International Conference on Digital Diplomacy

Bali Message on International Cooperation in Digital Diplomacy
"Unmasking Digital Diplomacy in the New Normal"
Bali, 16 November 2021

We, the representatives of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Chile, China, Fiji, Finland, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Viet Nam, gathered to attend International Conference on Digital Diplomacy, held in hybrid platform virtually in Bali on 16 November 2021.

We note that digital technologies are rapidly transforming society, simultaneously allowing for unprecedented advances in the human condition and giving rise to profound new challenges, as reflected in the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation (2019)[1] and the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (2020).[2]

We commend the 2019 Regional Conference on Digital Diplomacy (RCDD) hosted by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta, which has set the standard as the first conference on digital diplomacy in the Asia Pacific region.

We welcome the implementation of the Plan of Action, as set out in the Jakarta Message on Regional Cooperation in Digital Diplomacy, to explore the possibility of establishing the regional network on digital diplomacy.

We share the view that digital technologies have aided the process of policymaking and policy implementation, notably foreign policy and economic collaboration, which have been impeded by limitations, restrictions, and unpredictability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are also cognisant that digital technologies have the capability to further influence the perception of the general public and the policymaking process and therefore would play a critical role in policymaking foundations in the near future.

We recognise the significant transformation of digital diplomacy in safeguarding our common interests and as a tool for economic cooperation, especially amid the rapid changes and adaptation in the way people conduct their daily lives due to the global pandemic.

We acknowledge the presence of digital diplomacy challenges as reflected, among others, in the gap of digital connectivity, the lack of global governance, the risk of digital fragmentation, and the need for more people-centred policy and multi-stakeholder cooperation.

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[1] https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/DigitalCooperation-report-for%20web.pdf
[2] https://undocs.org/en/A/74/821

We intend to expand and broaden the exchange of ideas, expertise, and experiences in digital diplomacy to explore future cooperation opportunities and ensure digital inclusion, including for women, children, older people and people with disabilities, and promote the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We will advance the Plan of Actions outlined in the 2019 Jakarta Message and voluntarily implement Five Key Focus Areas to promote innovative, inclusive and sustainable growth while also bridging the digital divide among countries.

FIVE KEY FOCUS AREAS:

1. Government Policy Frameworks to Support Digital Diplomacy

    Many digital challenges are currently addressed in silos, through agencies or policies. Efforts to increase the use of digital tools in diplomacy and promote more holistic approaches, interdisciplinary and multisectoral perspectives may be utilized by:
    ● Developing holistic government policy frameworks that support digital diplomacy and all areas of importance and interest;
    ● Providing a mechanism for constant engagement and cooperation among public and private stakeholders, such as the academe, scientific community, and businesses involved in digital technologies, towards the advancement of digital diplomacy;
    ● Promoting political, social, and economic cooperation through digital platforms;
    ● Addressing emerging foreign policy issues, including cybersecurity, privacy, data governance, and cybercrimes;
    ● Enhancing the implementation of existing legal frameworks to increase confidence, security and safety of the digital system; and
    ● Placing human rights perspective at regulatory frameworks and legislation on the development and use of digital technologies.

2. Crisis Management Through Digital Diplomacy

    Challenges from crises such as natural disasters, health emergencies, and anthropogenic hazards, are often exacerbated among others by lack of information and preventive anticipatory strategy, technological constraints, inadequate infrastructure, complicated bureaucracy, as well as disinformation and misinformation. To leverage efforts in addressing crises through digital diplomacy, the following actions are needed:
    ● Sharing information to improve the understanding of disaster risk;
    ● Identifying and countering disinformation and misinformation that impacts diplomacy in the event of crises or protecting citizens abroad;
    ● Encouraging cooperation involving relevant institutions from both public and private sectors;
    ● Enhancing the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in crisis management; and
    ● Using digital technologies to help manage and prevent conflicts, promote and maintain peace, stability and security at the national, regional and global levels, and to enhance understanding between groups in society or among countries.

3.   <u>Data Management to Support Digital Diplomacy</u>

Data management in digital diplomacy foresees the impact and influence of data used by being situated at the intersection of data, governance, and social norms. Big data and industry 4.0 technologies should be managed effectively and prudently by:
- Enhancing the use of digital technology for services delivery of facilities such as visas, passports, healthcare, and transportation that is supported by adequate digital infrastructure connectivity;
- Building trust between countries in managing data whilst also reinforced by upholding ethical dimensions;
- Promoting the development of knowledge and responsible attitudes for using ICT through media and information literacy to fight infodemic;[3]
- Placing human rights' perspective on regulatory frameworks and legislation on the development and use of digital technologies; and
- Promoting multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation towards the design of global policies and standards to uphold information security and cybersecurity.

4.   <u>Innovations to Support SMEs</u>

Policies should be promoted to support SMEs that enable them to innovate, enhance productivity, improve competitiveness, address challenges in accessing new markets, and reap the full economic benefits of digital technology by:
- Adopting technologies that support small businesses;
- Creating an enabling environment for the digital transformation of SMEs;
- Leveraging public-private partnership to build SMEs' productivity and resiliency; and
- Assuring that all SMEs should have equitable access to available opportunities in the digital economy.

5.   <u>Capacity Building and Digital Inclusion</u>

Women, children, older people, people with disabilities, and the marginalised sector in every country should be given capacity building opportunities on information technology, and access to the digital economy by:
- Enhancing the use of enabling technologies for digital inclusion;
- Designing digital frameworks to empower women and the marginalised sectors;
- Mainstreaming digital literacy programs;
- Providing training on digital skills to build workforce capacity;
- Narrowing the digital divide among countries through technological development and transfer between developed and developing countries; and
- Encouraging the younger generation to pursue digital start-ups in various areas.

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[3] https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic#tab=tab_1