



DTN Autumn Session, Meeting Report (DRAFT)

FAO Headquarters, Rome 11 – 13 November 2024

Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction	3
Reflexive Team Leadership	3
AI Talent Maturity	4
Upskilling for a Digital Future	4
UN 2.0 Action Plan and Digital Compact.....	5
Outcomes of High-Level Advisory Board (HLAB) on AI & GDC	6
HLCM Task Force on AI in the UN System.....	6
Generative AI Community of Practice.....	7
Outcomes	8
Digital Dexterity	8
Outcomes	9
Digital Strategy and Data Governance.....	9
Implementing Digital Strategy	9
Global Data Strategy	10
Unstructured Data for AI.....	10
IFAD’s AI Journey	10
Conclusions	10
Outcomes	11
Next Generation ERP.....	11
Outcomes	13
CRM Community of Practice	13
Internet Governance Forum (IGF).....	14
Cloud Community of Practice	14

- Outcome 14
- Open Source..... 15
 - Open Source Initiative..... 15
 - Open-Source Solutions Community of Practice..... 15
- Outcomes 16
- Cybersecurity Community of Practice 16
 - Outcomes 17
- Vendor Exit Strategy 17
- IT Budget Benchmarking..... 18
 - Outcome 18
- Data Centre Resilience 18
- Session Planning..... 19
- Annex 1 – Attendees 20

Executive Summary

This session brought together Chief Information Officers (CIOs) and Chief Digital or Data Officers (CDOs) from across the United Nations system to advance a wide range of digital and technology interests and activities. These included Leadership; AI Talent Maturity and Upskilling for a Digital Future; Outcomes of High-Level Advisory Board (HLAB) on AI & Global Digital Compact; Digital Dexterity; Data Strategy and Data Governance; Next Generation ERP; CRM; Cloud; Open Source; cybersecurity; renegotiation of cloud and enterprise software licensing contracts; Vendor Exit Strategies; the introduction of an IT Budget Benchmarking exercise and a presentation on data centre resilience following the recent flash flood in Valencia.

Key outcomes included the forthcoming launch of a UN open-source software catalog in January 2025, promoting collaboration and resource sharing among UN agencies, fostering innovation, and optimizing the use of digital tools across the system. Underpinning many discussions was the need to recognize artificial intelligence (AI) as an opportunity to advance the digital literacy of UN personnel. This focus on AI tied into broader discussions to avert a “digital divide” within the UN and the need for tailored training. The session also tackled challenges related to Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, with a specific focus on streamlining processes and improving vendor support, aligning with a broader push for a unified procurement strategy and shared services across UN agencies to optimize costs and improve efficiency. Advances in cybersecurity including a revised Cybersecurity Minimum Baseline and guidance for enhancing the cybersecurity of shared services. Discussions on leadership in the digital age underscored a shift from the elevation of individuals to a broader, more contextual understanding that integrates practical management features and the collective dynamics within organizations.

Throughout the session emphasis was given to cost optimization, particularly in relation to the effective use of common services and the collective strength available to advance vendor negotiations. Together these discussions and the communities that advance them underpin the UN’s ongoing efforts to harmonize technology and improve both internal operations and external collaboration.

Introduction

The 2024 DTN fall session was graciously hosted by FAO in Rome between 11 and 13 November and co-chaired by Bernardo Mariano Junior (CITO, UN) and Shirin Hamid (CIO, IMF).

FAO Director-General QU Dongyu opened the meeting by emphasizing the transformative potential of digital thinking and innovation in addressing global challenges like food security and sustainability, advocating for digital platforms and collaborations to enhance efficiency, empower diverse stakeholders, and integrate traditional and modern systems for sustainable development.

Reflexive Team Leadership

Sunil Gupta (CTBTO) introduced the concept of Reflexive Team Leadership and gave the floor to Professor Mats Alvesson from Lund University. Reflexive leadership emphasizes continuous self-examination and adaptability without needing formal learning. This approach has been seen to encourage creativity, innovation, and resilience within teams by fostering self-awareness and questioning assumptions. The goal is to empower team members to reflect on their roles and interactions, fostering a positive culture and originality rather than merely following established norms.

Professor Alvesson’s presentation delved into the concept, advocating for a comprehensive understanding that transcends traditional leadership models. He critiqued conventional approaches that

often exaggerate the significance of the leader, creating unrealistic expectations. Instead, focusing on understanding leadership in context, exploring alternatives, and considering the organization as a collective. Focus was placed on balancing hierarchical structures with horizontal organization modes, where leadership not only concerns the leader's influence but also about how it interacts with the surrounding environment. In addition, a distinction was made between leadership and management, with leadership targeting internal cognitive and emotional aspects, while management addresses external behavior, rules, and power dynamics. Reflexivity in leadership encourages exploring different frameworks and recognizing the role of networks and peer influences, especially in team settings where autonomy and mutual adjustments are crucial. The presentation suggests a selective approach to leadership that adapts to specific situations, balancing leadership ideals with practical realities and the diverse needs of groups.

Disparities between idealized leadership and actual managerial practices were highlighted, noting that much of a manager's time is devoted to administrative tasks rather than direct leadership. Different roles and perspectives on leadership were also explored, categorizing leaders into roles such as prophet, pastor, psychotherapist, party host, and paragons. Each role emphasizes specific attributes like vision, morality, emotional intelligence, social integration, and a commitment to learning. Leaders impact their environments by inspiring trust, promoting ethical behavior, and maintaining authenticity while addressing the needs and emotions of their followers. The presentation emphasizes reflexive leadership, suggesting a balanced approach that avoids creating dependency and instead fosters inclusiveness and competence. A 5 P model is proposed to guide organizations in cultivating effective leadership tailored to their specific contexts and challenges.

AI Talent Maturity

Marc Nissen (LinkedIn Talent Solutions) highlighted the transformative impact of digitalization on workforce skills, emphasizing the necessity for continuous upskilling as roles evolve rapidly.

