



**United  
Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



Ministry of  
the Interior and Safety



Incheon Metropolitan City

**10th Regional Symposium on  
Effective Governance and AI Transformation: Revitalizing Public  
Institutions through Innovation and Cooperation to Accelerate Action  
towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Zero Draft Aide-Memoire**

**25 to 27 November 2026  
10:00 AM – 6:00 PM (Seoul, KST)**

24-26 November 2026, 8:00 PM – 4:00 AM (New York, EST)

In-person and via zoom

Organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)  
Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)  
Project Office on Governance (UNPOG)  
with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Republic of Korea (MOIS) and  
Incheon Metropolitan City

## I. EVENT DESCRIPTION

The 10th Regional Symposium on Effective Governance and AI Transformation is the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)'s annual regional event in Asia and the Pacific. Taking place from 25 to 27 November 2026 in Incheon, the Republic of Korea, the Symposium is organized by UN DESA's Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) through its United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Republic of Korea and Incheon Metropolitan City. This year's Symposium will mark two important milestones: the 20th Anniversary of the United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) and the 10th Anniversary of the Regional Symposium.

Under the theme "Effective Governance and AI Transformation: Revitalizing Public Institutions through Innovation and Cooperation to Accelerate Action towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," the Symposium will examine what the rapidly evolving global discussions on AI governance mean in practice for public institutions in Asia and the Pacific. Rather than approaching AI as a stand-alone technology issue, the Symposium places it within the broader context of public governance and institutional transformation. It will consider how institutions need to adapt and become more agile, how public administrations can build the capacities required to use and govern AI responsibly, and how countries can learn from one another as they respond to similar governance challenges.

The Symposium will bring together public sector leaders, policymakers, practitioners, experts and development partners to exchange experiences and consider how effective governance, institutional innovation and emerging technologies can contribute to stronger public institutions and accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## II. CONTEXT

With the 2030 deadline now only four years away, the need to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals has become increasingly urgent. The [Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026](#) shows that, while important gains have been made since 2015, progress remains uneven and insufficient. Looking towards the final push to 2030, it highlights frontier technologies, including artificial intelligence, as an important opportunity to advance development, provided their benefits reach those most at risk of being left behind.

The challenge is particularly significant for Asia and the Pacific region. According to the [Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2026](#), at the current pace, the region is expected to achieve 14 targets of the 117 measurable SDG targets by 2030. These trends highlight the

need for stronger public institutions responsible for translating global commitments into policies, services and tangible results for people.

This institutional dimension has gained increasing attention, with the 25th session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration placing the revitalization of institutions within the broader effort to realize the SDGs and identifying science, strategic foresight, systems thinking, risk analysis and artificial intelligence as important capabilities for a future-oriented public administration<sup>1</sup>.

Against this backdrop, artificial intelligence is becoming an increasingly important part of the environment in which public institutions operate. Its potential extends across policymaking, public service delivery, data analysis and scientific and technological innovation. At the same time, [the Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI](#) notes that AI capabilities are advancing rapidly and, in some areas, faster than the ability to measure or govern them. It also stresses that realizing the benefits of AI depends on an enabling institutional environment and that the AI divide concerns not only access, but also countries' capacity to shape, govern and benefit from these technologies.

The evolution of AI is also creating new governance challenges. The Scientific Panel identifies agentic AI as a significant step change, as AI systems increasingly move beyond generating information towards performing tasks and acting with greater autonomy and reduced human oversight. This raises new questions around accountability, controllability, safety and the role of human decision-makers, reinforcing the need for strong institutional arrangements and effective safeguards. The Co-Chair's Summary from the first UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance<sup>2</sup>, reinforced these concerns while highlighting AI's potential to support sustainable development.

Furthermore, the 2026 High-level Political Forum also underscored the need for inclusive AI governance, together with stronger digital cooperation to ensure that the benefits of technology are shared fairly and do not deepen inequalities<sup>3</sup>.

Against this rapidly changing development and governance landscape, the 10th Regional Symposium is anchored in SDG 16 and informed by the Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact, the 25th session of CEPA, the 2026 United Nations Public Service Forum, the 2026 High-level Political Forum, the UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance and the emerging evidence of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI.

The Symposium will also present the findings of the 2026 United Nations E-Government Survey, with a focus on digital government trends and developments in Asia and the

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<sup>1</sup> [25th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Co-Chair's Summary, UN Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance, 2026](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2026 session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2026 high-level political forum on sustainable development](#)

Pacific, to inform discussions on institutional transformation and public administration readiness.

Through policy dialogue and peer learning, the Symposium will provide a platform for Member States and other stakeholders to exchange experiences, and identify approaches that can be adapted to different national and local contexts, and consider how stronger institutional capacities can help governments address emerging governance challenges beyond 2030.

### III. OBJECTIVES

The 10th Regional Symposium aims to serve as a regional platform for policy dialogue, peer learning, capacity development and cooperation to support Member States in revitalizing public institutions in Asia and the Pacific in response to rapid technological and societal change. It will examine how effective governance, responsible AI transformation, anticipatory and inclusive approaches, institutional resilience and stronger cooperation can work together to build more agile, accountable and future-ready public institutions, enhance public value and accelerate action towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond.

