been set up to discuss and coordinate approaches on issues such as hate speech, disinformation, data protection and privacy and freedom of expression and social media, which the Office is deeply engaged in. For instance, the Office co-leads an informal working group across the United Nations system which has prepared a document for senior UN officials with background and key messages on freedom of expression and social media and is also deeply engaged on issues related to enhancing civil society engagement in UN processes, including through the use of digital technologies. Moreover, the Office works with OHCHR and other relevant UN agencies on the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report Our Common Agenda on relevant areas, such as the prevention of Internet shutdowns.







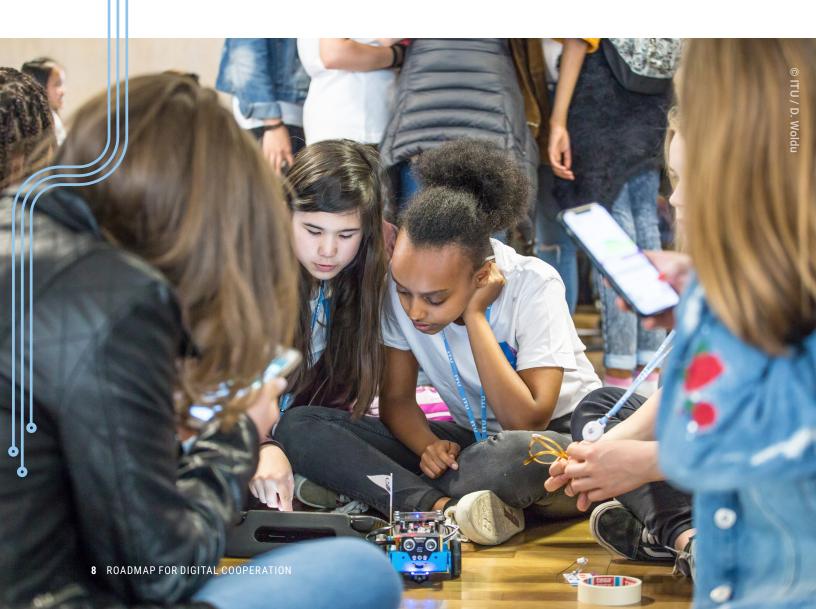


The Roadmap also calls attention to the significant impacts of advancing technologies on the environment, particularly in terms of "ground-breaking opportunities to monitor and protect the environment, as well as overall planetary health." In response to this, the Coalition for Digital Environment Sustainability (CODES), initiated by UNEP, UNDP, the International Science Council, the German Environment Agency, the Kenyan Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Future Earth and Sustainability in the Digital Age, and supported by our Office, has launched an ambitious Action Plan at the Stockholm+50 Conference in early June 2022. The Action Plan aims to present a comprehensive and strategic approach to embed sustainability in all aspects of digitalization and was developed through a extensive series of multistakeholder events and consultations aimed at pushing this important agenda forward.

Strengthening UN institutions and support from the United Nations in moving forward



The Roadmap recognizes the importance of the UN's in-country presence, particularly the role of the United Nations Resident Coordinators and Country Teams. The interagency Roadmap Response Team, led by the Office and United Nations' Development Coordination Office (DCO) continues to support Resident Coordinators' Offices in promoting digital cooperation and enhancing support to their Programme Countries on digital issues. Support has been provided, for example, to the preparations to the Common Country Assessment in Ghana, which features a specific analysis of Ghana's digital transformation process, to the establishment of a taskforce to lead digital transformation and accompany the Common Country Assessment in Mongolia, as well as to the UN Digital Task Force in Brussels.

