



Fact Sheet

WHAT:

UN Secretary-General António Guterres established the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation to advance proposals to strengthen international cooperation in the digital space. The ultimate aim is to realize the transformational potential of digital technologies while safeguarding against risks and unintended consequences.

The panel will contribute to the broader global dialogue on how interdisciplinary and cooperative approaches can help ensure a safe and inclusive digital future for all.

WHO:

The Panel includes 20 independent experts from government, private industry, civil society, academia and the technical community, representing a broad mix of disciplines, sectors and areas of expertise to reflect the cross-boundary nature of the digital sphere. The Panel is balanced in terms of gender, geographic origin and age. Members serve in their personal capacity.

Ms. Melinda Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Mr. Jack Ma, Executive Chairman of the Alibaba Group, serve as Co-Chairs.

WHY:

Rapidly advancing digital technologies hold unprecedented opportunities to accelerate sustainable development, advance well-being, and empower individuals throughout the world. Yet there is a risk that the use of these technologies may deepen inequality, increase mistrust, and undermine human rights.

The scale of both the opportunities and the challenges requires new ways of cooperating across borders to ensure that digital technologies help achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development while mitigating potential dangers or unintended consequences.

HOW:

The Panel will issue a report mapping trends in the development and deployment of digital technologies, identifying policy, research and information gaps, and making proposals to strengthen international cooperation in the digital space.

The Panel will also undertake a wide range of public consultations and facilitate an inclusive process to gather inputs from individuals and institutions worldwide, including via online engagement activities.

WHEN:

The Panel will conclude its work and issue its report within nine months from inception.

CONNECT:

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Key Messages

- The scale, spread and speed of change brought about by digital technologies is unprecedented. Digital technologies cut uniquely across sectors, disciplines and borders and can make a significant contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- At the same time, as a global community we face questions about security, equity, ethics, and human rights in a digital age. And the current means and levels of international cooperation are unequal to the challenges.
- Cooperation across domains and across borders is critical to realizing the transformational potential of digital technologies, while safeguarding against risks and unintended consequences.
- The High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation established by the UN Secretary-General will identify good examples and propose modalities for working cooperatively across sectors, disciplines and borders to address challenges in the digital age.
- The work of the Panel will proceed in full respect of Member State and industry prerogatives. It will build on existing approaches that have served the international community well and will not seek to create new structures or treaties.
- The Panel is comprised of 20 independent experts from government, private sector, civil society, academia and the technical community, and is diverse in terms of gender, geography and age. Members serve in their personal capacity.
- The Panel will be guided by three success metrics: a high quality report, an engaging and inclusive consultation process, and an enhanced capacity of all stakeholders to deal with the digital transformation.
- The Panel will adopt an inclusive approach to its consultations, leveraging its diverse membership and using a wide range of engagement tools and approaches.



Q&As

Why is it called the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation?

The term “digital cooperation” aims to situate discussions on digital issues within a cooperative framework; it also aims to break silos by encouraging thinking and action across domains, and build trust among stakeholders.

International cooperation on digital issues faces important hurdles: trade disputes, trust deficits, the search for competitive advantage in the technologies of the future and a stove-piped approach to thinking about digital issues.

This Panel will seek to encourage a cooperative approach to address digital issues and reduce the chances of a competitive, zero-sum mindset from taking hold. Through international cooperation we can more effectively mitigate risks and unintended consequences of digital technologies.

Why has the UN Secretary-General established this Panel now?

The Secretary-General's interest in ‘frontier issues’ in technology is well known. The idea of a High-Level Panel has matured through a series of consultations with states, civil society, industry and the UN system. During these consultations, stakeholders urged the Secretary-General to leverage the UN's unique convening power and offer a platform for dialogue on digital issues across disciplinary and geographic boundaries.

How were the Panel members selected?

The Secretary-General invited 20 independent experts with a range of professional and academic backgrounds in fields related to technology and policy. All members serve in their personal capacity, not as representatives of their affiliated institutions.

