WE WILL IMPROVE DIGITAL COOPERATION

"Digital technologies have profoundly transformed society. They offer unprecedented opportunities and new challenges. When improperly or maliciously used, they can fuel divisions within and between countries, increase insecurity, undermine human rights and exacerbate inequality. Shaping a shared vision on digital cooperation and a digital future that show the full potential for beneficial technology usage, and addressing digital trust and security, must continue to be a priority as our world is now more than ever relying on digital tools for connectivity and socioeconomic prosperity. Digital technologies have a potential to accelerate the realization of the 2030 Agenda. We must ensure safe and affordable digital access for all. The United Nations can provide a platform for all stakeholders to participate in such deliberations."

United Nations General Assembly, "UN75 Declaration", September 2020, A/RES/75/1.

"Advances in digital technology can support and accelerate the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals [...]. Technology, on the other hand, can threaten privacy, weaken security and add to inequality [...] Like previous generations, our governments, businesses, and individuals can choose how to leverage and manage new technologies."

Republic of Korea, students, mixed genders.
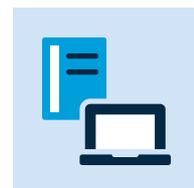
UN75 DATA ON THIS COMMITMENT

UN75 dialogues

UN75 survey

Media analysis

Research snapshot

We organize the relevant UN75 data gathered across 2020 according to the UN75 Declaration's 12 commitments. For the full methodology, see the UN75 report "Shaping Our Future Together".

FROM THE UN75 DIALOGUES[1]

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The positive and negative impact of digital technology on the economy and society.
Most dialogue participants were convinced that digital technology has greatly supported increased communication across countries and improved international cooperation.

They emphasized the role digital technology can play in creating a transparent and participatory platform for global citizens to connect and influence policies, and that the accelerating development of artificial intelligence will make our lives easier.

Participants in India, Mexico, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Republic of Korea referred to examples of the beneficial use of technology:

- Precision medicine techniques and use of artificial intelligence in the healthcare sector to equip specialists and doctors to diagnose diseases at early stages.

- Use of digital tools and technologies to improve agricultural practices and increase food production while reducing environmental footprints.

- The role of virtual learning environments in supplementing traditional education during COVID-19 and making education more interactive and results oriented.

- The potential of digital technology to enable urban sustainability and smart cities.

- The application of digital technology to social welfare administration, for example the provision of digital third-party surveys, SMART Identity Cards and SMART Licenses,

MIS and GIS mapping, digital modes of transactions, government-to-people cash transfers, digitally sound web-portals for tracking and ensuring transparency, e-governance initiatives, among others.

- The use of technology in the administration of justice and as a tool to support the activities of civil society organisations working in conflict-prone areas, and the role mobile phones can play as a tool to document and share human rights abuses in real time, supporting advocacy efforts.

"COVID-19 is an unprecedented public health crisis that has devastated the world economies and changed our social relations. If every crisis is an opportunity, this crisis may be an opportunity to bring about significant urban technological change. Smart technology is an important way to realize sustainable urban development. In this public health crisis, innovative technologies and applications, such as IoT, 5G, artificial intelligence, big data and cloud computing, have become the 'new foundation' for the 'urban immune system.'"

Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, China, dialogue with students, ages 16-30.

---

1. This report contains a summary of the analysis of 1,141 UN75 dialogue summaries received from 94 countries between 2 January and 7 November 2020. The dialogue summaries were analyzed in partnership with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. For the full methodology, see the UN75 report "Shaping Our Future Together".

