NATION BUILDERS UNIVERSITY LLC

THE BRIDGE

International Magazine of Nation Builders University

DIGITAL@UNGA 2026

Special Edition • Volume 1 • Issue 1 • September 2026

Bridging Central Africa's Digital Divide

Public-Private Partnerships for Youth, Trade & Inclusive AI in the Sahel

Independent publication documenting an NBU-organized Digital@UNGA 2026 Affiliate Session



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Publisher’s Note & Publication Status

The Bridge is a continuing publication of Nation Builders University LLC intended to document ideas, dialogue, leadership, innovation, education and global development conversations. This Volume 1, Issue 1 is the Digital@UNGA 2026 Special Edition.

This edition is organized as an international magazine and event-documentation publication. It combines the original special-edition material with an expanded editorial and documentation section so that the title, issue number, publisher, format, contents and publication information are readily identifiable.

The publication documents an independently organized Affiliate Session within the ITU–UNDP Digital@UNGA 2026 programme. It is not presented as an official publication of the United Nations, ITU, UNDP or the American Red Cross. The appearance of third-party names or logos does not by itself establish endorsement, sponsorship, accreditation or affiliation.

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Session at a Glance

Session	Bridging Central Africa’s Digital Divide: Public-Private Partnerships for Youth, Trade, and Inclusive AI in the Sahel
Date	September 22, 2026
Format	In-person and virtual
Duration	90 minutes
Programme context	ITU–UNDP Digital@UNGA 2026
Organizer	Nation Builders University
Issue focus	Youth • Trade • Inclusive AI • Digital inclusion • Public-private partnerships

The original issue describes the session as a cross-sector dialogue involving government representatives, private-sector technology and trade leaders, youth innovators and development partners. The discussion connected with Digital@UNGA thematic journeys including Digit'all Innovation, Digit'all Inclusion and Digit'all Future.

EDITOR'S LETTER

A Message From Our Founder



Hiroua Goare Bienvenu
Founder & CEO, Nation Builders University

On September 22nd, 2026, during UN General Assembly High-Level Week, we welcomed delegates, panelists, and partners from around the world — in person in New York and virtually across the globe — for a conversation that mattered deeply to all of us: how do we close the digital divide facing Central Africa and the Sahel, together?

What made this session special was not just who was in the room, but the spirit of genuine dialogue that filled it. Government leaders, entrepreneurs, technologists, and youth voices spoke candidly about the real barriers to digital access — and, more importantly, about the partnerships already proving that change is possible.

"Youth are not beneficiaries of digital transformation. They are its architects."

This special edition of The Bridge is our way of capturing that moment and sharing it further. Thank you to everyone who made it possible. This is only the beginning of the conversation.

FEATURE REPORT

Bridging Central Africa's Digital Divide

By the Nation Builders University Editorial Team

Central Africa and the Sahel remain among the regions most affected by the global digital divide. Limited connectivity, constrained access to digital financial services, and gaps in digital-skills development continue to restrict youth employment, cross-border trade, and small-business growth across the region.

Yet the region also holds significant untapped potential: a young, fast-growing population, expanding mobile penetration, and a growing base of entrepreneurs and public institutions actively seeking partnerships to close the divide. It was this tension — between real constraint and real possibility — that anchored the entire session.

> ***"The old models of development assistance are no longer enough. What this region needs is partnership, not charity."***

Held at the American Red Cross Greater New York Region and streamed live to a virtual audience spanning dozens of countries, the session convened government representatives, private-sector technology and trade leaders, youth innovators, and development partners to examine how coordinated public-private partnerships can expand digital access, unlock trade opportunities, and ensure AI deployment in the region is inclusive and locally grounded.

A Concrete Architecture

The conversation contributed directly to all three of Digital@UNGA 2026's thematic journeys — Digit'all Innovation, Digit'all Inclusion, and Digit'all Future — reflecting a session designed not merely to discuss the digital divide, but to sketch the concrete architecture of closing it.

Panelists returned repeatedly to a common theme: that lasting digital inclusion in the Sahel will not come from any single government programme or corporate initiative, but from the deliberate, sustained coordination between all three sectors — public, private, and civil society — represented in the room.

