Committee: Economic and Social Council

Agenda A: Addressing the digital divide in LEDCs and MEDCs.

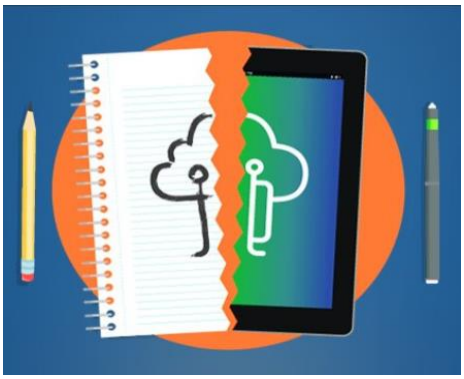
Ⅰ. Introduction

In 2019, 2.5 billion people—more than 60 % of the population—are using smartphones and technological devices while there are 3.4 billion internet users spread out in the world. However, the rest of the population does not have access to not only smartphones but also the internet. This disparity in terms of accessibility to technology has been a rising problem since the early 2000s, with new systems such as AI, IOT, and big data being developed at uncontrollable speeds. While some people can access data and digital devices, some people do not even have the chance to touch a smartphone in their lifetime. This distinction comes from the difference in wealth, education, age and more, but the most serious cause to this access of technology is the economic position of a country. According to the *World Investment Report 2017: Investment and the Digital Economy*, released by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), only four companies in the top 100 had their main headquarters based in developing nations. The ability to access digital devices has a crucial relationship with a country's economic wealth. While people of more economically developed countries (MEDCs) have relatively easy access to technology, people from less economically developed countries (LEDCs) are forced to undergo less opportunities.

This divide of technology and digital access can lead to many consequences in a society. Just some of these include differences in education, social networking, economy, and access to information. Without the technical devices, it is nearly impossible to incorporate digital learning. Schools with higher tech are able to offer 'blend learning' using objectively better learning materials, which leads to higher levels of concentration; on the other hand; schools without it cannot. The gap of education leads to the gap in the abilities of individuals, which in turn would lead to economic gaps. Furthermore, as the dependency in technology is becoming higher due to its continued development, technology itself is starting to have a direct influence on the economy. This so-called 'digital divide' influences one's access to information, especially in the medical field. People who live in the rural era generally have limited access to such knowledge, leading to less availability with related materials.

In addition, people from LECD countries who have less access to technology will eventually obtain both less information and fewer chances to succeed in society. A final point worth noting is that since digital technology can be a part of a country's power, it has been hard to share it worldwide, although it could lead to a severe gap between individual people's opportunities.

<Picture 1> The Digital Divide in terms of Education Between MEDCs and LEDCs



<Picture 2> The Disparity in Education Due to Technology

Ⅱ. Definitions of Key Terms:

| Digital divide*:*

The digital divide is defined as "any uneven distribution in the access to, use of, or impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) between any number of distinct groups". These groups may be defined based on social, geographical, or geopolitical criteria, or more. The divide within countries specifically refers to inequalities between individuals, households, businesses, or geographic areas, usually at different socioeconomic levels or other demographic categories. The divide between differing countries or regions of the world is referred to as the global digital divide, which examines this technological gap between developing and developed countries on an international scale.

| LEDC*:*

LEDC is an abbreviation for 'Less Economically Developed Country,' and is defined as a developing or third-world country. Many LEDC countries are the ones that produce most of the raw materials for the world. The definition of being a less developed country is interconnected to birth rate, death rate, infant mortality, life expectancy, housing, and literacy, among others. Children of lower classes often face poor classroom conditions with less or no digital devices and cannot be taught in a well-structured class compared to the children of higher classes. LEDC countries usually do not have high access to digital devices nor information mostly due to less infrastructure, fixed-broadband, and investment on technology. Countries of the LEDCs include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, East Timor and more.

| MEDC*s:*

MEDC is an abbreviation for 'More Economically Developed Country.' MEDCs typically have a lower birth rate, with an average of 10-16 babies born per 1000 people. Additionally, they have a low death rate compared to the LEDCs. MEDCs relatively have more access to digital devices than LEDCs due to more infrastructure, fixed-broadband, and higher investments on technology. Countries of the MEDC include USA, China, Japan, Hong Kong and more.

| ICT *:*

ICT is short for 'Information and Communications Technology.' It is a concept that is derived from information technology (IT), which focuses on telecommunications (telephones and wireless signals) and computers. The term ICT refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. ICT focuses on information and communication than IT. The digital divide focuses on the amount and skills of ICT used in a specific country.

| Technology *:*

Technology is normally defined as the practical, especially industrial, use of scientific discoveries. In this agenda, we will be focusing on the scientific developments and digital devices.

