

Session during 2021 Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit

Digital Transformation for the Next Normal: Toward an Inclusive and People-Centered Digital Society in the Post-COVID-19 Era

**16 December 2021
6:30-8:00 PM (GMT+9)**

**Livestream via OGP Global Summit Website: <https://ogpsummit.org>
& YouTube: <http://t.ly/ldbg>**
(English-Korean simultaneous interpretation will be provided.)

Organized by

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)
Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)
United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG)
and
ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Background and Objectives

With the critical role of digital technologies in delivering essential services online and connecting people during the COVID-19 crisis, the pandemic has become the new driver for digital transformation. Leveraging ICTs and digital technologies, particularly AI, big data analytics and robotics, has been at the center of the COVID-19 response by both government and non-government sectors. As highlighted in the UN E-Government Survey 2020, digital technologies have enabled governments to make rapid policy decisions based on real-time data and analytics and deploy evidence-based services to those who need them most.¹ At the same time, digitalization has come to the core of pursuing a sustainable and resilient recovery from the pandemic and preparing for the post-COVID-19 era. Many countries are advancing their digital transformation strategies for preparing for the “Next Normal” in the post-COVID-19 era with an exponential demand for digital services and so-called “non-contact-based industries”, such as distant education, telemedicine, e-business and working from home. Accelerating digital transformation at national and local levels, with expansion of digital infrastructure such as 5G and cloud computing and creation of new digital ecosystems, can contribute to revitalizing the economy through promoting the digital economy and transforming the way government delivers public services and interacts with and engages other

¹ UN DESA (2020). UN E-Government Survey 2020, p. 215.

stakeholders, including citizens. Harnessing digital transformation is ever more important, as now less than a decade is left to deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by 2030 while confronting the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic with significant repercussions on the progress in the economic and social development made over the past decades.

Nevertheless, not all parts of the society are ready to reap the potentials of digital technologies and fully equipped with the capacities and skills to adapt to the “Next Normal” and cope with the challenges in the digitalization process. Still, a large portion of society, particularly the marginalized and vulnerable populations, including the poorest, older persons, persons with disabilities, women, children and youth, migrants and refugees, and those living in remote and rural areas, face the challenges such as the lack of access to ICT infrastructure and digital connectivity and insufficient digital knowledge and skills. While the Internet connection has become a lifeline more than ever in the current pandemic situation, nearly half of the world is still not connected to the Internet.² With such constraints, these marginalized populations are often not included in the process of developing and implementing the digital transformation strategies and policies. This poses a threat of reinforcing and further exacerbating the existing economic, social and gender inequalities amidst the accelerating pace of digitalization in the post-COVID-19 era.

The UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation underlines that “digital technology does not exist in a vacuum – it has enormous potential for positive change, but can also reinforce and magnify existing fault lines and worsen economic and other inequalities”,³ and suggests eight areas of action, including achieving universal connectivity by 2030, ensuring digital inclusion for all, including the most vulnerable, and strengthening digital capacity-building.⁴ The UN Secretary-General Report “*Our Common Agenda*” also emphasizes the importance of digital inclusivity for ensuring leaving no one behind and highlights universal access to the Internet as a human right.⁵

In this regard, it is essential to ensure that no one is left behind in the process of digital transformation. Inclusion should be at the heart of this defining feature of the “New Normal” and building a digital society in the post-COVID-19 era. Digital transformation strategies and policies need to be inclusive and people-centered with a holistic approach that puts people first and centers around the needs of people, including those left furthest behind. Government should foster open and collaborative digital governance for building an inclusive and people-centered digital society, particularly by i) better harnessing data through building open, inclusive and collaborative data governance, ii) promoting digital inclusion, and iii) fostering multi-stakeholder engagement and partnerships, especially with the private sector and people.

Against this backdrop, the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), through its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), and the ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific are co-organizing a virtual thematic session on “Digital Transformation for the Next Normal: Toward an Inclusive and People-Centered Digital Society in the Post-COVID-19 Era” during the 2021 Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit. The Session aims to discuss and share knowledge, experiences and innovative practices for promoting digital transformation for the “Next Normal” in the post-COVID-19 era with an inclusive and people-centered approach.

² ITU (2020). Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures, p.7

³ United Nations (2020). UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, p. 3.

⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/>

⁵ United Nations (2021). The Report of Secretary-General “Our Common Agenda”.

Thematic Focus

The discussion of the Session will be centered on the three major thematic focuses.

Building Open, Inclusive and Collaborative Data Governance

Effective harnessing of data by building open, inclusive and collaborative data governance can contribute to promoting inclusive and people-centered digital transformation in the post-COVID-19 era. *Firstly*, promoting open and accessible data can enable harnessing of data by various stakeholders in society for fostering innovative and inclusive solutions to a multitude of challenges in the post-COVID-19 era. For example, open government data (OGD) can effectively support the people-centric analysis and applications, contributing to provision of services that address the specific demands of target groups, including vulnerable populations. It can also facilitate more effective and agile communications between government and citizens and engender better understanding of citizens on the work and priorities of government and public participation in policymaking and problem-solving processes, which further contributes to building public trust and strengthening accountability and transparency of government.

