

XX Infopoverty World Conference
Towards the Digital Society Inspired by SDGs

December 4, 2020

Hybrid meeting streamed on UN Webcast



Agenda

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Hybrid meeting

Opening Session

Institutional greetings

H.E. Emanuela Del Re, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy

Lorenzo Morini, First Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN

Daniela Bas, Director Social Policy and Development, UNDESA

General introduction

Pierpaolo Saporito, President, OCCAM and Infopoverty Programme

First Session How to overcome Covid creating a better Digital Society

Chaired by Melchiade Bukuru, Director, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Office in New York

Staffan De Mistura, Former UN Under-Secretary-General, Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, Deputy Foreign Minister of Italy

Brando Benifei, Member of the European Parliament, Special Commission on Artificial Intelligence in the Digital Era

Daniela Rondinelli, Member of the European Parliament, Commission on Employment and Social Affairs

Sarbuland Khan, Senior Counsellor, UNWTO Liaison Office in New York; Founder of UN-GAID

Djordje Djordjević, Deputy Permanent Observer of IDLO to the UN

Fabrizio Lobasso, Deputy Director Sub-Saharan Africa Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy

Second Session How new technologies and digital services could improve the food security system

Chaired by Giuseppe Enne, Founder and Scientific Advisor, Desertification Research Centre (NRD-UNISS), Italy

Giovanna Seddaiu, EWA-BELT Project Coordinator, NRD-UNISS, Italy

Contributions from

BURKINA FASO **Mamadou Traoré**, Université Nazi Boni
Bazoumana Koulibaly, INERA
Silvia Ciacci, ACRA Foundation

ETHIOPIA **Alemayehu Chala**, Hawassa University
Amsalu Nebiyu, Jimma University

GHANA **Joseph Adjebeng-Danquah**, CSIR-SARI
James Mantent Kombiok, Kundok Development Consult Limited

KENYA **Noel Nekesa Makete**, KALRO
Sheila Okoth, University of Nairobi

SIERRA LEONE **Joseph B. Tholley**, University of Makeni

TANZANIA **Kelvin M. Mtei**, NM-AIST
Anthony Kimaro, International Centre for Research in Agroforestry
Deodatus Stanley Kiriba, Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute

Roundtable: The Euro-African strategy to achieve SDG 2

Moderated by Patrick Worms, President, European Agroforestry Federation

H.E. Amb. Jackline Yonga, Ambassador of Kenya to Italy and Permanent Representative of Kenya to the FAO

Konstandinos Mattas, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Claire Billot, Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement, France

Paul Burgess, Cranfield University, United Kingdom

Adeline Barnaud, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, France

Nadia Serina, STMicroelectronics, Italy

Jasmina Bojic, Founder and Director, UNAFF and UNAFF Traveling Film Festivals, Stanford University, presents: UNAFF, OCCAM and IFTC-UNESCO in the ambit of:

10th Signs of Change Film Festival and 16th UNAFF Traveling Film Festival

THIS BEING HUMAN (Iraq/US) 13 min. Director: Aimie Vallat, Guido Ronge; Producer: Aimie Vallat

RAINBOW CHILDREN - PORTRAIT OF ELIKA (Belgium/Iran) 13 min. Director and Producer: Maryam Bayani

I'M NOT BAD LUCK (THE TRUE STORY OF KESZ VALDEZ) (Brazil/Philippines) 20 min. Directors: Marcos Negrao, Johanna Schnell; Producers: Marcos Negrao, Joseph Litzinger, Miguel Krigner

Fourth Session Best Practices to Fight Poverty: e-Health and e-Welfare for All, Smart Cities and ICT Villages, Circular Economy, Digital Communication

The relaunch of the UN Millennium Village of Sambaina

Toky Ravoavy, ONG Ligne Verte, Madagascar

Ny Najra, School trainer in Sambaina CEG

A Post-Covid Economic Perspective

Saurabh Dani, Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist, World Bank

Focus on Telemedicine

Francesco Sicurello, Chairman, International Institute for Telemedicine

Hassan Ghazal, Founder and President, Moroccan Society for Telemedicine and e-Health

Smart Cities Need to Eliminate the Slums

Ivan Shumkov, CEO, Build Academy

Aliye Çelik, Vice President, Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization

Discussing e-Welfare for All

Toshihiko Murata, Permanent Representative of OCCAM to the UN in New York

Makoto Okubo, General Manager International Affairs, Nippon Life Insurance Co.