Ⅲ. Background Information:

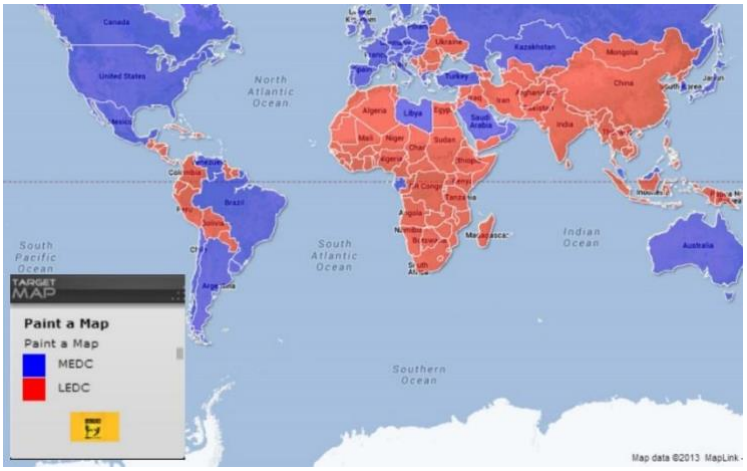
The gap between LEDC countries and MEDC countries have been a big issue for a quite long time, but the gap of technology and digital devices has risen to become an important issue in the 21st century since the reliance of digital devices in the world have grown dramatically.

Some people are concerned that people without access to the internet and other information and ICT technology will be disadvantaged. Technology offers considerable opportunities. For example, solar home technologies have provided access to electricity to millions of households in Bangladesh, while providing job opportunities to approximately 140,000 people. Without this technology, there would have been less opportunities. People without digital devices will not be able to search for information and education online, or learn technical skills for a job. This is the result of having no computers of smartphones of use.

The term *digital divide* describes a gap in terms of access to and usage of information and communication technology. In the early 2000s, it was traditionally considered to be a question of having or not having access. This is still a big problem since many people of the LEDCs have no access to the internet. But with a global mobile phone use over 60%, is has become a relative inequality between those with more or fewer skills. Conceptualizations of the digital divide have been described as "who, with which and what."

- Who (the group using the digital device): individuals, organizations, enterprises, schools, hospitals, countries, etc.
- Which (reasons to the divide): income, education, age, geographic location, motivation, reason not to use, etc.
- What (kind of devices): fixed or mobile, Internet or telephone, digital TV, broadband, etc.

Different perspectives of defining the digital divide varies due to the relations with who, which and what. In this agenda delegates will focus on the digital divide pertaining to **countries, economy, and all digital devices**.

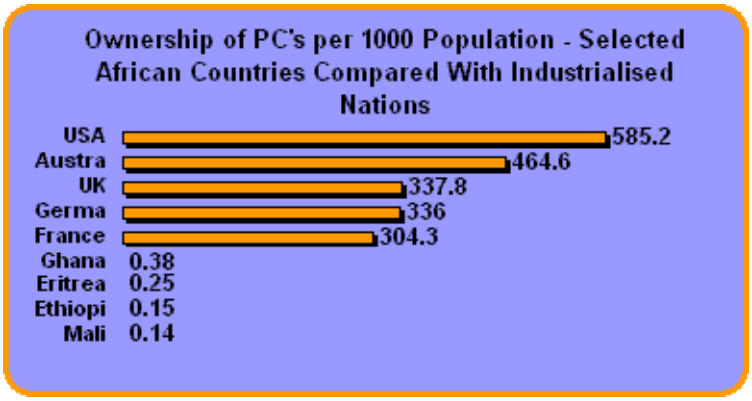


<Picture 3> The map of the Digital Divide differentiating MEDCs and LEDCs

IV. Major Parties Involved:

| *Africa*

In 2011, about 13.5% of the African population had Internet access. While Africa accounts for 15.0% of the world's population, only 6.2% of the world's Internet subscribers are Africans. Africans who have access to broadband connections are estimated to be in percentage of 1% or lower. In 2018, users in Africa have gone up more than 20 percent, with the reported number of internet users in Mali increasing by almost 6 times since January 2017. The number of internet users in Benin, Sierra Leone, Niger, and Mozambique has more than doubled over the year 2017. Africa has been putting effort in improving technology by making tech hubs, supporting small companies to start SMS-based money transfer systems or placing satellite connections.

