

**Draft Summary of 2nd Virtual Session of the Digital & Technology Network (DTN)**

Hosted on Microsoft Teams, 30 April 2020

Executive Summary

In response to the current pandemic and the accompanying challenges to ICT across the UN system, in March the DTN Chairs (Mr. Patrick Carey, Acting Assistant Secretary General, Office of Information and Communications Technology, UN Secretariat; & Ms. Ingrid Regien, CIO, UNESCO) decided to replace the planned DTN session for April with shorter and more regular virtual meetings on Teams. This decision reflected the immediate need for inter-agency knowledge sharing and collaboration on areas of common concern in order to support business continuity.

The DTN held its second virtual meeting in response to the need to exchange ideas and information pertinent to the situation caused by COVID-19 on 30 April 2020. This MS Teams meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Carey and Ms. Regien and there were 55 participants. The agenda for this meeting built on topics of immediate interest to the DTN community, as evidenced by exchanges within the Teams space and included status updates from all Working Groups established in the meeting of 6 April. While the first meeting included items focused on scaling up to meet the need to securely manage virtual meetings, the second addressed digital signatures, the future of work and measures to consider as organizations return to what it now termed the new normal.

Prior to the meeting, the UNISSIG had completed its task to provide guidance on the secure use of Zoom as a virtual meeting platform for UN system organizations. The two other working groups, looking to establish the federation of ICT resources and guidance for organizing virtual meetings respectively, both reported solid progress in the pursuit of their aims.

The Future of Work

Mr. Hans Baritt, Controller and Director, UNHCR provided the DTN with an update from the Future of Work Task Force. He was joined by Diego Ruiz (UNDP) and Mirjana Kavelj (WFP).

This Task Force was established by HLCM at its last session in October 2019 to support the UN system anticipating and adapting to social, economic, technological and political challenges to ensure its organizations are prepared to deliver on their mandates in the future. The group is co-chaired by WFP, UNDP, and UNHCR.

Mr. Baritt focused on workstream 3, Leveraging Technology, an action line that supports the two other workstreams: (1) Contractual Modalities and (2) New ways of working. Goals of workstream three include the creation of a catalogue of innovative technology in HR, including relevant projects/pilots using innovative technology (robotics, AI, ML, Blockchain, etc.) across the UN System; the design of potential pilot projects to improve the employee and candidate experience; and to launch pilot projects, where possible, to test feasibility and scalability.

The first objective with regards to the catalogue is completed. With regards to the second and third pilots, the group reviewed nine possible areas for collaboration using common solutions. With the

support of WFP, an Innovation Accelerator event was planned in Munich in early March 2020, which had to be scaled back due to challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Great Reset

Mr. Michael Von Uechtritz und Steinkirch (Senior Executive Partner, Gartner) provided the network with the conclusions of observations made on organizations' response and lessons learnt in response to COVID-19. In this, his second presentation to the DTN, Michael considered scenarios and measures to help navigate the Great Reset expected as we emerge from this current situation.

Michael presented a pandemic planning framework to assist organizations evaluate their situation as they plan for a return to the workplace. The framework considered the phases of response, recovery and renewal and set forth different scenarios for organizations as they return to a new normal. In this context it was considered important to redesign policies and technology, establish crisis-driven use cases and priorities, orchestrate new ways of working within a new culture, so to maintain engagement, communication and productivity. In summary, this framework presented organizations with an aid as they navigate imposed environmental factors such as legislation, the phased return of operations and the new opportunities for reinvention.

eSignatures

eSignatures have emerged as an effective enabler of remote working. Much discussion and knowledge sharing on this topic has been seen on the DTN Teams space of late and as follow-up the network received an update from UNDP on their experiences and lessons learnt to meet this increasing need, as they are one of several organizations seen to have successfully implemented an eSignature solution. Mr. Sylvain St. Pierre (Chief Technology Officer, UNDP) provided a summary of UNDP's DocuSign solution, costing model, options for integration within business processes and applications and during the plenary that followed dived into deeper detail on lessons learnt. This topic attracted much interest as many participants with similar use cases were also in the process of evaluating DocuSign and other eSignature platforms from a legal, business as well as technical perspective.

Zoom

Mr. Thomas Braun (Chief Cybersecurity Section, UN Secretariat) presented the conclusions of deliberations within the UN Information Security Special Interest Group (UNISSIG), which was delegated the evaluation of the Zoom video-conferencing solution at the DTNs previous meeting. Led by UN Secretariat, this group includes representatives from ADB, UNESCO, CTBTO, EIB, FAO, IAEA, ICC-CPI, ILO, IMF, ITU, OPCW, PAHO, Global Fund, ICAO, IFAD, UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR, UNRWA, UNIDO, UNIMS, UNJSPF, UNOPS, UNWOMEN, UNWTO, UPU, WFP, WHO, WIPO, UNICC & WTO.

Conclusions of this group were since circulated on 24 April within the DTN and HLCM membership. Conferencing solutions were seen to vary in the manner they addressed risks to the confidentiality of the content of a meeting (level of encryption, access control, etc.); privacy (collection of metadata about the meeting as well as participants, their devices, locations, etc. and the sharing of this information with third parties), and risks inherent in the client application and how they expose the platforms on which they are installed.

