



DIGITAL ECONOMY WORKING GROUP CHAIR'S STATEMENT

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
29 SEPTEMBER 2025

The meeting of the G20 Digital Economy Ministers, met in Cape Town, South Africa, on 29 September 2025, for the first time in Africa. The meeting reaffirmed our collective commitment to harness the potential of digital transformation to accelerate progress towards attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a shared vision of an open, innovation-driven, inclusive, development-oriented equitable, and sustainable digital future for all, which enables the protection, promotion and full enjoyment of human rights. The meeting reaffirmed the importance of building safety, resilience, security and trust and creating an enabling, open, fair, non-discriminatory and sustainable digital economy, which puts humans and their development at the center. The meeting further recognised the importance of sustainable development and the role of inclusive international cooperation, capacity building, partnerships, innovation, competition, and entrepreneurship in driving socio-economic development.

The Meeting builds on the achievements and commitments of previous G20 Presidencies, and focused its discussions on the following priorities:

- Universal and Equitable Digital Inclusion.
- Digital Public Infrastructure as a key element for Digital Transformation.
- Digital Innovation Ecosystems: Unleashing the Potential of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); and
- Equitable, Inclusive, Trustworthy and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence (AI) for good and for all.

The meeting acknowledged existing multilateral and multistakeholder initiatives in the digital economy such as the WSIS+20 review, and consistent with the participation in and membership of the Global Digital Compact, the meeting encouraged continued international collaboration on digital governance with an inclusive, consensus-based approach and multi-stakeholder cooperation, which respects sovereignty in the digital environment and is consistent with applicable legal frameworks and international law. The meeting reaffirmed its collective commitment to closing digital divides within and between countries and addressing the challenges that continue to hinder universal and equitable digital inclusion. Ensuring everyone can access and benefit from digital and emerging technologies for social empowerment and economic opportunities is fundamental to implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).





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Universal and Equitable Digital Inclusion Through Connectivity, Usage, and Enabling Conditions

The meeting reaffirmed its commitment to achieving universal and meaningful connectivity for all, by supporting developing countries in expanding the development and deployment of affordable digital infrastructure. The meeting recognised that development-oriented digital inclusion, which respects human rights advances and enables sustainable development and economic growth. It also improves service delivery and expands access to critical services such as education and healthcare, improving the quality of life and accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The meeting acknowledged that, if not adequately addressed, digital divides may contribute to widening inequality and missed opportunities for inclusive and socio-economic growth and development. The meeting thus reaffirmed the commitment by Leaders at previous G20 Summits to bridging digital divides, including halving the gender digital divide by 2030.

Despite considerable progress, about 30% of the world population, approximately 2.6 billion people, are not connected to the Internet due to energy and digital infrastructure gaps, as well as lack of affordability and other barriers. The meeting recognised the need for comprehensive measures, including supporting policies and enabling frameworks that address coverage, access and usage barriers. Additionally, the meeting emphasised solving the non-infrastructure restrictions on access to new and emerging technologies that can hinder progress towards achieving universal and meaningful connectivity. The meeting recognised the need for comprehensive measures, including supporting policies and enabling frameworks that address coverage, access and usage barriers driven by factors such as digital and energy infrastructure gaps, inequality across various population demographics such as gender, race, age, disability status, geography, limited affordability of devices and services, limited accessibility of high-quality sustainable and secure digital connectivity and stable power supply, inadequate levels of digital literacy, and concerns about online safety, security and trust and challenges related to environmental sustainability.

The meeting acknowledged the ongoing efforts of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and other relevant organisations; and noted the advancement of the *Universal and Equitable Digital Inclusion Framework*. The framework aims to enable policymakers to identify possible gaps and to prioritise actions that could be taken to address the digital divide (Annex 1). The meeting acknowledged the efforts of G20 economies to advance universal and meaningful connectivity, and the *Connecting Humanity 2030 Report* launched during the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) in Riyadh in 2025, which sets out the investments needed to close the global digital divide.





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The meeting emphasised the importance of structured, evidence-based approaches that enable governments to design and monitor interventions according to each country's context. The meeting reaffirmed the critical role of inclusive multi-stakeholder models, enabling regulatory and policy frameworks, innovation driven ecosystems, and sustainable financing mechanisms including public-private blended finance, innovation funds, and universal service obligation, in accelerating inclusive digital development. The meeting recognised the importance of mobilising investments from various sources, including private investments, to bridge the digital divides. The meeting further emphasised the importance of collaborative action to close funding and skills gaps and promote an inclusive and equitable digital transformation for all.

