## TEMPLATE FOR SUBMISSION OF OUTCOMES

1) **Title of your session**

   Children and the digital transformation of public services: State of affairs.

2) **Name of Organisation(s) organising the session**

   a. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

   b. United Nations University Operating Unit on Policy-driven Electronic Governance (UNU-EGOV)

3) **Relevance with the WSIS Action Lines – please specify the Action Lines C1 to C11**

   a. C1: The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development.

   b. C3: Access to information and knowledge

   c. C4: Capacity building

   d. C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

   e. C7: ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life – E-government

   f. C11: International and regional cooperation

4) **Did your workshop highlight any issues related to COVID-19? If yes, please explain.**

   Key highlights of the workshops includes:
   (i)     Government services are increasingly being carried out online and are benefiting children and their families especially during the COVID-19 pandemic;
   (ii)    (ii) limited knowledge on how the digital transformation of public services impact children and their families even though more and more online services are being provided by governments;

(iii)    (iii) there are elements of the digital transformation of services that are being amplified even in the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these elements are technology use in education, health and other social services. Other elements are increase in pace, literacy, etc., however, accessibility challenges have increased especially during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Although not the core focus of the workshop, the global COVID-19 pandemic was as indicted reflected in various ways during the discussion of the state of digital transformation of services for children.

## 5) Key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, and commitments

The workshop had 57 attendees (including Facebook feed/video views on the day of the workshop). There were also 5 panelists and 6 WSIS secretariat i.e. a total of 68 persons.

The workshop presented the results of the recently published report on "Government digital services and services and children: Pathways to digital transformation" (published in January 2021).

Conducted by UNICEF and UNU-EGOV and published in January 2021. The report is available on:

- UNICEF:    https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/reports/government-services-and-children-pathways-digital-transformation
- UNU Collection: http://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:7896

Available on both the UNICEF and in the UNU Collections the report have to date been viewed 636 times and downloaded 125 times from the UNU Collections.

## 6) Main outcomes highlighting the following:

### I.    Debated Issues

The main issues covered during the workshop and the discussion were generally on classical government services.

The main goal was to present the motivation, objective and state of affairs on digital governance services for children and also to discuss the results of the study. Main discussions were on (a) little or no knowledge on the impact of digital services on children

both in the literature and case studies; (b) how are authorities – (governments and other public sector authorities), addressing children in the digital services design.

The following was highlighted:

(i) The use of digital technology is seen as an enabler to change and is ultimately significant for children nowadays.

(ii) There is a universal potential for digital government services but this does not necessarily specify or identify children and their needs as an explicit driver or driving force of digital services.

(iii) Most publications and reports focused on cost efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery not minding whether the target audience is young or old.

(iv) Some countries in the study have presented child relevant strategies but there is the persistence of implementation gap especially in education, health and social services.

(v) Norm-setting institutions and donors played a major role in driving the general digital transformation agenda. More so, they played a huge role in driving the digital services for children, and child protection especially in emerging economies and low-income countries.

(vi) All case countries recognized that digital governance and digital government needs for children are significant. These are in terms of data protection, privacy and security, and adhere to, or are planning appropriate standards.

(vii) Unclear change management responsibilities between a lot of governments especially in middle-income and high-income countries, for example, Brazil and Sweden. Although ministries and sectorial ministries in these countries played a significant role, they lacked coordination.

(viii) User engagement in digital services for design and testing was recognized across all five case study countries and across all the different stakeholders but it often tended to be the first thing that got cancelled or prioritized lower when budgets or timelines starts sliding in the actual IT projects. Therefore, there is need for improvement.

(ix) Increased challenges for lower income countries for the provision of digital services such as internet access, identity management, digital skills, etc. The lower the income level of the country the less digital service availability for children and in general compared to high-income countries.

The key achievements and challenges outlined above was generally shared by all attendees including panelists

II. **Quotes**

**Quote 1**. *"…..Brazilian experiences show the availability of high-quality data, segmented in relation to geographical, socio-economic and user-parameters is essential for targeted and knowledge-based decision making, not only to assist the marginalized and potentially digitally excluded families but children in particular…."* **Manuella Maia Ribeiro**. Coordinator of the Survey on the use of Information and Communication Technologies in the Brazilian Public Sector. NIC.br/Cetic.br (Brazil).

**Quote 2**. *"…..the importance of the digital transformation is illustrated by an almost 50% increase in the current budget for Ghana's IT and eGovernment strategy….."* **Muhammad Rafiq Khan**. Chief, Child Protection. UNICEF, Ghana Country Office (Ghana).

**Quote 3**. *"…..privacy, security and data protection need to continue to be at the foundation of any initiative of digital services as it is particularly important for children…."* **Jasmina Byrne**. Policy Chief, UNICEF, Office of Global Insight and Policy (USA).

**Quote 4**. *"…..the economic motivator behind digital transformation of services is seen in most countries notwithstanding their GDP per capita or where they are located geographically…."* **Morten Meyerhoff Nielsen**. EGOV Adviser, United Nation University – EGOV (Portugal).

III. **Overall outcomes of the session highlighting**

Refer to 6.1 above.

7) **Main linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals (please specify the SDGs)**

   a. Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

   b. Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all

   c. Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

   d. Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

   e. Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

f. Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies

g. Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

**8) Emerging Trends related to WSIS Action Lines identified during the meeting**

Refer to 6.1 above.

**9) Suggestions for Thematic Aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2022**

Measurement! Objectives of the SDGs and WSIS Action Lines are noteworthy and relevant but many are hard to monitor and measure as they are often qualitative in nature and the aims are not quantified.

May be worth considering minimizing the overlap individual SDGs and Action Lines are in a post-2030 context.

WSIS should continue bringing together multiple stakeholders to facilitate and help establish partnerships, not least for international and regional organisations.