

# Comment On 2020 UN eGov Survey Response

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## **Introduction**

- Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, Public Sector friends and family from around the world, I'm honoured to be part of the 20th anniversary of the UN's commitment to helping Member States improve eGovernment service capacity and delivery.
- Over the past decade, I've had the privilege of working closely on a number of esteemed Expert Working Groups and to see first-hand the way in which the Survey's insights, observations and findings have supported governments in their quest to 'leave no one behind,' to deliver 'services for all,' and to accelerate achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- I have been constantly impressed by the way in which this Survey is regularly updated to reflect new and emerging trends, including the shift toward the term Digital Government.
  - In this latest, and I must say most **beautifully accessible** Survey, I have stuck by and loved the observation: '**Digital government is not an end; it is a means to ... ultimately, making life better for all**'.
  - I could not agree more and believe this statement underscores the essence of **Purpose Driven Government** – a phrase coined by Mohammad J Sear from EY which exemplifies our shared Sustainable Development Goals during this Decade of Action.
    - Government as a Platform
    - Multichannel Integration
    - Whole of Society not just Whole of Government
    - Data and People Centric not Tech Centric
  - These are just a few of the trends which caught my eye as I read this year's Survey and reflected on the shift we have witnessed from simply digitising the status to the goal of delivering '**sustainable, inclusive and equitable services to everyone, everywhere**'
  - A goal I am proud to say very much echoes Microsoft's own core mission '**to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.**'

- In this spirit, I was especially pleased to learn from the 2020 Survey that today 80 per cent of Member States now offer specific digital services for youth, for women, for older people, for persons with disabilities, for migrants, for the poor
  - It is truly inspiring to see digital being deployed to help those most in need.

## **Covid-19**

- I'd be remiss in reflecting on the achievements in Digital Government over the past 20 years if I did not contextualise these achievements in relation to the current Covid Crisis:
  - **Digital technologies** have played an increasing role through the years in helping Government address pressing global challenges from managing migration and protecting the environment to helping citizens stay safe and protected.
  - Without a doubt, however, one of the biggest - and I would argue most successful - test of Digital Government has been the way in which it has played a vital role in helping to hold the fabric of civil society together in the face of an unprecedented crisis.
- When Covid first struck our CEO Satya Nadella so presciently observed:
  - We are all **Digital First Responders** now
  - Meaning in essence that we in the tech industry are the **First Responders to the First Responders** - that all of us in the tech industry have a vital role in helping to fulfil the Public Sector mission to ensure the health, education and safety of people everywhere
- I'd like to take a few brief moments here to share some reflections - based on my own work throughout the crisis - on the way in which technology was able to support the Public Sector during its darkest hour of need:
- **Immediate:**
  - When crisis first struck **Innovation Barriers** came down at unthinkable rate:
    - Satya - More transformation in 2 months than in 2 years
    - Sweden Digitised in 7 days
  - **Under the cloud of crisis, the risk of doing nothing outpaced the risk of doing something wrong**
    - As Sarah Paquet, EVP for Shared Services Canada, recently shared with me:

- In the midst of crisis, a planned 3 year roll out of Remote Working was delivered over a weekend in mid-March
  - It is within this context that we saw **Cloud, Data and AI** come together in new ways to enable governments to:
    - Keep citizens informed
    - Deploy and stay connected with First Responders
    - Empower Health care workers to Deliver Virtual Assistance
  - I'd go so far as to say that from the earliest days of the crisis we saw **Data** come into its own as a **National Asset**
    - Taking just one example: **Chatbots were rapidly embraced** – as we learned in real time the way in which they can gather, process, and learn from data to quickly respond to and resolve enquiries
- **Next**
  - After this initial phase of the crisis, we then saw **AGILE in ACTION** as Public Sector agencies everywhere rapidly embraced technology to ensure Continuity of Operations
    - In Italy, the **Ministry of Justice:**
      - Quickly released regulation and deployed remote working to enable court cases to proceed without interruptions
      - Trend now being adopted by increasing number of countries like the Philippines where leaders praised the way in which technology enabled the:
        - Legal System to keep operating and
        - Innocent people to go free
    - And, of course, **Education** – What could be more important than ensuring that learners of all ages are able to continue to learn
      - UAE:
        - Shifted entire country to online learning in weeks – 1.3M
- **Now:**
  - Seeing a shift toward **Whole of Society** and **Government as a Platform** as Member States everywhere break down traditional silos, collaborate across

agencies and harness the power of Data to deliver **social value** whether in the form of:

- Distributing funds to help people keep food on the table or
- Searching for much needed Covid treatments and vaccines
- We are also seeing innovative, new partnerships emerge to **address the vital need for new capacities and skills in the post-Covid era**
  - LinkedIn, GitHub and Microsoft, for example, are coming together to help **25 million** students and workers prepare for the new future of work

### **Conclusion and Call for Action**

- From the printing press to email, from paper to websites, from queuing to immediate resolution:
  - 20 years of UN benchmarking shows that **Government has always been shaped by advances in technology**
- Thanks to the successful delivery of countless government digital services during the Covid Crisis, it is fair to say new and emerging technologies are in the process of driving another fundamental shift the way the Whole of Government works:
  - With the Public Sector **more open than ever before** to embracing new methodologies like Agile, new tools like Data and new technologies like cloud & AI, I truly believe that the **future has never been brighter** for Digital Government.
  - As UN Secretary-General António Guterres has recently noted, **'the post-COVID-19 world will be different and much more digital than before.'**
- It is now up to us all to come together to embrace the combined power of human innovation and technology during this the **UN Decade of Action** to harness the full promise and potential of digital to deliver Public Services that are truly sustainable, truly inclusive and truly available to all.