> ***"Digital inclusion is not a technology problem. It is a coordination problem."***

That framing — inclusion as a coordination challenge rather than a purely technical one — set the tone for the four thematic pillars that structured the remainder of the session, detailed on the following page.

SESSION AGENDA

The Four Pillars

The session's 90-minute agenda was structured around four thematic pillars, each surfacing a distinct dimension of the digital divide challenge — and a distinct opportunity for partnership.

PILLAR 1 Public-Private Partnerships

Government, industry, and innovators aligned on shared goals for digital transformation across Central Africa and the Sahel.

PILLAR 2 Youth & Entrepreneurship

Building pathways to digital jobs, skills, and new ventures for a young, fast-growing population.

PILLAR 3 Inclusive AI

Technology development reflecting local languages, institutions, and community priorities — not imported wholesale.

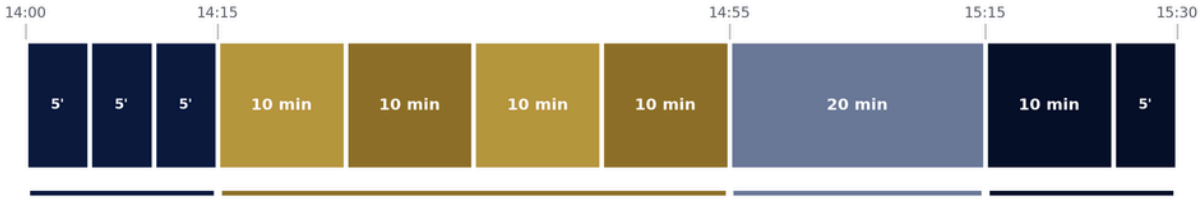
PILLAR 4 Trade & Digital Commerce

Expanding market access and cross-border digital commerce across the Sahel region.

90	4	8	2
Minutes of Dialogue	Thematic Pillars	Speakers & Panelists	Formats — In-Person & Virtual

THE 90-MINUTE JOURNEY

Programme run of show — Tuesday, September 22, 2026 • 14:00–15:30 EDT



14:00	Welcome & Opening Remarks	14:35	Pillar 3 — Inclusive AI
14:05	Framing Remarks	14:45	Pillar 4 — Trade & Digital Commerce
14:10	Panelist Introductions	14:55	Audience Q&A (in person + virtual)
14:15	Pillar 1 — Public-Private Partnerships	15:15	Closing Remarks & Key Takeaways
14:25	Pillar 2 — Youth & Entrepreneurship	15:25	Networking / Session Close

■ Opening ■ Pillar segments ■ Q&A ■ Closing

Source: NBU Digital@UNGA 2026 final agenda (scheduled times). Actual timings on the day may have varied slightly.

PANELIST SPOTLIGHT

The Voices Behind The Conversation

Eight leaders. Six countries-spanning pillars. One shared mission — to turn digital promise into digital access.



Mercy Idoko
Moderator—Principal Arbitrator, Daily Conflict Solution Firm



Hiroua G. Bienvenu
Founder & CEO, Nation Builders University



Prof. Maged Botros
Chair,Board of Advisors, Nation Builders University



Zulaykhah Aileru
Founder, Secure Gates Limited



Tavion Goodman
Chair,Board of Directors,Expanding Boundaries International



Nathalie Kesler
Founding President, PANGEE



Dr. Saemah Shamim
Researcher & Lecturer (Nepal)



Nkechi Oji
Consultant,NkechiOji Consulting

PHOTO ESSAY

Moments From The Floor



Opening remarks set the tone for the afternoon.



Panelists engage in candid, cross-regional dialogue.



Delegates and panelists between sessions.



Closing remarks and key takeaways.

PHOTO ESSAY, CONTINUED

Delegates From Around The World



In-person delegates gather after the session.



A truly global delegation, in one room.



Panelists and delegates share the moment.



Attendees take their seats before the panel.

BY THE NUMBERS

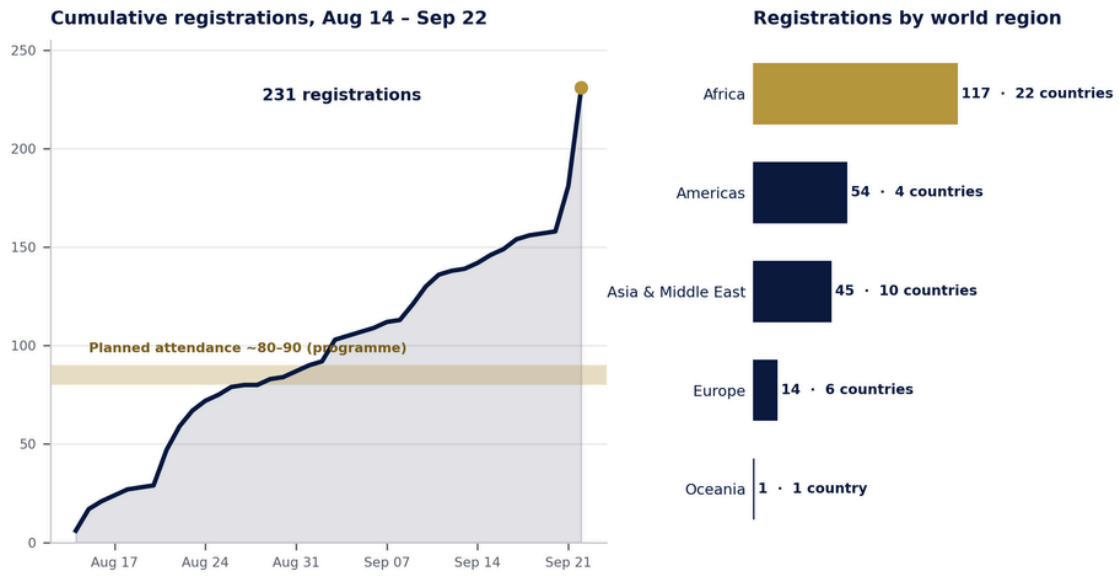
A Truly Global Convening

Fromitsfirst announcement totheclosingremarks, this Affiliate Session drew a registration base far larger — and far more international — than initially anticipated.

231	43	87
Total Registrants	Countries Represented	In-Person Delegates

FROM ANNOUNCEMENT TO EVENT DAY

Registrations grew far beyond the ~80–90 participants planned in the programme



Source: NBU Digital@UNGA 2026 registration data (231 registrations; timestamps from the registration form). Planned attendance from the official programme. Regions grouped by stated country; figures show registrations, not confirmed attendance.

Delegates registered across ten distinct participation categories — from Youth Representatives and Civil Society leaders to Government, Technology, and Investment representatives — reflecting the genuinely cross-sectoral nature of the conversation the session set out to convene.

Top represented countries: United States · Pakistan · Nigeria · Chad · Ghana · Kenya · Cameroon · India · Indonesia · Canada

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With Gratitude

To our panelists and moderator — thank you for your leadership, insight, and generosity of time in shaping such a rich conversation.

To every delegate who joined us, in person and virtually, from 43 countries — thank you for showing up ready to engage, not just to listen.

To the American Red Cross, Greater New York Region — thank you for so generously hosting us at your headquarters and welcoming our delegation with such warmth.

To the Digital@UNGA 2026 Secretariat, ITU, and UNDP — thank you for validating and supporting this Affiliate Session as part of a truly global programme.

> ***"This is only the beginning of the conversation."***

Every delegate and panelist who joined us will receive an official Certificate of Participation or Appreciation. The full session recording and highlight video will follow shortly — and we look forward to continuing this work at future Nation Builders University sessions.

Session Overview

Session: Bridging Central Africa's Digital Divide: Public-Private Partnerships for Youth, Trade, and Inclusive AI in the Sahel

Date: September 22, 2026

Format: In-person and virtual

Duration: 90 minutes

Programme context: ITU–UNDP Digital@UNGA 2026

Organizer: Nation Builders University

The supplied publication describes the session as a cross-sector dialogue involving government representatives, private-sector technology and trade leaders, youth innovators and development partners. Its central question was how coordinated partnerships can help address digital access, digital skills, trade opportunities and inclusive AI across Central Africa and the Sahel.

The original issue also states that the conversation connected with three Digital@UNGA thematic journeys: Digit'all Innovation, Digit'all Inclusion and Digit'all Future.