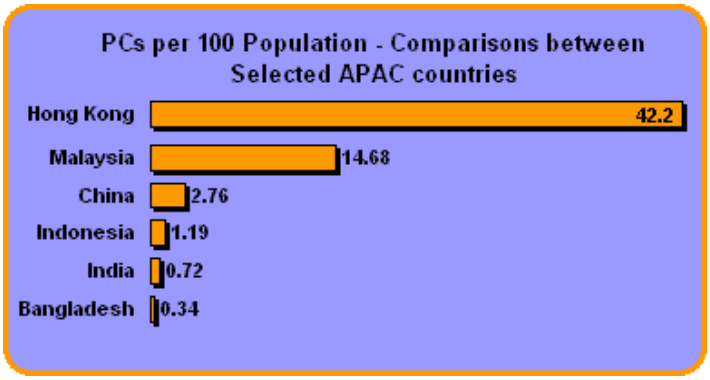


<Picture 4> Ownership of Personal Computers in African Countries

| Asia and the Middle East

Countries with low technology: Pakistan, Nepal, Cambodia, Afghanistan

In the East Asia and the Pacific, there is a big gap between the technology rich and poor countries. Republic of Korea and Hong Kong for example have more than 35% fixed-broadband while the country of Afghanistan has 0.0%. Afghanistan's technology is growing through its payment sector, as 97 percent of the police force were registered in the system.

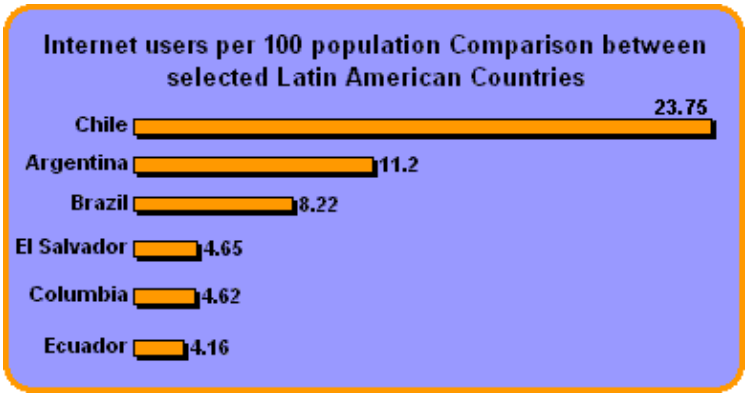


<Picture 5> Ownership of Personal Computers in Asia

| Latin America

Countries with highest need: Ecuador, Columbia, El Salvador

The situation in Latin America is slightly better than it is in Africa, however not as good as the situation if America, UK and other MEDCs. There are 43.6 per 1,000 people in Latin America and the Caribbean that actually own a PC. There are 271 fixed telephone lines or mobile phones per 1,000 people.



<Picture 6> Internet users in Latin America

V. Future Outlook / Solutions:

As we all know, the gap of digital devices between countries is a big dilemma in the world. There have been long talks and adjustments made in the world today to solve the problem. Official NGOs tried by announcing technology as a fundamental right. In 2011 UNHRC (United Nations Human Rights Council) announced 'United Nations report declares Internet access a human right'. In 2016, the United Nations "Condemns unequivocally measures to intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or dissemination of information online in violation of international human rights law and calls on all States to refrain from and cease such measures." Focusing on the digital divide of MEDC countries and LEDC countries, the possible solutions can be as follows:

- Increasing affordability since the high cost of digital devices can be solved by increasing the amount one can afford
- Empowering uses by investing more on basic infrastructure
- Improving the relevance of online content
- Developing the internet infrastructure
- Addressing the gender gap in internet access
- Making of stronger organizations dealing the problem of the digital divide, based on the country's economic divide

<Picture 7> Allowing for ensured technological equality

VI. Conclusion

In retrospect, people have recognized the difference and the outcome that can happen in a world of technology and development. Since the gap between the digital differences can lead to a big outcome where people who lack the digital devices get to have less opportunity and information, when people with the technology can have more of chances. Thus, this issue is an issue highly accompanied with the act of individual countries, since the gap between LEDCs and MEDCs are at the highest level at this moment.

In the current status quo, there is a big interest in how the world develops with the influence of technology and digital devices. Furthermore, the importance of resolving the gap of technology between countries have become a serious issue. Therefore, it is up to the delegates to make a difference in this issue and to harmonize with other delegates to resolve and come up with a more effective and outstanding conclusion, in the issue of the digital divide of LEDCs and MEDCs.

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