SEADGov

*South and East Africa
Digital Governance Forum*

CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction

Digital governance initiatives, strategies, and policies have a widely recognised potential to promote the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, namely SDG 16 calling for effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels in the framework of peaceful and inclusive societies.

Over the past two decades, the area evolved from a straight use of technology in public administration to a multidisciplinary understanding of governance, and an integrative, holistic view of administrative processes. Its aim expanded to cover the transformation of the relationships between government, citizens, communities, and all societal and economic dynamics.

Although an enormous progress in this area has been observed in many regions in the world, however, most regions, such as Africa, still face several challenges at two levels:

a) The planning and strategic level (e.g. accurate analysis and assessment of needs and initiatives; weak strategic planning at different levels; lack of suitable monitoring mechanisms), and

b) The technical and operating level (e.g. weak infrastructure; insufficient funding; weak institutional articulation; lack of focused and advanced human capacity and training).

Another critical issue is that of partnerships and collaborative efforts. Encouraging countries in ethe region to partner and work together is equally challenging, hence there is always a need to seek ways to promoting such partnerships for digital development.

Objectives

UNU-EGOV, the United Nations University Operational Unit in Policy-driven Electronic Governance, UN ECA, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and UN DESA, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, challenge South and East African countries to launch a South and East Africa Forum on Digital Governance (SEADGov Forum) aiming at joining together officials and governmental agencies in the region in order to

- share experiences and best practices,
- foster synergies and

- promote the design and assessment of regional and national strategies for digital governance and citizen empowerment in South and East Africa.

It is envisaged that the Forum will play a relevant role in articulating digital governance development initiatives at different levels and voicing this cause at the international arena.

To achieve these objectives the Forum will join

- formal representatives of each country for the Digital Governance area,
- experts from South and East Africa governmental agencies for digital transformation and governance,
- experts from academia, international agencies, and organizations active in digital governance in the region.

A similar initiative was launched in 2023 for West Africa, with a first meeting organised by the Government of The Gambia, UN ECA and UNU-EGOV in Banjul, in September 2023. A Digital Governance Forum for Central Asia will be launched in Astana, Kazakhstan, through the Ministry Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry, will be organised till the end of 2024, co-organised by UNU-EGOV and the Government Kazakhstan.

Launching the SEADGov Forum (30 Sep - 2 Oct 2024, in Pretoria)

The SEADGov Forum launching event will take place in Pretoria, on 30 September and 1 October 2024, organised back-to-back the International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV 2024), one of the major international events gathering specialists, academics and practitioners worldwide in the area of digital governance.

The event targets Government and high-level Public Administration officials from South and East Africa countries, with a specific emphasis on the Agencies or Ministries in charge of digitalization of the public sector and Public Administration in each country. As a general aim, the Forum will launch a permanent, but flexible, cooperation mechanism in order to harness digital governance mechanisms and new technologies for promoting sustainable development and more inclusive societies.

Therefore, event will

- promote a high-level analysis, debate and experience sharing on the progress, limitations and challenges to digital governance in South and East Africa.
- launch a permanent forum to foster synergies and regional cooperation, as well as shape the path to accelerate South and East Africa Governments digital transformation.

Organization

The SEADGov Forum Launching Event, jointly organised by UN ECA, UN DESA and UNU-EGOV, seeking direct involvement of the Digital Governance ministries or public agencies of all countries in the region.

UN ECA and UN DESA will financially support travel and accommodation expenses of one official delegate per each one of the 22 countries in the regions. UNU-EGOV will offer a free registration for ICEGOV to the same delegates.

The event is a two-day meeting, proceeded by a preparation day joining together the panel moderators and the organizing team. The possibility is open for country delegates to participate subsequently in ICEGOV 2024.