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**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international
organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2019 to
implement the outcomes of the WSIS**

Submission by

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 23rd session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

DISCLAIMER: The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.



Report on the Implementation of the Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

(January – December 2019)

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) through the Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) serves as facilitator for the implementation of and follow-up to the action lines:

- C1 - The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development
- C7 - ICT Applications: E-government
- C11 - International and regional cooperation

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I - Highlights

1. As the leading facilitator for Action Lines C1, C7eGov, and C11, as a member of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), and the institutional manager of the IGF Secretariat¹, UNDESA continued its efforts to promote policy dialogue and advocacy among United Nations bodies, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and partners for the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). UNDESA has ensured a comprehensive exchange of views, information and experiences among WSIS stakeholders; and has provided advisory services and technical assistance to some developing countries.
2. During the annual WSIS Forum 2019 which took place on 8-12 April 2019, in Geneva, UNDESA organized a facilitation meeting on WSIS Action Lines C1, C7eGov and C11. The participants at the facilitation meeting representing various governments and

¹ <http://www.intgovforum.org/>

various stakeholders debated on how governments can better incorporate ICT and e-government strategies into their National Development Strategies to reap the benefits of these technologies in building resilience and ensuring sustainable development.

3. The United Nations E-Government Survey is published by the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) once every two years. UNDESA in 2019 continued to work on the preparation of the *2020 United Nations E-Government Survey*. The *2020 Survey* will mark the 11th edition, following a consistent methodology first adopted in 2003. The Survey assesses global and regional e-government development through a comparative rating of national government portals relative to one another. It is not designed to capture e-government development in an absolute sense, but rather to provide a snapshot of country trends and relative rankings of e-government development in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It presents the e-government development trends and relative ranking of across the 193 Member States through a quantitative composite index, the E Government Development Index (EGDI), composed of three separate components - the Online Service Index (OSI), Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII), and Human Capital Index (HCI).
4. UNDESA, together with ITU, as co-lead of a Task Group of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, has developed a thematic list of ICT indicators that could be used to measure ICT availability and used in sectors relevant to the SDGs that are not covered in the global SDG indicators framework. The proposed indicators, which were discussed and agreed upon through a consultation process involving governments and international organization, cover 27 SDG targets with 11 SDGs and includes topics such as the business use of ICT, e-government, e-waste, individual use of ICTs, the telecommunication sector and ICT in education.
5. The fourteenth annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) will bring diverse voices from a range of stakeholder groups for discussions under the overarching theme: "One World. One Net. One Vision". The Forum, to be hosted by the Government of Germany in Berlin from 25 to 29 November 2019, aims to bring together more than 3,000 participants from different stakeholder groups, including some of the most prominent individuals in the global Internet governance discussion.

II. Facilitation of action lines and selected implementation of UNDESA activities

The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development (C1)

6. UNDESA through the United Nations Public Service Award (UNPSA) programme², promotes good practices and peer-to-peer learning in ICTs for development at the

² <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/UNPSA>

local, national, regional and international levels. In 2019, the category “promoting digital transformation in the public sector” highlighted strategic approaches and applications of existing and frontier digital technologies in transforming public administration. Innovative policies and mechanisms that address gaps and challenges in social, economic, and environmental sectors were encouraged, including through the development and use of artificial intelligence, open data, big data, analytics, blockchains, machine learning, cloud computing and the Internet of Things. Public policies that harness technologies in increasing public value while addressing governance issues and associated risks were likewise encouraged.

