



# Council Declaration

The Digital Cooperation Organization's 3rd General Assembly  
Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain



Since its inception in 2021, the Digital Cooperation Organization (“DCO” or “the Organization”) has been standing as the only global intergovernmental organization dedicated to digital cooperation. Now representing 16 nations, the Organization has been working relentlessly with its Members States, Observers, and Partners to enable Digital Prosperity for all, currently serving more than 800 million people with a collective GDP of more than 3.5 trillion USD.

On 31 January 2024, the DCO Council convened its 3rd General Assembly under the Presidency of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and brought together Ministers and Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Djibouti, the Republic of The Gambia, the Republic of Ghana, the Hellenic Republic, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Kuwait, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Sultanate of Oman, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the State of Qatar, the Republic of Rwanda, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## Preamble

We, the Ministers, and Representatives of Members States of the Digital Cooperation Organization, gathered in Manama at the 3rd superscript DCO General Assembly on 31 January 2024,

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We express our high appreciation to the 2023 Presidency, the Kingdom of Bahrain, as the host of this General Assembly, and warmly welcome the participation of guest countries, Observers and Partners. Their contributions are invaluable to our debates and the pursuit of our common vision.

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We acknowledge the critical juncture in the advancement of the global digital economy and therefore considering the importance of multilateral, multistakeholder, and multi-sectorial, digital cooperation to drive and accelerate the sustainable and inclusive growth of the global digital economy, we reaffirm our commitment to build an agile, efficient, and relevant organization and recall its functions of information provider, advisor, advocator, and facilitator, to deliver impact-driven interventions benefiting to the Member States, the public and private sectors, as well as civil society.

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We recall our goals and objectives articulated in the DCO Strategic Roadmap for 2030, approved by the Council in its Special Meeting of 7 December 2022, which are pivotal in bridging the global digital divide and ensuring a fair and human-centric digital economy. As such, we welcome the 2024 Plan and Objectives, approved by the DCO Council in its Administrative Meeting held on 12 December 2023, which translated our Roadmap into action for 2024.

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We affirm our commitment to avoid that the global digital divide becomes the new face of development divide and recognizing the potential of digital transformation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we recall the need for joint and relentless effort to ensure that every country, business, and individual gets the chance to prosper in the digital economy and drive progress for 2024.

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We note the recent developments and trends of the digital economy and acknowledge its dual nature, presenting an abundance of opportunities but also bringing important challenges to be mitigated and addressed through international cooperation. A multifaceted approach is essential, addressing not just infrastructure but also skills, policies, investment, cross-border data flows, support to SMEs, and others.

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We particularly emphasize the importance of multilateral cooperation to harmonize digital policies around the world, as the host of this General Assembly, and warmly welcome the participation of guest countries, Observers and Partners. Their contributions are invaluable to our debates and the pursuit of our common vision.

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We acknowledge the groundbreaking achievements by the Organization in a very short period, thanks to the commitment and the engagement of all Member States. And we also stress the importance of multilateral efforts and the significant role played by the DCO Observers and Partners, including the private sector, NGOs, and academia. Commending the efforts of the General Secretariat, we acknowledge the progress reported and look forward to continued advancements.

### Joining forces to drive digital cooperation

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We welcome the **adhesion of new Member States** and are pleased to welcome the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the State of Qatar, and the Hellenic Republic for their first DCO General Assembly. Each adhesion of a new Member demonstrates again the global relevance of the DCO's mission and enables the Organization to impact more individuals, businesses, and countries. Similarly, since the last General Assembly, we welcome 17 new Observers which joined the Organization, outlining the global will to drive digital cooperation among all types of stakeholders.

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We recognize the **role of cooperation to overcome the risks of digital fragmentation and bridge the digital divide**, which could impair the potential benefits of the digital transformation and innovation, but also limit the capacity of countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In this effort, we acknowledge the importance and contributions of Observers to the activities of the DCO, and welcome the Sultanate of Oman's intention of hosting an Observers Committee meeting in May 2024 to foster public-private partnerships for a prosperous digital economy.

