



A SIDE EVENT TO THE HRC41

# THE INNOVATION BRIDGE

A technological answer  
to the digital divide

Friday 5 July 2019, 13:30 - 15:00  
Palais des Nations, Room XXV 

## SPEAKERS



**Mr. Fadi Swidan**

Director of the Nazareth  
Business Center and Accelerator, Israel



**H.E. Mr. Foo Kok Jwee**

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Singapore



**Ms. Isabel de Sola**

Senior Advisor, UNSG High-Level Panel  
on Digital Cooperation



**Ms. Peggy Hicks**

Director for Thematic Engagement,  
Special Procedures and Right to Development, OHCHR



**Dr. Jonathan Andrew - Moderator**

Research Fellow, The Geneva Academy

## OPENING REMARKS

**H.E. Ms. Aviva Raz Shechter**

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Israel

**H.E. Ms. Maria Nazareth Farani Azevêdo**

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Brazil

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The rapid technological advances of our age bring tremendous improvements to people's lives. But they also risk exacerbating the existing digital divide. The very aim of innovative disruption is to break away from the current way of doing things, in order to do them differently, do them better. However, as the technological frontier is pushed further away by innovators and early adopters, others may find themselves left behind.

The pledge of **Agenda 2030** requires us to ensure that as many people as possible take part in the technological advances that affect every aspect of our lives. Quality technological education is key (SDG4), while measures aimed at bringing technology to wider segments of the society help reduce inequalities (SDG10). But **is the traditional toolbox of social inclusion sufficient in this regard?** What if the answer to bridging the digital divide created by technology lay with the introduction of a growing number of players to the eco-system thereby making the pool of technological actors bigger?

Therefore, the main question to be explored in this side event concerns **the potential of human technological agency being an effective means for social impact and for human rights.** When marginalized populations participate in the technological game as actors, this constitutes a change of a different order: Including more and more people as active technological players has the potential making the playing field not only larger, but also more equal.

Several countries have embarked in recent years on ambitious national digital strategies, aimed at reducing technological inequalities, promoting social inclusion and creating opportunities for large scale human development. **A great deal is being done to close gaps on the national level,** but isn't there room for further international cooperation to find complementarities and synergies?

And so, an additional question to be addressed by the panel would be what more can be done to **enhance international digital cooperation for the benefit of people's human rights around the world,** drawing from the conclusions of Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation?

