



Monday 6 DECEMBER 2021

1. HIGH LEVEL EXCHANGE PANEL: Global economic recovery – where are we at? (11.00 - 12.00 CET)

The fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need to take concerted action to revive the stifled global economy and unlock growth factors in both developed and developing countries. Global economic growth was uneven even before the pandemic, as was progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Countries now have a chance to leverage the economic recovery as an opportunity towards sustainable and inclusive development.

The digital economy can play a fundamental role as an enabler of opportunities for human development and economic improvement. The importance of investing in Information and communication technologies (ICTs), and making them available to all segments of populations, is one of the lessons of the recovery. ICTs offer opportunities to both developed and developing countries, as accelerators toward high value-added information economies that can offer equitable and sustainable growth for all.

At the same time, the ongoing global digital divide risks becoming the new face of global inequality. This is a pressing challenge and closing the gap must be a top priority. Harnessing resources from multi-stakeholder partnerships can help facilitate needed investments in digital infrastructure and capacity building. Ensuring data privacy, security and rights will also be essential for the future of digital technologies, especially for meeting the needs of developing countries.

This panel will discuss how a synergetic approach to data, platform-driven services and disruptive technologies can pave the way to economic recovery and sustainable development – the factors that the post-pandemic world needs just like lungs need air. Specifically, it will reflect on reshuffling the existing order to move forward with accelerated digitalisation and have it implemented across the board, leaving no country and no one behind. Whether we will come out stronger from this unprecedented crisis depends on how effectively and comprehensively the global community will address digital challenges for more equitable and sustainable human development.

2. HIGH LEVEL EXCHANGE PANEL: Cities United: connected, green and inclusive (12.15 - 13.15 CET)



The spatial distribution of the world's population continues to change. In 2000, around 47 per cent lived in urban areas. That proportion increased to 55 per cent in 2018. The global share of the urban population is projected to rise further to 60 per cent by 2030. By then, one-third of the world's people are estimated to be living in cities with at least half a million inhabitants.

Big cities around the world face similar challenges, such as suburban sprawl, slums, economic segregation and pollution. Most of them are fraught with traffic congestion and disparate isolated residential neighbourhoods. According to the United Nations E-Government Survey 2020, most cities are underperforming when it comes to delivering online public services compared to national governments. However, there are exemplary cities transforming into “smart cities” and harnessing technology such as; artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots to improve service delivery and streamlining internal workforce management; big data and analytics to design and implement effective local government policies, and optimize urban public resources; use of Internet-of-Things to support smart applications in healthcare, transportation projects, law enforcement, emergency situations; and use of augmented and virtual reality to drastically improve urban navigation, improve driver safety, and support rescue operations; among many other applications. But there are also many other cities that are early on in their “smart” journeys or have not even started yet.

This panel will discuss the importance and lessons learned in creating sustainable smart cities; designating more green areas, sports and entertainment facilities, and Internet hot spots; deploying safe and secure intelligent transport and infrastructure management systems; and developing places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in.

3. HIGH LEVEL EXCHANGE PANEL: Creating sustainable value and inclusive society – the role of digital platforms (14.00 - 15.00 CET)

The Internet serves as the primary tool both for mass and point-to-point communication, and as such it provides the global infrastructure for the information society. Innovations based on information and communication technologies (ICTs) empower individuals to exercise their rights and provide an opportunity for institutions to mobilise collective actions, by putting megabytes of information and knowledge right at their fingertips, wherever they live, work or operate. However, connectivity is not sufficient on its own. A human-centric approach that ensures universal access, meaningful connectivity and digital transformation for sustainable development is required for fostering diverse views and the equitable consumption and distribution of information.

There is a wide-ranging consensus regarding the need to acknowledge the impact of digital technologies in the exercise of human rights, particularly in promoting the availability of open information resources for education and health purposes, respect for privacy and personal data protection and ensuring their role in promoting freedom of expression in an increasingly digital world.



For that to happen, all stakeholders from civil society, the technical community, governments, the private sector and international organizations need to cooperate to design new governance models. It is particularly critical that the private sector, operators of social networking sites, search engines, sharing economy providers, e-commerce outlets, fintechs and other platforms are accountable and transparent for user-oriented practices, to ensure effective mechanisms for users to exercise personal rights and privacy.

The panel will discuss the ways of collaborating in new platform governance models that are human-centric and inclusive; examine how anti-competitive practices may harm the digital ecosystem's ability to protect and promote user rights; discuss good practices related to enforcing privacy and freedom of expression, combating online harassment, censorship and harmful content, and ensuring a level playing field for smaller players; and discuss concrete strategies for equally distributing the benefits of the digital economy across societies and countries.

4. HIGH LEVEL EXCHANGE PANEL: How to promote inclusive and diverse innovation, investment opportunities and corporate social responsibility in digital technologies? (15.15 - 16.15 CET)

Digital transformation is revolutionising ways of doing business across all sectors and disciplines. Emerging technologies carry an enormous potential for positive change in terms of promoting resilience, sustainability and inclusion. But this requires strong awareness and capacity building efforts to meet the challenges of creating technologies that are truly inclusive and crafted to the real needs of societies.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) aims at the sustainable governance of digital technologies while respecting human rights. Its role is vital in handling the new relationship between labour and technology, namely the impending squeeze out of human jobs by automation. It is also crucial for ensuring a more transparent, balanced and fair relationship with users. Businesses need to be responsible and careful about how their digital behaviours impact employees, customers, and society as a whole. CSR performance will be increasingly relevant for investors. Neglecting it may cost a profit-making business reputational damage that will eat away at its value.

