



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

10 March 2021

Excellency,

Sequel to my letter dated 27 January 2021, circulating the preliminary Concept Note for the High-level Thematic Debate on Digital Cooperation and Connectivity, to be held on Tuesday, 27 April 2021, in the General Assembly Hall, I have the honour to enclose herewith the preliminary programme.

The High-level Thematic Debate will include an opening segment, three panel discussions, a plenary segment and a closing segment. In light of the need to urgently address the digital divide and digital cooperation to support COVID-19 adaptation and recovery strategies, Member States are encouraged to participate in the plenary segment at the Heads of State and Government or Ministerial level, via pre-recorded video statements.

The list of speakers for the plenary segment will open for inscription on Tuesday, 16 March 2021 at 10 a.m. until Thursday, 15 April 2021, at 5 p.m. For inscribing on the list of speakers, please contact the General Assembly Affairs Branch (email: [galindo@un.org](mailto:galindo@un.org) with copy to [gaspeakerslist@un.org](mailto:gaspeakerslist@un.org)).

The time limit for statements will be three minutes for individual delegations and five minutes for statements delivered on behalf of groups of States. The list of speakers will be established in accordance with established practices of the General Assembly. The provisional list of speakers, to be circulated on Monday, 19 April 2021, will be determined on a first-come, first-served basis, based on the level of representation. Time limits will be strictly implemented to allow all inscribed speakers to deliver statements. In view of the limited time available for the plenary segment, pre-recorded video statements will be played without introductions by the representatives physically present in the General Assembly Hall. Further details, including guidance for submission of the pre-recorded video statements, will be circulated separately.

For further information, your office may contact Ms. Sara Ibrahim Mohammed Al-Ahmad ([sara.alahmad@un.org](mailto:sara.alahmad@un.org)) and Mr. Mohammed Amin Shaker ([mohammed.shaker@un.org](mailto:mohammed.shaker@un.org)).

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Volkan Bozkir'.

Volkan BOZKIR

All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York



Provisional Programme  
PGA High-Level Thematic Debate  
On Digital Cooperation and Connectivity:  
Whole-of-Society Approaches to End the Digital Divide  
Tuesday 27 April, 2021



<b>10:00am-10:20am</b>	<b>Opening Segment</b>
<b>10:20am-10:25am</b>	<b>Video Presentation:</b> Global Assessment of Digital Connectivity by the UN Regional Commissions
<b>10.25am-11.00am</b>  Panel: 30 minutes Q&A: 15 minutes	<p><b>Panel 1: Ending the Digital Divide by 2030: COVID-19 Recoveries To Accelerate the Decade of Action for the SDGs</b></p> <p>Internet connectivity and digital skills are inextricably linked with more education and job opportunities, and more access to information and services. Adaptations to COVID-19's impacts are accelerating digitalization, and societies need tools to adapt to these structural changes now to thrive in the emerging digital economy. Yet, these shifts risk entrenching the inequalities that disadvantage the digitally disconnected if substantial efforts are not geared to reduce multidimensional digital divides. The transformational potential of digital connectivity for the SDGs will be best achieved when governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders work towards a common goal.</p> <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How is the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and its unequal impacts exacerbated by the digital divide?</li><li>• What are short-term, mid-term and long-term goals and actions that can mitigate capacity gaps for digital connectivity?</li><li>• What can be done to promote more effective intersectoral linkages, at national and international levels, to achieve a whole-of-society approach to end the digital divide?</li><li>• How can focused multi-stakeholder attention be prioritized to address the digital divide within COVID-19 adaptation and recovery plans, and accelerate the Decade of Implementation?</li></ul>

<p><b>11:00am-1:00pm</b></p>	<p><b>High-Level Plenary</b></p> <p>Member States are invited to focus their statements on contributions to the overall vision, goals and targets of ending the digital divide, enhancing global digital cooperation, and upscaling digital contributions to environmental action by 2030. In this regard, Member States are encouraged to describe national and regional challenges, policy responses and commitments, and announce partnerships, new multistakeholder initiatives and development cooperation.</p>
<p><b>3:00pm-3:45pm</b></p>	<p><b>Panel 2: Equitable Access and Digital Empowerment: Securing a Safe, Inclusive, Free and Open Digital Future For All</b></p> <p>The digital divide reflects and amplifies existing inequalities. The poorest and the most vulnerable in developed and developing countries alike, who are the hardest hit by the COVID-19 crisis, are also the farthest behind in terms of digital access and opportunities. Without greater, more inclusive digital cooperation and coordination, expanding digital connectivity could risk expanding inequalities between and within countries and economic sectors; enabling technology-facilitated abuse and harassment, particularly targeting women and children; and aiding the spread of disinformation and misinformation that can cause harm and divide communities.</p> <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can be done to ensure an equitable digital future for all, including protecting the vulnerable and promoting social cohesion, as called for in the UN75 Declaration?</li> <li>• Which development priorities should be pursued to ensure global equity in the ability to create jobs and capture more value in the digital economy, and how can the digital private sector support the process of building back better?</li> <li>• Which existing mechanisms and processes can be leveraging to support a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society?</li> </ul>
<p><b>3:45pm-3:50pm</b></p>	<p><b>Video Message</b></p>

<p><b>3:50pm-4.35pm</b></p> <p>Panel: 30 minutes Q&amp;A: 15 minutes</p>	<p><b>Panel 3: Greening The Digital Future: Local, Regional and Multilateral Partnership</b></p> <p>Global digital connectivity can facilitate gathering and analyzing the global data needed to achieve the SDGs, and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements on Biodiversity, Land, Climate and Pollution. Global connectivity has the potential to greatly increase resource and technology efficiencies and reduce certain kinds of pollution, but it can also lead to entirely new services that require energy and increase pollution, sometimes with novel substances. Governments, the private sector, civil society and others play an important role in determining the balance between the two, including via market incentives. Whole-of-society approaches will be key to implementing the sustainable consumption and production patterns needed to realize benefits and avoid trade-offs. They will be especially important for managing rebound effects from the increased use of digital technologies.</p> <p><u>Guiding Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we close the digital divide in line with global environmental targets, including on energy, e-waste and sustainable consumption and production?</li> <li>• How can greater digital connectivity, including access to more data, and predictive analytics, contribute urgent environmental action at all scales, including aligning international capital?</li> <li>• How can environmental sustainability be directly encoded into the platforms, algorithms, and filters of the digital economy, including applications of Artificial Intelligence?</li> <li>• What kind of partnerships and high priority collaborative actions are needed?</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.35pm-5.50pm</b></p>	<p><b>High-Level Plenary (continued)</b></p>
<p><b>5.50pm-5.55pm</b></p>	<p><b>Video Message</b></p>
<p><b>5:55pm-6:00pm</b></p>	<p><b>Closing Segment</b></p>