Rolf Reinhardt (LinkedIn Talent Solutions) highlighted LinkedIn's strategic use of advanced tools to tackle procurement and data quality issues, setting the stage for a discussion on adaptive talent management practices. Notably, the utilization of the "Talent Insights" tool has revolutionized how the organization manages and aligns its talent pools to meet the demands of a rapidly changing labor market. The establishment of partnerships with educational institutions is a key strategy to source required skills proactively, thereby addressing skill shortages effectively. Significant emphasis was placed on the progress in expanding LinkedIn's educational offerings. The platform now delivers between 60 to 80 new courses weekly on advanced topics like co-pilots and GPT development, all available in multiple languages. Integration of these resources with enterprise systems such as Workday and SAP has been pivotal, ensuring that learning opportunities are both accessible and aligned with individual and organizational needs. The presentation brought to light LinkedIn's progressive approaches to talent management and educational resource development, emphasizing adaptive strategies, strategic partnerships, and technology integration as cornerstones for future organizational success. The ongoing commitment to evolving corporate learning and talent strategies marks a significant steppingstone towards meeting future workforce challenges.

Upskilling for a Digital Future

Ben Shuttleworth (Boston Consulting Group) and Francesco Mantovani (P&G) presented on the urgent need to upskill workforces to thrive in the emerging digital landscape. The conversation focused on the

development of a digital mindset among employees and the strategic implementation of generative AI technologies in business processes. In conversation format, they highlighted the importance of evolving corporate cultures to fully leverage the potential of predictive and generative AI technologies. They identified several key challenges impeding this transformation, including the rapid technological advancements that demand continuous employee training, the need to manage generational differences within the workforce effectively, and the necessity for leadership to focus equally on people and technological processes to ensure successful digital adoption.

The discussions also addressed the glaring gap in data literacy within many public sector organizations, emphasizing the critical need for a skilled workforce proficient in data handling and AI technologies. Mr. Mantovani suggested proactive measures, which include the deployment of AI tools to boost data literacy, alongside designing personalized educational experiences that integrate technological tools and strategic partnerships to enhance learning outcomes. However, he also addressed common obstacles such as organizational resistance to new technologies and the paramount need for fast-paced upskilling solutions. To mitigate these challenges, practical solutions were proposed, including the development of real-life use cases to illustrate the benefits of technology adoption and initiatives aimed at smoothing the transition to these new tools.

A joint initiative was presented that connects theoretical knowledge with real-world business scenarios through multidisciplinary collaboration, aiming to make learning as applicable and impactful as possible. Several issues such as maintaining participant engagement and addressing the subjective nature of upskilling were discussed. These challenges are being tackled through continuous program adaptation and innovation, ensuring that the learning material remains relevant and effective. Discussions covered strategies to facilitate staff's adaptation to these new tools, emphasizing upskilling as a mechanism to prevent obsolescence, enhance work-life balance, and maintain an innovative organizational culture. The large-scale initiative to establish an educational academy, in partnership with Coursera to offer widespread access to self-paced learning and interactive workshops for up to 10,000 corporate leaders.

This discussion underscored the challenges of ensuring responsible use of technology, maintaining data security, and sustaining financial viability as the initiative scales. It emphasized identifying effective practices suitable for variegated enterprise sizes and planning for the rapid obsolescence of skills due to swift technological evolution, highlighting these as critical factors for continual upskilling and ensuring organizations can adapt promptly to the changing technological landscape.

UN 2.0 Action Plan and Digital Compact

Michael Walton (UNHCR) & Yoon Barker (UN) introduced the UN 2.0 Action Plan as an initiative aiming to modernize the United Nations by making its operations more agile, data-driven, and responsive to evolving global needs. It focuses on leveraging emerging technologies to enhance internal processes and drive impact in support of peace, development, and human rights. The Digital Compact complements this by aligning the UN's digital transformation with global governance, promoting ethical technology use, and fostering collaboration across member states, the private sector, and civil society. With a focus on universal internet access, data protection, inclusivity, and sustainability, the Compact ensures that technology advances human rights and equality.

Kersten Jauer (EOSG) continued by presenting the UN 2.0 vision, emphasizing the need for the UN system to adapt to technological advances and evolving challenges. UN 2.0 focuses on building expertise in data, digital innovation, foresight, and cultural change to better support the achievement of the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs). Jauer highlighted the significant skill gaps within the UN, particularly in areas like cloud management, AI, and APIs, and stressed the urgency of closing these gaps to keep pace with Member States' digital transformation needs.

The UN 2.0 Action Plan, launched with a strong mandate during the Summit of the Future, outlines 14 key actions across four pillars: people, culture, partnerships, and systems. Targets include ensuring all UN strategic plans prioritize digital innovation, expanding UN 2.0 communities, and providing digital skills training to at least 50% of staff. The plan also includes developing new job profiles, such as AI engineers, to meet emerging needs. Jauer concluded by emphasizing the support of Member States through the Pact for the Future, calling for collaboration and resource-sharing to ensure the UN is ready to meet future challenges.

Outcomes of High-Level Advisory Board (HLAB) on AI & GDC

UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology Amandeep Singh Gill underscored the pivotal role of the DTN in advancing ICT policies and practices, especially as emerging technologies like AI reshape priorities within and beyond the UN. He highlighted the adoption of the Global Digital Compact (GDC) at the Summit of the Future, a landmark framework for digital and AI governance addressing critical issues such as bridging the digital divide, safeguarding digital rights, and establishing robust data governance and AI regulation. Key recommendations included creating an independent global AI scientific panel, fostering inclusive dialogues to ensure equitable participation from all countries, and building capacity to address the growing AI divide, particularly in developing regions. Additionally, the GDC calls for comprehensive data governance focused on data protection, interoperability, and leveraging data for sustainable development, alongside efforts to balance the global AI data marketplace.

Isabel de Sola (UN) elaborated on the GDC's implementation as part of the broader "Pact for the Future," outlining five key objectives: closing digital divides, fostering inclusion in the digital economy, ensuring safe digital spaces and human rights, enhancing data governance, and managing AI responsibly. These objectives blend traditional challenges like connectivity and rights with newer issues like AI oversight. Next steps involve formal endorsement of the GDC's principles, intergovernmental follow-up, and the development of an implementation mapping tool by April to facilitate partnerships and track progress at regional and country levels.

