

XV Annual Assembly of the
Inter-American Digital Government Network (Red GEALC)
November 18 - 19, 2021

PANAMA CITY COMMITMENT
“Digital Transformation beyond Borders”

The high-level digital government authorities of the Americas, meeting on November 18 and 19, 2021 on the occasion of the XV Annual Meeting of the Inter-American Digital Government Network, Red GEALC (hereinafter referred to as the Network):

HIGHLIGHTING that this year marks the 18th anniversary of the Network, created in Santiago de Chile in 2003 and known until 2020 as the E-Government Network for Latin America and the Caribbean, with a membership extended to encompass all the countries of the Americas in the statutory reform adopted at the VI Ministerial Meeting on Digital Government (2020), following the recognition by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) through the resolution on Strengthening Democracy (AG/RES. 2931, XLIX-O/19), and by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as Regional Policy Dialogue;

FURTHER NOTING that these mandates were reaffirmed during the 50th regular session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) on October 21, 2020, which instructed the General Secretariat to strengthen the Network, through the Department for Effective Public Management, as a mechanism for consistent horizontal technical cooperation to promote, multiply, strengthen and energize exchanges aimed at developing, disseminating and implementing best practices in digital government in the Americas and at promoting policies and the use of digital technologies to foster transparency, participation and accountability, accessibility, citizen-centered digital services, reduction of bureaucracy and simplification of procedures;

RECOGNIZING that the global impact of the coronavirus pandemic has pervaded all aspects of daily, social, economic, and governmental life; and has stressed the importance of digital technologies in the face of the emergency and recovery, including the generation of new and more sustainable, inclusive, accessible, and equitable digital services for all citizens.

REAFFIRMING, in this context, the importance of facilitating the full exercise of digital citizenship, since the mass adoption of information and communication technologies (ICT) by governments and citizens as a result of the pandemic entails the commitment of those who develop digital services to use and promote the ethical and responsible use of ICTs.

RECOGNIZING also the importance that digital governance be in line with the essential and unswerving respect for Human Rights, balancing the values of privacy and autonomy with security and protection.

AWARE of the need to actively ensure that indigenous peoples and all minorities participate in the digital transformation, including, but not limited to, the right of indigenous languages to be included in the provision of digital services.

NOTING that the enormous challenge posed by the above-mentioned issues reflects the prominence of digital government in the public agenda, it must be ensured that digital transformation agencies are sustainable and scalable, open, transparent, and have the budget and staff allocations according to their mandate and importance.

HIGHLIGHTING that national efforts are strengthened and enhanced by the horizontal cooperation generated within the framework of the Network and by the constant technical and financial support

of the IDB and by the OAS Department for Effective Public Management in its role as Technical Secretariat of the Network;

STRESSING, in this regard, that the Network's thematic working groups have mobilized more than two hundred officials from member countries for permanent work in the areas of Cybersecurity, Communication, Open Data, Digital Signature, Government Innovation, Cross-border Interoperability, Measurement, Public Software, Emerging Technologies and Digital Inclusion.

WELCOMING the development of cross-border products by the Network such as the Regional Study on Emerging Technologies and the Digital Government Indicator Dashboard, both promoted by Colombia as the Network's president country in 2021, and the Regional Document on Cross-Border Interoperability. Measurement indicators will support all countries of the region to improve or strengthen areas of governance and digital government, as well as to promote bilateral cooperation between countries at different levels of progress on specific indicators depending on the countries' reality, given that interoperability is essential for the development of cross-border digital services.

RECOGNIZING the essential nature of the commitment to these working groups and regional documents of all member countries of the Network, which have dedicated staff time to their collective elaboration, and the projects of the IDB's Regional Public Goods Initiative.

EMPHASIZING, in particular, the coordination between the Cross-Border Digital Services projects, implemented by the Network with the support of the Julio Ricaldoni Foundation, and the regional health project structured around the American Cooperation Network for eHealth (RACSEL for its Spanish acronym), to move towards a regional digital vaccination document, supporting economic and social reactivation, especially with regard to the transit of people.

