Seventh Ministerial Conference on the Information
Society in Latin America and the Caribbean

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DIGITAL AGENDA FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN (eLAC2022)

UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

A. BACKGROUND

1.   The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marks the entry of a new era and a time of opportunity when the dissemination and adoption of new technologies and global interconnection, and in which information and communications technology (ICT), offer enormous potential for accelerating human progress, facilitating access to information and developing knowledge societies. The 2030 Agenda also acknowledges the critical nature of scientific and technological innovation in areas that are vital to development such as health and energy. Both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda itself expressly include ICT as an essential tool for improving the quality of education, promoting women's empowerment, driving inclusive and sustainable industry and promoting innovation, as well as part of the means of implementation of the Agenda.[1]

2.   In 2020, it will be 15 years since the Plan of Action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2007) was adopted in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 2005. This cooperation mechanism has been renewed over the years, and was last updated during the sixth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) in April 2018, where the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2020) was adopted and it was agreed to hold the seventh Ministerial Conference in 2020.

3.   The present situation caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic forms a new and complex global panorama, characterized by an economic and social collapse of unforeseen magnitude. In this new reality, digital technologies have proven to be essential tools to facilitate physical distancing and mitigate the economic and social effects of the crisis. Adoption of these technologies has also accelerated considerably during this period, providing solutions for trade, labour, education and health. However, the coverage and use of digital technologies are still determined by structural and socioeconomic factors. In the medium and long terms, social welfare will clearly not be possible without access to and use of digital technologies in all areas of economic and social life.

4.   The Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean is intended as a catalyst for regional cooperation on digital matters and a mechanism to promote policy design, capacity-building and political dialogue on the challenges and opportunities that the digital transformation creates for society and the economy. Technological progress, coupled with the challenges of the crisis, calls for renewed cooperation that facilitates the expansion of the digital economy to all segments of the population but also promotes trust and security in the use of digital technologies.

5.   A cooperation agenda is needed to address the short-, medium- and long-term challenges associated with digital inclusion. To respond to the challenges the region faces in this area, the proposed Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2022), presented below, includes 8 areas of action —in addition to a section on the fight against the pandemic and economic recovery and reactivation— and identifies 39 specific goals for implementation. This proposal was formulated based on a survey of eLAC2020 focal points and observers, consultation with working groups and a review of documents. The proposal aims to follow on from previous agreements and provide inputs for political dialogue at the seventh Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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[1]   General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

B. AREAS OF ACTION AND GOALS

1. Digital infrastructure

Goal 1: Adopt policies, digital agendas and plans with specific targets relating to affordable universal access, which encourage deployment of broadband connections and resilient high-capacity networks, through an appropriate balance of public investment and the promotion of competition within an investment-friendly environment.

Goal 2: Promote broadband access and connectivity that is meaningfully affordable and of sufficient quality in remote, rural and semi-urban areas, fostering the development of alternative connectivity providers such as community networks, rural operators and cost-efficient technologies, through alternative and sustainable investment models.

Goal 3: Foster policies and incentives for the deployment, sharing and operation of the enabling infrastructure and technologies needed for the development of the Internet, especially by promoting the establishment and strengthening of Internet exchange points (IXPs) and adoption of Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) protocols, through multi-stakeholder approaches.

Goal 4: Formulate plans and strategies that facilitate the efficient and effective provision, management and use of radioelectric spectrum in accordance with international standards and recommendations, to promote the harmonized deployment of fifth-generation mobile technology (5G) in all countries of the region, taking into account the need for appropriate metrics to measure the efficient use of the spectrum.

Goal 5: Promote the strengthening or creation of specialized digital and connectivity infrastructure to boost education, science and technology in the region as fundamental pillars of economic and social development and to accelerate processes of digital transformation.

2. Digital transformation and the digital economy

Goal 6: Promote digital presence and effective adoption, dissemination and use of advanced digital tools related to Industry 4.0 to foster business productivity and competitiveness, as well as entrepreneurship and structural change, with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and women-led initiatives.

Goal 7: Incentivize entrepreneurial ecosystems and public and private collaboration to promote production linkages and innovation, and to accelerate technology-based enterprises, through incubators, accelerators, business networks and digital ecosystem observatories.

Goal 8: Stimulate the diversification of financing options for technology-based enterprises, including alternative sources of financing supported by systems such as targeted trusts, person-to-person loans and financial services through digital and other platforms and use digital technologies to reduce information asymmetries and barriers to access to capital markets, in accordance with domestic legislation and based on an appropriate regulatory framework that balances innovation, stability and security.

Goal 9:   Address the emerging challenges of the digital economy by updating rules and regulations on taxation, labour, competition and international trade, within a framework that safeguards rights and promotes sustainable development, taking into account the differences between countries that could hinder progress.

Goal 10:   Strengthen the political and regulatory frameworks to facilitate digital transformation processes and their linkages with national education, research and innovation systems.

3. Digital government

Goal 11:   Promote open standards, based on the principle of technological neutrality, that facilitate and expedite government services and promote multichannel and multidevice services, fostering an interoperable regional environment through data exchange and the development of infrastructure, platforms, architectures, standards, integrated systems and computer interfaces that ensure digital transformation.

Goal 12:   Foster the adoption of a regional strategy of standards and agreements for digital identity interoperability, digital signature, e-apostille and electronic medical records that support innovations in the public and private sectors, safeguarding data privacy, enabling public consultation, ensuring transparency and non-discrimination and strengthening security and trust in online services.

Goal 13:   Promote the use of digital tools for government procurement and contracts for public services and works, to ensure transparency, services for citizens, civic oversight and effective accountability.

