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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 Development Programme

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.

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Part One: Summary of activities undertaken, progress made, and obstacles encountered

Much progress had been made across UNDP in terms of focused efforts in the use of ICTs or new technologies in development programmes across regions. UNDP established this year 60 Accelerator Labs serving 78 countries, in addition to the Innovation Facility it established in 2014. It has integrated ICTs in more programmes (including in climate change and disaster risk reduction efforts, for instance, as listed below), and established more partnerships (examples also below) that support the digital transformation of developing countries for sustainable development.

Main obstacles in the area of capacities continue to be a serious concern. As noted by the Broadband Commission, digital inequality is significant, with close to half of the world population still without Internet access. Gap between developed and developing countries is stark, with majority unconnected living in developing countries of the Asia Pacific and African regions, and most in rural or low-income areas with weak infrastructure. LDCs are in particular disadvantage and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and countries in fragile settings (e.g., Haiti, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Timor Leste, Venezuela, Yemen, etc.) lagging behind the most. These pose distinct challenges to 2030 Agenda commitment to leave no one behind, and these challenges go beyond lack of infrastructure alone.

Part Two: Trends and experiences

UNDP efforts in countries with varying levels of digital capacities underline the need for building the local digital ecosystem to achieve the goals of sustainable development. Experience underlines that introducing a procured ICT or new technology in a project, without the aim of helping transfer knowledge, does not help to build the foundations of the digital ecosystem that can help pave the way for sustainable digital development. More needs to be done in building local and national digital ecosystems, which should be part of national and local digital strategies.

UNDP also notes the impact of the interplay of major trends, such as rapid urbanization and digital revolution, in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Many cities around the world are increasingly adopting "smart" technologies and approaches in addressing urban needs and challenges. There is need for more coherent support to these efforts from across the UN development system to ensure that they are anchored in the SDGs. The WSIS community, specifically, could more systematically assist these efforts, starting perhaps with the agencies in UNGIS working more closely to leverage each one's mandates and capacities to "deliver as one."

Part Three: Description of activities, policies, programmes, etc.

Action Line 3: Access to Information

- In 2019, the **Online Asset Declaration System of Public Officials in Ukraine** that UNDP helped establish two years earlier exceeded 4 million asset declarations. The online portal (https://public.nazk.gov.ua/search) contain information on officials' assets, incomes and expenditures. UNDP has also assisted the government of Ukraine in developing **asset declaration verification system** with predetermined algorithms able to flag major deviations.

Actin Line 4: Capacity Building

- UNDP **established 60 Accelerator Labs** in 2019 that will serve 78 countries across regions. The Labs demonstrate UNDP's new way of working in development and commitment to engage local solutions providers. Launched with the support of the State of Qatar and the Federal Republic of Germany, the Labs will work together with national and global partners to find radically new approaches that fit the complexity of current development challenges. They will identify grassroots solutions together with local actors and validate their potential to accelerate development.

Capacity building with a focus on cities

- The world is urbanizing at a fast pace, and the UN projects that by 2050 close to 70 percent of humanity will be urban, and as much as 90% of the urban growth between now and 2050 is expected to take place in Asia in Africa.[1] These trends have immense implications for the future of humanity: How we manage them will define the world we will leave the next generation and whether we achieve the world we envisioned in the 2030 Agenda. Cities are big contributors to GHG emissions and are also disproportionately affected by climate-induced disaster risks.

  In 2019, UNDP launched the **City2City Network** to support cities particularly from the global South to build their capacities to address growing needs amidst complex development challenges. The Network promotes leadership, learning, and innovation; facilitates exchange on innovative solutions; enables access to cutting-edge knowledge to help build inclusive and smart urban communities; and connects potential partners to explore joint efforts addressing a range of issues such as energy and climate change, resilience, governance, the informal economy, and municipal financing for development, etc. The Network has a specific focus on digital transformation, which will leverage the use of ICTs and smart city approaches to build cities we want now and for future generations.

Capacity building with a focus on disaster risk reduction

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[1] https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2018-KeyFacts.pdf

- A **regional *ICT for DRR* project** in the Europe and CIS Region is helping the capacities of cities in Armenia, Moldova and North Macedonia *to better manage and reduce disaster risks.* The project facilitates exchange on best-practice innovation technologies and collaboration between the cities of Skopje, Yerevan and Ungheni. In Ungheni, UNDP worked with the Civil Protection and Emergency Situations Service and local stakeholders to develop the Ungheni Resilience Strategy, which includes the development of a web portal that provides DRR information and offers a mechanism for stakeholder feedback. In Skopje, UNDP utilized [foresight exchange gaming](#) to engage local stakeholders in the development of the "Resilient Skopje" Climate Change Strategy. UNDP also worked with the Green Cadaster of the City to develop urban heat island maps, design a flood model of the city, and conducted a GIS inventory of the buildings.

Action Line 11: International cooperation

- Countries understand the serious need to transform their digital landscape to propel progress. Lifting the digital prospects particularly of developing countries however will require enormous investments. There is need therefore for strategies and tools that target the adoption of technologies and development of capacities that present the most impact, identifying "the technologies that matter." There is also great need for the development of digital transformation roadmaps that are aligned with the sustainable development priorities of countries, for models that respond to needs of developing countries, and for partners that can support efforts.

  It is in this context that the Government of Estonia and UNDP established the **Cooperation on Digital Transformation as Sustainable Development Pathway** in 2018. The cooperation is leveraging the digital evolution and expertise as well as development experience and achievements of Estonia through the years, alongside UNDP's expertise in, longstanding support for, and sustained investments in sustainable development across regions. In 2019, the Cooperation developed and piloted a diagnostic tool that will assist the development of digital transformation roadmaps, and had been supporting knowledge exchange through workshops.