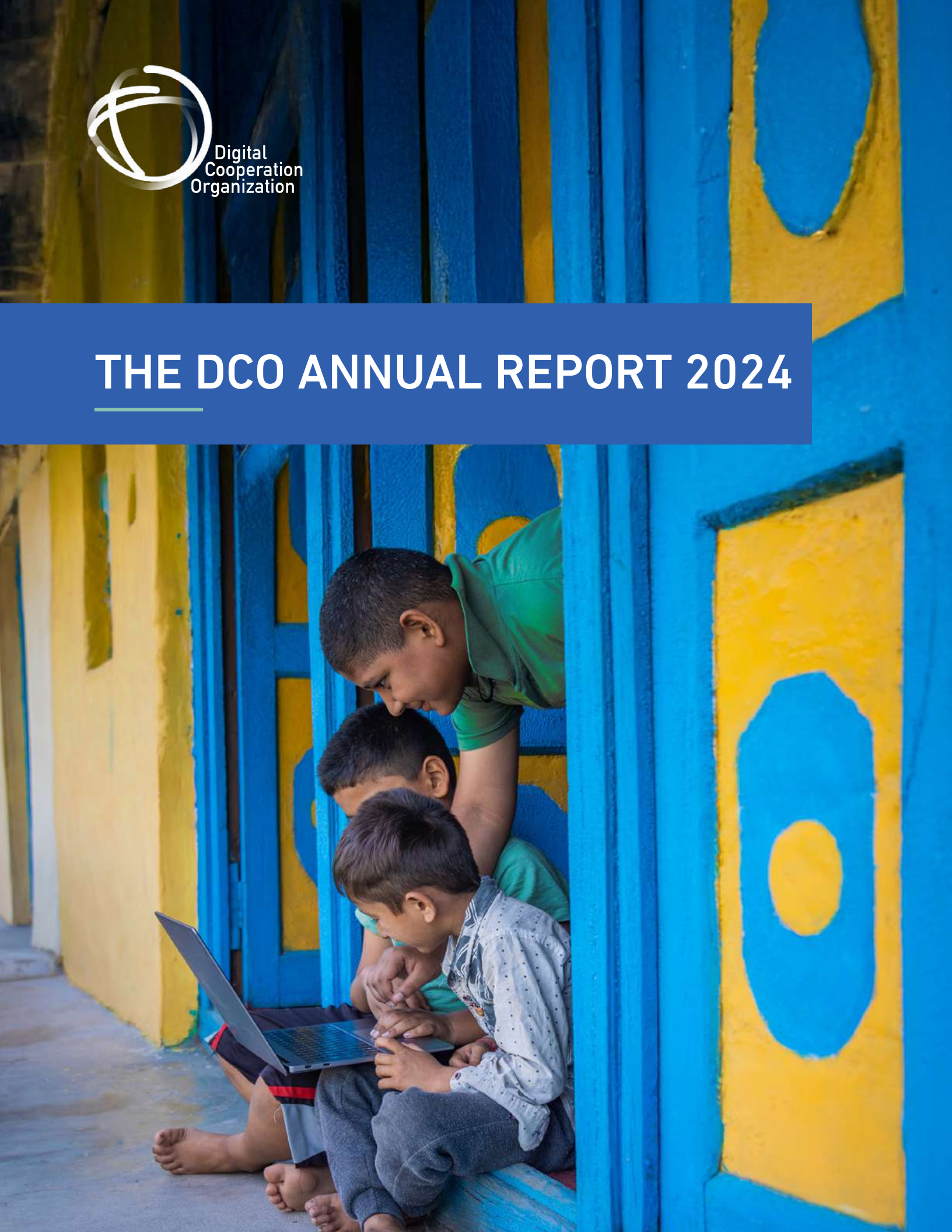
Digital Cooperation Organization

THE DCO ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Disclaimer

This document presents the Digital Cooperation Organization's 2024 Annual Report prepared by the General Secretariat and was presented to the DCO Administrative Council meeting on 19 December 2024, which approved the Annual Progress Report in its Resolution C/2024/S/2/Rep.6/GS/final.01

The Annual Report is published pursuant to Article 5.1 of the DCO General Rules of Procedure, which provides that an Annual Report shall be prepared annually by the General Secretariat and presented to the Council for approval.

It focuses on the progress made towards achievement of the strategic goals and objectives of the Organization from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024.
Its final and public version will be released 2025.

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Table of contents

01 Message from the Presidency 06

02 Message from the Secretary-General 08

03 Executive Summary 10

04 Introduction 14

05 Initiatives, Milestones and Impact 22

A. The Digital Economic Navigator (DEN) 26

B. Digital Space Accelerator 2024: Mandate & Impact 31

C. Building Impact Where It Matters: DCO Closing the Gaps 40

- Advancing Entrepreneurship: A Global Digital Transformation 40
  - STRIDE Initiative 40
  - Spotlights: WE- Elevate & Digital Trade Acceleration Initiatives 44
- Multilateral Cooperation: Frameworks for Action 50
  - Digital Foreign Direct Investment 50
  - E-Waste Management Program 55
  - IMPACT Platform 56
- Digital Technology & AI: Building an Inclusive Future 57
  - AI Readiness Toolkit 58
  - Building Ethical AI 59
  - DCO GenAI Center for Excellence 60
- Data & Governance: Ensuring Responsible Digital Practices 61
  - Data Agenda 61
  - Online Content Integrity 61
- DCO Building Capacity: Strengthening Skills for the Future 63
  - DigiSkills Accelerator 64
  - Digital Taxation Advocacy 68

06 Partnerships And Collaborations: Building Bridges 72

- Timeline of Major Events for DCO in 2024 76
- DCO Created Events 78

07 DCO Publications: Sharing the Knowledge 82

- Digital Economy Trends 84
- EconomiX 88
- Policy Watch 90
- Startup Guides 90

08 Organizational Excellence 92

09 Conclusion 98

Message from the DCO Presidency

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan assumed the presidency of the Digital Cooperation Organization at the start of this year, marking a pivotal moment for digital progress.

This role has provided a unique opportunity to shape a sustainable, inclusive digital future that addresses both the challenges and opportunities of our rapidly evolving landscape.

It has been a privilege for Jordan to lead this endeavor, guided by our dedication to fostering collaboration among Member States, Observers, and global organizations.

We proudly championed the STRIDE initiative, focusing on key pillars: Resilience, Inclusion, Digital Skills, and Economic Empowerment. Through STRIDE, we committed ourselves to bridging the digital divide, promoting ethical technology practices, and building resilient digital economies that respond to the needs of all.

As we continue to advance on our digital journey, we recognize the critical importance of impactful partnerships, especially with the DCO.

By sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices, we can empower one another to create thriving digital economies that serve our citizens.

Looking ahead, let us embrace innovation and creativity to harness technology's potential to strengthen connectivity, advance digital literacy, and drive economic growth in the digital sphere.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all our partners for their invaluable support and cooperation. Together, we can realize our shared vision of a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable digital future.

Eng. Sami Issa Smeirat
Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Chairperson of the Council of the Digital Cooperation Organization.

Message from the Secretary-General

2024 has been a transformative year for the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), marking our progress as a champion of inclusive digital growth on the global stage. Through initiatives directed by our Strategic Roadmap 2030, we have taken great strides towards harnessing digital technology for sustainable development, empowering communities, and ensuring that all people, especially women and youth, have the tools to thrive in the digital economy. It is with great pride that I present our Annual Report for 2024, truly a "Year of Action."

At the heart of our efforts this year is the Digital Economy Navigator (DEN), an innovative tool that empowers nations to assess and benchmark their digital maturity across 10 essential pillars. DEN offers actionable insights and a strategic roadmap to guide countries and businesses in building robust digital economies, fostering growth and resilience for the 800 million people within DCO Member States. This groundbreaking initiative demonstrates our commitment to equipping countries with the tools and knowledge necessary to thrive in the digital era.

In addition, the Generative AI Center of Excellence, introduced at the Global AI Summit (GAIN) and championed by Saudi Arabia, aims to address the critical need for advanced GenAI infrastructure and expertise across DCO Member States.

By fostering a collaborative environment, the GenAI CoE ensures that DCO Member States are equipped to move beyond being digital consumers and emerge as key innovators and leaders in the AI sector. This initiative reinforces the DCO's dedication to fostering sustainable and inclusive growth through AI.

The DCO DigiSkills Accelerator has also laid a robust foundation for digital readiness, addressing the skills gap and preparing diverse workforces for a rapidly evolving job market. Through targeted programs, we are delivering measurable impact by equipping individuals with the critical competencies needed to thrive in the digital landscape.

Digital entrepreneurial empowerment has remained a central focus of DCO's mission, and this year we have seen the successful launch of groundbreaking programs aimed at reducing the gender digital divide. By providing women and youth with the skills and resources with the WE-Elevate Initiative and other platforms to thrive in the digital space, we are not only fostering greater economic participation but also driving innovation and creativity in DCO's global digital ecosystem. We are preparing global citizens for a successful future in a shared global digital economy.

This year, we introduced new publications aimed at enhancing understanding and dialogue within the digital economy, including the Digital Trend Report, EconomiX, Startup Guides, and Policy Watch. Together, these efforts represent a unified approach to building a digital future where innovation, knowledge-sharing, and resilience are at the core of DCO's shared progress.

As this report highlights, our milestones in 2024 reflect the DCO's leadership in digital cooperation, laying the groundwork for long-term success on the international stage.

As we look to the future, we reaffirm our commitment to a world where digital transformation benefits all, building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable digital economies that leave no one behind.

Deemah AlYahya
Secretary-General
The Digital Cooperation Organization

Executive Summary

The year 2024 has been a pivotal one for the Digital Cooperation Organization, marked by the execution and completion of transformative initiatives and expanded impact across the digital landscape. Building on its core mission to enable digital prosperity for all, the DCO has taken significant strides toward bridging the digital divide, enhancing global digital cooperation, and promoting inclusive economic growth across its Member States.

The rise of digital technologies and the digital economy has not been uniform across the globe. Today more than ever vulnerable economies are struggling to fully harness the potential of digital innovations, leading to concerns that the digital divide could widen significantly. Throughout 2024, the DCO has not only implemented impactful initiatives but also expanded its global footprint in key international forums.

The Organization has played a critical role in shaping international discussions around digital taxation, data governance, and the future of digital work. With its growing reputation as a global advocate for digital cooperation, the DCO is set to continue making strides toward a more connected, inclusive, and prosperous digital future for all.

The DCO is focused on addressing the disparities in access and ensuring that all communities can benefit from digital advancements with a call to action for the year 2024 toward fostering a more inclusive and sustainable digital economy through cooperation with a target global impact.

Global Digital Cooperation:

Under the leadership of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which held the DCO Presidency in 2024, the Organization has sharpened its strategic focus on digital empowerment, multilateral collaboration, and policy advocacy. This leadership has been instrumental in rolling out new frameworks and partnerships to drive impactful digital initiatives across Member States as well as on the global arena with Global Digital Cooperation as a key priority.

Launch of the Digital Economy Navigator (DEN):

The Digital Economy Navigator inaugural edition was launched during the 79th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). As a global assessment tool, that measures the digital economy maturity in 50 countries based on three dimensions and ten pillars, it guides countries in achieving digital economy maturity by helping them identify gaps and chart unique paths based on their strengths and opportunities.

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs with the WE-Elevate Initiative:

One of the flagship programs piloted in 2024 is the WE-Elevate initiative, which aims to empower women-led micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Member States. By helping these businesses transition from traditional trade to e-commerce, WE-Elevate offers digital tools, global market access, financial support, and capacity building.

This initiative also advocates for gender-responsive policies, creating a more inclusive digital economy for women entrepreneurs.

Expanding the Digital Foreign Direct Investment (DFDI) Initiative:

To attract investment in the digital economies of least developed and developing countries, the DCO, in collaboration with the World Economic Forum, launched the Digital FDI Initiative.

This initiative is designed to create digital-friendly investment environments, initially focusing on Rwanda and Pakistan, with plans to expand to more countries.

By facilitating technology transfer and fostering digital innovation, the initiative paves the way for greater economic growth and job creation in Member States.

Capacity Building and Skills Development:

Recognizing the importance of skills in driving digital transformation, the DCO accelerated its efforts in upskilling and reskilling citizens of Member States through the DigiSkills Accelerator and one of its flagship programs, the Digital Skills4Jobs.

These initiatives provide advanced digital training, helping participants secure remote work and access both local and global market opportunities.

Driving Impact Through DCO's Knowledge Products:

In 2024, the DCO continued its mission as an information provider and advisor, working alongside global experts to create a diverse array of knowledge resources.

These resources, including policy briefs, research papers, reports, newsletters, magazines, toolkits, and digital tools focus on critical topics like:

01 Entrepreneurship

02 Digital Trade

03 Cross-border data flows

04 Digital foreign direct investment (DFDI)

05 Gig economy

By aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), promoting gender inclusion, and addressing other global priorities, these knowledge products play a vital role in advancing inclusive and sustainable digital economies worldwide.

As the year came to a close, the DCO's 2024 accomplishments now serve as a foundation for continued growth and innovation in the digital space.

