

# Digital Nations Shared Approach to Sustainable Digital Government



## Digital Nations Shared Approach to Sustainable Digital Government

**The Digital Nations affirms the principles of a sustainable digital government, with a focus on environmental sustainability. As Digital Nations members, with the relevant government departments and agencies responsible for digital public services and operations, we will strive to reduce the potential negative environmental impact of our governments' digital operations and contribute to climate targets, while delivering responsible, resilient digital services.**

*We recognize* that climate change is a defining challenge of our time, requiring ambitious action,

*We recognize* that digital government is “the use of digital technologies, as an integrated part of governments’ modernisation strategies, to create public value”<sup>1</sup>,

*We recognize* that sustainable digital government is the demonstration of leadership in the use of data and clean technologies to accelerate progress towards climate targets, while acknowledging the potential negative impacts derived from the use of technology, and taking action to reduce it,

*We recognize* the potential catalytic effects of digital government in supporting progress towards improving the sustainability of our organizations’ operations, and achieving climate targets. Digital technologies, data, tools, and design can reduce the embodied materials in goods through efficiency and by turning products into services in a circular economy,

*We also acknowledge* that, if sustainability considerations are not properly identified and managed, then digital tools and technologies may undermine our progress towards the achievement of climate and overall sustainability targets,

*We note evidence* that worldwide the share of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from digital technologies continues to rise as the digital transition accelerates, and is predicted to double by 2025<sup>2</sup>,

*We consider* that our institutions have a unique opportunity through our cooperation in the Digital Nations to champion the reduction of the environmental footprint of IT equipment and software across the whole lifecycle in accordance with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, particularly with SDG 12 of ensuring sustainable consumption and

---

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2014), Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies, OECD/LEGAL/0406, OECD, Paris, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECDLEGAL-0406>

<sup>2</sup> Ekholm, B. (2019, September 18). *Want to cut greenhouse gas emissions? Look to digital technologies*. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/09/want-to-exponentially-reduce-ghg-emissions-look-to-digital-tech-solutions/>.

production patterns,

*We will strive* towards lowering the environmental impacts of our governments' digital operations wherever possible, and delivering responsible and resilient government digital services and sustainability policies and commitments. This includes a wide range of activities encompassing the whole lifecycle from planning, procurement, and operations, to disposal, reuse, and recycling,

*We note* that this Digital Nations Shared Approach is a living document embracing a digital approach, giving partners the opportunity to revisit the principles,

*We will collaborate* as members of the Digital Nations to identify existing and future ways to improve the sustainability of our governments' digital operations. We will work together to build our shared understanding of how to encourage more sustainable approaches to digital transformation.

*Accordingly, we affirm* the following principles of a sustainable digital government, and our commitment to strive towards their fulfilment:

1. Promote sustainable digital operations and design in support of domestic and international climate change targets, including the Paris Agreement and relevant Sustainable Development Goals.
  2. Identify key roles within our governments and work to build awareness of sustainability as a key component of design, delivery, and implementation of digital and data services.
  3. Promote digital procurement, infrastructure, operations, and services that are sustainable and resilient to the changing climate.
  4. Increase the collection, measurement, and release of open data relating to environmental sustainability and the impact of IT equipment, infrastructure, and operations.
  5. Encourage our governments to limit their consumption of materials, resources, and non-renewable energy as part of their IT and digital services, with the aim of moving towards a more sustainable model of consumption and waste generation.
  6. Share and collaborate within the Digital Nations and with key public and private stakeholders on existing standards, as well as on tools, methodologies, and best practices on sustainable IT.
  7. Promote the design of digital government services, from start to finish, that integrate technologies or mechanisms that reduce GHG emissions and other negative environmental impacts.
  8. Promote the use of digital tools to achieve positive environmental outcomes.
-