#### **Specific Objectives**

- Enhance understanding of emerging AI governance issues and their implications for public administration and institutional transformation in Asia and the Pacific.
- Strengthen public administration readiness for responsible AI adoption, including institutional arrangements, coordination and public sector capabilities.
- Explore how innovation and anticipatory governance can help build more agile and resilient public institutions, including through the responsible use of AI for disaster risk reduction and climate resilience.
- Address AI and digital divides by strengthening institutional capacity, inclusive participation, gender-sensitive approaches and data governance, and by supporting developing countries to shape and benefit from AI transformation.
- Strengthen institutional capacity and cooperation through peer learning, knowledge exchange and partnerships, including national-to-local and city-to-city cooperation, while advancing meaningful youth participation in public decision-making.

#### IV. STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY

The Symposium will be held in a hybrid format in Incheon, the Republic of Korea, from 25 to 27 November 2026. It is anticipated that the Regional Symposium will also provide ample opportunities for online engagement to ensure wide-ranging participation.

The Symposium will consist of a high-level opening session, followed by a setting-the-scene session, five thematic sessions, one special session, a local governance and partnership forum, a youth session, two learning labs, and field visits. The Symposium will be conducted in English.

Participants will engage with a forward-looking agenda organized around three closely connected strands: revitalizing public institutions, harnessing innovation, and strengthening cooperation.

The first considers how governments can strengthen public administration, build institutional readiness, improve coordination and inclusion, and develop the capabilities needed to respond to changing expectations and emerging risks.

The second looks at innovation within this broader governance context, exploring how responsible AI, anticipatory governance and other emerging technologies can support more effective and resilient public institutions and help governments deliver greater public value.

The third reflects the importance of cooperation in addressing governance challenges that increasingly transcend national boundaries. The Symposium will therefore provide space for regional peer learning, capacity development, knowledge exchange and partnerships. AI governance cuts across all three strands.

The programme will address, among others:

- Strengthening public administration readiness for responsible AI adoption, including leadership, institutional arrangements, data governance, workforce capabilities.
- Governing increasingly agentic AI systems, with attention to transparency, traceability, human oversight, and accountability.
- Bridging AI and digital divides by strengthening institutional capacity, data governance, digital inclusion and the ability of developing countries to shape, govern and benefit from AI.
- Applying strategic foresight and anticipatory governance to help public institutions respond to uncertainty, and changing public needs.
- Harnessing AI and digital transformation to strengthen disaster risk reduction and climate resilience.

The programme will also bring a local and participatory dimension to these discussions. The Local Governance and Partnership Forum will consider how subnational and local governments can strengthen their capacities to use and govern AI, improve public services and advance national-to-local and city-to-city cooperation. The Youth Session will build on

the 10th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation, held on 13 August 2026, and bring forward youth perspectives on innovation and meaningful participation in public decision-making.

A key feature of the Symposium will be the special session commemorating the 20th Anniversary of UNPOG, “Two Decades of Strengthening Public Institutions and Looking Ahead Beyond 2030.” The session will reflect on how UNPOG’s work has evolved alongside changing regional and global priorities and draw lessons from two decades of capacity development, country support, regional knowledge exchange, peer learning and partnerships across Asia and the Pacific in support of SDG implementation.

The Symposium will be complemented by two practical Learning Labs. The first, “Building Institutional AI Readiness,” will support participants in examining the institutional capabilities required to shape, govern and responsibly deploy AI. Participants will also work across countries to identify areas where regional cooperation can add value. The second, “Quantum Computing: Preparing for the Next Technological Frontier,” will introduce the basic concepts of quantum computing and consider its potential implications for public administration, cybersecurity, digital infrastructure, public sector skills and future institutional preparedness.

The Symposium will conclude with a closing session bringing together the main messages, recommendations and lessons emerging from the three days of discussions.

## **V. THEMATIC AREAS**

### **Setting the Scene**

#### **Governing in the Age of AI: What Is Changing in Public Institutions and Why Does It Matter?**

Public institutions are undergoing a profound transformation as artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes how they govern, deliver services, make decisions and engage with citizens. Yet, AI is only one dimension of a broader shift in the operating environment of government characterized by rapid technological change, growing complexity, persistent uncertainty and increasingly interconnected risks. Recognizing these trends, the [Committee of Experts on Public Administration \(CEPA\), at its twenty-fifth session](#), identified science, foresight, systems thinking, risk analysis and artificial intelligence as essential capabilities for a future-oriented public administration capable of navigating an era of polycrisis and rapid disruption. These capabilities align closely with [UN 2.0 and its Quintet of Change](#), which calls for strengthening data, digital, innovation, behavioural science and strategic foresight capacities across the United Nations system to better support Member States in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The implications extend well beyond the adoption of new technologies. Public institutions increasingly need to understand how technological and societal change is reshaping the environment in which they govern and how their roles, functions and ways of working may need to evolve in response. In this context, AI should be understood not as a standalone technological issue, but as part of a broader agenda of public sector transformation that depends on anticipatory governance; evidence-informed administration; and agile and adaptive administration. Realizing public value from AI requires more than technological capability, but also depends on the capacity of public institutions to adapt and govern its use responsibly.