The meeting underscored that secure, affordable, universal and meaningful connectivity is foundational for developing digital ecosystems. The meeting encouraged G20 Members, invited guest countries and knowledge partners, to take proactive measures and work together to foster innovation, capacity building, and knowledge sharing on voluntary and mutually agreed terms towards shaping a globally dynamic digital future for all.

Digital Public Infrastructure as a Key Element for Digital Transformation

The meeting recognised digital public infrastructure, hereinafter referred to as DPI, tailored to each member's national context and priorities, respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms as an enabler of inclusive, prosperous, resilient, and sustainable digital transformation. Building on the legacy of prior G20 Presidencies, the meeting recognised the transformative potential of DPI to advance equitable and sustainable development that can respond to the needs of local communities and respect diversity.

The meeting reaffirmed that digital public infrastructure is described as a set of integrated digital systems that should be secure and interoperable, and can be built on open standards and specifications to deliver and provide equitable access to public, private services at societal scale and are governed by applicable legal frameworks and enabling rules to drive development, inclusion, innovation, trust, competition, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Considering the diverse approaches of G20 members to digital transformation, the meeting recognised that digital public infrastructure is an evolving concept that may not be limited to sets of digital systems with these characteristics and could be tailored to specific country contexts and can be referred to with different terminologies.

DPI is a critical enabler of public service delivery, digital transformation and inclusive development. When designed and governed effectively, DPI can encourage competition, foster innovation, strengthen resilience and financial inclusion, and promote sustainable development and meaningful





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digital access and participation, based on open standards as well as applicable international standards that support DPI, and technological neutrality. Its impact depends on context-specific design, effective governance, and sustained institutional capacity and a strong focus on public benefit. The meeting recognised respect for human rights, including privacy and personal data protection in the deployment and use of digital identity systems, together with respect for sovereignty in the digital environment, consistent with applicable legal frameworks and international law. These are foundational requirements for deployment effective DPI that support social, financial and digital inclusion.

The meeting recognised that safe, secure, trustworthy, interoperable and equitable access to digital identity and effective authentication policies implemented in compliance with applicable domestic and international legal frameworks on security, privacy and personal data protection can help reduce barriers to accessing services and business opportunities, thus promoting transparency, accountability, efficiency of government services and trust in the digital economy, without discrimination.

As an enabling infrastructure layer DPI can generate positive spillover effects across society, institutions, and markets supporting innovation, trust, inclusion, sustainable development, whilst protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The meeting noted the DPI Public Value Measurement framework (Annex 2) as a tool developed under the South African Presidency that can be applied voluntarily according to local context to map the potential effects of investments in DPI, across industry and society, with the aim of aligning digital investments with national strategic development goals. The meeting called for continued collaboration among G20 Members, guest countries and knowledge partners, and key stakeholders to refine this impact measurement approach, prioritizing open, interoperable, reusable and integrated solutions.

The meeting recognised that robust institutional frameworks, sustainable financing, and relevant policies and governance mechanisms, which put humans and their development at the center, in compliance with human rights, are essential to ensure DPI drives equitable and inclusive economic and social development.

The meeting noted the importance of having an enabling governance framework that ensures transparency, accountability, and protects privacy, personal data, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The meeting further noted the Guidelines for Integrated Governance of DPI (Annex 3) introduced by the Presidency as a flexible, non-prescriptive and voluntary resource to support countries in designing DPI governance frameworks.

Data access, disaggregated data collection and data sharing in compliance with applicable legal frameworks, in particular on data protection and privacy, technical and organisational interoperability





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are essential to realizing DPI's social and economic value. In this context, we recognise the importance of enabling safe, secure and trusted cross-sector data exchange within jurisdictions. We also reaffirm the importance of enabling cross border data flows and data free flow with trust, whilst respecting domestic as well as international legal frameworks and acknowledge the role of data for development. We promote DPIs for scalability to produce a more consistent service experience, reduce expenditure on development and maintenance, and can reduce the risk of vendor lock-in for countries.

The meeting encouraged the promotion of inclusive, efficient, and innovative public services through DPI. The meeting welcomed South Africa's global call for DPI innovations, launched in partnership with AU, ITU and UNDP to curate and share practical use cases of people-centered and human rights compliant DPI, which are secure, interoperable and can be based on open standards as well as applicable international standards that support DPI. In this regard, the meeting recalled the Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository (GDPIR) established under the Indian Presidency as a mechanism for knowledge sharing and the exchange of best practices, tools, and resources related to DPI.

