SDC
Digital Watch
Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of the *DigitalWatch* SDC newsletter. In this issue we touch base with a brief overview of how digital technologies are reshaping the development sector worldwide. As accelerators, digital technologies can help fight poverty, hunger and climate, but they can also contribute to gender divides, exclusion and violence. For the content to be tailored to your interests, please do not hesitate to get back to us and let us know your feedback.

In this issue, we provide a round-up of top news in the context of development, climate action, and food security.

We share statistics on global trust in artificial intelligence (AI) and the impact of AI on GDP.

PAST EVENT	IN FOCUS	A DUO IN THE MAKING
The first dialogue on the Road to Bern addresses the challenges and opportunities of collecting data and data sharing.	Online conferencing amid COVID-19: Will it change diplomacy and what can be done to ease the transition?	Distilling the interplay between digital technology and environmental sustainability.
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Digital steps to leaving no one behind

Development:

- Indian company Sterling and Wilson Private won contracts for a project on digital ID and the construction of a data center in the Republic of Congo. ↗

- Afghanistan reaches out to India to introduce a biometric and demographic system similar to Aadhaar. ↗

Migration

- Ethereum Classic (ETC) donates USD$ 1 million to UNICEF blockchain projects on refugee camps and healthcare. ↗

Water management

- International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and Digital Earth Africa (DEA) to cooperate on sensor and data technologies for better management of water in Africa. ↗

- UN World Water Development Report 2020 tackles the role of satellite imagery and big data analytics in water monitoring. ↗

Food Security:

- FAO calls for better data gathering in Asia-Pacific in order to ensure the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) and to measure progress of states on the goals. ↗

- Microsoft to provide Kenya with digital technology solutions that could help address agricultural challenges and contribute to Kenya's goal of 100% food security. ↗

Climate action

- Rwanda to set up e-waste collection points that will help educate its population about the danger and management of e-waste. ↗

- World's largest air quality data platform launched by UNEP, UN-Habitat, and Swiss air quality technology company IQAir. ↗

- *'Guidance for ICT Companies Setting Science Based Targets'* published to ensure that ICT companies are compatible with the objectives outlined in the Paris Agreement. ↗

- Egypt's Ministry of Surrounding to launch 'E-Tadweer' software to eliminate e-waste. ↗

Digital Health

- The European mHealth Hub launched in Geneva to promote the larger-scale implementation of mHealth in 53 European countries by collecting and sharing good practices and experiences of mHealth. ↗

Humanitarian

- Digital identity company Yoti adds partners to digital identity support programme to help humanitarian organisations address identification challenges and assist beneficiaries. ↗

Gender Equality:

- Founder of World Wide Web warns that the Internet is 'not working for women and girls' and that it is responsible for 'a new era of widespread abuse against females'. ↗

Female CIOs in Fortune 500 between 1995 and 2018

Source: Statista
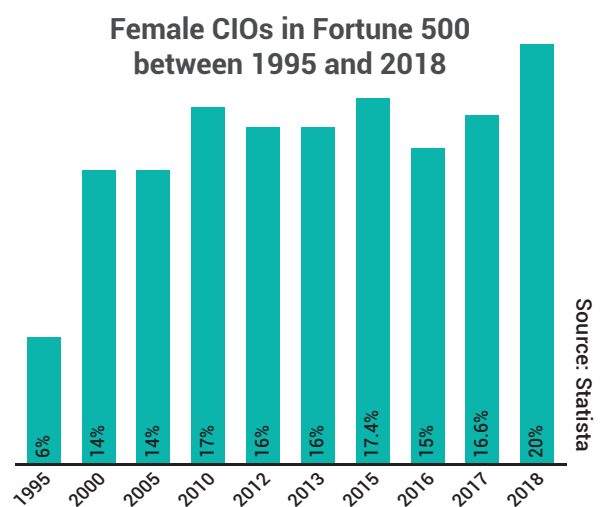
Women are underrepresented in the tech industry. The graph above illustrates the share of female chief information officers (CIOs) in Fortune 500 between 1995 and 2018. In 1995, women represented a mere 6% of CIOs. Albeit the improvement, In 2018, the share was only 20%.

Lessons learned and steps ahead

COVID-19: Will conference diplomacy shift online?

In response to the ban on gatherings as a result of COVID-19, the ICANN67 Public Meeting, the spring meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and several other tech summits have been moved to the virtual space. Even though factors including climate change, travel costs, and visa restrictions are increasingly motivating the shift from onsite to online meetings, the recent developments in regard to COVID-19 have precipitated a surge in online conferencing, and without a doubt represent a major shift in diplomacy. This newly-arised situation will require the rethinking of how conference diplomacy will be pursued and what skills should be mastered by diplomats and civil servants.

To learn more about approaches and tools for online conferencing, please consult DiploFoundation's *Conference Tech Lab.*

A duo in the making: Digital technology and environmental sustainability

While it is a well-known fact that digital technology has penetrated all aspects of human life, it is also increasingly impacting the way we interact with nature and the way the natural environment interacts with us. Over the last few years, a number of actors have tried to map the relationship between the two, however it is only lately that policymakers have become concerned with the matter. Recent initiatives such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) recommendation entitled *'GHG emissions trajectories for the ICT sector compatible with the UNFCCC Paris Agreement',* the EU Commission's *'Shaping Europe's digital future',* and the inclusion of the environment as a working track within the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) are all examples of this new awareness.

Technologies such as AI, big data, cloud computing, and blockchain could be used to conserve biodiversity, ensure ocean sustainability, monitor energy consumption, and ultimately reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but digital also has a less popular side.

Pollution resulting from use and operation of digital technologies, piling of e-waste and mining of rare earths are just some of the environmental consequences of digital technology.

Explore this issue further on *DigitalWatch* trend page digital and environment.

Past event: First dialogue on the 'Road to Bern'

Ahead of the UN World Data Forum (October 2020 in Bern), the WMO and WHO held the first of four 'Road to Bern' dialogues on big data. Entitled *'Collecting data: How can big data contribute to leaving no one behind and achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?',* the event addressed the challenges and opportunities of data collection and data sharing.

Among other issues, the participants highlighted the existing gaps in data collection, namely resulting from poor access to data in conflict-affected areas, poor connectivity, and lack of consent of data subjects. Not only can these gaps give the wrong impression of the situation at hand, but they also pose a risk of leaving the most vulnerable behind.

In order to transform these challenges into opportunities, some of the proposed measures include capacity building as well as the establishment of principles, norms, and standards for collecting, storing, and using data.

The 'Road to Bern' dialogues are co-ordinated by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva and the Geneva Internet Platform (GIP). The second dialogue will be organised in partnership with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the subjects of trust, security, and privacy of data.

You can consult the full report from the event here.

Do we trust AI?
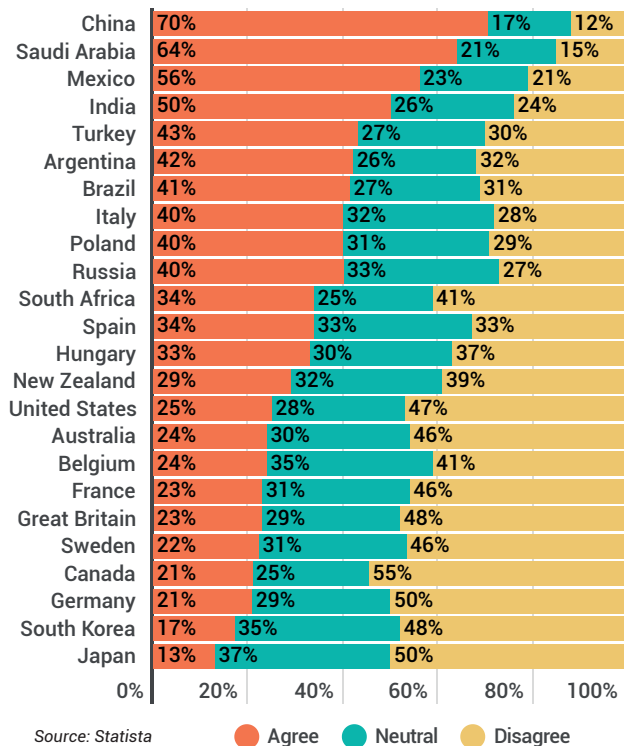
On 28 February, the Vatican launched the 'Rome Call for AI Ethics'. The Call sets out six principles, namely, transparency, inclusion, responsibility, impartiality, reliability, and security and privacy for AI. Signed by tech giants such as Microsoft, and IBM, as well as the Government of Italy and Director General of FAO, the document calls on stakeholders to act together in order to establish trusted AI systems. But, how much do we trust AI?

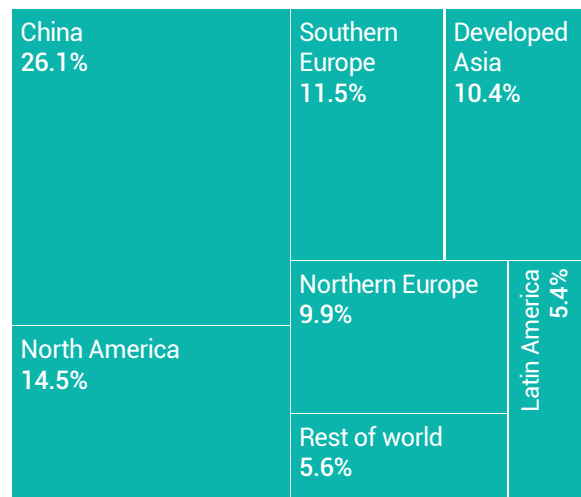According to a study conducted by IPSOS, China, with 70%, trusts AI the most. It is followed by Saudi Arabia and Mexico with 64% and 56% respectively. At the lower end of the scale, Japanese citizens (13%) expressed the least trust in AI technology. South Korea (17%), Germany (21%) and Canada (21%) appear amongst the sceptics.

A separate research conducted by PwC shows that China as the most trusting state is expected to experience the highest (26.1%) GDP growth by 2030 thanks to AI. Although with a much lower predicted GDP growth and degree of trust, North America (14%) follows suit. The lowest GDP growth is expected in Latin America (5.4%).

Trust in AI worldwide (2018)

Country	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
China	70%	17%	12%
Saudi Arabia	64%	21%	15%
Mexico	56%	23%	21%
India	50%	26%	24%
Turkey	43%	27%	30%
Argentina	42%	26%	32%
Brazil	41%	27%	31%
Italy	40%	32%	28%
Poland	40%	31%	29%
Russia	40%	33%	27%
South Africa	34%	25%	41%
Spain	34%	33%	33%
Hungary	33%	30%	37%
New Zealand	29%	32%	39%
United States	25%	28%	47%
Australia	24%	30%	46%
Belgium	24%	35%	41%
France	23%	31%	46%
Great Britain	23%	29%	48%
Sweden	22%	31%	46%
Canada	21%	25%	55%
Germany	21%	29%	50%
South Korea	17%	35%	48%
Japan	13%	37%	50%

Source: Statista

● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree

Expected Growth of GDP by 2030 due to AI

China 26.1%	Southern Europe 11.5%	Developed Asia 10.4%
North America 14.5%	Northern Europe 9.9%	Latin America 5.4%
	Rest of world 5.6%	

Source: Statista

Digitalisation of Multilateralism

As we step deeper into the digital era, technologies become all the more relevant for multilateralism. Not only is tech gaining importance from a policy perspective, but also in terms of practical applicability in the conduct of multilateralism. While the two approaches may seem distinct, knowing the opportunities and limitations of technology, such as AI and data, is key to making policies work.