G20
SAUDI ARABIA 2020

We, the G20 Ministers responsible for the digital economy, emphasize the promising role of digital technologies and relevant digital policies to strengthen and accelerate our collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to enhance our ability to prevent and mitigate future crises. We will work together to deliver on the commitment to leverage digital technologies made at the G20 Leaders' Extraordinary Summit on March 26.

1. Communication infrastructure and network connectivity

Given the unprecedented near-term importance of access to Internet connectivity, we will work together on an urgent basis with the private sector and business entities, in particular with telecommunications and Internet service providers, and civil society, to maximize inclusive, secure, and affordable connectivity, especially in underserved areas and for vulnerable people. In addition, we underscore the importance of keeping telecommunication networks and digital infrastructure, in particular in health provider and research environments, robust, secure, accessible, and resilient. Furthermore, digital capacities should be expanded, in particular by increasing broadband connectivity using fixed, mobile, and satellite technologies and by exploring non-traditional means of connectivity, such as community networks. We recognize the importance of working with telecommunication providers to ensure the proper functioning of these critical networks, particularly in times of crises.
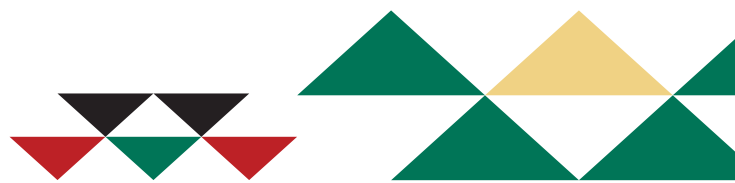
2. Exchange of data in a secure manner

Acknowledging the uncertainty associated with COVID-19 and the power of data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to accelerate pattern recognition and enable evidence-based policy-making, we encourage collaboration to collect, pool, process, and share reliable and accurate non-personal information that can contribute to the monitoring, understanding, and prevention of the further spread of COVID-19 as well as other infectious diseases. COVID-19-related data should be collected and processed in an ethical, transparent, safe, interoperable, and secure manner that protects the privacy and data security of individuals, in line with the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005, and national laws and regulations. We acknowledge the need to ensure that potential biases in the data or algorithms are appropriately addressed.

3. Research and development of digital technologies for health

We recognize the potential of digital technologies, including AI, to contribute to the fight against and prevention of pandemics by accelerating development of potential diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines, playing a critical role in diagnosis, supporting health professionals, monitoring of patients' vital signs remotely or in the hospital, facilitating remote care through virtual care and telemedicine, optimizing hospital logistics and operations, and providing information to the public via chatbots. We commit to use all digital means at our disposal, including the high-performance computing capacities available to us, to accelerate progress in developing, manufacturing, and deploying drug therapies and vaccines. We welcome increased investment in AI research and the expanded use of diverse computing infrastructures, including high-performance and cloud computing applications, to realize this vast potential. We support that the research and deployment of digital health technologies are evidence-based and human-centric, including respecting privacy. We support research on technologies to help individuals, notably health workers, families, and communities, and to support outbreak responses.

4. Use of digital technologies and solutions

Given the extreme importance and urgency of slowing down the spread of COVID-19, we will endeavor to work collaboratively to leverage digital technologies and solutions to enable individuals

and firms to continue to participate in the economy. We support the evidence-based, trustworthy, and human-centric deployment of digital technologies and solutions and any resulting policies, in a manner that respects individuals' privacy, security, and human rights.

We will further promote digital work and the development of basic digital skills in companies, public institutions, schools, and universities. We encourage the expanded and secure use of tools that facilitate remote working and learning, and thereby support the continuity of economic and social activity as much as possible in a pandemic.

We will encourage and collaborate with the research community, private sector, and business entities to promote the use of digital technologies and solutions for the development and manufacturing of critical medical equipment and supplies (including disinfectants, Personal Protective Equipment, and ventilators) to fight COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

5. Secure and trusted online environment

Given the increased digital vulnerability in the context of a pandemic, we will endeavor to share best practices within existing national processes to enable timely national response to counteract malicious cyber activities that present material risks to the security of the digital economy and the individuals and businesses of which it consists. We encourage online platforms as well as other businesses and organizations to continue to share trustworthy information and prevent disinformation, hoaxes, and online scams, while respecting freedom of expression. In addition, we will work to ensure that reliable official crisis communication over digital channels is available.

6. Business resilience

To support and strengthen the resilience of businesses, in particular MSMEs, women, and young entrepreneurs, and help them overcome digital divides, we note the importance of access to capital and the inclusive uptake of more sophisticated digital technologies. We encourage MSMEs to leverage digital technologies and solutions in carrying out production, business activities, and international trade cooperation, so as to maintain the stability of global supply chains. In parallel, we encourage the transition to digitalized production systems, e-commerce, digital supply of services, e-invoicing, and e-payments, and other services, as well as smart working solutions, including remote working, and innovative new business models. To enable this acceleration to digital business models, the G20 Saudi Presidency will work with stakeholders and International Organizations to develop a menu of policy options that will serve as a knowledge asset for governments of G20 countries and beyond.

7. Conclusions and way forward

To achieve the urgent progress in these areas that the current crisis demands, we encourage the sharing among G20 countries of digital economy policy interventions, practices, lessons learned, and solutions in response to COVID-19. This will help us identify critical common challenges, proven policy interventions and implementation practices to help G20 countries and beyond, in particular developing countries and regions, to mitigate the immediate challenges of COVID-19 and those that may emerge in the future. This present crisis carries with it an opportunity for governments to encourage the use of our most advanced technologies in order to prevent, mitigate, treat, and defeat future pandemics, and to facilitate the development of digital innovations that will enable a full economic recovery. The Digital Economy Task Force will encourage the dissemination of current and emerging digital tools for fighting this pandemic. Taking stock of and building on this experience, Italy is open to support and continue dialogue on the application of advanced technologies to fight pandemics in the upcoming G20 Presidency.