UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

CEB

Chief Executives Board
CEB/2021/HLCM/DTN/02/Rev.1
for Coordination

15 November 2021

Digital & Technology Network (DTN) Session Report
Virtual Session, 20-21 October 2021

Contents

1. Introduction

The Digital and Technology Network's (DTN) autumn session of 2021 took place virtually between 20 and 21 October. Mr. Bernardo Mariano Junior (CITO, UN Secretariat), opened the DTN session prior to the election of Ms. Ana Paula Nishio De Sousa (Chief, Information Technology Services Division, UNIDO) as DTN Co-Chair. The session was well attended (61 participants attended day one and 68 on day two) and engagement[1] was high. A key focus of the meeting was digital transformation, building on previous discussions and the importance this topic received at the High-Level Committee on Management's (HLCM) recent 42nd session.

2. Summary

The DTN's new chairmanship emphasized the need to act strategically and in unison wherever possible, and to assume a leadership role by applying its expertise to the achievement of the Secretary General's Common Agenda and the Quintet of Change. In addition, the agenda featured digital innovation, cybersecurity and included a timely update on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. External presenters included Microsoft Federal Security and the UK National Cyber Security Centre. Presentations were also received from the EOSG, OICT, UNDP, IAEA, WTO and the UN Digital Solutions Centre. Topics addressed strategic opportunities in areas of mutual interest as well as the need to share knowledge in key and dynamic areas. Plenary discussions addressed the need for common baselines for cybersecurity, priorities for the Information Security Special Interest Group (UNISSIG) and agreement on digital innovation principles to clarify the relationship between ICT and digital innovation. Due to a lack of time, updates from working groups including the HLCP's Inter-agency Working Group on AI (IAWG-AI) were deferred until the next DTN session.

2.1 Conclusions

Outcomes of this meeting included a set of recommendations and action points that address the strategic priorities of digital transformation, digital accessibility, digital innovation, and cybersecurity.

2.1.1 Digital Transformation

The DTN agreed to continue giving priority to this topic in future sessions, to further explore avenues of knowledge sharing and collaboration with EOSG and other entities to help advance the digitalization strategies of all member organizations. Ongoing exchanges between sessions will be facilitated by the establishment of a new workstream within the Collaboration Technologies working group, which will also consider remote simultaneous interpretation. It is expected that this initiative will results in closer coordination and more knowledge sharing in the area of virtual meeting (and RSI enabled) platforms.

2.1.2 Digital Accessibility

The current performance of entities on accessibility indicator is seen to be uneven[2]. A coordinated approach has shown to be key in successful implementation of the Strategy. In collaboration with EOSG and OICT, the DTN agreed to create a digital accessibility working group to advance the United Nations disability inclusion strategy. This working group will focus on advancing the uptake of inclusive and compliant technologies that

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[1] 90% of participants surveyed found the session either somewhat useful (40%) or extremely useful (50%).

[2] 29% (missing requirements), 33% (approaching requirements), 37% (meeting requirements) and 2% (exceeding requirements) Source: EOSG

meet accessibility requirements, thereby advancing the uptake of common and consistent policies and practices UN system-wide.

2.1.3 Digital Innovation

The DTN recognised that the role of technology in innovation is to identify and discover digital technologies that enable the operationalisation and scaling of opportunities into realised outcomes that more effectively supports organisation mandates and objectives. <u>The network agreed on a series of principles that clarify the role of technology in the successful implementation of an organization's digital innovation strategy</u>. Once put into practice, these principles intend to help ICT sections effectively identify, implement, and collaborate on digital innovation opportunities within their respective organization.

2.1.4 Cybersecurity

<u>The network agreed on a minimum baseline for cyber security and to prioritise the implementation of the fall of measures in their respective cyber security strategies.</u> The intended outcomes are enhanced security, trust and collaboration. The cyber security working group (UNISSIG), was tasked to pursue several priority areas, to ensure a minimum and consistent level of information security across the UN system. Conclusions of UNISSIG discussions will be presented to the DTN at its spring session in 2022.

3. Digital Transformation

3.1 UN 2.0 and the Quintet of Change

The "[Quintet of Change](#)" provides a path to 'UN 2.0' by focusing on stronger capabilities for data strategy, innovation, digital transformation, behavioural science and strategic foresight across organizational functions. Implications for the DTN's role were presented and included supporting the design of strategies within their organizations, being business driven, being partnership focused, transitioning to cloud services to simplify and harmonize digital ecosystems and by empowering colleagues to work and collaborate within a 'one UN family' environment.

