MINISTRY OF DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION AND AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Proceedings

Kazakhstan National Round Table Consultations on Digital Public Services for SMEs

in support of the Asia Pacific Information superhighway (APIS) Action Plan 2022-2026

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Astana, Kazakhstan

National Roundtable was organized by the government of Kazakhstan with the support from ESCAP and the Russian Federation as per the agenda. Participating representatives were national policymakers, C-level management of quasi-state companies, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), academia, international organizations and non-profit alliances.

Welcome and closing remarks and special remarks were delivered by **Ms. Ainur Yussupova**, Chairman of the Public Services Committee, Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry, Kazakhstan, and **Ms. Tiziana Bonapace**, Director of IDD, ESCAP covered achievements, current challenges in developing digital government services, and the areas of potential for possible cooperation in the region. **Mr. Alibek Sultangazin**, National ICT and Development Consultant, ESCAP (Kazakhstan) moderated the round table consultations, in a hybrid format.

The main statement points, presentations and workshop recommendations are reflected in these proceedings.

1. **Ms. Ainur Yussupova** in her welcoming remarks highlighted, that Kazakhstan plans to further develop accessibility and quality of digital public services (DPS), using accumulated experience and advanced technologies. She also highlighted the importance of the ESCAP led Project[1] and emphasized the need to develop further cooperation on the digital track in the Asia-Pacific region.
2. **Ms. Tiziana Bonapace,** in her special remarks emphasized the importance of digital innovation for creating new business opportunities and highlighted the challenges SMEs in the Asia-Pacific region face in adopting digital technologies. DPS are crucial for helping SMEs remain competitive and provide support in developing digital literacy, infrastructure, technology, and data interoperability. Regional cooperation enhances the quality and

[1] In 2024, the UN ESCAP with support from the Russian Federation, launched a two-year project to enhance policies and digital platforms for delivering DPS for SMEs in North and Central Asia, with a focus on women entrepreneurs. The project includes a Report summarizing experiences from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, based on interviews and surveys with SMEs associations and government representatives, and has held consecutive events on the progress in Bishkek, Astana and Tashkent.

accessibility of digital public services, fostering a cohesive and competitive economic environment for SMEs.

3. **Mr. Zorikto Gomboin**, authorized representative of the Digital Administration of the Russian Federation and the Vice Chair of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (APIS) Working Group 2 on Digital Technologies and Applications (Russian Federation), in his special remarks presented the methodology for developing DPS provision systems, including examining available services, analyzing stakeholder opinions to identify SME needs and priorities, and studying international best practices. Key insights were drawn from the APIS Working Paper Series on digital public services in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Additionally, he referenced to methodology of the foresight workshop of ESCAP on the future of the transforming DPS from vision to reality in the region, which is published as an APIS working paper series, available on the event page.
4. **Mr. Alibek Sultangazin**, National ICT and Development Consultant, ESCAP (Kazakhstan), outlined the current state of digital public services, emphasizing smartphone accessibility, proactive services, and the integration of AI-driven solutions. Mr. Sultangazin provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of DPS for SMEs in Kazakhstan. He highlighted significant advancements in smartphone accessibility, proactive service delivery, digitalization of essential documents, enabling seamless transactions through QR signatures and biometric identification. Further examples included AI-powered chatbots that assist entrepreneurs in navigating complex business regulations, selecting necessary documentation, and providing real-time recommendations for state support measures. These innovations align with Kazakhstan's goal of fostering a business-friendly environment by simplifying interactions between government bodies and SMEs. Moreover, the findings also showcased best practices from Kazakhstan's digital transformation journey. Notable examples included the implementation of the "One Window" principle for government-to-business (G2B) services. Additionally, Mr. Sultangazin underscored the importance of lifecycle-based service delivery, where digital platforms guide entrepreneurs through every stage of their business journey—from registration and scaling up to adaptation and rebranding. This approach ensures that SMEs receive tailored support at critical junctures, empowering them to thrive in competitive markets. The presentation concluded by reiterating Kazakhstan's commitment to leveraging technology for inclusive growth, positioning the country as a regional leader in digital public service innovation.
5. **Mr. Talgat Amanbayev,** Chief Information Officer (CIO) of Astana International Financial Centre Authority emphasized the transformative role of digital public services in fostering a conducive business ecosystem. Drawing from his extensive experience in spearheading digital transformation initiatives within financial and regulatory frameworks, Mr. Amanbayev highlighted the critical importance of integrating advanced technologies to streamline processes and enhance accessibility for entrepreneurs. He underscored the significance of secure and efficient digital platforms in facilitating cross-border trade, investment

