SUMMARY

Digital Dialogues:
Thinking Together about the G20 Digital Agenda

Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Brasilia, Brazil

The "**Digital Dialogues: Thinking Together about the G20 Digital Agenda**" event took place on February 20, 2024, in Brasilia at Escola Nacional de Administração Pública (ENAP). The event brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to further the debate on digital economy priorities in the context of the Brazilian presidency of the G20 (see full agenda here). Over 300 participants registered to attend the event, which counted with the participation of 50 speakers, including the leads of the T20 tracks and representatives of the other core G20 engagement groups. Overall, there were representatives from 35 countries, with more than 200 participants attending online and around 100 people attending in person.

The event drew upon the experiences of India's G20 presidency in both process and substance and anticipated the contours of South Africa's upcoming leadership. Leveraging the weight of the troika of the largest democracies and major economies in the Global South, it promoted coherence in the approach to digital issues to ensure no one is left behind in the digital transformation of economies and societies. Through structured panels and discussion sessions on the priorities of the G20 Digital Economy Working Group (i.e. meaningful connectivity, artificial intelligence, digital government, information integrity) and intersectional topics (e.g. data, climate justice, indigenous rights, gender, youth, etc.), participants gained a comprehensive understanding of digital economy challenges and contributed to shaping a coherent and ambitious digital agenda for all.

Conversations ventured into the importance of universal and meaningful connectivity, emphasizing the need for harmonized indicators and efforts by Brazil to map the real needs of users. Regarding artificial intelligence, discussions underscored the need for innovative financing mechanisms and addressing infrastructure gaps. With regard to digital government, the discussion centered on the importance of building trustworthy digital public infrastructure (DPI) and the necessity of international cooperation in its development and distribution. Discussions about information integrity also emphasized the role of civil society in shaping digital governance, stressing the need for transparency and multi-stakeholder engagement. Participants and speakers stressed the importance of inclusive processes, international cooperation, collaborative policy formulation, and multi-stakeholder engagement to shape a fair and comprehensive digital agenda that benefits all. Key calls to action are highlighted below.

Calls to Action

Multistakeholder Cooperation and Engagement: Participants highlighted the importance of fostering multistakeholder cooperation and establishing clearer avenues for engagement within and beyond the G20 and across stakeholder groups, such as the T20, C20, B20, S20, W20, J20, among others. There was a consensus on the need for a platform to facilitate connections and include diverse voices in the conversation. The intersectionality of digital issues with various societal concerns such as climate change, gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, youth, and children's issues, and antiracism was also recognized, prompting discussions on how these topics inform each other and need to be incorporated into the heart of the digital agenda.

> *Bringing the digital agenda and human rights topics to environments like the G20 is a way to shed light on the discussion and bring more accountability.*
>
> **Guilherme Canela**
> **UNESCO**

Catalyzing a mission-oriented process: The discussions underscored the necessity of ensuring that the benefits of the digital and the data economy are accessible to all individuals and communities, not just a privileged few. Data has been highlighted as a cross-cutting topic by all panels. The concept of an International Decade for Data (IDD) was proposed as a means to address the foundational role of data in contemporary global challenges. It was suggested that efforts should be focused on strengthening data governance to support meaningful connectivity, digital government, AI, information integrity, and other cross-cutting topics. In fact, one of the conclusions was that an IDD could drive investment in data collection, promote data literacy and education, support bridging the digital divide, encourage international data collaboration, and leverage data to advance progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

> *An International Decade for Data provides time to solve complex global challenges, offers a mission and vision for the international community, and promotes a global conversation.*
>
> **David Passarelli**
> **Centre for Policy Research, United Nations University (UNU-CPR)**

Innovating in multistakeholder cooperation: The use of innovative and agile frameworks was highlighted as a way to address the unpredictable uncertainty and ambiguity prevalent in the current global environment. Approaches and tools such as sandboxes were seen as valuable tools for finding workable solutions more rapidly than through abstract thought experiments, emphasizing the importance of global cooperation and local partnerships in tackling digital challenges effectively.

> *We need to experiment with the things we want to have. AI can and should be used to promote good.*
>
> **Philipe Moura**
> **Associação Brasileira de Inteligência Artificial (ABRIA)**

Next steps

The event's success highlighted the necessity of continuous engagement and collaboration across various sectors, including academia, civil society, private entities, and government agencies, to address complex data and digital challenges in the context of the G20 process. To sustain and amplify this momentum, the recommendation is to orchestrate a follow-up event that delves deeper into the topics discussed and expands the avenues for multistakeholder participation.

This potential series of events will serve as a platform to support the work of the T20 and to further foster collaboration, dialogue, and alignment among diverse G20 engagement groups, ensuring their active participation and contribution to the G20 process. As a recommendation to Brazil, participants highlighted that by continuing to open avenues for multistakeholder engagement and an integrated approach to the digital agenda, the country could strengthen its position as a global leader in driving the digital agenda.

