UN Digital Transformation Group for Europe and Central Asia
Draft Terms of Reference

I. Background

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) form the backbone of today's digital economy and have enormous potential to fast forward progress on the SDGs and improve people's lives in fundamental ways. Emerging technologies like 5G, Big Data, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, together with high-speed broadband connectivity, create new avenues for addressing global challenges in the fields of education, employment, health, agriculture, inequalities, climate change, governance and many more. In the wake of COVID-19, the role of ICTs and services, and the digital infrastructure that countries ride and scale on have become central to maintaining economic and societal activity, thus lessening the pandemic's impact. In these regards, the United Nations Digital Transformation Group for Europe and Central Asia (UNDTG4ECA) was formed to enhance multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral and inter-agency coordination in the digital domain at national and regional levels, capture the enabling potential of ICTs in achieving the SDGs, ensure that no one is left behind from the digital world, and build back better from COVID-19 using the full potential of ICTs.

Europe and Central Asia are at the heart of this historical transformation, and ICT infrastructure has become the predominant enabler, along with fit-for-purpose policy, of the regions' future competitiveness and global leadership. The UNDTG4ECA recognizes how cooperation and collaboration are crucial accelerators of ICTs development, ensuring enhanced accessibility, scalability and affordability of digital tools and platforms. The group's mandate further underlines the potential of digital transformation to enhance global supply chain integration, the use of critical health information, the opportunity for citizens to improve their options in the workforce, the ability for students to gain skillsets previously unavailable to them, and many more positive externalities that are changing the course of history. Guided by these overarching priorities, the group offers a platform to share competencies of diverse UN System agencies in the digital domain to strengthen coordination through the implementation of actions of cross-cutting character, building upon the enabling power of ICTs and advancing digital transformation. This strengthened regional cooperation takes into account the great potential of synergies at the regional level which are created through joint actions and multi-agency initiatives and programs.

Main activities carried out by the UNDTG4ECA since its formation:

- Flagship multiagency partnerships and projects to support digital transformation in Europe and Central Asia involving UN agencies members of the group:

  o **ITU-UN Women** report "Digitally empowered Generation Equality: Women, girls and ICT in the context of COVID-19 in selected Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries"
  o **ITU-FAO** activities to foster Digital Excellence in Agriculture in Europe and Central Asia
  o **ITU-UNICEF** collaboration on the report "Connectivity in Education: Status and recent developments in 9 non-EU countries" and related activities.
  o UNDTG4ECA ICTs Solutions Stocktaking Report, a collection of UN agencies' initiatives and projects to foster digital transformation in Europe and Central Asia.

- Support to Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) to foster digital transformation:

  o Development of a questionnaire for RCs and UNCTs, forming the value proposition of the UNDTG4ECA.

    To provide appropriate support to the UN Country Teams (UNCTs) in reaching the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) objectives, the UNDTG4ECA developed and circulated a questionnaire seeking inputs from the UNCTs members and RCs representatives in Europe and Central Asia. This questionnaire enabled to build a detailed mapping of country priorities vs. the work of the UNDTG4ECA and identify country-specific support to be provided.

  o Upon the direct request from UNCTs and RCs across the regions, a set of Data Protection Executive Trainings for Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) in Europe and Central Asia were organized by the ITU, with the support of the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UN DCO). Overall, more than 60 UN Resident Coordinators, UN Resident Coordinators Staff Office, UN Country Teams members as well as UN System Staff at the regional level participated in the training sessions. Among others, countries covered included: Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

- Information sharing on activities of the UN System

  o Launch of the public website on the work of the UNDTG4ECA on the UNECE Issue Based Coalition and Groups dedicated webpage.
  o Launch of the UNDTG4ECA ICTs Solutions Stocktaking Report presenting UN system efforts in advancing digital transformation in Europe and Central Asia at the regional and national levels.
  o Creation of a repository to collect UN studies and reports related to digital transformation in Europe and Central Asia into a single platform.
  o Organization of outreach events:
    ▪ 15 March 2021, within the framework of the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development (RFSD) 2021: Cross-cutting Session on Digitalization: Digital Transformation in the Wake of COVID-19
    ▪ 26 May 2021, within the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2021: Driving the WSIS Action Lines to foster digital transformation in Europe and Central Asia
    ▪ End of October 2021: Western Balkans Digital Summit 2021. The UNDTG4ECA coordinated with 10 UN agencies a proposal of over 10 sessions and side events to be carried out during the summit, and covering the following topics: Digital agriculture, innovation, smart manufacturing, disaster risk reduction, ICT accessibility, meaningful and inclusive connectivity, gendered digital divide, digital health, the role of data in the recovery of tourism;
    ▪ 15 December 2021: Special session of the UNDTG4ECA on the "Approaches of the UN System to support digital transformation".

