



UNInnovation.network
Info@UNInnovation.network
@UN_Innovation

INNOVATION

QUARTERLY UPDATE

The UNIN “Innovation in the UN” Update includes highlights from the innovation activities of UNIN members. All members are invited to contribute. This update includes contributions from:



UN INNOVATION NETWORK

We’re using this Quarterly Update to do a lot of foreshadowing about exciting initiatives we’re launching.

- ▶ UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNITAR, UN Women and UNIN are preparing the first [UN Behavioural Insights \(BI\) Week](#). Taking place in October, the week will bring together experts from the field of behavioural insights with UN innovators at headquarters and country offices to discuss how BI can be applied to the work of the UN.
- ▶ In collaboration with the Resident Coordinator’s Office and [WFP’s Innovation Hub](#), UNIN is piloting the Tanzania Innovation Safari, a “slow-motion” innovation bootcamp specifically tailored to the needs of innovators in country offices. The Innovation Safari will include joint problem identification, ideation, design and development around key challenges UN Entities in Tanzania are experiencing. Establishing relationships and encouraging collaborations with local partners will also be a central element of the Innovation Safari.
- ▶ In November, the [UN Innovation Toolkit](#), which has been developed in collaboration with the CEB Secretariat, UNSSC and 30+ UN Entities will be launched and become available to innovation practitioners from within the UN and beyond.



BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS AT THE UNITED NATIONS
Achieving Agenda 2030



The UN Innovation Network is an informal, collaborative network of innovators from UN Agencies. To find out more about the UNIN, please visit our website, where you can also subscribe to our mailing list.

Tourism Tech ADVENTURES

SPORTS | Powered by: UNWTO | BARÇA INNOVATION HUB



Photo: UNWTO



World Health Organization

▶ WHO uses bots to help beat chronic disease on WHO's new community driven platform. The newly launched [Knowledge Action Portal \(KAP\)](#) brings together a wide range of actors to share information, interaction and inspiration to help beat non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The community-driven online platform aims to enhance global understanding and engagement on NCD prevention and control. Innovative tools promote multi-stakeholder collaboration, while the virtual assistant helps users find what they need. KAP users can contribute to the site in all six official UN languages.



World Food Programme

▶ In June 2019, the WFP Innovation Accelerator collaborated with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to bring 10 teams to Munich, Germany for a high-intensity bootcamp to help them re-think and hone proposals to create [better access to and uptake of vaccines](#). Proposals ranged from planning tools to social media enabled reminders, empowering community champions to enabling AI chatbots to engage health workers in immunisation discourse.

▶ In July, UNFPA brought 8 of their global teams to Munich to participate in a bootcamp hosted by the WFP Innovation Accelerator to hone their ideas on [access to family planning and sexual & reproductive health](#) (SRH) info, and pitch their ideas for a chance of funding their proposals. Some proposals addressed SRH education by digital storytelling, while others sought to optimise the supply chain with artificial intelligence analysis of big data. Find out more in UNFPA's Update.



UNWTO
World Tourism Organization

▶ UNWTO joined efforts with [Barça Innovation Hub-Football Club Barcelona](#) to launch the 1st Sports Tourism Competition in collaboration with Qatar National Tourism Council. Selected start-ups will have the opportunity to leverage partnership opportunities and receive investment in front of the sports tourism ecosystem.

▶ During the 110th Session of the Executive Council, UNWTO shared the [results from the program of work on innovation](#) with 35 Member States

▶ UNWTO's [Tourism Tech Adventures](#), a forum for innovation in tourism, was hosted in Chile for the Americas. More than 530 attendees, 12 international delegations participated in the event which provided over 150 business opportunities for 10 start-ups. UNWTO developed a high level seminar on education and technology in partnership with IE University and keynote speaker [Juan José Güemes](#) presented the Tourism Online Academy, a joint project that aims to train 500.000+ people in three years.



Photo: WFP



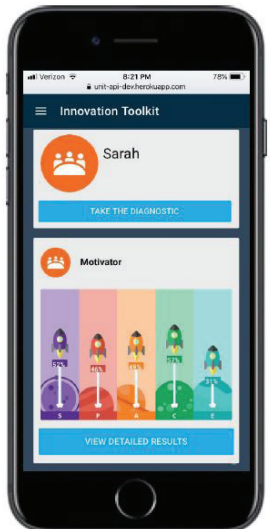


▶ **UNU-WIDER and the SDG Academy** have launched a new, free, online course on [Industrial Policy in the 21st Century: The Challenge for Africa](#). In this course participants hear from researcher John Page and other leading voices in development economics about so-called “industries without smokestacks” and learn how industrial policy that promotes the growth of these industries presents a win-win scenario for economic development in Africa.

▶ **UNU-EHS director Prof. Dr. Dirk Messner** co-authored [Six Transformations to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals](#) published in Nature Sustainability. The authors introduce six SDG Transformations as modular building-blocks: (1) education, gender, inequality; (2) health, well-being, demography; (3) energy decarbonisation, sustainable industry; (4) sustainable food, land, water, oceans; (5) sustainable cities and communities; (6) digital revolution for sustainable development. Each Transformation identifies priority investments and regulatory challenges with needed actions by government, business and civil society.



▶ **UNSSC is preparing for the global launch** of the UN Innovation Toolkit, which has been developed under the leadership of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, in November. The Toolkit, which will be freely available across the UN System, features an online diagnostic element to help identify readiness across five critical foundational areas for innovation: Strategy; Partnerships; Architecture; Culture; and Evaluation (S.P.A.C.E.).



▶ **Linked to these foundational areas** are downloadable, UN-focused tools, developed through deep UNIN engagement, including “Ecosystem Analysis”, with knowledge from UNHCR; “Define a Value Proposition” featuring learnings from UN Women; and “From Pilot to Scale”, drawing on insights from the WFP. The Toolkit seeks to support the development of internal capabilities to promote innovation; leverage innovation partnerships; and incorporate innovation as a core element of organisational culture.

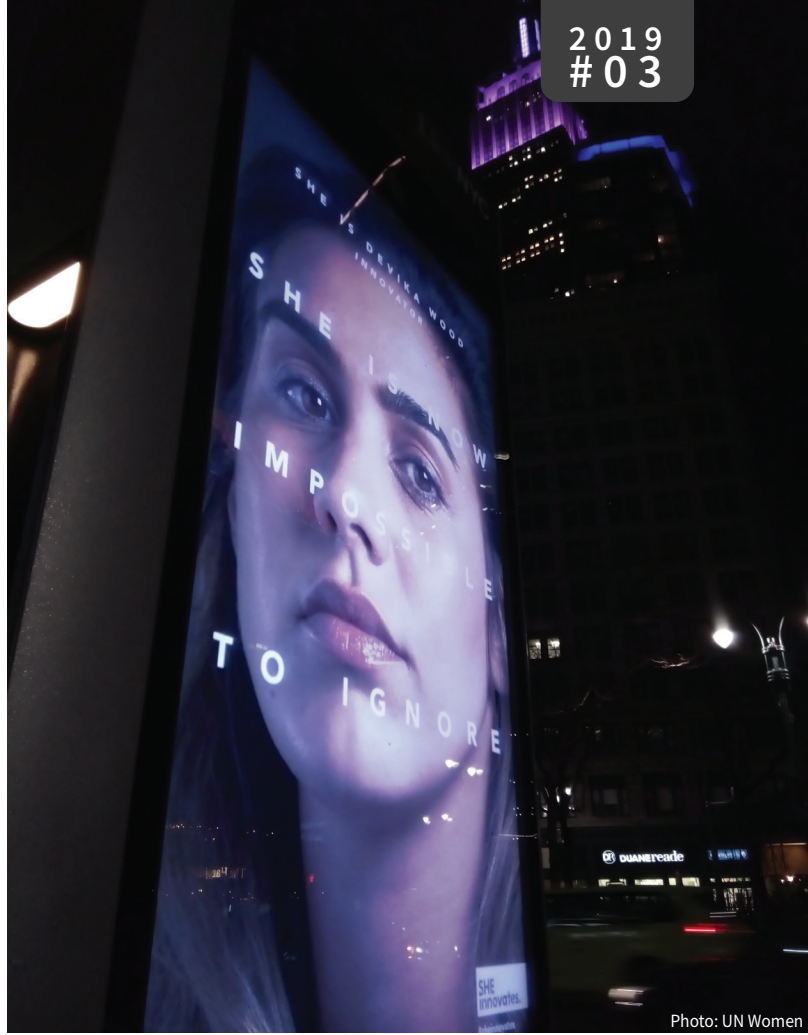


Photo: UN Women



▶ **In collaboration with WFP**, UN Women completed the testing of blockchain-based cash transfers to explore how to provide female Syrian refugees with the possibility of receiving cash back at WFP-contracted supermarkets or pay for purchases directly.

▶ **In partnership with the Ministry of Education and UNDP**, UN Women Georgia implemented a behavioural insight project targeting teachers as bystanders in cases of domestic violence. Georgia is piloting capacity development activities based on the data collected with 1,500 teachers across 60 public schools to improve referrals to social services and law enforcement.

▶ **As a member of the Secretary-General's Digital Financing Task Force**, UN Women developed a white paper “Leveraging digital finance for gender equality and women’s empowerment” which will be launched at the General Assembly on 27th September. It outlines the specific barriers and risks faced by women and pathways for utilising digital finance for gender equality with impactful investment returns.





- ▶ UNIDO has endorsed the [Principles for Digital Development](#) and will use this opportunity to not only embody the "Digital Principles" in its policies but also use them to guide its approach towards new technologies, and in particular in promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development.
- ▶ UNIDO's [SDG Impact Investment Platform](#) project hosted a workshop with innovators and investors in Vienna. Invited speakers were involved in the areas of SDG-aligned impact investment and blockchain technology. The session was initiated by Charly Kleissner, founder of TONIIC who elaborated on aligning impact investment results with the SDGs. Shaun Conway, the founder of IXO Protocol talked about how to overcome current barriers and help develop SDG-aligned impact investment in emerging economies. The meeting concluded with suggestions on how a platform could promote the SDG aligned impact investment in partnership with local investors.



Photo: WFP



- ▶ UNIN, UNICEF and WFP launched [Atrium](#), a project that enables any UN Entity to experiment and share blockchain applications in a sandbox environment. It has a storefront of applications and an underlying blockchain. UN agencies interested in learning more can email: info@uninnovation-network
- ▶ The newly launched [Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation](#) stressed the importance of providing affordable access to connectivity. In response, UNICEF and ITU launched a collaboration to pool demand for connectivity globally and use it to negotiate prices with providers, ensuring that every school in the world is connected.
- ▶ UNICEF held an [AI for Child Rights Policy workshop](#). Sixty experts, including governments of Finland, Sierra Leone and the UAE, strategised on how governments, industries and the UN can move from principles to practice. UNICEF is now developing policy guidance with the [IEEE-SA](#), the [Berkman Klein Centre for Internet & Society](#), the [WEF](#) and the [Generation AI](#).



Photo: UNICRI



- ▶ In July, UNICRI celebrated the formal [launch](#) of its [Centre for AI & Robotics](#) in The Hague with ambassadors, representatives of international organisations and eminent figures from academia and industry.
- ▶ UNICRI sponsored a [challenge](#) at the [Hackathon for Peace, Justice and Security](#) to create tools for detection of manipulated videos, such as [deepfakes](#), that can be made available to support law enforcement, security agencies, the judiciary and others to verify the authenticity of videos. The challenge was won by Open DSE with a state-of-the-art neural network architecture for image classification and web-application that simplifies user interaction.
- ▶ The UNICRI Centre for AI & Robotics and INTERPOL co-organised the [2nd Global Meeting on AI for Law Enforcement](#) in Singapore on 3-4 July, bringing together representatives from law enforcement agencies together with academia and industry to discuss AI for law enforcement.