7. During the 2019 United Nations Public Service Forum under the theme “Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through effective Delivery of Services, Innovative Transformation and Accountable Institutions” held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan from 24-26 June 2019, a workshop on “Transfiguring Digital Transformations for the Sustainable Development Goals” explored how digital government and the use of frontier technologies can be leveraged to support the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. The objectives of the workshop organized by the Digital Government Branch of DPIDG were: (i) to review current global and regional trends in digital government and reflect upon challenges and opportunities in its role as an enabler, multiplier, and accelerator in realizing the SDGs, including the use of new technologies in the public sector; and (ii) to deliberate on future scenarios as policy options and recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders in advancing digital government for SDGs. Regional and Ministerial experts were among the resource persons at the workshop attended by government officials, and policy-makers.
8. UNDESA report, *Sustainable Development Outlook 2019: [Gathering storms and silver linings](#)*, launched in October 2019 stated that although the SDGs have registered some progress since their adoption in 2015, gathering storms of weakening global economic growth, rising income inequality, unabated global warming and climate change, and escalating conflict are impeding their implementation. The report looks upon ICTs, specifically, the tailwinds of rapid technological advances as the best hope for accelerating progress in the attainment of the SDGs.
9. A Webinar on “Government Innovation and Disaster Risk Reduction: Frontier Technologies for Resilience” was held on 27 March 2019 in Incheon, Republic of Korea) organized by DPIDG/DESA through its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) together with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for Northeast Asia and Global Education Training Institute (UNISDR ONEA-GETI) and the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT). This webinar explored how governments can leverage frontier technologies for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and resilience, profiled success cases and addressed the barriers to scaling these innovations across developing country contexts.

ICT applications (C7): E-government

10. As part of its work that directly impacts Action Line C7 e-Government, UNDESA in 2019 continued to work on the preparation of the *2020 United Nations E-Government*

Survey. The *2020 United Nations E-Government Survey* is bringing focus on how digital government can facilitate integrated policies and services across the three dimensions of sustainable development. The Survey is a biennial flagship publication of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and is the only global report that assesses the digital government development status of all 193 Member States. It serves as a tool for countries to learn from each other, identify areas of strength and challenges in digital government and shape their policies and strategies in this area. It also aims to facilitate discussions among intergovernmental bodies, including the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, on issues related to digital government and development and to the critical role of information and communications technologies (ICT) in development.

11. In preparation for the *2020 United Nations E-Government Survey*, and to highlight the findings of the *2018 United Nations E-Government Survey*, a series of webinars outlining the methodology behind the *Survey* was conducted on 31 January, 13 February and 28 February 2019. Over 50 participants responsible for e-government development at the national level, participated in each webinar, during which DESA/DPIDG also announced the launch of Member States Questionnaire (MSQ) in preparation for the *2020 Survey*. The objective of the MSQ is to gather information from Member States on the latest progress in their e-government efforts. Participants had the opportunity to interact with the team behind the *Survey* in the Q&A Section.
12. DPIDG organized an Expert Group Meeting at UNHQ from 1 to 2 April 2019 in preparation for the *2020 United Nations E-Government Survey*. This meeting provided a platform for governance and public administration experts from UN entities, international organizations and academia to share global and regional perspectives on:
(i) How the *2020 UN E-Government Survey* can capture and reflect in its assessments the emerging issues and trends in new technologies and e-government
(ii) How to enhance digital inclusion, engagement and partnerships for leaving no one behind and how to capture this through improving the E-participation index
(iii) Expanded collaboration between UNDESA, UN Regional Commissions and prominent actors and international organizations working in the fields of e-government, new technologies and digital cooperation.
13. UNDESA also participated in an expert group meeting organized by the United Nations University Operating Unit on Policy-Driven Electronic Governance (UNU-GOV) in Portugal on 26 February 2019. The EGM aimed to contribute to the discussion and reflection about e-Government measurement and assessment at the local level, specifically, to examine the local online services index (LOSI).
14. UNDESA through DPIDG and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific through its Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD), co-organized an Interregional Capacity Development Workshop on Digital Government Implementation Toolkit for Sustainable Development (DIGIT4SD) in Bangkok from 23-24 July 2019. This programmed activity was part of the project implementation of the United Nations Development Account Project DA1617B on “Evidence-based e-government policies for advancing governmental service delivery and accountability in support of the Sustainable

Development Goals”. The main objective of the workshop was to discuss and share various digital government toolkits and explore replicability of lessons learned from Bangladesh and Ethiopia, target countries of the DA Project, with other least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing States (SIDS), and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). In the light of lessons learned during the course of the DA project, case studies of Bangladesh, Ethiopia and others were shared during the workshop to illustrate the good cases from different national, sectoral and situational contexts.

