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# Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2022 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 26th 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.

**UNDP Inputs to the CSTD Report on WSIS Implementation**
**October 2022**

***Part One:*** *Brief/Executive summary of activities undertaken, progress made, and any obstacles encountered (half a page).*

In 2022, the global community emerging from and striving to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic continued to leverage information and communications technologies (ICTs) in efforts across a wide range of priorities. Learning from and building on lessons learned during the pandemic throughout 2020 and 2021, UNDP focused ICT-enabled efforts to address challenges related among others to health, climate, governance and the economy, aiming to help countries not only regain and protect progress on SDG implementation but "turbo charge" efforts to quicken upward trajectories, given particularly the serious setbacks from the pandemic and the impending 2030 deadline.

Progress had been most visible in the increased adoption of ICTs across sectors and stakeholders across UNDP programme countries, reflected in the rising number of ICT-enabled efforts involving more stakeholders and greater investments in ICT-enabled approaches. These efforts included building digital capacities of the public sector and stakeholders, and enhancing the impact of programmes through ICTs. By 2022, UNDP has assisted 82 countries to adopt over 580 digital solutions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and its Accelerator Labs have supported 115 countries on a range of innovative development solutions beyond pandemic response. Programmatic support across its practices that leverage ICTs, deployed by its Country Offices and regional hubs, raise these numbers even more.[1]

But obstacles remain significant: Some 2.7 billion remain offline, with developing countries and the poor within developing and advanced economies lagging behind.[2] As governments and partners (including UN agencies supporting development efforts) increasingly use connectivity and new technologies in projects and programmes on the ground, the benefits could be dampened by risks of leaving the unconnected further excluded and behind. UNDP therefore sees digital exclusion as an obstacle to inclusive and resilient recovery and, along with the broader WSIS community, calls for greater cooperation and sustained investments not only to close the connectivity gaps (as a development outcome in and of itself) but to support ICT-enabled efforts that advance countries' SDG priorities and reach the most in need.

***Part Two:*** *A brief analytical overview of trends and experiences in implementation, highlighting achievements and obstacles since WSIS and taking into account the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (could include information on the facilitation process of implementation, monitoring and cooperation among stakeholders).*

[1] Please see https://open.undp.org/ for country-specific programming
[2] https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/PR-2022-09-16-Internet-surge-slows.aspx

Efforts since WSIS had been largely on "making the case" for ICTs, with the WSIS community expending a great deal of effort to demonstrate the benefits of ICTs and their potential to advance development goals. The pandemic showed the cost of weak digital infrastructure and capacities (steep challenges to business continuity and service delivery during crisis, among others), and shifted the need from advocacy and "proof of concept" efforts to strategic interventions and investments that could propel transformation in rapidly digitalizing societies and economies, and need for partners that could help countries "get there" quickly. Below are some that played out in many areas of UNDP's work, and which need to be more closely analyzed for their impact on SDG acceleration and achievement:

- ***The future is uncertain***. The Human Development Report launched by UNDP in September 2022 underlined that human development has fallen back to its 2016 levels, reversing much of the progress on the SDGs. The reversal is felt around the world, with over 90 percent of countries registering a decline in their 2020 or 2021 HDI score (with more than 40 percent reporting decline in both years, signaling deeper challenges that need to be addressed).[3] The uneven recovery across regions has put greater emphasis on the need to take into account the knock-on effects of the reversal, and the widening inequalities it caused, also on the more equal digital future envisioned by countries. WSIS outcomes implementation, or support to ICT efforts, will require very strategic interventions particularly in areas that have been hit hard and where digital exclusion remains significant (Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia).

- ***The future is uncertain, but it is certain to be tech-driven.*** Many expert reports have been produced across the WSIS community (and beyond) that underline the exponential growth of technology and the expectation of a future that is certain to be technology driven.[4] The positive impact of ICTs are clear (with 60 percent of global GDP in 2022 expected to lean on ICTs),[5] and investments in ICTs are expected to continue despite the economic downtrends and inflationary pressures, including in developing countries facing multi-pronged crises and SDG reversals.[6] From its work across regions, UNDP has seen that progress had been most visible in the increased adoption of ICTs across sectors and stakeholders, reflected in greater number of ICT-enabled efforts involving more stakeholders and greater investments in ICT-enabled approaches, including in ICT infrastructure and capacities in the public sphere and across industries. UNDP itself increased efforts launched since the pandemic, releasing its Digital Strategy 2022-2025 linked to UNDP's programmatic support outlined in its Strategic

[3] https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22

[4] For examples, please see reports from the Broadband Commission (https://www.broadbandcommission.org/) and thinks tanks like the Pew Research Center (https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/02/18/experts-say-the-new-normal-in-2025-will-be-far-more-tech-driven-presenting-more-big-challenges/)

[5] https://www.itu.int/hub/2021/11/bridging-the-digital-divide-with-innovative-finance-and-business-models/

[6] Please see https://data.oecd.org/ict/ict-investment.htm, https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prEUR149553222, https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prAP49657622,

Plan 2022-2025 designed to help drive down inequality that worsened during the pandemic, advance inclusion, tackle climate change and increase economic opportunities.[7]

- **From disconnected tech-focused innovation to ecosystem building.** Lessons from the pandemic informed UNDP efforts in 2022. In its Digital Strategy and Strategic Plan (released in 2022), UNDP outlined support for efforts that will not only leverage technologies to achieve country-specific development outcomes but also help build the *ecosystem* necessary to a more inclusive and sustainable future for the people and the entire planet --- taking into account not only the technological infrastructure foundations of a digital future but also the necessary governance arrangements, human and institutional capacities, ethical and regulatory frameworks, among others. It enhanced linkages across its Bureaux, Country Offices, and Hubs (pulling together experts from across domains to support digital efforts that are more coherent), leveraged and deepened partnerships within and beyond the UN system, and established efforts that take forward the SG's call in Our Common Agenda (among others taking on co-chairmanship of Digital Cooperation Working Groups while continuing to co-lead the UN Group in the Information Society and engaging in partnerships like the Broadband Commission).

