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I am ever confident that this decade, the Decade of Action to accelerate the achievements and delivery of the SDGs by 2030, will also be the decade of sustainable technology, the great enabler and equaliser of society.

Sameer Chauhan, Director, UNICC
UNICC welcomes new Clients and Partner Organizations and strategic partners, including:

**ID2020**

ID2020 is working to improve lives through digital identity, with high-impact projects enabling stakeholders to pursue a coordinated approach and a pathway for efficient and responsible digital ID implementation at scale.

**UNDP Nigeria**

UNDP, the UN’s global development network advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources, has been supporting the Government and people of Nigeria through UNDP Nigeria, working with an array of partners to support development challenges.

**UN Biodiversity Lab**

The UN Biodiversity Lab provides access to global public data on people and the planet, empowering governments and others to generate insights and intelligence for data-driven ecological conservation and sustainable development.

Here’s some UNICC news on other fronts:

**Director’s Report**

2020 was a challenging year showing the world that technology is a great enabler and equaliser in a rapid-changing world. UNICC has published its 2020 Director's Report to capture a snapshot of the organisation in 2020, its services, its COVID-19 support and unique capabilities as the shared services and digital solutions provider for the UN family.

**ISO 22301:2019 Certification**

UNICC has achieved the ISO 22301:2019 certification, a widely recognised international benchmark for Security and Resilience and Business Continuity Management (BCMS) systems.

**Columbia University Award**

Columbia School of Professional Studies (SPS) has honoured UNICC with the award Most Innovative Thought Leader for its collaboration in the university’s Executive Case Series and Think-a-Thon with Columbia SPS students and alumni.
Bots Developed at UNICC Support the Procurement Process of COVID-19 Vaccines

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has added two ‘Acquisitions Technicians’ to their Procurement and Supply Management team who can work 24/7. Mia and Max are PAHO’s first bots, developed by PAHO Procurement, their IT team and UNICC’s Robotic Process Automation (RPA) unit.

The robots execute repetitive tasks, allowing the human team to forget about the paperwork and focus on strategic aspects of the procurement function, such as establishing the needs of the countries served by PAHO and enhancing relationships with suppliers.

Mia automates the purchase order requisition process. The bot downloads data from a spreadsheet report and uses it to fill in specific details in the ERP software Workday. It is also able to detect if a memo is written in Spanish and translate it into English.

A single purchase order requisition takes a human buyer an average processing time of 20 minutes, while Mia is able to do the same work in approximately 5 to 8 minutes, thanks to automating redundant and time consuming steps.

Max is a robotic solution that uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to automatically create Advance Shipment Notifications (ASN). The bot reads shipping documents, extracts relevant data and adds it into PAHO’s Workday ERP platform. This solution saves the PAHO team time and reduces the risk of errors in documentation.

**PAHO’s IT team initially experimented with setting up its own infrastructure for RPA using Automation Anywhere and setting up its own MS Azure environments. However, PAHO decided to switch to UNICC’s “Bot-as-a-Service” to leverage their RPA expertise, since that was more cost-effective.**

Patrick Hinderdael, Director, Information Technology Services, PAHO

Since Mia’s first day at work, the bot has been helping buyers with the purchase of strategic products, including COVID-19 vaccines for the American countries. Max works on automatically completing the documentation on vaccine lots and batch numbers, as well as manufacture and expiration dates, a process that was not included in the previous manual system.
UNITAD and UNICC Chart New Ground in Criminal Investigations

The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), an independent, impartial, investigative team, mandated by the United Nations Security Council, joined the UNICC family in 2020. The partnership has quickly advanced to support data management for accountability in UNITAD criminal investigations, with UNICC offering Microsoft Azure hosting services, development, data and cognitive services.

UNITAD updated its approach to collection and analysis of evidence of ISIL crimes by focusing on innovation and technology, designing solutions with leading technology entities like UNICC.

UNITAD reflects that, if harnessed properly, technology resources can bring about a paradigm shift in how the world approaches international criminal investigations: integrating innovative technology not as a stand-alone platform but as an integrated process focused on organization, screening and analysis of evidence.