It was recognized that a complete assessment of Zoom from an information security and privacy standpoint requires an understanding of an organization's risk profile, the benefits and risks inherent to the platform, the data confidentiality requirements of a meeting, limitations of the platform and the technical controls available to help mitigate risk. However, members of UNISSIG were in agreement that, even if all available security controls are implemented, Zoom cannot be considered a secure communication channel and is, therefore, an inappropriate choice for sensitive discussions.

Recent changes to the service notwithstanding, there were continuing concerns about its privacy policy and practices, specifically the level of information that is collected and shared with third parties. In addition, it was highlighted that Zoom applications for mobile platforms require access to a lot of private information which may not be technically justified. At the time of writing, the platform extensively collected and shared user information with third parties and services such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

UNISSIG recognized that personnel of UN entities will continue to participate in Zoom meetings that are organized by third parties, either external or UN system organizations that actively use Zoom. The guidance provided by UNISSIG, therefore, included recommendations for general utilization of any remote meeting, and two different scenarios specifically for the use of Zoom as an organizer of a meeting and the use of Zoom as a meeting participant/attendee. The drafting of guidance for these sections was compiled by sub-groups established by UNISSIG Chair, led by UNDP and WTO respectively.

ICT Federation

Mr. Erzen Ilijazi (Chief Technology Operations, OICT, UN Secretariat) provided participants an update on the working group established to further ICT Federation for Enhanced Inter-agency Collaboration. Led by UN Secretariat, this group includes representatives from UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNWOMEN and UNRWA.

The overall objective of this WG is the continued simplification of the underlying ICT infrastructure and specifically enterprise identity systems. The inter-connection of these systems within the UN System is driven by the need to securely share organizations' resources, while using native account information and credentials. This allows participating organizations to keep their identity and branding while still being integrating into the larger UN System collaboration and communication. It was noted that the working group will align with the activities and outcomes of the UN system directory project, currently being pursued by the Digital Solutions Centre by UNHCR and UNICC.

Short Term Objectives of this group include the establishment of Azure AD B2B connections between UN Secretariat and Agencies, Funds and Programmes, permitting full access to other organizations to Teams functionality. UN Secretariat reported the uploading of staff identities from agencies, funds and programmes, (thereby eliminating the need for individual entry) from UNICEF, UNDP and UNWOMEN. Staff from these organizations are now in the Secretariat domain and visible in the UN address book. As the same time, UN Secretariat entities have been shared with these organizations, allowing them to reciprocate the configurations on their platforms. WFP, UNHCR and WHO plan to join this initiative in the short term, while the remainder are expected to be added progressively.

Long Term Objectives include further integration of global directory services; B2B extended when Microsoft provides solution of be-friending domains and discussion on the future of B2C in the United Nations. UN Secretariat reported progress on short-term objectives, piloted with UN WOMEN as well as in the planning of discussions with Microsoft.

Virtual Meetings with Interpretation

Mr. Edmund Tam (Head, Conference Technology Support Division, ITU) provided the network with an update on the scope and activities of the working group established to provide guidance on Virtual Meetings with Interpretation. Led by ITU, this working group includes representatives from FAO, IAEA, ICAO, IMO, IOM, OPCW, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOG, UNRWA, UN Women, WHO and WIPO.

This output for circulation within the DTN, will include guidelines and best practices for organizing a virtual conference, meeting, or event (collectively referred as “Event” thereafter in this document) and how to support interactive remote participation. It is intended that this guidance will be of value to organizations as they enter discussions within their respective internal structures and stakeholder communities, in order to arrive at the best overall solution that meets their needs.

During the meeting Chief of Interpretation, UN Secretariat expressed interest in contributing towards the group’s aims. Likewise, Chiefs of Interpretation from the UN system were subsequently invited to participate within the working group as Observers.

The New Normal

Ms. Enrica Porcari (CIO & Director IT, WFP) moderated a plenary discussion on the new normal, what it means for ICT and invited discussion on the DTN's future role and function. Referencing conclusions from Gartner observations and conclusions of research presented, Ms. Porcari invited the membership to consider how the network can coalesce to counter the limiting conditions imposed on organizations (by the pandemic), starting with sharing learnings on policies, skillsets and technology for the benefit of CIOs and ICT supported business functions.

A common approach to roles, processes and skillsets was considered fundamental to achieving this aim and would, for example, benefit from the alignment on information security policies and technologies. In conclusion, a more holistic view of how organizations navigate change imposed by COVID-19 was linked to the promotion of digital ethics, which are universally associated with UN system organizations in their respective sectors. On this basis, it was proposed, there remains the opportunity for a new future be defined as organizations adapt to new norms in pursuit of effective operations and their mandates.

Conclusions

- All working groups were thanked for the progress reported and those with deliberations ongoing were asked to proceed in their intended direction;
- The next virtual meeting will include an update from the DTN’s Technology Innovation group on initiatives that help address challenges arising from the pandemic;
- Following considerations raised by Gartner, the next meeting will also include a deeper dive into the future role and scope of the DTN;
- Next meeting date to be decided in the coming days.