Forum: Economical and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Bridging the digital divide in the aftermath of the Global Tech Summit

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Position: Deputy President

Personal Introduction

Dear Delegates,

It is my honor to welcome you to the 8th ACGMUN Economic and Social Council. First and foremost I would like to say that my name is Nikos Chantzeioannou and I am honored to serve as the Deputy President of the ECOSOC committee in this year's ACGMUN. I am attending the 11th grade at the 4th Lyceum of Nea Smirni “Dimitris Glinos” and I have already attended 4 MUN conferences as a delegate and this is going to be my first time being a student officer. Furthermore, I'd like to congratulate you on your decision to enter the intriguing world of Model UN and remind you that you will improve your communication skills as well as form long-lasting friendships and relationships as I did . I am looking forward to meeting and getting to know all of you.

Lastly, this study guide is about the second topic of our committee [Bridging the digital divide in the aftermath of the global tech summit] and don't forget to contact me in case you have any questions regarding the topic or you want help with your research. I would be thrilled to help you.

I am very eager to meet you,

Nikos Chantzeioannou

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Topic Introduction

The digital revolution has changed nearly every facet of daily life—from communication and work to tackling urgent global issues such as climate change and public health. Despite technology's ability to connect and empower, millions worldwide are still excluded from its advantages. This "digital divide" – the gap between those who have access to modern information and communication technologies (ICT) and those without – extends far beyond merely lacking the latest smartphone and computer or not having social media accounts for example. The digital divide restricts access to vital services like education and healthcare, heightening socioeconomic inequalities and hindering global progress on crucial matters. It enlarges already existing levels of exclusion where high prices, infrastructure problems and factors such as lacking digital literacy contribute to the further separation of the capable and the incapable.

In the socioeconomic and political sectors, problematic technology development often leads to the creation of economic issues, reduced governmental readiness, and increased vulnerability to cyber threats and discrimination. In addition to that, tech-related inequality possesses a considerable probability of intensifying a major part of the international relations thus resulting in widespread social unrest and the possible appearance of conflicts if left unaddressed.

Ultimately, this multidimensional issue requires an effective and reliable solution provided by a strong cooperation formed by the governmental and commercial sector. A good example of those factors working together as they should is in the EU where the[1] share of households with internet access was 94% in 2024, up from 80% in 2014. If the problem remains without a feasible solution to retain the gap the digital divide will continue to present more and more inequalities thus leaving the developing ones even further stagnated.

[1] "Statistics Explained." Digital Economy and Society Statistics - Households and Individuals - Statistics Explained, ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Digital_economy_and_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals. Accessed 25 Jan. 2025.

Definition of Key Terms

Digital Divide

"The digital divide refers to the gap between those who have easy access to digital technologies and those who do not. This divide can be influenced by various factors, including socioeconomic status, geographical location, and educational background."[2]

Digital Inclusion

"Refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies."[3]

Global Tech Summit

"Is a valuable resource for anyone working in the tech industry. They provide a platform for attendees to learn, network, and stay connected to the wider tech community in addition to that it features panel discussions and workshops, which provide attendees with the opportunity to engage in more in-depth discussions about specific topics. These events can also be a great way for attendees to connect with potential clients or partners, or to find new job opportunities."[4]

Cybersecurity

"Cyber security can be described as the collective methods, technologies, and processes to help protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of computer systems, networks and data, against cyber-attacks or unauthorized access. The main purpose of cyber security is to protect all organizational assets from both external and internal threats."[5]

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[2] "The Digital Divide: What It Is, and What's Being Done to Close It." Investopedia, 21 July 2021, www.investopedia.com/the-digital-divide-5116352

[3] "What is Digital Inclusion?" The Interaction Design Foundation, 6 Feb. 2024, www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/digital-inclusion?srsltid=AfmBOooZ8Q3vP-fVK0qRf3kTNh-YeVV8UMHNVhlrM19L3lpkj7H5mKNf.

