

The poster features a blue background on the left with white and yellow text. On the right, there is a graphic of a hand interacting with a digital network of glowing nodes and lines. At the top right, the 'REGIONAL FORUM' logo is displayed above a row of icons representing Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 14, 15, and 17.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Cross-cutting session:
Digital transformation
beyond the COVID-19
pandemic**

RFSD 2022 Side event

1 April 2022 | 10:00-13:00 CET

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REGIONAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION

Facilitated by: UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA, FAO, UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA

Organized by: UN Digital Transformation Group for Europe and Central Asia (RUNDGTGECA)

Coordinated by: UNECE, ITU

Cross-Cutting Session: Digital Transformation beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic

CONCEPT NOTE

Background and rationale

The side-event is organized by the UN Digital Transformation Group for Europe and Central Asia, with the coordination of ITU and UNECE and contribution of UN Women, UNIDO, UNICEF, UNECE, and UNFPA.

Development through digital transformation is a complex issue that touches on many enablers, including broadband availability, sectoral e-strategies, and programs fostering digital inclusion or developing innovation communities. With the COVID-19 pandemic highlighting the importance of digital transformation, Member States relied substantially on digital components to adapt to the “new normal”.

As “digital” is not only a solution to an emergency, but a long-term investment towards inclusion, resilience, and against risk, this event provides a platform for Member States to discuss challenges, opportunities, and necessary policy actions related to digital dimensions of each SDG of focus during the 2022 RFSD: SDG4 “Quality of Education”, SDG5 “Gender Equality”, SDG14 “Life below water”, and SDG15 “Life on land”, all while highlighting the importance of partnerships as per necessities to take multistakeholder approaches to address digital transformation.

With the adoption of distance learning, Member States will exchange on drivers of e-governance of education system to increase learning outcomes for children and youths, alongside nurturing digital economy and society growth through digital skills development. Partners will also discuss ways to provide equal technological access, especially to women, girls and youth, and other marginalized groups, ensuring equal participation in ICTs and STEM sectors. Finally, Member States will exchange on innovative ICT-based solutions that support overcoming obsolete and polluting practices, mitigating

environmental risks and challenges, conserving marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and sustainably using earth resources.

Session objectives and expected outcomes

- Provide a platform for the Member States to discuss challenges, opportunities, and required policy actions related to address the digital dimensions of each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of focus during the 2022 RFSD, complementing the roundtable sessions of the Forum;
- Draw attention of the international communities on gaps to be addressed and good practices to be scaled up across the regions;
- Outcomes of the discussions to be channelled to the ECOSOC High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2022, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2022, and the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition.

Organizers

Lead organizers Organized by the UN Digital Transformation Group for Europe and Central Asia, coordinated by ITU and UNECE

Contributors: UN Women, UNIDO, UNICEF, and UNFPA.

Focal points: Jaroslaw Ponder, Head, ITU Office for Europe; Sarah Delporte, Project Officer, ITU Office for Europe

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Agenda and Structure

Draft Agenda

10:00 – 10:10 **Opening remarks**

10:10 – 10:15 **Special statement from the youth**

This special statement from the youth will be delivered by a representative of the ITU Generation Connect Europe Youth Group and will focus on viewpoints and aspiration on digital transformation processes related to the SDGs in focus for this year RFSD.

10:15 – 12:45 **Segment 1: SDG 4 “Quality of Education”**

This segment will focus on answering the question: *“What are the main challenges of fostering digital skills development for all, e-governance of the education system and smart and flexible education delivery at home, and what are some solutions to grasp the potential of digital technology to improve quality and equity in education?”*

Segment 2: SDG 5 “Gender Equality”

This segment will focus on answering the question: *“How can governments overcome challenges that hinder the participation of women, girls, youth and those from other marginalized groups at risk of exclusion and disadvantage in the labour market, in the digital world and STEAM sectors?”*

Segment 3: SDG 14 “Life below water”

This segment will focus on answering the questions:

- *“What are effective policies or actions that government can put in place to make digitization and digitalization processes green and sustainable?”* and;
- *How can innovative ICT-based solutions and emerging technologies support governments in mitigating environmental risks and challenges, and sustainably use natural and earth resources, inter alia conserving marine and terrestrial ecosystems?*

Segment 4: SDG15 “Life on land”

The segment 4 will intend to answer the same questions as the segment 3.

In addition, panellists in all segments will also answer the question *“How can multistakeholder partnerships support digital development and thereby accelerate the achievement of all SDGs?”*

12:45 – 12:50 **Special statement from the youth**

This special statement from the youth will be delivered by a representative of the ITU Generation Connect Europe Youth Group and will focus on viewpoints and aspiration on digital transformation processes related to the SDGs in focus for this year RFSD.

17:20 – 17:30 **Summary of the discussion and closing remarks**

The closing remarks will intend to summarize the discussion and key policy actions put forward by panellists to be channelled to the ECOSOC High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2022, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2022, and the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition.

List of Panellists

Co-moderation:

- Natalia Mochu, Regional Director, ITU Office for CIS
- Maria Rosaria Ceccarelli, Chief, Trade Facilitation, UNECE

Introduction and closing remarks:

- Jaroslaw Ponder, Head, ITU Office for Europe
- Elizabeth Tuerk, Director, Economic Cooperation and Trade, UNECE

Panellists:

- Mr. Talant Sultanov, Chair and co-founder of the Internet Society Kyrgyzstan Chapter;
- Prof Marijana Petrovic, Faculty of Transport, Belgrade, Serbia, author of the thematic focus of the Gender Equality Index;
- Ms Mariam Torosyan, Founder and CEO at Impact Innovations Institute, Armenia;
- Mr. Rudin Qehajaj, Director of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Policies and Programmes Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Albania;
- Generation Connect Youth Representatives for Europe (TBA);
- Generation Connect Youth Representatives for CIS (TBA).