The Panel's composition represents a broad mix of disciplines and sectors, geographic, gender and age diversity in an effort to reflect the cross-boundary nature of the digital sphere. Given that young people will be disproportionately affected by the future impact of a digital society, the Panel includes several individuals under the age of 35.

What are the expected outcomes?

The Panel's report will provide a high-level independent contribution to the broader public debate on digital cooperation frameworks and support governments in their consultations on these issues.

The report is expected to: 1) map trends in the development and deployment of digital technologies, 2) identify policy, research and information gaps, as well as ways to improve interdisciplinary action, and 3) present concrete proposals to strengthen international cooperation in the digital space.

It is also expected that the consultation process leading to the report will stimulate discussion among and between various stakeholder groups on how they can work together to maximize the potential of the digital transformation.



How can people get involved and provide inputs to the Panel's deliberations?

The Panel will launch a consultation process to gather the views and proposals of governments, industries, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, technical communities, and academia. It will draw expertise from stakeholders across the globe including through engagement at existing events, conferences and forums.

Two regional events will be organized in Asia and in Africa, and a call for contributions from the general public through virtual hubs and online participation platforms will be launched in the coming weeks.

Will the Panel be making policy recommendations or proposing governance mechanisms?

The focus of the Panel is on approaches for enhancing digital cooperation across borders and sectoral silos. The Panel will identify principles and modalities that Governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and the technology community can rely on to develop digital policy solutions.

How will the Panel work with other panels, commissions and international forums on similar topics?

The Secretary-General welcomes the increased focus on the implications of digital technologies for our society and our economy through commissions, conferences and other forums. This shows that the timing is ripe for the digital policy ecosystem to evolve to the next level of maturity.

The work of all these initiatives can and should be mutually reinforcing. Wherever possible, the Panel will collaborate with other initiatives and seek to identify synergies and complementarities.

How does the work of the Panel relate to the Sustainable Development Goals?

Implementation of each of the SDGs depends to some extent on digital technologies. Strengthening modalities for international cooperation on digital issues will therefore help achieve the SDGs. The interdisciplinary approach adopted by the Panel will particularly contribute to Goal 17.

How is the Panel supported?

The Panel is supported by a small Secretariat funded by donor resources, and based in New York and Geneva.



Panel Members

Co-Chairs

- Melinda Gates (USA), Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Jack Ma (China), Executive Chairman, Alibaba Group

Members

- Mohammed Al Gergawi (UAE), Minister of Cabinet Affairs and the Future, UAE
- Yuichiro Anzai (Japan), President of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science
- Nikolai Astrup (Norway), Minister of International Development, Norway
- Vinton Cerf (USA), Vice President and Chief Internet Evangelist, Google
- Fadi Chehadé (USA), Partner at Abry Partners
- Isabel Guerrero Pulgar (Chile), Director, IMAGO Global Grassroots and Lecturer, Harvard Kennedy School
- Marina Kaljurand (Estonia), Chair of the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace
- Bogolo Kenewendo (Botswana), Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry, Botswana
- Akaliza Keza Ntwari (Rwanda), ICT advocate and entrepreneur
- Marina Kolesnik (Russian Federation), senior executive, entrepreneur and WEF Young Global Leader
- Doris Leuthard (Switzerland), Head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, Switzerland
- Cathy Mulligan (United Kingdom), Visiting Research Fellow Imperial College Centre for Cryptocurrency
- Edson Prestes (Brazil), Professor, Institute of Informatics, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul
- Kira Radinsky (Israel), Director of Data Science, eBay
- Nanjira Sambuli (Kenya), Digital Equality Advocacy Manager, World Wide Web Foundation
- Sophie Soowon Eom (Republic of Korea), Founder of Adriel AI and Solidware
- Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah (Australia), Secretary General, CIVICUS
- Jean Tirole (France), Chairman of the Toulouse School of Economics and the Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse

Ex officio

- Amandeep Singh Gill (India), Executive Director, Secretariat of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation
- Jovan Kurbalija (Serbia), Executive Director, Secretariat of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation