An Open, Free and Secure Digital Future for All

2024 Annual Report

Participating United Nations Organizations

Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology
United Nations Development Programme
United Nations Human Settlements Programme
United Nations Office for Project Services
United Nations University

Table of Contents

The Digital Cooperation Fund

In an era of rapid technological change, the equitable and safe distribution of its benefits requires urgent, multi-stakeholder collective action on a global scale.

Launched in 2023, the Digital Cooperation Fund (the Fund) embodies this mission. Aligned with the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and the Global Digital Compact, the Fund is dedicated to fostering robust digital cooperation for the global common good.

Partners of the Digital Cooperation Fund support concentrated investments in carefully targeted action areas of the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and the objectives of the Global Digital Compact.

In particular, the fund supports functions that remain under addressed and demand international or global multi-stakeholder collective action beyond national-level digital transformation.

Funding windows include supporting digital cooperation on governance of artificial intelligence (AI), digital cooperation for safe and inclusive Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), digital cooperation on data governance, open-source cooperation, and global digital cooperation.

The Fund Promotes Global Digital Cooperation

The UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (A/74/821) provides a vision for a digitally interdependent world. It lays out actions for the global community to connect, respect, and protect people in the digital age.

The Digital Cooperation Fund will make concentrated investments in carefully targeted action areas of the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation that:

- remain under-addressed
- demand international, cross-border or global multi-stakeholder collective action
- go beyond national-level digital transformation to international pooling of expertise, data, algorithms, and alignment of digital governance with human rights across jurisdictions

These funding criteria prevent overlap with national level digital transformation activities, such as those funded under the SDG Joint Fund's Digital Transformation window.

8 Key Areas for Action

Achieving universal, affordable, connectivity by 2030

Promoting digital public goods to create a more equitable world

Ensuring digital inclusion for all, including the most vulnerable

Strengthening digital capacity building

Ensuring the protection of human rights in the digital era

Supporting global cooperation on Artificial Intelligence

Promoting digital trust and security

Building a more effective architecture for digital cooperation

Global Digital Compact

The Global Digital Compact sets out a digital future that is inclusive, open, sustainable, fair, safe, and secure.

The Digital Cooperation Fund will help to catalyse the implementation of the objectives and principles outlined in the Global Digital Compact. It will serve as a vehicle for collaboration and partnership with the private sector, civil society, international organizations, the technical and academic communities, and all other stakeholders, within their respective roles and responsibilities.

Open

Secure

Sustainable

Global Digital Compact

Safe

Fair

Digital Cooperation on AI Governance

Digital Cooperation on AI Governance

Safe and Inclusive Public Infrastructure

Digital Cooperation for Safe and Inclusive Digital Public Infrastructure

Global Digital Cooperation

Global Digital Cooperation

Digital Cooperation on
Data Governance

Open-Source
Cooperation

Funding Windows

The Fund's initial funding windows strategically target the critical policy opportunities presented by the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and the Global Digital Compact.

At the end of 2024, the DCF established two new funding windows centered on *Digital Cooperation on Data Governance* and *Open-Source Cooperation*. Going forward, they will further enhance the Fund's ability to support projects aligned with the Global Digital Compact.

Digital Cooperation Fund
Milestones and Roadmap

Digital Cooperation Fund
Fund Launch

DPI Safeguards
Window 2 Project Launch

OCT-23   JAN-24

NOV-23   MAY-24

Advisory Body on AI
Window 1 Project Launch

Geneva Liaison
Project Launch

Concluded

Advisory Body on AI
Window 1 Project Conclusion

DEC-24

JAN-25

**Global Alliance of Mayors
for Digital Cooperation**
Window 3 Project Launch

Upcoming

**Global Cooperation on AI
Governance**
Window 1 Project Launch

Upcoming

$350,000

$1,175,200

$19,879

$217,699

$753,086

$779,896

$545,291

11/2023

Omidyar
Network

11/2023

Co-Develop (Global Impact)