- **The interplay of megatrends** will continue to be crucial in WSIS implementation and in turbo-charging SDG acceleration. *Urbanization* will continue to be rapid, particularly in developing regions lagging behind in connectivity, adding pressures to priorities that countries face while opening up opportunities for poverty eradication and inclusive growth through cities and urban centers that adopt "smart" technologies to raise competitiveness and people's quality of life. UNDP has enhanced support in this area through its City2City Network. *Climate change* and the call for *sustainable energy* will also continue to play a crucial role in achieving the vision of WSIS, as countries look to ensure a sustainable future through new technologies. In 2022, UNDP enhanced support to countries in reaching their climate goals (through the Climate Promise initiative), and continued to support various efforts on sustainable energy around the world, including in countries where access to energy dampens digitalisation goals).

**Part Three:** A brief description of (a) Innovative policies, programmes and projects which have been undertaken to implement the outcomes; (b) Future actions or initiatives to be taken (including any new commitments made to further implement the outcomes).

## A. Examples of innovative policies, programmes and projects launched or enhanced in 2022

- **Civil society, business, and multistakeholder partnerships:** UNDP joined several public and private sector partnerships for data, including the Development Data Partnership (DDP) platform, which promotes the use of second- and third-party data in research and international development, through secure data exchange.

[7] https://www.undp.org/news/ensuring-equitable-digital-futures-everyone

- **Facilitation of multistakeholder implementation:** UNDP continues to serve as co-lead of the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) with ITU, UNESCO and UNCTAD, convening the Annual WSIS Forum and facilitating UNGIS-wide inputs to UN system processes.
- **The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development (C1):** Through its Chief Digital Office and its Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP enhanced support to governments in developing national digital and data strategies, including advisory guidance on data management and capacity-building support for government officials, and other stakeholders, addressing risks arising from cybersecurity, human rights, and ethics.
- **Information and communication infrastructure (C2):** UNDP enhanced support to countries on their digital transformation through a good practice toolkit for national/local data collaboration. As countries struggle to manage increasing quantities of data, this project will address the pressing need for robust, needs-driven data collaboration and governance with people at its core. UNDP has also been supporting the adoption of inclusive, safe, and resilient digital public infrastructure (DPI). DPIs refer to solutions and systems that enable the effective provision of essential society-wide functions and services in the public and private sectors. This includes but is not limited to digital forms of ID and verification, civil registration, payment (digital transactions and money transfers), data exchange, and information systems. UNDP became co-host of the Digital Public Goods Alliance (DPGA) in 2021, and has since been working with global and local partners in the discovery and implementation of digital public goods (DPGs) as a basis for inclusive digital public infrastructure. Digital public goods - safe and reliable open-source solutions and data - have been deployed to help countries with food distribution, education, digital economy, healthcare and other services (such as the UN Biodiversity Lab as a GIS tool).
- **Access to information and knowledge (C3):** UNDP recently launched the beta version of its Digital Development Compass, an interactive data analysis and visualization tool that aggregates publicly available data on countries' digital development. By using the Digital Development Compass, users can interact with the publicly available data to examine the digital state of a country, whilst accessing comparison insights and recommendations.
- **Capacity-building (C4):**
    - Through its collaboration with Arup and University of Liverpool, UNDP launched the report "Cities Alive: Designing Cities that Work for Women", which looks into gender-responsive approach to urban planning, that also considers technology alongside gender inequalities that restrict women's social and economic opportunities, health and wellbeing, sense of safety and security, and access to justice and equity.
    - UNDP has been conducting several trainings on data analysis for to leverage digital technologies for assessments in crisis context, including GIS tools and systems, and Social Media Analyses. The training modules are organized to support the digital capacity of development practitioners understand the purpose

of using these technologies for decision-making in humanitarian emergencies and crisis settings and identify the types of data available in a crises context.
    - A new training programme on AI has been developed, to be piloted in Bahrain, to establish the capacity of government officials, particularly in leveraging AI for policy making. The training will be tailored for different contexts, based on the AI readiness assessment to be conducted in countries, identifying areas of unmet need for digital capacity development and fostering efforts to address them.
- **The enabling environment (C6):** UNDP has developed a Digital Readiness Assessment to provide insights into digital understanding and capacity, strategy and planning, as well as implementation and evaluation to establish an inclusive digital ecosystem for the country. The tool rely on indicators such as vision, governance, ethics, infrastructure, transparency, and accountability in user countries.
- **Ethical dimensions of the information society (C10):** UNDP enhanced efforts in this area by launching a tool to counter misinformation particularly during elections (iVerify, an open source misinformation detection tool), and an initiative on information integrity as part of the new Strategic Plan (which includes an information pollution mapping programme).
- **International and regional cooperation (C11):** UNDP continues to take part in global partnerships to tackle global challenges leveraging ICTs, such as the Broadband Commission; the Local2030 Coalition (serving as co-chair of the Steering Committee for 2022 and 2023), which is launching SDG localization advocacy and support with a pillar on technology and innovative approaches.