



United Nations Institute for Training and Research



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# UNITAR

## CONFERENCE ON DIGITALISATION

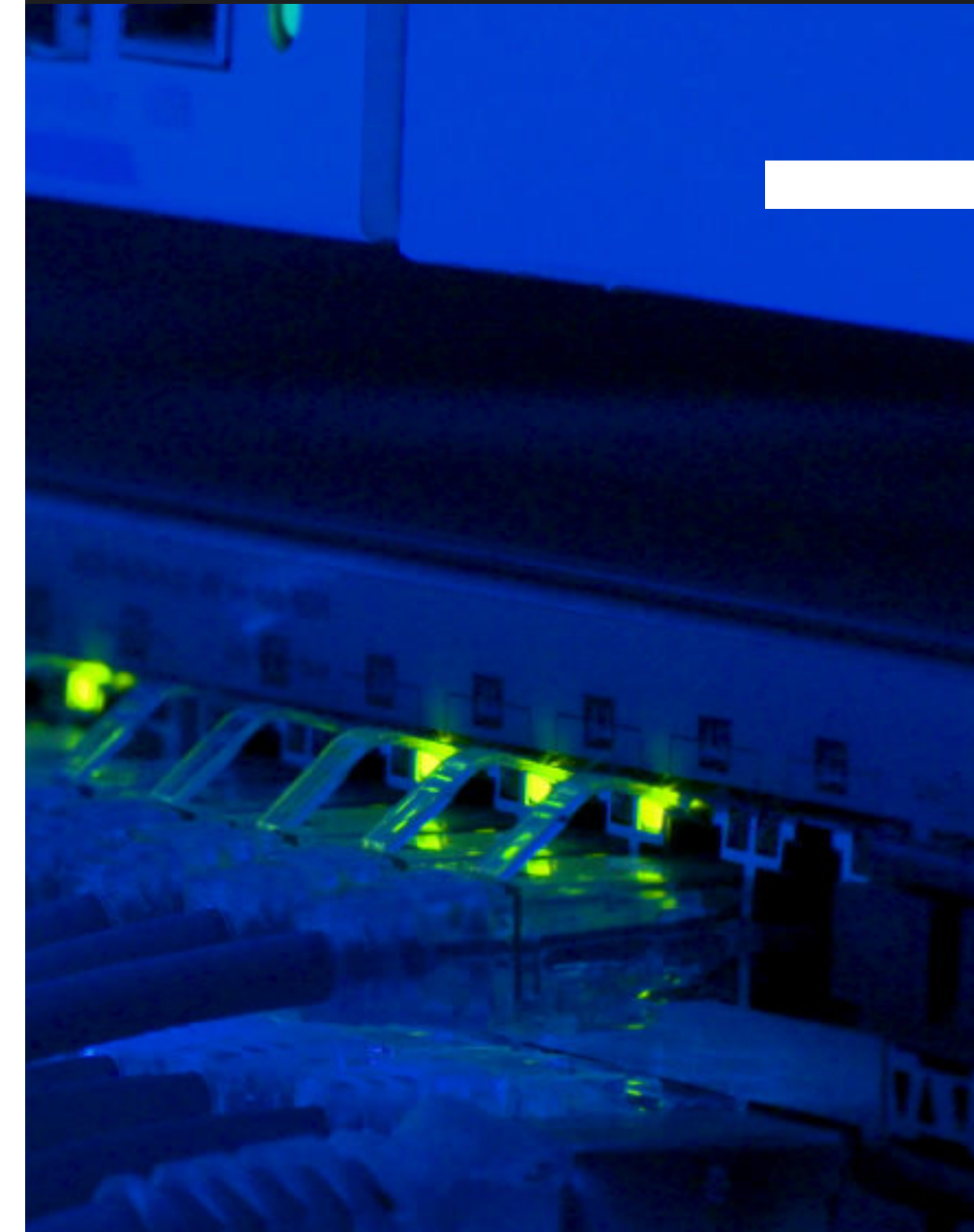
Closing the digital divide:  
strengthening digital literacy and  
infrastructure in the Sahel region, Iraq  
and Afghanistan.

