

Session Guidance Note

Session 1

Trends and Needs in Digital Government for Sustainable Development in LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs

Day 1

10:00-13:00 4 June 2019

1. Background & Objective

Countries in special situations, such as LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs, are confronted with special economic, social and geographical vulnerabilities and multi-faceted challenges such as climate change and intensified natural disasters with increased frequencies, scarcity of resources, capacity gaps and barriers to major markets.

Governments in these countries, especially the SIDS, have been making great efforts to improve the connectivity and innovate public services delivery through consistent investment in ICT infrastructure and digital government. The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action [S.A.M.O.A.] Pathway, adopted by the General Assembly in 2014, recognized the enabling role of information communication technologies (ICTs) to sustain high levels of economic and social growth in SIDS. It also highlighted the importance to increase connectivity and enhance the use of ICTs through improved infrastructure, training and national legislation, as well as through partnership with the private sector and other stakeholders.

Nevertheless, due to a number of restraining factors, which include lack of awareness of what ICT can offer, insufficient telecommunications infrastructure and Internet connectivity, expensive Internet access, absence of adequate legal and regulatory frameworks, shortage of requisite human capacity, failure to use local language and content, and lack of entrepreneurship and a business culture open to change, these countries in special situations have not been able to reap the sustainable benefits through ICT and digital government.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has provided a good framework for supporting capacity development in ICTs and digital government for sustainable development in LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs by building effective partnership through South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation. In addition, the UN E-Government Survey, which adopts the unified methodology to measure and evaluate digital government across all UN Member States, may not be a good gauge of digital government development in countries in special situations.

In order to build more effective development partnership to improve connectivity and digital government of LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs, and meanwhile improve the methodology and relevance of the UN E-Government Survey for benchmarking digital government

development, it is important to better understand the trends and capacity needs of digital government for sustainable development which reflect the unique economic, social and technical situations of LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs. Notwithstanding the fact that LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs share common vulnerabilities and challenges, it is also true that each individual country has its own contexts of digital government development.

Against this backdrop, this Session aims to discuss and share the knowledge of trends and capacity needs and exchange good practices in digital government in LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs. The Session will also introduce the policy initiatives and the effective partnership with other stakeholders, particularly the private sector, for advancing digital government. The Session will furthermore discuss the unique challenges confronted by LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs in promoting digital government development for achieving sustainable development. Moreover, this Session will also review the existing capacity support programmes and potential support from developed countries and regional and international development agencies for digital government development in LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs.

By sharing such trends and needs in digital government of LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs, this Session will set the overall background of the EGM upon which further discussions of the following Sessions on more detailed thematic areas can take place.

2. Main Questions to be Addressed during the Session

- What are some recent trends of digital government development in LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs in implementation of the SDGs?
- What are the unique challenges in digital government development confronted by LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs? What are the common challenges and what are the group specific challenges? What are the underlying factors of those challenges?
- What are some recent efforts and (integrated) policy initiatives of LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs to overcome those challenges?