[4] Global Tech Summit | Shaping the Future of Technology | 2023, https://www.globaltechsummit.com/. Accessed 25 January 2025.

[5] "What Is Cybersecurity? Definition + Industry Guide." Coursera, 9 Dec. 2022, www.coursera.org/articles/what-is-cyber-security?utm_medium=sem&utm_source=gg&utm_campaign=B2C_EMEA__coursera_FTCOF_career-academy_pmax-multiple-audiences-country-multi&campaignid=20858198824&adgroupid=&device=c&keyword=&matchtype=&network=x&devicemodel=&adposition=&creativeid=&hide_mobile_promo&assetgroupid=6484888893&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiA1p28BhCBARIsADP9HrPFFVSHuaiHSsSMuhtEPSuqUS8PKhtM638zTAyygK8GRduwe2tTy1oaAqBPEALw_wcB.

Digital Age

"The Digital Age (also known as the Computer Age, Information Age, Internet Age, and Information Era) is an idea that the current age will be characterized by the ability of individuals to transfer information freely, and to have instant access to knowledge that would have been difficult or impossible to find previously."[6]

Digital Literacy

"Digital Literacy is the ability of individuals and communities to understand and use digital technologies for meaningful actions within life situations. Simply it is the ability to access the computer/mobile/internet for our day-to-day activities and being connected with others through the internet."[7]

Background Information

Overview of the 2023 Global Tech Summit (GTS)

The 8th Global Technology Summit (GTS) took place in India in 2023, themed "Geopolitics of Technology," from December 4 to December 6, 2023. The summit brought together leading ministers and other government officials, tech experts, industry leaders, public policy professionals, entrepreneurs, civil society representatives, and scholars from India and abroad to deliberate on key technology policy issues with a special focus on the themes of digital public infrastructure (DPI), artificial intelligence (AI), critical and emerging technologies, and tech-driven partnerships. GTS 2023 was designed to explore and debate the technologies that will shape the future of India and the world. Building off the success of India's G20 presidency, the discussions on DPI revolved around the global institutionalization of DPIs, adoption strategies, how DPIs can foster innovation across sectors, and private sector participation in the DPI ecosystem. The discussions on AI focused on the trajectory of its evolution, guardrails for developing responsible AI, various regulatory approaches, its impact on skilling and employment, the importance of compute power for AI, and the military applications of AI.[8]

Additionally, the summit focused on issues of critical and emerging technologies – space innovation and collaboration, building semiconductor ecosystems, advancements in biotechnology, export control measures on technology products, and the geopolitical implications of critical minerals.

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[6] Digital Age – Dr. Dr. Jörn Lengsfeld." Dr. Dr. Jörn Lengsfeld – En, joernlengsfeld.com/en/definition/digital-age/.
[7] "What is Digital Literacy: Definition and Uses in Daily Life." Learning.com, 26 January 2023, https://www.learning.com/blog/what-is-digital-literacy-definition-and-uses-in-daily-life/. Accessed 25 January 2025.
[8] https://ceipimg.s3.amazonaws.com/email/New+Delhi/GTS+2023/Global+Technology+Summit+2023_Report.pdf. Global tech summit 2023 summary

The summit featured discussions on startups about their growth using DPIs, their key role in the payments sector, and their need for computing capacity to leverage the potential of AI. Data protection in the Global South and India's unique approach to data governance were the other pressing issues discussed at the summit. In addition to the public sessions, the summit also hosted nine off-the-record, closed-door discussions and workshops on a host of topics—global institutionalization. The program was expanded this year to host talented young professionals working on emerging technologies and technology policy from neighboring countries, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

This initiative allowed students exposure to key debates and discussions on technology policy through access to both the public sessions and closed-door discussions, and interaction and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders at the summit. dedicated interviews with eminent personalities at the summit, further contributing to the overall coverage of the event. Asia net News served as the summit's media partner. In partnership with the platform, Carnegie India curated a series of six dedicated opinion pieces around the theme of the summit. To summarize, the 2023 GTS was one-of-a-kind experience for all the participants and organizers since it was the first to imply a variety of innovative ideas such as a big variety of speakers and closed door discussions and different kinds of workshops.