With an unwavering commitment to fostering cooperation across governments, the private sector, and civil society, the DCO is well-positioned to drive Digital Economy acceleration and unlock new opportunities for its Member States in the years to come.

Introduction

Introduction

The Digital Cooperation Organization is an Intergovernmental Organization with a mandate to accelerate the inclusive and sustainable growth of the digital economy.

In a world where digital technologies, online platforms, e-commerce, and digital services are rapidly transforming how we think, live, work, and conduct business, the DCO focuses on fostering collaboration among Member States to enable digital prosperity for all.

Established in November 2020 by five founding Members, the DCO now encompasses 16 Member States spanning Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. As of 2024, the DCO also includes 44 Observers, reflecting its commitment to fostering global digital cooperation and inclusivity.

This collaborative approach involving governments, private sector, international organization and civil society is at the core of DCO's cooperation model to deliver its Vision and Mission.

Vision

"A world where every country, business, and person have a fair opportunity to prosper in a cross-border and sustainable Digital Economy."

Mission

"Achieving social prosperity and growth of the Digital Economy by unifying efforts to advance digital transformation and promote common interests."

Strategic Roadmap 2030

In 2022, the DCO Council approved the Organization's Strategic Roadmap, developed in response to projections that by 2030, the digital economy will contribute

30% to global GDP and create 30 million new jobs.

This roadmap outlines three core goals designed to harness this growth potential:

01. A Thriving cross-border digital market: Empowering businesses of the DCO cross-border digital market to thrive in the global digital economy.

02. A Data driven digital economy: Leveraging the full potential of data across the DCO ecosystem.

03. A Responsible digital economy: Fostering an inclusive, human-centric, and sustainable Digital Economy.

To fulfill its mission and achieve these goals, DCO operations are articulated across four (4) core functions:

Information Provider: The DCO provides reliable and comprehensive data, insights on existing trends and technologies, and foresight on future challenges.

Advocate: The DCO defends the interests of its Member States at the global level, contributing to and initiating international discussions, and promoting legal and normative guidelines on specific subjects.

Advisor: The DCO guides its Member States and provides tailored, evidence-based advice to help them take action to make the most of the data, information, and normative frameworks.

Facilitator: The DCO aims to support concrete, high-value projects aligned with its mission and goals, acting either as a direct project executor or a funding facilitator.

Spotlight: 2024 - The Global Digital Compact

The Global Digital Compact (GDC), a key element of the Pact for the Future, was adopted by UN Member States at the Summit of the Future in New York on September 22, 2024.

At the 79th UNGA, the DCO played an active role in advocating for Global Digital Cooperation and supporting the process leading to the approval of the UN Global Digital Compact, the first ever global agreement on the principles, objectives and commitments required to achieve an "Open, Free and Secure Digital Future for All."

SG AlYahya's speech after the UN General Assembly adopted the 'Pact for the Future' and the Global 'Digital Compact':

"The AI and computing divide represents a significant barrier, as some nations advance rapidly in AI innovation and deployment, while others struggle to keep pace."

"At the same time, the gender digital divide continues to limit women›s access to technology and opportunities, and the skills divide leaves many without the digital competencies essential for success in a fast-evolving economy. If we do not address these interconnected challenges, we risk leaving entire communities behind."

Fostering Digital Cooperation

The DCO's commitment to enabling digital cooperation towards a prosperous digital economy directly aligns with the scope of the Global Digital Compact and the acceleration of the SDGs.

During the 79th UN General Assembly (September 2024), the DCO played an active role in facilitating this multi-stakeholder›s approach through the following activities:

UN Group of Friends:
At the initiative of five Members States of the Digital Cooperation Organization

a bold step was taken to enable global digital cooperation with the launch of the 'UN Group of Friends for Digital Cooperation' at the United Nations headquarters in New York in 2023.

In 2024, the UN Group of Friends for Digital Cooperation became increasingly active within the intergovernmental process leading to the adoption of the Pact for the Future and the Global Digital Compact by the UN General Assembly.

DCO Secretary-General commends Global Digital Compact at Summit of the Future.

Informal Consultations:
To foster more inclusive dialogue during the negotiation process of the UN Global Digital Compact, the DCO conducted over

10 consultations with representatives from DCO Member States

(including Ministries of ICT and Digital Economy) and partner intergovernmental organizations, such as:

These consultations provided participants with opportunities to review and share perspectives on various versions of the text.

UN Summit of the Future and Action Days:
In the preparation for the Summit of the Future, the DCO participated in the Action Days and co-hosted a side-event at the UN headquarters titled, "Fostering Digital Cooperation to Enable Prosperity for All."

During the Summit and following the adoption of the Global Digital Compact, DCO Secretary-General Deemah AlYahya addressed the United Nations General Assembly as an Observer for the first time since the Organization's inception.

In her intervention at the 4th plenary session of the UN Summit of the Future, Ms. AlYahya advocated for networked multilateralism to drive the creation of an inclusive and sustainable global digital economy.

Initiatives, Milestones and Impact

Initiatives, Milestones and Impact

DCO's 2024 Journey - From Unlocking Insights and Identifying Gaps with the DEN Report to Implementing Solutions for Global Digital Impact Through DCO's Actionable Pillars:

This year, the DCO embarked on a transformative journey, beginning with insights gained from DEN's research, which highlighted critical global gaps that must be addressed to strengthen the digital economy.

Equipped with these findings, the DCO has concentrated its efforts on launching and piloting impactful initiatives to close these gaps and build a stronger, more inclusive digital future.

One of these initiatives, the Digital Space Accelerator (DSA), continues to contribute to the design of actionable solutions.

Advancing Entrepreneurship, Setting Policies, Strengthening Technology and AI, Protecting Data and Building Capacity: A Comprehensive Approach to Creating Impact Where It Matters – DCO's Mission to Close the Gaps

The DCO is committed to advancing entrepreneurship in the digital economy to:

01 | Close the gender gap

02 | Empower women and youth

03 | Uplift small and medium-sized businesses, recognizing their vital role in driving digital innovation and digital economic growth.

Central to this commitment is the development of effective policies and regulations that create a supportive framework for these enterprises. In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, harnessing the power of digital technology and artificial intelligence to support this mission is essential.

This focus on technology not only enhances business efficiency but also opens new avenues for collaboration and growth, enabling broader participation in the digital economy.

The DCO also emphasizes data governance to promote responsible digital practices. By prioritizing data integrity and security, it creates an environment where businesses can operate confidently.

This commitment to responsibility is complemented by a strong focus on capacity building, equipping people with the digital skills essential for the future.

To support these efforts, the DCO invests in training and educational programs that prepare entrepreneurs, particularly women and young people, as well as both the private and the public sectors with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in a digital economy.

Through these intertwined efforts

01 Advancing entrepreneurship

02 Establishing supportive policies

03 Leveraging technology

04 Ensuring responsible data practices

05 Building digital skills

the DCO is paving the way for a more equitable and prosperous future.

The DCO's commitment to inclusivity and innovation drives sustainable economic growth for its Member States and beyond.

A. The Digital Economy Navigator (DEN): A Global Assessment Tool Toward Digital Economy Maturity

DEN
Digital Economy Navigator

As the digital economy continues to evolve at a rapid pace, it unlocks new avenues for growth, innovation, and societal transformation. In response, the DCO plays a pivotal role as both an advisor and information provider, helping stakeholders navigate this dynamic landscape.

To support this mission, the DCO launched the annual Digital Economy Navigator (DEN) report in 2024, offering valuable insights into the latest trends and opportunities shaping the digital economy.

The first edition of the DEN report was introduced on the sidelines of the 79th UN General Assembly. As a global assessment tool, the DEN helps countries achieve digital economy maturity by identifying gaps and guiding them to chart paths based on their unique strengths and opportunities.

This allows them to effectively focus their policy agendas and promotes capacity building. The DEN is designed for policymakers, businesses, and researchers, providing the data needed for informed decision-making that enhances societies and economies.

The DEN takes a global, regional, and sector-driven approach moving beyond individual country assessments to highlight the importance of international cooperation in maximizing benefits and mitigating risks within the digital economy.

Developed to assess digital economy maturity, the DEN combines established quantitative indicators with insights from a comprehensive global survey:

27,081

respondents across **50** countries. This data is crucial for identifying challenges and priorities, forming the foundation of DCO strategies and activities and closing the gaps.

"A mature digital economy not only drives innovation and economic opportunity, but also promotes equitable distribution and inclusive access to services and opportunities. It can offer solutions to key societal challenges, such as education and healthcare. With DEN we are providing a tool to help countries assess their current status, identify opportunities for growth, and address any existing gaps"

A Snapshot of DEN

50 countries were selected for the DEN, covering 27,081 respondents:

EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA

- Cyprus (CYP)
- Denmark (DNK)
- Estonia (EST)
- Finland (FIN)
- France (FRA)
- Germany (DEU)
- Ireland (IRL)
- Italy (ITA)
- Netherlands (NLD)
- Poland (POL)
- Spain (ESP)
- Sweden (SWE)
- Switzerland (CHE)
- Türkiye (TUR)
- United Kingdom (GBR)

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

- Bahrain (BHR)
- Djibouti (DJI)
- Egypt (EGY)
- Jordan (JOR)
- Kuwait (KWT)
- Morocco (MAR)
- Oman (OMN)
- Qatar (QAT)
- Saudi Arabia (SAU)
- Tunisia (TUN)
- United Arab Emirates (ARE)

NORTH AMERICA

- Canada (CAN)
- United States of America (USA)

EAST ASIA & PACIFIC

- Australia (AUS)
- China (CHN)
- Indonesia (IDN)
- Japan (JPN)
- Korea, Republic of (KOR)
- Malaysia (MYS)
- Philippines (PHL)
- Singapore (SGP)
- Thailand (THA)

SOUTH ASIA

- India (IND)
- Pakistan (PAK)

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

- The Gambia (GMB)
- Ghana (GHA)
- Kenya (KEN)
- Mauritius (MUS)
- Nigeria (NGA)
- Rwanda (RWA)
- South Africa (ZAF)

LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

- Argentina (ARG)
- Brazil (BRA)
- Chile (CHL)
- Mexico (MEX)

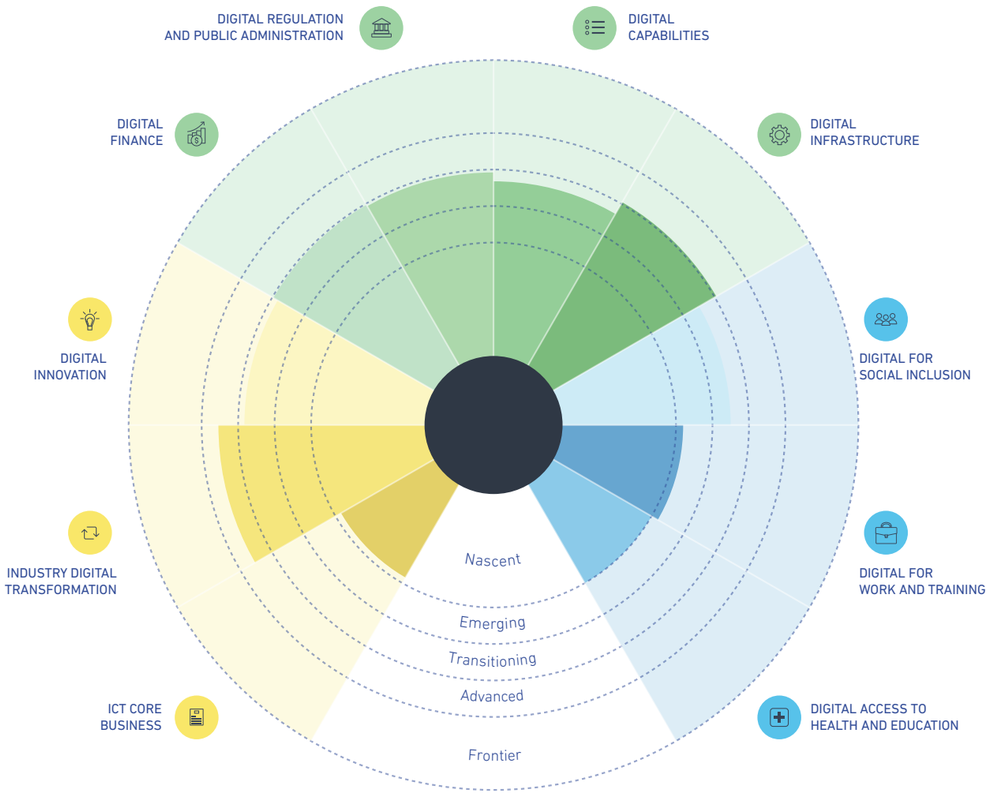
DEN countries represent

72% of the global population and **86%** of global GDP.

14 DCO Member States are included among DEN countries:

- Cyprus (CYP)
- Bahrain (BHR)
- Djibouti (DJI)
- The Gambia (GMB)
- Ghana (GHA)
- Jordan (JOR)
- Kuwait (KWT)
- Morocco (MAR)
- Nigeria (NGA)
- Oman (OMN)
- Pakistan (PAK)
- Rwanda (RWA)
- Saudi Arabia (SAU)
- Qatar (QAT)

Overall key findings Across 50 countries



DEN scores indicate that high-income countries tend to have greater digital economy maturity, and greater digital economy maturity is associated with higher income.