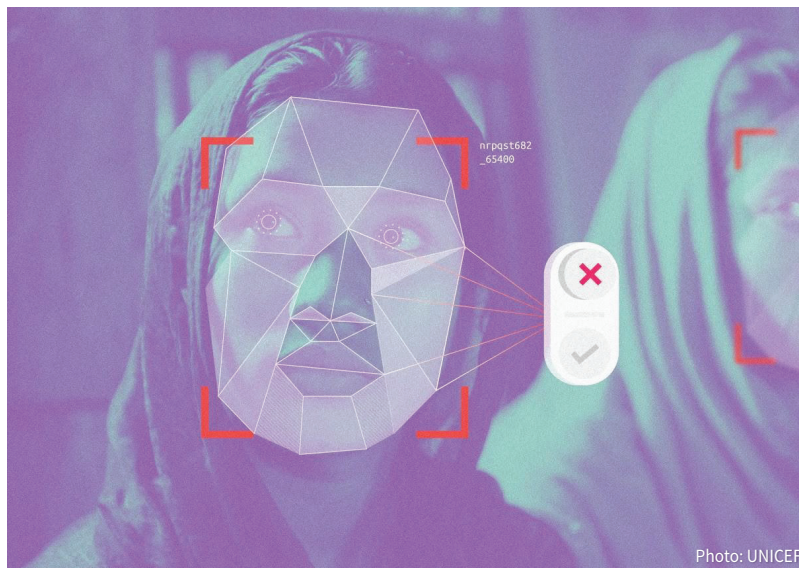


Photo: UNICEF





Environmental Security and Sustaining Peace

Photo: UNEP



- ▶ UNHCR received over 260 applications to its [NGO Innovation Award](#), launched by UNHCR's Partnership and Coordination Service and the Innovation Service – representing an increase from last year. The Award celebrates NGOs' efforts to advance the innovative delivery of services to refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. A prize will be awarded to the most inclusive and novel solutions in the two categories of partnership and digital connectivity.
- ▶ UNHCR's Innovation Service hosted colleagues from the [Center for Public Interest Communications](#) for a week of workshops. The Center has supported the Service for two years in understanding how to bring social, behaviour and cognitive science into how [we communicate about innovation at UNHCR](#). The team worked alongside divisions and colleagues to understand the science behind how to get buy-in for novel ideas, [communicating complexity](#), and improving the narrative on innovation.



- ▶ The [One Planet network](#) recently launched a [data visualisation tool](#) to provide a simplified means of understanding and exploring trends in the implementation of SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption & Production. The network's 600+ partners [report annually](#) on their sustainable consumption and production activities across sectors, organisations and countries. This data is curated into interactive graphs, providing a quick way to navigate and find relevant activities, while highlighting general trends and revealing implementation gaps. Check out this new tool [here](#).
- ▶ UNEP's popular [MOOC on Environmental Security & Sustaining Peace](#) will be launched as a self-paced online course on 23 September to coincide with the UN Climate Summit. Join the 17,000 alumni of the programme in learning how natural resources, environmental degradation and climate change influence conflict and peace dynamics around the world.



Photo: UNFPA



- ▶ How might we find new solutions to ensure sexual and reproductive rights and choices for all, especially to end the unmet need for family planning among women and girls? UNFPA joined forces with [WFP's Innovation Accelerator](#) to support eight country teams to design innovations that expand access to services in remote geographies, close the last mile for reproductive health commodities, and leverage technologies for women and girls' decision-making. An innovation bootcamp upskilled the teams and developed concrete plans for rapid prototyping, with a view to scale in 2020. Check out a video about the bootcamp [here](#).
- ▶ [UNFPA North Macedonia's "Digital Storytellers"](#), one of the eight teams selected to join the boot camp, is taking a unique approach to addressing the learning needs of adolescents with autism spectrum disorder through illustrations and assistive technology solutions. The online platform will offer individually-tailored and accessible sexual and reproductive health education.



 **UNAIDS**

▶ UNAIDS and partners have launched the [Health Innovation Exchange](#), a new initiative to leverage the potential of innovations to improve the health of all people by linking innovators to investors and innovations to implementers. [Launched](#) on the side-lines of the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland in May, the initiative aims to support global efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. The Health Innovation Exchange builds upon and shares the expertise of countries, global health actors, innovators, communities and the private sector.



▶ In a global kick-off event, the [Accelerator Lab network](#) was [launched on the 17th of July in New York](#) by UNDP and its core founding investors, Germany and Qatar. Permanent Missions, delegates from the High-Level Political Forum, businesses, and innovation partners joined the Accelerator Lab partners including the [Honey Bee network](#), the [Qatar Computing Research Institute](#), [Lego](#) and [Afrilabs](#) at the launch.

▶ The event was followed by a set of bootcamps to onboard 180 experimenters, explorers and solution mappers that will be working in the Labs. The new team members will be part of 60 country offices to serve 78 countries in addressing complex development problems.



Photo: UNAIDS



Photo: UNDP



▶ On 21st June, ITC successfully hosted the third edition of its [Innovation Heroes](#), an award to celebrate excellence in innovation amongst ITC colleagues. This year's winners include the ITCs new [Market Access Map](#) in the category "Natural Innovator"; and [TekkiiFii](#), a National Roadshow that raises awareness among young Gambians on the economic opportunities at home in the category "Innovation of the Year". The "Ecosystem Builder" award went to a colleagues who created a team environment in which people feel empowered to be creative and constantly develop new approaches. The event included an inspiration talk, hidden-hero 3D awards and a dance-off at the end!