Many dialogues were concerned that our increased dependence on digital tools is leading to a growing unethical use of technology by governments and hackers, offering unprecedented opportunities for systemic surveillance and human rights infringements.
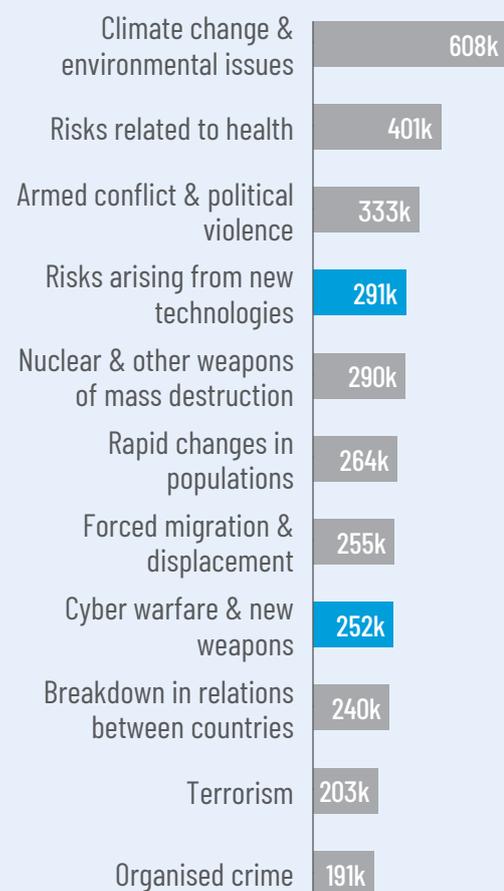
In East Asia, participants raised concerns that while the internet exposes children and young people to benefits and opportunities, it creates new risks, including exposure to harmful content, sexual exploitation and abuse, cyber-bullying and misuse of personal information.

"The COVID-19 outbreak potentially exacerbates the risks faced by children and young people online, as they are spending longer periods of time on the internet than usual. We need to listen to young people, who are a key partner in advancing the 2030 Agenda. It's important to both expand their access to the best digital technology has to offer, protect them from harm online, and empower them to know how to protect themselves."

Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, China, dialogue with students, ages 16-30.

The impact of COVID-19 and the role of the digital divide. According to participants from across the world, digital technology has been a vital tool during the COVID-19 pandemic in areas including online education, telemedicine, and remote working. The organizations and businesses that displayed high levels of digital readiness at the beginning of the crisis have been more resilient and have even enjoyed significant opportunities for growth. For the same reasons, however,

↗ **UN75 Survey long-term global threats: Risks arising from new tech was UN75 respondents' fourth top long-term threat, with cyber warfare also a high priority for many**

Climate change & environmental issues	608k
Risks related to health	401k
Armed conflict & political violence	333k
Risks arising from new technologies	291k
Nuclear & other weapons of mass destruction	290k
Rapid changes in populations	264k
Forced migration & displacement	255k
Cyber warfare & new weapons	252k
Breakdown in relations between countries	240k
Terrorism	203k
Organised crime	191k

UN75 Survey Question: Which of these global trends do you think will most affect our future? Base: 1,220,848 (all respondents). Participants could select up to three responses.

problems related to the digital divide, digital poverty, digital inequality, persist and, participants stressed, are getting worse.

Most dialogues cautioned that the inter-linkage of the pandemic and the digital divide risks exacerbating socio-economic inequality if equitable access to technology is not promoted and ICT infrastructure developed equally in all countries. This is especially true for remote areas in several countries, as rural communities often did not have the basic digital infrastructure necessary for online education and working platforms during COVID-19.

The impact of digital technology on the future of work. Participants across the world discussed the rapid transformations of digital technologies, including risks of disruption to job markets and the wider society, with the takeover of an increasing number of tasks currently performed by humans potentially leading to vast unemployment and a negative social impact.

"The lack of internet providers in rural regions, or the complete absence of the internet entirely, prevents residents from accessing essential information, especially during the current pandemic. Without a reliable connection, they are unable to share news, information, and take advantage of online education."

UN Office in Baku, Azerbaijan, ages 31-45, dialogue with managers and professionals.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

A world of open access to knowledge and technology. Participants in several dialogues hosted in East Asia envisioned a future based on open access to, and free transboundary movement of knowledge and technology. Some participants would like to see all vulnerable communities and disabled individuals gain access to technology, to ensure their participation and inclusion in society.