The DEN scores also show digital leapfrogging among low-income countries, some of which do well in pillars where the digital economy can provide solutions to fill important societal needs, such as Digital for Health and Education and Digital for Work and Training.

Digital Infrastructure is the most critical area to address, as closing this gap can unlock progress across all other sectors.

Among pillar and regional-specific insights, the DEN report identified 10 key areas for improvement:

01 Enhancing internet speeds and affordability.

02 Advancing and developing cybersecurity skills.

03 Improving digital regulation.

04 Enhancing banking infrastructure, promoting financial inclusion, and addressing risks in digital payment systems.

05 Support technology production and services globally.

06 Improving market conditions for e-commerce and supporting the digitalization of small businesses.

07 Developing digital innovation in low- and lower-middle-income countries.

08 Promote more equitable access in digital for health and education.

09 Improve the support for gig workers, e-learning, and the digitalization of tools to find work.

10 Closing gender and disability gaps in digital inclusion.

The report also highlights specific recommendations for governments, businesses, and individuals:

Governments

- Scale up digital capabilities building - Prioritize digital literacy and expand opportunities for advanced ICT education.
- Facilitate digital transformation at micro, small, and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) - Provide support in training, financial resources, incentives and technology access for MSMEs.
- Enhance internet infrastructure and access - Invest in internet, data, and electricity infrastructure, particularly in underserved regions, to improve internet affordability and access.

Businesses

- Digitalize to stay competitive - Invest in digital adoption, innovation, and integration of new technologies to avoid falling behind.
- Support emerging talent and capabilities - Collaborate with governments to nurture startup ecosystems and participate in creating national policy initiatives for emerging technologies such as AI.
- Prioritize cybersecurity - Implement data protection policies and provide cybersecurity training for all employees.

Individuals

- Engage in digital learning - Participate in ICT education, digital literacy programs, and cybersecurity training.
- Support policy initiatives - Advocate for improved work conditions in the gig economy and participate in policy development.
- Engage digitally with communities - Actively participate in local and national government platforms. A vibrant digital civil society depends on people's voices being heard.

- Bahrain (BHR)
- The Gambia (GMB)
- Ghana (GHA)
- Rwanda (RWA)

B. DSA 2024: The Design of Actionable Solutions

The Digital Space Accelerator (DSA) is an innovative cooperation mechanism created by the DCO Secretariat to bring together Thought Leaders, Subject Matter Experts, and Decision Makers from diverse sectors, including governments, the private sector, international organizations, academia, and civil society.

The primary aim of the DSA is to enable a multi-stakeholder collaboration that can design and propose actionable solutions that address the key barriers to a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive digital economy.

In 2023, DCO launched the Digital Space Accelerator with 6 topics:

1. Online content misinformation
2. Digital rights "intellectual property and safe digital space"
3. Empempowering women in and through ICT
4. Digital skills gap for the youth
5. Tax and financial incentives for the ICT sector
6. Public-private partnerships for the development of the digital economy

Year in Review where DSA is Designing Actionable Solutions Today

In 2024, the DSA held over 10 online meetings with experts from Member States and Observers, addressing each of the topics above to finalize the findings and outputs for each accelerator.

The DSA journey guided readers through its key topics in the "Reshaping the Digital Landscape: Digital Space Accelerator 2023-2024 Report" produced by the DCO.

1. Online content misinformation:

Guidelines for Combating Online Misinformation in the Era of Digital Economy:

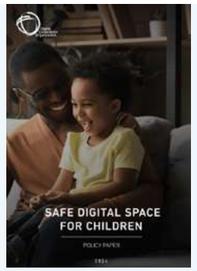
Outlines strategies to address the global challenge of online misinformation, particularly on social media. It focuses on five key areas:

1. Developing a standardized system for classifying misinformation types.
2. Establishing ethical standards and transparency in media practices.
3. Promoting media literacy in journalism education.
4. Creating a robust fact-checking tool, and Launching public awareness campaigns to help individuals recognize misinformation.

2. Digital rights "intellectual property and safe digital space":

Policy Paper on Digital Rights:

The paper presents policy recommendations and contributes to the promotion, safeguarding, and enhancement of digital rights within the context of fostering an inclusive, human-centric, and sustainable digital economy across the DCO Member States and beyond.



Policy Paper on Safe Digital Space for Children:

The policy paper culminates in presenting actionable policy recommendations to address the most pressing challenges and risks facing children in the online world.

Policy Paper on Digital Intellectual Property Protection:

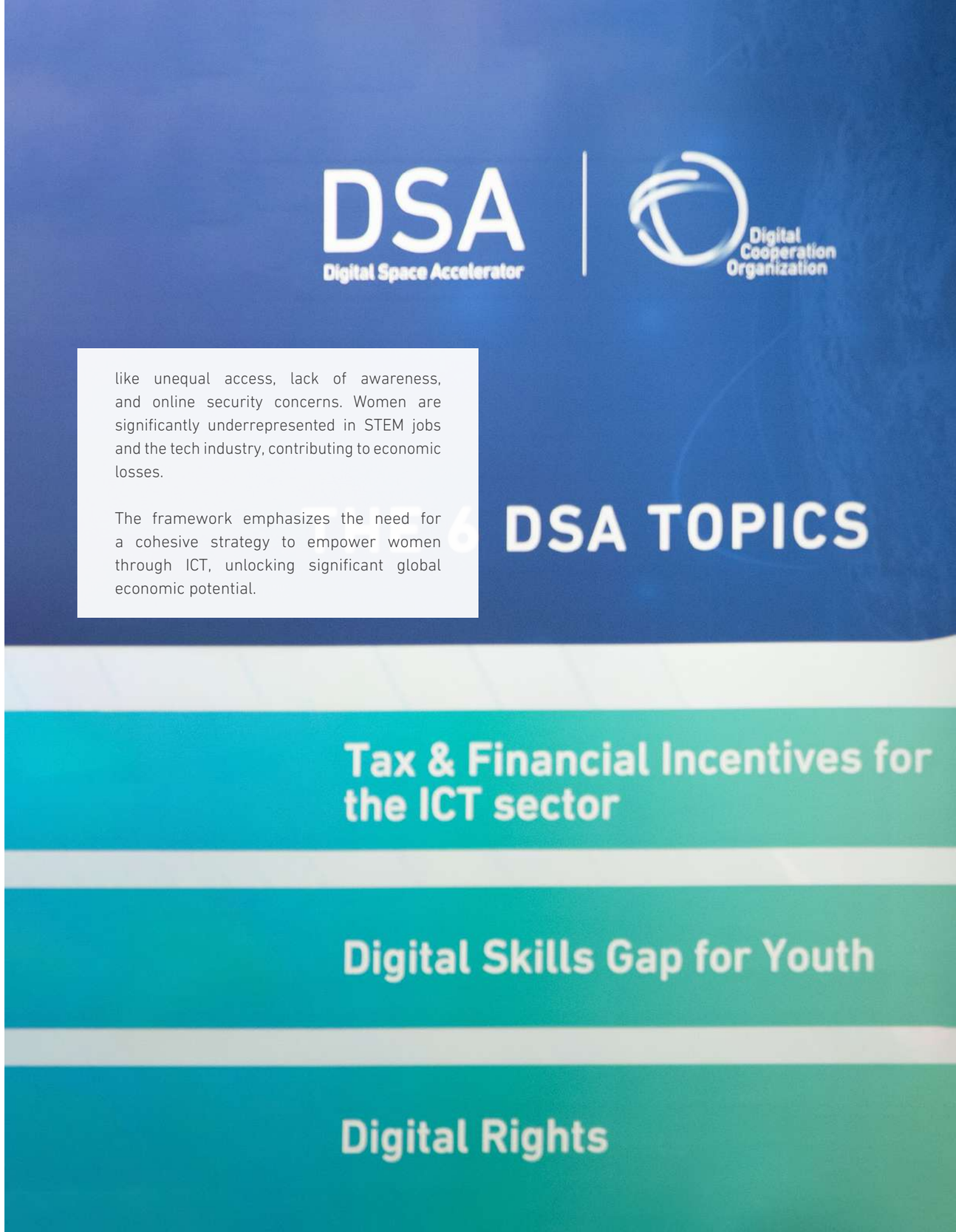
The paper examines the intricate landscape of Digital IP Protection, highlighting its significance, challenges, stakeholders› roles, and essential policy recommendations for DCO Member States and beyond.

It underscores that Digital IP encompasses inventions, literary and artistic works, designs, symbols, and digital assets like software, algorithms, and databases, all vital to the digital economy.

3. Empowering women in and through ICT:

Unified framework on Empowering women in and through ICT: It addresses the growing gender inequality in the digital economy due to barriers like unequal access, lack of awareness, and online security concerns. Women are significantly underrepresented in STEM jobs and the tech industry, contributing to economic losses.

The framework emphasizes the need for a cohesive strategy to empower women through ICT, unlocking significant global economic potential.



4. Digital skills gap for the youth:

The Digital Skills Nexus: A comprehensive exploration of youth's perspectives

around digital skills in 13 DCO Member States and empowering the next generation with cutting-edge digital skills to ignite innovation, enhance employability, and drive sustainable economic growth for the digital future.

This paper identified the gaps in youth in the age group of 18 - 25 years to contribute to the creation of opportunities, improve employability, and enhancement of participation of such individuals in advancing developing economies.

5. Tax and financial incentives for the ICT sector:

Comprehensive Study on tax and financial incentives:

The report provides a comparative analysis of tax and financial incentives in DCO Member States and selected benchmark countries with similar income levels, infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks.

It offers an overview of key incentives, compares their effectiveness, and provides a qualitative assessment of their impact on digital growth.

6. Public-private partnerships for the development of the digital economy:

The Development of the Digital Economy:

Fostering Public-Private Partnerships explores various opportunities within the digital sector that could drive significant benefits and innovation through enhanced collaboration between businesses and their national and regional governments.

By drawing on global best practices, this initiative examines how public-private partnerships can be utilized to advance the digital economy in DCO Member States.

It culminates in the introduction of an initial "Framework for Collaborative Investment in the Digital Economy," which serves as a guiding roadmap for DCO countries to consider when pursuing joint investments in the digital real.

In 2024, five (5) new DSAs were introduced to address emerging key barriers to building a more inclusive digital economy

01 **Cultural Values and Misinformation:** This topic explores how cultural values drive the spread of misinformation on digital platforms.

02 **Cross-border E-Waste Management:** This DSA tackles e-waste, promotes digital inclusion, and supports cross-border e-waste management for a circular ICT economy.

03 **Building Ethical AI:** The DCO plans to create a policy governance tool to help Member States integrate ethics and address human rights concerns within AI governance.

04 **Digital Trade Acceleration:** The DTA helps DCO Member States boost digital trade by conducting surveys to identify private sector barriers, interviews to understand public sector challenges, and a regulatory assessment to uncover hurdles.

05 **Model Startup Act:** The DCO Model Startup Act provides a unified framework to support startups and innovation hubs in member states, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation.

And the year witnessed a series of successful roundtable discussions hosted by the DSA addressing the topics:

July 16, 2024
Riyadh
The DSA conducted a roundtable on Misinformation and Social Media with representatives from platforms such as

August 8, 2024
Bangkok
The DSA held a roundtable on Cultural Values and Misinformation Mitigation with 15 experts.

September 11, 2024
Riyadh
The DSA hosted a roundtable on Ethical AI with 19 global experts, including representatives from 5 Member States.

September 12, 2024
Geneva
The DSA hosted a roundtable on Digital Trade with 35 global experts. Highlights and pictures are included below.

October 30, 2024
Singapore
A roundtable covering three topics took place with over 39 attendees.

November 7, 2024
Cape Town
The DSA hosted a roundtable on the Model Startup Act, with 56 people in attendance.

November 13, 2024
GCC - Riyadh
The DSA organized a roundtable on E-Waste Management with a total attendance of 18.

November 14, 2024
GCC - Riyadh
the DSA held a roundtable on Cultural Values and Misinformation Mitigation with a total attendance of 21.

November 20, 2024
GCC - Riyadh
The DSA hosted a roundtable on the Model Startup Act with a total attendees of 19.

December 12, 2024
London
The DSA held a roundtable on Cross-Border E-Waste Management, with total of 15 attendees.

December 19, 2024
Morocco
The DSA held a policy hackathon on the Model Startup Act, with total of 28 attendance

December 16, 2024
Riyadh
the DSA held a roundtable on the Ethical use of AI with total of 30 attendance.

December 18, 2024
Riyadh
the DSA held a roundtable on the E-waste management with total of 15 attendance .

C. Building Impact Where It Matters: DCO Closing the Gaps

Advancing Entrepreneurship: For Global Digital Transformation:

DCO's approach to enabling digital transformation starts with empowering entrepreneurs.

Through initiatives like STRIDE and WE-Elevate, DCO is uplifting women and young entrepreneurs, as well as promoting partnerships across the private and public sectors.

