Cape Town Declaration towards guiding the IFAP action plan in support of the UNESCO 2017 – 2021 IFAP priorities
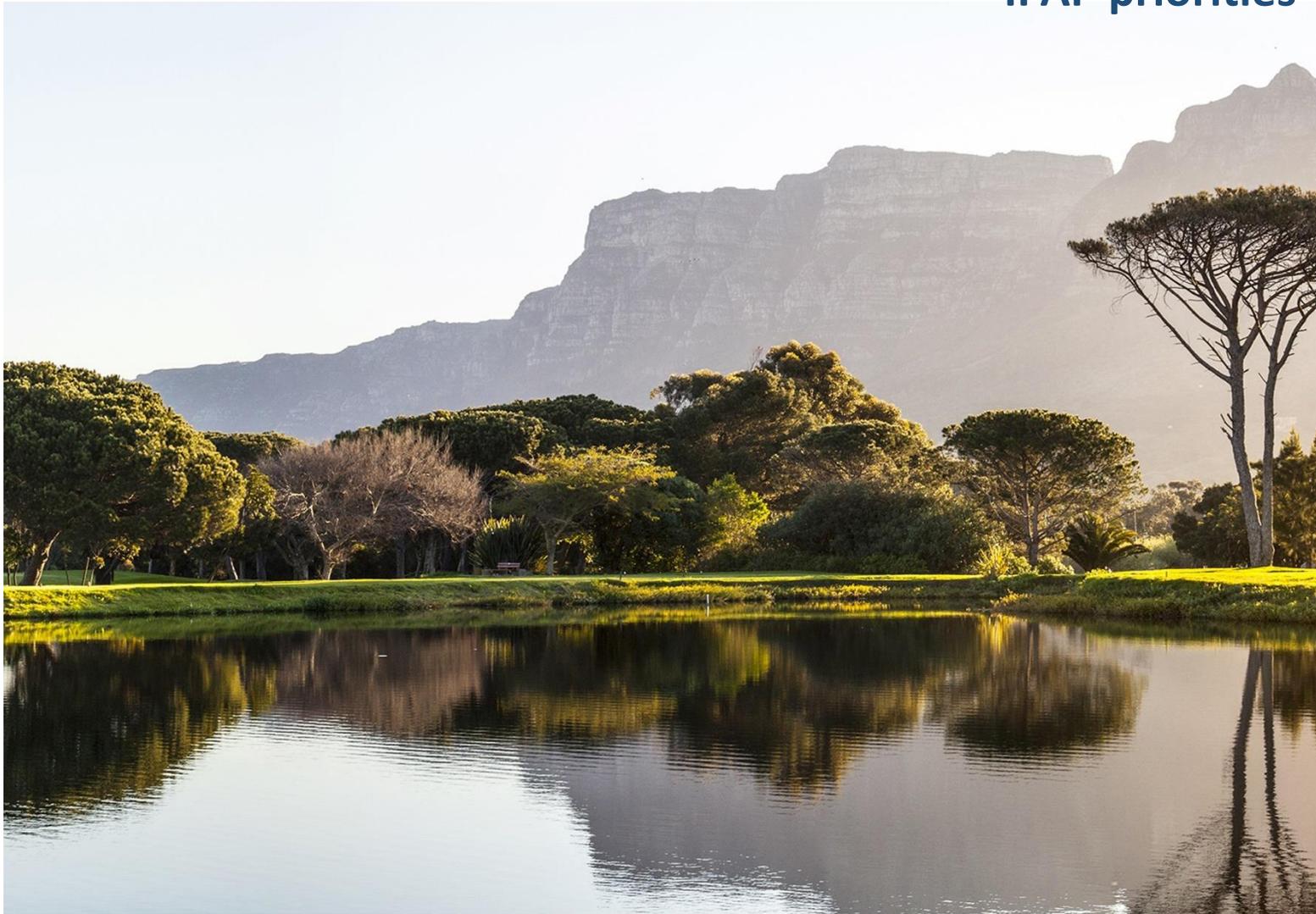
CAPE TOWN DECLARATION

Preamble

The Cape Town Declaration was adopted by the signatories and participants of the International Policy Dialogue on IFAP Objectives in BRICS and African Countries, 2 – 7 July 2018.

We, the IFAP members, BRICS representatives and African scholars, together with academics from the international community, as researchers and policy makers participating in the International Policy Dialogue on IFAP Objectives in BRICS and African Countries, 2 – 7 July 2018, Cape Town, South Africa, declare that:

The Sustainable Development Goals are to guide the implementation of IFAP strategic objectives so that all sectors of society uphold the basic right to information, accessibility and preservation. We acknowledge the significance of information literacy, promotion of multilingualism and the consideration of the ethical dimension of knowledge societies. We advocate for the right to information, the means to access and utilise information in an accessible language and medium, and rights of freedom of expression and association. We emphasise the Global South's contribution to this international dialogue and thereby advocate South-South and North-South reciprocal collaboration.

