Report
Zoom Webinar Global Forum 2021
Steering Committee Meeting, 16 October 2020

Kant: *"someone´s intelligence can be measured by the quantity of uncertainties that he can bea*r*"*.

Participants:

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The Global Forum 2021 Steering Committee Meeting on 16 October 2020 was held via three Zoom webinarstaking into account the different time zones Asia, Europe and Africa, and the USA and Canada.

All three webinars were very well-attended. The livelyand valuable discussionsallowed tocome upwith new perspectives on theGlobal Forum's programme, new ideason how to present and link key topics and how to strengthen the conference dynamics.

This report sums up the outputs of the three webinars.

The Global Forum 2021 Steering Committee Meeting wasmoderated by Ingrid Andersson, supported by SylvianeToporkoff and Tom Mackenzie.Ingrid guided through the three Zoom sessions with great ease.

Oman - the Destination for Global Forum 2021

Oman (about 5 million inhabitants, the size of Finland) is also known as"the Switzerland of the Gulf" because of itsvery high diplomatic standing. Oman is regularly hosting diplomatic talksdue to its geographic situation and political stability.

As a trade hub in the Middle East, Oman has strong links with Europe, Africa,Asia and the US.Oman is close to the big international hubs and very business friendly.

The Ibadi Islam,which is practiced in Oman, is the most tolerant form of Islam. Omanis are very open-minded and welcoming towards all other religions.

The country has a very modern infrastructure with several ports and airports, among those the new Muscat International Airport.

Oman's authorities are very positive about hosting the Global Forum. First contacts have been establishedand bothMinistryof Transport, Communications and ICT and the Ministry of Commerce and Industryagreed to support the Global Forum 2021.

For info, the United Nations Security Council is based in Oman.

Prof.Yoshio Tanaka,member of the Steering committee Asia, can provide connection to the Japanese Ambassador in Oman and Dr.Latif Ladid have participated in conferences in Oman during the past years and thereby have a number of local contacts.

All: Kindly e-mail Ingridif you have any direct contacts to partners in Oman.

Proposed Dates:

➢ **Monday 6ᵗʰand Tuesday 7ᵗʰof December 2021**

As kindly informed by John Giusti the ITU 2021 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-21) is to take place in Ethiopia, from 8 to 19 November 2021, it is recommended that Global Forum 2021 is scheduledfor the month of December.

Just for info:

- TheGeneral Assembly of the International Science Council is planned to be held between 9 and 14 October 2021 in Oman
- The Global Forum 2021 coincides with the World Expo in Dubai (Oct. 2021 to March 2022).

Potential Venues:

Conference venues

- Option I: Crowne Plaza Hotel Qurum, located at the sea front with excellent conference facilities allowing round table discussions and break-out sessions for group interactions.
- Option II: The Royal Opera House Muscat, the first of its kind in the Gulf region. It could be interesting to organise Global Forum 2021 in a cultural setting.

The Opera House could also be a suitable venue for the *Gala Dinner*(as in the Global Forum in Venice).

The Chedi Muscat Hotel was recommended as conference venueduring the webinar Europe & Africa. However, being a very beautiful hotel, its conference facilities are lesssuitable for GF.However, the Chedi Muscat Hotel could be a potential venue for the *Gala Dinner*.

The *Gala Dinner* will take place in a close-to sea location (venue TBD). The Omani food combines flavours from India, North Africa and Lebanon. Wine is allowed to be served.

The *Welcome Reception* on Sunday evening, marking thecommencementof the Global Forum (December 5th) will take place at The National Museum of Oman, Muscat.

Programme

The Steering Committee agreed to have onefull-day and a half-day of conference sessions and to dedicate the afternoon of the 2ndday to visits of high-tech and cultural sites.

The two-days eventwill be dedicated to "Digital Solutions Addressing Global Societal Challenges".

In order to keep the audience vivid and active during the entire two days, the discussion of Covid-19 impacts has been scheduled for the second day.The aim isto set the Global Forum in a very concrete and targeted way and to initiate real cross border collaboration projects for joint actions.

- **Opening Session on Future Visions**

The Opening Session should set the scene and provide a vison of the future. The aim of the Global Forum is to connect the digital world with the societal challenges in regard to environment, health and security. How can digital solutions support to solve and enable to tacklethe global challenges (including the impact of Covid-19)?

The participants of the *webinar Asia*recommendedto includetestimonials from different parts of the worldin the opening vision. The opening vision should inspire the floor for actions in regard to exploration of collaborative projects.

The complexities of the post Covid-19 world should be reflected in the new edition of Global Forum (i.e., climate change, effects of global pandemics and motivations of consumption, population growth, conflict, and social contestation, but also human resilience and transformations sweeping industries due to remote working from home and ICTs).

The participants of the *webinar Europe, Africa and the Middle East*agreed that the vision should include "resilience". How digital is used for more resilient societies?

The participants of the *webinar USA & Canada*suggested that the morning opening panels of Day 1 should set the stage for something really dynamic.Ideally this kick-off sessionshould start with a thoughtful provocative vision and a highly interactive dialogue among experts and the audience.