▶ The Innovation Lab presented its services for the first time to Field Coordinator at the beginning of July and organising the first field-based innovation bootcamp to be held in the second half of the year.



Image: ITC





► **Women in Technology and Entrepreneurship** in New York ([WITNY](#)), [ITU](#) and [ICC](#) joined together to sponsor an [International ICT4 Girls Day](#) at the new SMART campus of Cornell Tech on Roosevelt Island, working together with the NYC Mayor's Office and UNICEF Innovation. The goal was to provide middle school girls and young women from the City University of New York the opportunity to [meet women technologists and thought leaders](#) for inspiration, empowerment and discussions on women in ICT themes. Professional women came from all walks of life across industries and organisations in New York and Washington D.C.: full-stack developers, innovators, business analysts, operations managers, data scientists, cyber security experts, public policy directors, directors, founders, ICT associates, and technical solution specialists joined from UNICEF, UN Women, ICC, ITU, Verizon Media, Facebook, Microsoft, Ferrero and many others.



Photo: ICC



► The ILO's [International Labour Standards Department](#) (NORMES) and Business Innovation Unit (BIU) collaborated to strengthen the supervision of labour standards. From July 2018 to January 2019, the NORMES team participated in workshops led by the BIU to redesign the [ILO supervisory system's](#) internal production processes. The collaborative project took an innovative bottom-up approach, allowing staff to discuss pain points and opportunities, challenge each other's ideas and agree on the best solutions. The BIU functioned as an innovation lab, engaging staff to design a new electronic workflow system and other innovative IT tools to help modernise their largely paper-based system. The new workflow system and tools will be launched in the coming months.



► **The Learning Innovation Unit** launched its CoachBox project, a digital communication channel through which colleagues can submit innovation challenges and get targeted guidance (based upon design thinking tools). The initiative was born based upon an increasing demand for more informal innovation coaching support and integrated workplace learning. [Contact](#) ILO-ITC for more information on this project.

► **Upon request of** the High-Level Committee on Programme (HLCP), ILO-ITC is preparing a one day foresight exercise on the Future of Work in Sub-Saharan Africa. The objective is to expose HLCP members to the potential of futures literacy and foresight methodologies. This will be done in close collaboration with other UN foresight experts.

► **ILO-ITC analysed innovation hackathons** that have taken place in international organisations, extracted insights and integrated them into a practical manual that provides specific guidelines on how to design and implement a challenge-based hackathon. Take a look at the findings [here](#).



► The [Digital Agriculture Transformation Seminar](#) held in Rome in June aimed to foster an exchange among stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities of digital technologies and interconnected data-driven systems in agriculture. FAO also launched its inaugural [Status Report on Digital Technologies in Agriculture and Rural Areas](#).

► **ANSI Niger and Cipmen**, together with FAO, ITU, UNESCO and WHO have launched the [Smart Village Initiative](#) in Niger, which will transform how communities access agricultural services. The UN Entities have also signed an agreement to underline their common commitment to help achieve the SDGs.

► **Proceedings from the International Symposium** on Agricultural [Innovation for Family Farmers](#) have been published. The [book](#) provides a record of the main highlights of the symposium, including the innovation fair, and two special events dedicated to youth, chefs and family farmers.





UNITED NATIONS



▶ Earlier this year, ESCAP and UNCDF launched a **Women's FinTech Innovation Fund** for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to provide risk capital to develop and test innovative technology and digital finance solutions for women-led enterprises. The fund initially received 110 applications, thirty applicants pitched their ideas to a panel of industry experts and ten digital solutions for women entrepreneurs were selected and funded.

▶ **SkyEye, a Pacific based technology company**, is one of the ten winning institutions. SkyEye plans to launch a local payments gateway, to facilitate e-commerce transactions for women-led MSMEs. The gateway will allow for independence of network, link directly with a range of bank and mobile money partners and with SkyEye's Maua app, a mobile marketplace for rural women MSMEs. SkyEye will receive risk capital, mentorship and technical support from ESCAP/UNCDF's expert network and link with investors to scale-up their business model.



▶ **UN Global Pulse hosted** ten national statistical offices as part of the **UN Global Working Group on Big Data's workshop** in Jakarta. Representatives saw mobile data use cases, heard first-hand experiences from Pulse Lab Jakarta's data team, and brainstormed on how mobile phone data can be operationalised to meet citizens' expectations within a country context.