11/2023

Czech
Republic

12/2023

Italy

12/2023

Germany

2/2024

Switzerland

2/2024

Finland

$500,000

$108,900

$1,081,081

$648,000

$2,000,000

3/2024

United Arab
Emirates

5/2024

Singapore

5/2024

Netherlands

9/2024

Saudi Arabia

10/2024

Bill and Melinda
Gates Foundation

$8.2M Total Commitments

as of April 2025

Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence

A global approach is imperative for effective AI governance, as powerful AI models, once connected to the open Internet, can scale rapidly across borders. To foster such an approach, the UN Secretary-General convened the multistakeholder High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence (AIAB) to undertake analysis and advance recommendations for international governance of AI, prior to the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

The project supported the AIAB's role as a key contributor to policy discussions on international AI governance and established the Advisory Body as a global resource, whose reports, recommendations, and knowledge products harness the world's foremost geographically, gender and age-balanced expertise to foster cooperation among member state, private sector, civil society and other stakeholders on global governance of AI. Overall, the project contributed to globally strengthened cooperation on the governance of AI.

The AIAB published its final report "Governing AI for Humanity" in September 2024 at the Summit for the Future. The report focuses on the near-term opportunities and risks, based on science, and outlines recommendations for reaping the benefits of AI while minimizing and mitigating its risks.

Supporting Global Cooperation on AI Governance

By successfully delivering the Advisory Body on AI (AIAB), the project marked a significant milestone in the United Nations' efforts to support cooperation on artificial intelligence governance.

The gender-balanced group of 39 individuals from 33 countries represented all regions and brought together expertise from government, civil society, the private sector, and academia. The project supported the operational needs of the AIAB and ensured the delivery of its outputs through support to the secretariat of the Body hosted by the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology.

Across its three in-person and frequent online meetings, the AIAB engaged in intensive and wide-ranging discussions, reaching a consensus on the existence of a global governance deficit in AI and affirming the UN's crucial role in addressing this gap. This consensus was highlighted in the AIAB's major outputs, the Interim and Final Report titled "Governing AI for Humanity," issued in December 2023 and September 2024.

The AIAB conducted numerous deep-dive sessions with AI experts from around the world, encompassing a wide range of expertise and engaging with multi-stakeholder groups. These inputs were key in creating the final report, which the body outlined during an engagement in Singapore.

Through these efforts, the AIAB has significantly enhanced stakeholder cooperation on AI governance, contributing to the development of more effectively governed AI globally. With the final report of the AIAB published, the focus has now shifted towards implementing the recommendations made by the AIAB into 2025.

Governing AI For Humanity: Final Report

The United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Body on AI's Final Report, "Governing AI for Humanity," was released in September 2024 and builds on months of work, including extensive global consultations, and the publication of an interim report.

Recommendations:

1 **International scientific panel on AI**

2 **Policy dialogue on AI governance**

3 **AI standards exchange**

4 **Capacity development network**

5 **Global fund for AI**

6 **Global AI data framework**

7 **AI office within the Secretariat**

Recommendation 2
Policy dialogue on AI governance

We recommend the launch of a twice-yearly intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on AI governance on the margins of existing meetings at the United Nations. Its purpose would be to:

a) Share best practices on AI governance that foster development while furthering respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights, including pursuing opportunities as well as managing risks;

   ote common understandings on the implementation of AI governance
   ures by private and public sector developers and users to enhance international
   erability of AI governance;

   luntarily significant AI incidents that stretched or exceeded the capacity of State
   to respond; and

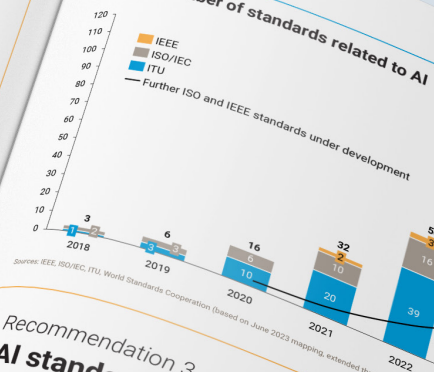   ports of the international scientific panel on AI, as appropriate.

