

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen!

It is a great honor for me to speak today at the Turkmentel 2024 conference, Turkmenistan's premier event in the field of digital technologies and telecommunications. At the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), we see digital transformation as the foundation of sustainable development that can improve governance, identify new directions for the economy, and improve the quality of life of every citizen.

In today's world the importance of digital processes and the use of emerging technologies like AI and Blockchain in public policy and development projects cannot be overstated. These realities, have the potential to bring immense changes to people's lives, and we can already see the potential in all walks of life. However, to fully embrace and utilize the power of these tools, while leaving no one behind we have to prepare well, and ensure that we have a clear vision for the future.

In the organization that I represent, we believe that Digitalization can be a powerful force for good, enabling processes and enhancing development outcomes across all programming. We believe that our organization, but also our partners and national institutions, should emphasize the importance of developing innovative digital cultures, supported by strong capabilities that would be able to meet the challenges of the future.

Today is a good opportunity to be reminded that only this September, world leaders met in the UNGA and adopted the Pact for the Future, where countries further emphasized the role of digitalization and the importance of global cooperation to improve our digital practices and realities.

So, this conference comes at a perfect time, where the digital agenda is in everyone's focus, and UNDP is ready to continue to support Turkmenistan in pursuing a Digital vision for the country.

The United Nations Development Programme emphasizes the need for responsible use of technology and data management in all its initiatives. In UNDP's global Digital Strategy, we emphasize the importance of ethical norms and standards that will help protect human rights and ensure equitable access to digital resources, as well as the principle of "Leaving no one behind," which is one of the fundamental principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Today, I would like to highlight several key areas where digitalization and digital innovation have the potential to bring about immense impact for the future of Turkmenistan, its institutions, and its people, and how we are ready at UNDP to support the institutions in realizing this vision and be with you in that journey.

Next year, 2025, the period of validity of the *State Program for the Development of the Digital Economy of Turkmenistan for 2021–2025* will end. This will present institutions with an opportune moment to look back, evaluate, summarize, and prepare for what comes next. The experience of the past five years has shown how important, comprehensive planning is, especially in matters of digital transformation of the state, where it is especially important to take into account the interaction of various systems, the degree of readiness and digital maturity of various government agencies, as well capacities and readiness of IT specialists, IT managers, and citizens of the country.

Looking ahead, we can all see the importance of a clear path, a roadmap for the digital transformation of the state. This document should take into account the reality of today, assess the opportunities and challenges facing the country, and potentially incorporate some of the vast institutional memory and experience that UNDP has in this space. As a reminder UNDP is working in 170 countries and territories, and heavily invested here, in Turkmenistan, where we have worked together with institutions on some of the earliest pilots in digitalization until today. UNDP **offers** cooperation in the development of the ‘State Program for the Development of the Digital Economy of Turkmenistan’ for 2026-2030. This program could include such components as planning and implementation of public services, plans for the development of digital infrastructure, principles of data management for decision-making based on them, and, of course, the development of digital literacy for public sector employees and the population.

This program could help strategically prioritize, calculate the financial needs of different initiatives to ensure their effective use, and channel resources across ministries, ensuring a coordinated approach to digitalization. It could set priorities, timelines, and measurable targets for Turkmenistan’s digital transformation, making it more inclusive and sustainable. UNDP has extensive experience in supporting similar programs around the world; and, more importantly, we have close collaboration and an understanding of the country here in Turkmenistan, where we have

worked almost 30 years on advancing the development agenda together. We are ready to apply our knowledge and technical capabilities here in Turkmenistan to help create a program that meets the country's unique needs and objectives. UNDP in Turkmenistan also offers co-financing from its own resources for the development of this program.

We are ready to help in developing this State Program. Noteworthy, we have already worked with institutions on the implementation of key provisions from the current State Program for the Development of the Digital Economy for 2021-2025, so we wish for this collaboration to continue.

Dear friends, allow me to also offer some specific comments, and feedback about the state of digitalization in Turkmenistan.

In any state-of-the-art digital systems, it is very important to have reliable ***electronic identification and authorization***. Today Turkmenistan still needs to develop a national ID and an electronic signature system. Identification and authorization systems serve as the basis for digital services that can simplify government procedures, ensure greater transparency, and effective interaction between citizens, businesses, and the state. This can offer new avenues for institutions and solve existing governance bottlenecks.

UNDP has offered its assistance in creating the infrastructure for digital identification and electronic signature within the framework of the joint program between the Government of Turkmenistan and the UN in 2024 and is ready to discuss the details of this task with all interested parties. We are confident that by building these important components of the digital public infrastructure, Turkmenistan will make a decisive breakthrough in its quest for the digital transformation of the state.

Turkmenistan is currently in the active stage of creating ***digital databases***. Due to the emergence of various new information systems that collect data, the digitization of existing data, and, of course, an important component of accelerating this process is the introduction of the electronic data interchange system (EDI), which UNDP is implementing right now together with the "Turkmenragatnashyk" Agency.

When an organization cannot get accurate data from another one and cannot trust this data, the EDI system is not doing what it should. We live in a data driven world, and smooth data processes are a prerequisite for the further digital transformation of the country and development of e-Governance. Having these systems will ensure the secure and effective use of data and will improve the decision-making process at all levels of government. Reliable data is the basis of effective usage of the electronic data interchange system for effective governance to identify and address public needs and strengthen data security.

We believe UNDP is the right partner, and now is the right time, to commence joint work on data governance, starting with defining methodologies for secure data collection and storage, management of data, and, of course, data analysis for evidence-based decision-making that will lead to better outcomes for society and ensure that the country achieves the SDGs and leaves no one behind.

Ladies and gentlemen, the vision I have outlined today is not ambitious. Knowing the potential of the people and institutions in Turkmenistan, this is achievable. We see the potential; we see the intention; we just need to set a common vision and work towards a digitally ready Turkmenistan.

Digital transformation is not just a goal; it is a necessity for a prosperous and inclusive future for the country. UNDP stands ready to work with the Government of Turkmenistan, leveraging our global expertise and most importantly our experience gained in Turkmenistan for over nearly 30 years of our presence in country, to make this vision a reality. Together, let us build a digital future that benefits everyone, supports vulnerable groups, and puts Turkmenistan on a sustainable path.

Thank you for your attention!