- Support to the work of the Issue Based Coalitions (IBCs) and Knowledge Hub

  o Creation of a coordination channel between the UNDTG4ECA and the IBCs through the identification of liaison officers. Regular updates on the work of IBCs with particular focus on digital component are provided during the UNDTG4ECA's meetings.

II. Main goal and Objectives

The main goal of the **UNDTG4ECA** is to constitute a regional platform for UN agencies to exchange common and good practices and to strengthen inter-agency collaboration to advance digitalization and digitization processes at the regional and national levels through the adoption of a multi-agency, multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approach to achieve the SDGs through ICTs by 2030, including by means of joint collaboration on implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks in the countries of Europe and Central Asia.

Specifically, the core objectives of the **UNDTG4ECA** are the following:

(i)   facilitate cooperation and collaboration between different UN agencies in the field of digital transformation, realizing synergies among related areas of work and contributing to the relevant platforms, processes, conferences, etc.;

(ii)   promote coordinated UN support to Member States in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda through ICTs, while providing support to the UN Country Teams (UNCTs) on digital transformation issues;

(iii)   strengthen information sharing on the activities of the UN System in Europe and Central Asia in the field of digital transformation and their impact on advancing achievement of the SDGs;

(iv)   provide support to the work of the Issue Based Coalitions and Knowledge Hub of the UN System for Europe and Central Asia, with focus on digital transformation, while keeping track and sharing updates on the information of new technologies and trends which may be utilized as SDG enablers and accelerators.

All types of support services provided by the UNDTG4ECA to UNCTs are request based. The UNDTG4ECA does not engage in operational matters, or in mobilizing resources for programs or projects, or in implementing them.

III. Typology of activities / *Menu of Services*

IBC thematic coverage	Geographic Coverage	*Main support modalities*	Linkages and coordination with regional/country-level mechanism
E.g. Environment and CC IBC: water management; waste management, etc.)	*List countries/sub-regions for support*	*(E.g. regional advocacy, regional policy guidance, technical support to CCAs and UNSDCFs, trainings/webinars, etc).*	*E.g. Mention consultation and coordination with RC/UNCT/results groups, PSG and other regional mechanisms (to show demand for support)*
The IBC thematic coverage is Digital Transformation. Based on the consultative process with RCs and UNCTs, the UNDTG4ECA will focus its endeavours on the following four priority areas: • Meaningful connectivity (educational institutions, health facilities, youth centers, community centers, administration unit etc.) and last mile connectivity; • Digitally skilled population and highly skilled digital professionals; • Accessibility of ICT services for all; • Digital innovation ecosystem development. Additional areas of support may include: • Youth inclusion and creation of new opportunities in the digital space; • Digital health and social protection; • Digital governance; • Overcoming the gendered digital divide; • Digital inclusion of elderly;	The UNDTG4ECA focuses on countries and sub-regions from Europe and Central Asia (please see full list of countries below). Special attention is dedicated to countries with UN in country-presence, which are identified as priority to support digital transformation. Countries with UN in country presence are: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan. List of countries in Europe and Central Asia: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Rep., Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Republic of North Macedonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy,	In its capacity of regional coordination mechanism, the UNDTG4ECA undertake the following activities: • Coordination on flagship multiagency partnerships and projects to support digital transformation in Europe and Central Asia involving UN agencies members of the group. This includes organization of regional policy guidance, trainings and webinars. • Regional advocacy: information sharing on activities of the UN System, participation in/ organization of UN system events, elaboration and dissemination of joint report taking the stock of ICT related initiatives at the regional and national level, creation of a repository to collect relevant knowledge products. • Support to the work of the Issue Based Coalitions (IBCs) and Knowledge Hub.	The UNDTG4ECA undertook a consultative process to identify digital related areas that are of prior importance to UNCTs and RCs to achieve the objectives of the UNSDCF and type of support that may be provided by the UNDTG4ECA. This consultation process was channelled through the dissemination of an online questionnaire among RCs and UNCTs in the regions. Additionally, the UNDTG4ECA held a series of consultations with IBCs focal points leading to the setting of a communication channel between IBCs and the UNDTG4ECA.