Masahiro Ikeno, President, NEC Corporation of America

Cinema and Digital Communication in the Post-Covid Era

Melita Zajc, Associate Professor of media communication, AMEU ISH Ljubljana

Rizwan Ahamd, Director of Instructional Media Centre, MANUU, Ministry of Education, India

Rita Pizzi, Senior Research Fellow, Department of Information Technology, University of Milano, Italy

Final Declaration

The Participants to the 20th Infopoverty World Conference:

Thanking:

The High Representatives from the Italian Republic: H.E. Emanuela Del Re, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy; Fabrizio Lobasso, Deputy Director of the Sub-Saharan Africa Office at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; Lorenzo Morini, First Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations in New York;

The Government of Kenya, represented by H.E. Amb. Jackline Yonga, Ambassador of Kenya to Italy and Permanent Representative of Kenya to the Food and Agriculture Organization;

The European Parliament, represented by Daniela Rondinelli and Brando Benifei, Members of the European Parliament;

The United Nations Agencies, Offices and Conventions Representatives: Daniela Bas, Director for Social Policy and Development at the UN Development and Social Affairs Office; Melchiade Bukuru, Director at the UN Convention to Combat Desertification Office in New York; Sarbuland Kahn, Senior Counsellor at the UN World Tourism Organization Liaison Office in New York;

The United Nations Association Film Festivals, OCCAM and IFTC-UNESCO for presenting the 10th Signs of Change Film Festival and 16th UNAFF Traveling Film Festival, moderated by Jasmina Bojic, Founder and Director of UNAFF and UNAFF Traveling Film Festivals, Stanford University;

Recalling the important contributions exposed during the four previous steps of the conference:

1. *First Step – Davos, 29 January: “Could the Digital Society overcome poverty?”;*
2. *Second Step– 29 May, Worldwide webinar: “[Smart Cities Need to Eliminate the Slums: the New 3D Building Solutions](#)”;*
3. *Third Step– 15 July, Worldwide webinar: “[e-Learning and Telemedicine – Relaunch of the UN Millenium Village of Sambaina](#)”;*
4. *Fourth Step– 17 September, Worldwide webinar: “Expanded cinema enriching new social cultures for gender equality”;*

Appreciating the successful path of the Infopoverty World Conference, which from 2001 achieved results by stressing opportunities progressively opened by the digital revolution for disadvantaged people and providing them with adequate ICT solutions, such as the ICT villages, the UN Millennium Village in Madagascar, the World Food Security e-Centre, the e-MedMed program for telemedicine, the Infopoverty Platform for digital services;

Acknowledging the Final Declarations from past editions of the Conference as guidelines to understand the role of e-services4dev, the mechanism of the digital revolution waves, and how the transfer of knowledge and adequate technologies could accelerate the achievement of SDGs and face the challenge of moving “Towards the Digital Society inspired by SDGs”;

Taking into consideration the statements summarised in the attached **Report**.

The participants convene on the following visions:

- a. To build back better from the disruption caused by the pandemic, we must ensure that the digital society we are creating for the future will be guided by the vision and targets in the 2030 Agenda. From the incredible sense of necessity of fulfilling the digital divide, some important issues came out and emerged strongly: reducing the gap between the centre and the periphery, clean energy and access to energy, gender balance, preventing youth radicalisation, fulfilling existential voids, development cooperation, education, as stated by **H.E. Emanuela Del Re, Fabrizio Lobasso and Lorenzo Morini (on behalf of H.E. Amb. Mariangela Zappia)**, respectively Vice-Minister and Deputy Director Sub-Saharan Africa Office at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and

International Cooperation and First Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN; and reprised by Members of the European Parliament **Daniela Rondinelli** and **Brando Benifei**;