In Colombia, participants called for universal, free access to the internet, as a human right, which is regulated as a common good to promote sustainable development.

Participants from Kenya would like digital technologies to be aligned with the 2030 Agenda and utilized by governments to generate research solutions and innovations that will eradicate inequalities.

Preparing for a just transition to the impact of technology in the future of work. Participants from across the world want to see their countries move to automation with minimal disruptions, thanks to adequate regulatory mechanisms that ensure that new technologies promote rather than hinder human well-being, that they respect human rights, that they don't lead to mass

unemployment, and they are based on shared ethical principles.

Bridging the digital divide. Participants across the world envisioned a future where all citizens benefit from digital technology, without digital divides within and across countries.

A future of quality online education and digital literacy. Most participants believed that even after COVID-19, online or hybrid learning will remain necessary in providing education to students. They want to see the international community improve the quality of online education for all countries, including those where the digital divide is particularly pronounced, and believe that there should

be a focus on matching the level of online education to that provided by traditional education. Student participants from China called for a shift from adult-dominated approaches that emphasize 'protection and control' in digital environments to approaches that enable adolescents to foster better internet literacy through digital education and readiness.

Participants want to see **inclusive AI systems** that do not discriminate against minorities and people with disabilities (for example, through facial recognition or other identity verification systems), and a general removal of digital barriers that prevent equal access to technology.

HOW WE CAN GET THERE

Digital governance

Promoting open access to knowledge and technology, while addressing risks. In the Republic of Korea, participants called on governments to reform intellectual property rights in WTO conventions, to improve government support to R&D, free movement of R&D resources, and promote equal treatment of foreign research institutions and researchers.

In Mongolia, participants called on governments to establish a monitoring and assessment mechanism to review regularly developments in digital technology, to assess their respect of minimum criteria of environmental sustainability and respect of human rights. In Egypt, participants urged governments to agree on modern antitrust policies to fight monopolies in e-commerce, IT and artificial intelligence.

Improving ICT infrastructure

Ensuring universal internet access and equal access to technology. In Panama, participants called on the Secretary-General to advocate for the universalization of internet access as a way of closing the digital gap, and the investment in equal access to technological equipment and the internet. Participants in the United States invited national governments and the UN to **provide access to consistent and affordable internet connectivity to people in vulnerable situations, for example asylum seekers and those living in refugee camps and settlements.**

In Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Central and Southern Asia, participants called on national governments to bridge the digital divide through substantial investments in infrastructure. Participants from Mongolia and India urged the UN,
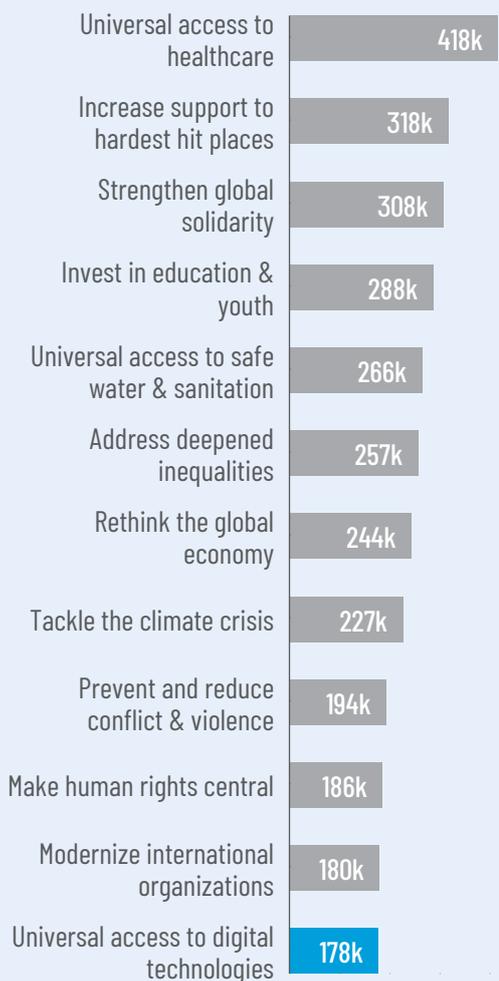
including UNCTAD, UNIDO and the ITC, to prioritise the introduction of new technologies in low- and middle-income countries, promoting effective technology transfer, and launching collaborations with national governments to bring the internet to remote regions. Participants from Tajikistan called on the UN to ensure that the application, and choice of, specific digital technologies and solutions is tailored to local needs and contexts, for example by partnering with programs developed by local ICT specialists.