We, the participants of this conference and the signatories to this declaration, affirm the following principles:

Principles

1. IFAP and the Sustainable Development Goals

We acknowledge the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity"[1]. The signatories will work towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the underlying means to monitor all endeavours in working towards knowledge societies so that the spread of information and communication technology and global interconnectedness can accelerate human progress and bridge the digital divide. By promotion the empowerment of women, the signatories advocate to enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology to promote gender equality. The IFAP strategic programme objectives are important elements in ensuring that the Fourth Industrial Revolution, is harnessed

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[1] http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html

for eradicating poverty, empowerment, informed decision-making and human development and to strengthen the foundations of peace.

2.   Access and accessibility considerations for minorities and people with disabilities

No one is to be excluded from the benefits of ICTs and the information and knowledge society because of disabilities. Opportunities for collaboration on the use of technologies should be actively sought to ensure accessibility, freedom of expression and opinion and access and inclusive education. Youth should also not be excluded from knowledge societies as young people are the custodians of the future. Hence, the signatories undertake to uphold the right to global citizen education, including media and information literacy to ensure a flourishing and save future for all generations.

3.   Multilingualism, mutual respect and cultural diversity

Culture contributes to poverty reduction and paves the way for a human-centred, inclusive and equitable development. The signatories acknowledge the diversity in languages and the importance to promote multilingualism in cyberspace and in access to information, as well as knowledge creation and preservation in these languages. The signatories undertake to advocate for the celebration of the International Year of Indigenous Languages in 2019 as well as the call for a world report on multilingualism.

Given i) the importance of languages as unique tools enabling people to comprehend and describe the world, preserve and promote knowledge of various nations, including indigenous ones, ii) the threats of narrowing the spheres of use even for the world's major languages (education and science, international policies and public discourse, business and tourism), and iii) the necessity of representing the diversity of languages and cultures in cyberspace, we underline the importance of comprehensive language policies to let people use their potential in the languages of their choice, so that their dignity is not derogated, and languages are not used for the purposes of domination, suppression and separation. The signatories also recognises the rights of those displaced due to acts of war, political and socio-economic instability, to practice their mother tongue in harmony with the citizens of the adopted countries.

4.   Radicalism in the digital environment

We underscore the importance of freedom of expression and association, together with the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, which should not be exercised to the detriment of others within knowledge societies, whether it is in real life or online interaction. We undertake to promote safe access to safe information by undertaking concrete steps towards Media and Information Literacy for all.
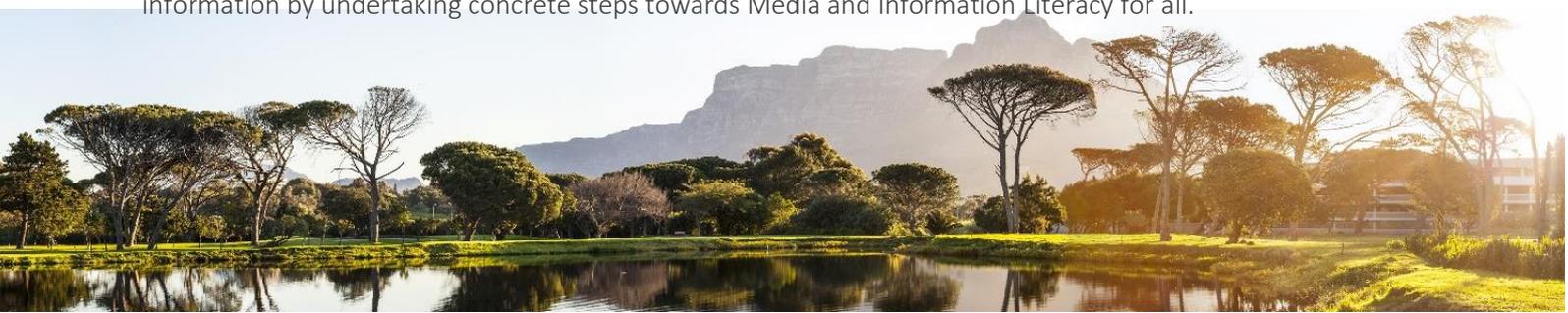
5. Information Ethics

The signatories undertake to take into consideration the intercultural and interdisciplinary practices of Information Ethics. Further education and research will be undertaken to advocacy for digital ethics such as computer ethics, cyber ethics, and Artificial Intelligence ethics.

Conclusion

Towards narrowing the digital divide and addressing information poverty, it is the responsibility of institutions, governments, the international community and each able individual to advocate for those without a voice and to ensure that academic and technology prowess are to the advantage of those communities who lack sustainable development. The signatories will therefore endeavour to harness the conference outcomes towards organising events in in the following years towards observing the IFAP Strategic Plan 2017 to 2021.