• Data protection, data privacy, cybersecurity and mitigation of cyber harassment (including Child Online Protection and prevention of online violence against women); • Digital agriculture; • Digital trade; • Digital transformation of business and productive sector; • Digitization and ICT upgrade for the weather, water and climate monitoring, observation, information management and services; • Disaster-resilient ICT infrastructure for saving lives and reduce damages; • E-waste management; • Enabling policy, legal and institutional environment; • Emerging digital technologies (including, AI, Blockchain, IoT etc.); • Sustainable Smart Cities.	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, Vatican.	Following the consultation with RCs and UNCTs, the UNDTG4ECA may provide the following type of supports: • Development of national assessments; • provision of policy guidance and recommendations on digital related topics; • Provision of advisory services (including guidance, checklists and technical support in strengthening the integration of ICTs in UNCTs/RCs priority areas); • Development and/or revision of the digital strategy from gender and leaving no-one behind approaches. Additionally, secondary type of products and services that may be provided by the UNDTG4ECA are: • Thematic briefing notes on digital related advancement and initiatives at the regional/sub-regional level; • Targeted country/thematic study/ies to provide necessary evidence and knowledge for UNSDCF specific result/s or priorities; • Regular engagement with RCs/UNCTs to ensure more systematic, strategic and coordinated communication; • Provision of advocacy messages to address key digital trends.	

- *IBC performance assessment*
  - (i)   Number of new UN agencies collaborative efforts on digital-related topics.
  - (ii)   Number of knowledge products elaborated.
  - (iii)   Number of supports services provided to UNCTs.
  - (iv)   Number of events organized under the umbrella of the UNDTG4ECA.

- *Criteria for a knowledge product to be considered / branded as a the Group result*

  - (i)   At least 2 UN Agencies involved in the activity and committing resources to finalize the deliverables;
  - (ii)   Development of each product should be co-led by minimum 2 UN Agencies (not more than 4) and should demonstrate clear collaborative efforts;
  - (iii)   Product should address at least one of the specific issues related to the digital transformation;
  - (iv)   The product should focus on the country or group of countries of the ECA region;
  - (v)   The activity should not duplicate any ongoing efforts in the ECA region.

IV. Membership

- **Coordination**
  - **Co-Chairs:** ITU and UNECE
  - **Members:** FAO, ILO, IOM, ITU, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UNICEF, UNIDO, UN Women, UNWTO, WHO, WIPO, WMO
  - **Secretariat:** ITU

- **Membership**
  - The UNDTG4ECA is open to all UN funds, agencies and programs. Once entering the group, each member agency designates a focal point and an alternate, ideally a specialist working on digital transformation. Any cost of participation is met by each participating member agency. The focal points represent their agencies and are responsible for providing an update on their activities in the field of digital transformation. The focal point is also responsible for keeping their colleagues in the respective agencies informed on the activities of the digital transformation**.**

V. Management Arrangements

The group is co-chaired by ITU and UNECE on an equal footing. No rotation is expected.

The secretariat is led by ITU. The secretariat is responsible, among others, of organizing the quarterly meetings, drafting and finalizing minutes of the meetings as well as finalizing joint annual work plan and following up on the status of activities in annual joint work plan.

To ensure accountability of the members of the group, a list of priorities identifying areas of common interest to advance digital transformation in Europe and Central Asia has been elaborated. This list includes (i) UN Agencies which are able to commit financial, capacity and human resources on specific areas of work; (ii) UN

agencies which cannot commit the aforementioned resources but are willing to provide light support to the work of the group on specific areas of work.

Reporting by members of the group on the progress made in advancing digital transformation and/or supporting the mandate of the group is done during the group's regular conference call (at least one per quarter). Additionally, the leading agencies per key activity is responsible for coordinating with other agencies to ensure effective implementation and monitoring. The co-chairs of UNDTG4ECA will report on the overall status of joint annual work plan as well as key achievements and challenges at the meetings of the RCP and to the DCO mechanism as relevant and necessary.

- **Work Modalities**

  o For the overall coordination of the work, a MS Teams Repository has been created with all members of the group;
  o Dedicated public website serving as the main repository of information;
  o Regular video conferences, which includes coordination of activities and reporting by members of the group on the progress made in advancing digital transformation and/or supporting the mandate of the group;
  o Ad-hoc calls if needed to prepare for supporting UN Missions, reports and interventions at the national and regional level;
  o Yearly review of work, results, progress towards achievement of the group's terms of reference, monitoring of engagement and attendance of agencies, country feedback and UN Regional Coordination Platform;
  o Overall coordination of all regional activities which include ICT component.

VI. Sunset Clause

Members of the group acknowledge that should one of the following situations were to occur, the UNDTG4ECA will be dissolved:

- Insufficient engagement and commitment of resources by UNDTG4ECA's members leading to poor results;
- Situation in which the thematic area is not considered a priority for the regional UN system in the coming year.