The Charter for Digital Public Goods

Dated September 29, 2022

Vision

The Sustainable Development Goals can only be attained by 2030 through better leveraging the potential of digital technologies, while also safeguarding against their risks. In support of the ambitious digital cooperation agenda championed by the UN Secretary-General through his [Roadmap for Digital Cooperation](#) and [Our Common Agenda](#), we support the need for a Digital Public Goods Charter (DPG Charter).

Through the DPG Charter we intend to advance access to [digital public goods](#) so that countries can build the foundational digital public infrastructure and data systems needed to provide safe, trustworthy and inclusive public and private services at scale, and to collaboratively address urgent global challenges such as hunger, pandemics and climate change.

To this end, we acknowledge:
1. The vital role of relevant, well-designed, and secure open source technologies (digital public goods) that enable countries to build transformative digital public infrastructure, solutions and services that meet their contextual needs, while also enabling collaboration and cooperation across countries;
2. The need for countries to have regulatory frameworks and capabilities in place to protect privacy and other important human rights when digital solutions are planned, implemented, and operated;
3. The need for countries to have sufficient public, private and civil society capacity– including through the training of local talent–to implement, integrate, maintain and own their digital public infrastructure; and
4. The need for the public and private sector to invest sufficient and sustainable funding for digital public goods and digital public infrastructure.

Consistent with this vision, we recognize that as a diverse group of stakeholders the ways each of us can most effectively contribute will vary. We will therefore work according to our abilities, identifying and developing the most relevant pledges for each of us. We are all committed to collaborating through this process to share progress on our pledges towards an overall monitoring and coordination framework, recognizing that our diverse contributions towards a shared vision is what will enable us to succeed.

Commitment framework
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We understand that fulfilling [this commitment](#) involves challenging the status quo by increasing the number and viability of high-quality, effective interoperable standards and implementations of open-source solutions that help countries avoid the risk of vendor lock-in and help countries invest in their local digital workforces. Digital public goods can be reused across the globe, adapted for unique contexts, and improved with each new iteration. This ensures that financial resources are used to improve, rather than to recreate. To make this a reality, we need to overcome existing barriers to designing, deploying, and governing open source solutions across sectors, geographies, and institutions; build and maintain not only products, but communities; and ask how foundational digital technologies can drive not only efficiency, but actively empower people, societies, and economies.

Furthermore, there is work to do to ensure that shared solutions, once implemented, operate effectively within each context to drive real benefits for countries and communities. To this end, the endorsers of this document intend to work together to ensure that governments can choose to use digital public goods to deploy and deliver digital and data solutions that enable society-wide functions and services (digital public infrastructure), when these solutions meet their country's specific needs. Moreover, we are committed to strengthening the supporting ecosystem for digital public infrastructure so that there are a robust set of institutions working to ensure that these foundational systems ultimately serve to empower people, rather than to suppress them.

While each endorser brings a different set of skills and perspectives, through this Charter we acknowledge that our individual actions, aligned together, have greater impact than they would if we worked in isolation. To ignite this effort, we plan to align our commitments supporting digital public goods and digital public infrastructure to contribute to five outcomes, each of which is critical to realizing our joint vision of safe, secure, inclusive, open, reliable, and trusted digital public infrastructure:

1. *Products:* There is a diverse set of discoverable, sustainably financed, effectively maintained digital public goods using interoperable standards, supported by qualified vendors and contributions from implementers, that effectively meet the needs of countries to build and maintain their digital public infrastructure;
2. *Capacity:* Governments and local private sector actors are empowered and able to locally select, plan, regulate, manage, and evolve their digital public infrastructure in line with national strategies;
3. *Implementation:* Countries have sufficient funding, technical capacity, strategies, and processes in place to build and scale end-to-end digital public infrastructure that addresses pressing national needs and empowers people, organizations, businesses, and civil society;

4. *Safeguards and Inclusion:* Countries and civil society implement and enforce policy, regulations, and governance frameworks, as well as technical and process-oriented measures to mitigate risks and maximize benefits of digital public infrastructure for all people;

5. *Extended Ecosystem:* Effective institutions, such as associations, think tanks, schools, universities, and accelerators, are funded and have capacity and authority to coordinate, safeguard, and advance digital public infrastructure and relevant digital public goods.

Through consultations with at least 100 people working in over 30 countries and 67 organizations across government, private sector, foundations, civil society, and international organizations, we have increased our understanding of what is needed to achieve these outcomes.[1] The high-level results of these consultations are listed below, and intend to help inspire commitments from endorsers that will advance our joint vision.

The list below categorizes commitments by three broad types: those that 1) provide *finance* in support of this agenda, 2) those that involve *designing*, *sharing*, and *deploying* digital public good platforms and 3) those that focus on increasing collective knowledge and inspiring action by committing to *learn* and *advocate*.[2] Under each action type, there is an *illustrative* list of specific challenges that should be addressed to achieve the relevant outcome.