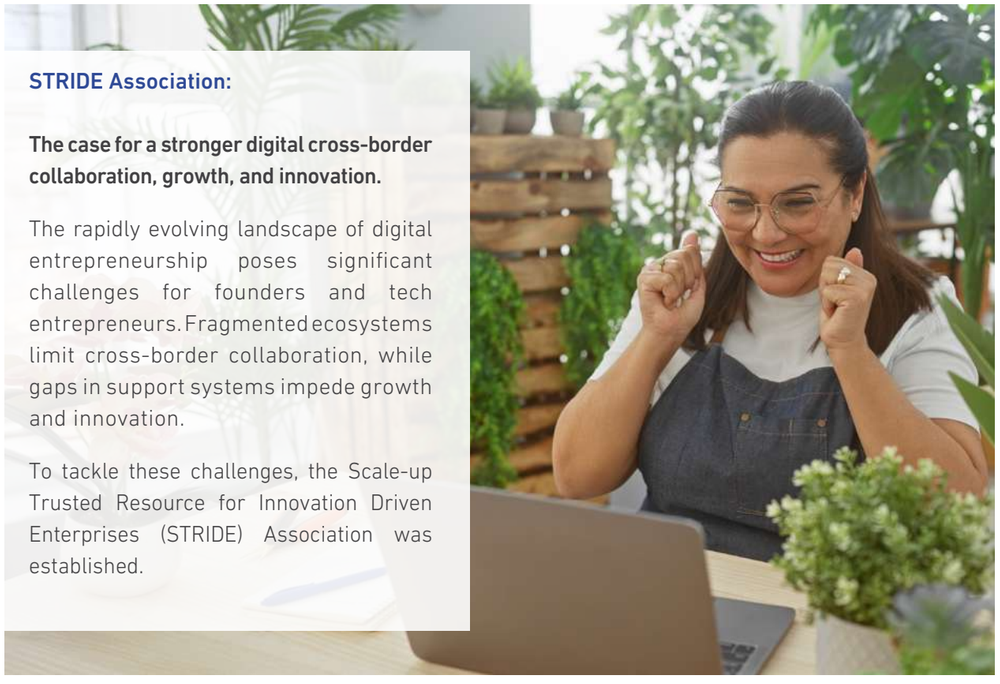
These programs drive inclusive growth and encourage digital trade across borders, setting the foundation for a vibrant, expansive and diversified digital economy.

STRIDE's mission is to build a dynamic and inclusive global ecosystem where entrepreneurs can thrive, innovation can flourish, and barriers to success are dismantled, driving economic prosperity and social impact across DCO Member States:

Support the sustainable and inclusive growth of the Digital Economy in DCO ecosystems.

Harmonize Member State policies and streamline digital ecosystem integration in DCO countries.

Catalyze alignment between governments, the private sector, and non-profits to support entrepreneurs across DCO Member States.



STRIDE Association:

The case for a stronger digital cross-border collaboration, growth, and innovation.

The rapidly evolving landscape of digital entrepreneurship poses significant challenges for founders and tech entrepreneurs. Fragmented ecosystems limit cross-border collaboration, while gaps in support systems impede growth and innovation.

To tackle these challenges, the Scale-up Trusted Resource for Innovation Driven Enterprises (STRIDE) Association was established.

STRIDE three key pillars:

1. **Think Tank:** Provide a platform for networking, idea exchange, and access to resources for business growth, technological advancement, and sustainable innovation.
2. **Implementation of Projects:** identifying, selecting, and implementing impactful projects that empower entrepreneurs.
3. **Partnerships:** Build partnerships with international and local players to support activities through sponsorships, funding, and collaborative initiatives.

Empowering Entrepreneurship of Today for a Prosperous Tomorrow

The STRIDE Association Framework was completed in 2024 and has started implementing impactful initiatives toward a dynamic and inclusive global entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Balancing policies & regulations: The DCO is advancing a balanced approach to policies and regulations through initiatives that foster entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainable growth.

The Standard of Excellence for Entrepreneurship and Innovation provides a comprehensive framework to promote innovation and advanced technology adoption, creating a dynamic business environment that supports research and development (R&D), talent development, and retention, as well as streamlined access to government procurement opportunities.

In 2024, several key milestones were achieved:

01 A Global Benchmarking Report on innovation and entrepreneurship, along with the Global Best Practice and Leading Country Case Studies Reports, were developed.

02 The Entrepreneurship and Innovation for Government Maturity Assessment Framework was created, accompanied by a User Guide for Country Assessment.

03 Comprehensive Country Reports were developed for each of the 16 DCO Member States.

Complementing this is the DCO Model Startup Act, a reference legal framework that offers standardized provisions with elements focused on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This act aims to reduce regulatory barriers, nurture resilient startup ecosystems, and address pressing environmental concerns, paving the way for sustainable innovations and long-term startup success. A benchmark report summarizing global best practice and successful startup acts was successfully developed in 2024 with 17 Comprehensive Country Analysis reports for all DCO Member States and United Arab Emirates.

Fostering cross-border expansion: the DCO is enabling cross-border business expansion and regional growth through targeted initiatives that support startups in navigating new markets.

The DCO Startup Guides serve as a comprehensive resource, providing startups with vital information on the entrepreneurial landscape in each Member State.

This includes market data, links to essential websites, venture capital options, accelerators, coworking spaces, industry rankings, government incentives, and free zones.

By tackling common challenges faced by entrepreneurs, the guides make it easier to establish and grow businesses across borders.

Additionally, **the Startup Nexus** initiative empowers startups to explore and expand into other Member States' markets, helping them increase sales, form strategic partnerships, and even pursue acquisitions.

Together, these initiatives create a more accessible and interconnected digital ecosystem that drives cross-border investment and entrepreneurial success across the DCO's Member States.

Testimonial

Muhammad Bilal Abbasi
General Manager – Ignite National Technology Fund – Pakistan.

"I am writing to express our heartfelt appreciation for the outstanding effort and support in organizing the DCO Startup Nexus in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The event was a resounding success and brought together an exclusive gathering of Pakistani startups, marking a significant milestone in fostering collaboration and innovation within the entrepreneurial community"

Facilitating Access to Finance: The InvestConnect initiative aims to enhance access to finance for startups in emerging markets by addressing their funding challenges and connecting them with investors.

The initiative includes a roadshow that introduces venture capitalists to the ecosystems of DCO Member States, as well as Deal Zone, a networking platform at global events designed to facilitate faster and more transparent deal flow.

By supporting early-stage ventures, InvestConnect ultimately seeks to drive economic growth through increased startup investment.

Testimonial

Taybull Soft, a Gambian fintech company behind the innovative Zooblin platform, has achieved remarkable milestones since participating in LEAP 2024 under the support of the DCO.

Zooblin enables financial institutions to create bespoke fintech solutions, reducing costs and accelerating market entry, and its growth story exemplifies innovation and impact.

Zooblin secured $250,000 in seed funding (May 2024)

to drive growth and strategic initiatives and established operations in The Gambia, the UK, and Europe, with a strategic presence at the prestigious Level39 Innovation Centre in London.

The company introduced TaybullPay, a cross-border remittance solution connecting local and diaspora communities and has collaborated with global leaders such as

VISA Direct | worldpay | Currencycloud A Visa Solution

while powering 56 credit unions and six remittance companies.

In addition, Zooblin has garnered prestigious accolades, including Tech Specialist of the Year (2023) and Female Digital Innovator of the Year in The Gambia (2023).

With DCO's support, Taybull Soft is bridging communities, driving digital transformation, and fostering financial inclusion. Its commitment to innovation and collaboration continues to align with DCO's vision of a thriving digital ecosystem.

Pa Essa Jabang
Founder of Taybull Soft.

"Taybull Soft's success story highlights the transformative impact of strategic partnerships and innovation-driven growth,"

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs:
The WE-Elevate initiative, spearheaded by the Digital Cooperation Organization, focuses on empowering women by helping them transition their traditional micro, small and medium enterprises into the digital space. The program aims to bridge the gender digital divide and drive economic growth by providing women with the tools, resources, and knowledge they need to succeed in the digital economy.

By fostering digital inclusion, WE-Elevate seeks to create new opportunities for women entrepreneurs, enabling them to thrive in an increasingly connected world.

Impactful Story

WE-Elevate: Empowering Entrepreneurship for Women of Today for a Better Tomorrow

WE-Elevate takes a comprehensive approach, offering digital tools, access to global markets, capacity building, financial resources, and advocating for gender-responsive policies to support women's economic growth - a key goal for DCO.

The initiative hopes to create both economic and social impact. Economically, it supports women-led offline businesses in transitioning to the digital economy.

Socially, it empowers these businesses to expand their offerings and hire more staff, thus promoting gender equality, closing the gender gap, and creating jobs.

WE-Elevate aims to provide women-led MSMEs, with the opportunity to join the digital revolution with a multifaceted approach based on four pillars:

Pillar One: Business acumen and digital skills:

- Design and implement digital and business skills training programs tailored to the specific needs of W-MSMEs:
- General digital and financial literacy
- E-commerce management
- Digital marketing
- Digital safety
- No coding website development.

Pillar Two: Access to market:

- Provide subsidies for onboarding onto fully integrated and user-friendly e-commerce platforms.

  These platforms offer centralized marketplaces to showcase products and services, allowing businesses to tap into a wider customer base and access complementary services such as payment processing, delivery management, and logistics, ultimately enhancing sales opportunities.

Pillar Three: Access to finance and financial inclusion:

- Establish partnerships with public and private financial institutions/firms to provide and facilitate financing through government-subsidized loans, micro-finance, business angel interventions, and equity investments.
- Provide and facilitate MSME's access to financial inclusion tools that could include digital bank accounts, mobile banking apps, credit facilities, digital payment solutions, point of sales systems, digital lending platforms, etc.

Pillar Four: Enabling regulatory reforms:

- Leverage DCO's status as an international organization to engage governments to raise awareness around the importance of gender-responsive policies and regulations, particularly within the digital economy.
- Advocate for policies that streamline business regulations and provide tax incentives to ensure a "soft landing" into a more transparent business environment, including incentives to formalize MSMEs.

Rwanda: A Success Story for WE-Elevate

In 2024, Rwanda emerged as a champion of the WE-Elevate initiative, thanks to its robust e-commerce ecosystem.

Building on a project launched before the COVID-19 pandemic to digitize women-led offline businesses, WE-Elevate has aligned seamlessly with Rwanda's national strategy.

This collaboration with the DCO led to pilot programs successfully onboarding 120 women-led businesses this year.

Furthermore, the DCO supported a peer-to-peer program led by Rwanda to share valuable lessons, challenges, and insights with counterparts in Nigeria and The Gambia. This program focuses on creating e-stores, establishing business-to-business connections, identifying critical skills for training, and facilitating the onboarding of businesses in both countries.

2024 witnessed the completion of several activities for WE-Elevate in 3 Countries:

Rwanda (Champions) The Gambia Nigeria

In Rwanda there are 4 local e-commerce platforms as partners for the program, 145 businesses applied,120 women led businesses were accepted and onboarded for local and export tracks.

This was supported with export readiness training for 30 export-focused businesses held in collaboration with the Rwanda Development Board.

Testimonial

Abigail Bundi
Strategic E-Commerce Advisor, Tony Blair Institute of Global Change.

"Rwanda has made e-commerce a strategic priority to boost export growth and domestic trade. Efforts, supported by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, aim to make Rwandan businesses competitive globally. A major challenge is the lack of online presence for many businesses.

The WE-Elevate program addresses this by transforming women-led businesses with digital tools, aligning with Rwanda›s e-commerce strategy.

By supporting these enterprises, WE-Elevate helps increase export visibility and enhance domestic trade, contributing significantly to Rwanda's economic development."

Digital Trade Acceleration: Advancing Digital Trade

The Digital Trade Acceleration (DTA) Initiative aims to boost digital trade and strengthen collaboration among Member States.

Recognizing the need for robust frameworks in an increasingly digital global economy, this initiative focuses on enabling smooth cross-border digital transactions, fostering regional partnerships, and creating new business growth opportunities. It addresses key challenges like fragmented regulations, infrastructure gaps, and varying digital readiness levels among members.

Through regulatory assessments, stakeholder engagement, and digital trade agreement reviews, the initiative identifies both opportunities and obstacles for scaling digital trade. This collaborative approach supports inclusive economic growth, increased digital adoption, and deeper integration into the global digital economy.

In 2024 the Digital Trade Acceleration Initiative has made significant strides in advancing digital trade across DCO Member States. All seven components of the project have been successfully completed, offering comprehensive insights into the digital trade landscape and laying the groundwork for future collaborations.

DTA 2024 Milestones:

01 **Regulatory Assessment Reports:** Comprehensive assessments of digital trade regulations were completed for all 16 DCO Member States, along with the UAE. These reports provided a clear understanding of each nation's regulatory landscape concerning data governance, cybersecurity, digital payments, and cross-border data flows.

02 **Business Survey Report:** Industry-wide surveys from the private sector across all DCO Member States have been compiled, highlighting key barriers to digital trade. These findings have been synthesized into actionable insights.

03 **Digital Trade Gap Analysis:** A gap analysis report identified key areas where Member States can improve their digital trade capabilities.

04 **Roundtable Discussions:** A successful roundtable was convened, bringing together key stakeholders from DCO Member States to review findings and collaborate on developing actionable solutions for accelerating digital trade.

