



First of all, I would like to thank the United Nations for inviting me to participate in this round table.

What is the French Digital Council and what do we do ?

- We like to consider ourselves as a “public lobby”, a lobby for those who don’t have one – citizens, SMEs, startups who don’t have the time or the money to lobby the public authorities.
- The council is composed of 30 digital experts appointed by the French President.
- We are geeks, citizens, investors, researchers, activists and entrepreneurs who are committed to one major purpose : to help the French government elaborate, shape and implement digital public policies.

“We believe that technological choices are shaped by political choices and that the development of ICTs is not an end in itself”



I. We need to leverage ICTs to change our economies and societies

- I would like to briefly **reaffirm the importance of the Paris Agreement commitments (COP21-twenty one)**.
 - We must adapt our economic and social models to avoid dangerous climate change.
 - (And) I truly believe that ICTs are powerful tools to make this transition.
- However, the French Digital Council does not believe that ICTs alone will lead to a more sustainable and inclusive future.
 - **We believe that technological choices are shaped by political choices.**
 - **The development of ICTs is not an end in itself.**
- In order to reach the SDGs, we must not forget our collective responsibility in our choice of the kind of digital transformation we need
 - This requires more than technological adaptation: it requires innovations that are also social and political.

(II.) The title of this round table is “Mobilizing resources and leaving no one behind”. I believe that this is exactly where the power of ICTs lies. **We can actually mobilize resources by leaving no one behind.**

- In my opinion, the main strength of ICTs lies in their ability to enable new connections.
 - It allows people to communicate and cooperate at a very low cost and without time and distance limits.
 - This is why I believe that **the Internet is above all an organizational revolution.**



- To illustrate this point I would like to focus on one specific example. This is an innovative approach to building ICT infrastructures in SIDS. It is the “Caribe Wave French West Indies” project.
 - This is Gaël Musquet from Guadeloupe.
 - When he was 9, Hurricane Hugo passed over the Caribbean. It left nearly 100.000 (one hundred thousand) people homeless, and the damage caused cost 10 billion \$ to repair. The Hurricane blew the roof off his house. Since then, he has dedicated his life to the study of climatic events.
 - He rapidly became a very talented data-analyst. But he has never forgotten his childhood dream which was to prevent disasters like the one he himself experienced.
 - You may have heard of “Caribe Wave”, a warning prevention exercise piloted by UNESCO since 2011 (two thousand eleven) to reduce tsunami casualties in Caribbean islands. In the French West Indies, the population is not mobilized enough and the risks are still underestimated.
 - That is why 2 years ago a group of “hacktivists” lead by Gaël Musquet, launched the “CaribeWave French West Indies” project

- to help the 150.000 (one hundred and fifty thousand) people who are at risk in Martinique and Guadeloupe. It aims to reduce the damage provoked by tsunamis and earthquakes in small islands by mobilizing populations through ICTs.
- The project is based on the powerful effect of digital technologies.
 - Firstly, it can help to map vulnerable areas prior to, and right after the wave, using drones and 20-dollar solar powered seismographs.
 - Secondly, it facilitates the sharing of information between citizens and the planning of rescue operations by deploying WiFi mobile aeriels and using social networks.
 - Thereby, with a minimum investment in infrastructures, it is possible to allow people to move to safe areas, to connect isolated islands, to collect precise data about the damage caused and share it with rescue teams to save lives.
- But technology alone cannot do much. That is why the project strongly relies on field expertise. This includes training programs for local people, school programs, awareness training sessions for public stakeholders, and so on and so forth. Last year, the annual prevention exercise involved more than 10.000 (ten thousand) people and this number is expected to triple for the next prevention exercise in March.
- It would be relatively easy to generalise to other small islands a project such as CaribeWave but Government support is needed.
- Because so far, Gaël has mostly had to rely on the support of local communities.
- He raised 30 000 (thirty thousand) euros on a crowdfunding platform and this allowed him to launch the first prevention exercise.
- And he unfortunately had many difficulties convincing local companies and authorities of the need to mobilize ICTs in order to leave no one behind if a major disaster happens.
 - ⇒ You can find his contact information on my slide:
contact@hand.team <http://hand.team>

“We believe that we will need to mobilize many resources to leave no one behind. Inclusion policies require a lot of capacity building and support”



III. “Mobilizing resources and leaving no one behind”. I believe that we will need to mobilize many resources in order to leave no one behind.

- Education obviously is a field where ICTs represent a huge opportunity. It allows distance and flexible learning which is critical for small and remote communities.
- Similarly, ICTs can make public services more accessible in remote areas.
- This is why we need to invest in building e-governments.
- However, **if there is one lesson I want to share with you it is the following: inclusion requires a lot of capacity building and support.**
- In France, we have been rather good at dematerializing documents and processes, which have contributed to the simplification of many administrative procedures.
- But by doing so, we also unfortunately reinforce certain inequalities.
 - Let me give you an Example : Pôle Emploi is the French

- government agency which registers unemployed people, helps them find jobs and provides them with financial aid.
- It recently launched a big dematerialization plan, which increased the agency's efficiency and reduced costs.
- But if reducing cost is our only criterion when deploying ICTs, the results may be a real disaster and increase inequalities.
- We must remember that some people still need to have face to face contact.
- So let's not forget that the digital revolution is not only about cables, it's also about people.
- No one should be left behind because he or she does not have access to the Internet and does not master digital tools.
- Raising people's awareness and educating populations to the uses of digital technology is crucial.

What we recommend:

- Technological choices are **political choices**. The development of ICTs is not an end in itself
- **ICTs can address some of the most difficult challenges faced by SIDS**, but they need to be backed by governments in order to scale (e.g. CaribeWave FWI project)
- A lot of **capacity building** and **support** is required to improve inclusion and reduce inequalities in our societies, particularly in SIDS
- **Digitalization**, in each and every sector, must systematically come with an inclusion policy, based on access, digital literacy, citizens support and empowerment

- I am convinced it will improve social cohesion and catalyze the gradual dematerialisation of procedures.
- **To conclude** : Changing the world means nothing if a large part of its population is excluded from the benefits of these transformations.
- That's why **digitalization must necessarily come with an inclusion policy, based on access, digital literacy, citizens support and empowerment.**