This discussion will focus on the close relationship between business growth and the sustainable development and governance of digital technologies.

5. HIGH LEVEL EXCHANGE PANEL: Building equitable employment conditions and competences for the future of work (16.30 - 17.30 CET)



With emerging technologies already impacting the global labour market and some of their practical applications and risks still to be discovered, acquiring talent, and maintaining employees competent to deal with technological developments is strategically important. Access to technologies will tend to be less of a challenge than finding the manpower able to exploit them. Talent drains are common in the digital sector, as is difficulty finding the equitable conditions to manage labour-employer relationships.

The future of work will face several changes: a shift in demand away from office support positions, machine operators and other occupations, edging towards ICT professionals; a move from more stable relationships in employment to independent, flexible or freelance employment deprived of traditional social protection benefits; a need for constant updating of skills to keep pace with evolutions in technology; a transfer of human capacities to more reflective, creative, and complex tasks rather than repetitive and labour-intensive ones.

However, the impact of these new technologies on labour markets and income distribution is not predetermined. The right policy mix and institutional arrangements can ensure that the benefits of innovation are shared broadly, which is an essential step to achieving the SDGs. Governments, as well as international organizations, should work together on an approach that facilitates the adoption and diffusion of new technologies while addressing their negative consequences.

Our daily work has become not only more dependent on digital skills, but also more mobile and less dependent on geography. This challenges us to create new forms of management and to refine the balance of remote work relationships. The so-called gig economy and its implication of unstable work conditions is a related issue. A discussion is pending on how to better address the challenge of permanent employment being increasingly substituted by temporary work, and a single employer being replaced by multiple concurrent ones, in ways that affect traditional workforce protections.

The discussion will focus on policy alternatives, from educational ones addressing early education (including STEM-focused) and constant reskilling for future employment, to ones dealing with new forms of balancing in employment relationships. The panel will reflect on policies that can help employees and society at large to manage the transition with as little disruption and as many benefits as possible.



Tuesday 7 DECEMBER 2021

6. HIGH LEVEL PLENARY: Investing in digital growth and enabling capacities – transnational and transcontinental synergies (11.45 - 12.45 CET)

Digital transformation is a complex process that carries enormous potential for human development and economic growth but is not free of challenges. A combination of factors includes but is not limited to: Micro Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) funding possibilities and adequate regulatory frameworks, digitalisation of business and industrial processes, efficient and affordable infrastructure availability, inclusive digital literacy, continuous perfecting of digital skills, and user-centric e-services governance.

The discussion will focus on ways to nurture synergy-driven digital cooperation and growth. Analysis of large volumes of data, including big data – generated from myriad transactions, production and communication processes – is accelerating knowledge and value creation across society to unforeseen levels. Data-driven innovation (DDI) refers to significant improvement of existing products, processes, organisational methods and markets emerging from this phenomenon, or the development of new ones. At the same time, we should also be aware of the need to cooperate to avoid risks arising from lack of governance mechanisms, and to ensure a use of DDI that is human-centric and respects human rights.

Emphasis will also be given to start-ups, as well as micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as they play an extremely important role in digital transformation. One of the crucial issues is funding: high-tech start-ups find it difficult to scale up capital to fully capture the growing demand for their products and services. To tackle this, the discussion should explore co-investment models that involve cooperation between domestic and foreign venture capital sponsors that support those values. This allows risk mitigation for negative impacts on users' rights, portfolio diversification in investments across jurisdictions, and fostering of new innovative business models better aligned with the exercise of users' rights as well as access to smart-funding opportunities.

7. HIGH LEVEL EXCHANGE PANEL: Governance models to promote inclusive and diverse business development – what stands in the way? (13.45 - 14.45 CET)

We all live in a digital world that we want to see as open and safe. We all wish to trust and to be trusted. How can we create a safe digital environment in which long-established and start-up businesses can grow? How do we ensure no one is left behind in the emerging digital economy? What are the good practices in self-regulation and regulation that can be leveraged to for digital businesses models to flourish? Are there particularly complex areas that need



to be addressed through regulation? What are the alternative governance models? And if we are to regulate – how to do so in a way that does not stifle innovation, but rather, fosters a diversity of businesses models, respects human rights, and promotes sustainable development?

We need to work together as a global community to reach a viable and operational consensus on these controversial issues. There is a challenge in finding the right balance between different governance mechanisms available to address these issues. It is obvious that Governments should protect their people, but this must be done in a collaborative, inclusive manner, with all stakeholders involved in co-creating a digital environment that is diverse and inclusive.

The discussion will focus on governance models that mitigate the risks of big tech concentration; fair taxation for the benefit of local economies and communities; digital platforms regulation, including the protection of privacy, ethical use of AI, and freedom of expression; data governance and users' ability to understand and control their own data; and re-use of non-personal data to build liquid and trusted data markets that will drive global economic growth.