05 **Impact on Target Audiences:** The initiative provided Member States with actionable recommendations and strategic tools to overcome barriers to digital trade. By improving regulatory clarity and fostering cross-border cooperation, the project has strengthened the competitiveness of DCO Member States in the global digital economy, positioning them as leaders in the digital trade space.

Multilateral Cooperation: Frameworks for Action

Effective policies and regulations are essential to guide the digital future. DCO is championing frameworks that address key areas such as Digital Foreign Direct Investment and Cross-Border E-Waste Management, enabling member countries to attract investment, protect their environments, and ensure sustainable growth. These efforts lay the groundwork for secure and collaborative global digital economy policies & regulations.

Digital FDI Initiative (DFDI): Promoting Enhanced Digital Investment Climates

The DFDI initiative plays a vital role in a world that is increasingly influenced by digital technologies. It aims to boost digital foreign direct investment across DCO Member States.

As digital markets evolve rapidly, many countries encounter difficulties in attracting these investments due to skill gaps, insufficient infrastructure, and regulatory obstacles. This initiative seeks to turn these challenges into opportunities by establishing "digital-friendly" investment environments, facilitating technology transfer, and promoting economic growth through enhanced digital activity.

In 2022, the DCO partnered with the World Economic Forum (WEF) to launch the Digital FDI Initiative, aimed at establishing "digital-friendly" investment climates in various countries. This initiative is part of a larger effort to stimulate growth in the digital economies of the DCO Member States.

The initiative spans a comprehensive two-year plan across selected countries, with the final phase currently underway in Rwanda and Pakistan. Plans for further expansion to additional countries are already in progress. The initiative focuses on four main objectives:

- Identify state of play and benchmark policies to attract and facilitate digital FDI.
- Identify and help implement elements that enable investment in new digital activities.
- Identify and help implement elements that enable digital adoption by traditionally non-digital firms.
- Identify and help implement elements that enable investment in digital infrastructure, which includes both a physical dimension and a regulatory dimension.

With four countries across three continents already engaged in the Digital Foreign Direct Investment (DFDI) initiative—and more set to join—the impact of these policies is truly global.

DFDI in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

In 2023, the DCO launched the DFDI Initiative in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Pakistan). As part of this initiative, a diagnostic report was released to analyze Pakistan's regulatory landscape, aimed at facilitating smoother FDI within its digital economy.

Three phases were completed in 2024, and the correspondent report has been finalized.

- **Diagnostic**
- **Interviews & Surveys**
- **Reform Recommendation**

National Workshop (May 2024): The Digital Cooperation Organization, in collaboration with organized a workshop in Islamabad to explore policy options for enhancing digital foreign direct investment in Pakistan. Pre- and post-workshop meetings were held with the BOI and MOIT&T.

The Working Group established a mandate and agreed on a set of policy options that government partners aim to implement under the DFDI Project, along with an action plan.

Representatives from MOIT&T and BOI are scheduled to present these policy options to the senior management team for validation.

The final report for the DFDI Pakistan project is now complete and ready for publication.

DFDI in The Republic of Rwanda

The Digital Foreign Direct Investment (DFDI) project was launched in the Republic of Rwanda in 2023, beginning with a comprehensive diagnostic report.

This report was informed by over sixty interviews, conducted both online and in person, with diverse stakeholders from Rwanda's public and private sectors.

held a workshop in Kigali to discuss policy options for strengthening digital foreign direct investment in Rwanda.

The workshop gathered key stakeholders from Rwanda›s digital economy, while pre- and post-workshop meetings with MINICT facilitated deeper engagement.

The final report for the DFDI Rwanda project is now complete and ready for publication.

National Workshop (May 2024): The Digital Cooperation Organization and the World Economic Forum, in collaboration with Rwanda's Ministry of ICT and Innovation (MINICT)

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

DFDI in The Sultanate of Oman

The DFDI Initiative was launched in the Sultanate of Oman in 2024. By June, a diagnostic report was completed, providing an in-depth analysis of Oman's regulatory environment and strategic government goals for attracting DFDI.

This report also included an analysis of DFDI flows, offering insights into foreign direct investment trends within the current regulatory framework.

Over fifty interviews—conducted both online and in person—involved a broad range of public and private sector stakeholders.

The mission commenced with a briefing from the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT) and continued with discussions with private sector representatives. Key focus areas included identifying opportunities for new digital activities, promoting digital adoption in traditional businesses, enhancing digital infrastructure, and exploring outward digital FDI.

These insights will be utilized to craft policy recommendations that will help position Oman as a vibrant digital market. The DCO and the World Economic Forum, in collaboration with Oman's MTCIT,

سلطنة عمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

held a workshop in Muscat to discuss policy options for enhancing digital foreign direct investment in Oman. Pre- and post-workshop meetings with MTCIT helped ensure alignment on key objectives and next steps.

DFDI in the Republic of Cyprus

In 2024, a meeting was held with the government of Cyprus to initiate the operational phase of the project, share key outcomes, discuss next steps, and identify any necessary government support.

Additionally, a survey was completed in November 2024 to identify factors that influence firms' decisions to invest in Cyprus's digital economy.

This survey included responses from 100 firms that have invested in Cyprus's digital economy, covering key digitally enabling sectors such as

01 Information technology

02 Telecommunications

03 Media, e-commerce

04 Consumer electronics

05 Financial services

Survey participants were selected using the FDI Markets database.

Across the 4 countries – the DFDI Initiative focused on 4 primary areas:

01 **Digital infrastructure:** elements that enable investment in digital infrastructure, which includes both a physical dimension and a regulatory dimension.

02 **New digital activities:** elements that enable investment in new digital activities such as social media, digital platforms, cloud computing, and data centers.

03 **Digital transformation:** elements that enable digital adoption by traditionally non-digital firms as facilitated by policies and measures that enable the integration of digital services.

04 **Digital services exports and outward digital FDI;** investment that helps develop local capacity to enable two-way integration with the global digital economy.

E-Waste Management Program:

Tackling E-Waste Challenges, Supporting Sustainability & Enhancing Digital Inclusion Policies Sustainability focuses on protecting our planet, combating climate change, and fostering social and economic development without risking life on Earth or leaving anyone behind. A circular economy is central to these goals, promoting sustainable production and consumption.

E-waste management is a key component of the circular economy, involving the responsible collection, transport, recycling, refurbishing, and disposal of electronic waste to minimize environmental impact. To address these issues, the DCO General Secretariat plans to launch the "E-Waste Management Program (EMP)," a specialized initiative aimed at tackling e-waste challenges, supporting sustainability, and enhancing digital inclusion within a circular economy framework for the ICT sector.

The EMP will establish a comprehensive E-Waste Management Framework, including strategies for managing cross-border e-waste flows, and will be piloted in at least two DCO Member States. The primary objective of the EMP is to provide guidance on the setup, execution, and improvement of e-waste management practices at both national and international levels, incorporating Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for greater impact.

E-Waste Management Program (EMP) promoting the Circular Economy

The DCO's E-Waste Management Program (EMP) has made significant progress towards fostering sustainability and promoting a circular economy within the ICT sector.

An introductory online session was held, bringing together over 20 participants from 10 different countries, demonstrating strong engagement and collaboration among DCO Member States. To date, the Current State Assessment Report, which includes a gap analysis for selected DCO Member States, including those in the GCC region, has been finalized.

Additionally, the benchmarking report on E-waste management in three advanced countries is nearing completion. This report captures best practices, key initiatives, and identifies stakeholders, along with the main challenges and opportunities in E-waste management.

Research work on developing the E-Waste Management Framework Document is ongoing, while the selection of two DCO Member States for the pilot phase is in progress. This initiative is a crucial step towards building a practical, tested framework for efficient E-waste management, which will be completed by the end of 2024.

IMPACT Platform:

Facilitating the Expansion of Cross Border Digital Solutions With Saudi Arabia as its champion, the DCO launched the IMPACT platform in 2023. This online marketplace promotes cross-border market expansion by facilitating the growth of digital solutions, enabling global cooperation, and fostering knowledge-sharing among Member States.

The IMPACT platform supports progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals by stimulating economic growth, driving innovation, and accelerating digital transformation.

This initiative is designed to create meaningful, positive change, strengthening the digital economy across the DCO ecosystem and paving the way for a more digitally inclusive future.

IMPACT Platform Making Significant Strides

To date, the IMPACT platform has made significant strides, establishing communication with DCO Member States. It has organized four one-on-one meetings between the DCO and Member State Points of Contact (POCs), as well as three broader meetings with local stakeholders to provide a comprehensive overview of the platform.

Twelve digital government solutions from four Member States have been published on the platform.

The first demonstration (DEMO) session showcased digital government solutions from the Hellenic Republic and Pakistan to all DCO Member States, and the second DEMO took place in November 2024.

Additionally, coordination with Saudi Arabia's Digital Government Authority (DGA) has been established to explore capacity-building opportunities and conduct case studies on match-mapping government digital solutions.

Overall, eight sessions have been conducted with various DCO Member States, including Oman, Pakistan, Rwanda, Djibouti, Jordan, Bahrain, Greece, and Saudi Arabia.

Digital technology & AI: Building an Inclusive Future

The Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) is advancing its commitment to fostering an inclusive and sustainable digital economy through three key AI initiatives:

the AI Readiness Toolkit, Building Ethical AI, and the DCO GenAI Center of Excellence.

These initiatives are designed to drive economic growth, ensure responsible AI governance, and establish robust infrastructure for generative AI, positioning DCO Member States as leaders in AI innovation and ethical standards. Below are the details of each initiative:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Readiness Toolkit: Boosting Economic Growth & Enhancing International Competitiveness.

The AI Toolkit is designed to help countries strategically assess and elevate their AI capabilities. It consists of three main components: an AI Readiness Assessment, AI Adoption Recommendations, and an AI Playbook.

The AI Readiness Assessment evaluates current AI capabilities across five critical dimensions:

- Government strategies, policies, and regulations
- Technology Advancement & Readiness
- Data & Infrastructure
- Economic Impact of AI
- Skills and Talent

This assessment provides a comprehensive understanding of a country's strengths and areas for improvement.

Based on these insights, the toolkit offers targeted AI adoption recommendations and a customized AI adoption roadmap with prioritized initiatives and actionable steps to advance AI maturity. The AI Playbook serves as a practical guide, offering best practices, examples, and adaptable frameworks tailored to different levels of AI maturity to assist countries in effectively managing AI adoption.

AI Readiness Toolkit Bringing Benefits to the Global Community

This toolkit brings substantial benefits to the global community, particularly for DCO Member States, by promoting structured, data-driven AI adoption at the national level.

It empowers countries to accelerate AI maturity through well-defined KPIs and a customized roadmap, aligning local policies and strategies with international standards to foster collaborative progress. Additionally, it enhances global cooperation by standardizing AI adoption practices, boosting international competitiveness, and creating a shared knowledge base that supports the development of responsible and inclusive AI ecosystems on a global scale.

To kick off this initiative, an introductory online session was hosted, attracting over 15 participants from 12 DCO Member States.

This session facilitated initial discussions on the toolkit›s objectives and functionalities. Building on this foundation, the DCO has finalized the research methodology and approach for assessing AI readiness and adoption phases, ensuring a structured and comprehensive evaluation.

A Benchmark Analysis has also been prepared, highlighting the top 5 leading and emerging AI countries, which will serve as a reference point for Member States in their AI development journeys.

Currently, the DCO is developing a digitalized AI Readiness Assessment Framework and toolkit, which will provide Member States with essential resources to gauge their current capabilities and identify areas for improvement.

Additionally, deliberations are underway regarding a suite of AI adoption artifacts and the formulation of an AI initiative charter to guide implementation efforts. DCO has completed the selection of the piloting Member States and in the process of discussion with each of them.

Building Ethical AI: For an Ethical Digital Future

This initiative supports the DCO's mission to create an inclusive, sustainable, and human-focused digital economy by advancing ethical AI governance across Member States.

It positions the DCO at the forefront of ethical AI advocacy and offers a "Responsible AI" policy tool based on a Risk Prioritization Matrix to address human rights and ethical concerns in AI. The initiative promotes harmonized, interoperable AI governance, proposes collaborative multilateral actions for human rights-centered AI, and encourages inclusive dialogue to ensure responsible AI development.

Progress on this initiative has been substantial. A baseline assessment report has been developed to analyze the current AI landscape within DCO Member States while also exploring global governance approaches and best practices.

In addition, a focused report on "Human Rights in AI Developments Across DCO Member States" highlights the critical intersection of AI and human rights, set for publication by the DCO.

To further this discourse, a roundtable discussion titled "AI & Human Rights: Balancing Protection and Progress" was held alongside the GAIN Summit in Riyadh on September 11, 2024. In-depth interviews with representatives from

Oman Saudi Arabia Nigeria Morocco

provided valuable insights into their AI governance frameworks and expectations regarding the DCO's forthcoming AI policy tool.

Anticipated for completion in December 2024, this Responsible AI Policy tool, bolstered by a Risk Prioritization Matrix, aims to support Member States in navigating the complex landscape of AI while ensuring the protection of human rights.