Tech for the SDGs & future of work

Fostering digital readiness and literacy, with a focus on just transition. Participants across the world asked governments to develop strong programs and actions towards closing the digital divide faced by young people in low and middle income countries, including by improving internet access, facilitating the purchase of smartphones and computer equipment, and investing in digital skills development.

In the UK, participants urged governments to invest in bridging the digital gap faced by older generations, stimulating peer learning, reverse-mentoring by youth, and re-training educators and public servants to ensure that the potential of digital tools is fully harnessed. In the Republic of Korean, participants asked governments to offer digital courses tailored to different needs, providing assistance to those who need help, and ensuring that services that are available online remain equally available offline for those without an internet connection or the necessary skills.

↗ **UN75 Survey immediate priorities to recover from the pandemic: 178,000+ respondents prioritized universal access to digital technology in the short-term**

Priority	Responses
Universal access to healthcare	418k
Increase support to hardest hit places	318k
Strengthen global solidarity	308k
Invest in education & youth	288k
Universal access to safe water & sanitation	266k
Address deepened inequalities	257k
Rethink the global economy	244k
Tackle the climate crisis	227k
Prevent and reduce conflict & violence	194k
Make human rights central	186k
Modernize international organizations	180k
Universal access to digital technologies	178k

UN75 Survey Question: What should the international community prioritize to recover better from the pandemic? Base: 1,133,501 (all respondents as from 22 April, when this question was added). Participants could select up to three responses.

In the context of preparing for the just transition of the workforce, participants from a number of dialogues invited governments to **offer protections to those who may lose out from automation and technological change**, including through active labour market policies and facilitating new economic opportunities and training.

Ensuring protection of personal data:

- Students in India implored social media platforms to ensure the confidentiality of people's personal data, especially children and young people. Participants in Korea wanted governments to agree on stronger privacy laws and accountability frameworks to limit the use and abuse of such data by companies.

- In Egypt, participants said governments must protect privacy when accessing and using data for research and public interest purposes.

- Participants in the United States called for safeguards and firewalls in all activities that entail the use and management of personal data of migrants and refugees (for example, the data protection policy used by the UN Refugee Agency), as well as robust guidelines for evaluating the risks and benefits of using new technologies to assist them.

- Participants from China noted that the UN and the business and industry community should agree on a shared commitment to a safe and positive online experience for all children, as illustrated by the 2017 UNICEF/ Tencent partnership on the 'Child Online Protection Project'.

"We need to listen to young people, who are a key partner in advancing the 2030 Agenda. It's important to both expand their access to the best digital technology has to offer, protect them from harm online, and empower them to know how to protect themselves."

Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, China, dialogue with students, ages 16-30.

Aligning digital technologies with the SDGs and human rights.

- Participants in the USA called for an updated version of the SDGs, to include emerging issues such as cyber security and cyber espionage. They also invited the UN to leverage the use of information technology to improve the responsiveness, effectiveness and transparency of UN peacekeeping operations, including by facilitating feedback into response efforts and crowdsourcing data to provide early warning mechanisms.

- In Estonia, participants asked governments to review international human rights instruments to bring them in line with the digital transformation.