UNICC’s Data and Analytics, Application Development and Cloud Infrastructure teams supported the collection, preservation and storing of evidence in the form of images, audio, video and digital text files that has been recovered from sources on the field.

The Data and Analytics team led the development of a data pipeline build-out, using cloud AI technologies and enabled, AI-enriched content to gain an understanding of content for investigators.

We are proud to be working with UNITAD, UN OICT and Microsoft to harness innovation, data and analytics to assist UNITAD in fulfilling its mandate to deliver justice for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

Sameer Chauhan, Director, UNICC

The result is not only transformative for UNITAD’s work but may also be a model for more partnerships to enhance criminal accountability initiatives.
Girls and Women Talking Tech - 100 Interviews - Over 20 from UNICC

As we move further into the information age, women and men need to be equally represented as shapers of our increasingly digital world. One way to inspire and empower girls and young women is to showcase success stories.

UNICC is proud to be working with ITU, the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth and EQUALS to present the Girls and Women Talking Tech series, which grew out of ITU’s Girls in ICT Day in 2018-2019 with conferences at Microsoft and Cornell Tech in New York and UNOG in Geneva. UNICC is supporting SDG 5: Gender equality and women’s empowerment, SDG 4: Quality Education as well as UNICC’s own gender parity initiatives.

For 2020, it wasn’t possible to have physical meetings anymore, so the group started to host dialogues online – and by now this has been a big success and radically transformed the scope of the initial project.

UNICC continues to include more and more UNICC women in interviews, often with the assistance of Break Through Tech Winterns and Communications team interns. Across the inter-Agency team UNICC goal is to engage women in 196 countries.

Also, a blog post marking the 100th interview milestone has been published at ITU News, where 200 girls and women in ICT share their stories on digital transformation, diversity and inclusion.

UNICC women were able to share lessons they learned along the way, advice about careers in technology and stories that inspired and help many young girls. Check out our playlist that includes all the interviews UNICC women have participated in.

The Talking Tech: Girls and Women in ICT interview series promotes girls and women in the sector. Today, there is nothing they cannot achieve in this fast-evolving field.
A Yoga App for a Healthy Lifestyle During the Pandemic - and Beyond

The World Health Organization, together with the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India, recently launched the well-received and popular WHO mYoga mobile app.

Developed by UNICC, the mYoga app has found a global audience with a simple yoga practice platform for the general public. It includes yoga learning and practice sessions of varying durations. The app comprises a collection of videos and audio sessions that users can enjoy in the comfort of their homes, and when they wish. It also allows users to download videos in case they wish to watch them offline at their own convenience.

Need an efficient and inexpensive yoga app in a timely fashion? Call on UNICC. Its Application Delivery team helps Clients to design, enhance and build mission-critical custom enterprise applications and collaborative solutions.

The mYoga app is safe and secure, collecting no data from users at all, and it can be used as a daily yoga companion for people aged 18-65 years old. The app is easy-to-use and a free tool for people who are trying yoga for the first time or those who already practice yoga regularly. No special equipment is needed, and users can learn or practice yoga from 3 to 45 minutes, so even busy people can use it to get active, achieve peace of mind and stay fit. The application currently supports two languages, both English (default) and Hindi, and it will soon be available in all six UN languages.

The app was built using React Native, which is an Open Source cross-platform framework for mobile development. UNICC leverages Amazon AWS for storing media content (video/audio files). The WHO mYoga app is available for free download on Android devices and Apple devices.
The Future Digital Work Force is Here

The UN Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda (UN RSCE), has among its many missions the consolidation of administrative and support functions previously located in its field missions. This streamlining of administration provides less volatile, more business-friendly regional locations while reducing the footprints of UN field missions across Africa. UNICC’s RPA+ Centre of Excellence was there to help develop and deploy a telephone billing consolidation system.

The bot accesses target files for processing from an input folder at a UN RSCE Microsoft SharePoint site. On processing, successful files are moved to an output folder with exceptions, audit logs and performance reports being maintained in separate folders.