▶ **Global Pulse published a study** discussing risks arising from the malicious use of automated text-generation. The study used open-source tools and data from UN General Assembly speeches to build a fake UN speech generator. The model was able to match the style and cadence of actual UN speeches and thereby signalled the potential dangers of AI text generation to peace and political stability.

▶ **Global Pulse facilitated a roundtable discussion** in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications and the Data Protection Commission in Ghana to advance efforts for developing an ethical AI framework in the country.



Photo: ESCAP



▶ **UNOV/UNODC leadership approved** a vision and roadmap for innovation early this year. Innovation efforts are targeted to both facilitate organisational agility and identify innovative solutions to combat illicit drugs, crime and terrorism.

▶ **Through an internal collaboration**, UNOV/UNODC is reinforcing an enabling culture for innovation with a multi-faceted training initiative. The first step, an information campaign on new technologies, provides an introduction on this topic to spark dialogue and ideas. The next phases include an instructor-led workshop series, hosting subject matter experts on possible use cases related to mandate areas, and guiding staff through the "nuts and bolts" of innovation in two upcoming workshops.

▶ **Focal points from all UNOV/UNODC divisions** successfully completed an innovation mapping exercise and the team is working on transforming this exercise into an innovation strategy and a set of pilot initiatives.

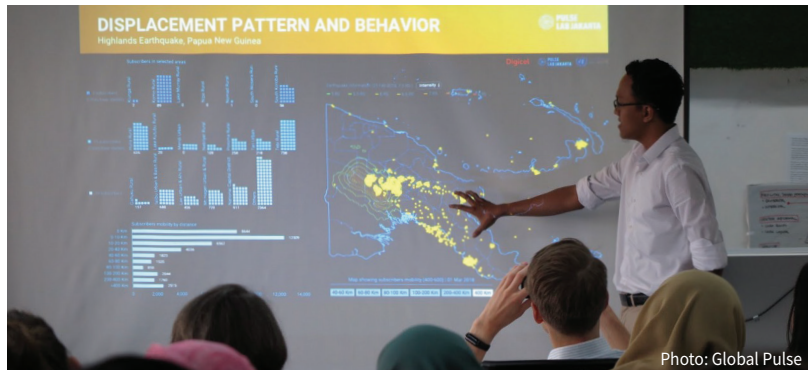


Photo: Global Pulse





UNITED NATIONS



DPPA-DPO

- ▶ DPPA's Policy and Mediation Division, in partnership with DPO, DPET, UNIDIR and ODA organised a workshop on [Digital Technologies, Conflict Prevention and the UN Peace and Security Mandate](#) that highlighted the risks and opportunities of ICT for the peace and security field.
- ▶ DPPA and the American University of Beirut brought together designers, computational linguists, public relations, and political affairs experts for a design workshop on [AI for Peace](#) to explore ways of using AI and social media monitoring to enhance political analysis. A follow-up meeting took place at the Alan Turing Institute in London in July and stressed the need for closer cooperation between cognitive and behavioral scientists, AI companies and the UN.
- ▶ DPPA held its annual "E-Analytics Course" for Political Affairs Officers that demonstrated how methods of Open-source Intelligence (OSINT), digital forensics, and satellite imagery analysis can be adapted to the peace and security field.



CEB

- ▶ In May, CEB's High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) [announced the winner of its challenge](#) on automatic information identification and generation of semantic metadata from UN General Assembly resolutions. The challenge was hosted on [Unite Ideas](#), the open innovation and crowdsourcing platform provided by UN-OICT. An independent judging panel of experts selected the winning team from the University of Bologna, which developed the open source tool SANKOFA (Semantic Annotation of Knowledge Featuring Akoma Ntoso).
- ▶ The challenge is part of the Akoma Ntoso initiative, led by UN-DGACM and FAO in collaboration with the HLCM Secretariat and meant to create machine-readable documents based on a common XML standard. The initiative is also benefitting from a new partnership with Microsoft, which is exploring the use of Microsoft Azure to analyse and tag UN documentation through machine learning. This proof of concept is supported by UN stakeholders, such as UN-DGACM, the UN Library and UN-DESA.

The UN Innovation Network is an informal, collaborative network of innovators from UN Agencies. To find out more about the UNIN, please visit our website, where you can also subscribe to our mailing list.

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2019
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AI FOR PEACE DESIGN WORKSHOP

AUB, BEIRUT
**Maroun Semaan Faculty of
Engineering and Architecture**



Image: ESCAP