Secondly, effective harnessing of data, particularly disaggregated data broken down by detailed sub-categories, can promote inclusive digital society by allowing government and other stakeholders to better understand and address the special vulnerabilities and demands of vulnerable groups in the post-COVID-19 era. It allows data-driven and evidence-based decision making which is critical for effectively addressing the multi-dimensional and dynamically evolving demands of vulnerable populations in a more agile and pre-emptive manner. Furthermore, effective collaboration and coordination across different government agencies and between national and local governments with a whole-of-government approach as well as a whole-of-society approach through collaboration with other stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society organizations, is required for effective collection and sharing of data.

Thirdly, as digital transformation for the New Normal in the post-COVID-19 era is data-driven, it is important to protect personal data and privacy by instituting legislative and policy frameworks and strengthening institutional and technical coordination. While governments shall take measures to improve data disaggregation for the inclusion of vulnerable groups, it is equally important to protect the privacy of vulnerable groups and avoid exposing their personal data from potential discrimination and unwanted threats and harms.

Promoting Digital Inclusion

To ensure leaving no one behind in the process of digital transformation and preparing for the post-COVID-19 era, it is essential to include the marginalized and vulnerable groups in the process of developing and implementing digital transformation strategies and policies. In this regard, government can strengthen the people-centered approach of digital transformation and better address the needs of all stakeholders of the society.

Thus, it is imperative to address the digital divide caused by various factors including gender, language, age, disability, and migration status, among others. Government, in partnership with other stakeholders particularly with the private sector and civil society organizations, need to improve connectivity and affordability of digital services and devices, based on the perception of ensuring the access to the Internet as a public good and a part of basic human rights. It is also imperative to enhance digital capacities and skills of the whole society, especially vulnerable groups, to enable them to harness the potential and benefits of the digitalization in the post-COVID-19 era.

Fostering Public-Private-People Partnerships (PPPPs)

The accelerated pace of digital transformation during the COVID-19 pandemic has redefined the role of the private sector and people and it is expected that their roles will become more prominent in the post-COVID-19 era, further accentuating the importance of fostering Public-Private-People Partnerships (PPPPs). Government particularly needs to work together with the private sector and people in building inclusive and human-centered post-COVID-19 digital society. Strengthened PPPPs can allow more effective use of human, technical and financial resources required for addressing diverse challenges of digital inclusion in the process of accelerating digital transformation and equipping the whole society for the “New Normal” with new ways of working, production and consumption, communications, and service delivery.

To foster PPPPs, government needs to create an open and enabling innovation ecosystem and encourage innovation by the private sector and people through providing platforms for innovation and collaboration. It is also important to collaborate and move together toward further opening of the economy and society, by promoting the digital economy and creation of more job opportunities, including for the most vulnerable populations, and empowering small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and ICT start-ups.

Guiding Questions

- What are the main guiding principles and strategies for advancing digital transformation for the “Next Normal” in the post-COVID-19 era?
- What are the strategies, approaches and innovative measures for instituting an open, inclusive and collaborative data governance framework? What could be effective approaches for fostering collaboration and coordination across different government agencies and between national and local governments?
- What are the main challenges for ensuring digital inclusivity, particularly in overcoming digital inequalities of vulnerable groups including women, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons?
- What are innovative measures for i) promoting inclusion of the marginalized and vulnerable groups in the process of developing and implementing digital transformation strategies and policies; and ii) bridging the digital divide and enhancing digital capacities and skills of vulnerable groups?
- What could be effective mechanisms for government to collaborate with other stakeholders, including the private sector and individuals, for promoting inclusive and people-centered digital society?
- What could be effective strategies to further advance digital cooperation at the regional and global levels, especially through North-South, South-South and triangular partnerships, for promoting concerted actions toward the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-COVID-19 era?

Draft Agenda

Time (GMT+9)	Agenda
I. Opening	
6:30-6:35 PM (5 mins.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction by the Moderator: Ms. Mi Kyoung Park, Governance and Public Administration Officer, UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA • Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Bokyun Shim, Head of UNPOG, DPIDG/UN DESA (2 mins.) - Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2 mins.)
II. Overview Presentations	
6:35-7:20 PM (45 mins.)	<p>Moderator: Ms. Mi Kyoung Park, Governance and Public Administration Officer, UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA</p> <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Keping Yao, Senior Governance and Public Administration Expert, UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA (5 mins.) • Mr. Wai Min Kwok, Senior Governance and Public Administration Officer, Digital Government Branch, DPIDG/UN DESA (5 mins. Video presentation) • Mr. Indrek Önnik, Global Affairs Director, Government CIO Office, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Estonia (8 mins.) • Mr. Sahng Yoon Kim, Director for External Cooperation, Korea Local Information Research & Development Institute (KLID) (8 mins.) • Mr. Mpho Matsitse, Head of the Industry & Value Advisory, SAP Africa (8 mins.) • Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (8 mins.)
III. Facilitated Roundtable Discussion	
7:20-7:45 PM (25 mins.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable Discussion with the Panelists facilitated by the Moderator
IV. Q&A with Audience	
7:45-7:55 PM (10 mins.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q&A discussion to address the questions from the audience
V. Closing	
7:55-8:00 PM (5 mins.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2 mins.) - Mr. Bokyun Shim, Head of UNPOG, DPIDG/UN DESA (2 mins.)

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