



Ministerial Declaration
G7 Digital and Technology Ministers' meeting
28 April 2021

We, the G7 Digital and Technology Ministers, met on 28 April 2021 under the chairmanship of the Rt. Hon Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, of the Government of the United Kingdom, to discuss the digital and technology agenda under the theme of 'building back better'.

Our collective recovery from COVID-19 must be rooted in a desire to build back a better, more productive and resilient global economy, with digital technology at its heart. This should support open societies in the digital and data-driven age, and be guided by our shared democratic values of open and competitive markets, strong safeguards including for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international cooperation which drives benefits for our citizens, economies and global well-being.

We have therefore decided to place the needs of open, democratic societies at the centre of the technology debate and to work together towards a trusted, values-driven digital ecosystem. We believe that such ecosystems must enhance prosperity in a way that is sustainable, inclusive and human-centric. We have also affirmed our opposition to measures which may undermine these democratic values, such as government-imposed Internet shutdowns and network restrictions.

This will be delivered through six important interventions at every level of the technology stack, from the physical infrastructure and digital technical standards that underpin it, to the data that fuels it, and the applications and content with which consumers and businesses interact on a daily basis in order to harness the opportunities that the digital economy presents. The interventions address:

- **Promoting Secure, Resilient, and Diverse Digital, Telecoms, and ICT Infrastructure Supply Chains**
- **A Framework for G7 Collaboration on Digital Technical Standards**
- **A G7 Roadmap for Cooperation on Data Free Flow with Trust**
- **G7 Internet Safety Principles**
- **Deepening Cooperation on Digital Competition**
- **A Framework for G7 Collaboration on Electronic Transferable Records**



Promoting Secure, Resilient, and Diverse Digital, Telecoms, and ICT Infrastructure Supply Chains

Digital and ICT infrastructure underpins modern societies and helps to deliver inclusive economic growth. The rapid pace of technological advancement is increasing dependence on such infrastructure, and therefore the need to assure its security, resilience, reliability and integrity. We are committed to working together, and with other international partners, to lead global efforts on this important agenda.

In our first discussion of this topic, we recognised the foundational role that telecommunications infrastructure, including 5G and future communication technologies, plays and will play in underpinning our wider digital and ICT infrastructure, and therefore the importance of assuring security and resilience in this critical technology layer in a long term and sustained manner.

To support this objective, we discussed options for promoting a more secure, resilient, diverse, competitive, transparent and sustainable digital and ICT infrastructure supply chain, particularly in global telecoms. We discussed that such infrastructures require a rigorous evaluation of equipment, consistent with existing measures such as those outlined in the Prague Proposals, and the EU's 5G toolbox. We also considered how to encourage innovation, and to actively explore the potential of emerging open and interoperable network architectures, alongside current technological offers. We noted that such approaches should maintain or enhance security, performance, energy efficiency and resilience, and could stimulate the emergence of new entrants to the market both now and in the future.

Our officials will continue this discussion later in the year, and will establish expert points of contact to advance long term collaboration, including with industry, civil society, multilateral fora and other relevant stakeholders, and to share best practices.

A Framework for G7 Collaboration on Digital Technical Standards

The industry-led digital technical standards ecosystem has been a catalyst for the growth and adoption of the Internet and digital technologies. We recognise the significant and positive role that digital technical standards have in supporting the global economy and society. We recognise that the way in which digital technical standards are developed and deployed has a real world impact on citizens and societies.



Therefore, building on the 2017 Italian G7 ICT and Industry Ministerial Declaration, we reiterate our strong support for industry-led, inclusive, multi-stakeholder approaches for the development of technical standards. It is essential that the development of digital technical standards continues to be underpinned by transparency, openness of process and participation, relevance and consensus-based decision-making in line with core principles for standards development.

We commit to international collaboration within the G7 and with like-minded partners in relevant fora to ensure that the development of digital technical standards supports our core values. We will work with stakeholders to ensure inclusive digital technical standards development processes for areas such as the Internet, telecommunications and emerging digital technologies. In particular, we will work with stakeholders towards the more inclusive development of Internet protocols that contribute to and protect the continuing evolution of an open, interoperable, reliable and secure internet, one that is unfragmented, supports freedom, innovation and trust, and empowers people. We firmly state our opposition to any government-imposed approaches that fundamentally seek to reshape the digital technical standards ecosystem.

To deliver this, we have endorsed a *Framework for Collaboration* (Annex 1) which sets out areas for G7 and like minded partners' collaboration on digital technical standards and offers a pathway for constructive engagement.

A G7 Roadmap for Cooperation on Data Free Flow with Trust

The ability to move data across borders is essential for economic growth and innovation. COVID-19 has demonstrated the need for data free flow with trust and its role in the global recovery.

We recognise the importance of unlocking the power of data in our economies and our societies, while continuing to address challenges related to privacy, data protection, intellectual property rights, and security.

We believe that it is vital we work together to better leverage the potential of valuable data-driven technologies, promote international cooperation to drive benefits for our economies and societies, and ensure personal data are appropriately protected, while recognising our varied approaches to data governance.