ge

st explored, few   were adopted for narrow technical or internal
o navigate or measure   validation purposes, and those that are intended
ntly, there has been a   to incorporate broader ethical principles. We now
gure (b) illustrates the   have an emerging set of standards that are not
ds adopted by ITU,   grounded in a common understanding of meaning
   for Standardization   or are divorced from the values that they were
   technical   intended to uphold.
ute of Electrical and
                           xxxv Drawing on the expertise of the international
                           scientific panel and incorporating members from
ong these   the various national and international entities that
   routinely used   have contributed to standard-setting, as well as
   transparency   representatives from technology companies and
   ere are   civil society, the United Nations system could serve
dards that   as a clearing house for AI standards that would
                           apply globally.

Figure (b): Number of standards related to AI

Legend: IEEE, ISO/IEC, ITU, Further ISO and IEEE standards under development

Sources: IEEE, ISO/IEC, ITU, World Standards Cooperation (based on June 2023 mapping, extended through inclusion of

Recommendation 3
AI standards exchange

We recommend the creation of an AI standards exchange, bringing togethe
from national and international standard-development organizations, techno
civil society and representatives from the international scientific panel. It wou
with:

a) Developing and maintaining a register of definitions and applicable stand
    measuring and evaluating AI systems;

b) Debating and evaluating the standards and the processes for creating ther

c) Identifying gaps where new standards are needed.

AIAB
Milestones and Roadmap

Call for Experts
1800+ nominations from
128 countries

**Initial In-Person
Meeting in New York**
Two-day meeting of the
Advisory Body
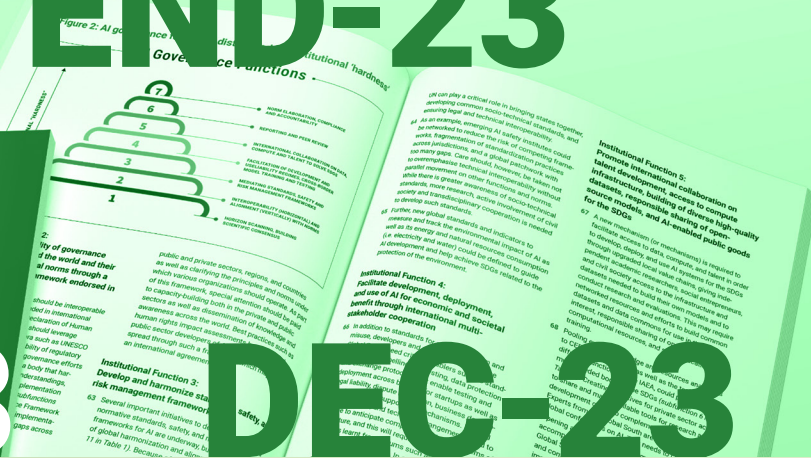
SEP-23

END-23

OCT-23

DEC-23

AI Advisory Body Formed
Members appointed, work
commences

Interim Report Released
International AI governance
principles and functions

Consultations
15+ deep dives and 40+
consultations reaching
1,000+ experts

In-Person Meeting in Singapore
Two-day meeting of
the Advisory Body

EARLY-24

MAY-24

MAR-24

SEP-24
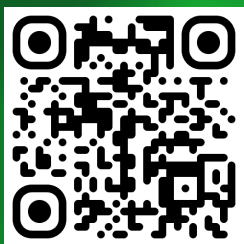
In-Person Meeting in Geneva
Three-day meeting of the
Advisory Body