This simplified list is not intended to imply or call for simple solutions. Establishing safe, inclusive, open, and trusted digital public infrastructure is a complex problem in need of complex solutions. Therefore, we stress that Charter endorsers, when developing a commitment, should use this only as a starting point. Effective commitments can cut across the different outcomes and commitment types, build on the strengths of the endorsing entity, and leverage new partnerships not yet imagined.

1. *Finance:* Predictable and coordinated investment is critical to driving sustainability, incentivizing reuse of digital public goods, and allowing transnational scaling of secure and open solutions. To this end, financing commitments may take the form of:

   - *Products:* Sustainable funding for digital public good core products which includes operations, contributor communities, and maintenance, in addition to deployments; support for transitioning existing government systems to digital public goods for other countries to use; creation of new sources of sustainable financing including joint funds; improved coordination across donors as well as other sources of capital;

   - *Capacity:* Support for intra-national capacity building and the fostering of active and vibrant developer communities; financing to increase the

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[1] The full list of those consulted is available here.

[2] This framework is also available in table format here.

pool of locally available talent that has the skills and awareness to support and maintain digital public goods and digital public infrastructure;

- *Implementation:* Restructuring of grantmaking and tender processes to incentivize use of open tools, reuse of existing systems, and the long-term engagement required to establish community trust; financing for end-to-end digital public infrastructure implementation that includes local user testing and adaptation to those segments of the population who are hardest to reach;
- *Safeguards and Inclusion:* Financing for digital literacy across the educational continuum, from primary school through to workforce development; and,
- *Ecosystem:* Financing for foundations, communities, and/or networks that provide common services that are shared across digital public goods and/or systems integrators such as human resources and accounting; support for institutionalized capacity such as standard bodies, research hubs, centers of excellence, universities, and vocational training programs.

0. *Design, Share, and Deploy:* The benefits of digital public goods are most fully realized through sharing and reuse of open-source software and standards. Those countries who have already implemented digital public infrastructure platforms can open these platforms for others to deploy, while the broader ecosystem can design new features that support specific communities. To this end, commitments of this type may address:

- *Products:* Systematic, consistent upstream contribution on voluntary and mutually agreed terms of code, standards, staff, and experience from governments and their partners who are implementing digital public goods to core projects; improved discovery and awareness of digital public goods by submitting existing solutions to registries and catalogs; transformation of custom-built solutions, already successfully implemented, into digital public goods for others to reuse and contextualize;
- *Capacity:* Adjustment of national and multilateral tender guidelines and procurements rules to enable the participation of digital public goods; adoption of a consistent open source policy at the country or company level; development of non-traditional pricing and financing models better suited to open source solutions;
- *Implementation:* Support for systems integrators to improve interoperability between existing systems (proprietary or custom-built) and digital public goods on voluntary and mutually agreed terms; collect, analyze, and prioritize end-user experience in order to inform ongoing improvements and investments;
- *Safeguards and Inclusion:* Updating national, regional, and local laws; strengthen implementation and enforcement of existing laws and standards; translation of in-demand digital public goods into

additional languages; adaptation of interfaces to specific needs based on human-centered research to better reach women, those with disabilities, historically marginalized populations, and others; support for innovative and effective mechanisms for end users to manage their personal data and provide truly informed consent;

- *Ecosystem:* Engagement across a broad supporting ecosystem, including start-ups, universities, litigators, journalists, standards bodies, trade associations, user-groups, etc;

0. *Learn and Advocate*: There is no one path to building safe, inclusive, open, and trusted digital public infrastructure; much of our understanding of "what works" is frequently changing and evolving as technology changes and evolves. Thus, it is necessary to generate new evidence, disseminate this knowledge, and advocate to drive alignment on recognized, effective approaches. To this end, commitments of this type may address:

- *Products:* Testing of new business and governance models for core products; documentation and sharing of specific attributes of digital public goods and their benefits (for example, which attributes are most crucial to an open ecosystem, and which are most critical for lowering implementation costs);
- *Capacity:* Technical assistance for engaging effectively with technology vendors and services providers; training and capacity building for local ownership and ability for governments to self-manage DPG implementations; creation and dissemination of model regulatory, legal, and policy frameworks;
- *Implementation:* Documentation and dissemination of return on investment (ROI) for digital public goods versus other options; documentation of heuristic timelines and numbers for implementation; support for ongoing peer learning between governments;
- *Safeguards and Inclusion:* Increased understanding of how to mitigate risks associated with storing and sharing of personal data while maintaining the benefits of digital public infrastructure;
- *Ecosystem:* Establishment of networks of in- and intra-country product managers to facilitate cross-sector coordination; bridging the gap between systems integrators and governments through engagement and capacity building.

By endorsing this document, we affirm the need to work with our partners to ensure that these categories and examples inspire new and relevant commitments not yet imagined. We also declare our intention to work, in concert with the rest of the digital ecosystem, to help promote a future where digital public goods and digital public infrastructure drive growth, resilience, and empowerment for people and society.