opportunities, and financial inclusion, particularly for women entrepreneurs and underserved communities. His insights were enriched by real-world examples from AIFC's operations, where blockchain technology and AI-driven analytics are employed to ensure transparency, security, and compliance while minimizing operational costs. Furthermore, Mr. Amanbayev discussed the potential challenges ahead, including cybersecurity threats, data privacy concerns, and the need for continuous upskilling of stakeholders to adapt to rapidly evolving technological landscapes. He advocated collaborative efforts between governments, private sector players, and international organizations like ESCAP to develop harmonized regional frameworks that promote interoperability and knowledge sharing. In conclusion, Mr. Amanbayev reiterated the importance of adopting a forward-thinking approach to digital public services, one that anticipates future trends and leverages emerging technologies to drive sustainable economic growth. His contributions to the roundtable provided valuable perspectives on aligning national strategies with global best practices, positioning Kazakhstan as a leader in digital innovation within North and Central Asia.

6. **Ms. Antonina Buts**, Acting Registrar of Companies at the Astana Financial Services Authority (AFSA), delivered a presentation on the Digital Resident Project during the roundtable consultation. Her session highlighted AFSA's pivotal role in positioning the AIFC as a global hub for business and finance, connecting economies across Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), West China, Mongolia, the Middle East, and Europe. Ms. Buts emphasized the transformative impact of the platform in streamlining regulatory processes and fostering an efficient, transparent, and business-friendly environment for SMEs. Ms. Buts provided a detailed overview of the functionalities focusing on its automation capabilities. She outlined the end-to-end digital company registration process, which includes online Know Your Customer (KYC) verification, automated generation of Business Identification Numbers (BINs), issuance of certificates of incorporation, and real-time updates to the Public Register and state databases. This seamless integration dramatically reduces the processing time from weeks to minutes. The presentation also covered event-driven filings and annual report submissions, showcasing how the platform automates compliance-related tasks. These features ensure that SMEs can focus on their core operations without being burdened by administrative complexities. Ms. Buts underscored the platform's ability to detect red flags, disqualified directors, and sensitive jurisdictions, thereby enhancing regulatory oversight and mitigating risks. In conclusion, Ms. Buts reiterated the importance of leveraging digital innovation to enhance the accessibility and efficiency of public services for SMEs. Her presentation underscored the potential of the Digital Resident platform to serve as a model for regional and global digital transformation efforts, contributing to Kazakhstan's leadership in advancing inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
7. **Ms. Sholpan Abirova**, Managing Director of Kazpost, highlighted the pivotal role of company's extensive network in enhancing access to financial and public services for SMEs across Kazakhstan. She noted on key initiatives such as partnerships with microfinance

organizations, government agencies, and private sector players to deliver critical services like loan disbursement, pension payments, utility bill payments, and document verification. Ms. Abirova once again confirmed Kazpost's ongoing digital transformation efforts, which aim to modernize traditional postal services and integrate advanced technologies into everyday operations, transforming its branches into one-stop service hubs that cater to both individual citizens and businesses.