The session will therefore examine what is changing within public institutions as AI and other emerging technologies reshape governance systems, and what these changes mean for public administration in practice. It will consider the broader implications for how governments fulfil their responsibilities, respond to emerging challenges and continue to deliver public value in a rapidly changing environment. The session will also present the findings of the 2026 United Nations E-Government Survey, with particular attention to trends and developments in Asia and the Pacific and their implications for public institutions and digital government transformation.

As the 2030 Agenda approaches its final years, the session will also explore how governments can use AI to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, while building public institutions that are better prepared to respond to emerging challenges and serve their communities beyond 2030.

### **Guiding Questions:**

1. How are AI and other emerging technologies reshaping the operating environment, roles and functions of public institutions?
2. What major technological, societal and governance shifts should public institutions anticipate as they seek to remain effective and relevant?
3. How can governments ensure that technological transformation contributes to public value and supports the principles of effective governance?
4. How can AI and digital transformation contribute to accelerating sustainable development while helping public institutions prepare for governance challenges beyond 2030?

## **Special Session**

### **20th Anniversary of UNPOG: Two Decades of Strengthening Public Institutions and Looking Ahead Beyond 2030**

The United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), under the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic

and Social Affairs (UN DESA), was established in 2006 to support Member States in strengthening public institutions and promoting effective governance for sustainable development. Over the past two decades, UNPOG has built the governance capacities of developing Member States across Asia and the Pacific and beyond, evolving into a recognized regional hub for public administration reform. This role was formally acknowledged by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which highlighted the importance of UNPOG in Resolution [E/RES/2014/38](#). The resolution called for the UN Secretariat to further strengthen governance and public administration capacity development through advisory services, training, self-assessment, awareness-raising activities, and technical projects such as UNPOG.

This special session marks UNPOG's 20th Anniversary by reflecting on its past achievements and looking toward the future. It provides an opportunity to review two decades of operational accomplishments and contributions to public administration reform, while drawing out the institutional lessons that have enabled a relatively small office to make a significant contribution to governance capacity development across the region. At the same time, the session will look ahead. With UNPOG's current mandate extending to 2030 and the international community beginning to shape the development agenda beyond that horizon, participants will consider how the office's role can evolve to support the anticipatory, digitally enabled, and AI-aware governance that this Symposium has identified as central to institutional revitalization. The session will also serve as a platform to gather ideas, insights, and perspectives that will inform UNPOG's vision, strategic goals, and operational direction for the next fifteen years. In doing so, the discussion will explore how the platform built over the past twenty years can remain relevant and responsive to the needs of public institutions in the decades ahead.

### **Guiding Questions:**

1. Looking back over the past two decades, what have been the most significant lessons from UNPOG's efforts to strengthen public institutions and governance capacities, and how can these lessons inform support to Member States in an increasingly complex and uncertain global environment?
2. How should UNPOG evolve beyond 2030 to help countries build anticipatory, inclusive and future-ready public institutions capable of addressing emerging challenges, accelerating the SDGs and sustaining long-term resilience?
3. What strategic partnerships, institutional innovations and areas of focus should guide UNPOG's next fifteen years to ensure it remains relevant, responsive and impactful in advancing effective, accountable and inclusive governance for sustainable development?
4. How can UNPOG continue to serve as an effective platform for South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation, enabling the exchange of practical governance solutions and innovations across diverse national contexts?

## Thematic Session 1: From AI Innovation to Adoption: Strengthening Public Administration Readiness

Public institutions are being called upon to adapt their structures, capabilities and ways of working to a rapidly changing digital environment while continuing to uphold public values, accountability and trust. As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated into public administration, the challenge is not simply one of adopting new technologies, but of ensuring that institutions are equipped to use them effectively and responsibly. This requires attention to institutional mandates, leadership, organizational arrangements and the conditions needed to translate AI innovation into sustainable improvements in public administration and service delivery.

The United Nations E-Government Survey 2024 underscores that this transformation must build on strong digital government foundations. Its Addendum on AI and Digital Government notes that AI development is advancing faster than many national policy and regulatory frameworks and stresses the importance of integrating AI governance within existing digital and data governance arrangements<sup>4</sup>. UN DESA further emphasizes that AI initiatives should be coordinated across institutions rather than developed in isolation, as fragmented approaches can create duplication, conflicting rules and operational inefficiencies. Robust data governance, supportive infrastructure and coherent institutional frameworks are therefore central to effective AI adoption.

Institutional readiness also depends on the capabilities of the public sector workforce and the ability of institutions to manage organizational change. The report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)<sup>5</sup> on its 25th session, in its discussion of future-oriented public administration, highlights the need for governments to ensure that the digitalization of public services, including the use of artificial intelligence systems, is inclusive, fair, ethical and people-centred, with appropriate safeguards in place. This also resonates with the messages from the 9th Regional Symposium, which emphasized that people and institutions must come before technology, and that AI strategies require leadership, cross-sector cooperation, in-house expertise and accountability structures to move from ambition to implementation.