15. In addition, UNDESA through DPIDG engaged in the following activities:

- a. Participated remotely in the 12th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV2019) held in Melbourne, Australia on 3-5 April 2019 where it submitted two conference papers and a video presentation on “Monitoring and measuring the impact of Digital Government and the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean”. DPIDG sent a presentation for the paper on “Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Challenges for the Public Sector” and a second paper co-written with Fudan University on “Digital Government, Smart Cities and Sustainable Development”.
- b. Delivered a keynote presentation on “Thriving in the Digital World and the Data Revolution: In Pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals”, at the national workshop on Data and Digital Government in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 25 February. The event was presided by the Minister of Planning and Principal Coordinator (SDG Affairs) of the Prime Minister’s Office.
- c. Participated in the first 2019 meeting of the AI Pioneers Forum, held in New York on 6 March 2019 at the Grant Thornton headquarters. The AI Pioneers Forum is a community of world leaders in AI from business, government and academia.

International and regional cooperation (C11)

16. The 4th annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development Goals (STI Forum) with the theme, “Science, Technology and Innovation for ensuring inclusiveness and equality with a special focus on SDGs 4, 8, 10,13 and 16” organized by UNDESA, was held in New York from 14-15 May 2019. Approximately 700 participants representing a cross-section of scientists, innovators, technology specialists, entrepreneurs, policy makers and civil society representatives reviewed in detail the innovative solutions that can push the needle on the critical issues of education, decent jobs and economic growth, inequality, climate change, peaceful and just societies, and partnerships for the Goals. More than 30 side events and two satellite events were held: (i) Global Solutions Summit and (ii) Global Science Technology and Innovation Conference. The Forum’s summary report, [E/HLPF/2019/6](#), noted the following:

- a. the status of existing and new technologies, the potential of science, technology and innovation to support the achievement of quality education and lifelong learning;
 - b. the ways in which science, technology and innovation have an impact on economic growth and perspectives for full and productive employment and decent work for all;
 - c. the interrelations between technology change and inequality within and among countries;
 - d. the main challenges to developing, adopting clean technologies for mitigating and adapting to climate change; and
 - e. the ways in which STI can promote peaceful and inclusive societies and access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.
17. The 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), held under the theme, “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality” in New York on 9-18 July 2019. Fifty-one countries presented their [Voluntary National Reviews](#) (VNRs) on their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The Forum also conducted an in-depth review of six out of the 17 SDGs i.e., SDGs, 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17. The theme and much of the content of the Forum were generally relevant to the work of digital government and ICTs for development, as highlighted in the following sections of the ministerial declaration ([E/HLPF/2019/8](#)) adopted at the conclusion of the HLPF:
- a. Paragraph 8 notes that decent work and economic growth are dynamically interlinked with the Goals and are a means for achieving the 2030 Agenda. New technologies such as artificial intelligence, automation and robotics offer new challenges and opportunities in this area.
 - b. Paragraph 12 emphasizes that improving the capacity of national statistical systems to generate data and measure progress of implementing policies to attain the Goals is important, particularly, the need to produce disaggregated data to identify exactly who is being left behind and to inform effective action.
 - c. Paragraph 18 emphasizes that realigning education systems is required to meet the learning needs of individuals, reflect the modern world while ensuring that traditional knowledge is passed down through generations. There is also a need to tap into learning technologies and digital infrastructures, change mindsets around the value of education for societies and ensure that no one is left behind in terms of access to quality education.
 - d. Paragraph 26 recognizes that new technologies such as artificial intelligence, automation and robotics offer new challenges and opportunities. However, they require government policies to ensure that benefits accrue at all levels of society and that non-standard forms of employment respect workers’ rights and

ensure their protection. Furthermore, new technologies can support creativity and entrepreneurship and have the potential to bring about economic productivity gains, but these must be underpinned by the development of digital skills, infrastructure development, technology transfer and other resources in order to avoid a global digital divide, with particular attention paid to countries in special situations.