Drawing on the Secretary-General's [Common Agenda](#), Ms. Ayaka Suzuki (Director, Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit, EOSG) provided context to discussions on digital transformation for the DTN to unfold and prioritize collective actions over the next five years. Subsequent discussions underlined that the role of ICT is to drive the digital transformation of the business, which will in turn empower organizations to support countries to develop digital strategies in the future. Members were encouraged to use the mandate provided by the Secretary General in the advancement of digital transformation within their organizations.

3.2 Business-Driven Digital Transformation

The UN Digital Solutions Centre is a pilot programme to provide a platform to design, build, deploy, scale, standardize automated, shared, digital solutions to the UN family. It is an Inter-Agency partnership to develop solutions that can scale across multiple organizations to achieve cost savings and efficiency improvements across common operational areas.

Ms. Kate Krukiel (General Manager, [UN Digital Solutions Centre, DSC](#)) elaborated on how the DSC works with the business to identify common solutions to help steer digital transformation. The DSC achieves this by being driven by the business, adopting an agile approach, being flexible and scaling based on the participation of multiple entities in order to develop the right solutions and save money. Seven projects (at different stages of development) were presented, four of which were considered ready to invite wider engagement from the membership, including the UN system Digital ID; Joint Sanctions Bot; JAMBO Phone Book and the Travel Data Cube. Interested members were encouraged to contact the DSC.

3.3 Accelerating Digitalization at UNDP

Mr. Sylvain St. Pierre (CIO, UNDP) and Mr. Robert Opp (Chief Digital Officer, UNDP) presented UNDP's approach to digital capacity building, which aims to ensure adoption of new digital ways of working, as well as their data strategy and chosen future data platform.

Digital transformation was presented as a corporate priority for UNDP, dependent on effective change management and included an emphasis on data stewardship, data quality and (analytical and visualization) platform independence. Since the inception of UNDP's strategy, in 2019, a dedicated team has been established to address the many challenges presented, which in turn translated to an emphasis on planning, education, advocacy, and communication of change.

Discussions delved deeper into issues surrounding benchmarking progress against digital maturity models, governance, an emphasis on data quality and the vital role change management plays in the successful digital transformation of an organization. While the pandemic was recognized as an important driver for corporate transformation, it was widely acknowledged that the future impact of organizations is largely dependent on measures taken now towards this objective and that the DTN has a leading role to play.

3.4 Update on UN System Digital ID

The network received an update from Mr. Sylvain St. Pierre (CIO, UNDP) on progress made in establishing a governance and structure for the HLCM's UN System Digital ID project. The membership was informed that this project, which remains in the preliminary phase builds on the work of the UN Secretariat, UNHCR and WFP being developed by the DCS now has a governance structure in place, which also includes UNJSPF[3], UNDP and UNICEF and newly appointed executive sponsor.

Pending the release of funding, next steps include the prioritization of use cases and the appointment of a Project Coordinator, who will be tasked with leading this overall effort and assuring the engagement of stakeholder communities to address privacy any security issues. Going forward, the DTN will be regularly updated on progress by the project's Technical Advisory Board, once the project advances towards the consideration of technical solutions, including identity management architectures.

3.5 Virtual Meetings

In the first quarter of 2020, the DTN directed its attention towards the effective planning and execution of virtual meetings, from both a functional and security perspective. During the intervening period a lot has changed and in preparation for this session, an internal DTN survey addressed the adoption of popular platforms in support of remote working institutional meetings and meetings requiring remote simultaneous interpretation (RSI).

Mr. Fabrice Boudou (Director, IT Solutions Division, WTO) and Mr. Jeff Modell (Director and CIO, IAEA) provided analysis of survey results with the membership. Discussion highlighted the need for a knowledge sharing forum to support future exchanges in this fast-changing environment and to leverage membership of IAMLADP (International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications) when addressing the legal aspects of virtual meetings.

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[3] Revision 1 of this document included UNJSPF within the governance structure of the UN System Digital ID project, which was mistakenly omitted from the original report.

3.6 Digital Accessibility

The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) provides the foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the work of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights, and development. This strategy was discussed at HLCP's recent session at the beginning of October. This item was presented by Mr. Gopal Mitra (Senior Social Affairs Officer, Disability Team, EOSG); Ms. Georgia Dominik (Social Affairs Officer, Disability Team, EOSG); and Ms. Suzanne Shanahan (Chief, Enterprise Application Center - Americas, Enterprise Solution Service, OICT).