The session will therefore explore the reforms, coordination mechanisms, institutional readiness and public sector capabilities needed to enable responsible and effective AI transformation. It will consider how governments can move from experimentation towards sustained implementation while ensuring that AI strengthens public value, service delivery, institutional performance and public trust.

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<sup>4</sup> [The United Nations E-Government Survey 2024](#)

<sup>5</sup> [E/2026/44-E/C.16/2026/7](#)

## Guiding Questions:

1. What institutional reforms and governance arrangements are needed to move from AI experimentation to responsible and sustainable adoption in the public sector?
2. What institutional capabilities are needed to harness AI responsibly and build more agile, adaptive and resilient institutions?
3. What are governments learning from their experience of adopting AI, and what can they learn from one another?
4. How can governments strengthen coordination across ministries, agencies and levels of government to support coherent and effective AI transformation?
5. What public sector workforce capabilities, skills and organizational changes are needed to support responsible AI adoption while maintaining human judgement and accountability?

## Thematic Session 2: Governing Agentic AI Systems in Public Institutions: Accountability and Human Oversight

Artificial intelligence is entering a new phase in which systems are increasingly able not only to generate information, but also to plan, use tools, interact with digital environments and carry out sequences of actions with greater autonomy. The Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI describes this development as a governance step change, noting that agentic AI moves beyond systems that primarily generate outputs towards systems that can act, with increasing autonomy and correspondingly less direct human oversight<sup>6</sup>.

For public institutions, this evolution creates new possibilities for supporting administrative processes, managing complex workflows and improving the delivery of public services. At the same time, the implications are different when an AI system is able to initiate or carry out actions rather than simply provide information for a public official to consider<sup>7</sup>. Questions of authority, responsibility and institutional control therefore become more central as these systems are introduced into government.

This is particularly important where AI-supported actions may affect rights, entitlements, access to public services or the use of public resources. The Scientific Panel notes that human oversight cannot be understood simply as placing a person at the end of an automated process. It needs to be built into the way institutions authorize, monitor and, when necessary, intervene in or reverse AI-enabled actions. For public administration, this

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<sup>6</sup> [Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence, Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI: Evidence-based Assessment of Opportunities, Risks and Impacts of Artificial Intelligence, UN, July 2025.](#)

<sup>7</sup> [UN Secretary-General's remarks to the opening of the first Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance, 6 July 2026.](#)

means ensuring that responsibility remains identifiable and that existing systems of accountability, due process and redress continue to function as AI systems take on a more active role in administrative processes.

The session will examine how public institutions can adapt their governance and accountability arrangements to this emerging level of AI autonomy. It will consider where human judgement and authority need to remain decisive, how institutions can maintain visibility over the actions taken by AI systems, and how oversight, incident reporting and avenues for remedy may need to evolve as these systems become more capable. The discussion will also provide an opportunity for governments to exchange emerging experience and consider how institutional learning and international cooperation can help governance arrangements keep pace with technological change.

### **Guiding questions:**

1. Where could agentic AI create public value in government, and which functions or decisions should remain subject to direct human authority?
2. How should responsibility and accountability be defined when an AI system can initiate or execute actions on behalf of a public institution?
3. What mechanisms are needed to ensure meaningful human oversight, including appropriate authorization points, traceability, monitoring and the ability to intervene, pause or reverse AI-enabled actions?
4. How can governments strengthen cooperation, evidence-sharing and institutional learning so that governance arrangements evolve alongside rapidly changing agentic AI capabilities?
5. How can public institutions ensure that agentic AI systems remain aligned with legal mandates, public values and administrative procedures as their level of autonomy increases?

### **Thematic Session 3: Anticipatory Governance for Inclusive and Future-Ready Public Institutions**

In an era of rapid technological change, growing uncertainty, complex risks and persistent development challenges, anticipatory governance is emerging as a core capability of effective public institutions. Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming how governments design policies, deliver services, regulate markets and respond to crises, while simultaneously introducing new ethical, social and governance challenges. As the 2030 Agenda enters its final years, the critical question is not simply how governments respond to change, but how they strengthen their capacity to anticipate emerging developments, manage uncertainty and deliver inclusive, resilient and sustainable outcomes for current and future generations.

This institutional perspective is reflected in the work of the [Committee of Experts on Public Administration \(CEPA\), at its twenty-fifth session](#), which has identified foresight, systems thinking, risk analysis and AI as essential components of a future-oriented public administration. Anticipatory governance requires embedding these capabilities into the machinery of government so that policymakers can move beyond reactive decision-making towards proactively identifying emerging risks and opportunities.

The 2026 High-level Political Forum also reinforced the need for agile public institutions capable of delivering integrated responses across sectors and levels of government. Strategic foresight, one of the core capabilities of the UN 2.0 Quintet of Change, can help governments consider the longer-term implications of technological and societal change, explore alternative futures and connect emerging signals with decisions being made today.

