



Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

Shaping an Environmentally Sustainable and Inclusive Digital Future (Side-Event)

9 October 2024

Ladies and Gentlemen, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honor to speak with you today about how the United Nations Economic and Social Council has championed digital technologies to accelerate sustainable development. The new UNCTAD Digital Economy Report 2024 continues to support this critical agenda.

Digital transformation is reshaping our world, offering immense potential to tackle pressing challenges like climate change, poverty, education, and inequality. ECOSOC has been at the forefront, ensuring this transformation is inclusive, sustainable, and aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

ECOSOC promotes digital technologies through the annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) for the SDGs. This forum brings together governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society to explore how technologies like AI and big data can drive progress toward the SDGs.

Through its Commission on Science and Technology for Development, ECOSOC oversees the follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, ensuring global digital transformation aligns with sustainable development goals, emphasizing universal connectivity and bridging the digital divide.

ECOSOC advocates for universal access to digital technologies, recognizing connectivity as essential for building inclusive and resilient societies.

Data governance is another critical area. ECOSOC calls for frameworks ensuring responsible data use and privacy protection. Its advocacy for transparent, accountable, and human-centric AI governance aligns with the



Global Digital Compact, promoting development while safeguarding human rights.

The UNCTAD Digital Economy Report 2024 illustrates how the digital economy can drive the SDGs. It emphasizes aligning digital transformation with environmental goals, managing its impact through e-waste management, energy efficiency, and sustainable resource use, contributing to climate action and environmental protection.

The report highlights the need to close the digital divide, a long-standing priority for ECOSOC. It urges greater investment in digital infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas, ensuring digital technologies are accessible to all.

Additionally, the report supports ECOSOC's focus on data governance, calling for frameworks that promote responsible data use, privacy protection, and interoperability. It emphasizes international cooperation to ensure emerging technologies, including AI, are governed responsibly, reflecting ECOSOC's advocacy for ethical AI governance.

In conclusion, ECOSOC continues to champion digital technologies for sustainable development and the UNCTAD Digital Economy Report 2024 provides a comprehensive framework to advance this agenda, offering clear guidance on how digital transformation can contribute to the SDGs.

By working together—across governments, the private sector, civil society, and international organizations—we can ensure the digital revolution serves all of us while leaving no one behind.

Thank you.