19 April 2021

Excellency,

Further to my letters dated 27 January 2021 and 10 March 2021 regarding 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 circulate the final programme and the list of speakers. Furthermore, in support of greater inclusivity and accessibility for digital discussions and implementation efforts, I have the honour to circulate a Supplementary Information Note ahead of the Thematic Debate to support impactful and results-oriented discussions.

To allow for greater participation in the meeting, I have decided to schedule the Thematic Debate from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Kindly note that the time limit for statements will be three minutes for individual delegations and five minutes for statements delivered on behalf of groups of States. Statements of those inscribed on the list that are not delivered by the end of the meeting will be posted on "eStatements" in the Journal of the United Nations. In this regard, delegations are encouraged to send their statements to estatements@un.org. I would like to remind delegations that the guidelines for submission of the pre-recorded statements have been circulated previously.

Regarding participation in the 'Question & Answer' section of each panel, I would like to request Delegations to kindly indicate to the focal points of this meeting, on a ranked basis, their preference for panels in which they would like to pose questions (listing their preference for 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices) as well as share the text of their questions (no longer than 100 words per question). Due to time constraints, preference will be given to questions from delegations speaking on behalf of regional groups. Delegations are kindly requested to submit these proposed questions by 5.00pm on Wednesday, 21 April 2021.

For further information on the meeting, your office may contact my Advisers, Ms. Sara Ibrahim Al-Ahmad (sara.alahmad@un.org) and Mr. Mohammed Amin Mohammed Shaker (mohammed.shaker@un.org).

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

Volkan BOZKIR

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

10:00am-10:25am	**Opening Segment** ▪ H.E. Mr. Volkan BOZKIR, President of the General Assembly. ▪ H.E. Mr. Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council. ▪ Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations. ▪ H.M. Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, United Nations Secretary General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development. ▪ Ms. Manjeet Kripalani, Executive Director of "Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations".
10:25am-10.30am	**Video Presentation:** Global Assessment of Digital Cooperation and Connectivity by the United Nations Regional Commissions
10.30am-10.40am	**Mutli-stakeholder Spotlight**
10.40am-11.30am Panel: 35 minutes Q&A: 15 minutes	**Panel 1: Ending the Digital Divide by 2030: COVID-19 Recoveries To Accelerate the Decade of Action** 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 and thrive to contend with these structural changes now. Yet, these shifts risk entrenching the inequalities that disadvantage the digitally disconnected if substantial efforts are not geared to reduce the digital divide. 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. Guiding Questions 1. What are short-term, mid-term and long-term goals and actions that can mitigate capacity gaps for digital connectivity? 2. 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? 3. 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? Speakers - Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director of Telecommunication Development Bureau, International Telecommunications Union. - Mr. Joshua Setipa, Managing Director of the United Nations Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries. - Mr. John Frank, Microsoft Vice President, United Nations Affairs. - Ms. Eleanor Sarpong, Deputy Director and Policy Lead, Alliance for Affordable Internet. - Mr. Rodney Taylor, Secretary General, Caribbean Telecommunications Union. - Moderator: Ms. Anriette Esterhuysen, Chair of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group, Internet Governance Forum.
11:30am-1:00pm	**High-Level Plenary** 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.
3:00pm-3:10pm	**Multi-stakeholder Spotlight**
3:10pm-4:00pm Panel: 35 minutes Q&A: 15 minutes	**Panel 2: Equitable Access and Digital Empowerment: Securing a Safe, Inclusive, Free and Open Digital Future For All** 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. Guiding Questions 1. 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? 2. 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? 3. Which existing mechanisms and processes can be leveraged to support a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society? Speakers ▪ Ms. Maria-Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and Officer in Charge, Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Technology. ▪ Mr. Javier Villamizar, Operating Partner, SoftBank Vision Fund. ▪ Ms. Isabelle Durant, Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). ▪ Ms. Maria Grazia Panunzi, President of AIDOS International, Coordinator of the Civil Society 20 (C20) Gender Working Group. ▪ Ms. Solinn Lim, Oxfam Cambodia, Country Director. ○ Moderator: Mr. José Ramón López-Portillo, 10 Member Group, Technology Facilitation Mechanism.
4:00pm-4:10pm	**Multi-stakeholder Spotlight**
4:10pm-5.00pm Panel: 35 minutes Q&A: 15 minutes	**Panel 3: Greening The Digital Future: Local, Regional and Multilateral Partnership** 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. Guiding Questions: 1. How can we close the digital divide in line with global environmental targets, including on energy, e-waste and sustainable consumption and production? 2. How can greater digital connectivity, including access to more data, and predictive analytics, contribute to urgent environmental action at all scales, including aligning international capital? 3. How can environmental sustainability be directly encoded into the platforms, algorithms, and filters of the digital economy, including applications of Artificial Intelligence? Speakers ▪ Ms. Damilola Ogunbiyi, CEO and Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All, Co-Chair of UN-Energy. ▪ Mr. Luis Neves, CEO, Global Enabling Sustainability Initiative. ▪ Dr. Eliane Ubalijoro, Executive Director, Sustainability in the Digital Age. ▪ Mr. Maximo Torero, Chief Economist, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). ▪ Mr. Sonam P. Wangdi, Chair of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group on Climate Change. o Moderator: Ms. Rose Mwebaza , Director, UN Climate Technology Center and Network (CTCN).
5.00pm-6.55pm	**High-Level Plenary** (continued)
6:55pm-7:00pm	**Closing Segment** • H.E. Mr. Volkan BOZKIR, President of the General Assembly

