

FORUM: Economic and Social Council

QUESTION OF: Bridging the digital divide and enhancing access to financial services

MAIN SUBMITTER: The United Kingdom

CO-SUBMITTERS: Jamaica, Japan, The Russian Federation, Dominion of Canada

Recognizing the pressing need to develop methodologies for reducing the digital divide and enhancing financial inclusion across all demographics,

Emphasizing the profound consequences and the rapid pace at which digital transformation is occurring, underscoring the need for local and international cooperation to reimagine development in the digital age,

Acknowledging the importance of initiatives such as the "Digital Strategy 2022-2025" led by the UNDP, which aims to foster inclusive, ethical, and sustainable digital societies,

Alarmed by the staggering statistics revealing that approximately 45 percent of households worldwide lack access to the internet, as reported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,

Deeply concerned for the least economically developed countries (LEDCs) that possess underdeveloped internet infrastructures and require support to bolster the digital capacity of vulnerable and marginalized groups,

Acknowledging with appreciation that notable efforts were devoted multilaterally from most member states to solve the multidimensional and critical issue, including The United Nations' International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Connect 2030,

Expressing concern for lack of access and connectivity to digital technologies as around 3.7 billion people live without internet access,

1. Encourages the development of incentive programs for the usage of technological services, particularly in underserved areas and among marginalized populations, with a focus on affordability, accessibility, and relevance, through ways including but not limited to:
 - a. collaborating with telecommunication companies to offer discounted or subsidized internet, developing affordable data plans tailored to the needs and financial capacities of low-income individuals and communities, through ways including but not limited to:
 - i. engaging in constructive dialogues with telecommunication companies to explore options for providing discounted or subsidized internet services in underserved areas and among marginalized populations

- ii. establishing regulatory frameworks that encourage telecommunication companies to invest in infrastructure development in underserved areas, thereby expanding access to affordable Internet services
 - b. engaging with relevant organizations to contribute resources, expertise, and innovative solutions to enhance the affordability and accessibility of technological services, including:
 - i. supplying adequate monetary resources and standardized guidance with non-profit organization to achieve mutual service goals
 - ii. offering preferential policies for financial institutions regarding the collaboration with underserved populations
 - iii. providing subsidy programs or vouchers for technology companies that can be redeemed for digital devices, such as smartphones or tablets, to individuals and communities with limited financial resources,
 - c. fostering partnerships between public and private entities to develop and implement incentive programs;
- 2. Invites More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) to succor Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) in accelerating their process of resolving the severe digital divide and lack of access to financial services in ways including but not limited to:
 - a. providing technical and financial assistance to LEDCs to support their digital transformation efforts, including:
 - i. development of digital infrastructure
 - ii. digital capacity building
 - iii. regulatory frameworks that prioritize human rights, data privacy, and security
 - b. encouraging LEDCs to adopt inclusive and participatory approaches, involving all relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations and marginalized communities, in the design and implementation of digital transformation strategies to ensure equitable access and the protection of human rights,
 - c. establishing international funds for countries to contribute based on economic capacity, dedicated to the development of digital infrastructures in underserved areas,
 - d. organizing programs for the exchange of technology, expertise, and fund developed and developing countries through measures including but not limited to:
 - i. fostering partnerships with relevant private sectors and international organizations for the supply of resources
 - ii. establishing multiple communication channels and forums to ensure prompt update of information
 - e. conducting thorough progress examinations and alterations to action plans in bridging the standardization gap between different economically situated

countries on an annual basis, with these conferences overlooked by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA);

3. Calls upon member states to globalize the promotion of digital and financial literacy programs and workshops to ensure individuals have the necessary skills to navigate the digital world effectively, through measures including but not limited to:
 - a. launching public awareness campaigns to highlight the benefits and opportunities of using technological services, utilizing various media channels to reach a wide audience, and promote the incentives available, including but not limited to:
 - i. radio
 - ii. television
 - b. promoting the designing of comprehensive curriculum and content that are approachable and effective for rural citizens through ways including but not limited to:
 - i. conducting necessary assessments to understand the literacy gaps, misconceptions, and needed areas of improvement in the local environment
 - ii. ensuring the content educates appropriate financial topics including budgeting, insurance, investing, digital transactions
 - iii. supporting the familiarization and usage of digital tools such as control of physical components, digital communications, and prevention of scams and other malicious activities
 - iv. collaborating with local education centers and international rural education programs for a complete and undisruptive integration of digital curriculum,
 - v. integrating visuals and on-hand activities that strengthen the engagement and accessibility of the curriculum
 - c. offering adequate training programs to local facilitators to promote local responsibility and direct support through measures including but not limited to:
 - i. collaborating with related organizations that offer standardized training and technical assistance such as Financial Literacy International,
 - ii. supporting the allocation of resources and funding for countries that lack financial resources to establish necessary training and tools
 - iii. partnering with existing community delivery channels such as the Farmer's Cooperative and Women Self-Help Group to host financial sessions in a more convenient manner
 - d. implementing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track the reach, participation, and impact of the financial education programs by taking note on the following:
 - i. changes in financial knowledges, attitudes, behaviors, and adoption of financial products
 - ii. best practices which can be later shared to relevant stakeholders to promote the replication of such successful models