Current State of the Digital Divide

The digital divide generally refers to the disparity between countries, regions, nations, and people in their access to digital services and infrastructure. For example, a large percentage of the African population doesn't have access to the global digital society. This disparity is considered by many a global challenge. It is obvious that digital information and communication are of key importance for the development of countries and regions that experience any form of economic stagnation. A big variety of approaches exist to address the digital divide. Some approaches are technology-focused, seeking progress through technological advancement. Some approaches focus mainly on profits and economic growth.

Other approaches are more human-centric, trying to achieve human well-being. Each approach reflects a different worldview or school of thought, with varying assumptions about the nature of development, the role of technology, and the desired outcomes of bridging the digital divide. From a technology-focused perspective, not being connected is attributed to a lack of physical and digital infrastructure. Due to the absence of proper infrastructures in less economically developed regions or countries, many people do not have access to digital services and content. This withholds their participation in the information society and hampers development. In that case rolling out digital

infrastructure and making the Internet available to people in every corner of the planet is then the solution. The ensuing question is how all of this is going to be organized.[9]

From a slightly different perspective, the digital divide is only a snapshot in time, in an ongoing process of technological innovation and diffusion. This will lead to progress and bring economic development and prosperity. The uptake of digital technologies by people in low-resource environments is seen as an opportunity, as this will create a new market segment for technology vendors and other markets. This market segment is referred to as the "bottom of the pyramid". Economic growth is the main justification for this approach. Both perspectives, technology-focused or economy-focused, have one idea in common: digital technology is the motor for progress and development. Access to digital information and services will lead, from a "developing" situation to a situation of prosperity, like in the industrialized countries of the west. It is assumed that well-being will follow from technological and economic development and that prosperity will trickle down, naturally, to most people.

Alternative perspectives on the digital divide value a more human-centered standpoint. Digital humanism, decolonial theory, and grassroots initiatives are examples of human-centered approaches. They prioritize human well-being, social inclusion, equity, and emancipation above technology and profit.

Challenges of bridging the digital divide

To begin with, equipment and material shortages have a leading role in prohibiting the overall resolvement of the digital gap. As a result, the industry doesn't have the necessary equipment for today's needs, let alone the needs of the future. The equipment has become reactive rather than proactive.[10] The broadband industry was already suffering from labor shortages before The Great Resignation. Stretched too thin for too long, today's fiber technicians and engineers can be more selective in the jobs they take on and the prices they charge for those jobs because the power dynamics have shifted in their favor. In addition to that there is a large demand for technicians that can't be effectively satisfied. These labor crunches will only worsen as fewer people are left to take on more and more work. This with the high construction costs it's no wonder that equipment, material and labor shortages have caused high construction costs. Higher costs can mean delays or setbacks in numerous ways, from raising capital to timelines to broadband access. Those who need connectivity the most - those in rural areas, those who have low incomes, historically marginalized communities and developing countries will be especially vulnerable to higher construction costs. Their needs may be put

[9] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376715329_Bridging_the_Digital_Divide
[10] "Five Challenges to Closing the Digital Divide and How to Solve Them." Homepage, biarrinetworks.com/insights/five-challenges-to-closing-the-digital-divide-and-how-to-solve-them.

on the back burner for longer when construction costs become a barrier for communities and service providers. Furthermore inaccurate, missing and non-interoperable data like mapping of course is a problem, but maps are only a corner piece to a 1,000-piece data puzzle. The data is misrepresented and the majority of big providers cherry pick where they build networks, so they can charge the most to the most affluent customers. Too often, the broadband industry relies on data that's five years old or older, which, let's face it, is ancient in data terms. Not cleaning, validating or assuring the quality of data causes just as many problems. But perhaps our biggest data problem is not defining what's crucial, what can be used from end to end. If you have an army of engineers and designers at your disposal without the right data, information architecture and interoperable schemas, you can't design a network efficiently or effectively. Lastly the lack of transparency which means that they're operating under a dearth of both transparency and collaboration on the macro and micro levels. On the macro level, Internet service providers (ISPs) hoard information so that we don't know who's spending what where. On the micro level, projects and partners are too siloed, not understanding the bigger picture that leads to gaps galoring and the digital divide getting larger. Even though the obstacles are many, the opportunities and will-power of the people outweigh them and have the potential to create a more connected society, where the internet is a tool of empowerment rather than exclusion in every corner of the globe.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