High-level Thematic Debate on Digital Cooperation and Connectivity

LIST OF SPEAKERS

Tuesday, 27 April 2021, 10:00 AM
General Assembly Hall

1. MALAWI (VP)
   (on behalf of Least Developed
   Countries)
2. GUYANA (HG)
3. NORTH MACEDONIA (HG)
4. UKRAINE (DPM)
5. FINLAND (M)
6. RUSSIAN FEDERATION (M)
7. INDIA (M)
8. SINGAPORE (M)
9. ESTONIA (M)
10. URUGUAY (M)
11. PAKISTAN (M)
12. COLOMBIA (M)
13. LATVIA (M)
14. PANAMA (M)
15. DENMARK (M)
16. CANADA (M)
17. ITALY (M)
18. CUBA (M)
19. SWEDEN (M)
20. HUNGARY (M)
21. SWITZERLAND (M)
22. GERMANY (M)
23. KENYA (M)
24. VIET NAM (M)
25. SLOVENIA (M)
26. ALGERIA (M)
27. AUSTRALIA (M)
28. REPUBLIC OF KOREA (M)
29. BRAZIL (M)
30. QATAR (M)
31. SUDAN (M)
32. PORTUGAL (M)
33. MALTA (M)
34. POLAND (VM)
35. LITHUANIA (VM)

36. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (VM)
37. PERU (VM)
38. AFGHANISTAN (VM)
39. PARAGUAY (VM)
40. UNITED KINGDOM (VM)
41. SLOVAKIA (VM)
42. CZECH REPUBLIC (VM)
43. BULGARIA (VM)
44. IRELAND (VM)
45. NETHERLANDS (VM)
46. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (HL)
47. SRI LANKA (HL)
48. ARGENTINA (HL)
49. EL SALVADOR (HL)
50. UNITED STATES (HL)
51. INDONESIA
    (on behalf of the Co-Chairs of
    the STI Forum)
52. EUROPEAN UNION
53. TURKEY
54. SAINT LUCIA
55. JAMAICA
56. SAUDI ARABIA
57. MEXICO
58. IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF)
59. ECUADOR
60. MOROCCO
61. AUSTRIA
62. CHILE
63. CONGO
64. NEPAL
65. HOLY SEE (M)

**High-level Thematic Debate on Digital Cooperation
and Connectivity
Whole-of-Society Approaches to End the Digital Divide**

Supplementary Information Note

In preparation for the High-Level Thematic Debate on 27 April 2021 convened by H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the United Nations General Assembly, and in support of more inclusive global deliberations and action on digital issues, this Information Note outlines key action areas and multistakeholder partnerships and initiatives, including recommendations from the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, to support impactful and results-oriented discussions, and facilitate upscaling implementation efforts relating to ensuring global digital connectivity, and greater cooperation for equitable and environmentally sustainable digitalization by 2030.

Global Digital Connectivity by 2030

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) September 2020 report Connecting Humanity estimates that US$ 428 billion is required to connect 90% of the remaining 3 billion people aged ten years and above to broadband Internet by 2030, and US$ 100 billion for Africa alone. It is an ambitious goal and a major infrastructure investment challenge. Achieving it will require creating enabling policy and regulatory frameworks, upscaling basic digital skills and local content at both the global and regional levels and mobilizing unprecedented levels of financing needed to extend networks to underserved communities.