- iii. presence of misleading or confusing contents that creates the potential of misinformation and incorrect guidance;
4. Encourages the implementation of targeted programs that promote financial inclusion, through methods including but not limited to:
- a. promoting effective tools for financial inclusion, particularly among underserved populations, calling for the establishment and expansion of microfinance services, including:
 - i. microcredit
 - ii. micro-savings
 - iii. microinsurance
 - b. supporting and collaborating with community-based organizations and local financial service providers to ensure the availability of affordable and accessible financial products and services to those who are currently excluded from the formal financial system,
 - c. assisting local content creators and entrepreneurs to develop and deliver culturally sensitive and inclusive digital solutions,
 - d. supporting the development of low-cost, innovative digital financial products that target the obstacle encountered by developing economies and low-income users through methods including but not limited to:
 - i. establishing legal frameworks that encourage the development of cost-efficient financial services through preferential policies and government subsidies
 - ii. promoting small-scale, customer-centric financial products with low monetary burden and flexible terms that are suitable for underserved individuals
 - iii. establishing rules for disclosure, fair treatment, and recourse that protect less digitally familiarized users from potential abuse and inequitable treatment from providers
 - e. revamping accessibility to financial services by comprehensive digitalization while ameliorating their affordability:
 - i. suggesting that the relevant government sectors supplement their regulations with pragmatic subsidies or incentives for financial services existing on online platforms as a method to stimulate digital tools users to access their financial services
 - ii. adopting existing digitalized financial services by implementing them with financial and resource support from national, state, or local government agencies
 - f. allocating fund and resources dedicated for the preservation and training of offline financial services to cater the need of elderlies and other demographics that are resistive to digital technologies;

5. Emphasizes the investment in developing of robust and reliable digital infrastructure, including broadband networks and mobile connectivity, especially in underserved areas, through ways including but not limited to:
 - a. allocating resources and prioritizing investments in the development, expansion, and improvement of digital infrastructure in underserved and remote areas, including:
 - i. broadband networks
 - ii. mobile connectivity
 - iii. last-mile connectivity solutions
 - iv. computing devices
 - v. durable and future-sustaining architectures
 - vi. consistent electricity supply
 - b. fostering public-private partnerships and utilizing innovative financing mechanisms to mobilize funds and expertise for digital infrastructure development, ensuring sustainability, affordability, and equitable access for all segments of society,
 - c. integrating user-friendly, comprehensive internet services that accommodate the needs of local citizens and ensure the ability of full participation in the open internet which includes characteristics such as:
 - i. contents served in languages understandable for the locals
 - ii. elimination of unnecessary paywall sand restrictions that exclude users with low economic capacities
 - iii. inclusive and open presentation of different sources and websites required by the local community;
6. Recommends all member states to boost the implementation coverage of pertinent developed or developing technologies that hold the objective of supporting universal accessibilities, in methods including but not limited to:
 - a. reinforcing the availability of necessary resources for continual research and advancement in universal and high-speed connectivity to the internet via cable, satellite, or wireless 4G and 5G to eliminate socioeconomic disadvantages for marginalized groups, such as the impoverished, the disabled, and the discriminated, to ensure:
 - i. their ability to gain new and pertinent skills
 - ii. their capability to successfully find and apply for jobs to thrive in society
 - iii. to engage in online transactions and online interactions or communication without the hindrance of inaccessibility issues
 - b. targeting rural regions to ensure that advancing technologies can especially alleviate their struggles in embracing digital connectivity:
 - i. allocate resources and human workforce to the creation of necessary infrastructures and devices in rural regions

- ii. mandate the addition of correct digital usage and introduction to relevant areas of fields as a supplement to co-curriculum or compulsory lectures to eradicate informational gaps, misconceptions, or lack of knowledge in digital tools and the logistics behind technologies
 - c. encouraging the usage of newly developed technologies or technological-based programs that accelerate the process of mitigating the issue, which include but are not limited to:
 - i. Giga, a joint initiative launched by The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) that helps to develop the digital infrastructure to expand internet access for schools bolster the younger generations
 - ii. Solar Community Hubs, which served as central access points for technology, education, healthcare, career opportunities
 - iii. online banking, which has a notable use in facilitating online transactions,
- 7. Urges Member States to promote collaboration and exchange of information between the international community and with relevant nongovernmental organizations to achieve mutually supportive and benefiting framework through measures including but not limited to:
 - a. encouraging active participation and support in multilateral and regional dialogues to foster consensus and communication among member states on common objectives, commitments, and norms on topics including but not limited to:
 - i. standardization and sharing of curriculum design, research, and data collection methods
 - ii. mutual supervision and evaluation in the success of achieving stages and targets in reducing digital divides
 - iii. information exchange on success principles, technologies, and functionality with prevalent applicability
 - iv. development of ICTs with the ability to transcend global boundaries and form robust networks through joint efforts
 - b. enhancing the development of digital identity and online identity verification to increase convenience in financial services through ways including:
 - i. working with relevant stakeholders and agencies to promote and develop consistent digital identity standards amongst countries and entities
 - ii. taking legislative and regulatory action to streamline digital ID efforts to avoid fragmentation.