Mr. Gopal Mitra spoke to the importance of digital accessibility as a critical enabler to deliver accessible products, information, services, and premises to our constituencies – as well as opportunities for system-wide cooperation and collaboration in support of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy. The relevance of this topic was made immediately apparent by the fact 15% of the world population are persons with disabilities, which amounts to nearly 1.2 billion. People with disabilities have different impairments, (including vision, sensory, physical, intellectual, and psychosocial impairments) face many barriers, socially and professionally, which technology can play a significant role in helping dismantle.

Discussions addressed the pragmatic and ultimately cost-effective need to design for accessibility at the beginning of a project and to further solution and knowledge sharing on this topic within the DTN.

3.7 Conclusions

Further internal discussion on technical platforms are best undertaken within framework of the existing DTN Working Group on Collaboration Technologies. In addition:

- The DTN committed to engage in regular dialogue with the EOSG, to foster exchange between programme and technology communities (to traverse organizational boundaries) and thereby contribute towards the digital transformation of all organizations.
- All members were recommended to contribute towards the digital transformation strategy for their organization.
- Since most DTN member and observer organizations with a language service are also members of the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP), DTN members are recommended to seek participation in IAMLADP through existing representatives from their organization.
- In addition to the existing IAMLADP membership of some DTN organizations, the DTN (and potentially UNISSIG) to seek representation at IAMLADP.
- Recommendations emerging from IAMLADP are to be considered by DTN.

In furtherance of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) and in collaboration with EOSG and OICT, the DTN agreed to create a digital accessibility working group to explore the following:

- Establish shared services/ COE for digital accessibility
- Build a common understanding and commitment to digital accessibility
- Identify and establish shared standards for accessibility compliance
- Share best practices, tools, support services and system contracts through a common information portal
- Share contacts in civil society organizations and partners who support the UN in accessibility projects
- Create a Community of Practice for digital accessibility to encourage collaboration
- Share existing LTAs that support digital accessibility

The Terms of reference for this working group are to be developed in collaboration with EOSG and OICT. A progress report of this working group's first meeting is to be presented at the next DTN (Spring) session.

4. Digital Innovation

Mr. Salem Avan (Director, Policy, Strategy & Governance Division, OICT and Chair of the DTN working group on Technology Innovation) provided an update us on recent discussions within the group, which focused on clarifying the relationship between ICT and innovation. The DTN was invited to consider that *the role of technology teams in innovation is to identify and discover digital technologies that enable the operationalization and scaling of opportunities into realized outcomes that more effectively support your organization's mandates and objectives.*

Members recognized the importance of a supportive organizational environment, which notably implies cultural change, clear governance structures and the pragmatic delineation of traditional ICT functions from innovative practices. Digital innovation was ultimately recognized as a means to an end and its effective implementation would prioritize organizational impact over traditional functions and recognize the role of the UN system as the provider of programme solutions. Key points raised during the discussion included the following:

- Awareness of technology innovation techniques should be raised
- Technology innovation should be scalable, secured and shared
- As failure is a built-in part of innovation, digital technology innovation proof of concepts should remain time-bounded even if they do not scale up
- It should respond to needs of the business reckoning that there are challenges to find space for innovation teams to partner with business and programmatic areas.
- Digital technology is a promotor of innovation and an enabler for scale
- The context, structures and implications differ from one organization to another but also from programmatic vs. corporate IT. In general, a cultural change (new way of working) is needed to make space for innovation
- The role of digital technology innovation as "enabler" is different from the role of IT professionals to "find/discover", facilitate, connect
- The roles should be defined as key drivers for digital transformation as we evolve towards digital innovation, alignment with change management
- Future management of innovation and harmonization should be considered, more closely connected to programmes to ensure synergies, and reduce overlap.

4.1 Conclusions

A variety of organizational strategies and governance structures supporting innovation were exchanged during the plenary, which concluded with the definition of a common set of principles. In order to help advance a common understanding of digital innovation and the role of ICT teams going forward, the DTN agreed on the following:

1. The concept of technology in innovation should be integrated into the work of the United Nations common system with digital technology being positioned as both support for innovation as well as an enabler for innovation.