- e. Paragraph 78 acknowledges that skills in science, technology, engineering and math are key to achieving the Goals. In engineering, there is a significant shortfall in both developed and developing countries, with continued low participation by women. Inclusive practices must be established to ensure that women acquire such skills and that they are not left behind.

18. The high-level political forum on sustainable development was also convened under the auspices of the General Assembly on 24 and 25 September 2019. The event was the first UN summit on the SDGs since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015. The SDG Summit resulted in the adoption of the Political Declaration, “Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”. World leaders called for a decade of action to deliver the SDGs by 2030 and announced actions they are taking to advance the Agenda. The declaration commits to “harnessing science, technology and innovation with a greater focus on digital transformation for sustainable development”, and in item (h) under paragraph 27 states that “we will promote research, capacity-building initiatives, innovation and technologies towards advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and promote the use of scientific evidence from all fields to enable the transformation to sustainable development. We will promote and support quality education and lifelong learning to ensure that all children, youth and adults are empowered with the relevant knowledge and skills to shape more resilient, inclusive and sustainable societies that are able to adapt to rapid technological change. We will foster international cooperation to support developing countries in addressing their constraints in access to technologies and education”.

19. In addition to convening the 4th annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (STI Forum) on 14-15 May 2015, UNDESA is responsible for delivering the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) as mandated by the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. A new 10-member group was appointed by the Secretary-General to advise over the 2018-2019 period.

20. In 2019, UNDESA’s United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), based in South Korea, contributed to WSIS work in the area of ICT for development by organizing or co-organizing activities including but not limited to:

- a. the annual Symposium for the Asia-Pacific region to strengthen the capacity of public administration and promote innovation in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development in close collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Korea

- b. the Study Visit on Advancing E-Government Development for SDG Implementation under the theme “Evidence-based e-government policies in support of the Sustainable Development Goals” along with UNDESA/DPIDG and the National Information Society Agency of the Republic of Korea. It took place in Incheon, Republic of Korea from 1-5 April 2019. The Study Visit aimed to develop capacities of government officials of the targeted countries in leveraging e-government and digital technologies for SDG implementation
- c. an international forum on “Public Governance and International Development Cooperation for Realizing the SDGs” on 10 June 2019 in Seoul, Republic of Korea in collaboration with the Korea Institute of Public Administration (KIPA), the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and UNDESA/DPIDG. More than 100 representatives from government agencies, academia, civil society organizations, private sector and international organizations participated in the Forum. Colleagues from several other international organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCAP and OECD Korea Policy Center also participated in the Forum.

III. Implementation of themes

Internet governance

- 21. The First Open Consultations and Meeting of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was held in Geneva from 28 to 30 January 2019. This meeting, supported by the IGF Secretariat and DESA/DPIDG, was held to kick start the preparations for the 14th Internet Governance Forum, to be hosted by the Government of Germany in November 2019. In addition to taking stock of IGF 2018 held in Paris last November, the MAG also discussed strategic approaches and programmatic changes to IGF 2019 including its intersessional activities. The latter aims at addressing the recommendations made by the Secretary-General during his address at the opening of IGF 2018, as well as the recommendations of the French President Macron Emmanuel and other IGF stakeholders. All meeting sessions were webcast live with real-time transcript to support remote participation of stakeholders from different regions and countries.
- 22. The Second IGF Open Consultations and Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) meeting was held in Geneva from 9-11 April 2019. The purpose of the second round of IGF Open Consultations and MAG meeting is to advance preparations for the IGF 2019 annual meeting and to advance various strategic items with input from the community.
- 23. The Third IGF Open Consultations and Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) meeting, the last of the 2019 cycle, was held in Berlin from 5-7 June 2019. The meeting took critical decisions on the programme of the annual IGF in November, including the selection of workshops under the three core themes of Data Governance, Digital Inclusion, and Safety, Security, Stability & Resilience. With a view to building more

streamlined and cohesive thematic tracks in the programme, the number of workshops was limited to 20 for each theme, emphasizing varied but complementary policy questions within the tracks. The tracks will be bookended by introductory and concluding sessions, with the latter expected to contribute to the overall “IGF Messages” outcome. MAG members also identified 9 main sessions for the programme, focusing on: human rights, hate speech & content regulation; a multidisciplinary policy framework in the digital age; digital governance & digital trade; cybersecurity & the Internet of Things; SDGs - ensuring inclusion in the digital transformation; the report of the High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation (HLPDC) & frontier issues; and a topical session each for the IGF National, Regional and Youth Initiatives (NRIs) and Dynamic Coalitions (DCs). In addition to programmatic discussions, the first ‘open consultations’ day of the meeting heard short briefings from Internet-governance related entities, including several UN and intergovernmental organizations, such as ITU, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. UNICEF and the Organization of American States (OAS) also made contributions to this segment for the first time.

24. The fourteenth annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum aims to bring diverse voices from a range of stakeholder groups for discussions under the overarching theme: “One World. One Net. One Vision”. The Forum, hosted by the Government of Germany in Berlin from 25 to 29 November 2019, is expected to bring together more than 3,000 participants from different stakeholder groups, including some of the most prominent individuals in the global Internet governance discussion.

Measuring information and communications technology for development

25. DESA, together with ITU, co-leads a Task Group of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. To better reflect the role of ICT in achieving the SDGs, the Task Group has developed a thematic list of ICT indicators that could be used to measure ICT availability and use in sectors relevant to the SDGs that are not covered in the global SDG indicators framework.
26. The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development is an international, multi-stakeholder initiative that was launched in 2004 to improve the availability and quality of ICT data and indicators, particularly in developing countries. It has taken a lead role in increasing awareness about the importance of ICT for development and in international ICT monitoring. The Partnership has made a concerted effort to highlight the role that ICTs will play in achieving the SDGs and prepared a joint proposal of ICT indicators to help track the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. In March 2017, at its 48th Session, the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) adopted the global indicators framework for the SDGs and targets developed by Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). The framework includes 231 indicators. However, only 7 of which are ICT indicators, and only 3 out of 7 indicators are Tier I indicators covering 6 targets under Goals 4, 5, 9, and 17. It is imperative that all areas where ICTs will play a role are measured and monitored.

27. There is obviously a need for increasing data availability for current ICT indicators and in developing a more detailed list of thematic indicators to help countries measure their progress in the adoption and use of ICT in different sectors of the economy. Thus, within the Partnership, UNDESA and ITU, co-leads of the Task Group on ICT for the SDGs, proposed a thematic list of ICT indicators that could be used to measure ICT availability and use in sectors relevant to the SDGs that are not covered in the current SDG indicators framework. The Task Group further aims at improving the availability of disaggregated data.
28. The proposed indicators, which were discussed and agreed upon through a consultation process involving governments and international organizations, cover the following areas: ICT infrastructure and access; access and use of ICT by households and individuals; use of ICT by businesses; the ICT sector; trade in ICT goods; ICT in education; e-waste and e-government. The current proposal includes 26 ICT indicators, related to 28 SDG Targets belonging to 11 Goals.
29. The final draft list was presented at the WSIS Forum 2019. The list has then been open to feedback from WSIS stakeholders, during and after the WSIS Forum 2019, after which, it was finalized. The list contains 26 indicators covering 27 targets in 11 goals and covers topics such as the business use of ICT, e-government, e-waste, individual use of ICTs, the telecommunication sector and ICT in education. In its report to the Statistical Commission in March next year, the Partnership will be presenting the thematic list. Going forward, the Partnership will disseminate the list widely to countries and is considering a report on the thematic list.