DCO GenAI Center of Excellence

This year, the DCO proposed the establishment of the GenAI Center of Excellence (CoE) initiative to tackle the urgent challenges its Member States face in fully harnessing the opportunities offered by generative AI.

Despite the immense potential of this technology, DCO Member States are predominantly net consumers of AI solutions, exhibiting limited investment and production capabilities in this field. Adding to these issues is the restricted access to advanced supercomputing infrastructure, with only two Member States having supercomputers that rank among the global TOP500.

Furthermore, a notable global disparity in the development of generative AI, training capabilities, and a general lack of governmental emphasis on enhancing AI infrastructure still exists.

Advocating for the creation of shared Generative AI Infrastructure

To address these challenges, the DCO General Secretariat is advocating for the creation of shared generative AI infrastructure that leverages cutting-edge, energy-efficient technologies. This initiative will be governed by a multilateral framework for operations, overseen by the DCO Council, ensuring equitable access to and development of generative AI capabilities across all Member States.

During the GAIN (AI Global Summit) in Riyadh the DCO announced the championship of Saudi Arabia for this initiative.

The DCO is in the process of creating a working group with the Saudi Arabia to kick start the design of the CoE.

Data & Governance: Ensuring Responsible Digital Practices

In today's data-driven world, effective governance is essential. DCO's Data Agenda and Online Content Integrity frameworks empower countries to develop policies that protect data privacy, promote transparency, and ensure a safe online environment. These frameworks are foundational for building trust and preserving the integrity of digital spaces.

Data Agenda:

The DCO General Secretariat has defined the Data Agenda as a comprehensive framework to navigate the complexities of data management and governance.

This agenda, meticulously structured into distinct yet complimentary layers, serves as a guide for organizations, addressing the nuanced challenges of interoperability, privacy, and the evolving area of digital diplomacy.

The DCO Data Agenda is structured into several layers for clarity and effectiveness and this year the focused was on the following:

DCO Interoperability Mechanism: This layer is centered on promoting Legal Interoperability of data governance frameworks to enhance trusted cross-border data flows.

Data Embassy: This layer is concerned with the governance and diplomatic aspects of data residency, guided by the theme of Data Diplomacy.

Online Content Integrity:

The program seeks to combat online misinformation, empower individuals to critically assess it, and create a thriving digital ecosystem where technology and open dialogue promote cultural diversity and uphold societal values in online content. In 2024, it will be supported by two key projects:

Race to Zero Misinformation: This project aims to develop a comprehensive framework and establish a code of practice on misinformation for social media and digital platforms. It will also explore and recommend digital strategies, norms, and standards for nations to integrate into their digital agendas. Additionally, it will launch a media campaign and form a task force dedicated to the "Race to Zero Online Misinformation."

Misinformation Mitigation Activities in Process:

The work on the final draft of digital strategies, norms, and standards recommendations for nations to incorporate into their national digital agenda is in progress:

01 Communication strategy document for the digital contents on combating misinformation is finalized.

02 Deliberations on the overall structure, related pillars, dimensions, associated commitments, and their reporting aspects and indicators are in progress.

03 A draft of the approach document for setting up a function, forum, or task force to perform misinformation mitigation activities is in process.

Cultural Values and Misinformation: This project focuses on creating a framework that addresses misinformation through a cultural lens. It will lay the groundwork (a set of requirements) for a technology-centered tool to tackle culturally nuanced misinformation.

Creating a Framework to Combat Misinformation: This research-based approach project is currently focused on data collection from several sources:

a literature review, a survey questionnaire covering 20 countries with approximately 400 respondents, and five roundtable discussions held alongside international events such as SWITCH 2024 (Singapore), UNCTAD (Geneva), UNCTAD – CSTD (Geneva), and UN COP29 (Azerbaijan), among others. Using these data resources, the DCO is developing culturally integrated frameworks to combat misinformation, with project outcomes expected to be finalized by **the end of 2024:**

A report on the cultural value attributes is currently in progress, focusing on their integration into an online misinformation mitigation framework.

A Culturally Integrated Misinformation Mitigation Framework is being developed to promote transparency and accountability in digital content dissemination by incorporating cultural values.

Developing a Product Requirements Document (PROD), to outline functional and non-functional requirements for technology-centered tools.

DCO Building Capacity: Strengthening Skills for the Future

The DCO understands that digital skills are the foundation of economic resilience. Through programs like the DigiSkills Accelerator and Digital Taxation Trainings, DCO is investing in skill development, equipping individuals and institutions with the knowledge needed to navigate and shape the digital economy.

With these initiatives, the DCO is not only making an impact where it matters most but also charting a path for an inclusive, ethical, and sustainable digital transformation that benefits everyone:

The DigiSkills Accelerator: Developing a Digitally Skilled Workforce

Digital transformation, particularly through automation, presents a major challenge for low-skilled workers. However, it also creates new job opportunities that require digital skills. According to estimates if the digital skills gap is not addressed,

an estimated 85 million jobs could remain unfilled globally by 2030, potentially resulting in a loss of approximately $8.5 trillion in unrealized annual revenue.

Acknowledging that the global digital skills shortage could become the most significant business disruptor by 2030, the DCO is supporting its Member States in developing a digitally skilled workforce to meet the evolving demands of the labor market.

The DCO emphasizes the importance of multilateralism, international cooperation, and partnerships with like-minded stakeholders to mobilize the necessary resources and capabilities to address this pressing challenge.

Quotations:

- Digital literacy is one of the major barriers that will prevent the global Digital Economy from reaching its full growth potential over the next decade.
- Fostering digital skills empowerment reduces inequality by opening business opportunities, giving access to quality information, and making high-quality public services more easily accessible in all areas.

To boost digital literacy, the DCO has launched the DigiSkills Accelerator, a platform that unites relevant stakeholders to pool resources, coordinate efforts, and take concrete actions to bridge the digital skills gap and promote lifelong employability across its Member States.

The Accelerator focuses on addressing targeted and identified gaps, offering tailored capacity-building programs informed by critical insights from DCO Member States.

This approach ensures that key strategic objectives are achieved, sustained, and continuously improved.

The DigiSkills 2024 Impact

To advance digital transformation, the DCO has broadened its efforts to upskill and reskill citizens across Member States through three key programs within the DigiSkills Accelerator: The Executive Learning Program, The Entrepreneurial Track, and The Digital Skills4Jobs program.

These initiatives provide specialized digital training, equipping participants with critical skills in:

- AI
- Cybersecurity
- Cloud computing
- Entrepreneurial knowledge
- Job-ready digital competencies.

By building these capabilities, participants are empowered to lead and innovate in their roles, access remote work opportunities, and engage with local and global markets, thereby driving economic growth and digital inclusion throughout the region.

01 Established and coordinated a capacity-building working group with representatives from each Member State. The group collected essential baseline data, including training needs, skills assessments, and identification of the target audience with identified skill gaps.

02 Leveraged the DCO's ecosystem to engage key strategic partners from the public and private sectors, to implement capacity-building programs to reduce the skills gaps of Member States.

03 Created a platform for peer-to-peer learning, facilitating the sharing of best practices and knowledge among DCO Member States.

Success Story

In 2024 the DigiSkills Accelerator began executing three key strategic programs.

1. Executive Learning Programs

Transforming government operations through digital tools is essential for improving efficiency, transparency, and public service delivery. The DCO Executive Learning Program is tailored to empower government leaders with the key digital skills necessary to drive innovation and lead effectively in the public sector technical programs launched in 2024 with topics covering specific expertise, such as digital taxation, digital transformation, cybersecurity, cloud computing and GenAI.

Oracle Cloud Computing by Oracle University: Oracle partnered with the DigiSkills Accelerator for 3 years issuing **10k** licenses for the DCO Member States to use.

On August 12, 2024, the Oracle Cloud-Based Training Program was launched online with

77 participants 13 Learning Pathways were selected as part of the training.

These Learning Pathways introduce the learn Cloud Computing and Oracle's Cloud Solutions which include Oracle Cloud Infrastructure and Oracle Cloud Applications and are delivered on a joint learning portal created under DCO for the Oracle programs.

By November 2024, the number of participants had grown to 180.

Nano Degree: A Nanodegree is a skills-based educational credential program where participants learn and complete a series of projects that demonstrate their mastery of specific skills. Upon successfully finishing the required projects, learners receive a credential that validates their expertise in the subject.

The program aims to empower government leaders by equipping them with the tools for digital transformation, enhancing their digital literacy, and fostering innovation in public sector problem-solving. It promotes data-driven decision-making, raises cybersecurity awareness, and facilitates collaboration among digitally skilled leaders to improve service delivery and protect government infrastructure.

This program is a step towards building a digitally competent government workforce capable of meeting the demands of a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

DCO has selected 2 Nano Degrees:

01 Digital Transformation and Cybersecurity for Business Leaders

02 Generative AI for Business Leaders

Through targeted outreach efforts, the DCO successfully reached potential learners across 9+ countries, attracting a diverse and robust applicant pool.

A total of 117 learners enrolled, surpassing the initial target of 100, with 22% of participants being female. This diversity promises to enrich the overall learning experience.

Enrollment is well-distributed between the two Nanodegree programs, with 52 participants in the Digital Transformation and Cybersecurity for Business Leaders program and 65 in the Generative AI for Business Leaders program, both of which are now underway.

2. Freelancing Programs

The DigiSkills Accelerator provided courses designed to empower entrepreneurs from Member States to succeed in the rapidly changing digital environment and address the increasing demand for skilled freelancers. These programs offered a variety of advanced digital skills, preparing participants to secure remote jobs and capitalize on both local and global market opportunities.

Twelve learning streams are currently underway, offering courses in advanced digital skills.

3. Digital Skills4Jobs

The Accelerator initiated a training program to address the digital skills gap between the existing skills (supply) and the expertise required to support the digital development of DCO Member States (demand).

In a time when digital skills are essential for employment and economic growth, DCO's Digital Skills4Jobs program focuses on upskilling, reskilling, and enhancing digital competencies.

Recognizing the critical need for digital skills development across Member States, the DCO proactively approached Oracle University to provide technical expertise and learning support, and Udacity to offer specialized digital courses and learning platforms.

This collaboration has led to a robust program that equips participants with the skills needed to thrive in the digital economy.

The 3MTT (Three Million Tech Talents) Initiative, which seeks to train and develop three million tech talents across DCO Member States, is essential for unlocking opportunities in the digital economy and preparing Nigeria's youth for the future of work.

Success Story

The success of the 3MTT initiative was made possible through strategic partnerships between the DCO, Oracle University, and Udacity.

In 2024, DCO secured 15,000 licenses from Oracle and 300 licenses from the Entrepreneurial Program (UDACITY), specifically for Nigeria.

By targeting Nigeria— a country with a large youth population and a rapidly growing tech sector—the DCO aims to drive digital transformation and unlock new opportunities for employment and innovation.

Equipping young Nigerians with skills in cloud computing, AI, data science, and entrepreneurship positions the country to lead digital innovation across the region, advancing DCO's mission of closing the digital skills gap. During October 2024, 300 Learners from the 3MTT initiative were provided access to the Freelance program.

The support for Nigeria with the 3MTT initiative is part of DCO's broader mission to bridge the digital skills gap across its Member States.

Digital Taxation Advocacy: The making of international tax policy discussions

The integration of national economies and markets has increasingly challenged international tax rules, which were established over a century ago for traditional businesses.

In the digital age, businesses rely on online networks for operations and data exchange, making it difficult to align taxation with the actual locations of economic activities and value creation.

This has resulted in the phenomenon of "stateless income," where digital companies can generate substantial profits without a physical presence in a country, often resulting in minimal or no tax obligations.

This discrepancy in international tax regulations exacerbates issues related to Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS), highlighting the urgent need for new policies that ensure profits are taxed where economic activity occurs.

In 2024, the DCO used its UN Observer status to advocate for international tax policy discussions.

It has been actively engaged in the work of the United Nations Tax Committee, ECOSOC, and the newly formed Ad Hoc Committee tasked with drafting the Terms of Reference for the upcoming UN Framework Convention.

Additionally, the DCO has completed its certification training on the fundamentals of digital taxation for Member States' tax officials, aimed at building capacity within tax departments and enhancing domestic tax revenue mobilization.

Following the adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 78/230 on December 22, 2023, an Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Committee was established to draft the Terms of Reference (ToR) for a UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, finalized in August 2024.

This year, the DCO submitted two written inputs to the Committee on both the procedural and substantive components of the structural framework of the Framework Convention and played an active role in the ECOSOC Special meeting, contributing significantly to the discussions and helping shape the TOR to safeguard the interests of its Member States.

Two trainings conducted:
Implementation under Digiskills Accelerator Executive Learning Program.

1. Principles of International Taxation in the Digitalized Economy (IBFD)

In 2024, the digital taxation unit partnered with IBFD to create an executive learning program for tax officials, titled "Principles of International Taxation in the Digitalized Economy."

This training aimed to help DCO Member States effectively navigate the challenges of taxation in the digital economy, providing delegates with a clearer understanding of its complexities.

The program updated participants on the latest developments in the digital economy, ensuring they are well-prepared for future challenges 41 delegates attended the online training from Member States:

Cyprus Jordan Morocco Oman Pakistan Saudi Arabia

12 delegates passed the final assessment, where the passing grade was 60%.