The session highlighted alignment between the GDC and UN 2.0 initiatives, focusing on harmonizing efforts across agencies to enhance digital skills, capacity building, and innovation. Examples like UNICEF's "Digital Transformation Briefcase," a practical tool guiding country offices in crafting digital strategies, were shared to illustrate operationalization of these frameworks. Key themes included leadership training in digital topics, fostering communities of practice, and integrating digital transformation into strategic plans while leveraging existing resources and avoiding duplication. Emphasis was placed on ensuring sustainability, tailoring initiatives to diverse organizational needs, and fostering a unified approach to digital inclusion, innovation, and data-driven solutions across the UN system.

HLCM Task Force on AI in the UN System

Outcomes of the HLCM task force tasked to develop an operational framework for the ethical and responsible use of AI across the UN system were presented by Ricardo Rendon Cepeda (IFAD). This Task Force was divided in two subgroups: the first focused on creating a framework for a model AI policy to standardize the responsible use of AI in the UN system, including risk management and governance; the second analyzed AI applications and initiatives across UN organizations, synthesizing insights from existing

projects to take stock of activities, inform best practices, and improve future work. The framework for a model policy and all recommendations from the analytical report were recently approved at HLCM's 48th session in Bern.

The Task Force recommended establishing a unified AI policy framework to standardize ethical and responsible practices across the UN system, emphasizing risk management, governance, and the ethical deployment of AI technologies. They highlighted the importance of unified data management processes, interagency collaboration, and learning from established models for implementation and innovation. To enhance AI applications and improve future use cases, it necessary to reduce errors like model hallucinations, improve dataset utilization through collaborative platforms, and involve external expertise where necessary. The Task Force also suggested streamlining project management by cataloguing initiatives, consolidating funding, and aligning project goals to ensure efficiency. Scaling policy frameworks, transitioning toward open-source initiatives, and fostering broad participation were also encouraged to expand AI development and innovation while upholding ethical standards and responsible use.

Generative AI Community of Practice

The Generative AI Community of Practice aims to advance the transition from proof of concept to live applications, the adoption of integrated AI tools, and the challenges of ensuring that new AI solutions are both effective and sustainable.

Ingrid Regien (UNAIDS) provided a recap of the CoP's recent meeting, which primarily focused on moving AI solutions from the proof-of-concept phase into full production. Examples from UNHCR highlighted the practical application of live Gen. AI systems, including the evolving use of co-pilot tools. Additionally, the Data Commons and Data Exchange Platform presented their innovative solutions for handling large datasets with user-friendly reporting and natural language search functionalities. One key discussion revolved around the use of integrated AI vendor solutions, such as Workday, Salesforce, and SAP, within various UN agencies. Although these solutions have seen limited uptake, the session identified issues like cost, versioning, and duplication (e.g., HR chatbots available both in Workday and UNHCR systems). The need to assess these concerns before further development was emphasized.

Anusha Dandapani (UNICC) provided an update on the Prism Tool, designed to help agencies evaluate AI use cases based on business value, technical feasibility, and internal readiness. This tool also incorporates frameworks from Gartner and UN 2.0 principles, with a focus on sharing lessons learned and identifying which use cases are most viable for replication or scaling across the UN system. Marco Liuzzi (UNICC) highlighted key recommendations for moving forward, including the identification and prioritization of shared AI initiatives, such as the unified HR solution developed by partner agencies. The focus is on shared and replicable AI models, as exemplified by the unified HR tool, was highlighted as a best practice for collaborative development. Recommendations also included establishing a repeatable process for prioritizing and implementing these use cases, as well as improving the sharing of experiences, particularly concerning the cost implications and practical applications of enterprise AI tools.

In conclusion, the group outlined the next steps for aligning with the HLCM's recommendations, including the continued sharing of best practices, development of a common risk framework for AI, and fostering collaboration across agencies to maximize the impact of AI solutions within the UN system.

Outcomes

DTN tasked Generative AI CoP to:

Include in its work further detailing the direction and impact of AI embedded in business applications, including among others, understanding product roadmaps, and costing models in collaboration with ERPSIG/CRMSIG.

Focus on value-added solutions with emphasis on business context, ensuring clear differentiation of UN AI solutions from OOTB solutions from vendors.

Dedicate a Teams channel for AI use case discussions and database and identify approaches for bias testing in AI models.

Continue developing shared UN use cases like Unify HR, starting with looking at the possibilities to develop a joint AI-solution for member states to have easy access to resolutions and other relevant documents.

Develop a common risk assessment framework (baseline) in collaboration with Cybersecurity Community of Practice and Legal network.

Share access to the PRISM tool for use as collaborative platform with shared use cases and for individual agency use, including the link to submit potential shared use cases.

All agencies are invited to populate the data in the PRISM portal.

Follow-up on the following HLCM AI Task Force recommendations, including starting the discussion with HRN and PN on implementing the recommendations.

Digital Dexterity

Digital dexterity, encompassing the ability and willingness to adapt to new technologies, workflows, and ways of working, is more than just technical proficiency. It also involves using digital tools creatively and effectively to drive innovation and organizational transformation. This panel discussion showcased diverse efforts across the UN system to enhance digital dexterity as a critical enabler of digital transformation.

Hlekiwe Kachali (UNICEF) shared UNICEF's journey toward embedding digital dexterity into its operations. While the organization initially focused on building digital skills, it quickly recognized that true transformation requires adaptability and innovative thinking. Insights from over 100 consultations across global offices helped identify three essential skill areas: core technical proficiency, digital collaboration, and innovative/analytical thinking. Despite challenges in aligning various departmental initiatives under a unified digital skills strategy, UNICEF is fostering collaboration among teams such as HR, digital, and knowledge management. The organization is also developing role-specific personas to build a shared understanding of digital dexterity and ensure baseline digital skills across all levels of staff and partners.

Michael Maldony (UNAIDS) discussed UNAIDS' steps to improve digital literacy through a self-assessment survey that highlighted key skill gaps. Staff expressed strong interest in tools like AI but noted a need for more advanced training in areas such as data analysis, visualization, and digital content creation, including accessibility. The survey also revealed a preference for bite-sized, flexible learning formats, aligning with UNAIDS' goal of creating a responsive learning environment. The findings will guide targeted training programs, with plans for annual assessments to track progress and adapt to emerging needs.