4. Inclusion and digital skills and other competencies

Goal 14:   Promote the development and incorporation of digital skills and competencies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics into teaching and learning by updating curricular content, digital educational resources and teaching standards according to the skills that will be demanded by the activities of the future.

Goal 15:   Strengthen advanced digital, technical and professional skills and competencies and establish incentives for companies and governments to provide opportunities for continuous learning to workers, based on individual and local needs and labour market requirements.

Goal 16:   Promote a digital culture that incentivizes appropriation of technology and development of digital skills and competencies, for the innovative, ethical, safe and responsible use of ICT to promote digital inclusion.

Goal 17:   Promote accessibility of digital technologies as a necessary resource for the inclusion of persons with visual, auditory, mobility, motor and cognitive disabilities, among others, in work, education, health, culture, access to justice, public services and smart cities.

Goal 18: Establish a comprehensive and non-discriminatory perspective in public policies for digital inclusion, guaranteeing full access and use of ICT and emerging digital technologies for women, girls and older persons and promoting their online participation and safety, as well as women's leadership in public and private decision-making spaces.

Goal 19: Promote telework in the region, updating labour policies to ensure adequate social protection, social dialogue, decent work and participation of workers in the digital economy, above all in the case of vulnerable groups and women.

5. Emerging technologies for sustainable development

Goal 20: Promote technological development and digital and data innovation through incentives for development of new products and services, provision of public and private financing, a flexible regulatory environment and consolidation of a digital ecosystem.

Goal 21: Encourage open access to data and its reuse in the public and private sectors, to drive innovation, co-creation of value, new products and services, and evidence-based policymaking.

Goal 22: Consider the use of emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence and 5G technology, in a convergent and interoperable manner, taking into account factors relating to ethics, impartiality, transparency, accountability, security, privacy and non-discrimination.

Goal 23: Promote the use of digital technologies to prevent, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and natural disasters, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote sustainable development.

6. Trust and digital security

Goal 24: Combat digital crime by formulating public policies and cybersecurity strategies for critical infrastructure protection, by developing or establishing regulatory frameworks aligned with international human rights instruments, building capacities, strengthening secure systems based on best practices, and by coordinating at the local, regional and international levels among cyber incident response teams and among stakeholders.

Goal 25: Coordinate multi-stakeholder actions aimed at ensuring privacy and personal data protection, the protection of consumers and their rights on online platforms, access to public information and freedom of expression in the digital environment, restricting improper and unauthorized use of data and strengthening mechanisms of collaboration between the competent authorities in the region.

Goal 26: Promote civil society participation in assessment, mediation, transparency, capacity-building and consumer protection.

7. Regional digital market

Goal 27:   Promote a regional digital market strategy, including in the framework of regional and subregional integration mechanisms, that facilitates cross-border e-commerce and digital trade through integration of digital infrastructure, regulatory harmonization, free flow of data with trust, in accordance with domestic legislation; trade facilitation; improved postal and logistics services; and regulatory frameworks that encourage innovation in digital payment services.

Goal 28:   Facilitate greater regional coordination through a digital integration plan that establishes a common vision and goals, with mechanisms for dialogue and coordination with existing regional and subregional organizations.

8. Digital regional cooperation

Goal 29:   Promote strengthened regional digital cooperation in Internet governance processes by reinforcing national, regional and subregional multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanisms.

Goal 30:   Strengthen the institutional structure of the entities responsible for designing, implementing and following up on digital agendas. Formalize and coordinate multi-stakeholder participation in the development of such policies.

Goal 31:   Promote digital regulatory coherence at the regional level, especially on data protection, cross-border data flows, cybersecurity, e-commerce and digital trade, consumer protection and rights on online platforms, and interoperability between digital signatures and digital identity systems in the region, in line with domestic policy and regulatory frameworks.

Goal 32:   Improve the measurement of digital transformation and the digital economy by strengthening data collection, analysis and review for official statistics, use of new methods and advanced technologies such as big data analytics, strengthening and harmonization of common frameworks of indicators and their monitoring and evaluation through regional observatories.

9. Combatting the pandemic and facilitating economic recovery and reactivation

Goal 33:   Design strategies for economic recovery and reactivation based on productive digital transformation and the use of ICTs and which encourage inclusive innovation and changes in management, production and business models, with a special focus on SMEs.

Goal 34:   Promote comprehensive policies on information management in the different key government areas to address the pandemic and enable coordination of testing, dissemination channels, communication, services, epidemiological forecasting and limitation of physical contact between people.

Goal 35:   Implement specific measures to promote and expand access and continuity of access to quality Internet services and digital platforms, preserving in particular the open architecture and interoperability of the Internet, and addressing the affordability of connectivity and devices.

Goal 36: Strengthen the institutional and regulatory frameworks for data protection and privacy, providing a guarantee to citizens that the exceptional access to personal data required to deal with a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, entails adequate custody of the data, and that their privacy will be safeguarded.

Goal 37: Strengthen distance education programmes in national education systems, considering the use of digital tools specifically designed for low-connectivity settings, in addition to supporting the training and digital literacy of teachers and the development of digital educational content.

Goal 38: Promote strategies and programmes in the field of digital health, considering aspects such as training of health professionals, promotion of telemedicine services, interoperability of health information and records systems, regulations to protect patient privacy and validation of the use of emerging technologies, and new means of delivering health services.

Goal 39: Accelerate the creation of affordable services and online government solutions that allow citizens to be served remotely, to facilitate physical distancing, through the use of digital identification systems.