RPA has allowed for automated multiple, time-consuming offline processes by converting telephone bills received from over 16 missions in over 25 formats into a single standard format that is compatible with the unit’s telephone billing platform. This means that there is now visibility for every single row of every single bill that has gone through RPA, which is projected to generate thousands of dollars a month in savings through enhanced recoveries.

UNICC was responsible for a project assessment, with development, testing, production deployment, associated license procurement, onboarding orchestrator service for relevant bot, infrastructure hosting, administration and support for RPA process candidates with agile project management in UN RSCE’s United Nations Regional Telephone Billing Unit (RTBU).

RPA and hyperautomation technologies – what UNICC calls ‘RPA+’ – allow us to call on a digital workforce to help us gain immediate operational efficiencies and get closer to business stakeholders and beneficiaries on the ground. Ultimately, RPA+ helps Clients and Partner Organizations build better to deliver on their mandates.

Nagesh Vepa, Head, Hyperautomation Solutions, UNICC

The result is greater speed and accuracy in performing repetitive, high-volume tasks, freeing time for staff to focus on more productive, analytical tasks. In addition, there are benefits like time stamps and an audit trail for previously offline actions that are performed outside the telephone billing platform.
Robust Data and Analytics Amplify UN Volunteers’ Capabilities

The spirit of altruism and volunteering is a core tenet of the United Nations, where individuals around the world can contribute to the UN goals of universal betterment in progressive social, environmental and economic transformation.

Volunteerism in the UN is championed especially by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, an organization that works with partners to integrate volunteers into development programming and promote the value and global recognition of volunteerism.

UNV partnered with UNICC to implement Application Integration services and Business Intelligence support from UNICC’s Data and Analytics team. Beginning in 2018, the project entailed the planning, gathering and consolidating of essential business data and analytics for UNV’s Finance department.

Technologies include SQL Integration Services (SSIS), SQL Server, Power BI Premium and Pro with a Microsoft Azure Infrastructure.

Due to the smooth delivery of the BI project support service in 2018, UNICC signed on to continue to support UNV in October of 2020 to provide business analyses and gather critical data on major reports, including financial, contribution, status and donor reports, among many others.

We count on UNICC for expertise and experience in delivering application integration services. The data dashboards now in place help to prioritise the business needs for us to change and grow with the times.

Frederic Le Maistre, Chief Information Officer, UNV

Across the successful deliverables and impactful team collaboration, UNICC’s BI support for UNV demonstrate the importance of the health of internal organizational structures. The robust data analytics and newly advanced internal reports amplify UNV’s capabilities to manage its missions in providing volunteers to hundreds if not thousands of UN initiatives around the globe.
UNICC Continues to Support the International Criminal Court’s Technology Programme

Digital transformation is critical to the way international organizations do business today and find success in delivering their mandates, with an emphasis on leveraging technology to streamline systems, do ‘more with less’ and speed the way to mission success.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is no exception. With its role to settle legal disputes in accordance with international law and provide advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by United Nations entities, the Court also relies on optimised business practices to get its work done. UNICC’s experience, expertise and complex knowledge means that Partners get the top of today’s technology services.

In line with the UN Secretary-General’s Strategy on New Technologies, UNICC has advised, designed and delivered a number of business optimisations to help ICJ embrace cloud computing, with a refresh of its enterprise applications stack and technology services, including business continuity during COVID-19.

UNICC and the International Court of Justice have worked together to help transform the Court’s digital business landscape. UNICC’s experience and expertise from consulting, strategy and information security to web hosting, content, collaboration and communications continue to shape and transform our technology programme and the business it supports.