Olivier Simah (UNDP) described UNDP's focus on integrating technology into daily workflows to bridge digital skill gaps, particularly among staff in remote locations. By shifting from tool-specific training to process-based learning, the organization aims to make technology adoption practical and relevant. Initiatives such as the "Digital Compass," short instructional videos, and tools like "Matchmaker" and

"Digital Translator" help staff navigate and adopt approved systems effectively. However, low completion rates for training underscore the importance of leadership support and fostering employee buy-in to sustain engagement and drive innovation.

The discussion concluded with a collective call for a unified, system-wide approach to enhancing digital dexterity. Participants stressed the need to address barriers such as low training participation rates and digital readiness gaps. Suggestions included leveraging AI for personalized learning, integrating digital skills into HR processes, and developing a UN-wide platform for content sharing. Leadership buy-in, tailored training for specialized roles, and collaboration across entities were seen as critical to bridging the digital divide and improving both internal efficiency and external partnerships. It was agreed that digital dexterity should remain a priority agenda item, driving ongoing efforts to build a more agile and innovative UN system.

Outcomes

DTN to establish a Digital Dexterity community of practice. DTN members interested in either leading or participating in this initiative are invited to coordinate with DTN Secretary.

Digital Dexterity to be added as a standing item on DTN agenda.

Digital Strategy and Data Governance

The session gave focus to digital strategy and data governance within the UN system, emphasizing the need for a clear, structured approach. It was observed that the responsibility for data governance is often unclear or fragmented, with various offices, such as Chief Data Officers, CIOs, and steering committees, playing roles in its management and this lack of a unified framework across the UN system makes data integration and accessibility a challenge. The session aimed to inspire participants to define and strengthen data strategy and governance in their organizations, recognizing that these elements are inseparable for effective data management.

Opening the discussion, Dr Samira Asma (WHO) discussed the crucial role of data governance in advancing public health, particularly in the face of unprecedented digital health data generation. She highlighted the challenges of privacy, security, interoperability, and equitable access, which exacerbate health disparities. Asma discussed WHO's efforts to improve global health data systems through initiatives like the World Health Data Hub, aimed at improving data availability, access, and usage to enhance healthcare delivery and policy-making. She stressed the importance of robust data governance principles, including accountability, equity, interoperability, and trust, in ensuring that health data is used ethically and effectively. Asma concluded by underscoring the need for partnerships, innovation, and careful attention to the ethical implications of digital health transformation to achieve healthier, more equitable global outcomes.

Implementing Digital Strategy

Omar Baig (UNESCO) presented the organization's early efforts in crafting a digital transformation strategy. He emphasized the critical role of internal digital governance, collaboration with senior management, and engagement with Member States in driving this effort. Key initiatives include building on existing knowledge management strategies, aligning with global frameworks, and prioritizing data and AI. Baig also highlighted challenges, particularly the need for increased funding for digital initiatives, as UNESCO's digital spending lags behind other international organizations. To address this, he proposed creating a UN-

wide digital IT spend benchmarking practice to support broader digital goals and invited input on innovative funding solutions.

Global Data Strategy

A panel discussion turned to the components of an organization's data strategy, including a comprehensive plan to manage, analyze, and utilize data effectively to achieve its goals, ensuring governance, security, and compliance while driving innovation and operational efficiency.

Magan Naidoo (WFP) presented WFP's global data strategy, emphasizing its alignment with the UN data strategy and its goal to enhance operational efficiency through data and AI. Launched in early 2023, focuses on three pillars: robust data architecture, effective governance, and staff training. Efforts include standardizing global data practices, integrating AI for scalable solutions, and launching a data literacy program. Naidu showcased the practical impact of these initiatives, such as improving food distribution efficiency through tracking wheat shipments, demonstrating how data and AI enhance WFP's ability to respond swiftly to hunger crises.

Unstructured Data for AI

Amy Doherty (World Bank), in her presentation, shared insights into the World Bank's AI strategy, developed after just four months in her role. Rather than creating a standalone AI strategy, Ms. Doherty proposed AI as a strategic capability aligned with the organization's broader business and technology strategies. She outlined the vision of using AI to accelerate and sustain development impact, developed a lean governance framework, and highlighted the importance of integrating data governance with AI. She discussed various AI-driven initiatives, such as enhancing staff productivity, automating processes, and improving access to knowledge, notably through their AI-powered assistant, "My." This tool leverages internal data to improve decision-making and efficiency, and its usage has grown significantly. Amy also emphasized the need for secure and responsible AI use, including training requirements for staff using AI tools. Lastly, she highlighted the World Bank's work with unstructured data, showcasing how AI now unlocks hidden insights, offering valuable lessons for others in similar fields.

IFAD's AI Journey

Thomas Bousios (IFAD) shared insights into IFAD's AI journey, which has evolved significantly since 2019. Initially developing a corporate digital transformation strategy in just four weeks, IFAD engaged in grassroots AI initiatives, empowering staff across various departments to drive AI integration. They partnered with a major vendor to build data platforms and engaged with their community through workshops, resulting in over 150 use cases. A key lesson was the importance of bespoke AI solutions tailored to their unique business needs. Their focus shifted from generic AI tools to more specialized, internally developed solutions to better serve IFAD's mission. As they continue to evolve, Thomas highlighted key areas for future growth: multimodal architecture, benchmarking quality, effective productization of AI use cases, and managing costs predictably. They remain cautiously optimistic about AI's potential to transform operations in the medium term.

Conclusions

Discussion on this topic highlighted the importance of leadership, clear communication, and accountability in implementing digital and data governance strategies. Key strategies included addressing data fragmentation, creating a federated system for data governance, and utilizing AI-powered tools for improving data management. The need for gradual, sustainable integration of AI technologies was

emphasized, with a focus on embedding AI within existing governance structures rather than creating separate policies or units. Success was achieved by aligning technical capabilities with business processes, ensuring that AI adoption followed established frameworks for security, architecture, and maintenance. Collaboration with partners was noted as crucial for advancing digital transformation. The focus on cost management through benchmarking was balanced by a call for evaluating the broader value and impact of AI initiatives. Moving forward, organizations are advised to prioritize building capabilities slowly, ensuring alignment with long-term objectives, and evaluating the potential benefits of AI through careful use case selection and governance.

Outcomes

DTN members were invited to:

- Establish a framework for effective data collection and sharing among organizations to enhance decision-making processes.

- Create a centralized platform for unstructured data management to facilitate better utilization of AI technologies.