The meeting recognised the efforts to promote DPI regionally and internationally and support DPI deployment in Africa and other developing countries through human development, investment and technical support, and through a government-led multi-stakeholder, sustainable financing initiative to fast-track DPI implementation in developing countries, as articulated during the Indian Presidency. The meeting encouraged continued G20 collaboration to share best practices fostering inclusive digital public infrastructure worldwide. The meeting noted South Africa's Roadmap on Digital Transformation, as a useful reference for interested G20 and other countries. The meeting further supported strengthened collaboration among G20 members and private sector to exchange best practices, share knowledge, facilitate technology transfers on voluntary and mutually agreed terms, and advance regional DPI solutions to promote effective economic cooperation.

The meeting committed to advancing open data as a public good and as a critical input into DPI, which should be effectively governed in full compliance with applicable legal frameworks and in accordance with each country's national capacity and development priorities. This approach, which will protect human rights, contributes to ensuring public and local value creation, economic development and knowledge sharing and technology transfer on voluntary and mutually agreed terms associated with DPI. The meeting recognised that DPI and can be utilised as a transformative tool for crisis management, humanitarian and development assistance.





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Digital Innovation Ecosystems: Unleashing the Potential of MSMEs

The meeting reaffirmed its shared commitment to unlocking the potential of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and startups, and venture capital (VC), with an emphasis on developing countries. Recognising MSMEs and startups as the backbone of many economies – in Africa they represent over 90% of businesses and more than 50% of employment¹ – they are engines of job creation, innovation, and sustainable growth in the economy. There are similar trends with respect to the role of MSMEs globally.

In the coming decade, more than 1.2 billion young people will reach working age, with only 420 million jobs expected to be created². The meeting recalled that the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development Conference (FfD4) held in Seville, Spain in June 2025, recognised that digital technology and AI are key enablers for MSMEs and startups, especially in developing countries, to overcome structural barriers and promote inclusive growth. MSMEs and startups can help to bridge this gap, offering pathways to create meaningful employment, entrepreneurship, digital empowerment, and new opportunities for all youth leaving no one behind.

Digital technology deployment expands access to digital services, such as digital payment systems and e-commerce for economic inclusion. This will also enable micro-enterprises to access new business opportunities and support social empowerment and economic opportunities. Furthermore, promotion of digital entrepreneurship necessitates additional focus on reducing start-up failure rates through the development of relevant skills and fostering digital resilience.

The meeting promoted multistakeholder collaboration to contribute to the design and development of innovation ecosystems that support MSMEs and start-ups. Such ecosystems should enable them to become more competitive, specialised, innovative and better integrated into global value chains, including to scale up and expand into international markets.

The meeting encouraged engagement with investors, funders, and MSMEs and startups to contribute to expanding access to capital to fund digital innovation ecosystems, accelerators and innovation hubs, and MSMEs and startups, from early stage to scale-up. This can include supporting sector-specific and thematic funds targeting fintech, healthtech, edutech, agritech, clean tech, and beyond. Special funding instruments can continue to be leveraged and developed by working with

¹ World Bank. 2019. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Finance. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/finance>

² World Bank. 2025. *Jobs: The Path to Prosperity*. World Bank Live, Spring Meetings 2025. <https://live.worldbank.org/en/event/2025/spring-meetings-jobs-the-path-to-prosperity>



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public, public-private, and development finance institutions, and by strengthening homegrown venture capital funds. Conducive Policy and enabling environments can assist MSMEs and Startups to leverage resources to scale up, and to access local, regional and global markets, across key industries.

The meeting recognised the strategic importance of investing in talent through digital re-skilling and upskilling, entrepreneurship education and mentorship, particularly for youth, women, girls and people in vulnerable situations and local communities and entrepreneurs in rural areas and building the capabilities of policymakers, funders, and digital ecosystem actors. This can contribute to fostering a conducive, open, agile, vibrant, dynamic, cooperative and inclusive ecosystem with humans and their development at the center enabling the promotion, protection and full enjoyment of human rights by all stakeholders, with the skills needed to drive success.

The meeting underscored the importance of domestic talent development and research ecosystems to build digital capabilities, foster innovation tailored to national and regional contexts and ensure that digital transformation opens new business and innovation opportunities that are both inclusive and enduring. Therefore, we encourage international exchange programs and harmonizing approaches to digital skills development that are essential for creating a sustainable and inclusive talent pool.