Alvaro Flores, Head of the ICT Division, ICJ

UNICC maintains a strategic view of digital business and technology support for international development goals and deliverables around the globe. UNICC has been providing ICJ with services in the following areas:

- Advisory Support and Technology Workshops
- Website Hosting
- Enterprise Communications
- Workspace Management
- Systems Safety and Security
- Unified Communications (Microsoft Teams).
Clearing House Solution Leverages RPA to Streamline Payments in the Field

A WFP medical officer on mission stays at a guesthouse in Mogadishu, Somalia. She’s able to fulfil her work, and, when leaving the guesthouse, sign out without any local currency or hassles. At checkout, the guesthouse manager issues an invoice automatically on the UN Booking Hub with three options for cashless payments: Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) reduction, danger pay reduction or salary reduction. No cash!

It’s just one example of the new and automated payment operation thanks to the UN Booking Hub Clearing House solution.

In the background, and in line with the UN Secretary-General’s Strategy on New Technologies, the UN Digital Solution Centre (UN DSC) new solution, using Robotic Process Automation, digitally processes her invoice data.

The UN DSC, a joint project of WFP and UNHCR, with the UNICC’s Robotic Process Automation Centre of Excellence, has delivered a Clearing House solution for field-based UN accommodations.

The Clearing House solution provides automation to the existing UN Booking Hub, an inter-Agency platform for UN accommodation management. At full potential on all its services with all UN partners, the Clearing House solution is expected to generate more than $1.3 million yearly savings and 200,000 saved invoices.

The Clearing House solution seeks to create inter-Agency automated billing for cashless common service payments, with a vision to improve the experience for humanitarian workers in field operations when using UN provided services and innovating the way UN Agencies work today in providing UN accommodations management.

Clementina Dal Cin, UN Booking Hub Accommodation Manager

Built over 2020 and championed at a WFP Innovation bootcamp last year, the platform was piloted to WFP guesthouses in Somalia and Sudan and will be open to UNHCR guesthouses in Afghanistan soon.
UNICC Takes Part in the Tenth Anniversary Celebration of the Base

UNICC is proud to have been a part of the warm welcome to Secretary-General António Guterres at the UN Support Base in Valencia - to take part in the celebration of its tenth birthday.

I’m extremely grateful for the work of my colleagues at the UN Support Base in Valencia, Spain. Through the deployment of innovative solutions and digital support, they play a critical role in ensuring we can deliver our work, around the clock and around the world.

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

The Secretary-General recognised the work of people at the base, which has expanded beyond the UN Department of Operational Support (DOS, formerly DFS) to include more Agencies, including UNOPS, UNICC, and now UNICEF and IOM.

The UN Support Base hosts the UN Global Service Centre (UNGSC) to meet the needs of UN peacekeeping operations worldwide since 1994.

UNICC is the biggest Agency in the base (with nearly 300 personnel) and is also the biggest UN Agency in Spain. The Centre of Excellence covers many strategic areas of digital business solution delivery, from cyber security, data and analytics, new technologies as well as ongoing operational services.

UNICC acknowledges Spain’s efforts to provide the required space to accommodate the continuous growth of the organization.

In a separate session later that afternoon, the Secretary-General met with the youth of Spain at the City of Arts and Sciences. Among the select group of twenty youth were five UNICC interns.

The UN Support Base celebratory event was an affirming testament to the good work that UNICC delivers to its more than 70 Clients and Partner Organizations and provided an opportunity for UNICC to share its success stories and digital business solutions with UN leadership, the Spanish government, the city of Valencia, the country of Spain and the wider world.
Teams Work with UN Mentors to Present Tech-based Solutions to Global Challenges

UNICC and the Columbia University School of Professional Studies (SPS) have collaborated to bring students and alumni together to advance human welfare, make an impact to accelerate the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and confront the great challenges of our time in the first ever Columbia University - UNICC Thinkathon.

Seven teams have been working this summer on real-world solutions with live data, mentored by area experts from the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, UNICC as well as Columbia Faculty. On 24 August, the teams presented their solutions in front of a live audience worldwide and a panel of five judges.

The teams’ presentations proposed solutions to three challenges: Disaster Preparedness, Gender Equality and Cybersecurity.

In June, 73 participants came together to form 17 teams and submitted their proposals. Among the initial participants were 45 Columbia University students or alumni from 5 different schools, and 38 external people. Up to 10 countries of 4 continents were represented.