- Develop guidelines for data governance that include clear roles and responsibilities to ensure coherent data management across different agencies.

- Align data governance models with strategic digital goals, emphasizing the need for responsible data handling and advanced analytics.

- Implement user-friendly enterprise data systems to improve decision-making processes across organizations.

Next Generation ERP

Unlike traditional ERP systems, which primarily focus on automating basic processes, Next Generation ERP offers real-time data insights, advanced automation, and greater flexibility, enabling organizations to adapt quickly to market changes, improve decision-making, and enhance operational efficiency. A panel session allowed the sharing of experiences and highlighted the benefits of integrating modern technologies such as SaaS and cloud-based solutions as effective strategies for achieving these goals. These technologies were emphasized for their scalability, cost-effectiveness, and ability to integrate seamlessly into existing workflows, aligning with the digital transformation objectives outlined in the session.

Opening the discussion, the Chair reflected on the lessons learned from the first generation of ERP systems, highlighting the opportunity costs and inefficiencies that arose from a lack of collaboration and coordination among UN agencies. Despite these lessons, current ERP systems still face challenges, including skyrocketing costs and duplicated efforts. Mr. Mariano emphasized the need for a more collaborative approach to minimize these inefficiencies, optimize the use of taxpayer money, and create shared services that agencies can use together. He called for a renewed focus on learning from past experiences, leveraging opportunities for collaboration, and addressing change management issues, particularly for early adopters of new ERP systems. The upcoming session aims to discuss these challenges and make recommendations for improving future ERP implementations across the UN system.

Sylvain St. Pierre (UNDP) shared his experience implementing ERP systems, specifically focusing on Quantum at UNDP. He reflected on the challenges of transitioning from older systems like PeopleSoft to the Oracle Cloud, emphasizing the importance of change management and data quality. Mr. St. Pierre highlighted that modern ERP platforms require significant attention to detail in terms of data integrity,

and the journey often involves delays and budget increases. He also discusses the integration of complementary tools like ServiceNow for service management and Salesforce for donor management. While the platform now supports multiple agencies, offering a shared service approach, it remains a complex and challenging project. In conclusion, a successful ERP implementation is one that receives strong leadership, cross-agency collaboration, and careful attention to information quality to drive process automation.

Doug Greene (CIO, UNHCR) and Thinus Greyling (UNHCR) provided an overview of a major multi-million dollar, multi-cloud business transformation project spanning across Workday, Salesforce, and Oracle. The project, launched in 2020, faced significant challenges, such as managing cross-system integrations, maintaining clean data, and overcoming resource constraints during peak operational periods. Key lessons included the importance of top-down leadership, early involvement of process owners, and maintaining strong relationships with vendors for post-go-live support and product enhancements. They emphasized the value of effective integration design, particularly in a multi-cloud environment, and the need for proactive master data governance. He also highlighted the emerging role of AI in ERP systems, advising ongoing engagement with stakeholders to drive continuous improvement and optimization.

Rick King (IOM) shared insights into IOM's ongoing ERP transformation project, focusing on the implementation of the "Wave" platform based on Oracle ERP Cloud, transitioning from SAP. Highlighting the collaboration with other agencies, the speaker stressed the importance of teamwork to avoid delays and technology missteps. The platform's scope covers various operational processes, including project management, procurement, and human resources. A multi-release approach has been adopted, with significant milestones like the go-live in February 2023 and the major SAP-to-Oracle cutover planned for January 2024. The speaker discussed challenges such as managing data migration, change management, and training 22,000 staff across multiple regions. Mr. King emphasized the value of field involvement, detailed cost modeling, and governance, along with the lessons learned, such as the need for more detailed requirements upfront and better change management training for regional staff.

Lorraine Pablo-Ugale (WHO) shared some challenges faced in implementing the ERP system, particularly with Workday, amidst a multi-cloud, multi-vendor, global environment. She highlights the importance of selecting the right contract type and managing vendor support, particularly when working with professional services. The complexities of aligning various methodologies, such as Agile and Waterfall, among different vendors and stakeholders, are emphasized. Key challenges included managing change, standardizing business processes, testing strategies, and the risks of migration errors. The speaker stresses the need for strong resource management, clear governance, collaboration between departments, and a robust PMO to ensure the success of the project.

Massimiliano Merelli (WFP) discussed the World Food Programme's gradual adoption of Salesforce as its CRM since 2004, emphasizing its role in donor intelligence, forecasting, and contribution management. Andy Lintern (WFP) highlighted key lessons, including the importance of user experience, flexibility, and process alignment, while noting challenges like strong email culture, varying digital skills, and changing senior management support. Despite hurdles, Salesforce has enhanced professionalism, relationship management, and contributions. Mr. Merelli also explained WFP's long-standing use of SAP, noting a shift from a "best-of-suite" to a "best-of-breed" strategy by integrating SaaS tools like Workday and Coupa. This shift has introduced fragmented processes and challenges tied to SAP's move to a cloud-based model, raising costs for on-prem solutions. WFP is exploring strategic negotiations with SAP and potential UN

agency collaboration to tailor solutions for nonprofits, balancing cost, AI capabilities, and alignment with organizational goals to maximize value for beneficiaries.

Panelists focused on strategies to optimize ERP systems across UN agencies, particularly through collaboration, cloud-first strategies, and shared services. Key topics included the potential for using platforms like the payment hub, developed by UNDP and UNHCR, to reduce the need for each agency to independently develop and manage similar systems, thus avoiding duplication and promoting efficiency. The conversation also explored the growing role of AI, analytics, and integration in the next generation of ERP systems, alongside considerations around vendor innovation and customization. A major point raised was the need for better coordination among agencies to share services like travel, payroll, and procurement, where there are significant commonalities in processes. The discussion emphasized how pooling resources could significantly lower ERP costs, particularly for smaller agencies, and reduce the burden of re-implementation. While some agencies are leaning towards simplified cloud solutions, others, like WFP, emphasized the challenges in adapting such systems to their unique needs. Ultimately, there was a consensus that shared platforms and a unified approach would be essential to reducing costs and enhancing the effectiveness of ERP systems across the UN.

Outcomes

ERPSIG was tasked to:

- Implement a unified IT procurement strategy across all UN agencies, identifying a centralized champion per vendor to streamline purchasing processes and negotiate better prices with vendors.