Executive Summary

The Digital@UNGA2026 Affiliate Session documented in this issue focused on the relationship between digital inclusion, youth opportunity, entrepreneurship, trade and responsible use of artificial intelligence. The discussion was framed around the proposition that closing digital divides requires sustained coordination among public institutions, private-sector actors and civil society.

Four thematic pillars structured the session: public-private partnerships; youth and entrepreneurship; inclusive AI; and trade and digital commerce. Across these themes, the session materials emphasize locally grounded solutions, digital skills, expanded access, entrepreneurship and cross-border opportunity.

The publication records a registration base of 231 people representing 43 countries, including 87 in-person delegates. These figures are presented as event registration/participation statistics supplied in the original issue and should not be interpreted as a census of the populations or digital conditions of the represented countries.

Regional Context: Central Africa & the Sahel

The original feature report identifies limited connectivity, constrained access to digital financial services and gaps in digital-skills development as barriers affecting youth employment, cross-border trade and small-business growth in Central Africa and the Sahel.

At the same time, the issue describes significant potential associated with a young population, expanding mobile penetration and institutions and entrepreneurs seeking partnerships. The session therefore positioned the digital divide not only as a question of infrastructure, but also as a question of skills, institutions, access, markets and coordination.

This section is an editorial synthesis of the supplied feature report. It is not intended to substitute for a country-by-country development assessment or independent statistical study.

Pillar I — Public-Private Partnerships

The first pillar examined cooperation among government, industry and innovators. The session materials repeatedly frame sustained coordination as essential to digital inclusion and emphasize that no single government programme or corporate initiative can address the full challenge alone. Editorial framing: this section summarizes the thematic architecture stated in the supplied session issue; it does not represent a negotiated resolution or binding policy commitment unless separately documented.

Pillar II — Youth & Entrepreneurship

The second pillar focused on pathways to digital jobs, skills and new ventures. Youth were presented in the editorial framing not simply as recipients of digital transformation, but as participants capable of shaping it. The issue connects youth opportunity with entrepreneurship, skills and market access. Editorial framing: this section summarizes the thematic architecture stated in the supplied session issue; it does not represent a negotiated resolution or binding policy commitment unless separately documented.

Pillar III — Inclusive AI

The third pillar addressed AI that reflects local languages, institutions and community priorities. The session materials emphasize locally grounded deployment rather than importing technological approaches without adaptation.

Editorial framing: this section summarizes the thematic architecture stated in the supplied session issue; it does not represent a negotiated resolution or binding policy commitment unless separately documented.

Pillar IV — Trade & Digital Commerce

The fourth pillar explored digital market access and cross-border commerce. In the context of the issue, digital commerce is connected to entrepreneurship, regional markets and the practical ability of businesses to participate in a more connected economy.

Editorial framing: this section summarizes the thematic architecture stated in the supplied session issue; it does not represent a negotiated resolution or binding policy commitment unless separately documented.

Key Discussion Takeaways

• Digital inclusionwasframedas a coordination challenge as well as a technology challenge.

• Public institutions, private-sector organizations and civil society were identified as complementary actors. • Youth skills and entrepreneurship were treated as central components of digital transformation.

• Inclusive AI was discussed in relation to local languages, institutions and community priorities.

• Digital commerce and cross-border market access were connected to broader digital infrastructure and entrepreneurship.

• The session emphasized partnership-oriented approaches rather than reliance on a single institution or sector.

These are editorially consolidated themes from the supplied publication. They should not be read as formal resolutions, declarations or commitments unless a separate official outcome document establishes them.

Participant Directory

The supplied issue describes fourteen speakers and panelists, while the published spotlight page identifies the following eight individuals by name and role. The complete fourteen-person directory should be verified against the final event programme before a later edition or archival record is issued.