This session will explore how anticipatory governance can enhance the capacity of public institutions to manage uncertainty, foster inclusion and participation, and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that future-oriented policymaking reflects the perspectives and needs of diverse groups, especially those at risk of being left behind. Drawing on the discussions and outcomes of the 2026 United Nations Public Service Forum, the session will identify practical lessons and policy options that participants can adapt to strengthen anticipatory, inclusive and future-ready institutions in their own national and regional contexts.

### **Guiding questions:**

1. How can governments use strategic foresight to identify emerging risks, opportunities and signals of change and prepare for a range of plausible futures before they become immediate policy challenges?
2. What institutional arrangements, leadership practices and capabilities are needed to embed strategic foresight, systems thinking and anticipatory approaches into regular policymaking and planning processes?
3. How can governments use foresight to better understand the longer-term implications of technological, social, economic and environmental change for public policy, institutions and service delivery?
4. How can foresight processes incorporate diverse perspectives, including those of groups at risk of being left behind, so that future-oriented decision-making is more inclusive and responsive?

### **Thematic Session 4: Strengthening Institutional Resilience through AI-Enabled Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Action**

Climate change is reshaping the scale, frequency, and complexity of disaster risk, placing growing pressure on public institutions to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to interconnected, overlapping and cascading shocks. The UN DESA's Toolkit on Risk-informed Governance and Innovative Technology for Disaster Risk Reduction and

Resilience<sup>8</sup> and policy brief on [Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction \(DRR\) and Resilience for Climate Action through Risk-informed Governance](#) emphasize that effective disaster and climate risk management depends on appropriate laws and policies, strong leadership, capable institutions, coordination mechanisms, clear responsibilities, adequate resources, monitoring and accountability across sectors and levels of government. These approaches align with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

According to the report on [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) for Climate Action](#)<sup>9</sup>, AI and other emerging technologies offer new opportunities to strengthen institutional capabilities and support a shift from reactive disaster management towards more anticipatory, preventive, and adaptive governance. Consequently, AI can help public institutions analyze large and diverse datasets, identify evolving risk patterns, improve hazard detection and forecasting, strengthen risk assessments, and support more timely decision-making. Nonetheless, technology alone cannot make institutions resilient. The report produced by the Early Warnings for All (EW4All) initiative on [Leveraging AI to Enhance Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems](#) provides evidence that the effectiveness of AI-enabled disaster risk reduction and climate action depends on the governance systems within which these technologies are deployed. High-quality and interoperable data, institutional coordination, appropriate infrastructure, transparency, human oversight, and accountable decision-making are essential to address challenges such as data gaps, algorithmic bias, limited connectivity, and uncertainty.

Recent international discussions reinforce the importance of bringing these governance and technological dimensions together. The [2025 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) highlighted the potential of AI, open data, and other transformative technologies to accelerate disaster risk reduction, while stressing the need to adapt technological solutions to local contexts, strengthen capacity and ensure equitable access, particularly for people most at risk. It also called for disaster risk reduction strategies to be institutionalized, adequately resourced and anchored in legal and regulatory frameworks, supported by multi-hazard, multi-sectoral and all-of-government approaches. The resulting [Geneva Call for DRR](#) further emphasized better risk data, ethical use of emerging technologies, integrated risk governance, and closer alignment between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

In this context, this Session will examine how governments are applying AI to strengthen institutional resilience and advance integrated approaches to disaster risk reduction and climate action. It will explore how AI-enabled tools can enhance risk identification, early warning, preparedness, anticipatory action and evidence-based decision-making, while

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<sup>8</sup> [UN DESA Curriculum on Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

<sup>9</sup> The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), July 2025.

considering the institutional capacities and governance arrangements required to translate technological innovation into effective public action.

The discussion will also consider how governments can integrate AI-generated risk insights into policies, planning, investment and operational decision-making across sectors and levels of government. This reflects the broader principle that risk management should be embedded within governance and development frameworks and supported through whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. In parallel, participants will discuss how to ensure that AI-enabled resilience strategies remain human-centered and responsive to local contexts, particularly for people in vulnerable situations.

### **Guiding Questions:**

1. How can governments translate anticipatory capabilities into stronger institutional resilience, including through AI-enabled disaster risk reduction and climate action?
2. What institutional capacities, governance arrangements and coordination mechanisms are needed to translate AI-generated risk information into timely, accountable and effective public action?
3. How can AI strengthen multi-hazard early warning systems, preparedness and anticipatory action while ensuring human oversight, data quality, interoperability and responsible use?
4. How can governments ensure that AI-enabled disaster risk reduction and climate action are inclusive, locally relevant and responsive to the needs of communities most at risk?
5. What forms of cooperation, capacity-building and partnerships can help developing countries strengthen institutional resilience and adopt AI-enabled solutions for disaster risk reduction and climate action?