Launched in June 2020, the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation outlines how the international community – Member States, the private sector, civil society, the technical community, and all other stakeholders – should cooperate to achieve universal connectivity and harness the benefits of digital technology while mitigating its challenges. UN-system entities, in partnership with ITU, are leading a number of ongoing and upcoming initiatives aimed at addressing the various 'pain points' along the road to getting the remaining half of the world connected. The Office of the Envoy on Technology works to coordinate and support ongoing multistakeholder consultations and efforts in this regard. ITU, together with UNDP and UNICEF, and the stakeholders, champions and constituencies of the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation will lead related, multi-stakeholder processes and implementation efforts, including through the Roadmap's Working Groups related to Universal Connectivity and Capacity Building in the following areas:

Universal Connectivity

- Establishing a baseline of digital connectivity that individuals need to access the online space, as well as a definition of "affordability", including universal targets and metrics.

- Convening a global group of investors and financing and community experts to consider the development of a financing platform and find other new models for investment in connectivity, including hard-to-reach and rural areas.

- Promoting new and potentially transformative models to accelerate connectivity, such as the global Giga Initiative, which aims to connect every school in the world to the internet.

- Promoting the development of enabling regulatory environments for smaller-scale Internet providers, along with local and regional connectivity assessments.

- Accelerating discussions on connectivity as part of emergency preparedness, responses and aid, including working through the inter-agency Emergency Telecommunications Cluster and Connect2Recover.

- Mapping on capacity building initiatives within and outside the UN.

- Establishing a multistakeholder network to provide offering on digital capacity building to countries and the community at large.

Global Cooperation for Equitable Digitalization

Harnessing the potential of accelerated digitalization, remote work and education, e-commerce and the virtual delivery of essential services to equitably benefit whole-of-societies, and not just the few, requires creative thinking and policy experimentation. It also calls for greater global and regional multi-stakeholder cooperation to avoid widening the income gap, steer away from other emerging inequalities such as those based on gender or age and promote equitable access to technology solutions for the SDGs.

In this vein, it is imperative to upscale digital skills development, including through Technical Vocational Education and Training, that can contribute to socio-economic development, and support workers as economies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic's impacts. This must include analyzing the skills needed across sectors for the short and long-term future, through social dialogue and direct interaction with stakeholders. 8.8% of working hours have been lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs. The development of digital labour platforms can provide workers with income-generating opportunities and benefits from flexible work arrangements, including for women, persons with disabilities, young people and migrant workers. In order to effectively leverage digital cooperation and new technologies, support changing industries and address structural inequalities, investments in digital skills will be needed. This is particularly true for youth, who are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption to education and labour markets, and yet at 1.8 billion people comprise the world's largest single population group, 90% of whom are in developing countries. Upscaled digital governance will also be vital to harness the benefits of the emerging technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Given the tendency towards market concentration, *competition policy frameworks* need to be adapted to provide for competitive and contestable markets in the digital era. Countries also need to rethink how *taxation* rights should be allocated in a data-driven, digital economy to address the current mismatch between where profits are taxed and where and how value is created. New *data policies* are also needed to assign ownership and control over data; build consumer trust and protect data privacy, regulate cross-border data flows, and build relevant skills and capabilities for harnessing digital data for development. *Robust social safety nets and support for lifelong learning* will be needed for workers in industries facing digital disruption to ease the transition in labour markets. Various forms of bias, abuse and harassment along gender, racial and other divides have been identified as unintended consequences of the deployment of digital technologies. *Normative frameworks and specific policy instruments* will have to be developed to address them. The United Nations will need to play a central role in providing relevant forums that can ensure inclusive dialogue among all member States and mobilize more development cooperation, including through regional and North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation. In this context, it is necessary

to make effective use of existing mechanisms while exploring innovative and creative new pathways and partnerships. Examples of forums that could be better harnessed in this context include:

- United Nations Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) including its Inter-Agency Task Team, and the annual global multi-stakeholder STI Forum
- United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development
- United Nations Group on the Information Society
- The Internet Governance Forum
- United Nations Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters.
- UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy
- The Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries
- UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy
- UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy
- The UNCTAD-led eTrade for all initiative
- UNESCO's initiative to Elaborate Recommendations on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.
- The Reskilling Revolution initiative to provide one billion people with better education, skills and jobs by 2030.
- The Generation Unlimited partnership to prepare the largest generation of young people in history for the Future of Work.
- The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative, and working group on establishing a Pacific Internet exchange point.
- The UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), a subsidiary, intergovernmental body of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), for trade facilitation recommendations and electronic business standards.
- ESCWA's Proposed Arab Digital Agenda: Preliminary Framework for the Arab Information and Communication Technology Strategy for Sustainable Development and Arab e-Government Directors meetings.
- The Africa Communication and Information Platform for Health and Economic Action (ACIP), a mobile-based tool for two-way information and communication between citizens and governments.
- The Digital agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2022) – a platform that aims to catalyze regional cooperation efforts on digital matters.
- Intergovernmental work organized by other UN agencies, such as ILO, ITU, UN DESA and all the UN Regional Economic Commissions.

Environmentally Sustainable Digital Transformation

Data, digital technologies and related innovations are sweeping the planet at an exponential rate with the potential to unleash major structural transformations in the global economy. One of the urgent priorities is to embed and accelerate environmental sustainability through new digital channels. Digital information and communication technologies (ICT) can enable a 20 percent reduction of global CO_2 emissions by 2030 when applied to five sectors: mobility, manufacturing, agriculture, energy, and buildings. ICT solutions can help cut nearly 10 times more CO2e than they emit. Digital technologies and design can help reduce the embodied materials in goods by 90% - through efficiency and by turning products into services in a circular economy, and thereby reduce

impact of material extraction on biodiversity and the environment. Digital technologies can help reduce waste & detoxify supply chains by a factor of 10-100X. There are over 150 environmental applications of artificial intelligence (AI) in agriculture, energy, transport, and water that could save up to 4% of global CO2 emissions by 2030.

An Action Agenda for Digitalizing and Scaling Environmental Sustainability

Through multilateral and multistakeholder digital cooperation we can close the digital divide, improve energy access and encode environmental sustainability across the platforms, algorithms and filters of the digital economy. Technology can help us address systemic threats such as COVID-19, climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and pollution – but only if we build the infrastructure, standards, digital algorithms and governance framework with this strategic intent. Multilateral and multistakeholder cooperation around a common vision and Action Agenda is key. Main actions to achieve a sustainable digital transformation include:

- Establishing an acceleration plan for digitalizing environmental sustainability, including immediate priorities and partnerships covering a 2-3 year perspective, to define and influence the digital investments, standards and infrastructure needed to close the digital divide in an environmentally sound manner while also encouraging diverse voices to contribute to innovative and impactful applications.
- Collecting and synthesizing existing research, operationalising experience and using cases on how digital technologies can accelerate environmental sustainability through a multistakeholder process.
- Helping unite various environmental sustainability and digitalization tracks under a common framework and federation umbrella to improve coordination, coherence and impact, and offer a space to unite some flagship initiatives as well as share lessons learned.
- Mobilizing the scientific community and prioritizing a research agenda. The capacity of the scientific community to mobilize in successfully addressing urgent and clearly-defined objectives through unprecedented sharing of ideas and data, across the public-private interface has been exemplified by its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A similar sense of urgency should be sought in mobilizing a response to the challenge of the digital sustainability agenda, and in applying the community's digital toolkits to address outstanding problems as part of a major cross-sectoral effort.

To advance these goals, UNEP, UNDP, the International Science Council, the German Environment Agency, the Kenyan Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Future Earth and Sustainability in the Digital Age have joined forces as co-champions to launch the Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability (CODES). The co-champions will lead a multi-stakeholder process and convene a series of events to firmly anchor environmental sustainability needs within the Secretary-General's Digital Cooperation Roadmap. They will also work with several related multistakeholder environmental sustainability and digitalization initiatives including:

- One Planet Programme on Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP)
- Greening the Blue Initiative: Promoting Sustainable management practices in the UN system
- The Inter-agency Group on Tackling E-waste
- Focus Group on Environmental Efficiency for Artificial Intelligence and other Emerging Technologies (FG-AI4EE)
- Resilience Frontiers Initiative

- Green Growth Knowledge Platform
- Policy Network on Environment and Digitalization of the Internet Governance Forum
- UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism's on-line platform, 2030Connect, for access to sustainable technologies for all countries
- Global initiatives for energy access such, as the 2021 High Level Dialogue on Energy
- Sustainable Digital Financial Alliance
- Global Enabling Sustainability Initiative (GeSI)
- UNEP's new digital transformation for the environment programme, the Global Environmental Data Strategy, World Environment Situation Room and the Science-Policy Business Forum.