Mercy Idoko	Moderator — Principal Arbitrator, Daily Conflict Solution Firm
Hiroua Goare Bienvenu	Founder & CEO, Nation Builders University
Prof. Maged Botros	Chair, Board of Advisors, Nation Builders University
Zulaykhah Aileru	Founder, Secure Gates Limited
Tavion Goodman	Chair, Board of Directors, Expanding Boundaries International
Nathalie Kesler	Founding President, PANGEE
Dr. Saemah Shamim	Researcher & Lecturer (Nepal)
Nkechi Oji	Consultant, Nkechi Oji Consulting

Global Participation

231

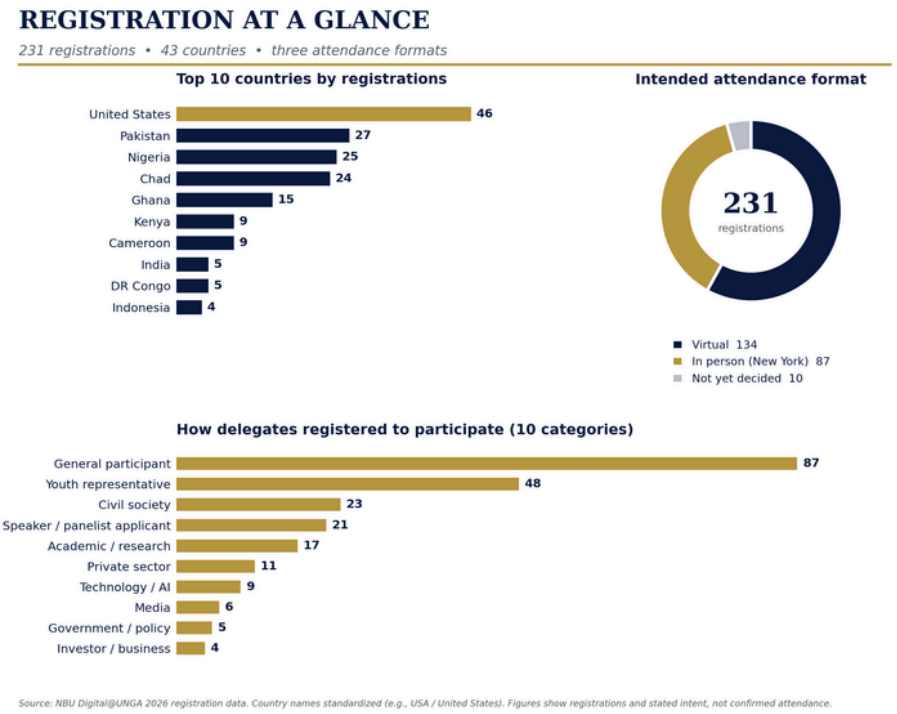
Total Registrants

43

Countries Represented

87

In-Person Delegates



The original issue identifies the United States, Pakistan, Nigeria, Chad, Ghana, Kenya, Cameroon, India, Indonesia and Canada among the top represented countries. It also states that delegates registered across ten participation categories, including youth representatives, civil society, government, technology and investment.

For a future data edition, NBU should maintain an auditable registration data set and publish the exact methodology used to calculate registrants, countries, attendance and participation categories.

Youth, Innovation & Local Capacity

A central editorial message of the original issue is that young people should be recognized as active contributors to digital transformation. The session linked youth opportunity with digital skills, entrepreneurship, employment and market access.

For future programming, the publication can serve as a bridge between dialogue and implementation by documenting specific youth-led projects, partnerships, training pathways, pilot initiatives and measurable follow-up actions when those activities are formally established.

This approach would allow subsequent editions to distinguish clearly between ideas discussed at a convening and initiatives that have actually moved into implementation.

AI, Digital Inclusion & Responsible Innovation

The session's Inclusive AI pillar called attention to local languages, institutions and community priorities. That framing places context and participation alongside technical capability. For future editions, NBU can strengthen this section through documented case studies covering digital literacy, AI skills, public-sector capacity, local-language technology, accessibility, community consultation and responsible deployment. Any claims about impact should be accompanied by a source, date, geography and methodology.

The publication should also distinguish between participant viewpoints, editorial analysis and independently verified evidence when discussing emerging AI technologies.

Trade & Digital Commerce

The fourth thematic pillar connected digital transformation with market access and cross-border digital commerce across the Sahel. The issue presents digital connectivity, entrepreneurship and trade as interdependent areas of opportunity.

A future data-rich edition could add verified indicators on digital payments, e-commerce readiness, SME adoption, cross-border trade procedures and digital infrastructure. Those indicators should be sourced directly from the relevant governments, international organizations or recognized research institutions.

Institutional & Programme Context

Nation Builders University: Organizer and publisher identified in the supplied issue.
Digital@UNGA 2026: The supplied issue identifies the session as an independently organized Affiliate Session within the ITU–UNDP Digital@UNGA 2026 programme.