- Focus on developing common services across agencies to simplify operations, reduce duplication of efforts, and enhance user experience. This could include Standardized payroll systems; Integrated travel management platforms; Single payment gateways for employee compensation and vendor payments and; Common reporting and analytics tools.

CRM Community of Practice

Dino Cataldo dell'Accio (UNJSPF) provided an update on the CRM Community of Practice (CoP), highlighting significant developments, including the second special interest group (SIG) meeting held in June. The meeting featured expert insights from a Gartner speaker, whose expertise benefited participants, and facilitated meaningful discussions on system integrators' use across UN agencies.

Talita Molenaar (UNICEF) shared key themes emerging from the meeting, including the adoption of advanced AI capabilities by CRM vendors, responsible AI usage, and the critical importance of data governance. The vendors demonstrated the latest AI, emerging technologies, and low-code/no-code platforms, highlighting their potential to accelerate digital transformation. The SIG also emphasized user-centricity, rapid deployment, and the growing use of CRM across diverse scenarios, such as program planning and event management. A notable outcome was the establishment of a long-term agreement with Salesforce, offering UN agencies preferential pricing.

Angelo De Angelis (UNICC) talked to the growing role of CRM technologies in enabling innovation and digitalizing processes. He introduced a consolidated service offering around CRM, designed to streamline organizational workflows and enhance productivity through cloud-based solutions like Salesforce and Dynamics. This service aims to promote digital transformation while emphasizing principles of standardization, integrability, centralization, and user-centricity. Angelo also discussed the importance of

establishing a common vocabulary within the CoP, which led to the identification of shared use cases across various agencies. These use cases ranged from CRM-specific applications to governance, risk compliance, and document lifecycle management, all essential for fostering collaboration and identifying common challenges. The session concluded with an acknowledgment of the success stories and collaborative efforts that have emerged within the CRM community.

The CRM CoP indicated the need to further collaborate with the SIG on Artificial Intelligence and UN Data Strategy.

The DTN was updated on progress made by the CRM CoP, including:

- An overview of the results of the 2024 CRM SIG Event
- Highlights of key achievements and successes
- Identification of any challenges or obstacles encountered.
- Key Deliverables Reporting on Lessons Learned from System Integrators
- Priority given to the sharing of valuable insights gained from each entity's experience with System Integrators.

Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

The IGF, a global platform convened by the United Nations, addresses key internet governance issues such as accessibility, security, human rights, privacy, and economic impact, promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration among governments, the private sector, civil society, and technical communities. It plays a vital role in supporting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals by fostering dialogue on topics like digital security and human rights. While the IGF does not make binding decisions, it helps build consensus on crucial internet governance principles, ensuring the internet serves as a tool for sustainable development and global cooperation.

Dino Cataldo dell'Accio (UNJSPF) provided background and detail to a UN system presentation at the IGF, organized by the Digital Transformation Community of Practice. He invited members to participate in planned IGF's activities on December 19, 2024, either in person or remotely, alongside international organizations, member states, civil society, NGOs, the private sector, the technical community, and academia, to support the Global Digital Compact and ensure diverse perspectives are represented in governance discussions and best practices.

Cloud Community of Practice

Francesca Duri (WIPO) and Senida Panjeta (UN), co-chairs of the DTN Cloud Community of practice, presented their work on obtaining a common UN agreement for AWS services. The proposal is for common conditions to apply to all the agencies without requiring for those with contracts already in place to review them but aiming for a common MoU applying to all UN entities.

Next steps, therefore, include selecting the central entity to manage the agreement, and agencies currently using or planning to use AWS services to express interest. The final agreement will be shared with the Community of Practice and relevant focal points for further discussion.

Outcome

Cloud CoP to reach out to agencies who are the top five consumers of AWS cloud services to get them engaged.

Open Source

Open source software, which is made publicly available with a license that allows anyone to view, modify, and distribute its source code, is vital to the United Nations as it encourages collaboration, transparency, and innovation, as developers worldwide can contribute to its improvement. For the UN, open-source software enhances cooperation among member agencies, enabling the customization of tools to meet specific needs across diverse contexts. It also reduces costs by eliminating proprietary software licensing fees, ensuring that resources are allocated more efficiently. Most importantly, open-source software aligns with the UN's core principles of accessibility, equity, and operational efficiency, supporting its mission to foster inclusive and transparent global development.

Open Source Initiative

Stefano Maffulli, Executive Director of the Open Source Initiative (OSI), discussed the organization's critical role in defining open source software and maintaining global standards for open-source licenses. He emphasized OSI's commitment to neutrality and its focus on serving the public interest, rather than the interests of sponsors. Stefano highlighted the tremendous economic value of open source software, estimated at \$8.8 trillion, and explained how OSI's definition of open source forms the foundation for defining digital public goods. He acknowledged that the rise of AI has added complexity to the open-source landscape, especially with opaque AI systems, such as misclassifications in child protection tools.

In response, OSI began working on defining "open source AI" two years ago, ensuring that AI systems adhere to open-source principles by being transparent, modifiable, and mindful of legal and privacy challenges surrounding data use. He outlined three key components of open-source AI: open weights (trained AI parameters), accessible source code, and full transparency of the data used in training. Stefano clarified that AI systems using private or sensitive data, like medical information, could still be considered open source under certain conditions, such as using federated learning. OSI's approach fosters the growth of the open-source AI ecosystem while addressing privacy concerns and encouraging innovation. He concluded by sharing examples of open-source AI that align with this definition and inviting participants to support OSI's work through membership.

Open-Source Solutions Community of Practice

Co-Chairs of the Open Source Solutions Community of Practice (CoP), Omar Mohsine (UN) and Mostafa Elkordy (UNFPA), presented an update on their progress, outlining achievements and challenges across five thematic areas: policy development, licensing, software cataloging, code hosting, and capacity building.

Emphasizing the collaborative efforts across UN agencies and with external partners, the CoP has established a common policy framework, open-source principles, and a branding identity as "Open Source United." Other achievements include creating a software catalog and hosting platform powered by GitLab, as well as establishing guidelines to support agencies in selecting appropriate open-source licenses. Challenges faced include varied maturity levels among agencies, resource constraints, and legal complexities.