24 March 2022  
10:00 – 15:40 CET.

Format: Virtual via Zoom,  
Youtube and Facebook.

Languages: English,  
French

**Registration:**  
**<https://bit.ly/359uTxE>**  
**or:**




“With most of the 17 Global Goals thrust sharply off-track by the force of the emergency, the pandemic has highlighted – and exacerbated – the crippling cost of digital exclusion. Achieving universal meaningful connectivity has become a matter of the utmost urgency if we are to meet the SDGs by the end of the decade.”

*Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director, ITU  
Telecommunication Development Bureau*

“Digital upskilling and reskilling present immense potential for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as it offers many opportunities to re-imagine how our economies could serve better social and environmental needs.”

*Nikhil Seth, UN Assistant Secretary-General,  
Executive Director, UNITAR*



**Digital transformation** has been an ongoing trend. Together with the Covid pandemic, this transformation has been accelerating to an incredible speed globally. The pandemic also clearly highlighted the importance of access to digital infrastructure and digital literacy. Digital platforms and services, including mobile networks and the Internet, have become crucial in all areas of daily life, especially enabling continuity in business activities and education.

Access to digital infrastructure (Internet penetration and mobile network coverage) has been significantly improved in the past years. However, there is still 2.9 billion people offline, with 96 per cent of them living in the developing world. Even those with access often lack skills preventing them from making the most out of devices and services, while staying safe and secure. **A twofold goal should therefore be followed: closing the digital divide by strengthening both the digital infrastructure and digital literacy around the world.**

**UNITAR Prosperity Division** contributes to closing the digital divide by delivering training programs to empower youth and women in countries in difficult situation. These **digital upskilling and reskilling programs** aim to create opportunities for participants to transform their entrepreneurial ideas into digital products, and address new challenges in the post-Covid work environment. Current programs in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Sahel region cover programming and coding skills, digital literacy, application development, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and gender leadership to stand out in the Fourth Industrial Revolution and empower others in their communities.

**During this conference, UNITAR aims to share its own extensive experience and invites key global and regional stakeholders to share their vision.** We will hear about the importance of a global digital transformation which is affordable, inclusive and safe. We will learn about the latest trends, emerging challenges, opportunities, best practices, lessons learnt from building digital infrastructure and enhancing digital literacy in the Sahel region, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Building on the lessons learnt, we will explore the possibility to replicate and scale-up our training programs in cooperation with different stakeholders. Digital infrastructure can only be efficiently and safely harnessed, if all users are equipped with necessary digital skills all over the world.

# AGENDA

10:00-10:10

## Opening remarks:

Nikhil Seth, Assistant Secretary-General of the UN, Executive Director, UNITAR

10:10-10:25

## Keynote address:

Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau

10:25-10:30

Short video about UNITAR Prosperity's training activities in the Sahel, Iraq and Afghanistan

10:30-12:00

## Session 1:

*Why digital transformation is important for sustainable prosperity? – a global overview of accessibility, literacy and inclusion*

### Speakers:

Representative of Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO)

Representative of Sweden

Representative of Japan

Representative of GSMA

Permanent Mission of the European Union to the UN, Geneva (or

Representative of EU Commission)

12:00-12:30

Break (lunch/coffee)

**24 March 2022**

**10:00 – 15:40 CET.**

**Via Zoom, Youtube  
and Facebook.**



**12:30-14:00**

**Session 2:**

*How to overcome the digital divide and leave no one behind in the Sahel region?  
– challenges and opportunities*

Speakers:

Representative of OIF

Representative of Smart Africa, Digital Infrastructure Project

Representative of African Development Bank

Representative of UNECA

**14:00-15:30**

**Session 3:**

*How to overcome the digital divide and leave no one behind in Afghanistan and Iraq?  
– challenges and opportunities*

Speakers:

Representative of The Graduate Institute, Geneva

Representative of ZAIN

Representative of GIZ Iraq

Representative of UNDP Iraq Office

**15:30-15:40**

**Closing remarks:**

Mihoko Kumamoto, Director, Division for Prosperity, UNITAR

**24 March 2022**

**10:00 – 15:40 CET.**

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