Testimonial

EL MINAOUI HASNAE

"Principles of International Taxation in the Digitalized Economy" training course has been a valuable experience for my professional development.

The course content was highly relevant to my role as a tax manager, addressing the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the digital economy. The in-depth exploration of current international taxation principles and developments enabled me to keep up with a rapidly evolving field"

Testimonial

SAAD EL BOURY

"The content addressed the latest trends and changes impacting the taxation of digital economy, which is crucial to stay up to date with the latest developments in the digital economy area"

2. Tax Treaty Negotiations (IBFD):

To help Member States navigate the complexities of taxation in the digital economy, particularly in tax treaty negotiations, the DCO launched a specialized training program. The Tax Treaty Negotiations workshop provided participants with a thorough understanding of the provisions and differences between the OECD and UN Models and provides guidance on the tax treaty negotiation process. It also focuses on teaching effective negotiation techniques, drafting compromise solutions, and setting appropriate priorities during negotiations.

The training is designed to strengthen participants' ability to engage in international tax treaty discussions, improving their country's negotiating position on the global stage.

Member States were asked to nominate two tax officials who are new to tax treaty negotiations so they could develop the necessary knowledge and skills to engage confidently in these discussions

29 officials attended and completed the training
32 were trained including 3 officials from DCO

Testimonial

EUGENIA ARYEETEY

"The course was very rewarding. All the knowledge acquired is relevant and will enable me to improve my work and my skills in international taxation"

Partnerships And Collaborations: Building Bridges

Partnerships And Collaborations: Building Bridges

The DCO is building bridges towards a more inclusive and dynamic digital economy. This is driven by two main ideas:

01 | first, to help narrow the digital divide between the major known players in the market and the smaller but equally capable companies, and

02 | second, to help DCO partners expand their reach beyond national and regional borders.

By addressing these two goals, the DCO is working toward a more diverse ecosystem of service providers, where smaller enterprises have equal opportunities to compete and innovate, and where large companies can leverage local expertise, ultimately creating a balanced and inclusive marketplace.

Reducing the Digital Divide

Reducing the digital divide is essential because it enables smaller companies—often rich in talent and innovation potential—to compete with larger corporations that dominate the digital economy.

This diversity in service providers not only leads to greater innovation and creativity but also strengthens the resilience of the digital market by supporting a wide range of players, including those from underrepresented regions and backgrounds.

Expanding the footprint of DCO partners beyond their home countries also brings mutual benefits. By promoting cross-border collaboration, companies gain exposure to new markets, increase their customer base, and foster job creation and economic growth.

This expansion fuels prosperity not only for individual businesses but also for the wider digital economy, as businesses grow and diversify across regions, stimulating economic development and creating employment opportunities.

Creating win-win situations for a greater collective impact

These bridges are about more than just business; they also represent a commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) for the DCO partners. Not to mention that some of the DCO initiatives are related to CSR, including programs dedicated to youth and women's empowerment, capacity building, and skills development.

By emphasizing these values, the DCO and its partners reinforce the importance of socially responsible growth and equitable access to digital opportunities. Strong partnerships and collaborations create "win-win" situations where businesses can achieve their economic goals while contributing positively to society.

And by joining forces for stronger CSR initiatives, the DCO and its partners ensure a greater collective impact.

From reducing gender disparities in tech to building digital skills in under represented communities.

These efforts help create a more inclusive digital economy where everyone has the opportunity to participate, prosper, and contribute to growth. Through these bridges, the DCO is supporting a vision of sustainable, inclusive, and socially responsible digital development.

THE DCO ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Timeline of Major Events for DCO in 2024

January 14–20, 2024
Davos
World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting

January 31, 2024
DCO 3rd General Assembly
Manama | January 31, 2024

February 6–9, 2024
LEAP
(SG and Min. of ICT Ghana fireside chat)

March 5–7, 2024
World Trade Organization (WTO) Meeting

May 4 – 5, 2024
OIC Banjul Summit

May 27 to 31 2024
WSIS in Geneva (Panels)

September 3-5, 2024
24 Fintech

September 10 – 24, 2024
79th UNGA

September 21, 2024
GAIN (Secretary-General delivered a keynote)

High-Level Digital Cooperation Reception

October 11, 2024
Women's Day Event (UN SG Panel)

September 22-23, 2024
Summit of the Future (UNGA Side Event)

September 22-23, 2024
FII

November 20 – 21, 2024
MENA ICT Forum

December 8–15, 2024
COP16

December 12–13, 2024
DOHA Forum (Panels)

December 15–19, 2024
IGF (Secretary-General delivered a keynote),

December 17, 2024
4th Diplomatic Connect Event

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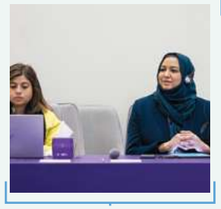
DCO Created Events

UNGA side events

GAIN, Misinformation Roundtable (WSIS)

4th Diplomatic Connect

DSA 2 Roundtables (IGF)



DSA 3 roundtables- 3rd Diplomatic Connect

DSA Roundtable MISK Global Forum

Misinformation Roundtable with Social Media Companies

Online Safe Space for Children Panel (IGF)

Ministerial Roundtable on Misinformation (IGF)

Deal Zone (DCO booth at COP16)

Launch of Digital Economy Trends 2025 report (IGF)

GDC Townhall (IGF)

UNDP Panel (COP16)

Deal Zone (MENA ICT)

Ecosystem

DCO New Observers:

- TikTok (Los Angeles, USA) (Category A)
- Microsoft (Washington, USA) (Category D)
- Aleph Digital advertising for all (Argentina) (Category D)
- People-Centered Internet (Geneva, Switzerland) (Category E)
- Strategeast (USA) (Category E)

DCO's Observership to:

- United Nations General Assembly
- WIPO World Intellectual Property Organization

DCO is Cooperating with:

- ITU
- UN trade & development
- EDISON ALLIANCE FOR DIGITAL INCLUSION

DCO Partners with existing MoUs:

- UNDP
- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
- مركز التحكيم التجاري
- smart africa
- GSMA
- World Trade Organization
- المركز الوطني للتعليم الإلكتروني National eLearning Center
- HEWLETT PACKARD
- ims by Aleph

this will be signed in Dec 2024

Observers Committee Meetings (Championed by the Sultanate of Oman)

- Q1 – took place on the sidelines of DCO's 3rd General Assembly in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain
- Q2 – took place on the sidelines of COMEX Global Technology Show in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
- Q3 & Q4 – took place virtually

Working Groups:

- ESTONIAN ASSOCIATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS
- WORLD BANK GROUP

DCO Publications:
Sharing the Knowledge

DCO Publications: Sharing the Knowledge

The DCO plays a big role in disseminating knowledge about the digital economy through a range of targeted publications designed to inform and guide its Member States and a global audience.

By producing comprehensive reports and studies, the DCO provides valuable insights into the current landscape of digital economies, exploring key trends, challenges, and opportunities.

These publications often include baseline assessments that analyze the adoption of digital technologies across Member States, as well as comparative analyses of global best practices.

In addition to research reports, the DCO also focuses on critical issues such as the intersection of human rights and AI developments, ensuring that ethical considerations are integrated into discussions about technological advancement shared with the readers of its publications.

Through these efforts, the DCO not only shares vital knowledge but also empowers Member States to navigate the complexities of the digital economy, driving sustainable growth and innovation.

Ultimately, the DCO's commitment to knowledge sharing plays a crucial role in building a more interconnected and resilient digital future for all.

Digital Economy Trends

As the digital economy evolves rapidly, it presents new opportunities for growth, innovation, and societal transformation. To support this, DCO launched the annual Digital Economy Trends report for 2024 and 2025 offering key insights into emerging trends such as AI, the trust economy, digital reality, and more.

This report helps stakeholders in the public, private, and civil sectors navigate the rapidly changing digital landscape while promoting responsible and sustainable adoption. Through this effort, the DCO fosters collaboration and accelerates progress toward achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and building an inclusive, thriving digital economy.

Digital Economy Trends 2024 Report

The 2024 edition of the Digital Economy Trends report was launched during the World Economic Forum 2024 in Davos in January 2024. The report covers six themes aimed at helping to shape the evolution and transformation of the digital landscape.

The six themes include: Artificial Intelligence, Digital Reality, Trust Economies, Cybersecurity, Smart Ecosystems, and Green Economies, revolving around current and upcoming shifts in digital trends backed by data and real-life examples.

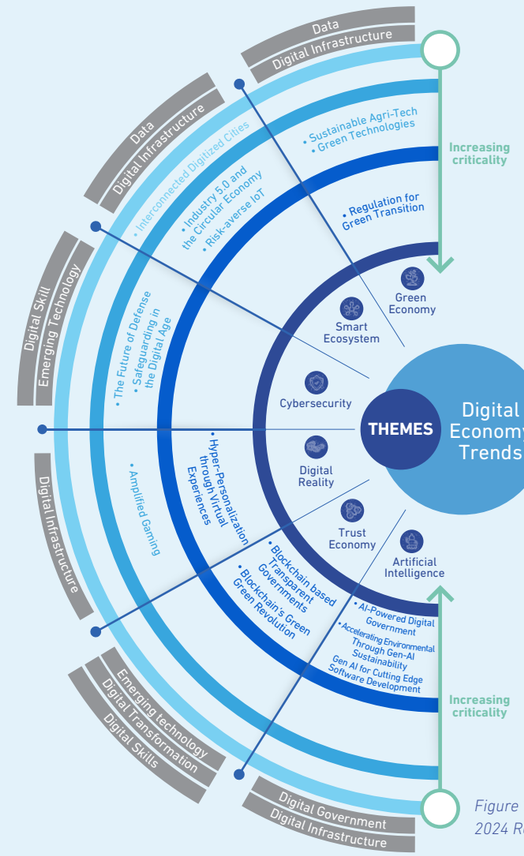


Figure 1: Trend Blueprint DET 2024 Report

2024 DET activities:

- Organized a series of expert panel sessions to discuss and deliberate on the Digital Economy trends 2024 and united more than 10 experts in the sessions.
- Conducted an online webinar with the following speakers: Sanghamitra Pati, Managing Director, Deloitte Consulting, Generative AI Expert, Dr. Syed Iftikhar Shah, Digital Research Director, DCO, Digital Economy Expert, Nirmal Vijaya Kumar, Associate Director, Deloitte Consulting, Generative AI Expert, and Mr. Bilal Qureshi, Digital Economy Expert as a moderator and was attended by more than 220 participants.
- The DCO launched the DET 2025 during the IGF Riyadh 2024.

Digital Economy Trends 2025 Report

'Digital Economy Trends 2025', the second edition in DCO's Digital Economy Trends report series was launched in December 2024 at the Internet Governance Forum in Riyadh.

The report has a special focus on social-economic impact and highlights the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration to address the emerging challenges within the digital economy such as ethical innovation, equitable access, digital divide, low public confidence in online systems, and the limited public-private partnerships.

The report offers essential insights into the rapidly evolving digital landscape by **exploring 18 transformative trends grouped under three themes:**

01 Sustainable Intelligent Ecosystems,

02 Empowered Communities

03 Trust and Security.

The current trends expected to have the greatest impact in 2025 are identified as: Extending Global Connectivity; Deploying Specialized, Accessible, and Localized AI; and Building Digital Skills and Continuous Learning.

Additionally, the emerging trends anticipated to have the greatest impact in the next 3-5 years are: Ensuring a Digitally Safe and Inclusive World, Utilizing New Types of Data, and Governing Superintelligent AI.

By aligning the trends with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the report provides actionable insights and a roadmap for fostering an inclusive, safe, and sustainable digital economy.