During the discussion that ensued, participants praised the initiative but raised concerns about sustainability and the cost implications of open-source solutions. It was noted that while open source offers flexibility and transparency, it is not inherently free and requires ongoing investment in maintenance, training, and governance. Participants emphasized the need for a collective approach to ensure scalability and long-term support for open-source projects. In response, CoP representatives

highlighted their focus on readiness and governance structures to address disparate adoption levels across agencies. They acknowledged sustainability challenges and committed to exploring value-for-money metrics and collective strategies for maintaining open-source solutions. The discussion concluded with an offer to share resources, such as research on the return on investment in open source, to inform further deliberations.

Outcomes

DTN approved:

- a) The official launch the open-source software catalog at opensource.un.org and the GitLab repository at opensource.unicc.org on January 1st 2025.
- b) The open-source principles and conditional approval of the policy framework document, effective after incorporating feedback from the group, with a deadline of December 12th, 2024. This policy is to be reviewed annually, with updates as needed.
- c) The concept of small annual contributions from each participating agency to cover technical support, infrastructure costs, platform upkeep, and maintenance, primarily through UNICC. This will ensure a high level of service for both the UN system and public contributors. Final details will be outlined and approved in the forthcoming funding proposal.

DTN tasked OSS CoP to:

- a. Ensure the necessary security and control required for representing the UN, in line with OLA's recommendation to avoid using public Git repositories like GitHub.
- b. Explore additional funding opportunities from donors and the private sector to ensure long-term sustainability.
- c. Submit a funding proposal to the board by the end of the first quarter.

Cybersecurity Community of Practice

Incoming Co-Chairs of the Cybersecurity Community of Practice (Richard Lane, WIPO & Sebastian Bania, UNICEF) were joined by outgoing interim Co-Chair Charles Hornsby, UNHCR to provide an update on recent advances made by the community.

The focus of this update was the roll-out of the updated cybersecurity minimum baseline, version 4. This baseline is designed to align with the High-Level Committee on Management Data Cyber Risk Management Framework. It introduces maturity levels that establish standardized metrics crucial for measuring, guiding, and enhancing organizational cybersecurity practices and investments. By adopting these structured metrics, organizations are better equipped to systematically assess their capabilities and strategically allocate resources to areas that require improvement. The implementation of this baseline (January 1 2025) is anticipated to bring cohesiveness to control and investment strategies across the sector, ultimately elevating the overall cybersecurity posture.

Discussions further delved into enhancing incident response capabilities, a critical component of cybersecurity resilience. Specialized working groups have been formed to tackle prevalent cybersecurity challenges, including advancing passwordless authentication methods and bolstering defenses against phishing attacks. These working groups pool expertise from across the community to drive significant advancements in handling complex cybersecurity threats.

There was the consensus on adopting an incremental approach to improving security assurance. The proposed approach emphasizes annual self-assessments based on the updated baseline, fostering an environment where organizations can share insights and uncover vulnerabilities confidentially. This initiative is set for full implementation by January 2025. While there was considerable support for a more formal assurance process, resource constraints and varying organizational maturity levels prompted the decision to prioritize pragmatic, incremental improvements. This approach allows organizations to gradually strengthen their cybersecurity frameworks without overwhelming their resources.

Security awareness and community engagement were highlighted as essential components of the cybersecurity strategy. Organizations are actively developing innovative awareness campaigns to enhance understanding and responsiveness to cybersecurity threats. A unique initiative involved a session led by a Mentalist, aimed at engaging participants in an interactive manner to deepen their awareness of security issues. Continued efforts are dedicated to aligning community practices and improving engagement, with working groups recommending updates such as adopting the latest security baselines and refining strategic plans for upcoming activities.

Discussions underscored the community's unified commitment to advancing cybersecurity readiness and resilience. Through leadership changes, updated frameworks, collaborative incident response strategies, and creative awareness campaigns, the community is setting a foundation for future improvements. These coordinated efforts reflect a collective resolve to enhance security practices and foster a more secure organizational environment across the board.

Outcomes

DTN approved:

Cybersecurity Baseline v4 pending:

- Review of the baseline maturity with a view to possibly removing the "level 0" maturity level
- Addition of baseline enforcement capability by requiring all new MoUs for inter-agency shared service provision to have a requirement for self-assessment and reporting of maturity against baseline.

UNISSIG report, including change of name (Cybersecurity COP)

Election of co-chairs Richard Lane (WIPO) & Sebastian Bania (UNICEF).

Shared Services White Paper.

Planning for next sessions (WBG, Washington D.C.).

Creation of the proposed working group.

In addition, DTN encourages:

Resource commitment from CISOs to actively participate in the Cybersecurity CoP.

Vendor Exit Strategy

Aadil Nanji and Nikos Drakos (Gartner Group) provided members an opportunity to discuss in detail the management and negotiation of Microsoft licenses, noting a significant rise in costs since their introduction. Emerging frameworks, such as E.7, were introduced alongside traditional models, and a shift toward exploring cloud services from Google was observed, driven by competitive pricing compared to Microsoft. Key topics included optimizing licensing tiers, consolidating negotiations for better terms, and leveraging non-profit discounts and commercial solutions.

Proposed negotiations with vendors primarily center around pricing structures offering large-volume purchase discounts. The introduction of alternative providers, which offer competitive discounts and free service periods, was seen as a way to enhance negotiation leverage. The importance of thorough checks on entitlement reports and purchase histories was stressed due to Microsoft's audit rights. Discussions also covered aspects like contractual flexibility, disaster recovery rights, and the implications of switching to services like G Suite. Cost optimization strategies for cloud service licenses included adjusting license volumes and types, renegotiating terms before contracts expire, and ensuring licensing costs align with actual usage. The need for flexibility to avoid overspending and address unused licenses was highlighted. Discussions also focused on securing volume discounts and the impact of different payment terms on cash flow, while noting the diminishing offers on support services.

Participants also compared the complexity of Microsoft's offerings with the user-friendly platform of Google Workspace. Challenges of migration, data management, and operational adaptation were discussed, with an emphasis on strong management strategies to ensure smooth transitions between platforms.

Outcome

DTN to negotiate unified agreements to leverage volume discounts and achieve flexible pricing with Microsoft. This approach aims to optimize licensing costs while ensuring that organizations can effectively utilize Microsoft's services and products.

