

## **Delegation from the United Arab Emirates**

### ***Position Paper for the General Assembly***

The issues before the General Assembly are: *Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development and Disaster Risk Reduction*. The United Arab Emirates are committed to develop to a more progressive and sustainable lifestyle. Like his Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum stated in 2021: "In the race for excellence there is no finish line."

#### **I. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) are concerned by the fact that 4.2 billion people worldwide have currently no or just limited access to ICTs. The high digital divide between developed and developing countries is especially concerning regarding that the use of ICTs is essential for countries, communities, and individuals to take place in the international trade and improve financial growth at both, a national and regional level. The lack of technical devices as well as knowledge in developing countries is a barrier to profit from the opportunities of ICTs. By not being able to use devices properly or not knowing how to use them in the most effective way, especially developing countries are missing out on the chance to improve their economic as well as their domestic organization processes. Also, citizens are not able to access information or data, if necessary, they are therefore excluded from political, social and economic processes. The UAE are an example of an effective and sustainable use of ICTs. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) they have one of the highest rates of Internet access to information and communication technology in the world, regardless of user age groups. They are also first in the mobile phone subscriptions indicator and second in the electricity access indicator according to the Global Competitiveness Report 2019. This is a result of the constant and high investments made by the UAE in ICTs. By the strong presence of government institutions on the internet and the participation of the majority of the UAE cabinet members and other authorities on social media it is shown, how the ICTs can be used to provide easily accessible information and lower the burdens for the civil society to communicate and take place in political processes more easily.

By establishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in A/RES/70/1 in 2015 to set global goals until 2030 several essential areas are tackled. The achievements of ending poverty as well as SDG 8 and 9 concerning economic and industrial topics are deeply connected with the use of ICTs. Therefore, the fulfilling of the Agenda 2030 by all member states is essential and mutually for and with the use of ICTs. The *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* (2015) is the groundwork for especially the financial aspects of the use for ICTs. The focus on investments in economic resources that promote capacity building and economic growth to create more private and governmental partnership is essential due to the problems for developing countries to finance and therefore make ICTs available. The Resolution 70/125 from 2015 highlights the crosscutting contributions of ICTs to the development also stated by the *World Summits on Information Society* (WSIS) calling for an improvement of fundamental rights and sustainable livelihoods by developing ICTs to improve the quality of life. Nevertheless Resolution 76/189 (2021) stressed the increasing digital divide between developing countries and developed countries, stating, that four out of five people cannot profit from social or economic benefits of the internet. This concerning number calls for immediate action to close this gap and provide access to information and economic opportunities for everyone.

It must be the top priority to decrease the growing digital divide between developing and developed countries by supporting developing countries and the most affected groups there to provide access to information and take advantage out of the use of ICTs. Therefore, the UAE propose an annual forum to exchange the newest ICTs developments and inform about the correct and most effective way on how to use not only those but all ICTs, to spread and share the knowledge for everyone's profit. By sharing experiences and progress made in the last year to support each other is a great opportunity to help states, groups and individuals to help themselves properly and take advantage of the use of ICTs. The knowledge on how to use ICTs in all kinds of different areas like infrastructure, the health system, education or trade is essential for an effective use of ICTs. The international connectedness must be

increased. A forum hosted by the Office of Information and Communications Technology should include all countries, especially those with an advanced use of ICTs and those who need support and have a lack of knowledge on how to include and how to use ICTs in an effective and sustainable way. A forum presenting the latest state of research will provide a previously unused opportunity to include everyone in the process of digitalization and globalization with a focus on how ICTs can improve the work and effectiveness in all kinds of areas.

## II. Disaster Risk Reduction

With the climate change as the challenge of this century, there are a lot of consequences like extreme weather phenomena that can turn into climate-related disasters. In the past ten years disasters of all kinds affected over 1.5 billion people and incurred costs of over 1.3 trillion USD. These disasters are also a threat to the achievement of the *2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development* (2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations. The number of climate-related disasters increases rapidly. In combination with the fast urbanization that leads to a fast and not necessarily sustainable enlargement of cities all over the world. These cities are vulnerable to hazards of all kind. On top of that especially SDG 1, SDG 11 and SDG 13, are endangered. In cities with poorly build houses, a lack of an infrastructure and an urban planning just being functional in a short-term way, especially the poor people suffer from the consequences of disasters. Internationally, developing countries which are often hardly affected due to their geographic position are lacking a sustainable urban planning and therefore the destruction after climate-related or natural disaster is exceptionally high and expensive. That increases the divide between affected and less affected countries and also their attempt to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

The UAE stress the importance of the *Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (2015) and *Resolution 75/216* (2020) to continue the review of the implementation of the framework. and state the importance of the *Paris Agreement* (2015) as an opportunity to swift to more sustainable energies to be able to limit the rising temperatures and combat the climate change effectively. In 2015 the SDGs were set to be achieved by 2030 through A/RES/70/1. Especially SDG 11, which focusses on sustainable cities and communities to make cities more resilient to hazards especially when they are climate related, has yet a lot more potential to play an important role to improve disaster risk reduction and combat the climate change to prevent disasters. The *New Urban Agenda* (2016) highlights the connection between sustainable urban development and disaster risk reduction and is therefore essential to combine the combat of the climate change and the architectural and organizational approach to the disaster risk reduction. An active approach on how to transform or build new cities following these guidelines is nevertheless lacking as well as a plan on how to finance the evolving of a sustainable urban development. *Resolution 56/195* (2001) established the *United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction* (UNDRR) helping member states with data and analyses. It initiated the *Making Cities Resilient Campaign* (2020) to implement more sustainable urban planning. The UAE strongly recommend to all member states to implement the proposed measurements to increase the creating of disaster-resilient communities.

Since the climate change is a topic that affects the present as well as the future, it is necessary to act now and start preventive actions so the future generations can benefit from those. Therefore, the UAE proposes to focus and promote smart sustainable cities (SSC). These cities combine a smart use of ICTs and a sustainable architecture as well as green energy use to ensure to meet the needs of current as well as future generations by combating the climate change and building sustainable and disaster resistant cities. This can be achieved by reducing the demand for energy and water, and establishing a recycling and reuse of waste material already in the construction process. By also including adequate measurement in the architecture or the organization of cities, to protect them from the regionally potential disasters, like the reduction of asphalt the sealing of asphalt can be decreased to reduce floods and also heatwaves in cities. By investing in parks and green spaces only the risk reduction of natural disasters but also the life quality is improved. This requires a sustainable urban planning and a smart use of the newest technologies. But in the end SSCs are the future of living and with the increasing number of climate-related disasters one approach to prevent and take adequate action now.