The opening session would benefit from including people with visions (philosophers, sociologists, economists…)—not to forget the governmental and geopolitical aspects so as to provide different visions of how to regulate the legal, human, ethical and business aspects of IT across different regions of the world.

It was also proposed to make the morning session more dynamic by putting forward some guidelines: No prepared statements, inviting a panel of leading experts from multiple disciplines making sharp statements about the confluence of a number of social and technical issues in combination with one or two spirited moderators and then encouraging the audience to ask questions/comment.

The general remark was made to be conscious of the diversity in speakers –in regard to gender, origin, age etc. Givethe youth a voice,especially from the region,and listen to & acknowledge their vision of the digital society.

Another suggestion was to reformulate the sessions' titles into questions (using "How", "Why" and "What" as beginning words).

Proposed new titles for the opening panel:

- "*Digital dynamics confronting the new realities*";
- *"Confronting the digital revolution"*
- *Human Elements of the Digital Transformation: Man-Machine Interface on a Grand Scale, balancing People-Process-Technology*

> **Panel Session on Digital Infrastructures (and how they support global societal challenges)**
> *(topicsto bealsoincluded in other sessions)*

To be noted on the title of the session; the participants of the *webinar Europe & Afric*a proposed the following

- "*Intelligent infrastructures for resilience and cooperative societies*".

Another title suggestion was proposed as per below:

- *"Highly powerful computing & intelligent network Infrastructures: Anticipating the upcoming challenges"*

The participants of the *webinar Asia*recommended to provide a couple of different perspectives and projects (from Middle East, Japan…) and to add the following aspects to the discussion of this key topic:

- Education and awareness (the use of data/ who owes my data…)
- Standardization

The participants of the *webinar Europe & Africa*suggestedto talk about infrastructure in more general terms and focus less on the technical aspects of 5G. Current discussions in the EC and institutions are much more targeted on how countries build this kind of digital infrastructure to enable e-Services on the societal level, e.g., platforms for digital identity. The session should focus on capabilities for e-societies instead of basic infrastructure.

It was proposed to add:

- digital and green transformation
- the cloud dimension - especially linked to the data governance framework and data flows and transfers

Furthermore, social innovation, future networks and resilience were considered important aspect in this context, as well as the human centric perspective, i.e., how individuals can be empowered by the digital infrastructure. It was proposed to go beyond digital and to talk about intelligent infrastructures for cooperation and resilience.

As infrastructure is an underlying and transversal theme for most of the other sessions (and given the remarks for the previous webinars), the participants of the *webinar USA & Canada* recommended not to dedicate an entire session to "infrastructure" but to include this topic in other sessions.

Alain Shark (et al.) will work with Sylviane on spreading the topics related to infrastructure among the other sessions (taking into account the remarks from the other webinars).

➢ **Afternoon Keynote Session on Collaboration between the Digital and Human Worlds**

During the *webinar Europe & Africa*, changes in the session's title have been discussed:

- *"Synergy between the digital and human worlds"*
- *Collaboration between human and AI (with the human at the centre)*
- *Co-evolution between human and machine*
- *Digital at the service of a human centred approach and trusted socio-economic innovation*

➢ **Parallel Session on Big Data, Artificial Intelligences &IoT**
New title proposed as per below:

- *Intelligent Applications& Services enabled by disruptive Digital technologies includingArtificial Intelligences, IoT, 5G , Blockchain*

Covid-19 leads to increased surveillance for the general well-being but reinforces the questions of the ownership over data and profit from those data.In order to be much more concrete in terms of the experience, participants from *Europe & Asia* suggested to focus on

- Learnings from the use of big data and AI around Covid-19
- Who owns the data? Is it just a loan? What can be done with it?

Participants from the *USA & Canada* proposed make the panel multidisciplinary and to include the following aspects:

- • the U.S. - China concerns about AI
- • privacy concerns about AI
- • controlling AI
- • how and whethergovernments should use AI

➢ **Parallel Session on Regulatory Policy & Governance Framework**
(Session to be redesigned)

The participants of the *webinar Asia* proposed to add the following aspect to the discussion of this key topic:

- • Digital Identity

The participants of the *webinar Europe & Africa*proposed to focus on "new uses", i.e., "*Designing a Regulatory Policy & Governance Framework depending on the New Uses*".

Furthermore, a discussion on the right policy instruments for digital sovereignty (as it is currently discussed in the U.S. and EU) was encouraged: What impacts on innovation and regulation? What about creating equal opportunities for all actors?

It was also discussed whether a dedicated session on regulation is really necessary as regulation is transversal and touching all other sessions.

The participants of the *webinar USA & Canada* recommended to keep this session on regularity issues. The session touches a lot of other areas and there are some real global questions, especially with regards to privacy, AI and cyber, the US model, the China model, or Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act(and the protections that social media companies have), …

Parallel Session on Industry 4.0 / Smart Industry

This session on industry will be much more connected to the local region than the sessions before.