The meeting recognised the importance of collaboration with academia and the broader research community to develop and commercialise research insights for MSMEs, startups and digital ecosystem actors to adapt to emerging technologies and trends. The meeting appreciated the efforts of the Presidency's *Foresight Studies on Shaping the Future of SMEs and Startups, and on Shaping an African Venture Capital Ecosystem*, (attached as Annexures 4 and 5), prepared by the ITU, as useful contributions to supporting MSMEs and start-ups and shaping digital innovation ecosystems in countries and regions.

By working together and focusing on long-term, meaningful impact, we can enable enterprises to thrive and drive the next wave of economic prosperity and positive social impact.

Equitable, Inclusive, Trustworthy and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence for Good and for All

The meeting recognised the potential of safe, secure and trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI) to transform economies, foster social progress, improve public service delivery and drive inclusive growth and sustainable development. To harness the full potential of AI, the meeting recognised the





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importance of creating innovative AI ecosystems through enabling initiatives and frameworks to promote AI infrastructures, nurture AI talent and foster AI applications.

The meeting reaffirmed its commitment to risk-based and human-centric, development-oriented, innovation-friendly AI policy and governance approaches that are consistent with human rights and applicable legal frameworks on security, privacy and protection of personal data, and intellectual property rights, whilst also encouraging multistakeholder participation. The meeting also reaffirmed the G20 AI Principles adopted in 2019, that highlight the importance of international cooperation for AI, consistent with above commitment. In this regard, the meeting reiterated the importance of cross border data flows and data free flow with trust for the development and deployment of AI by enabling safe and secure and high-quality data sets, whilst respecting domestic, regional and international applicable legal frameworks and acknowledging the role of data for development.

Building on the principles outlined in the 2024 Maceió Ministerial Declaration, which emphasised the importance of equitable AI and reducing inequality, the meeting sought to advance this agenda through practical tools and collaboration which promotes a sustainable and inclusive approach to AI, including the AI for Good platform which seeks to identify practical applications of AI to advance potential solutions to global challenges, and the UNESCO Global Forum on Ethics of AI.

The meeting acknowledged that digital divides significantly limit the benefits of AI for economies and societies worldwide, particularly in developing countries. To address these challenges, the meeting sought to foster cooperation on the deployment of computing facilities, on the development of representative datasets used to train AI systems in compliance with public interests and human rights, ethical and international technical standards, the preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity, in line with specific national contexts and applicable legal frameworks. The meeting also recognised that the use of open-source AI, international standards including open standards and tools may ensure that AI technologies remain inclusive and accessible to all nations and people. The meeting further committed to address algorithmic bias as well as to foster transparency in order to promote accountability, explainability, reliability and human oversight including through fostering multistakeholder driven, expert-led and consensus-based development of relevant evaluation frameworks and auditing mechanisms and tools for helping to assess real-world performance of AI systems, throughout their lifecycle. The meeting also encouraged international efforts to promote more sustainable AI with a view to reducing its impact on the environment.

The meeting welcomed the UNGA resolutions *on Seizing the opportunities for safe secure Artificial Intelligence systems for sustainable development* A/RES/78/265, and *on Enhancing International Cooperation on Capacity Building of AI* A/RES/78/311 and stressed the importance of fostering inclusive multistakeholder and multilateral cooperation and global AI governance that facilitates the





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meaningful participation of developing countries. The meeting encouraged efforts to bridge AI and other digital divides including through North-South, South-South, triangular and multistakeholder cooperation, with full consideration of the needs, policies and priorities of developing countries. The meetings supported capacity building, particularly in developing countries, including through policy exchange, knowledge sharing, research initiatives and transfer of technology on voluntary and mutually agreed terms. The goal is to enable the development, deployment of AI and contribute to enhancing innovation, economic growth and sustainable development, whilst fostering societal adaption and resilience. The meeting called upon knowledge partners within their respective mandates and resources to advance international cooperation on AI capacity building. The meeting encouraged the use of safe, secure and trustworthy open-source models, and the development of local language models to further help enhance the diversity and inclusivity and relevance of AI technologies.

The meetings noted the *Toolkit to Reduce Inequalities Connected to the Use of Artificial Intelligence* (Annex 6), prepared by UNESCO on behalf of the Presidency, as a practical resource contributing to informing countries' AI policies from design to deployment; as well as the related G20 multistakeholder virtual workshop on AI and inequality, held on 4 and 5 June.