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We reiterate our **commitment to leverage the power of digital cooperation** to accelerate the sustainable and inclusive growth of the digital economy with the ultimate mission to enable prosperity for all. And in that context, we recognize the importance of maximizing the value of data, accelerating the development of human-centric emerging technologies, and building a harmonized and conducive cross-border market which will generate jobs and encourage innovation.

## Value of data

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**We reaffirm the importance of harnessing the value of data** to enable the inclusive and sustainable growth of the digital economy, and therefore the need to enhance the flow of data across borders through the establishment of Cross-Border Data Flows with Trust. Access to and use of data are key elements of the digital economy, enabling international trade and investments. It makes data governance central to any successful policy supporting economic growth.

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**We endorse the DCO Data agenda** which will serve as a framework for navigating the complex landscape of data management and governance, helping Member States and the Organization meet the challenges of interoperability, privacy, and the evolving area of digital diplomacy.

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**We announce the launch of the new Data Embassy Initiative.** This initiative will support the establishment of a network of secure data storage facilities beyond national borders, ensuring the safety and sovereignty of Member States' data, while fostering a unified digital environment among the DCO Member States. We are convinced that the DCO Data Embassy will create a robust framework for Member States, offering standardized protocols for the secured storage and handling of data on international servers, prioritizing economic advantage and privacy.

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**We welcome the decision of the Kingdom of Bahrain to champion the Data Embassy Initiative** which is the cornerstone of this Data Agenda, and we commit to joining efforts to ensure multilateral cooperation and dialogue on this key initiative.

## Human-centric emerging technologies

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**We are committed to fostering a human-centric, safe, and sustainable digital economy,** and monitoring closely the evolution of emerging technologies and their potential impact on humanity. In this context, we acknowledge that the popularization of AI and metaverse are profoundly shaking up the relationship and accessibility to technology for people around the world, but we also point out that their development is not without risk.

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We recall the need to ensure the development of AI for the Good of Humanity, as stated in the DCO Riyadh AI Call for Action launched during the 2022 Global AI Summit.

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**We announce the launch of the DCO GenAI Center of Excellence Initiative** which will kick-start a network of state-of-the-art facilities equipped with advanced computing systems with the ambition to accelerate the development of essential AI infrastructure, stimulate the development of domestic AI start-up ecosystem, and ultimately position the DCO Member States as GenAI producers in leading economic sectors; such as gaming and healthcare, supporting economic growth.

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**We acknowledge and recognize the initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia “Gen AI for all”** to deliver digital prosperity for all under its established International Center for AI Research and Ethics (ICARE). area of digital diplomacy.

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**Recognize that social media platforms have brought about a significant shift** in how people globally interact, breaking down geographical barriers, and enabling instant connections. Also recognizing that amidst these promising prospects, ethical challenges have emerged, including issues of transparency, accountability, and authenticity. Expressing concerns regarding the widespread misinformation and offensive content which negatively impacts individual and societal beliefs and values, which jeopardizes the creation of a safe, inclusive, and sustainable online environment.

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**We acknowledge the growing challenges associated with online content** and the importance to adopt a comprehensive and multistakeholder approach at the global level to mitigate the risks in term of misinformation, children protection, as well the respect of cultural diversity. We advocate for a transparent, trustworthy digital economy through increased collaboration between the public and private sectors that must be rooted in mutual trust.

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**We reiterate our commitment to take joint action** in an inclusive and open way to address the challenges of misinformation, as described in the white paper published by the DCO General Secretariat in November 2023.

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**We announce the launch of the Online Content Integrity Initiative**, designed to confront the challenges presented by misinformation on social media and streaming platforms while considering the diversity of cultural values. The initiative will take a comprehensive approach articulated across five (5) key elements: State's efforts, social awareness, multi-stakeholders dialogue, promotion of cultural diversity, and development of new technology solutions.

