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Too long; didn't read

Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, "The Age of digital interdependence"

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Introduction

The United Nations High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation released its 47-page report *The Age of Interdependence* on 10 June. This is a very short summary aimed to help time-poor readers understand the main points of the report. The full report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, *The Age of digital interdependence*, is available at:

<https://digitalcooperation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/DigitalCooperation-report-for-web.pdf>

The introduction of the report contextualises the reasons for the panel and its report:

- Digital technologies are changing and touching every part of our lives.
- While digital technologies are improving our lives in many ways, they also pose significant risks.
- The panel was asked to look at ways digital technologies can help achieve the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Around half of the world's population still do not have access to the Internet.
- The speed of digital development is getting faster all the time.
- We need to act now to find better ways of managing digital governance
- Digital governance can benefit from utilizing the best of both multilateral and multistakeholder processes.

Declaration of Digital Interdependence

The report **invites all stakeholders to commit to a Declaration of Digital Interdependence:**

Humanity is still in the foothills of the digital age.

The peaks are yet uncharted, and their promise still untold. But the risks of losing our foothold are apparent: dangerous adventurism among states, exploitative behaviour by companies, regulation that stifles innovation and trade, and an unforgivable failure to realise vast potential for advancing human development.

How we manage the opportunities and risks of rapid technological change will profoundly impact our future and the future of the planet.

We believe that our aspirations and vulnerabilities are deeply interconnected and interdependent; that no one individual, institution, corporation or government alone can or should manage digital developments; and that it is essential that we work through our differences in order to shape our common digital future.

We declare our commitment to building on our shared values and collaborating in new ways to realise a vision of humanity's future in which affordable and accessible digital technologies are used to enable economic growth and social opportunity, lessen inequality, enhance peace and security, promote environmental sustainability, preserve human agency, advance human rights and meet human needs.

Possible digital cooperation architectures

The panel presents three possible architectures that could contribute to ongoing discussions on digital cooperation:

1. Internet Governance Forum Plus

- Would work on policies and norms of direct interest to stakeholder communities.
- To consist of:
 - Advisory group
 - Cooperation accelerator
 - Policy incubator
 - Observatory
 - Help desk
- To have a dedicated IGF Trust Fund.

2. Distributed co-governance architecture (“COGOV”)

- Build on existing mechanisms and fill any gaps with new mechanisms using a self-forming ‘horizontal’ network approach (e.g. IETF, ICANN).
- Decouples the design of digital norms from their implementation and enforcement.
- Three functional elements:
 - Digital cooperation networks
 - Network support platforms
 - Network of networks

3. Digital commons architecture

- Governments, civil society and business to work together to ensure digital technologies promote the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals
- Multi-stakeholder tracks would discuss emerging issues, then come together at an annual meeting.

Underpinning values

The panel identified nine values that should shape the development of digital cooperation:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Inclusiveness | 4. Human flourishing | 7. Accessibility |
| 2. Respect | 5. Transparency | 8. Sustainability |
| 3. Human-centeredness | 6. Collaboration | 9. Harmony |

Recommendations

1. Create an **inclusive digital economy**

- Provide every adult with **affordable access** to digital networks and digitally-enabled finance and health services by 2030.
- A broad, multi-stakeholder alliance, involving the UN, to create a **platform for sharing “digital public goods”**, engaging talent and pooling data sets in areas related to attaining the SDGs.
- Support full **digital inclusion for women and marginalized groups**; international institutions to focus on women and inclusive technology in research.
- Develop **metrics on digital inclusiveness**, including **gender-disaggregated data**, for worldwide use and reporting.

2. Strengthen **human and institutional capacity**

- Establishing **regional and global digital help desks** to help governments, civil society and the private sector understand digital issues and build capacity to steer their social and economic impacts.

3. Protect **human rights and human agency**

- UN Secretary-General to conduct a **UN agencies-wide review** of how existing international human rights accords and standards apply to digital technologies. All stakeholders should be encouraged to provide input.
- **Social media companies** to respond to concerns about existing or potential **human rights violations** around the world, in consultation with governments, civil society and human rights experts.
- Engage multiple stakeholders to develop ethical standards for the design and application of **accountable and non-biased AI systems**.

4. Ensure **digital trust, security and stability**

- Develop a **Global Commitment on Digital Trust and Security** to shape a shared vision, attributes of **digital stability** and norms for **responsible uses** of technology, as well as propose **priorities for action**.

5. Update mechanisms for **global digital cooperation**

- UN Secretary-General to:
 - Hold an open **consultation process to create up-to-date mechanisms for global digital cooperation** with three architecture options (described earlier in summary) as a starting point:
 - Internet Governance Forum Plus
 - Distributed co-governance architecture
 - Digital commons architecture
 - May involve the appointment of a **Technology Envoy**
- Support a new, **multi-stakeholder, “systems” approach for regulation** that is adaptive, agile, inclusive and fit for purpose.