MEDIA ANALYSIS²

Amid the pandemic, digital tech has captured the attention of media outlets across regions, with cyberrime, misinformation, emerging tech and access to ICTs most reported on

During the period reviewed, editorial coverage was often driven by discussions on current health challenges and the impact of emerging technologies on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In Northern Africa and the Middle East, the media reported on the role that technology has played to help countries improve their situation in sectors such as health and education. Coverage of digital technology was particularly positive in Sub-Saharan Africa, although lack of access to ICTS and cybercrime are prominent.
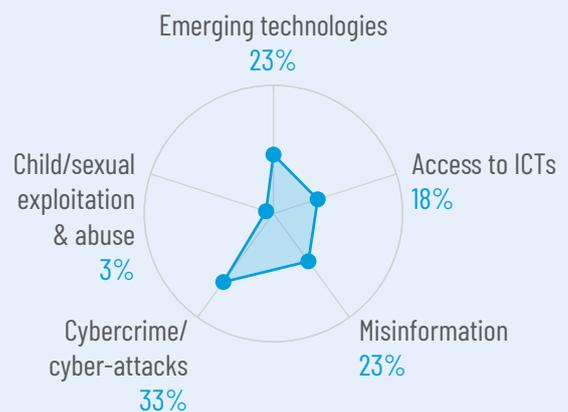
In Latin America and the Caribbean, news coverage is more negative, with misinformation, 'fake news' and inequalities due to lack of access to technology emerging as strong themes. In Europe and Asia, news outlets focused on access to information, underlining the importance of access to technology and ICTs for remote learning and working.

In lower human development countries, news outlets discussed the highly unequal access to technology often limited by lower financial resources. They reported on the plight of entire segments of populations being cut off during the pandemic and not being able to work or study.

Misinformation, particularly in relation to COVID-19, is causing negative visibility in the media across all regions, and especially in Europe and the United States. Cyber-attacks and online sexual abuses were discussed across all regions. There has been a spike in reports of phishing attacks, Malspams and ransomware attacks during COVID-19.

There is some discussion about the geopolitical aspects of technology in the media in China, Russia, the United States and in some countries in Europe and Asia. Countries where the UN is most mentioned in relation to technology are Afghanistan, Angola and the Netherlands, but it was largely otherwise absent in media reporting on digital technologies.

↗ **Cybercrime, emerging tech, misinformation and access to ICTs most reported on in media coverage of digital technologies.**

Emerging technologies
23%

Access to ICTs
18%

Misinformation
23%

Cybercrime/
cyber-attacks
33%

Child/sexual
exploitation
& abuse
3%

Asia & Australia	1. Cybercrime/cyber-attacks 2. Emerging technologies
Europe & Central Asia	1. Cybercrime/cyber-attacks 2. Misinformation
Latin America & Caribbean	1. Misinformation 2. Access to ICTs
Middle East & North Africa	1. Emerging technologies 2. Access to ICTs
North America	1. Misinformation 2. Cybercrime/cyber-attacks
Sub-Saharan Africa	1. Cybercrime/cyber-attacks 2. Access to ICTs

Edelman Intelligence Discovery+ | All languages | Media review in 70 countries | Date range: May 2019 - May 2020.

2. Edelman Intelligence analysed the global media landscape to gain insights into how megatrends are covered, including the perceived role of international cooperation and the United Nations. They analysed print, broadcast and online media, including social media, in 70 countries, covering the period May 2019 and May 2020. For the full methodology, see the UN75 report "Shaping Our Future Together".

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT³

Academic publications

- Cihon, P. & Maas, M. 2020 "Fragmentation and the Future: Investigating Architectures for International AI Governance" Global Policy.

- Ma, S. & Wen, G. 2020 "数字经济时代的全球经济治理：影响解构、特征刻画与取向选择" Reform.

- Nagelhus Schia, N. 2018 "The cyber frontier and digital pitfalls in the Global South" Third World Quarterly.

- Pan, X. 2020 "国际数字经济竞争新态势与中国的应对" Research on International Issues.

- Pollitzer, E. 2018 "Creating a better future: Four scenarios for how digital technologies could change the world" Journal of International Affairs.