### **Thematic Session 5: Bridging AI Divides through Strengthening Institutional Capacity, Data Governance, and Cooperation**

The benefits of artificial intelligence remain unevenly distributed, reflecting differences in institutional capacity, infrastructure, data availability, and technical expertise. [The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development \(UNCTAD\)](#) reports that 118 countries, most of them in the Global South, remain excluded from 19 key international forums shaping AI governance while fewer than one in three developing countries has adopted a national AI strategy. Within countries, barriers related to affordability, digital skills, language and accessibility can prevent people from benefiting from AI-enabled public services. Bridging these divides requires stronger institutional capacity, coherent data governance, and cooperation that enables developing countries to shape and benefit from AI transformation.

Recent UN commitments provide direction for addressing these disparities. The [Secretary-General's report](#) (A/80/817, August 2026) identifies the public sector capabilities needed to assess, procure, and govern AI alongside the infrastructure, data, and skills required for its use. The Global Digital Compact sets out commitments to support interoperable national data governance frameworks, protect privacy, and develop common data standards with affordable connectivity, digital literacy, accessible services and meaningful participation by people in vulnerable situations. [The Global Dialogue on AI Governance](#) highlights the importance of cooperation and capacity-building as ways to address disparities between countries.

Against this backdrop, this session will examine how institutional capacity, data governance and cooperation can enable developing countries to make informed technology choices and direct AI towards national development priorities. It will consider how governments can address gaps in data on underserved populations, including gender data gaps, improve service accessibility and language coverage, and involve people in vulnerable situations and other affected communities in designing AI-enabled public services.

This session will also consider how cooperation, peer learning and partnerships can align technical assistance with institutional needs, improve access to shared infrastructure and expertise, and sustain capabilities within public institutions. The discussion will examine how these efforts can expand access to public services, strengthen developing countries' participation in AI governance and advance the 2030 Agenda.

### **Guiding questions:**

1. Which institutional capacities should governments prioritize to assess, procure and govern AI in line with national development needs?
2. What legal and institutional arrangements are needed to enable data sharing across public institutions while ensuring data quality, privacy and accountability?
3. How can cooperation improve access to data, infrastructure and expertise while building sustained capacity within public institutions?
4. How can public institutions identify who is being excluded from AI-enabled public services and involve those groups in improving service design?
5. What practical measures can strengthen developing countries' participation and influence in AI governance and standard-setting?

## **LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIP FORUM**

### **AI and Local Governance: Empowering Local Governments through Institutional Capacity, Service Delivery Innovation and Cooperation**

Local governments are where many of the practical implications of AI transformation will be experienced most directly, particularly in the delivery of public services and engagement

with communities. When applied responsibly, AI can support local planning and decision-making, improve the allocation of resources, help anticipate emerging risks and enable more responsive, people-centred services. At the same time, the benefits of AI will depend on whether local governments have the institutional capacity, skills, data and resources needed to use these technologies effectively in their own contexts.

This forum will explore how local governments can strengthen their capacity to adopt and govern AI while improving service delivery and responding to the needs of their communities. Particular attention will be given to how local authorities can use data and AI to support better decision-making without widening existing inequalities or leaving vulnerable and underserved groups behind.

The discussion will also consider how national governments can better support local implementation through policies, financing and capacity development adapted to local needs. It will highlight the value of national-to-local and city-to-city cooperation in sharing practical experience, adapting successful approaches and helping local governments translate broader commitments on AI governance and digital transformation into tangible improvements in public services and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Guiding questions:**

1. What are the most promising ways AI is improving local government service delivery and decision-making, and what lessons can be drawn from these experiences?
2. What institutional and regulatory reforms are needed to enable local governments to adopt AI responsibly while preserving public trust and accountability?
3. How can local governments ensure that the benefits of AI reach all communities, including vulnerable and underserved groups, while avoiding the risk of widening existing inequalities and digital divides?
4. How can national governments better support local governments to ensure equitable and safe AI adoption?
5. How can national-to-local and city-to-city cooperation help local governments share experience, close capacity gaps and adapt successful approaches to their own contexts?

## **YOUTH SESSION**

### **Youth, AI and Meaningful Participation in Public Decision-Making**

Young people are important partners in building inclusive, responsive and future-ready public institutions. The United Nations has emphasized that meaningful youth engagement should extend beyond consultation and enable young people to participate in policymaking and decision-making processes. The Secretary-General's Policy Brief on [Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-making Processes](#) highlights the need to strengthen youth participation at all levels and develop mechanisms that are more diverse, representative and effective.

Building on the outcomes of the [10th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation](#), the session will explore how artificial intelligence, digital transformation and innovative governance approaches can create new opportunities for meaningful youth participation. It will consider practical mechanisms for strengthening young people's access to decision-making spaces, supporting youth-led innovation and creating more inclusive platforms for collaboration between young people and public institutions. In this context, the UN Youth Office's [Core Principles for Meaningful Youth Participation](#) provide a useful framework for considering how participation can be made more inclusive, accessible, representative and accountable.

The discussion will focus on how young people can contribute throughout the policy cycle, from agenda-setting and policy design to implementation, monitoring and accountability. It will consider how young people can contribute as partners and co-creators, and how their perspectives can be better reflected in public policies and services. The session will connect youth perspectives to the Symposium's broader discussions on institutional capabilities, innovation and responsible AI transformation in public institutions. The session will provide an opportunity for youth representatives, policymakers and other stakeholders to exchange practical experiences and identify approaches that can strengthen institutional responsiveness and youth participation.

