



Panel discussion on the most efficient ways of upholding good governance to address the human rights impacts of the various digital divides

DATE : 4 September 2023, 10:00 – 12:00 pm, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm (UTC+2)

VENUE : Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva, and online platform (Zoom)

OBJECTIVE

Pursuant to Human Rights Council [resolution 51/5](#), the panel discussion will bring together key stakeholders to discuss the most efficient ways of upholding good governance to address the human rights impacts of the various digital divides. Panellists will provide the perspectives of various sectors, thereby offering a multi-stakeholder perspective on this issue. Panellists will:

- Discuss and unpack the root causes of digital divides, including the power imbalances that reinforce the inequalities and the lack of economic resources, skill, and physical access to the information and technology domain, through a human rights lens.
- Discuss the human rights impacts of the digital divides by looking at those who are at the front of experiencing discrimination and social, political, and economic exclusion, including groups in situations of vulnerability and marginalization.
- Explore and discuss the importance of human rights data and indicators in measuring good governance and its response to bridging the digital divides, including the gender digital divides.
- Exchange information, expertise, and good practices, highlighting successful experiences and promising practices for bridging digital divides at both local and national levels, particularly among groups that are disproportionately affected.
- Discuss the role of good governance in the context of addressing the digital divides, including through the promotion and enhancement of digital literacy.
- Discuss the opportunities of using digital information and technologies to prevent and address corruption and how such measures should be designed and implemented in the context of and with the aim to bridge the digital divides.

FORMAT

The panel discussion will be in a hybrid format and fully accessible to persons with disabilities, including with international sign language interpretation and a webcast open to the participants of States, relevant treaty bodies and mandate holders, academia, civil society and other relevant stakeholders. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

There will be two interactive sessions, limited to two hours each. The opening statements and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by interventions by participants and concluding remarks from the panellists. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, which will cover the panellists' presentations and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor, with each segment consisting of interventions from States, national human rights institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions.

10:00 - 10:15

Opening Remarks

10:15 - 12:00

Session 1 : Human rights-based approach to data and indicators as a means of measuring good governance and bridging the digital divides

Many forms of the digital divides remain between and within countries, and between men and women, boys and girls, older and younger persons, and persons with disabilities. Those who find themselves on the “disadvantaged side” of the digital divides are being left behind, unable to access education and training, or news and information that can help protect their health, safety, and rights. As a result, digital inequality perpetuates existing social disparities and reinforces economic and political inequalities. Hence, while digital divide is an issue that needs to be unpacked and assessed, data and indicators remain a crucial tool to bridge the gaps and address the underlying inequalities causing the digital divides.

In contrast, data plays a pivotal role for duty bearers to measure good governance and respond to the needs and aspirations of individuals and groups. It also empowers right holders by enabling them to know the process and action of their government, allowing them to hold authorities accountable when appropriate. A human rights-based approach to data offers an opportunity to ensure that no one is left behind through the data collection processes. This approach entails collecting disaggregated data, fostering meaningful participation from all individuals, ensuring transparent access to data for everyone, and holding duty bearers accountable. By applying the human right based approach to data, democratic institutions, services delivery, efforts to combat corruption and overall good governance can be strengthened and improved, guided by the human rights standards and principles and the rule of law.

This session will begin by unpacking the digital divides, including digital literacy, from a human right lens. Subsequently, it will explore the role of data in identifying, analyzing, and addressing inequalities, with a specific emphasis on how data enables measuring good governance but also how do the digital divides manifest in the different forms of data protection legal regimes.

15:00 - 16:50

Session 2 : A way forward: the role of digitalisation in promoting good governance

The role of information and communication technology (ICT) is increasingly dominant in the transformation of the public sector and public service delivery and promote good governance as well as, among others, in preventing and tackling corruption. ICTs can support good governance by impacting public scrutiny, promoting transparency and accountability, and facilitating citizen participation and delivery of public services, among others. Conversely, ICTs can also create new opportunities for concealing wrongdoing, due to lacking the necessary legal, institutional and good governance frameworks. Governments have a duty to protect citizens against abuse and misuse of digital technologies and this session will explore the opportunities and risks of technology for promoting good governance. Panellists will identify and discuss effective digital governance strategies for promoting regulation, towards bridging the digital divides, and integrating human rights-based approach in the delivery of public services.

16:50 - 17:00

Closing Remarks

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 5 [A Global Digital Compact – an Open, Free and Secure Digital Future for All](#), (2023).
- Human Rights Council Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Panel discussion on good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights during and after the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic ([A/HRC/52/43](#)) (2022).
- Human Rights Council resolution 51/5 of 6 October 2022 on the role of good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights ([A/HRC/RES/51/5](#))
- Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Report on the impact of the digitalization of education on the right to education (2022) ([A/HRC/50/32](#))
- Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, Report on possible impacts, opportunities and challenges of new and emerging digital technologies with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights (2021) ([A/HRC/47/52](#))
- UNDP, [Report “New Technologies for Sustainable Development: Perspectives from integrity, trust and anti-corruption”](#) (2021)
- Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Report on Artificial Intelligence and the rights of persons with disabilities (2021) ([A/HRC/49/52](#))
- Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Report on safe digital space for women’s equal enjoyment of freedom of opinion and expression (2021) ([A/76/258](#))
- Secretary-General, Report on the road map for digital cooperation: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation (2020) ([A/74/821](#))
- Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Report on digital technology, social protection and human rights (2019) ([A/74/493](#))
- OHCHR, Report on promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet: ways to bridge the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective (2017) ([A/HRC/35/9](#))