



GDC Sustainability Townhall

Advancing Global Digital Cooperation

Overview

Digital technologies are increasingly central to economic development, public services, and environmental management. At the same time, the rapid expansion of digital infrastructure and artificial intelligence systems is generating new environmental pressures, including rising energy demand, increased resource extraction for critical minerals, and expanding electronic waste. Ensuring that digital transformation is sustainable by design is therefore essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and addressing the environmental crises.

The Global Digital Compact (GDC), adopted in September 2024, marked a pivotal moment as the international community agreed on the importance of sustainability considerations and respect for the environment in the design, development and deployment of digital technologies. The GDC places strong emphasis on promoting greener digital infrastructure, improving energy efficiency, encouraging responsible resource use across the technology lifecycle, and fostering global cooperation to reduce the environmental footprint of the digital ecosystem.

The UNEA-7 resolution on the environmental sustainability of artificial intelligence systems, adopted in Nairobi in December 2025, reinforces this agenda by calling for international cooperation to assess and address the environmental impacts of AI systems while maximizing their potential to support environmental protection and sustainable development.

This townhall will focus on how to operationalize environmental sustainability within the implementation of the Global Digital Compact, highlighting practical initiatives, policy approaches, and partnerships that help ensure that digital transformation supports – rather than undermines – global sustainability objectives. The discussion will contribute to ongoing efforts across the United Nations system and Member States to operationalize the Global Digital Compact through coordinated initiatives, partnerships, and policy frameworks.

Objectives

- Highlight concrete initiatives that reduce the environmental footprint of digital technologies or leverage digital innovation for environmental action
- Identify practical entry points for embedding sustainability into digital governance (e.g. metrics, standards, interoperability, and data systems)
Showcase implementation experience across public and private sector, research, and partnerships to inform Global Digital Compact rollout.

Date

April 15th 2026 – 4:00–5:30 pm EAT (GMT+3)

Format

Virtual

Key Questions



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- How can environmental sustainability be systematically embedded into the implementation of the Global Digital Compact from the outset—including through governance frameworks, standards, and metrics?
- What practical approaches and initiatives are emerging to reduce the environmental footprint of digital infrastructure and artificial intelligence systems, both from partnerships and science perspectives?
- How can digital technologies and AI be leveraged responsibly to accelerate environmental action, including climate mitigation, biodiversity protection, and pollution monitoring?

Expected Outcomes

- Shared understanding of practical pathways to embed sustainability in GDC implementation
- Identification of priority areas for collaboration (data, metrics, standards)
- Increased visibility of ongoing initiatives and partnerships

Speakers

Moderator:

Panel: Sally Radwan, Chief Digital Officer, UNEP

Q&A: Francesco Stabilito, ODET

Speakers:

- Vlad Coroama (Roegen Institute)
- H el ene Costa de Beauregard (France, Sustainable AI Coalition)
- Stefania Minestrini (ISPRA)
- Byron Anangwe (Data Governance in Africa, Kenya)

Run of Show

Time	Section	Speaker	Content
4:00 – 4:05	Opening & Introduction	<i>Francesco Stabilito, ODET</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Context • Encourage all of the participants to put their initiatives for sustainability into the UN Digital Cooperation Portal
4:05 – 4:10	Opening remarks	<p><i>Sally Radwan, CDO, UNEP</i></p> <p><i>Overarching question:</i> If we want to embed environmental sustainability into the implementation of the Global Digital Compact in the next</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the GDC at UNEP: GEDS, Sustainable AI resolution • Link to the side event at UNEA-7 on streamlining sustainability across the GDC • Introduction of the speakers



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		1–2 years, what is the one priority action that should happen—and who needs to lead it?	
4:10 – 4:20	Speaker interventions	<i>Stefania Minestrini (ISPRA)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEDS perspective: Why is environmental data a prerequisite for sustainable digital transformation?
4:20 – 4:30	Speaker interventions	<i>Byron Anangwe, (Data Governance in Africa)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-boarder data sharing in East Africa: What does real-world data sharing look like in practice, and what are the barriers?
4:30 – 4:40	Speaker interventions	<i>Vlad Coroama, Roegen Institute</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental impact of AI: What do we know today about AI’s environmental footprint—and what are we still missing?
4:40- 4:50	Speaker interventions	<i>Hélène Costa de Beauregard (France, Sustainable AI Coalition)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable AI Coalition: How can coalitions translate principles into measurable action?
4:50- 5:30	Q&A	<i>Moderated by Francesco Stabilito, ODET</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turn on the same question to the audience Audience interventions (2 mins each) Moderator groups questions by theme Speakers provide short responses Closing reflections from moderator