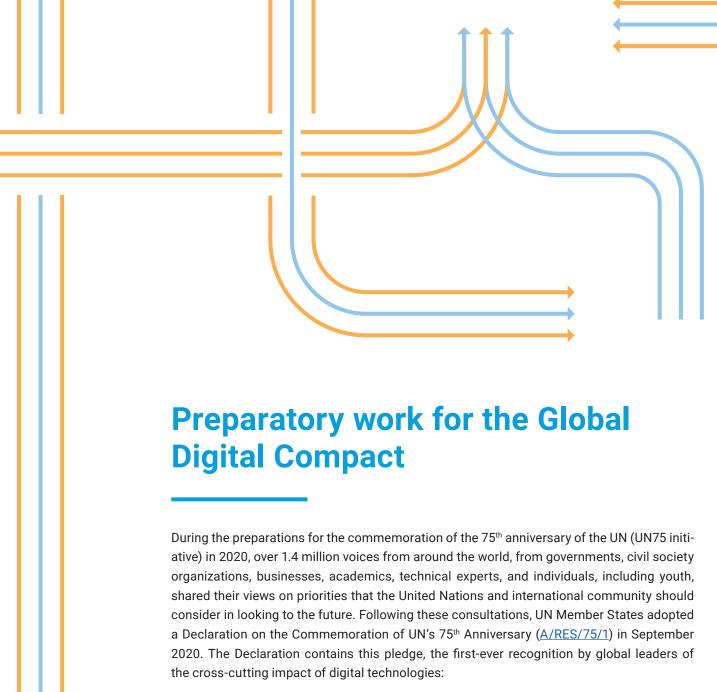


Recognizing the central role played by the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in the global digital cooperation architecture, the Roadmap lays out a series of recommendations to strengthen the IGF. Work on this is proceeding, through close cooperation between the Office of the Envoy on Technology and UN DESA, the IGF Secretariat, and a wide range of stakeholders, including the IGF community. In particular, discussions among the IGF community have further advanced specific Roadmap recommendations such as having a more focused IGF agenda; how to strengthen links among the global Forum and its regional, national, sub-regional, and youth initiatives; and ensuring that the IGF continue its high-level segments, ministerial and parliamentarian tracks.



In line with the mandate of the IGF and as recommended in the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, the Secretary-General will shortly establish the IGF Leadership Panel as a strategic, empowered, and multistakeholder body to support and strengthen the IGF. The Panel brings together ten high-level and eminent persons and will address strategic and urgent issues and highlight Forum discussions and possible follow-up actions, in order to promote greater impact and dissemination of IGF discussions according to its Terms of Reference.





"We will improve digital cooperation. Digital technologies have profoundly transformed society. They offer unprecedented opportunities and new challenges. When improperly or maliciously used, they can fuel divisions within and between countries, increase insecurity, undermine human rights, and exacerbate inequality. Shaping a shared vision on digital cooperation and a digital future that show the full potential for beneficial technology usage, and addressing digital trust and security, must continue to be a priority as our world is now more than ever relying on digital tools for connectivity and social-economic prosperity. Digital technologies have a potential to accelerate the realization of the 2030 Agenda. We must ensure safe and affordable digital access for all. The United Nations can provide a platform for all stakeholders to participate in such deliberations."



In response to the Declaration, the Secretary-General Guterres' report, <u>Our Common Agenda</u>, proposes a Summit of the Future in 2023, with a technology track leading to a Global Digital Compact:

"Furthermore, building on the recommendations of the road map for digital cooperation (see A/74/821), the United Nations, Governments, the private sector and civil society could come together as a multi-stakeholder digital technology track in preparation for a Summit of the Future to agree on a Global Digital Compact. This would outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all.

Complex digital issues that could be addressed may include: reaffirming the fundamental commitment to connecting the unconnected; avoiding fragmentation of the Internet; providing people with options as to how their data is used; application of human rights online; and promoting a trustworthy Internet by introducing accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content. More broadly, the Compact could also promote regulation of artificial intelligence to ensure that this is aligned with shared global values."

As per discussions by Member States during thematic consultation on Our Common Agenda report and the subsequent <u>summary of consultations</u> on the Common Agenda in February 2022 circulated by the President of the General Assembly (PGA) in May 2022, the UN system has been "invited to develop this proposal [i.e. of a Global Digital Compact] further through an open and inclusive process as part of the preparations for the proposed Summit of the Future."

Currently, the Office of the Envoy on Technology is coordinating the preparatory work for the Digital Compact, including establishing UN internal working groups as well as undertaking partnerships and collaborations with various stakeholders. The Office is also working closely with many UN agencies to build on their existing activities, initiatives, frameworks and processes as key elements to prepare for the Compact. In particular, a number of existing initiatives and processes that are part of the implementation of the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, including the multistakeholder recommendation roundtables, will provide important inputs towards the Compact. The Office is also closely consulting, advising and supporting Member States, including through various intergovernmental and the PGA-led processes, and the Group of Friends on Digital Technologies.

To date, several regional and thematic consultations have been organized by civil society partners with the support of the Office, while the Office has also co-organized with various UN agencies opportunities to consult and hear from Member States and other stakeholders on the Compact. For example, at the recent World Telecommunication Development Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, the Office co-organized with the ITU an informal consultation on the Compact, which saw active engagement by Ministers, CEOs and stakeholders. The upcoming IGF in November 2022, where the five thematic tracks align with the proposed areas of the Digital Compact, will also be a source of critical input.

The Office has also launched a public platform (www.un.org/techenvoy/global-digital-compact) inviting everyone everywhere - individuals, groups, associations, organizations, entities - to share what they want to see in the Compact, and making all submissions publicly available in an open and transparent manner.

The Office will compile and present all views and inputs submitted through these ongoing processes and outreach to inform deliberations on the Global Digital Compact in an intergovernmental process led by co-facilitators to be appointed by the President of the General Assembly during the 77th session of the General Assembly, as mentioned in the aforementioned summary of consultations.



More information on the work of the Office is available at the Office's website (www.un.org/techenvoy). Latest developments and events can be followed at the Office's Twitter account (www.twitter.com/UNtechenvoy).