IT Budget Benchmarking

Alessio Meloni (Gartner) presented the UN's IT benchmarking initiative, designed to provide insights into IT spending and efficiency through a structured, confidential process. This initiative analyzes IT expenditures across central, regional, and field operations, categorizing them by domain and alignment with business goals. Launching in January, the initiative will collect data over two months, concluding in March, with results to be presented in May. Key benchmarks include operational versus capital expenditures and categorizing spending into Run (operations), Grow (expansion), and Transform (innovation). Gartner will support participants through webinars and consultations to ensure accurate results and comparability. Challenges such as harmonizing data across UN agencies and comparing with non-UN industries were discussed, with Gartner assuring flexibility and privacy. The initiative aims to foster collaboration and improve IT spending alignment across the UN system.

Outcome

Organizations are encouraged to participate in the Gartner IT budget benchmarking exercise across sectors and establish transparent methodologies for financial and resource comparisons.

Data Centre Resilience

Michel Bergeron (UN) detailed the response to the severe flooding in Valencia on October 29, which impacted a critical technology center. The Valencia facility, paired with its twin in Brindisi, hosts 250 racks of equipment and operates as a tier-3 certified site.

During the disaster, robust disaster recovery protocols and active-active site configurations ensured seamless failover of systems, preserving data integrity and minimizing downtime for approximately 64,000 users. The disaster recovery process involved mobilizing over 130 engineers and executing over 50 recovery plans. Despite challenges, including water contamination affecting backup generators and reliance on limited UPS power, recovery objectives were met. Within 36 hours, all systems were

operational without any data loss. Effective teamwork, stringent monitoring tools, and pre-emptive disaster recovery exercises played pivotal roles in the successful response. While the technical response was efficient, Mr. Bergeron highlighted the need to consider the human aspect during crises. Staff members in Valencia faced trauma from personal losses and the overwhelming nature of the event. Others shared insights on planning for worst-case scenarios, emphasizing the importance of geographic redundancy in human resources and prioritizing staff well-being alongside operational goals.

Participants acknowledged the need to incorporate lessons from real incidents into preparedness strategies. In closing, members expressed gratitude to Mr. Bergeron and his team, and all contributors for ensuring uninterrupted services during a challenging time, reiterating the value of resilience, collaboration, and proactive planning.

Session Planning

- The Spring 2025 session will be hosted by ICAO in Montreal, Canada (Tentatively 5-6 May 2025).
- The following fall session in 2025 will be hosted by UN & UNICEF in Valencia, Spain. (Date TBD).
- The 2026 spring session will be hosted by IAEA in Vienna (Date TBD).

Annex 1 – Attendees

- Aadil ANJI, Gartner Group
- Alessio MELONI, Gartner Group
- Alexander SUDAKOV, CTBTO
- Alexandra VARYUTA, UNIDO
- Alvaro FLORES, ICJ-CIJ
- Ammar AHMED, IMF
- Amy DOHERTY, World Bank
- Andy LINTERN, UNHCR
- Angelo DE ANGELIS, UNICC
- Anna MIROSHNICHENKO, WFP
- Annabelle VIAJAR, IMO
- Ben SHUTTLEWORTH, BCG
- Bernardo MARIANO JUNIOR, UN
- Biswamber GURUBACHARYA, WHO
- Bjorn MANSSON, OHCHR
- Charlotte TARP TOELLE, UNOPS
- Christian LARSSON, UNICEF
- Christina SCHIRMBRANDT, IAEA
- David MANSET, ITU
- David SABIR, UNWOMEN
- Dejan JAKOVljeVIC, FAO
- Dennis CLEARLY, OPCW
- Dhanani QAHIR, BCG
- Dino CATALDO DELL'ACCIO, UNJSPF
- Douglas GREENE, UNHCR
- Elena TOMUTA, UNCTAD
- Fabrice BOUDOU, WTO
- Farzana MITHUN, WIPO
- Francesca DURI, WIPO
- Francesca TACCONI, Gartner Group
- Francesco MANTOVANI, P&G
- Gael LAMS, ITC-ILO
- Gayan PEIRIS, UNDP
- GURUBACHARYA BISWAMBER, WHO
- Hlekiwe KACHALI, UNICEF
- Ingrid REGIEN, UNAIDS
- Isabel DE SOLA CRIADO, UN
- Jason SLATER, UNIDO
- Judith KAHURE, UNRWA
- Kamal NAIM, UNEP

- Karl KALEJS, WIPO
- Katarzyna OSTROWSKA, WMO
- Kelly MANNIX, ICC
- Kristina EGUND, UNOPS
- Magan NAIDOO, WFP
- Marc Nissen, LinkedIn
- Marietta MUWANGA-SSEVUME, IOM
- Marthinus GREYLING, UNHCR
- Massimiliano MERELLI, WFP
- Michael WALTON, UNHCR
- Michel BERGERON, UN
- Michelle FORTUNE, World Bank
- Mostafa Elkordy, UNFPA
- Ng S. CHONG, UNU
- Nieto BARRANTES PRADO, UNICC
- Nikos DRAKOS, Gartner Group
- Olivier SIMAH, UNDP
- Omar BAIG, UNESCO
- Omar MOHSINE, UN
- PALLY SRIDHAR, UNIDO
- Peay ASHLEY, BCG
- Petra MARSHALL, ILO
- Dongyu QU, FAO
- Rania ABOU CHAKRA, WMO
- Rick King, IOM
- Ricardo Rendon Cepeda, IFAD
- Richard MACIVER, CEB
- Rola KHREIS, IAEA
- Rosie WORTH, UNICEF
- Sameer CHAUHAN, UNICC
- Samira ASMA, WHO
- Sanya DEHINDE, ICAO
- Shirin HAMID, IMF
- Singh Gill AMANDEEP, UN
- Soren THOMASSEN, UNFPA
- Stefano MAFFULLI, OSI
- Sunil GUPTA, CTBTO
- Sylvain ST-PIERRE, UNDP
- Talita MOLENAR, UNICEF
- Thomas BOUSIOS, IFAD
- Tsigereda TEKLE SEBHATU, IMO
- Yiotis LONGINOS, FAO
- Yoon BARKER, UN