## **Guiding Questions**

1. How can governments strengthen youth participation in public governance and move beyond consultation towards more meaningful engagement?
2. How can digital tools and AI create new opportunities for meaningful youth participation while ensuring that digital divides do not deepen existing inequalities?
3. How can public institutions better support youth-led innovation and integrate young people's ideas and solutions into policymaking and public service delivery?
4. What institutional mechanisms can help build and sustain partnerships between young people and public institutions across the policy cycle, from agenda-setting and policy design to implementation and accountability?

## **Learning Labs**

### **Learning Lab 1: Building Institutional AI Readiness**

Building directly on Thematic Session 1, this practical Learning Lab will give participants an opportunity to apply the discussion on public administration readiness to their own institutional contexts. Rather than revisiting the broader concepts covered in the thematic session, the Lab will focus on assessing where institutions currently stand and identifying the most immediate gaps that may affect responsible and effective AI adoption.

Working in country or institutional groups, participants will examine key dimensions of readiness discussed in Thematic Session 1, including leadership and governance arrangements, coordination, data readiness, workforce capabilities, institutional processes and safeguards. They will use these dimensions to reflect on their own strengths and constraints, identify priority areas for improvement and consider what changes may be needed to move from experimentation towards more sustained implementation.

The Lab will conclude with the development of a short institutional action roadmap, highlighting priority actions that could be taken in the near term and areas where peer learning or regional cooperation could add value.

## **Learning Lab 2: Quantum Computing - Preparing Public Institutions for the Next Technological Frontier**

Quantum computing is emerging as a potentially transformative technology that could significantly expand the ability to solve certain classes of complex problems beyond the reach of classical computing. By harnessing the principles of quantum mechanics, quantum computers may enable major advances in areas such as climate and environmental modelling, scientific discovery, optimization, materials science, health research, secure communications and complex systems analysis. The [United Nations Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board](#) has highlighted quantum computing's potential to contribute to sustainable development while also warning that uneven access to quantum capabilities could create a new "quantum divide," exacerbating existing inequalities in scientific, technological and economic development.

At the same time, quantum computing presents important governance, security and institutional challenges that require early attention from governments. While the technology remains at a relatively early stage and many applications are not yet scalable, recent scientific and technological breakthroughs have accelerated expectations regarding its future development. Of particular concern is the potential impact of quantum computing on current encryption systems and cybersecurity architectures, raising questions about the long-term protection of government data, critical infrastructure and digital public services. The Scientific Advisory Board emphasizes that proactive international cooperation, governance frameworks and capacity-building will be essential to ensure that the benefits of quantum technologies are shared equitably and that associated risks are managed responsibly.

The [United Nations General Assembly's proclamation of 2025 as the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology](#) recognized the growing importance of quantum technologies and the need to promote global awareness, scientific cooperation and inclusive capacity development.

Designed primarily as a learning session, this discussion will provide participants with a practical understanding of quantum computing and its potential implications for public administration. It will explore what governments need to do today to strengthen institutional readiness, including building technological literacy, strategic foresight capacities, cybersecurity preparedness, skills development and partnerships with academia, research institutions and the private sector. The session will encourage participants to consider how public institutions can proactively assess emerging opportunities and risks, prepare for future technological disruption and ensure that quantum technologies, as they mature, support inclusive, secure and sustainable development outcomes.

## **VI. EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The Regional Symposium is expected to generate practical insights and policy recommendations, consolidated into an outcome document to support Member States in strengthening public institutions and accelerating action towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The expected outcomes include:

- Improved understanding of emerging AI governance issues and their implications for public administration and responsible AI adoption in Asia and the Pacific.
- Greater understanding of the institutional capacities and governance arrangements needed for responsible AI use, including coordination, data governance, workforce capabilities, accountability and human oversight.
- Practical approaches identified to address AI and digital divides, strengthen inclusion and participation, and support developing countries in shaping and benefiting from AI transformation.
- Increased understanding of how anticipatory governance, AI and emerging technologies can contribute to more agile and resilient public institutions, including in disaster risk reduction and climate action.
- Institutional action roadmaps developed through Learning Lab 1, identifying steps for strengthening AI readiness at the country or institutional level.
- Stronger regional peer learning, cooperation and partnerships, including national-to-local and city-to-city cooperation and more meaningful youth participation in public decision-making.

## VII. TARGET AUDIENCE AND BENEFICIARIES

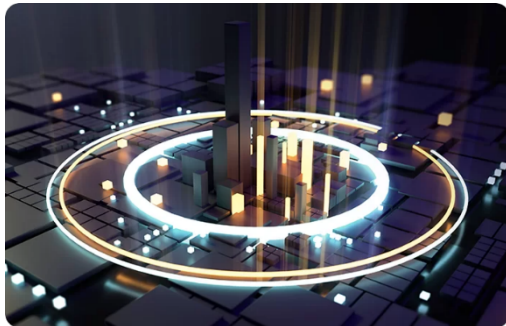
The Regional Symposium will primarily bring together government representatives from Asia and the Pacific, while also providing opportunities for participation from other regions, including African countries, particularly in East Africa.