American Red Cross, Greater New York Region: The supplied issue identifies the organization as the venue host.

> ***Important distinction: Participation in, hosting of, validation or programme inclusion should not be described as an endorsement, accreditation, sponsorship or institutional affiliation unless the relevant organization has formally granted that status.***

The original publication's final-page disclaimer is therefore retained as an essential part of the publication record.

Photo & Media Documentation Standard

•Each photograph should have a descriptive caption identifying what is visible without overstating what the image proves.

• Where available, captions should identify date, location and photographer or source organization.

• Photo rights and permissions should be retained in NBU's event archive.

• Images supplied by partners should not be republished beyond the permission granted.

• Future editions should maintain a media log linking each image to its original file and consent/usage record.

The original issue contains a photo essay documenting opening remarks, panel discussion, delegates, closing remarks and group moments. The expanded edition recommends adding formal credits and archival metadata to each image.

Editorial Methodology & Accuracy Standard

This expanded edition is based on the supplied eleven-page publication and its documented event information. New sections are editorial organization, clarification and publication guidance derived from that source; they are not presented as newly verified external research.

Where the source provides a number, name, title, event description or institutional relationship, the expanded edition preserves the source's wording and qualification. Where the source does not provide enough information to establish a claim, the edition flags the gap rather than filling it with an assumption.

For future editions, the editorial workflow should include fact-checking of names and titles, confirmation of attendance statistics, source logging for substantive factual claims, image-rights verification and a final approval record before publication.

Sources & Documentation

Primary publication used for this expanded edition: The Bridge — Digital@UNGA 2026 Special Edition:
Official Affiliate Session Report, Nation Builders University, 11 pages, supplied in the present publication file.

The source publication includes its own event narrative, agenda, participant spotlight, photo essay, participation statistics, acknowledgments and final institutional disclaimer.

No external statistical claims have been added to this expanded supplement. For future analytical editions, NBU should maintain a formal references page containing the title, issuing organization, publication date and link or identifier for every external source used.

Recommended archival practice: preserve the event invitation/programme, speaker confirmations, registration export, attendance record, photographs, recording, presentation materials, partner correspondence and final approved publication as a single event documentation package.

Corrections, Transparency & Editorial Policy

The Bridge seeks to maintain accuracy, transparency and responsible attribution. Readers, participants and partners may submit factual correction requests to the editorial office. Corrections should identify the relevant page, statement, supporting evidence and requested correction.

Editorial summaries may condense complex discussions. They should not be interpreted as verbatim transcripts or as formal statements by participants unless explicitly identified as quotations or official statements.

Names, professional titles, organizational affiliations and programme relationships should be rechecked before each subsequent edition because professional roles and institutional arrangements can change.

About The Bridge

The Bridge is a publication of Nation Builders University dedicated to documenting ideas, dialogue, research, leadership, innovation, education and global development conversations.

Through special editions, interviews, event reports, analytical features and photo essays, the publication aims to connect institutions, leaders, educators, entrepreneurs, researchers, youth and communities across borders.

About Nation Builders University
Nation Builders University is identified in the supplied publication as the organizer and publisher of this special edition. For institutional information, readers are directed to www.nationbuilderuniversity.com and info@nationbuilderuniversity.com.

Publication & Legal Notice

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This publication documents an independently organized Affiliate Session and should be read together with the non-endorsement statement on the original publication's final page.

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Editorial Closing

The conversation documented in this edition is presented as a starting point for continued dialogue. Its value lies not only in the issues discussed, but in the relationships, questions and ideas that can inform future work.

Future editions of The Bridge can build on this foundation by documenting verified commitments, implementation progress, research findings, youth-led initiatives, partnership outcomes and lessons from subsequent convenings.

Build a Nation, One Leader at a Time.

#DigitalAtUNGA2026 • #BridgingTheDivide • #NationBuilders

Final Programme Disclaimer

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> ***This publication does not constitute endorsement by, or affiliation with, the United Nations, ITU, UNDP, or the American Red Cross unless a separate official document expressly establishes such a relationship.***

The original issue contains this disclaimer on its final page; it is reproduced here in expanded editorial form to maintain clarity for international readers.

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