China

China's forward-looking vision on the future development of the internet offers a glimpse into how cooperation can narrow the digital divide across the world, at a time when an economic slowdown and impeded globalization have stunted growth worldwide, said industry experts. They also sought more global cooperation to advance the development of the internet in less-developed economies and enhance digital competence for all. Also, China has been sharing the opportunities of modernization with countries around the world and injecting strong impetus into global modernization with actions such as the Digital Silk Road (DSR) as they are a fundamental part of the Belt and Road initiative China has currency invested generously in digital infrastructure mainly in developing countries. Finally, China has recently prepared a United Nations General Assembly resolution that it says is intended to help close gaps between rich and developing countries in the advance of artificial intelligence.

USA

The USA as a stable democratic state has been deeply committed to the race to reduce the effects of the digital divide throughout the globe by supporting international key corporations, infrastructure, financing projects, and supporting programs aimed at increasing access to technology. Furthermore, the US has made partnerships with a big variety of international organizations such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and other UN bodies to promote digital inclusion worldwide and also strongly supports programs under the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership whose goal is to expand an inclusive and secure internet access in developing nations. Moreover, it's well known that the USA government is funding skill-development programs through the USAID which focuses on the upgrading of digital infrastructure in developing nations.

Nigeria

With respect to the issue of Nigeria's digital gap, reference should be made to the discrepancy between those who have access to the Internet and computer facilities, and those who do not have. Computers and the Internet are present in the houses of the wealthy but not in the homes of the poor owing to the high cost of computers and the prohibitively high cost of Internet connection. Nigeria is a classic example of a developing country in the southern hemisphere that is afflicted by development issues. Nigeria is not just well-known for being the most populous nation in Africa with a vast landmass; it is also a typical instance of a nation with underdeveloped digital capabilities caused by lack of leadership, corruption, and violent wars, which have undermined the country's infrastructure by and large. Consequently, among other shortcomings, the local population also lacks, to a great extent, access to basic public utility services, such as electricity, running water and healthcare. This means that in today's global information economy, Nigeria, more than any other nation, exemplifies the urgent need for information and communications technology.

Rwanda

The country is considered one of the most politically stable with a fast-growing economy and social-economic transformation in Africa. The Rwandan government led by President Paul Kagame has received widespread global praise and financial support from donors and international financial institutions over the past two decades for its development model. Digital transformation in Rwanda targets economic growth rather than inclusion. Maximizing digitalization for businesses has been prioritized over inclusive digital development. Local CSOs are not involved in the creation or implementation of the country's digital agenda and citizens' needs are not always at the forefront of

policy and program decisions. Furthermore, despite the growing digital transformation that takes place in Rwanda many people remain excluded due to mainly poverty , as a result many cannot access digital devices , others lack digital literacy skills with education being one of the areas that has been heavily affected by digital exclusion mainly due to the lack of affordability .

European Union

The digital divide remains one of the most significant barriers to achieving global equality in the 21st century, impacting access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and essential services. The European Union as an international organization that represents a considerable number of nations is willingly working with the international community thus recognizing the critical importance of the issue and the collaborative actions that have to be taken in order to resolve it. Europe has had the leading role in a lot of attempts by forming the EU-Africa partnership which means that the EU is going to invest heavily in infrastructure, cyber law frameworks and skill development programs with the collaboration of NGO and NPO in the sub-Saharan regions. With that being said, The EU is actively supporting infrastructure development and capacity reforms in developing countries in Asia.