Participants will include government officials, in particular representatives from Prime Minister's Offices and ministries and agencies responsible for public administration, public service management, planning, ICT, innovation, disaster risk reduction and other relevant areas. Participants will also include representatives of local governments, schools of public administration, youth representatives, the private sector, civil society organizations, academia and UN entities.

## VIII. FIELD VISITS

A guided field visit will be arranged for registered participants to explore the **Yonsei University Institute of Quantum Information Technology**, **IFEZ Promotion center**, the **National Museum of World Writing Systems** and to enjoy a scenic boat ride in **Songdo Central Park**.

### Yonsei University Institute of Quantum Information Technology



Yonsei University's Institute of Quantum Information Technology conducts research and promotes innovation in areas including quantum computing and quantum communication. This visit will provide participants with an opportunity to learn about current developments in quantum technologies, research collaboration and their potential future applications.

### Incheon Free Economic Zone Promotion Center



**IFEZ Promotion Center**, officially opened on March 24, 2015, presents the history, development and current initiatives of the IFEZ through digital media and three-dimensional spatial information technologies. The visit will provide participants with a view of Songdo International City and the West Sea through the 360-degree glass windows.

## The National Museum of World Writing Systems

The National Museum of World Writing Systems promotes understanding of the diversity and development of writing systems across cultures. The permanent exhibition “Great Journey of Literature and Civilization” sheds light on various writing traditions such as the wedge letters, Egyptian letters, and Hangeul from the perspective of comparative culture. In addition, participants can experience the world's writing culture through various experiences and exhibitions.



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## The Songdo Central Park (Water Taxi Riding)



The Songdo Central Park is an urban park in Songdo International City, built around a seawater canal and surrounded by green spaces and high-rise buildings. Along the waterway, spaces tailored to themes such as walking gardens, grassland, terrace gardens, and hanok villages are created, and exotic sculptures and artworks appear one after another along the long trail. At the boat houses located in the east and west, you can board a water taxi and enjoy the scenery of the Incheon Bridge and the Songdo International City. The scenery from the water taxi is particularly nice during autumn with colorful leaves.

## IX.CO-ORGANIZERS

The Regional Symposium will be co-organized by UN DESA and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Government of the Republic of Korea and Incheon Metropolitan City.

### United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

Rooted in the United Nations Charter and guided by the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)<sup>10</sup> supports the development pillar of the United Nations and brings the global community together to work towards common solutions to the world's most pressing

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/about/who-we-are.html>

problems. It helps countries translate their global commitments into national action in the economic, social, and environmental spheres.

UN DESA is a pioneer of sustainable development and the home of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where each goal finds its space and where all stakeholders can play their part to leave no one behind. It is a leading analytical voice in promoting inclusion, reducing inequalities, and eradicating poverty, and a champion for tearing down the barriers that keep people in poverty.

UN DESA helps countries make informed decisions by providing a wealth of information through our publications and databases and through its support for deliberations at the United Nations General Assembly, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Commissions, Forums, and other bodies. Through this work, UN DESA advances sustainable development for all.

### **The Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Government of the Republic of Korea**

The Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) is responsible for general affairs of the State Council, the promulgation of Acts and subordinate statutes and treaties, government organization and a prescribed number of public officials, awards and decorations, government innovation, administrative efficiency, e-government, personal information protection, management of government buildings and support for elections and referendums.

Furthermore, MOIS actively promotes local autonomy and decentralization by supporting business, finance, and taxation of local governments and mediating disputes among local governments. In addition, MOIS takes charge of establishing, supervising, and adjusting policies related to safety and disaster management such as emergency countermeasures, civil defence, and disaster prevention.

### **Incheon Metropolitan City**

Located on the West Sea (Yellow Sea) of the Republic of Korea, Incheon is home to a large-scale seaport and Free Economic Zone, and is rich in tourism resources. It is growing by leaps and bounds based on its ability to nurture various industries. The population of Incheon exceeded three million in 2026 making it the third-most-populous city in Korea. At 1,062 km<sup>2</sup> Incheon also has the largest land area of any metropolitan city in Korea.

Having successfully hosted the World Education Forum in 2015, Incheon is a city where everyone wants to live for its educational and living conditions. Four globally renowned foreign universities and eight local colleges have their campus in the city, and the city government provides various support programs for foreigners to settle and the number of foreign residents in Songdo now exceeds 2,000.

Incheon stands out as a global city where many international organizations are based. A total of 15 international bodies are based in Incheon, including the Green Climate Fund

Secretariat, World Bank Group Korea Office, and nine United Nations organizations. With the second expansion phase of the Songdo Convensia convention center completed, the city of Incheon is also emerging as a new hub for Meetings Incentives Conferences and Exhibition (MICE) industry.

## **X. CONTACT INFORMATION**

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