

**DRAFT JOINT STATEMENT OF THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE GROUP OF FRIENDS
ON DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AT THE 7TH MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FORUM
ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

New York, 6 May 2022

It is an honour to issue this statement on behalf of the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends on Digital Technologies: Finland, Singapore and my own country, Mexico.

We congratulate Ambassador Kennedy Godfrey Gastorn, Permanent Representative of Tanzania, and Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya, Permanent Representative of Ukraine, for their leadership in organizing the 7th Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals.

The STI Forum is a space like no other. It is an outstanding opportunity to listen to different voices, experiences, concerns and proposals from different stakeholders about the development of science, technology and innovation, rapid technological change and new digital and frontier technologies. The Forum and its outcomes contribute significantly to the implementation of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated our transition to the fourth industrial revolution. This is most evident in the fields of e-commerce, e-learning, and telemedicine, among others. Such accelerated change has brought great benefits, but also opens the door to pressing challenges. For example, inequalities along the lines of income, gender, age, disability, education and health, among others, affect people's access to the benefits of new technologies and risk further exacerbating those structural gaps. While some have used technology to adapt to the pandemic reality, others have been left in digital exclusion, falling further behind.

Co-Chairs,

Considering these scenarios, we welcome the proposal from the Secretary-General to develop a Global Digital Compact in collaboration with all relevant partners through broad and inclusive consultations. "Our Common Agenda" charts an outstanding basis for discussions in this regard. We believe that it is timely to start consultations on a framework for international cooperation on digital issues and digital technology. The challenges posed by digitalization are global in nature, and therefore require a concerted global response to address the issues of connectivity, data protection, human rights, gender equality, misleading content, artificial intelligence, digital public goods as well as environmental and climate sustainability.

We further propose that the Compact address the issues of data flows, online harmful content, online gender based violence, digital skills and literacy, and digital capacity building. We should build upon the good work that has been done to implement the Secretary General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation. We also support the important role that the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology will play in this process.

Therefore, we reaffirm the urgent need to close the digital divide, to achieve universal, affordable and meaningful connectivity for all by 2030, to support and promote digital inclusion policies, particularly for people in vulnerable situations. We further reaffirm that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online.

We are committed to ensuring full and equal access to and participation in science, technology and innovation for women and girls in diverse situations and conditions to close the gender digital divide, as well as to ensure their access to education in general, and STEM in particular. By doing the above, we can achieve SDGs 4 and 5.

We also underline the importance of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and its four components. Since its launch, the TFM has engaged thousands of scientific and technological stakeholders, bringing innovative proposals and solutions to our organization. We express our full support to its work and look forward to its contributions throughout the STI Forum.

Co-Chairs,

You can count on proactive commitments of our countries to address the findings of the STI Forum. As co-chairs of the Group of Friends on Digital Technologies, it is our interest to address these new developments in science, technology and innovation in the work of the United Nations. In the XXI Century, our goal is leaving no one disconnected, is leaving no one behind.

Thank you.