- b. The enhancement of a strong public-private sector partnerships is essential for the achievement of the SDGs, in particular SDG1 (on poverty reduction) and SDG 2 (on the eradication of hunger), while also looking to health, building synergies, and sharing of lessons learned based on practical experiences, as stated by **H.E. Amb. Jackline Yonga**, Ambassador of Kenya to Italy and Permanent Representative of Kenya to the FAO;
- c. Two key lessons need to be learned. The most crucial lesson is that “We are all in this together”. “Go it alone” attitudes and solutions just do not work either for individuals, communities or countries. An equally important lesson is that what we thought of as our digital future is already here, as highlighted by **Staffan De Mistura**, Former UN Under-Secretary-General, Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, Deputy Foreign Minister of Italy, and **Sarbuland Kahn**, Senior Counsellor, UNWTO Liaison Office in New York; Founder of UN-GAID. However, in order for all people to benefit from digital technologies, promoting universal access to ICT is critical, but not sufficient. The lack of digital skills is increasingly emerging as a leading barrier. Urgent actions need to be taken to build digital skills through investing education, literacy and skills training through both formal and informal channels. In addition, efforts to promote digital inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized groups and communities are essential, as illustrated by **Daniela Bas**, Director Social Policy and Development, UNDESA;
- d. Addressing COVID-19 will not be done by vaccines and cures alone. We must have nature as our ally. Restoring degraded lands will curb the human encroachment on the wildlife habitat thus avoiding a dangerous collision course between humans and wildlife. Hence, this will help building back better, as stressed by **Melchiade Bukuru**, Director, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Office in New York;
- e. With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have witnessed first-hand how dependent we are on digital technologies and the extent to which we can keep people connected for economic, political, cultural purposes, without physical proximity, as described by **Djordje Djordjević**, Deputy Permanent Observer of IDLO to the UN. Therefore, the new society’s entelekia process has been accomplished, accelerated by Covid which has imposed a massive use of ICTs best practices for survival from the pandemic. This experience demonstrates how ICTs and new technologies in the hands of poor communities – enriched by ad hoc services finalized to solve their basic needs – make a difference and accelerate a real self-development on the path to general wellbeing, as pointed out by **Pierpaolo Saporito**, President, OCCAM and Infopoverty Programme;
- f. What Covid has done is definitely highlighting the whole aspect of digital technology and all the technologies in play to help people, monitoring, reaching out, an aspect quite underestimated before the arrival of the pandemic, as mentioned by **Saurabh Dani**, Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist, World Bank.

Answering to the call of the UN Secretary-General to face the scourge of the pandemic, the participants converge on the following

DECLARATION

In light of this complex moment in history, digitalization has become a crucial process in the promotion of an inclusive and sustainable society, aiming at guaranteeing full and productive employment and decent work for all, in perfect coherence with SDG 8. Covid-19 is a factor of change affecting the whole planet and the ICTs a global tool to save our social lives.

This is necessary to face new challenges, from social inequalities and injustice to physical and mental health assistance, from poverty and hunger elimination to climate change.

Digital technologies are essential for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. The revolutionary process is underway towards the creation of a New Society, based on digital paradigm. The ancient regime, having demonstrated his incapacity and turbulent management of the global development, is ending. Nobody really knows how the next society will be: 2020 is a sort of year zero Dreamers are welcome but we need practical, coherent, convergent solutions, to be exploited with the help of new and digital technologies.

At the moment, we are immersed in algorithms, platforms, applications, constantly influencing our social behaviour and driven by economic and financial mechanisms. The key for applications comes not from institutional research anymore, but rather from investments made by super-sized multinational enterprises.

To create algorithms based on correct social relations is the starting point towards a society that is more just and collaborative. The amount of accumulated knowledge shall be distributed in order to elevate the youth's skills, oriented towards job creation.

Since the virtual world exceeded the real one, there is a need to build a new society also on these premises. To include the rest of humanity once separated, now connected.

The Conference tackled these issues with a very practical sense, presenting best practices already able to change the current paradigms in the field of food security, telemedicine, e-learning and e-welfare. Moreover, it developed analyses and strategic evaluations able to orient in detail the choices founded on the polar star that are the SDGs.

Finally, it expressed the complexity of the mechanisms at stake, suggesting bracing oneself to seize in the current mutations those positive elements that can be implemented.

The cascade of innovations we are living needs to be seized and, where possible, hastened not only with investments such as the EU Horizon2020 Programme, but especially in terms of regeneration of the institutional governance. This shall become the main engine to develop a wider social profit in terms of jobs, equity, participation.

Having seen the large quantity of suggestions, analyses, projects and strategic considerations, the Conference sees appropriate to consolidate this discussion in a specific initiative on the Next Digital Society vision, able to give further continuity to the debate, open to the most innovative leaders, experts and decision-makers, aimed at studying the current phenomenology and at defining future scenarios in the constant assertion of the digital world in the everyday life, by monitoring innovations and best practices to be a reliable source for the stakeholders.