During the *webinar Europe & Africa* it was proposed to differentiate between big and small industries. (For instance, process productivity or blockchain are very different in small companies compared to large ones. At the same time, it is also important to have the point of view of big companies).

There is strong local interest in the topic of Industry 4.0 as Oman plans to adopt the concept and invest in Industry 4.0 in the coming years. It might be interesting to look at the marine environment and fisheries as digital uses, and the oil and gas industry as leaders in Industry 4.0, especially in the GCC countries. In regard to the societal challenges Industry 4.0 connects to the concept of circular economy and the numerous of digital solutions propelling their support to this agenda,

In order to not forget the human aspect, itwas proposed to add the question:

- What is an Industry 4all?

Parallel Session on Women Pioneers at the Intersection between Economic and EnvironmentalDevelopment

Just as the session on industry, this session will be a bit more concentrated on the local scene in order to connect with different partners and provide the possibility for cooperation.

Women from the region will demonstrate their start-ups in tech areas.In the Middle East, a lot of young women have set up start-ups using digitalenablers for their business. They also have innovated the serviceIndustry in the Middle East by adopting novel digital solutions.

As women represent the largest share of people working in sectors like education, healthcare, agriculture and household services, it was proposed to also address

- The impact of Covid-19 on women's digital inclusion
- Bias, diversity, education, and the digital divide

Keynote Opening Session Day 2

Day 2 will be dedicated to post-Covid-19 and societal challenges.

The participants of the *webinar Asia*proposed to change the subtitle of this keynote session as follows "*How the pandemic changes our society and what does the future look like*?". This could cover a wide range of questions related to surveillance, transport and travel habits for the future, an increased importance the integration of digital…

Because some of the current hot topics will be less important in November 2021, the session would ideallycover the perspective of the future and address questions like

- Towards a contactless society?
- Sustainability and the role of technology in this?

As a general remark, it was stated that, even if the year 2020 is marked by Covid-19, one should not forget that the Global Forum is a digital and prospective event.

➢ **Panel Session discussing thequestion: COVID-19 Pandemic as a Technology Accelerator?**

The participants of the *webinar Asia*suggested to put some more local angles in this session and to add:

- Digital innovation in the Middle East / What kind of collaborative projects with the Middle East?

During the*webinar Europe & Africa*, the remark was made to distinguish

- Short term consequences and measures taken throughout the world
- Long-term consequences, measures and networks' transformation

It was also proposed to add

- Success stories/lessons learnt

The scope of the session might be broadened as Covid-19 impacted so many aspects (digital divide, nations closing their boarders, democratic procedures, surveillance, privacy and integrity…). Covid-19 was also a return of the nation-state. It was proposed to add the question

- How to make the future more collaborative?

It might be interesting to add geopolitical issues, e.g., Europe's dependency upon the U.S. has increased with the Covid-19 apps.

Referring to the bullet "the need of data access", the participants of the *webinar USA & Canada* commented that Covid-19 has revealed the global need to find better ways to make data accessible and useful in monitoring our behaviour in response to the pandemic. This raises some issues to be added:

- How do we develop global standards for the data in a collaborative way?
- How different countries handle data?

Moreover, suggestions were put forward to add:

- The impact of e-learning
- The impact of teleworking / telepresence / tele-existence

➢ **Parallel Session on Sustainable Smart, Cognitive Cities, Regions & Communities & Tech for Good**

The session has a strong focus oncross-border collaborationand new ways of cooperation. How can we collaborate as cities, regions communities?

During the *webinar Europe & Africa* it was proposed to replace the word "smart" by "wise" and to add the following topic:

- Circular economy, social innovation and citizen participation

The participants of the *webinar USA & Canada* emphasised that the number of topics in this session would allow to divide the session in two. A possibility to be evaluated (e.g., one part for showcases, a second one for discussions).

The participants recommended to add the following issues to be discussed:

- How to plan collaboratively in order to achieve sustainable and resilient cities and regions? How to measure that (indicators, benchmarking at a global scale…)?
- Confidence-building measures (CBMs)

It was recommended to avoid a scattershot approach covering too manydifferent aspects. Better to push the discussion forward and to focus more specifically on what it means to become a cognitive city or community.

> **Parallel Session on Digital Healthcare & Global Challenges**

The participants of the *webinar Asia* proposed that forecasting should be a focus of this session (how do we forecast pandemics, climate change etc.?).

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> **5 ThematicSessions (topics of the upcoming webinars):**

As preparation for the Global Forum, 5 thematic discussions in form of webinars will be organized from the beginning of next year.

Experts in certain fields from all over the world will be invited. The thematic sessions could be the start of working on some real action projects together.

The following 4 thematic sessionshave been proposed:

- Shaping the digital society within COVID-19
- Security, privacy, regulation and frameworks for sustainable Digital Infrastructure
- Digitally empowered NBS solutions water-energy food
- Digital solutions for sustainability – engaging & shapingindividuals and communities

The participants of the *webinar Asia* proposed the following topics for the 5th thematic session:

- Common good and human
- Dignity embedded in technology
- Responsible innovation and responsible use of technology