Blocs Expected

Alliance 1

Aliance 1 should include developed states, with a leading role in digital infrastructure and technologies such us, USA, Germany, Japan, India, China that will follow a more balanced approach with regard to the development, application and the spreading of information technologies towards developing countries.

Alliance 2

On the other hand, Alliance 2 should consist of developing countries like Rwanda, Kenya, Chad that will propose more drastic and more revolutionary solutions to the topic taking in consideration their socio-economic nature comparing to developed countries

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1946	The creation of the first electronic general-purpose digital computer by the US army
1969	The first message is sent over ARPANET, the precursor to the internet, paving the way for global digital communication
1980	The start of the digital revolution
1989	The Invention of the World Wide Web by Tim Berners-Lee while working at CERN
1995	The term "digital divide" gains prominence as internet usage grows, highlighting disparities in access between different regions and demographics
1999	The G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force) is established to address digital inequality worldwide
2001	The first resolution made by the UN on the topic
2003	The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is held in Geneva (2003), pushing for global internet access and digital inclusion policies
2005	The lunch of the One Child One Laptop campaign by Nicholas Negroponte
2010	UNHumanRightsCouncil declares Internet Access a Human Right

Relevant UN Resolutions, Treaties & Event

Resolution 64/187 (2009)[11]

Recognizes that information and communication technologies have the potential to provide new solutions to development challenges; further recognizes the immense potential that information and communication technologies have in promoting the transfer of technologies in a wide spectrum of socio-economic activity; encourages the UN funds and programmes and the specialized agencies to contribute to the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, and emphasizes the need for resources in this regard; invites the Economic and Social Council to consider the report of the Secretary-General on enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the

[11] "Information and Communication Technologies for Development : Resolution / Adopted by the General Assembly." UN Library, UNITED NATIONS , digitallibrary.un.org/record/673688?ln=en&v=pdf.

Internet; invites Member States to support the meaningful participation of stakeholders from developing countries in the preparatory meetings of the Internet Governance Forum; requests the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, during its 13th session, which was to be held at the halfway point to the 2015 overall review, to organize a substantive discussion on the progress made over 5 years in the implementation of the Summit outcomes.

Resolution 56/183 (2001)[12]

Endorses the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action adopted by the Summit on 12 Dec. 2003 and stresses the importance of its effective and timely implementation; urges Member States, relevant UN bodies, including the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, and other intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector to contribute actively to the implementation of the outcome of the Geneva phase and to the preparatory process of the Tunis phase of the Summit as well as to the Summit itself in order to ensure its overall success; reiterates its call to the international community to make voluntary contributions to the special fund established by the ITU to support the preparations for and holding of the Summit and the overall mitigation of the digital gap.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project

In 2005, MIT professor Nicholas Negroponte unveiled an idea so innovative that it had the potential of improving the lives of millions of people in developing countries around the world. His vision was to distribute a low-cost, rugged computer to the children in elementary schools in developing nations, help them gain access to knowledge, and allow them to explore and experiment with the latest technologies. The One Laptop per Child program received a lot of praise during its unveiling but failed to meet its idealistic expectations. Its failure contributed to Cultural issues that presented significant challenges. In Uruguay, for example, a national evaluation of the program after it launched revealed that only 21.5% of teachers reported using the laptops in class daily or near daily, and 25% of the teachers reported using them less than once a week. Moreover, the cost of the laptop rose to $188 instead off the $100[13] that was promised resulting in the backing out of initial buyers, stakeholders and the IT support became minimal. Another drawback of the OLPC project was the forcing of Western

[12] "World Summit on the Information Society :" United Nations, United Nations, digitallibrary.un.org/record/455403?ln=ru&v=pdf. Accessed 25 Jan. 2025.
[13] The Effect of Access to Information and Communication Technology on Household Labor Income: Evidence from One Laptop Per Child in Uruguay

ideas on children in developing nations, which often led to criticism and resentment about the project. Computers were designed to be used by people in the English-speaking world. From the layout of the keys on the keyboard to the display of the icons on the screen, the computers show a great deal of Western culture and influence. Therefore, people from developing nations do not benefit as much from the same laptops.

