

Aotearoa New Zealand Country Statement to the 80th UN ESCAP Session

Thank you Chair, Executive Secretary.

New Zealand acknowledges the critical role of digital innovation in accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As we have seen with the rapid digitalisation of our economies and societies and expansion of technologies like AI over the past few years, we can only expect the role of digital technologies to grow over the coming decade.

This rapid growth in digital technologies and the increasing interdependence of our economies and people on these tools bring both opportunities and risks.

If harnessed effectively and inclusively, new and emerging digital technologies offer an enormous and growing range of tools to tackle some of the world's most pressing development challenges.

These tools can build resilience, empower current and future leaders, and ultimately support well-being by creating opportunities for communities to "earn, learn, and thrive."

These benefits will not be fully realised, however, without proactive, ongoing and coordinated effort by leaders. We know this is particularly the case for small countries with limited resources, including many Pacific nations.

We also risk leaving our most vulnerable and marginalised behind if we do not place our people's diverse needs, perspectives and aspirations at the centre of our considerations when setting global and national level policies and priorities on digital technologies.

Digital tools and technology have also brought with them new challenges that we must face. We must ensure that digital tools and services are trustworthy, accessible, inclusive, and safe.

Addressing issues like cybersecurity, cybercrime, hate speech, misinformation and disinformation are all crucial to ensuring that the benefits of these technologies are maximised.

Minimising the environmental footprint of our digital infrastructure and promoting sustainable practices is also crucial as we work towards addressing our respective contributions to climate impacts.

By embracing digital innovation responsibly and inclusively, we believe that we can build a more sustainable and equitable future for all. We remain committed to playing a leading role in this endeavor by supporting the development of resilient digital infrastructure and digital inclusion in developing countries in order to ensure equitable access to affordable, reliable and secure internet, technology and online services.

We acknowledge that digital innovation has the potential to change economies and livelihoods for communities. This is particularly true for small, isolated states, like those in the Pacific.

We invite collaboration on this path to realising a world where people, communities, economy, and environment flourish and prosper in the digital era.

Thank you, Chair.