2. This complies with the "IT is the Business" model whereby core programmatic efforts use digitial technology innovation as an integral part of delivery.
3. Technology entities should take an actively positive approach by default to innovation projects and proposals from the business and support them.
4. Internal operational efficiencies should not be overlooked in using digital technology in support of and to enable innovation.
5. We should consider the structures that support the use of digital technology in innovation, for example policy frameworks and governance should be tackled.
6. Mechanisms should be found to make technology innovation products (digital technologies, documentation, policies, governance structures, frameworks) available to the community of professionals working on digital technology in innovation.
7. Strengthen communications to build a compelling narrative for the work being done in technology innovation and the benefits of it.

Organizations will be requested to report back on the implementation of these digital innovation principles within their respective organization at the DTN's next (spring) Session.

5. Cybersecurity

5.1 Public-Private Partnerships to Address Universal Cyber-Risk

Mr. Steve Faehl (CTO, Microsoft Federal Security) presented insights into emerging threats in software supply chain and ransomware attacks. Mr. Faehl also shared lessons learned from working with the US Government on Zero Trust and the recent Executive Order on Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity to address these risks.

The approach presented centred on public-private partnership in a manner that brought together vendors in order to learn together and help identify and address all blind spots. This approach is typically unnatural within the industry and placed the US government in the role of intermediary, bringing industry players together towards consistent objectives. Another strategy presented for public-private partnership was based on industry feedback, a centralized architecture review which resulted in cloud security technical reference architectures for US government agencies being further hardened by feedback received from cloud service providers.

5.2 UK National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)

Mr. Paul Chichester (Director Operations, UK National Cyber Security Centre) presented on the importance and value of cybersecurity collaborations between international organizations and national government. In the discussion that followed organizations were encouraged to strengthen their threat awareness by reaching out and establishing relationships with national CERTS in countries within which they operate.

5.3 Plenary Discussion on Cybersecurity

Mr. Thomas Braun (CISO, UN Secretariat & UNISSIG Chair) moderated a plenary discussion on Information Security, which concluded on recommended measures for the DTN to adopt as well as priorities to be pursued by the cybersecurity community (UNISSIG). Following consultation with the UNISSIG community, Mr. Braun put forward a series of priorities for which collective action was considered timely.

5.4 Conclusions

DTN Members agreed on a minimum baseline for cybersecurity, and to prioritize the implementation of the following measures in their respective cybersecurity strategies:

1. Implement and enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) to the maximum extent possible; all accounts that access systems via the internet should be configured with MFA.
2. Mainstream basic cyber security best practices, including:
    a. Maintaining an inventory of organization-owned devices and systems;
    b. Ensuring organization-owned devices and systems are regularly updated;
    c. Decommissioning systems that no longer add value;
    d. Implementing access control to non-public resources, and ensure all users receive regular information security awareness training;
3. Perform regular penetration and/or security assessment tests (i.e. at least once a year);
4. Ensure cybersecurity risks are adequately included in enterprise risk management processes.

In addition, it was agreed that the DTN will continue to address:

- Measures to strengthen collaboration through, e.g. UNISSG and Common Secure;
- Exploring the sharing of (anonymized) incident storylines and lessons learned.

UNISSIG were tasked to pursue the following priority areas, to ensure a minimum and consistent level of information security across the UN system:

- A common approach[4] to cloud security, revising the previous white paper on the issue;
- A common baseline of technical and procedural security controls to protect PII, based on defined classifications and protection requirements;
- A mapping of existing classification levels in the UN system to baseline controls;
- A common methodology for security assessments of ICT systems to allow for mutual recognition; Further guidance on minimum operating cybersecurity standards for services such as e-mail, public websites, etc.

The UNISSIG Chair is requested to brief DTN on progress made pursuing these priority areas at DTN's next (Spring) session.

6. Next Steps

1. DTN members commit to minimum baseline standards put forward in support of information security.
2. Further follow-up within the area of information security is to be assigned to UNISSIG.
3. CEB Secretariat to coordinate with EOSG and OICT to establish a digital accessibility working group.
4. Digital innovation principles to be shared with the business in order to attain a common understanding of the role of ICT, with the aim of maximizing its organizational impact.
5. DTN's Collaboration Technologies working group to incorporate the need for knowledge sharing on virtual institutional meetings and RSI.
6. Working group on Technology Innovation to convene to identify follow-up actions that build on principles, once formalized.

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[4] It was underlined that a "common approach" does not imply a "one size fits all", but is based on a tiered model, that reflects different risk profiles of member organizations