8. **Mr. Ruslan Yensebayev**, Counsellor to the Chairman of the Management Board of Bank CenterCredit, focused on the role of innovative banking solutions. Drawing from his extensive expertise in banking-as-a-service (BaaS) products and his active engagement with businesses, Mr. Yensebayev began by outlining the strategic initiatives undertaken by Bank CenterCredit to enhance financial inclusion and accessibility for SMEs. He emphasized the importance of BaaS as a transformative model that enables banks to offer tailored financial products and services through digital platforms. This approach not only simplifies access to credit, payments, and treasury management but also fosters collaboration between traditional financial institutions and fintech companies. In addition, Mr. Yensebayev shared his vision for the future of digital banking in Central Asia, emphasizing the need for customer-centric solutions that cater to the diverse needs of SMEs. He highlighted ongoing efforts by Bank CenterCredit to develop user-friendly digital tools that enable entrepreneurs to manage their finances, access real-time insights, and navigate regulatory requirements with ease. These innovations align with Kazakhstan's broader goals of fostering a business-friendly environment and positioning the country as a regional leader in financial technology.
9. **Ms. Aida Alzhanova**, Chairperson of the public fund "Adam Damu," highlighted on a critical role of DPS in advancing women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in Kazakhstan. Drawing upon her extensive expertise as an international gender expert she highlighted the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the region, including limited access to financial resources, regulatory barriers, and underrepresentation in decision-making processes. She underscored how DPS can address these disparities by streamlining administrative procedures, enabling online access to credit and state support programs, and fostering a more equitable business environment.
10. **Ms. Aziza Shuzheyeva**, Chairman of the Board of TechnoWomen, on the challenges SMEs face due to legislative and policy-making frameworks that often hinder their growth. Drawing from her extensive experience as an entrepreneur and business consultant, Ms. Shuzheyeva highlighted the disconnect between well-intentioned policies and their real-world applicability. Overly complex compliance requirements and rigid bureaucratic procedures can stifle innovation and discourage SMEs from leveraging available digital tools. She stressed the importance of adopting a bottom-up approach in policymaking, involving business and other stakeholders to ensure regulations are practical and relevant.
11. **Mr. Batyrbek Umarov**, President of Blockchain KZ Association, delivered a concise yet impactful speech drawing from his extensive experience in driving technological

advancements and promoting entrepreneurship, and emphasizing the need for policies and digital tools that empower businesses to thrive in a rapidly evolving economic landscape. He stressed that while innovation offers immense opportunities, its successful implementation depends on clear regulations, accessible platforms, and widespread digital literacy. His insights were informed by his work in advocating for forward-thinking approaches to business development and his commitment to positioning Kazakhstan as a regional leader in fostering entrepreneurship. Since many technologies are currently seamless and restricted by the laws of a specific country, Mr. Umarov raised the issue of the need for cross-country platform integration (interoperability), describing the prospects for the recognition of documents and platforms between the parties.

12. **Mr. Andrew Beklemishev**, Chairman of the Social Council of MDDIAI RK, Vice-President in CIS Region at the International Data Corporation (IDC), emphasized the critical importance of aligning technological advancements with the needs of SMEs to ensure that digital public services are not only innovative but also practical and accessible. He underscored the need for a data-driven approach to policymaking, where insights from market research and industry analysis guide the development of platforms that address real-world challenges faced by entrepreneurs. He further elaborated on the importance of fostering collaboration between governments, technology providers, and SMEs to create an ecosystem that supports innovation and scalability. Mr. Beklemishev stressed that while Kazakhstan has made significant strides in digital transformation and the Kazakhtstan's digital public services for citizens are well developed, and its not the same for SMEs. Sustained State efforts are needed to ensure that SMEs can fully benefit from these advancements. This includes addressing gaps in digital literacy, infrastructure, and access to funding, particularly in underserved regions. In conclusion, Mr. Beklemishev called for a proactive and inclusive approach to digital public services, one that prioritizes accessibility, adaptability, and sustainability.
13. **Mr. Rustem Bigari**, CEO of the Digital Government Support Centre (DGSC), delivered a comprehensive and forward-looking speech outlining the DGSC's vision of transforming traditional bureaucratic processes into seamless, automated systems that cater to businesses at every stage of their lifecycle—from registration and growth to adaptation and renewal. He emphasized the importance of adopting a proactive approach through AI-driven solutions, such as automated business plan generation, one-click licensing, and real-time risk management systems. These innovations aim to reduce administrative burdens, eliminate paper-based workflows, and provide entrepreneurs with tailored support throughout their journey. He further elaborated on the practical outcomes of implementing scoring models and risk management systems, which streamline state support measures and inspections while ensuring transparency and predictability. In conclusion, Mr. Bigari reiterated the importance of aligning digital public services with the evolving needs of SMEs to drive sustainable economic growth. His contributions underscored Kazakhstan's commitment to leading

regional efforts in digital inclusion and positioning itself as a hub for innovation in public service delivery.