> *We have to ensure a coherent narrative from data to value, ensure these technologies are inclusive and equitable, and build multistakeholder avenues for engagement.*
>
> **Lorrayne Porciuncula**
> **Datasphere Initiative**

Annex. Highlights per panel

PANEL 1.

Connectivity and Digital Inclusion:

- Universal connectivity is a long-standing goal, emphasized more during the pandemic.
- Meaningful connectivity is crucial, allowing people to consume and produce innovation.
- Challenges include harmonizing indicators for assessing Universal Meaningful Connectivity (UMC).

Digital Skills and Education:

- Designing correct indicators for assessing digital skills is essential.
- Brazil is making efforts to map real needs of users to develop new indicators.

Innovative Financing and Policy:

- Brazil is emphasizing innovative financing mechanisms for small operators and networks.
- Addressing infrastructure gaps alongside digital skills is fundamental to ensuring universal meaningful connectivity.

PANEL 2.

AI and Governance:

- AI is seen as a tool for improving lives but requires careful regulation and better algorithms.
- AI deployment in sensitive areas without proper safeguards raises a series of concerns (e.g. bias, discrimination, etc.) that must be addressed.

Fair Work and Platform Regulation:

- Regulation of AI and platforms is crucial to ensure fairness and safety for workers.
- Evaluating companies and raising awareness is key, as the FairWork Project shows.

PANEL 3.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):

- DPI aims at building a trustworthy and inclusive digital public infrastructure.
- Brazil is focusing on digital identity, interoperability, and fostering a business-friendly environment.

Global Cooperation on DPI:

- International cooperation is crucial for sharing experiences and developing DPI.
- Emphasis is needed on safeguarding and distributing the benefits of DPI across countries.

PANEL 4.

Information Integrity and Digital Governance:

- G20 discussions include strategies for resolving information integrity issues.
- Challenges include lack of global consensus on definitions and balancing platforms' economic and political power

Role of Civil Society:

- Civil society faces challenges in accessing information and participating in discussions.
- There is a need for transparency and multi-stakeholder engagement in shaping digital governance.

PANEL 5.

Data Deficiency and Governance:

- There is a lack of public data due to insufficient funding for global statistics collection.
- There is an urgent need to tackle local and national data deficiencies.
- We are living in a fragmented data landscape.
- There is ongoing advocacy for proactive approaches to data collection and governance.

Data's Role in Development:

- Only data for 5 out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is available.
- Every $1 invested in data infrastructure generates a $32 return for the country.
- Proposal for launching an International Decade for Data in 2025.

International Decade for Data:

- Proposal for launching an International Decade for Data in 2025.
- The G20 plays an instrumental role in shaping milestones and support during this decade.
- The International Decade for Data highlights the value and promise of addressing the most pressing and complex data challenges and driving political agreement.

Gender-Based Violence and Data Inclusivity:

- Data can be used to address gender-based violence.
- Inclusive data collection and representation is important.
- The real impact of data on individuals' lives needs to be emphasized to include everybody in the conversation.

Information Integrity and Digital Governance:

- G20 discussions include strategies for resolving information integrity issues.
- Challenges include lack of global consensus on definitions and balancing economic and political power of platforms.

Climate Justice and Digital Innovation:

- There is an intersection of climate justice and digital transformation.
- AI and digital industries have impacts on sustainability.
- We need to address challenges such as e-waste and energy consumption.

PANEL 6.

Consumer Protection and Engagement:

- There is growing consumer vulnerability and unequal power dynamics.
- Establishing a consumer engagement group could support consumer protection and engagement.
- Drawing from Brazil's experience, it is important to support consumer protection measures.

Judicial AI and Governance:

- AI is more often used in the judiciary and legal sectors.
- There are growing concerns regarding bias, privacy, and job displacement.
- Advocacy is needed for international institutions to develop fair AI principles.

Digital Empowerment and Inclusive Growth:

- There is a need to prioritize digital inclusion and equitable access.
- Focus on women's economic participation and safety in digital spaces is key.
- We need a call for regulations to prevent discrimination in digital services.

Corporate Responsibility and Collaboration:

- There is a growing need for commitment to responsible AI development by corporations.
- There is also a need for collaboration between businesses, governments, and civil society for digital progress.
- Brazil plays a key role in advancing digital initiatives.

CLOSING REMARKS

Digital Governance and Coordination:

- Emphasis was placed on inclusive processes and accountability.
- International cooperation and engagement were highlighted as key elements.
- There was a proposal for future events to maintain dialogue and momentum.

Policy Implementation and Evaluation:

- There is a need for collaborative approaches to policy formulation and evaluation.
- The conversation focused on bridging digital divides and achieving tangible outcomes.
- It is key to recognize challenges in harmonizing digital transformation efforts.

Multi-stakeholder Engagement and Innovation:

- Advocacy is needed for multistakeholder models in digital governance.
- It is important to explore innovative solutions such as sandboxes and charters.
- Participants committed to shaping a fair and comprehensive digital agenda for all.

ACCESS THE RECORDING OF THE EVENT