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**We welcome the decision of the State of Kuwait to champion the Online Content Integrity Initiative**, starting with the establishment of a High-level Committee and Task Force, involving governments, private sector, and civil societies to lead the successful development of this initiative, as of 2024.

## Trade, Investments, and entrepreneurship

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**Promoting digital trade, investment, and entrepreneurship** are the foundations of the development of a prosperous cross-border digital market. Since its inception, the DCO has been actively engaging in supporting entrepreneurs and startups.

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We acknowledge the key milestones reached in 2023 in this area and welcome the active role of Member States championing those initiatives:

- a. **We commend the efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan** to champion the STRIDE Association, an umbrella initiative acting as a digital entrepreneurship ecosystem providing tailored services for the empowerment of SMEs and startups. We call upon all Member States to take an active role in the newly established Member States Working Group, which will lead the delivery of key impact-driven projects such as the Start-up Passport, the Startup Guides, and the Standard of Excellence for Entrepreneurship.
- b. **We welcome the announcement by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan**, champion of the DFDI initiative, of their decision to host the first Digital FDI Forum in 2024, which is designed as an ambitious platform to showcase the results of the DFDI initiative, and advocate for investment in the digital economy across the DCO Member States.
- c. **We welcome the announcement by the Republic of Rwanda** of their commitment to champion the WE-Elevate Initiative which aims to support women entrepreneurship across the DCO Member States by supporting women-led SMEs in their journey to leverage e-commerce opportunities.

## Accelerating the digital cooperation agenda

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**We reaffirm the critical role of cooperation to share digital products and services** from diverse sectors to boost digital transformation and contribute to the growth of an inclusive and sustainable digital economy. In this perspective, we commend the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in initiating, with the support of the General Secretariat, the IMPACT platform. It will allow to streamline the integration of digital solutions, encourage the exchange of knowledge, cultivate digital ecosystems, and enhance capabilities.

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**We welcome the successful completion of the 2023 Digital Space Accelerators.** This cooperation mechanism, led by the General Secretariat, aims to, is aiming to define actionable solutions co-designed among public and private sectors, and civil society to key challenges of the digital economy. We call upon all Member States and global stakeholders to take an active role in the next iteration of the Digital Space Accelerators to be launched in March 2024.

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We agree on the importance of inclusive digital cooperation by opening discussions to all stakeholders, even the most vulnerable or marginalized groups. In this perspective, we welcome the organization of the first Youth Dialogue, here in Manama, with the participation of more than 20 youth representing most of the DCO Member States. We commit to encouraging participation of the Youth from all DCO Member States, and in this effect, we request the Secretary-General to activate a “Future Pulse” which will drive active engagement of the future digital leaders.

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We request the Secretary-General to continue to lead global advocacy efforts, representing the Organization, to build strong, inclusive, and impactful strategic dialogues with all relevant stakeholders sharing the ambition to enable digital prosperity for all. In this perspective, we call upon all Members to support these efforts, and leverage together the opportunity to shape the future of digital cooperation in the context of the finalization of the Global Digital Compact during the UN Summit of the Future.

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Today’s era must be of digital cooperation, not fragmentation.

## Organization and governance

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We express our gratitude to the Kingdom of Bahrain for its dedication and visionary approach to leading the Council of the Organization and for the accomplishments achieved during its Presidency.

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We extend our congratulations to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for assuming the Presidency of the DCO Council for the year 2024 and we endorse the election of the State of Kuwait as the Presidency country for the year 2025.

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We confirm the composition of the 2024 Executive Committee, which will be chaired by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and will include Deputies from the following Member States: the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, and the Republic of Rwanda.

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We agree that the next General Assembly of the Digital Cooperation Organization will take place by the end of February 2025 in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, when we will discuss the progress of the Organization and assess the impact of our joint initiatives in line with the DCO Strategic Roadmap for 2030 to enable Digital Prosperity for All.





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