2025 DET activities:

- Organized two multi-stakeholder Expert panel sessions to discuss and deliberate on the Digital Economy trends 2025 and united more than 50 experts, including policymakers from DCO Member States in the session.
- Gathered specific insights through the Digital Economy Trends survey (DET survey) 2024, which collected the opinions of nearly

300 Chief Technology Officers and senior technologists from large companies (250+ employees) operating in at least two countries, alongside 100 experts (60 policymakers and 40 digital economy experts)

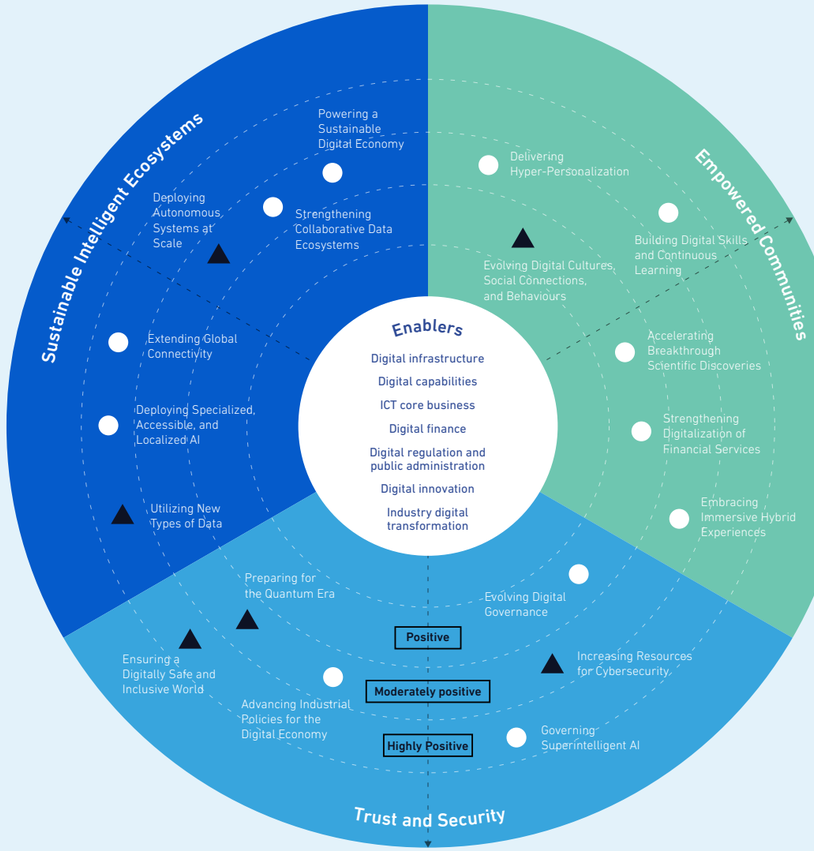


Figure 2: Trend Blueprint DET 2025 Report

EconomiX

The EconomiX by the Digital Cooperation Organization is a quarterly publication that brings together thought leaders from governments, businesses, academia, and international organizations to explore critical topics shaping the global digital economy.

EconomiX fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange, empowering stakeholders to harness the transformative potential of the digital economy for sustainable economic growth.

Featuring exclusive interviews with prominent figures, insightful articles, and practical case studies, EconomiX provides readers with actionable perspectives on leveraging digital transformation to drive economic and social prosperity.

Key areas of focus include entrepreneurship and innovation, digital trade and cross-border data flows, digital foreign direct investment, digital taxation, and the development of digital skills across industries.

Topics such as the Sustainable Development Goals, gender inclusion, the blue economy, and the gig economy are also prominently explored, offering a holistic view of the intersection between technology and economic growth.

EconomiX underscores the importance of multilateral cooperation and knowledge sharing in addressing the challenges and opportunities of the digital age. It reflects the DCO's objectives of fostering collaboration among stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, to ensure inclusive and sustainable development in the digital economy.

By uniting experts and trusted research, EconomiX serves as an essential resource for navigating the evolving relationship between technology and the economy, equipping individuals, organizations, and governments to succeed now and in the future.

All issues of EconomiX are accessible at

THE DCO ANNUAL REPORT 2024

DCO Policy Watch

As the digital economy evolves rapidly and technological advancements accelerate, it is essential for policies to keep up.

The "Policy Watch" initiative was developed based on the DCO's role as a trusted source of information and expertise for its Member States. This quarterly publication provides up-to-date insights and trends in digital policy, helping Member States implement policies that promote inclusive and sustainable growth.

In May 2024, the DCO released its first edition, focusing on four key areas at the forefront of digital governance:

Artificial Intelligence, Data Protection and Privacy, Electronic Waste (E-Waste), and the Future of Work.

In September 2024, the DCO published the second edition, which focused on three key aspects of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):

Digital Government, Digital Identity, and Open Data, while also providing global and regional updates on the digital policy advancements covered in the first edition.

Startup Guides

The DCO's Startup Guides provide entrepreneurs with an essential resource for starting and growing businesses within DCO Member States. These guides simplify the process by offering tailored information, market insights, and direct access to critical websites.

They map out the entrepreneurial landscape, covering areas such as venture capital, accelerators, coworking spaces, industry rankings, government incentives, and free zones.

By addressing the specific challenges faced by foreign entrepreneurs, the guides help create a more accessible and connected digital ecosystem, fostering regional economic growth.

The 2024 Startup Guides were successfully shared with all DCO Member States and published on the DCO's website.

Additionally, three new guides were added to the list for Bangladesh, Greece, and Qatar.

Spotlight on Publications Engagements.

In 2024, DCO publications sparked exceptional engagement, solidifying their value in driving discourse on the digital economy. Across policy papers, reports, and newsletters, our publications garnered over 7,500 views, with more than 1,300 downloads, reflecting their importance as resources for policymakers, industry leaders, and innovators.

These numbers showcase the increasing global interest in DCO's insights, reinforcing our position as a trusted thought leader in the digital economy space.

Testimonial

Reema Al-Kuwari
Founder & Chief Executive Officer at Adeer, Qatar

"The DCO Startup Guide was instrumental in our preparations for LEAP 2024. It's clear and concise structure, coupled with helpful links, provided us with a comprehensive understanding of the Saudi startup ecosystem. We found the guide to be an invaluable resource in navigating the local market."

Shershah Hassan
Founder KalPay, Pakistan

"The DCO Startup Guides offer a comprehensive roadmap for navigating the startup ecosystem. Their exhaustive guidelines have been instrumental in supporting the growth of our local startup community."

Organizational Excellence

Organizational Excellence

In 2024 the DCO Shared Services began implementing a performance management system with KPIs for employees, coupled with two-way feedback sessions to enhance both organizational and individual performance.

The focus is on building teams and empowering departments to secure and retain top talent. Placing greater emphasis on work culture, ensuring that new hires seamlessly integrate into the DCO while fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment.

By creating a culture that balances experience and human synergy, the aim is to develop an internal environment unique to the DCO where employees feel that they are part of a mission, not just a job.

This approach builds loyalty, a sense of belonging and drives higher performance, while encouraging an open dialogue.

This year the DCO also concentrated on growth from an operational excellence perspective, ensuring the development of governance tools to keep pace with this expansion.

Additionally, we strengthened relationships with Member States across financial, personnel, and technological aspects. Leveraging a diverse workforce to drive accelerated organizational performance was a key enabler of this success.

Enhancing the Shared Services channels has been instrumental in increasing the organization's visibility, particularly through the activation of two key portals:

01 Careers Page

02 Vendor Registration Portal

These channels have attracted both individuals and entities to engage with the DCO.

Talented individuals have been eager to apply for open vacancies and join the DCO workforce, while vendors have sought opportunities to collaborate on various DCO projects and initiatives.

Through these channels, the DCO has introduced more than 3,200 highly skilled candidates and 400 vendors from across the globe.

Introducing an enhanced governance approach was a key focus to sustain the Organization›s growth and foster a better working environment, built on transparency and trust.

This involved both the creation of new policies and the enhancement of existing ones.

New policies and guidelines were introduced, including:

Code of Conduct

DCO Code of Conduct provides clear ethical guidelines, enhances organizational integrity, promotes accountability, fosters a respectful workplace, and builds trust with stakeholders. Code of Conduct comprises of key Governance Guidelines such as Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest, Data Privacy and Protection, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Corruption.

Corporate Credit Card Guidelines

This guideline is a governance enabler to the financials of DCO, it outlines the main features of using a DCO Credit Card by employees for business need. It is also facilitating a digital based financial solution to meet dynamic business requirements.

Clean Desk Policy

As DCO data and its office impression is so important, this policy was introduced to ensure that employees require to keep their workspace free of sensitive or confidential information when not in use, to enhance security and minimize the risk of data breaches. Also, to make sure DCO working place is always representing the values of DCO

Publications Guidelines

Publication Guidelines ensure consistent quality, accuracy, and integrity in communications, enhance credibility, and maintain compliance with organizational standards and branding guidelines. Internal Audit Policy Outlines the mechanism for conducting internal audits, ensuring compliance and operational efficiency while enhancing accountability and effectiveness.

Member States Communications Policy

DCO is keeping the level of transparency and cooperation as the key priority to its Member States, from that perspective, the Member States Communication Policy was created to effectively communicate with Member to foster collaboration, ensure alignment on shared goals, enhance transparency, and strengthens diplomatic relations, leading to more cohesive and impactful outcomes.

HR Disciplinary Actions Guidelines

As DCO is keen to create a safe working environment, the HR Disciplinary Actions Guidelines is created for addressing employee misconduct, ensuring fair and consistent enforcement of policies, highlighting the mechanism for internal investigation, potential consequences, and the appeals process to maintain a respectful workplace with high level of transparency.

Investment Guidelines

DCO is always aiming for financial sustainability that could help the organization to keep growing and delivering its goals with Impact. Creating such guidelines is a key stone to Outlines the principles and criteria for making financial investment decisions, aiming to optimize returns while managing risk. They ensure that investments align with the organization›s financial goals and ethical standards.

Managing Political Affairs Guidelines

Managing Political Affairs strategically navigates complex political landscapes, enhances stakeholder engagement, mitigates risks, and drives effective decision-making to advance organizational and policy objectives.

Policy Management Framework

Ensures consistent creation and application of policies, improves compliance and risk management, enhances organizational efficiency, and supports strategic objectives through clear, well-documented guidelines and policies.

The DCO puts people first and in 2024 it has made significant improvements to its hiring and selection mechanisms, enhancing internal collaboration, and elevating the interviewing experience.

The onboarding process, especially for international hires in Saudi Arabia, has been also enhanced to improve the employee journey, with a strong focus on cultural diversity. The DCO positions itself as a welcoming environment for global talent as well as from Member States. The Shared Services department has expanded organizational capacity by creating new functions and securing adequate resources to drive greater impact.

Flexible hiring methodologies were introduced this year, allowing certain roles to be filled by consultants based on business needs. Retaining talent is now simpler, contributing to business efficiency. This marks a new era of global recruitment, hybrid working models, and a forward-looking HR approach that DCO is set to adopt and implement.

To add to this change, an anonymous engagement survey was conducted for the first time to gather insights and foster improvements in organizational culture, aiming to create a more positive and supportive work environment.

Over 40 new employees joined the DCO in 2024, increasing the total human capital to 75 employees from 23 different countries. DCO maintained a healthy balance of gender diversity, with 45% female and 55% male employees. A key focus was hiring from DCO Member States, leading to a 20% increase in human capital from these nations compared to 2023.

From a financial perspective, three key aspects stand out:

01 **Resilient and Agile Budgeting:**
The DCO has implemented a resilient and agile budgeting process aimed at increasing efficiency and improving transparency around internal expenses and expenditures. This involves and encourages all departments to ensure the organization's financial health and transparency. While the financial department maintains oversight secured under a robust financial governance mechanism, departments are empowered to make decisions regarding their spending and cost management, fostering internal accountability.

02 **Financial Literacy and Compliance:**
Another step taken was to equip all teams with the necessary tools for financial literacy, encouraging active participation and awareness across the organization. Additionally, communication with Member States on all financial aspects has been strengthened, particularly given that this year marks DCO's first full fiscal year financial audit for the 2023 statements and the organization›s second fiscal year audit overall. This focus demonstrates that compliance has been a top priority for DCO.

03 **Internal Controls:**
DCO has made significant strides in strengthening its internal controls and enhancing financial practices in 2024. The establishment of the Internal Audit Function, along with the foundational policies and procedures, demonstrates a proactive approach to governance and accountability. The issuance of the first Financial Statement for the fiscal year 2023 after thorough audits signifies a commitment to transparency and integrity in financial reporting. Engaging both an external independent third-party audit and an independent review by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has provided the Secretariat with a statement of endorsement, adds credibility to the Organization's financial practices.

Additionally, the recommendations provided for improving financial maturity will lead to more robust and transparent practices moving forward.

Conclusion

Conclusion

With the conclusion of another year, the Digital Cooperation Organization is poised to amplify its success by fostering robust partnerships with Member States, Observers, and international organizations by focusing on several key strategies:

01 Collaborative Frameworks: This collaboration will promote shared learning and innovative solutions to common digital challenges.

02 Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building: The DCO will prioritize knowledge sharing among its partners to enhance digital literacy and capacity-building efforts.

03 Leveraging Technology for Inclusivity: The DCO aims to leverage advanced technologies and digital tools to create more inclusive platforms for engagement. This will enable Member States and international organizations to engage more effectively, ensuring that all voices are heard in the digital dialogue.

04 Promoting Best Practices: The DCO will focus on identifying and promoting best practices in global digital cooperation among its partners. This approach not only fosters a culture of innovation but also encourages the dissemination of effective policies and practices across different regions.

05 Coordinating Global Responses: In a world where digital challenges often transcend national borders, the DCO will play a crucial role in coordinating global responses to emerging issues such as cybersecurity, data privacy, and digital trade.

06 Engaging the Private Sector and Civil Society: The DCO recognizes that successful digital cooperation requires the involvement of various stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society.

Through these strategic efforts, the DCO is not only enhancing its partnerships but also creating a vibrant ecosystem of collaboration that is essential for driving progress in the digital realm. By uniting the strengths of its members and fostering an inclusive approach to digital cooperation, the DCO is well-equipped in 2024 and beyond to navigate the complexities of the digital age and ensure that the benefits of digital transformation are shared broadly and equitably.

The DCO remains committed to fostering continued engagements, focusing on creating an inclusive and sustainable digital economy that addresses the diverse needs of all.

By overcoming obstacles to enable global digital resilience and prosperity, the organization aims to empower communities, enhance digital capabilities, and ensure that the benefits of the digital revolution are shared equitably across the globe.

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