Final Report Released
Incorporating results
from consultations

Summit of the Future
Member States consider
Global Digital Compact

Digital Public Infrastructure Safeguards

DPI is poised to turbocharge economic development by providing a foundational layer of digital infrastructure to be leveraged by governments, civil society, businesses, and individuals. However, risks of data breaches, surveillance, and exclusion, particularly affecting women and minorities, often scale in tandem. Neglect of DPIs by governments and companies creates safety and inclusivity risks, undermining citizen trust and hampering the socio-economic development potential of these transformative technologies. To guide this digital transformation towards safer and more inclusive approaches, the DPI Safeguards Initiative seeks to mitigate the risks DPIs pose to individuals, while enabling governments and organizations to harness its potential for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The DCF project is a UN high-impact initiative working to develop the first global DPI Safeguards Framework and to promote its uptake across countries. It is a multi-stakeholder effort, supported by governments, private sector and civil society organizations. The Framework includes guiding principles and practices for safe and inclusive DPI and is tailored to the needs of the various stakeholders in the DPI ecosystem.

The project supports a joint initiative of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology and the United Nations Development Programme.

Developing the DPI Safeguards Framework

The first version of the DPI Safeguards Framework—developed by multi-stakeholder working groups formed in March 2024—was launched during UNGA79 as an interactive knowledge library. Additional publications include a guide to the DPI Safeguards Framework, released alongside the Framework, as well as an interim report that contextualizes and explores various risk categories related to the safety and inclusion aspects of DPI.

The framework's creation was informed by extensive public consultations and convenings, with 13 key events contributing to its development. These engagements were further bolstered by a series of updates and collaborations, including a major event toward the end of 2023 and an online update in March 2024. Additionally, the project conducted 12 country engagements, which provided valuable insights that helped refine the framework's methodologies and approaches.

Left page (top, partially visible)

occur when services are not delivered to, and accessible by, individuals; and when they have no recourse mechanisms for complaints regarding security and privacy breaches.

Country-level risks: Technical risks that have country-level impact arise from technology choices that prevent interoperability, scalability, sustainability, sovereignty and ownership of the DPI. These risks also arise from an inadequate focus on mitigating the risk profile of the country, and on resilience, reliability, availability, scalability, and quality of service; inadequate skills and capital to develop domestic DPI in line with global standards, and inadequate focus on various forms of fraud. Risks arise from security vulnerabilities introduced when the DPI is implemented, for example that derive from security of the complexity of supply chains and siloed accountability. Other country risks arise from lack of interoperab... ...influences and various factors that cause ...technical risk. ... ...this gives rise to new threats.

...ave harmful effects on the environment, ...or exacerbating water scarcity. This ...assive, population-scale information ...e large data centres with significant ...y and water consumption. This is a ...DPI.

...at have regional or global impact ...those governing cybersecurity, ...ality, are not employed. Such ...action between different DPI ...II as to global communication ...and exchange. They are also ...y systems. Risks associated ..."lock-in" with its associated ...s discussed previously.
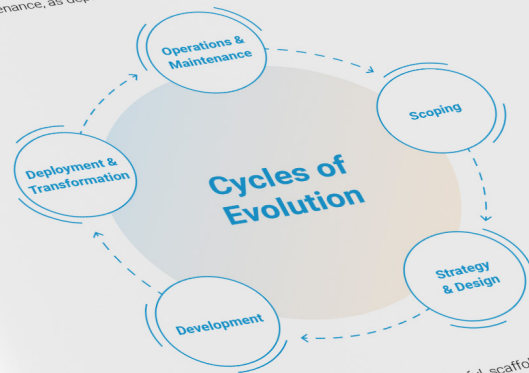
...ency from unnecessary ...diminish enthusiasm by ...ganizations involved in

Right page

4.2 Risks and DPI Life Cycle

Just like any large and complex societal transformation, a country adopts DPI over a life cycle composed of stages and activities. While these are nuanced, based on the social, political, economic, environmental or technological ecosystem of each country, a DPI life cycle generally comprises the following stages: scoping, strategy and design, development, deployment and transformation, operations and maintenance, as depicted below.

Cycles of Evolution

- Operations & Maintenance
- Scoping
- Strategy & Design
- Development
- Deployment & Transformation

This nominal DPI life cycle is included as a useful scaffolding to develop ... generic framework of risk identification, mitigation and management throu... processes, operationalization and governance mechanisms across ... initiative. DPI implementations may continue to evolve, with adjustments ... or some stages of the life cycle, as necessary. This ensures relevance a... in the context of a country or DPI.

