

**Delegation from the Republic of France**  
**Position Paper for the United Nations General Assembly**

The topics on the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) agenda are I. Information and Communications Technologies for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development and II. Disaster Risk Reduction. Regarding the importance of the economic, the social and the environmental dimensions to achieve sustainable development, the Republic of France is looking forward to finding with all participants of the upcoming conference new and innovative solutions.

**I. Information and Communications Technologies for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development**

Just like the process of civilization and the industrial revolution, the digital era marks a before and an after in the human race history. Citing the World Economic Forum, as of 2000, less than 7 % of the world was online. Today, the panoramic looks very different: in 2022, 62.5% of the global population has access to the internet. Despite this positive change, however, the pressure to change our analogue system into a digital one still exists. Furthermore, the current pandemic is a mirror of how far we are from being equal. What is even more, the COVID-19 pandemic leads to an intensification of existing inequalities. Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), eventually, turn into e-waste causing so pollution, representing a danger for human health and a loss of finite resources. In fact, every year we generate fifty million metric tons of e-waste. This amount equivalates to the weight of nearly 4.500 Eiffel towers. Attempts of reducing e-waste are oftentimes unfruitful, due to the practice of big companies to create a repair monopoly. The latter is the result to the fact that customers can repair their electronic goods only with the support of the company that created them. Moreover, the cost of repairing an electronic good is usually higher than acquiring a new one. If we take a closer look at the solutions, we should mention the 2003 *Declaration of Principles* of the Information Society (WSIS), which acknowledged the potential of ICT to promote the development goals of the Millennium Declaration. Years later, the 2005 *Tunis Agenda for Information Society*, also a statement of the WSIS, focused on financial mechanisms for bridging the digital divide. Endorsed in 2015 by the UN GA in its resolution 69/313, the 2015 *Addis Adaba Action Agenda* (AAAA) of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development described new technologies as a powerful driver of sustainable development. Regarding e-waste, we need to consider the 2017 *UN System-wide Response to Tackling E-waste*. Form the regional perspective, the European Union has gone important steps in the digital decade path. In this context, it is noteworthy to mention the introduction of Horizon 2020, the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme, which is the financial instrument to implement the Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 flagship initiative. Most recently, the European Commission presented in 2022 a draft declaration on digital rights and principles. At a national level, when it comes to ICT, the Republic of France recognizes the power of the internet to promote fundamental rights, democracy, and economic growth. In fact, the Constitutional Council, France's highest court, declared internet access as a basic human right. Thus, we are actively working to develop a digital society in France. For instance, the 2018 *French National Plan for Digital Inclusion* seeks to enable French participation in the digital society. Moreover, French-based tech startups have been supported with a sum of 5 billion Euros during the years of 2019–2021. At an international level, France aims to be a good influence on the topic of ICT; for example, we convinced our G8-Summit partners of the need for international cooperation when developing and using the internet for peaceful means. Concerning ICT and its importance for sustainable development, France is concerned about the “uneven” innovative capacity, connectivity and access to technology and thus acknowledges the necessity to address these inequalities. We need to promote funding programs for ICT. Thereby, it is crucial to guarantee that the provisions shall be transparent. Enhancing transparency means that all incentives for investment must be made public and provided through tax laws only. Where possible, only one governmental entity shall be responsible for the incentives. Furthermore, the fund shall be directed towards generating knowledge and creating work opportunities. In this context, it is important to invite the private sector to participate in the creation of work opportunities. When it comes to e-waste, we have to pay a greater attention to the early stages of the life-cycle of electronic goods. This means, increasing the lifespan of electronic goods and reinforcing the right to repair. In this context, France promotes the elaboration of UN Guiding Principles on E-Waste, whereby, the principles shall address typical hindrances in developed and developing countries. Furthermore, we shall encourage companies to works towards increasing the lifespan of electronic goods with favorable tax-treatment. Companies that create electronic goods shall contribute with the recycling and destroying process of electronic devices by paying taxes. As a principle, we shall strengthen the right to repair by promoting the legal prohibition of the creation of repair monopolies. In addition, we have to enhance the awareness of people regarding the negative consequences of e-waste. For this matter, the UN Environmental Programme, financed by the Environment Fund

(resolution 2997 (XXVII)), shall launch a global campaign involving all relevant stakeholder from private, public and academic sectors. Thereby, the general public shall be educated about the problematic of e-waste, for example, via online seminars and workshops.