- Risse, M. 2019 "Human Rights and Artificial Intelligence: An Urgently Needed Agenda" Human Rights Quarterly.

- Snower, D., Twomey, P. & Farrell, M. 2020 "Revisiting digital governance" Social Macroeconomics Working Paper Series [University of Oxford].

- Vila Seoane, M. 2018 "Digitalización, automatización y empresas transnacionales de seguridad privada en áreas con capacidad estatal limitada" Revista de Relaciones Internacionales, Estrategia y Seguridad.

Policy research & reports

- African Union 2020 The Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030).

- Azmeh, S. & Foster, C. 2018 Bridging the digital divide and supporting increased digital trade: Scoping study, South African Institute for International Affairs.

- Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development 2020 Global Goal of Universal Connectivity Manifesto.

- Center for China and Globalization 2019 中国如何把握国内外的数字贸易机会.

- De Bastion, G. & Mukku, S. 2020 Data and the Global South: Key Issues for Inclusive Digital Development, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

- Digital Future Society 2019 Measuring the margins: Improving global digital inclusion metrics.

- Global Commission on Internet Governance 2016 One Internet.

- Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace 2019 Advancing Cyberstability.

- G20 Saudi Arabia 2020 G20 Digital Economy Ministers Meeting: Ministerial Declaration.

- Hernandez, K. & Roberts, T. 2018 Leaving No One Behind in a Digital World, Institute of Development Studies.

- International Telecommunications Union 2020 Connecting Humanity.

- Pathways for Prosperity Commission on Technology and Inclusive Development 2020 The Digital Roadmap: How Developing Countries Can Get Ahead.

---

3. This research snapshot includes a selection of top cited publications identified in the broader UN75 research mapping of academic and policy research focused on multilateralism, the United Nations, and the UN's areas of work, covering the six official UN languages. The research mapping was conducted in collaboration with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. For the full methodology, see the UN75 report "Shaping Our Future Together".

- The World in 2050 (ed) 2019 The Digital Revolution and Sustainable Development: Opportunities and Challenges.

- UN 2020 Roadmap for digital cooperation: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation: Report of the Secretary-General.

- UN Human Rights Council 2019 New and emerging digital technologies and human rights [A/HRC/RES/41/11].

- UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation 2019 The Age of Digital Interdependence.

- UN Secretary-General's Task Force on Digital Financing of the Sustainable Development Goals 2020 People's Money: Harnessing Digitalization to Finance a Sustainable Future.

- World Leadership Alliance - Club de Madrid 2020 Digital Cooperation and a Better Global Future .

- World Wide Web Foundation 2020 Women's Rights Online.

Commentaries & opinion pieces

- Bachelet, M. 2019 "Human rights in the digital age", Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

- Buchser, M. & Mandal, R. 2020 "Can the UN Roadmap on Digital Cooperation Improve our Digital Future?" Chatham House.

- Filer, T. & Weiss, A. 2020 "Digital minilaterals are the future of international cooperation" Brookings TechStream.

- Girard, M. 2019 "Global Standards for Digital Cooperation" Centre for International Governance Innovation.

- Gupta, S. 2019 "How digitalization is supporting sustainable development" GlobalDev.

- Kleinwächter, W. 2020 "UN Secretary General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation: Creative Navigating in Stormy Cyberwaters" CircleID.

- Kurbalija, J. 2020 "Digital Roadmap: The realistic acceleration of digital cooperation" DiploFoundation.

- Leuthard, D. 2018 "It's time to strengthen global digital cooperation" World Economic Forum.

- Njoroge, P. & Pazarbasioglu, C. 2020 "Bridging the Digital Divide to Scale Up COVID-19 Recovery" IMFBlog.

- Venis, J. 2020 "Digital transformation and human rights" International Bar Association.

- Zolli, A. 2020 "Humanity and AI: Cooperation, Conflict, Co-Evolution" Rockefeller Foundation.

Data resources & tools

- Geneva Digital Atlas

- International Telecommunications Union 2020 Digital Skills Insights.