Cover (foreground)

...n for Safe and ...eties

Global Mainstreaming and Local Adoption

Building on the successful release of the Universal DPI Safeguards Framework during UNGA79, the DPI Safeguards initiative is now focusing on operationalizing the framework, ensuring mainstreaming at global level and testing it in local catalytic implementations.

The strategic dual-track approach combines global ecosystem mainstreaming with local catalytic implementations to ensure safe and inclusive DPI implementations worldwide.

Built on three core development pillars—Framework Evolution, Implementation Knowledge Resources, and Digital Platforms—and supported by multi-stakeholder working groups, the initiative aims to creates a comprehensive ecosystem for safeguards adoption while driving advocacy and communications at both global and local levels.
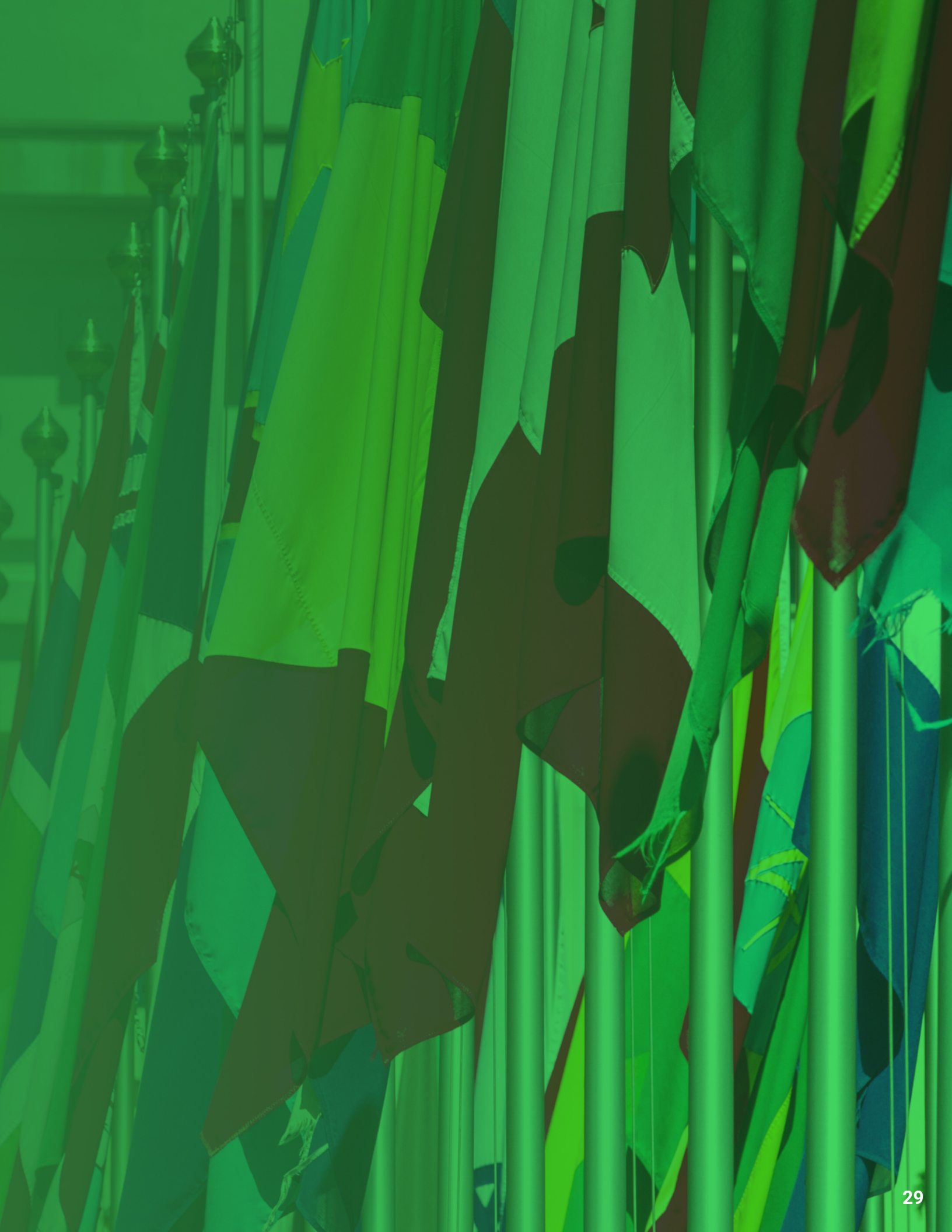
Geneva Liaison Project

