SEPTEMBER 2023

DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Scaling inclusive and open
digital ecosystems for the SDGs

HALFWAY TO 2030
HIGH IMPACT INITIATIVES AT SDG ACTION WEEKEND, 2023

The SDGs are essential but we are off track

World leaders made a historic global promise to secure the rights and well-being of all peoples when they adopted the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. This Agenda recognizes that collectively, we can deliver a better future for all. However, the Agenda is a promise, not a guarantee.

Over the past eight years, the world has seen unprecedented mobilization around the SDGs and we have made significant progress on some fronts, laying the critical foundations for our future success. However, now halfway to the 2030 deadline, we are not halfway there – in fact, we are only 15% of the way.

To keep the promise, we need a fundamental pivot

It will take more than rhetoric or increased attention to deliver the promise. We cannot stay wedded to current ways of working. Everything we do, in every corner of our world, will need to evolve for us to advance.

The fundamental pivot we need at the core of the 2030 Agenda demands that countries reorient economies, ways of working and mind-sets to ensure the rights and aspirations of all can be achieved while preserving our climate and natural environment.

This change will take everyone

In many ways, the foundations for transformation are right in front of us - the technical know-how, institutional infrastructure, global financial resources and proven programmes – but we need to channel these resources more effectively. This is the critical moment for political leadership and bold action from national governments; for the international community to come together in common purpose; and for all partners on the SDG journey to take their contribution to the next level. We start tomorrow, by accelerating what works today.

THE HIGH IMPACT INITIATIVES AT SDG ACCELERATION DAY
SUNDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER

As we look to the future, our goal is simple: to generate renewed momentum, strengthen political leadership and channel tangible, integrated and coordinated support behind national plans and priorities. As part of the global effort to meet this challenge, the United Nations development system is mobilizing behind 12 high impact initiatives which provide a platform to help take SDG progress to scale. This platform will enable us to learn, evolve and scale what works with greater coordination and collaboration. The platform cuts across three major areas: economic and social transitions, means of implementation, and a core aspect of the cross-cutting issue of gender equality.

- **Energy** Compacts: Scaling up ambition to deliver on SDG7
- Nature Driving Economic Transformation: Leveraging the power of **biodiversity and nature** to drive equitable economic progress
- **Food Systems** Transformation: Transforming food systems for a sustainable world without hunger
- Transforming **Education:** Learning to build a better future for all
- Global Accelerator: The Global Accelerator on **jobs and social protection** for just transitions
- **Digital** Public Infrastructure: Scaling inclusive and open digital ecosystems for the SDGs
- The SDG Stimulus: Scaling up long-term affordable **financing** for the SDGs
- Transforming4**Trade:** Paradigm shift to boost economic development
- **Local**2030 Coalition: Pushing key transitions and achieving the SDGs by 2030
- FutureGov: Building **public sector capabilities** for the future
- Power of **Data:** Unlocking the data dividend for the SDGs
- Spotlight Initiative: To eliminate **violence against women and girls**

VISION FOR IMPACT

Accelerating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires inclusive digital transformation. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) can maximize the opportunities for digitalization to support the SDGs and reduce the risks that digital technologies may bring.

Rather than taking a siloed approach to designing and implementing digital solutions, DPI emphasizes people-centered and interoperable digital building blocks at a societal scale. This approach allows local digital ecosystem players to innovate on top of these blocks, fostering new services for people. With rights-based and people-centric DPI approaches, countries can advance a range of development objectives and respond better during crises.

Today's decisions by countries on how to build their DPI will have lasting consequences on their opportunity to grow and innovate, and to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Following the G20 Leaders Declaration in 2023, Digital Public Infrastructure is a key breakthrough that gives the momentum needed to change course and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, across all 17 SDGs. As new technologies advance at an exponential rate, there is an acute opportunity for entire communities to benefit from a growing array of life-changing digital solutions — from digital cash transfers to e-health — given proper investments in their own DPI.

OVERVIEW: DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

By 2030, the UN High Impact Initiative on DPI aims to catalyze the collective action necessary, working with leaders and scalable models to unlock targeted support for DPI implementation and strengthening in **100 countries** by ensuring that DPI is safe, accessible, affordable, green, financed, and future ready. Accordingly, this HII has identified and prioritized five key pillars that combine global initiatives with commitments from individual countries and organizations in support of this objective.

1. **Universal Safeguards:** DPI must be people-centric and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. This requires appropriate safeguards, including gender-responsive provisions. DPI implementation without proper safeguards can lead to adverse outcomes, both through unintentional and intentional actions of actors in the ecosystem. Currently there is no commonly agreed set of these universal safeguards that can help drive safe DPI implementation at scale. This pillar calls for the creation and adoption of universal safeguard framework by all member states and stakeholders to collectively chart a unified path forward to ensure fundamental human rights are universally protected. In partnership with the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology and under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General, the Universal Safeguards initiative which also includes the 2030 Safeguards Action Hub will be launched at the 78th UNGA, leading into the Summit of the Future in 2024 and beyond.

2. **Innovations for Last-Mile Inclusion**: Benefits of DPI should be made accessible for all people, including those living in remote regions and those with disabilities that limit access by conventional means. Lack of last-mile connectivity, availability of appropriate devices, and training often precludes those with most need for DPI from partaking in its benefits. This is compounded by the over 2.7 billion people in the world who are not connected to the internet and therefore do not have the basic access or skills required to use digital technologies. This pillar seeks to strengthen DPI partnerships with the private sector and community-based organizations across 100 countries to integrate intermediaries into local digital ecosystems and facilitate greater scale services for inclusion, especially for women, as well as strengthen efforts to ensure universal digital connectivity. Through local digital ecosystems, DPI can accelerate solutions in last-mile situations, at scale.