A review committee studied the submissions and selected 7 final teams that moved forward to the Thinkathon competition.

These teams have been working together with expert mentors to refine their proposals. Finally, on 24 August the finalist teams had the opportunity to present their ideas.

Team Agritech was the first-place winner, receiving a $3,000 cash prize, with its solution of a newly-developed, sustainable, proprietary ozone-based disinfection delivery system to tackle the disaster preparedness challenge.

Logista Emergency Response was the runner-up with a field-based logistics system that gives emergency responders accurate, data-driven insights in order to make the right decisions (cash prize team was $2,000).

The audience-chosen team was The Bulb, which was awarded a $1,000 cash prize for their Gender Equality solution of virtual networking against violence.
Four Prototypes Developed Based on Ideas Proposed During 2020 Thinkathon

On 25 and 26 August 2021, over 25 women from the city of Guadalajara, in Jalisco, Mexico, engaged in a design thinking workshop to ideate and prototype solutions to make their city safer. This event followed up on the Safe Cities for Women Thinkathon organised in November 2020 by UN Women and UNICC, an event that aspired to amplify women’s voices and needs for access to safe and inclusive public spaces during the pandemic and beyond.

The goal of the two-day design thinking workshop was to develop and test a prototype using a hands-on approach that allows to quickly validate high-level assumptions with a proof of concept before drilling into details.

Experimenting fast and cheap is one of the pillars of design thinking. The prototypes resulting from this experience are a first approach to solving a real and important need in terms of safe cities for women.

Isabella Stranger Stranger, Design Thinking Coach

The design thinking workshop was based on collaborative problem-solving. Members of civil society organisations, academia, private sector, local governments and technologists were also invited to learn more about the area of concern.

On the first day, 20 participants were assigned into 5 groups, representing 5 different personas: working mother, person with disabilities, indigenous woman, refugee woman and member of the LGBTQIA+ community, all of them vulnerable collectives in the public space. The groups worked each with a design thinking coach who stimulated and guided the participants through the definition of the problem and ideation process, with two rounds of brainstorming and idea selection. The second day revolved around prototyping and testing.

The UNICC Data and Analytics team will work together with the organization’s Applications Delivery team to design and deliver a mobile application that includes the most prioritised, applicable and common features that all women mentioned in their proposed prototypes such as emergency calling and alerting.
UNICC and ESCWA Speak About Robotic Process Automation Services

On 9 June, UNICC participated in a UN Innovation Network (UNIN) TechLearnTalk segment about Robotic Process Automation (RPA).

Manuel Nunes, Senior Business Analyst at UNICC, described the functions and benefits of RPA, followed by Carla Ziade and Kamal Al-Khatib of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) who presented a case study and demonstration of RPA in their daily operations as supported by UNICC’s Robotic Process Automation (RPA+) Centre of Excellence.

TechLearnTalks is a series of UNIN webinars dedicated towards demystifying up-and-coming technologies “without the jargon”; this was accurately reflected in the audience when a pre-webinar Zoom poll revealed that only 25% of participants had prior knowledge about RPA. This was no barrier for Manuel, who gave a brief yet comprehensive presentation on the topic, describing RPA as a self-functioning set of rules much like a self-playing piano. He continued to set out the different types of RPA and each of their specific functions.

RPA is both cross-mandate and cross-function. Since the development of the service, UNICC has built more than 50 automations through RPA bots to over 15 organizations in the UN. This equates to thousands of hours of efficiencies – thousands of hours these organizations can re-allocate towards the greater UN mission.

Following Manuel’s presentation, colleagues from ESCWA delivered a case study of RPA in action. They presented a bot which UNICC had built that primarily worked to automate the process of internal employees to submit travel requests within the Umoja system, boosting efficiencies, reducing turnaround times and improving accuracy.

