

Digital for Sustainable Development (D4SD) UNGA80 High-Level Side-Event

“Advancing SDGs Agenda in the Arab Region and Africa Through Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence”

Launch of the Morocco Digital for Sustainable Development Hub, a Regional Partnership for Inclusive Digital Transformation in the Arab States and Africa

Convened by the Kingdom of Morocco and the United Nations Development Programme

Date: Friday 26 September 2025

Time: 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Location: United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room: CR5

The UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) together with the Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform within the Government of Morocco and key digital stakeholders, will host a high-level side event during the 2025 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) high level week, to officially launch the Morocco Digital for Sustainable Development (D4SD) Hub under Morocco’s leadership. The D4SD initiative is a regional platform that supports countries in the Arab Region and Africa in advancing the SDGs Agenda by leveraging digital transformation, including digitalization and artificial intelligence, through joint programming, policy alignment, and knowledge exchange. This initiative is anchored in Morocco’s Digital 2030 Strategy and reflects its ambition to catalyze South-South and triangular digital cooperation across the Arab and African regions.

Context

Digital transformation is reshaping economies and societies across the Arab and African regions, yet, systemic challenges continue to limit its inclusive and sustainable impact. High costs of AI infrastructure fragmented digital public systems, talent shortages, and uncoordinated policy frameworks hinder the ability of governments to scale digital solutions, foster innovation, and deliver quality public services. Without coordinated support, the region risks deepening digital divides and missing key opportunities to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As part of its Digital The establishment of D4SD Hub in Morocco is therefore crucial, as it is positioned to serve as a pivotal platform to contribute significantly to bridging these identified gaps and advancing inclusive digital progress in the region.

Led by the Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform within the Government of Morocco, the D4SD hub will catalyze equitable, trusted, and scalable digital transformation by leveraging Morocco’s role as a digital leader and convener as well as D4SD partners, while



supporting countries through tailored advisory services, innovation pilots, policy development, and capacity-building. The initiative will focus on establishing the Hub and demonstrating early results through flagship interventions in AI adoption and sectoral integration in health and education. Furthermore, the hub will engage with partners, such as governments, private sector, digital society and others to scale support across five strategic pillars: AI governance, digital public infrastructure, regulatory harmonization, digital talent development, and broader sectoral digital integration.

Through this digital cooperation initiative, the hub aims to deliver impactful outcomes in countries and serving as a regional anchor and knowledge center, supporting Arab and African countries to unlock digital dividends and drive inclusive digital development.

Objectives and strategic priorities of the D4SD Morocco hub

The D4SD hub aims to address the key challenges of digital transformation and scaling digital and AI ecosystems in the region, directly contributing to the success of Morocco's "Digital Morocco 2030" strategy. The D4SD Hub will employ a multi-pronged strategy centered on five overarching approaches:

- **Ecosystem Building & Convening:** The Hub will act as a neutral convener and enabler across sectors to co-create inclusive digital and AI ecosystems, with a focus on inclusive data governance and transparent citizen-centered digital public services.
- **Catalytic Support for Digital Transformation:** The Hub will provide tailored Advisory and Implementation support to Arab and African countries in designing and implementing national digital strategies and initiatives grounded in the principles of equity, resilience, and SDG integration, including technical assistance, policy advisory, and capacity-building efforts - particularly in e-governance, DPI, digital service delivery, and data governance – while promoting open-source tools, digital public goods, and low-tech solutions to empower underserved communities and countries.
- **Innovation Acceleration and Scaling:** The Hub will identify, support, and scale AI-powered and digital innovations that address critical development priorities - including health, education, climate resilience, and inclusive governance. Through public-private partnerships (PPPs), regulatory sandboxes, and proof of concept (PoC) pilots, it will promote citizen-centric digital services and accelerate responsible, data-driven, locally rooted innovation aligned with national goals and the SDGs.
- **Strategic Partnership Development and Resource Mobilization:** The Hub will strengthen and expand a diverse partnership network across governments, private sector, development agencies, academia, and civil society to drive regional digital transformation. By promoting



scalable public-private partnerships and incentivizing private sector engagement, It aims to unlock investment, accelerate innovation diffusion, promote data-sharing standards, and build trusted, interoperable digital ecosystems that support cross-border collaboration and inclusive access to digital services.

- **Knowledge Generation and Dissemination:** The Hub will serve as a regional knowledge center, sharing cutting-edge insights, research, and best practices on AI, DPI, digital inclusion, and e-governance to support evidence-based policymaking and public sector innovation. It will leverage digital platforms, toolkits, and training programs, to promote responsible use of data that enhances service delivery, social equity, and progress toward the SDGs.