United Nations World Summit on the Information Society, in 2005

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is a unique two-phase United Nations (UN) summit that was initiated in order to create an evolving multi- stakeholder platform aimed at addressing the issues raised by information and communication technologies (ICTs) through a structured and inclusive approach at the national, regional and international levels. The goal of WSIS is to achieve a common vision, desire and commitment to build a people-centric, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information. Since 2005 and following the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society a cluster of WSIS-related events has been held on an annual basis in Geneva. The goal of the Summit is to close the gap of the digital divide between developed countries and the developing ones through any means possible.

Digital Divide Network (DDN) (1999–2005)

An online community that was established in 1999 and taken down around 2005. It's proposed to address and mitigate the effects of the digital divide which translates to closing the gap between developed nations and the developing ones. It was mainly composed off activists, researchers, legislators and everyday citizens to share their knowledge and collaborate with international organizations to bring the digital divide to an end. The DDN at its highest point was an international site and preferred choice for NGOS interested in sharing information from their research with others and receiving feedback to help the attempts to bridge the digital divide.

Possible Solutions

Addressing the necessity for infrastructure that boosts the nation's economy and protection

Governments should prioritize the start of the development and further expansion of a robust and reliable digital infrastructure program that is going to be capable of providing high-speed broadband networks, particularly in areas that are substantially poor and underserved. This goal is going to be achievable by investing in the construction of internet infrastructure. Governments can extend connectivity to remote regions, schools, hospitals and rural communities lacking adequate access. Also

collaborating with private sector partners to utilize innovative technologies governments should strive to ensure affordable and reliable internet access to citizens in need.

Companies should cooperate with local governments and communities to develop digital policies that value inclusivity and accessibility over profits.

The governmental and the commercial sector should create a strong bond with each other to close the cap off the digital divide and guarantee fair and inclusive access to the digital world. Firstly, the private sector should promote most of the resources needed, the technological knowledge and some innovative solutions to the matter. On the other hand, the public sector could possess' funds, subsidies and legislative frameworks. Their cooperation could very possibly result in the reduced internet price and create high-speed wideband networks, especially in developing nations and rural areas. Moreover, this partnership can create customized solutions to meet the needs on every occasion. Lastly their cooperation is guaranteed to mitigate the effects of the digital gap.

Enlighten digital skills in developing countries with the assistance of NGOs and the UN

If we are serious about closing the digital gap, we need to focus on teaching digital literacy, especially to those who need it most. Equipping underserved students with the skills to use technology effectively requires intentional instruction on how to engage with digital tools in ways that enhance learning. Educators play a critical role. It’s not enough for students to know that tools like digital pencils or elimination capacity exist; they need to understand how to integrate them into their math problem-solving processes, including drawing visual representations. Teachers should model this in the classroom, guide students to practice using these tools regularly, and provide feedback so that they feel comfortable and proficient in their use. In addition, we must invest in professional development for teachers. Many educators may not fully understand how digital tools can support higher-order thinking. Providing them with the knowledge and confidence to teach these skills is just as important as giving students access to the technology itself. This is achievable with the help of several NGOs and a partnership between the government and several UN agencies.

Addressing the disparity between technology-producing and technology-consuming countries

This situation often leaves consuming nations completely relying on importing products from producing nations This minimizes their chance to innovate and take a leading role in the technological economy worldwide. Cooperation attempts should be made to promote digital transfer and build the necessary infrastructure. Technology-producing nations must collaborate with a variety of NGOs to

provide equal opportunities in digital tools, hardware and experts in the field. Furthermore, educational and research factors and the creation of regional solutions have a vital role in altering the situation for the better in technology-consuming nations. To summarize, by eliminating dependency and supporting the growth of regional innovations technology-consuming nations could finally acquire positions in the international markets thus resulting in a more balanced state.

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