

# Digital Nations Thematic Group on Artificial Intelligence

## Terms of Reference

This document describes the purpose, objective, and operation of the Digital Nations (DN) Thematic Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI).

### I. Purpose

The Group's overarching goal is to promote learning and responsible innovation with respect to the design, development and use of AI systems in the public sector, including through knowledge exchange and collaboration among Group members.

In pursuing this goal, the Group shall be guided by the "Shared Approach for the Responsible Use of AI by Governments" (hereafter the Shared Approach), endorsed by the DN at the 2018 Ministerial Summit (Annex A).

### II. Objectives

The Group's key objectives for the year 2023 shall be to:

1. Ensure that the DN AI principles (as outlined in the Shared Approach) are aligned with relevant international frameworks and reflect DN values and interests;
2. Foster dialogue among DN member countries on domestic AI governance arrangements; and
3. Strengthen practical collaboration on AI governance among DN member countries.

Each objective shall be advanced through one or more Group activities, as follows:

#### Objective 1:

- Activity 1.1: Examine and revise the DN AI principles, drawing on the current state of their uptake and implementation within DN governments; and relevant international frameworks and processes.
- Activity 1.2: Support dissemination and implementation of the revised principles following endorsement at the 2023 Ministerial Summit.

#### Objective 2:

- Activity 2.1: Hold country presentations on domestic AI governance arrangements (e.g., impact assessments, ethical frameworks, laws, policies, strategies).
- Activity 2.2: Host a roundtable to showcase approaches to automation within DN governments.

#### Objective 3:

- Activity 3.1: Develop and pilot an adaptable DN impact assessment for AI, drawing on an examination of existing impact assessment tools (e.g., algorithmic impact assessments, human rights impact assessments, privacy impact assessments).

### III. Operation

The Group shall aim to meet virtually on a biweekly basis, with specific dates and times to be determined by the DN Secretariat in consultation with Group members. Meetings shall be chaired by Canada, the Group lead for 2023, in coordination with the DN Secretariat. Meeting materials shall be made accessible to Group members on Google Drive or by email.

#### Meeting Schedule

Meeting date ( <i>provisional</i> )	Milestones
<b>Meeting 1:</b> February, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2023 Group workplan and Terms of Reference are endorsed.</li> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> country presentation is delivered.</li> </ul>
<b>Meetings 2-3:</b> June, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaps in DN AI principles are identified and agreed on.</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> country presentations are delivered.</li> </ul>
<b>Meetings 4-5:</b> July, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisions to DN AI principles are drafted and discussed.</li> <li>• 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> country presentations are delivered.</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting 6:</b> August, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised DN AI principles are proposed for consultation.</li> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> country presentation is delivered.</li> </ul>
<b>Meetings 7-8:</b> September, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised DN AI principles are finalized.</li> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> country presentations are delivered.</li> <li>• Approach to DN impact assessment is agreed on.</li> </ul>
<b>Meetings 9-10:</b> October, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roundtable on public sector automation (details TBD).</li> <li>• Remaining country presentations are delivered.</li> <li>• Initial draft of DN impact assessment is developed and discussed.</li> </ul>
<b>Meetings 11-12:</b> November, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress report for the 2023 DN Ministerial Summit is prepared.</li> <li>• Proposal to endorse the revised DN AI principles at the 2023 DN Ministerial Summit is submitted.</li> <li>• Draft DN impact assessment is refined and tested with use-case.</li> </ul>
<b>Meetings 13-14:</b> December, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft DN impact assessment is finalized.</li> <li>• Preparations for handover to next chair (details TBD).</li> </ul>

#### Membership

Group membership is open to DN member countries (Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Israel, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal, United Kingdom, Uruguay). Members shall register their interest in participating in the Group with the DN Secretariat, who shall maintain the Group's membership list. Members shall also inform the DN Secretariat of any changes in Group membership. Where a member country has several representatives in the Group, it is encouraged to inform the DN Secretariat of the primary point of contact.

## Annex A

### D9 approach for responsible use of AI by Governments (2018)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to help governments realize a future of greater effectiveness and responsiveness, and to do a better job meeting the needs of society, than has been possible to date. The ability to identify patterns in vast data and, where helpful and appropriate, to take automated action will help maximize the benefit to the public through the improved delivery of services. This will require the appropriate design, development, and enforcement of policy and regulations.

Whether using AI to improve public services or enhance operational efficiencies it must be designed and implemented carefully. If not, we risk making erroneous decisions based on misinterpretations of data. We believe that AI should not only follow - but be built to improve - core principles of our respective societies, including transparency, accountability, and procedural fairness.

This is why we have come together to agree on the following best practices related to the use of AI other than for purposes of national security and defence. Together, we can advance on this important innovation for our populations in a manner that is responsible, in accordance with international human rights obligations, and prioritizes the needs of citizens and users.

Accordingly, we will promote the following goals:

1. Understand and measure the impact of using AI by developing and sharing tools and approaches.
2. Be transparent about how and when we are using AI, starting with a clear user need and public benefit.
3. Provide meaningful explanations about AI decision-making, while also offering opportunities to review results and challenge these decisions.
4. Be as open as we can by sharing source code, training data, and other relevant information, all while protecting personal information, system integration, and national security and defence.
5. Provide sufficient training so that government employees developing and using AI solutions have the responsible design, function, and implementation skills needed to make AI-based public services better.