3. **Affordable & Open:** To realize the benefits of DPI, countries must have access to affordable, safe, and scalable technologies, along with the technical expertise required for design, deployment, and evolution of DPI. In the current ecosystem set up, countries cannot make use of low-cost, reusable solutions due to lack of local digital expertise.

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Affordable access to connectivity is also prohibitively expensive for many people in the world. This pillar seeks to build awareness of the potential for DPI, facilitate guidance between countries on the approaches most likely to succeed, and promote sharing between countries on best practices. Through the development of open digital and data commons, countries can effectively share, re-use and adopt the relevant solutions for their DPI journeys. This is showcased through a preview of the 50-in-5 Campaign, a global advocacy effort bringing 50 countries together to share learnings and accelerate DPI adoption. This includes the potential for leveraging digital public goods, as built-for-purpose, open-source technologies that countries can adopt and adapt to develop their DPI-capabilities.

4. **Sustainable & Green:** DPI can be leveraged to establish global digital ecosystems that enhance transparency, data sharing and innovative green financing. It can help create scalable solutions that empower nations, communities, and individuals in addressing our planetary crisis. To effectively combat climate change and nature degradation, further efforts are needed in leveraging DPI. This pillar demonstrates DPI's use of open standards, shared data, and reusable digital building blocks to enhance transparency, data sharing, and innovative green financing across 100 countries. It also promotes the adoption of sustainable technologies in the development and deployment of DPI.

5. **Financing DPI for Sustainable Development** Rights-based and inclusive DPI requires enhanced and coordinated financing to accelerate deployment and aid states in their implementation efforts. The pandemic has widened the annual SDG financing gap in developing countries from $2.5 trillion to $3.9 trillion, and similarly, available funds for DPI fall short of the escalating global needs. DPI and related innovations, such as digital finance, can play an increasing role in mobilizing, allocating, and deploying funds for the SDGs. This pillar aims to unlock focused financing, including leveraging the Joint SDG Fund window on Digital Transformation, and initiatives such as the One Future Alliance to synergize global financing efforts to improve accessibility of technical assistance, governance capacities, and open innovations for countries. Without this support, many nations may be hindered in investing in various critical areas at scale, such as poverty alleviation and large-scale adoption of clean energy solutions.

PLAN FOR 2023 SDG ACTION WEEKEND

An integral part of SDG Digital, this High Impact Initiative brings together global leadership to demonstrate and consider the many possibilities that DPI can offer to accelerate progress across all 17 SDGs. This HII has identified and prioritized 5 key pillars that combine global initiatives with commitments from individual countries and organizations in support of this objective. Specifically, the session will be the launching point for UN Universal DPI Safeguards Initiative, targeting member state and stakeholder adoption and implementation across majority of the UN member states and territories. Additionally, the weekend will aim to mobilize financial commitments from a range of members states, philanthropies, and other funders, with a Call to Action launched to mobilize beyond the event.

ROADMAP TO 2030

Long-term plans will evolve as we learn and circumstances change. Below is our current approach to acceleration through 2030 after the SDG Action Weekend.

Timeline and deliverables for progress:

- *2024:* Development of DPI Safeguard principles and set up the Safeguards Action Hub; Establish a coordination mechanism to monitor and follow up on DPI financing, including through the One Future Alliance and the SDG Financing Working Group; Catalyze and track the development of DPI technologies and capacities for green transitions to make them available for countries.

Mobilizing coalitions to action women's inclusion in DPI.

- *2025-2027:* Continued strengthening of political leadership and international financial and technical cooperation for DPI through subsequent annual global convenings; high-level convening on the intersection of DPI and climate, additional revenue streams identified for DPI in countries through innovative funding models e.g. carbon trading, revenue collection, additional financing, knowledge and capacity unlocked for more than 50 LMICs for DPI implementation, local private sector companies becoming active proponents of the DPI agenda and actively shaping international DPI cooperation

- *2030:* 100 countries have implemented safe and inclusive DPI, for people and planet.

Metrics for success:

- Number of countries including local governments implementing safe and inclusive DPI

- Number of countries adopting and adhering to DPI Safeguard Principles

- Number of DPI communities and partnerships mobilized across SDGs to strengthen local digital ecosystems in countries

- Number of DPI technologies and capacities for green transitions available for countries and stakeholders

- Number of financial commitments for DPI mobilized.

- Number of action research, high-level commitments and learning exchanges, towards safe, accessible, affordable, green, financed, and future-ready DPI.

Roles and responsibilities of partners:

UNDP and ITU will monitor progress, coordinate stakeholders, and share best practices, in partnership with leaders across the countries and the broader ecosystem. In addition, they will convene meetings to review progress and manage partnership outreach. Partners will assist each coordination and relationship building among member states implementing Universal DPI Safeguards.

SPONSORING PARTNERS

For more information on Digital Public Infrastructure, please contact Keyzom Ngodup (kezyom.ngodup@undp.org); Ursula Wynhoven (ursula.wynhoven@itu.int)

For an overview of the High Impact Initiatives visit the Transformative Actions action tab on the SDG Summit website