The rapid development of GenAI offers remarkable opportunities but also carries considerable risks particularly through the creation of harmful and inappropriate content, deepfakes, nonconsensual explicit material and fraudulent schemes. Those risks tend to affect people who may be in vulnerable situations, such as children, youth, girls, women, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Moreover, AI-systems also can be misused to manipulate public perception, disseminate misinformation, disinformation and enable identity theft, affect the cohesion of societies and erode trust in institutions and individuals.

Noting with concern the continued and growing threat of abuses to information integrity, online safety and the digital economy, the G20 members participated in the workshop on *Generative AI and its evolving ability to produce high-quality deep fakes at low cost*, and considered efforts to improve technical detection of the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation and policy response, whilst reflecting upon the steps generative AI applications and social media platforms can take to watermark and label such content. Digital literacy and skills for online users are also important to ensure greater awareness of deepfakes, and to promote online safety, leveraging on the important role of the media in alerting the public about these issues.

The meeting underscored the importance of ensuring online safety, security, and trust, including relating to the misuse of technologies such as AI and social media platforms, and countering technology facilitated violence including gender-based violence. The meeting reaffirmed the





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importance of mitigating the risk of online harms, including for children and youth, in a manner that respects applicable legal frameworks including on human rights.

G20 Members and invited guest countries noted and thanked the South African G20 Presidency's *Guidelines for access to data for AI-driven MSMEs and researchers, promoting data sharing with and by the public and private sectors* (Annex 7), and recognised the interest in aligning with evolving best practices and principles, as reflected in various international dialogues and agreements such as the Global Digital Compact and other multistakeholder frameworks.

The meeting encouraged G20 members and invited guest countries to develop and adopt governance frameworks, with the aim of unlocking data for AI and the digital economy; ensuring public interest, privacy, safety, and compliance with human rights, the protection of personal data and intellectual property rights, whilst respecting sovereignty in the digital environment and consistent with the applicable legal frameworks and international law. The governments can develop data sharing infrastructure initiatives, for example data pools, to facilitate external data partnerships such as with MSME's and AI start-ups, in order to create a level playing field for all economic stakeholders.

Private sector data holders are encouraged to make available data sets and contribute to public data sets whilst upholding data protection, in order to help inform crisis and disaster response and important public policy objectives, such as the attainment of the SDGs. G20 countries can take a lead in promoting international standards, regulation, interoperable data arrangements and data quality that enables seamless, secure and responsible data sharing. The meeting thus further recognised trustworthy and legally obtained data and data literacy as well as its assessment as important components for ensuring high quality and representative data that can support the deployment of AI especially by MSMEs and researchers.

The meeting further encouraged multistakeholder exchanges and continued collaboration on these issues among G20 members and invited guest countries, international organisations, and knowledge partners and other relevant stakeholders in the AI ecosystems, to help identify, promote and share good practices to demonstrate how AI can empower economies and societies. Such collaboration can be instrumental in advancing concrete initiatives in AI education, research and governance.





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WAY FORWARD

The meeting will work to align digital economy strategies with broader development agendas, ensuring coherence across digital, economic, social, and environmental pillars for a holistic and sustainable impact.

The meeting appreciated the contributions of all G20 members, guest countries and invited international organisations for their contributions to the G20 Digital Economy Working Group (DEWG) under the South Africa Presidency of the G20. The meeting expressed its gratitude to all the organisations that contributed to the work of the DEWG as Knowledge partners, in particular the ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, the UN ODET, Research ICT Africa, University of Pretoria, University College London, University of Cambridge, CETIC, ATU, AfDB, World Bank, FAO, South Centre, and OECD as well as many others who contributed.

The meeting further appreciated the relevant contributions and recommendations put forth by engagement groups and acknowledge their ongoing efforts and inputs to the work of the DEWG, notably the B20, M20, T20, C20, L20 and S20.

The meeting commended and thanked the South African Presidency for its leadership of the G20 DEWG in 2025 and looks forward to the G20 Presidency of the United States of America in 2026.

Annexures

1. Universal and Equitable Digital Inclusion Framework
2. DPI Public Value Measurement framework
3. Guidelines for Integrated Governance of DPI
4. ITU Foresight Study on Shaping the Future of SMEs and Startups
5. ITU Foresight Study on Shaping an African VC Ecosystem
6. Toolkit to Reduce Inequalities Connected to the Use of Artificial Intelligence
7. Guidelines for access to data for MSMEs and researchers, promoting data sharing with and by the public and private sectors.