OCCAM is committed to involve all the Institutions and Personalities, which have been with Infopoverty in these 20 years of activity.

In order to ensure the realization of these premises, the following initiatives have been endorsed and recommended to be supported by Governments, main donors and the UN system:

1. The **EWA-BELT** project, funded by the European Commission's Research and Innovation programme Horizon 2020 under grant agreement No 862848. The project is aimed at implementing the application of ICTs and new technologies towards a Sustainable Intensification (SI) of agriculture productions in organic, agroforestry and mixed crop and livestock farming systems in 38 study areas of 6 countries belonging to East (Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania) and West (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Sierra Leone) Africa. The main goals are protecting natural resources by enhancing climate change resilience and input-use efficiency; enabling an environment so farmers can competitively participate in markets; implementing strategies to reduce pre- and post-harvest losses and to conserve and valorize plant genetic resources, in perfect coherence with SDG 2. The project has been officially introduced by **Giuseppe Enne**, from the Scientific Advisory Board, and presented by **Giovanna**

Seddaiu, Project Coordinator, Desertification Research Centre – University of Sassari, Italy. EWA-BELT was also further discussed in detail by partners coming from the six African countries involved. Furthermore, European Partners of the project discussed a Euro-African strategy to achieve SDG 2 along with **Patrick Worms**, President of the European Agroforestry Federation;

2. The relaunch of the **UN Millennium Village of Sambaina**, originally validated and launched in 2006 by the Infopoverty Programme and illustrated by **Toky Ravoavy** from ONG Ligne Verte and by Sambainan school trainer **Ny Najra**;
3. The **Telemedicine** projects bringing forward the e-MedMed Project, launched by Infopoverty in 2013 and further highlighted by **Francesco Sicurello**, Chairman, International Institute for Telemedicine, and **Hassan Ghazal**, Founder and President, Moroccan Society for Telemedicine and e-Health. Telemedicine can be a great tool in helping the digital revolution in all its disclosure. Promoting the most innovative tools, telemedicine can bring easy and inexpensive instruments and insights within the field to ensure basic health standards across the world. Given the current situation, it is essential that telemedicine plays a role in providing basic sanitary tools to each disadvantaged community;
4. The role of **Smart Cities** in eliminating slums and other urban distortions, as a follow-up of the Robotic Architecture initiative presented at the 19th Infopoverty World Conference, and illustrated by **Ivan Shumkov**, CEO, Build Academy, and **Aliye Çelik**, Vice President, Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization. Homes must be designed to accommodate the needs of their residents in cases of pandemics and quarantines. Kids will need space to learn and study from home and similarly, adults will need to work remotely, if possible. Accessibility and safety are two of the main features the future home needs to integrate;
5. The necessity to ensure **e-Welfare for all**, stated by **Toshihiko Murata**, Permanent Representative of OCCAM to the UN in New York, **Makoto Okubo**, General Manager International Affairs, Nippon Life Insurance Co., and **Masahiro Ikeno**, President, NEC Corporation of America. Artificial Intelligence can minimize the impacts a pandemic like the one we are living now may cause. In particular, the focus should be on supporting the education of the children, thus empowering e-learning using virtual reality technology, on promoting diversity and empowering women and finally on protecting the environment;
6. Initiatives related to **Cinema and Digital Communication in the Post-Covid Era**, held by the International Council of Film and Television at UNESCO, such as those presented by **Melita Zajc**, Associate Professor of media communication, AMEU ISH Ljubljana; **Rizwan Ahamd**, Director of Instructional Media Centre, MANUU, Ministry of Education, India; **Rita Pizzi**, Senior Research Fellow, Department of Information Technology, University of Milano, Italy.
7. The realization of innovative tools, such as the **Smart Box**, designed by OCCAM, able to assure solar energy, clean water, sat connectivity, and primary e-services to communities in need with several portable kits for telemedicine, food security and apps for e-learning, microcredit, ecommerce, in order to provide a basic form of e-welfare.

To implement the results of the XX Infopoverty World Conference the participants

Give mandate to OCCAM to continue as the Permanent Secretariat of the Infopoverty World Conference and Programme, coordinating the efforts to reach the task defined, in order to prepare the 20+1 Edition of the Infopoverty World Conference, which will hopefully take place, as usual, in a physical form at the UN Headquarters in New York.