Second Draft

Ad-Hoc Working Group
meetings to review in a transparent manner the outcome of the independent feasibility study on the role, structure and financing of the proposed digital solutions centre for sustainable development to be established in Kazakhstan and recommend a roadmap for strengthening the sharing of practical digital solutions in the Asia-Pacific region

Section A: Outcome

1. The Ad Hoc Working Group took note of the key findings and recommendations of the independent feasibility study.
2. An integral part of the Outcome of the Ad-Hoc Working Group is the Explanatory Note on UN ESCAP Asian and Pacific Digital Solutions Centre for Sustainable Development, prepared in co-sponsorship by Kazakhstan,
3. The Ad Hoc Working Group agreed on following Concept of the proposed digital solutions centre for sustainable development (DSC SD):

Background and Rationale
The process of digital transformation is sweeping across the world, bringing with it significant changes to economics, politics, society and culture. Driven by the world's most powerful corporations and their host governments, this process does not always put the public interest to the fore. Many smaller and economically weaker countries are finding it difficult to navigate a course that, in some respects, is being forced upon them by the speed of developments and internal and external pressures. There is a significant risk that these countries are losing any real agency and autonomy in the process of transformation, particularly where they are being offered ready-made proprietary solutions to problems they were not even aware they faced.

Virtually all those interviewed, experts and institutional and member state representatives, agreed that, in principle, there is major potential, especially among least and less developed UN ESCAP member states, to further digitalise their public and government services, and to enhance interoperability between systems and countries.

Scope
The DSC SD is designed to become a trusted and neutral platform under the UN umbrella, which identify best-practice digital solutions from Asia-Pacific countries in public and government services, it is matching them to the needs of other member states in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and is enabling their implementation there in a timely, cost-effective and sustainable manner.

Vision
A united world on one platform. We are creating a time for practically implementing the world's best solutions in digitalisation and innovation among ESCAP members and associate members. One needs to forget about narrowly defined interests in favour of not only exchanging ideas but also integrating solutions to start real acceleration in SDG implementation.

Mission
Timely and cost-effective selection and support for the implementation of the best solutions/critical digital technologies in compliance with the UN Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda and the upcoming Digital Global Compact to ensure significant progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Tasks and functions

- Identification of critical digital technologies that can drive significant progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Establishment of a National Digitalization Framework;
- Development of clean software versions that can be adapted and implemented across different countries;
- Providing access to such technologies on a voluntary basis, especially for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;
- Knowledge sharing among specialists from participating countries on effective IT methodologies and best practices;
- Operations based on the Technology Hub Mode.

The work of the Centre will focus on technologies that:

- Implement at the national level proactive digital solutions that contribute automation and digitalization of public services;
- Create electronic mechanisms for interaction with citizens to receive appeals, suggestions and complaints;
- Ensure transparent mechanisms for public discussion and government decision-making until the legislative enshrinement;
- Create the basis for targeted support for socially vulnerable families;
- Promote legislative amendments to streamline, simplify, and digitize business procedures, reducing time needed for regulatory requirements;
- Allow debureaucratisation and reengineering of internal processes in public administration sphere;
- Implement principles of meritocracy and transparency for the civil service.

Principles

- Ensuring cross-country integration in the processes of digital transformation;
- Application of an integrated approach, selection of best practices;
- Support in the implementation of technical solutions;
- Promoting a digital ecosystem based on common standards and access protocols across Asia-Pacific countries.

Institutional and scientific background

- The Center’s work will be organized based on the increasing need to consider the process of emergence and further rapid development of digital technologies, which radically change principles and established mechanisms of work, leading to the superiority between countries, and contain the risks of even greater stratification in the level of digital development;

- The Center's work will ensure universal access to such breakthrough technologies on a voluntary basis, especially for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;
- The Center's work will also unlock the potential of digital innovations for poverty reduction and fostering harmonious relations between governments and societies;
- An important outcome of the Center's work will be the facilitating legislative and institutional measures to incorporate digital technologies related capacity building into the Member states official development assistance systems as one of the practical ways to ensure the implementation of the leave no one behind principle, guard against redundancy and duplication of effort and ensuring cost-effectiveness in the use of resources, sharing national best practices and providing states with access to knowledges on digital technologies;
- The project will strengthen the important role of the United Nations in ensuring that the consequences of the emergence of such breakthrough technologies are considered and assessed, as well as in creating neutral platforms for digital cooperation and technologies transfer.

Collaboration model and principles of operation

- The Centre will act as an international depository of digital solutions and foster a community of practice of engineers, legists and policymakers. Countries expressing interest will be provided with free access to all IT products, as well as assistance in their utilisation;
- The Centre will operate with the following principles:

(a) All digital solutions will be provided in open source, with the recipient country having full permission to adapt, revise, update, extend, and repurpose them for other public service solutions. (b) Solutions will be designed and configured to maximise cross-country interoperability and integration, by adopting common standards and access codes.