Overall, the webinar was well received by the audience, with nearly 30 questions and comments from members of international organizations such as UNICEF, ICAO, UNV and PAHO.
UNICC Internship Programme Mutually Benefits Interns and the Organization

Over the past several years, UNICC has seen a steady growth in internships - young professionals, recent graduates and even current university students passionate about the United Nations and UNICC’s digital business solutions, contributing to meaningful projects by joining various teams.

These teams range across the organization, from Data and Analytics to Application Development, Operations, Finance and Procurement to Communications and Human Resources. Since the beginning of the internship programme around 2015, UNICC has been proud to host nearly 50 hardworking interns, many of whom have continued to pursue careers within the field of international humanitarian aid and technology. Some have even joined UNICC!

Internships have continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, even when most of the interns haven’t been able to meet with their respective teams during their time at UNICC.

Thanks to all of our interns for their contribution and efforts during this challenging period of uncertainty, they were able to perform their tasks with an excellent manner of professionalism.

Frederic Laval, Chief, Human Resources Officer, UNICC

UNICC’s internship programme is mutually beneficial for interns and the organization, because it gives the opportunity for bright young minds to contribute to day-to-day functions, allowing UNICC to put into practice two of its core values: involvement and inclusiveness, while supporting youth to enter the aging UN system. The involvement of interns on UNICC teams creates open conversations where team members and interns can share information for more innovation in accomplishing daily tasks.

Meet the interns of UNICC in a virtual meeting or read more about their contributions to UNICC.
UNICC Staff Present on Project Management, Cyber Security and Unified Communications

UNICC strives to build a dynamic pipeline for its talented workforce, with commitments to gender parity, diversity and inclusiveness. With this goal in mind, UNICC staff delivered digital business master classes to students at various universities.

The Università del Salento’s Department of Economics, in collaboration with the Department of Engineering for Innovation, partnered with UNICC for a Business Management seminar on Project Management perspectives, held remotely on 26 April. Nearly 30 students from various faculties attended the session led by Marco Liuzzi, Chief Operations Officer, UNICC, upon invitation from Professor Roberto Paiano.

Also in April, the University of Valencia School of Engineering, located in Burjassot, Spain, held a conference to bring engineering and data science students across the university to network with professionals in the tech sector. For a session on cybersecurity, the university reached out to UNICC to deliver a virtual master class presentation.

On 21 April, UNICC’s Gabriella Andriuzzi, Informational Security Administrator, with the help of Amadeo Cioffi, Lead, Cyber Security Operations, presented a session on “Zero-day Threats from the Defender’s Perspective.”

To launch the beginning of a new academic semester in September 2020, the Universidad Internacional de Valencia hosted a series of master classes titled “The Day to Day in International Organizations” for Master’s students in legal studies. Presentations were conducted weekly by representatives from international organizations such as UNESCO and NATO. UNICC was invited to present on the daily activities of supporting its 70 Client and Partner Organizations.

Ricardo Pardal, Project Lead for the UNICC Unified Communications team delivered a master class to 50 students on the mandate of UNICC, its strategic position as the leading digital business solutions provider for the UN family, the historical growth and development of the organization, especially regarding the pandemic – and ultimately his role and responsibilities.
About UNICC

UNICC is a specialized UN entity providing digital business solutions to the UN family and related international organizations. UNICC is committed to delivering reliable digital services driven by best practices, offering world class technology, state-of-the-art infrastructure and a system-wide cross domain experience of knowledge and data, enabling Clients to achieve their SDG mandates through accelerated digital delivery.

Over the past 50 years, UNICC has acquired a strategic view of the technology needs of its more than 70 Clients and developed relevant expertise and a nuanced understanding of the complexities of their digital environments. As a United Nations entity, UNICC operates with UN privileges and immunities. Its cost-recovery business model uniquely positions it to meet the needs of its Clients. UNICC offers cost savings, business efficiencies and volume discounts based on the scale of its engagements.

UNICC Clients can focus on their substantive business while leveraging the organization’s nearly 50 trusted services and digital business solutions in five strategic operation locations around the world. For more information, please visit our website at www.unicc.org or contact business@unicc.org.