مؤسسة محمد بن راشد آل مكتوم للمعرفة
MOHAMMED BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM KNOWLEDGE FOUNDATION

UNDP

GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE INDEX 2021

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FOREWORD

United Nations Development Programme

The Global Knowledge Index (GKI) continues to serve as a vital tool to monitor the knowledge status of countries in key areas including education, innovation and information and communications technology (ICT). Now covering 154 countries and 232 indicators, the 2021 GKI is helping to guide policymakers, researchers, civil society, and the private sector as they nurture knowledge-based societies and bridge knowledge gaps. In particular, the GKI shows how emerging trends in technology, learning and innovation are radically reshaping our societies. Countries must now leverage their knowledge infrastructure to open-up new opportunities in the form of jobs and livelihoods, driving forward sustainable development. They must also utilise its immense potential to drive decisive climate action and spur new efforts to protect and restore our natural world. Crucially, the GKI is helping countries to identify how and where they must invest to build these cutting-edge, knowledge-based societies. Indeed, the GKI can also feed into key measurements such as UNDP's Human Development Index.

The GKI shows, for instance, how many countries in Africa need more support to address knowledge gaps in key areas like quality education, decent work, and regulatory frameworks, whilst highlighting new opportunities. Consider Mauritius, for example, where investments in ICT contribute to its strong performance on the Index. Indeed, many developing countries are demonstrating notable advances in key knowledge sectors. That includes Barbados in pre-university education; the Philippines in technical and vocational education and training; Lebanon in higher education; or Bahrain in ICT. The GKI also reflects the unprecedented wave of innovation and adoption of new technologies as countries and communities looked to find much-needed solutions to COVID-19. The United Nations (UN) is at the forefront of efforts to support this innovation surge -- everything from helping countries like Nigeria and Honduras to leverage the power of digital finance to support financial inclusion and sometimes lifesaving electronic cash transfers; to the 3-D printing of much-needed personal protective equipment for health workers, an effort assisted by the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Accelerator Labs network. Indeed, the Labs are making a concerted effort to pool the world's collective intelligence to address persistent development challenges, part of efforts to help countries build knowledge-based societies.

As countries aim to build forward better from this devastating pandemic, the 2021 GKI reinforces the need for strategic South-South and triangular cooperation to narrow the gap between knowledge sectors, helping to scale-up development impact. It also recognises that 3.7 billion people remain trapped offline, unable to have their say in decisions that will affect their lives and livelihoods. Yet a worthwhile investment of $428 billion could achieve universal broadband connectivity by the end of the decade. The UN is also supporting global efforts to boost the digital capacity of vulnerable and marginalised groups, including women and persons with disabilities, so that they can play their role in shaping the future that they want.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum for his continued support to global efforts to create and sustain knowledge-based societies. I would also like to thank the many experts who contributed to the development of the Index. As we aim for the Global Goals, the UN and partners like the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation will continue to support knowledge and scientific initiatives that are helping to both envision -- and create -- a greener, more inclusive, and more sustainable future for all.

Achim Steiner

Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

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