## II. Disaster Reduction

No country is excluded from being a victim of a disaster. For instance, in 2010 France was hit by Cyclone Xynthia, a European windstorm that caused an estimated damage of 1.3–3 billion Euros. From France's experience, this natural disaster represents one of the most destructive climatic events we have faced in decades. France recognizes that not all nations are well prepared to confront a disaster. In fact, between 1991 and 2005, almost 90% of the lives lost to natural disasters occurred in developing countries. What makes it more dramatic, disasters create an endless cycle of misery, because the affected countries, while recovering from a disaster, are not able to prepare for the next one. Thus, disasters jeopardize sustainable development. Ultimately, due to the fact that national borders do not represent a hindrance for diseases, the phenomenon of globalization and thus global connectivity has taken health disasters on a new dimension. Among international measures, the *Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World* adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction of 1994 recognizes the rising world-wide toll on human and economic losses due to natural disasters. The *Hyogo Framework for Action* adopted in 2005 by the UN highlights the importance of promoting disaster risk reduction. Also, in 2015, the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* and the UN GA resolution 70/1 came to life. Finally, because climate changes are linked to natural disasters, the *Paris Agreement of 2015* is of extreme relevance. Aiming to reduce disasters, the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable development, Transport and Housing presented a French policy to reduce the risk from disasters. As of 2012, 7,700 municipalities had developed local plans for disaster prevention. At the initiative of French NGOs such as CARE France and Solidarités International, the French Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Network was created. Worried about the COVID-19 pandemic and the uneven access to vaccines, France not only supported COVAX with monetary aid but, beyond that, the Republic of France was the first country to also donate doses from its own vaccine purchases to COVAX. In this vein, we plan to deliver 120 million vaccine doses for developing countries by mid-2022. Another French contribution to fight this unequal combat against the COVID-19 pandemic was a donation of twenty million Euros we made for the Medicines Patent Pool. Regarding the afterwards of this pandemic, France is highly concerned about the negative impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the economic growth of developing countries. Therefore, aiming to support the efforts of tax and customs administrations in developing countries, France launched a strategic guidance document: *The Interministerial Strategy 2020*. To guarantee the success of this strategic plan, a technical roadmap, *The Strategic Investment Development Plan 2020-2023*, was drawn up. For the upcoming meeting, there are different stages of disaster reduction we need to consider. Planning for disaster reduction means identifying, reducing and being prepared for disasters. In order to identify disasters, we need to be able to share knowledge about upcoming risks. For this matter, France proposes the establishment of an internationally accessible database governed by the principle of Open Data, Open Science and Open Map. Such a database could be organized by the United Nations University (UNU) (resolution 2951 (XXVII)) and shall include historical data and scientific tools that have helped to reduce disasters in the past. Furthermore, a national disaster risk reduction strategy is necessary. In this context, France is conscious of the fact that many Member States (MS) do not have the sufficient resources to invest in the development of such a plan. Therefore, France proposes to use the knowledge and experience of MS that already have a national strategic plan to create prototype national strategic plans. In order to develop such a plan, France proposes to initiate a scientific project to compare national strategies. Thereby, the project would be open to all MS that want to participate. Overall, the program could be called "Comparison of national strategic plans". Due to geographic differences, however, a one-size solution cannot fit for all countries. Thus, we need to divide this project into different sub-comparison-projects. In this vein, the idea is to specialize the sub-project regarding the peculiarities of each region of the world. Besides, the project shall be oriented towards the mainstream of gender-perspective. Hence, when a gender is underrepresented, we need to implement positive discrimination measures like introducing a participation quota. Concerning the responsible for running this multi-disciplinary program, France considers the UNU to be especially indicated for this task. Ultimately and respecting the sovereignty of every MS, the result of this prototype plans could be adopted by those MSs that have the desire to do so. Lastly, because the current pandemic is characterized by its ongoing uncertainty, it has shown us the urgent need of a global plan, within, decision-makers at national and regional level can find an orientation when taking pandemic-related decisions. Respecting the sovereignty of all MS, the goal of such a global plan is not to impose a solution, but to offer a guidance, for instance, when designing areas as high-risk areas and deciding about travel restrictions.