Building on the 2019 G20 Osaka Leaders' Declaration, the 2019 G20 Ministerial Statement on Trade and Digital Economy, and the 2020 G20 Leaders' Riyadh Declaration, we will draw



upon our shared values as like-minded, democratic, open and outward looking nations to support a plan of work which realises the benefits of data free flow with trust.

To deliver this, we endorse a *Roadmap for Cooperation on Data Free Flow with Trust* (Annex 2) which sets out our plan for delivering tangible progress on this agenda, building confidence for businesses and individuals to use technology, as well as driving economic and social value. As part of this Roadmap, we will work to accelerate the development of mutually acceptable data sharing practices for agreed priority sectors, and we will build evidence on the economic and societal impacts of data localisation measures. We will also champion progress of the OECD's work on 'Mapping commonalities in regulatory approaches to cross-border data transfers' and on trusted 'Government access to personal data held by the private sector'.

G7 Internet Safety Principles

We recognise that actions by governments, companies, academia, civil society and individuals are improving internet safety and we note the positive steps taken by companies to keep their users safe in a responsible and risk-based way. In line with our domestic approaches, we believe that further steps from governments, companies, academia, civil society and other interested stakeholders should be taken to improve internet safety, including to educate and empower people of all ages to increase access and knowledge, enabling users to make informed and safe choices online. These steps should also support our shared values as open and democratic societies, and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We note that despite some positive steps and technological improvement, harmful content and activity remains widespread online. This undermines our democratic values, risks the physical safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable user groups, reduces online participation and diminishes trust in the online environment.

We endorse the *G7 Internet Safety Principles* (Annex 3) which demonstrate our support for a set of underpinning principles to guide G7 approaches to improving online safety, and a set of operational principles where consensus exists for specific action.

Deepening Cooperation on Digital Competition

Competitive digital markets drive innovation across the global economy, enhance consumer choice and allow the sectors that rely on the digital economy to flourish. However, there is increasing international concern that participants with significant market power can abuse



that power to hold back digital markets and the wider economy. We recognise it is in our shared interest to coordinate and cooperate.

We will therefore build upon the 2019 French G7 Presidency's common understanding on 'Competition and the Digital Economy', recognising the expanding evidence base and policy initiatives that have been, and continue to be, developed. By working together, including in existing international and multilateral fora, we can find coherent and complementary ways to encourage competition and support innovation in digital markets. We note various approaches taken around the world to address these challenges, but recognise that we will be most effective if we find commonalities between them

To support existing workstreams on enforcement and policy related to digital competition, we will invite the UK's Competition and Markets Authority to convene a meeting of G7 competition authorities in 2021. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss long term coordination and cooperation to better understand enforcement approaches, market characteristics and policy initiatives related to competition in digital markets, including in existing international and multilateral fora.

The coordination and cooperation between competition authorities should be complemented by increased coordination between policymakers. The UK will therefore also host relevant officials in 2021 to discuss the importance of promoting competition through regulatory policies for digital markets, including through further coordination with competition authorities. Both meetings will draw on expertise and evidence from G7 policymakers, competition authorities and other relevant work including from the OECD, and should subsequently report to the G7, highlighting outcomes and next steps.

Framework for G7 Collaboration on Electronic Transferable Records

Paper-based transactions, which still dominate international trade are a source of cost, delay, inefficiency, fraud, error and environmental impact. It is our shared view that by enabling businesses to use electronic transferable records we will generate efficiencies and economic savings. This will strengthen the resilience of our global economic system and play a crucial role in trade recovery across the G7.

We endorse our *Framework for G7 collaboration on Electronic Transferable Records* (Annex 4), through which we will initiate a dialogue between experts to work to achieve compatible domestic reforms, and provide collective support to other international initiatives seeking to facilitate and enable the adoption of electronic transferable records.



This Framework will champion the work of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and promote the adoption of legal frameworks compatible with the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records 2017. It will also support international efforts to facilitate legal reforms as well as ongoing work by other international fora on interoperability and cooperation on relevant regulatory issues to promote the use of electronic transferable records. This will also enable the private sector to adopt these digital solutions for their transactions.

Towards the Cornwall Summit

Recognising that COVID-19 has underlined the importance of digital technologies to our economies and society, deepened their uptake and made the acceleration of digital transformation essential to our recoveries as we ‘build back better’, we recommend that Leaders consider these important topics at the Cornwall Summit.

Noting the importance of building a broad coalition to guide and shape the role and application of digital technologies in the future, we welcome the UK’s hosting of the ‘Future Tech Forum’ in September 2021, which will convene like-minded democratic partners to discuss the role of technology in supporting open societies and tackling global challenges, in collaboration with industry, academia, and other key stakeholders.

Annexes:

Annex 1: Framework for G7 Collaboration on Digital Technical Standards

Annex 2: A G7 Roadmap for Cooperation on Data Free Flow with Trust

Annex 3: G7 Internet Safety Principles

Annex 4: Framework for G7 Collaboration on Electronic Transferable Records