A complementary model in cooperation with existing UN ESCAP regional institutions

- UN ESCAP Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) (*New Delhi, India. Established in Bangalore, 1977*) in the area of the digital technology transfer. Scientific cooperation.

  Development and implementation of institutional norms, legal frameworks, and standards enabling the free exchange and adoption of digital solutions among countries.

  The extensive experience of the APCTT is of great importance, as the main activities of the Digital Solutions Centre will focus on the transfer of digital solutions.

  Currently, significant and often insurmountable barriers, coupled with the lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework governing the transfer of digital technologies create significant obstacles for countries. Many of these barriers are related to the willingness or unwillingness of states to engage in bilateral cooperation.

  It is therefore crucial to establish national institutional norms and standards that would enable countries to freely adopt digital solutions - particularly through neutral platforms facilitated by UN institutions.

- UN ESCAP Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT) (*Incheon, Republic of Korea. Established in 2006*) in the field of training of representatives of the countries where the projects will be implemented. Scientific cooperation.

  Organization of capacity-building activities, including training sessions, professional development programmes, and advanced courses for specialists facilitating the exchange of experience, technologies, and knowledge in the digital sphere among countries.

  Experience has demonstrated that the successful transfer of technology from one country to another requires adequate training and capacity-building support for specialists. It is estimated that thousands of new professionals across the region will require training to effectively support this process.

- UN ESCAP Asian and Pacific Centre for Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM) (*Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. Established in 2018*) in the field of digital solutions for disaster management. Scientific cooperation.

  Collaborative work on identifying and adapting new digital solutions for disaster risk reduction.

  The consequences of global climate change know no territorial boundaries, and devastating natural disasters often affect entire regions.

  The timely sharing of new and effective digital solutions developed by any country can play a critical role in saving lives and safeguarding the well-being of millions of people.

- UN ESCAP Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) (*Chiba, Japan. Established in 1970)* in the field of work with socio-economic indicators, big data. Scientific cooperation.

  Collaborative work on identifying and adapting new solutions and mechanisms for data consolidation.

- UN ESCAP Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM) (*Beijing, China. Established in 1977)* in the field of implementation of advanced digital practices in agricultural mechanization. Scientific cooperation.

  Collaborative work on identifying and adapting new digital solutions in the field of sustainable agricultural mechanization

Cooperation with other institutions:

ADB: Asia Development Bank
CDPI: Centre for Digital Public Infrastructure
DPGA: Digital Public Goods Alliance
DIA: Digital Impact Alliance
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN)

ITU: International Telecommunications Union
MAIDD: Ministry of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development (Kazakhstan)
NITEC: National Information Technologies Joint Stock Company
KazAid: Kazakhstan Agency for International Development
KISDI: Korea Information Society Development Institute
SPECA: United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNECE: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNTB: United Nations Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries

Donation from Kazakhstan:

The Government of Kazakhstan will provide premises and financial support.

Kazakhstan will host the Centre and cover its institutional, programmatic, and operational costs for a period of five years, up to a total amount of 15 million US dollars.

Add-ons:

- Kazakhstan has already formulated its proposal for 23 digital solutions, which we are ready to provide for Asian and Pacific countries as in-kind contributions;
- These 23 solutions include public services, cloud document management, taxation, customs procedures among others;
- All these solutions have a proven track record of successful implementation over several years and are ready for replication in other countries;
- The technologies offered by Kazakhstan could play an important role in strengthening digital capacities within the UN system globally. Kazakhstan envisions contributing to the modernization of the Organisation's management tools through advanced digital technologies.

Section B: Road map

1. Establish the Asian and Pacific Digital Solutions Centre for Sustainable Development as a regional institution of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).
2. Establish a core team of five staff members. The operation of the Centre must be administered by a Head of the Centre (D1) and four leading professional experts (P5, P4, and P3).
3. Ensure that the established core team of the Centre carries out targeted efforts to attract, on a secondment basis, two IT engineers and/or policymakers from every UN ESCAP member States and associate members.
4. Ensure the following organizational process:

- Identify and secure agreement of donor countries;
- Identify potential beneficiary countries, and explore potential;
- Specifying and building national frameworks within which digital solutions can be integrated;
- Develop National Digital Solutions Action Plans in recipient countries;

- Facilitate a beneficiary/donor country contract agreement;
- Oversee and support capacity building and implementation;
- Assist in securing additional financing;
- Follow up and sustainability;
- Facilitating or enabling the transfer of specific digital solutions;
- Ensuring that recipient countries can autonomously implement and further develop these solutions.

5. Ensure the implementation of the following Principles of Operation:

- Give countries agency;
- Target priority SDGs;
- Tailor solutions to each eco-system and user;
- Seek out Partnerships and Collaboration;
- Use open standards;
- Ensure Security and privacy of Digital Solutions;
- Support internal, regional and global interoperability;
- Support International Human Rights Standards.