IGF 2020 Environment Track narrative (ver. 3 clean)

Please find the previous version with edits here:

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Short description

Environmental sustainability and climate action is a fundamental component of the UN 2030 Agenda. At the current pace, however, the world seems to be dangerously off-track of delivering these targets, especially the Paris Agreement commitment to limit climate change to 1.5ºC. Transcending sectors and regions, climate action is an issue that all stakeholders have committed to, but one that calls for truly integrated and innovative solutions.

The Internet and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have a powerful impact in the face of this challenge. They connect people, initiatives and resources across the globe, opening up relationships, information and avenues for collaboration. They can help monitor and track the environment, facilitating understanding, prevention and more targeted interventions globally.

At the same time, digital technologies can also be deployed in ways that counter the goals. While the ICT sector currently performs better than the wider market, the sector's expected growth poses its own challenges on energy use and carbon emissions as well as other negative externalities such as increasing resource consumption, pollution associated with manufacturing and e-waste. There is an urgent need to identify and address the cases in which the development and use of Internet and ICTs as well as related devices and services may have adverse environmental impacts.

This track aims to understand the interdependences between the use of Internet and digital technologies to preserve the environment, but also to threaten its sustainability. It will consider how the positive impacts of ICTs for climate action can be enhanced while minimizing any negative impact.

Associated Tags/Issues
- Climate change;
- ICTs impact on the environment;
- ICTs carbon footprint;
- Management and limitation of e-waste ;
- Technology development for climate action;
- Biodiversity;

- Responsible consumption;
- Conservation;
- Clean and renewable energy;
- Water scarcity;
- Sustainable cities / Smart cities;
- Emerging technologies and environment;
- Leveraging artificial Intelligence and big data for environmental sustainability.

Associated [Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)](link): [6](link), [7](link), [11](link), [13](link), [14](link), [15](link)

Illustrative Policy Questions:
- How can existing and emerging digital technologies contribute to addressing climate change and how can they foster change in various sectors of the economy (manufacturing, trade, agrifood, etc.)? What initiatives exist and what can be done to improve them?
- What can be done to reduce the carbon footprint of ICTs (e.g. sustainable infrastructure, carbon-neutral data centres, efficient manufacturing, use and recycling of devices, etc.)? What lessons can be learned from various communities (e.g. indigenous peoples, small island states etc.) and existing initiatives?
- What role can data and AI play in tackling sustainability issues such as climate change, biodiversity, conservation and water scarcity?
- How could policy-making benefit from the analysis of big data to better understand impacts of policy decisions on sustainability?