VNR Lab 14: Strengthening digital government and data governance for a more agile and effective public sector in Africa

17 July 2024, 1:15-2:45 p.m. EDT
Conference room S-1522/1523

<u>Concept note</u>

Organizers

Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)/African Union

Description

Rapid technological development has had a transformative impact on governments across the globe, from the ways in which they communicate with people to the development of innovative solutions enhancing public service delivery and fostering sustainable development (e.g., smart cities and the use of emerging technologies in the public sector). However, potential associated challenges and risks exist, which must urgently be addressed, such as the persistent digital divides, data gaps, as well as security and privacy issues. There are also growing concerns about the potential disruptive changes that rapid advancements in technology may bring to societies and public administrations worldwide, with questions of adequate governance and regulation of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, remaining as elaborated on by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) at its recently held [23rd session](#). Nevertheless, the digitalization of governments can offer immense opportunities to leapfrog development, improve public service delivery, combat corruption, reduce inequalities and deliver public value provided it is managed in a fair, ethical, and people-centred manner.

The impact of digitalization on public administrations, political systems and economies in Africa remains uneven, though new technologies offer compelling opportunities for social and economic growth. For most African countries, the realities of inadequate infrastructure, low digital literacy skills, lack of effective data governance and other socioeconomic challenges make the adoption of new technologies and digitalization of government difficult.

This VNR Lab intends to facilitate peer-to-peer learning by inviting selected African countries to share their different approaches and experiences in fostering digital government and data governance to render their public sector more effective and agile. In addition, representatives from UN DESA and APRM will complement the discussions by providing insights into related support provided to countries.

Guiding questions

- What concrete measures or actions has your country undertaken to strengthen digital government and data governance in order to achieve a more agile and effective public sector? What are your main related challenges?

- What are main lessons, success stories and examples of good practices related to fostering digital government in your country?

- How can regional bodies and/or international organisations better help countries in fostering digital government in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international or regional agendas (e.g., Agenda 2063)?

Format

The Lab will last for 1.5 hours and will be held in person in Conference room S-1522/1523. It will be an interactive dialogue with six speakers who will make short initial interventions (max. 5 minutes). A moderated open discussion will follow, based on the questions presented above. Speakers are invited to address questions and comments in short and focused responses. Use of PowerPoint presentations is discouraged. The VNR lab will take place under the Chatham House Rule to allow for candid discussions. This also applies to the use of social media during the event.

Language

The VNR lab will take place in English only.

Draft agenda

Moderated by APRM Continental Secretariat

1:15-1:20 p.m.	Opening – UN DESA/DPIDG
1:20-1:25 p.m.	Opportunities and risks of the digitalization of government - CEPA member (in person or video recording)
1:25-1:35 p.m.	Sierra Leone (tbc)
1:35-1:45 p.m.	Mauritius (tbc)
1:45-1:55 p.m.	Kenya (tbc)
1:55-2:00 p.m.	Supporting digital government in Africa – APRM
2:00-2:08 p.m.	Baseline study on digital data governance and digital government (based on findings of the UN E-Government Survey) – Mr. Wai Min Kwok, UN DESA/DPIDG
2:08-2:40 p.m.	Open discussion
2:40-2:45 p.m.	Closing – UN DESA/DPIDG

Contact details:

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