CONSIDERING also the work conducted by the recently created working group on Cybersecurity at the initiative of Costa Rica, the Network's president country in 2020; group which has been strongly supported by the technical teams in this area from the Network's member countries, the IDB and the OAS' Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE, for its Spanish acronym);

TAKING NOTE of the agreements reflected in the Commitments of previous meetings of High-level authorities reached in Santo Domingo (2006), Mexico City (2015), Santo Domingo (2017), Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (2019) and the Declarations of the Ministerial meetings of the Network held in Montevideo (2009), San José de Costa Rica (2012), Cartagena de Indias (2014), Santiago de Chile (2016), Panama City (2018) and Virtual Ministerial Meeting, San Jose, Costa Rica 2020;

WE, THE HIGH-LEVEL DIGITAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES OF THE REGION: WE PLEDGE TO THE FOLLOWING IN THIS "PANAMA CITY COMMITMENT:

1- We recognize, in view of the profound global changes experienced in the last two years, that digital transformation for inclusive economic and social reactivation has an essential cross-border component, which not only complements digital transformation within countries, but also enhances it.

2- We renew our commitment to Red GEALC as a regional mechanism to encourage digital transformation with equity to benefit from the experiences of all the countries in the continent.

3- We express the importance of advancing in the technical and regulatory aspects of digital signature and interoperability as enablers of cross-border actions, procedures, and services.

4- We invite the Member States to provide institutional and budgetary support to the digital government agencies or ministerial departments responsible for this area, so that they can fully comply with the citizenship and with the challenges set forth in this document.

5- We invite the remaining competent areas of civil society and other social actors, and governments, to align their mandates with the citizens' need of cross-border digital services, advancing in the legislative recognition and towards a regional agreement to make it effective, now that the technical bases have been established, tested and agreed upon by the technical teams within the framework of the Network, according to the "Document for the Promotion of Cross-Border Digital Signatures" adopted at the VI Ministerial Meeting of digital government and the XIV Annual Meeting of the Red GEALC.

6- We express our willingness to work together with the different actors of civil society, the academic community and the business sector, and other public and private actors, on the basis for an ethical and responsible use of ICTs, with full respect for human rights, gender perspective, attention to the full exercise of digital citizenship of indigenous populations and other minorities, respect for the environment and accessibility for people with disabilities, contemplating active efforts for the broadest social inclusion.

7- We approve the 2021 Work Plan Execution Report and the 2022 Work Plan, submitted to this Assembly.

8- We acknowledge the work of IDB, their technical and financial support to the Network and the contribution of the OAS' Department for Effective Public Management as the Network's Technical Secretariat, and, once again, we ask them to strengthen their cooperation for the execution of the Work Plan adopted in this meeting for 2022.

9- We approve the Network's Executive Committee for the 2022 period, which shall be composed by: Mercosur: Brazil and Paraguay. / The Caribbean: Dominican Republic and Trinidad & Tobago. / Central and North America: El Salvador and Guatemala. / Andean Region: Bolivia and Ecuador.

10- We acknowledge the work conducted by Colombia during their tenure of the presidency of the Network in 2021, as well as the work of the Executive Committee during the same period. The Executive Committee comprised Argentina, Belize, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago, the OAS, the IDB and the Network Manager.

11- We congratulate the government of XX as elected president of the Network for the year 2022, as well as the other seven countries elected to the executive committee for the same period, entrusting them to deepen the actions of this regional mechanism in harmony with the Technical Secretariat and the Network Management.

12- We thank the people and the government of Panama, especially the Authority for Government Innovation (AIG, for its Spanish acronym) of that country, for hosting this Meeting, and the government of the Republic of Korea for the technical and financial support for this event.

13- We agree to take this Panama City commitment: "Digital Transformation Beyond Borders" and report the results of this XV Meeting of the Network to the OAS Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP for its Spanish acronym), urging the inclusion of this instrument in the 2022 Resolution on Strengthening Democracy in its section on Digital, Open, and Transparent Government.

(Adopted in the plenary session held on November 18, 2021).