14. **Ms. Ekaterina Genkina**, International Change Management Expert, emphasized the need for forward-looking plans that align with the changing needs of businesses. She highlighted that while technologies offer great opportunities, their successful implementation depends on the quality of innovation adoption, the application of a comprehensive approach, and a focus on increasing engagement, awareness, and digital literacy. Her experience in stakeholder engagement and cross-sectoral partnerships provided valuable context for developing practical strategies that address the real challenges faced by SMEs. In conclusion, Ms. Genkina called for more active efforts to bridge gaps in digital inclusivity and ensure equal access to resources for all entrepreneurs. Her contribution to the roundtable underscored the importance of using foresight methodologies to predict future trends and position Kazakhstan as a leader in ensuring sustainable economic development through digital innovations.
15. **Ms. Assem Bolatzhan**, President of Women in Tech (Kazakhstan), delivered an insightful presentation on empowering women entrepreneurs and fostering inclusive economic growth in Kazakhstan. Drawing upon her extensive experience in promoting gender equality, digital literacy, and innovation, Ms. Bolatzhan highlighted the transformative potential of technology in bridging gaps and creating opportunities for women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). She emphasized the importance of tailored digital solutions that address the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, particularly in accessing resources, funding, and networks. She shared insights from Women in Tech Kazakhstan's upcoming initiative, developed in collaboration with the United Nations APCICT's flagship "Women in STEM Leadership Programme" (WiFI), targeted to equip women with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the digital economy. In conclusion, Ms. Bolatzhan called for greater efforts to integrate gender perspectives into the design and delivery of digital public services, ensuring equitable access for all entrepreneurs. Her contributions to the roundtable provided valuable perspectives on leveraging technology to drive sustainable development and position Kazakhstan as a leader in fostering women's participation in the digital economy.
16. **Ms. Aida Karazhanova**, Economic Affairs Officer of the ICT and Development Section, IDD, ESCAP provided an overview and concluded the round table discussions in Kazakhstan. She highlighted the application of the interactive digital foresight methodology for DPS for SMEs context, utilizing the visualization method through the future triangle and the use of multi-level causal layered analysis (CLA) to assess challenges and improve digital government services for SMEs. The use of this methodology formed the basis for analyzing and solving problems and presenting future scenarios for DPS ecosystems in North and Central Asia. She outlined the main components of CLA, explaining how these layers help "unpack" surface perceptions, systemic barriers, and cultural narratives. This approach allows stakeholders to identify gaps in existing systems and prioritize improvements. She emphasized the transformative

potential of changing cultural narratives and adopting forward-looking worldviews that embrace technology as a means of implementation. She also discussed the importance of data analytics in promoting evidence-based decision-making with tools such as risk management systems and automated assessment mechanisms, contributing to transparency and efficiency. The presentation included examples from national discussions in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (reflected in the respective reports), demonstrating how CLA helped stakeholders identify priorities such as simplifying the regulatory framework and enhancing digital literacy. The briefed on the preferred adaptive scenario in national discussions, which leads towards a vision of an adaptive, AI-driven DPS ecosystem that ensures accessibility, transparency, and inclusiveness for SMEs.

Ms. Karazhanova of ESCAP, wrapped up discussions that led to the following **recommendations of the round table consultations of 5 March 2025**:

1. Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations, and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MDDIAI RK), in collaboration with relevant bodies, to consider consolidating all digital public services (DPS) and necessary state support measures for businesses under the "one-stop-shop" (one window) principle.

2. Project Team to develop a methodology for assessing the quality and effectiveness of Digital Public Services (DPS) for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) (digital maturity matrix), including the development of a digital product in the form of a digital business card, accounting for the work of women's cooperatives.

3. MDDIAI RK, together with the ESCAP secretariat, to consider creating an expert group on the development of DPS, which could cover:

- Exchange of experience in creating and developing digital government service platforms.
- Consideration of the best regional and international practices.
- Discussion of innovations and experiences in implementing new and emerging technologies in the provision of DPS.
- Creation and maintenance of a knowledge base on DPS and DPS platforms available to entrepreneurs in the region.
- Discussion of opportunities and barriers for legally significant cross-border exchange of DPS system results.

4. Countries of the North and Central Asia region harmonize approaches to the development of DPS with a vision of legally and technically compatible and integrated e-government systems in the region.

Moderator and Notetaker: Mr. Alibek Sultangazin, National Consultant on ICT and Development, ESCAP (Kazakhstan)