Since the World Summit for the Information Society's first phase in 2003, Geneva-based UN and non-UN entities have played key roles in shaping global digital cooperation, including CERN, IEC, IGF Secretariat, ILO, ISO, ITU, OHCHR, UNCTAD, UNODA, WEF, WIPO, WTO and others. Geneva hosts the permanent missions of 177 States, 42 international organizations, over 420 NGOs, many multinational companies, and a relevant academic sector.

With several UN digital cooperation-related processes reaching key milestones in 2024–2026, it becomes imperative to activate this Geneva-based ecosystem. These processes include:

- Summit of the Future and Global Digital Compact in 2024
- World Summit for the Information Society+20 (WSIS+20) in 2025

This project aims to strengthen the bridge between Geneva-based and New York-based processes, with full respect for the mandates of different UN entities, so as to ensure greater coherence and complementarity between relevant activities in Geneva and New York at this critical time for digital cooperation through its support to the liaison presence of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology in Geneva. The overall impact of this project will be greater coherence and complementarity between digital cooperation activities in Geneva and New York during a key period for global digital cooperation.

Outlook Into 2025:
A Global Alliance of Mayors For Digital Cooperation

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) worked in close collaboration with the United Nations Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology to outline a vision contributing towards the localized implementation of the Global Digital Compact. The Global Alliance of Mayors for Digital Cooperation (MDC), with implementation starting in early 2025, is the result of this vision.

The Global Digital Compact GDC outlines a shared understanding of an inclusive, open, sustainable, fair, safe, and secure digital future for all. As urban areas are at the forefront of global digital transformation, they play a key role in its implementation. The digital cooperation of local governments is a necessary tool to harness digital technologies, fostering economic growth in cities, and to improve the provision of public services at the local level.

Recognizing the leading role that cities play in global digital transformation, the project aims to support the localization of the GDC and accelerating its implementation in cities. The Global Alliance of Mayors for Digital Cooperation will provide a forum to encourage global digital cooperation among cities and mayors, to leverage and maximize the benefits of digital technologies for sustainable urban development.
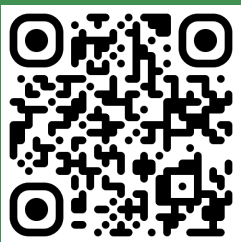
Outlook Into 2025: Global Cooperation on AI Governance

Following the final report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Body on AI and the Global Digital Compact, global cooperation on AI governance transitions to an implementation and follow-up phase. Through the adoption of the GDC, Member States committed to key actions on AI governance, including: the establishment of a multidisciplinary Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the initiation of a Global Dialogue on AI Governance, both within the United Nations. They also requested the Secretary-General to develop innovative voluntary financing options for AI capacity-building that take into account the recommendations of the HLAB-AI on a Global Fund on AI.

The Global Cooperation on AI Governance project aims to support this next phase through 2025 and to enable globally coordinated approach that harnesses AI for humanity while addressing its risks and uncertainties.

Digital Cooperation Fund: What's Next?

The Global Digital Compact and its implementation will further vitalize the concept of Global Digital Cooperation and will surface new opportunities to act as a driver for actions in targeted areas. The Digital Cooperation Fund stands ready to make new investments, including through its new *Digital Cooperation on Data Governance* and *Open-Source Cooperation* funding windows.

Digital Cooperation Fund