To address the challenges of Arab and African countries in terms of digital transformation, the D4SD Hub will serve as a platform for Arab and African countries to co-create, pilot, and scale digital solutions across four pillars and sectoral verticals:

- **Artificial Intelligence and Data Science** - Accelerate AI Adoption and emerging technologies in public services by boosting readiness, fostering innovation and developing AI infrastructure through regional collaboration and public-private partnerships.
- **Digital Talent (Education)** - Bridge the digital skills gap and strengthen public sector capacity through accessible training, targeted upskilling, and inclusive talent development.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure** - Advance cross-border digital public infrastructure (DPI) and e-governance by piloting scalable solutions and aligning policies through regional collaboration.
- **Policy and Regulation** - Strengthen regional digital governance by advancing ethical AI, harmonized data and DPI regulations, and future-ready policies, enabling responsible AI innovation and fostering cross-border collaboration and entrepreneurship via the D4SD Network.
- **Sectoral Integration** - Accelerate digital transformation of key thematic areas/SDG sectors, such as **Health, Education**, Environment and others by integrating AI, DPI, and future-proof policies

Objectives and outcomes of the high-level event

- Officially launch the Morocco D4SD Hub for Arab and African digital cooperation.
- Announce flagship partnerships, financial commitments, joint programmes, and public-private alliances to support AI, DPI, and digital talent development.
- Showcase Morocco as a regional leader in digital diplomacy and innovation investment.
- Convene high-level dialogues on triangular cooperation, private sector engagement, and investment in digital ecosystems.



Agenda of the D4SD Side Event (1.5 hours)

Time	Segment
11:00 - 11:10 (10 min)	<p>Segment 1 - Opening Remarks (10 minutes): <i>This opening segment will set the strategic vision for cross-regional digital transformation and reaffirm the commitment to an inclusive, trusted and forward-looking digital cooperation between countries.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Marina Walter, UNDP RBAS, Deputy Regional Director</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Aziz Akhannouch, Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco • Mr. Haoliang Xu, Under-Secretary-General and UNDP Acting Administrator • H.E. Prof. Dr. Amal El Fallah Seghrouchni, Minister Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform. • H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, Morocco's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York
11:10–11:20 (10 min)	<p>Segment 2 - Official launch of the Morocco Digital for Sustainable Development (D4SD) Hub (10 minutes): <i>This session will officially launch the Morocco-based D4SD Hub as a regional platform to scale inclusive digital transformation across the Arab States and Africa.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Marina Walter, UNDP RBAS, Deputy Regional Director</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Video (2 minutes) • Launch Speech and Call for Partners/Donors to Join the D4SD Hub: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ H.E. Prof. Dr. Amal El Fallah Seghrouchni, Minister Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform. (5 min) ➢ Dr. Abdallah Al Dardari, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States UNDP (3 min)
11:20-12:10 (50 min)	<p>Segment 3 – High-Level Roundtable Discussion on Strategic Hub Agenda for The Arab Region and Africa: The Need for Multilateralism in The Digital and AI Age</p> <p>Moderator: Robert Opp, UNDP, Chief Digital Officer</p>



	<p>Panel (30 min, 6 interventions x 5 min)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The necessity of highly impactful international digital cooperation, and the role of the Morocco D4SD Hub as a cross-regional catalyst to Advance the Sustainable Development Agenda. (5min) Rola Dashti <i>Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)</i> 2) How Digital and AI Enhances Digital Inclusion in the Arab Region and Africa by Improving Access to Quality Services and Supporting Data-Driven Policymaking for More Equitable and Resilient Systems. (5min) Deemah AlYahya <i>Secretary General, Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO)</i> 3) How Artificial Intelligence multilateralism plays a vital role in fostering ethical and trusted use of artificial intelligence by enabling countries in the Arab States and Africa. The call for global AI cooperation. (5min) Dima Al-Khatib <i>Director of the UN Office for South South Cooperation (UNSSCO)</i> 4) D4SD hub Unlocking Sustainable Impact: The Critical Role of Funding and innovative Financing in Advancing the Digital for Sustainable Development (D4SD) Hub impact on Arab and African Countries. (5min) Omran Sharaf <i>Assistant Foreign Minister for Advanced Science and Technology of the UAE</i> Alex Wong <i>Chief, Special Initiatives, Office of the Director, BDT, ITU</i> 5) The Role of Private Sector as a main partner in Innovation and Digital Infrastructure to Accelerate Human Development (5min) John Giusti <i>President of GSMA Foundation and CRO</i>
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	<p>Interactive segment - Interventions from the floor (20 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: Robert Opp, UNDP, Chief Digital Officer</p> <p><i>4-5 interventions (3 min each)</i></p>
12:10–12:30 (20 min)	<p>Closing Remarks & Announcements / Call for action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Launch of AI and Data Science Alliance</i> ➤ <i>Other D4SD partners initiatives</i> <p>Reflecting on key takeaways and reinforcing commitment to inclusive digital transformation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dr. Abdallah Al Dardari, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States UNDP. ➤ H.E. Prof. Dr. Amal El Fallah Seghrouchni, Minister Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform.

