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**Data for Development**

Statement by

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## **Harnessing Science, Technology, and Innovation for Sustainable Development: UNCTAD's Role in Supporting the 2030 Agenda.**

**Speech delivered on occasion of the 27th CSTD Session on 'Science and Technology for Development High-level panel on Data for Development'.**

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies, and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this esteemed gathering to discuss the critical role of data-enabled technologies in driving sustainable development, particularly in the context of developing countries like The Gambia.

Data is often compared to oil due to its economic value and transformative potential. Like oil, data can fuel innovation and drive economic growth, but its exploitation must be managed carefully to avoid negative impacts. Developing countries face challenges in harnessing the benefits of data, such as limited infrastructure and skills. To fully leverage data's potential, countries must invest in digital infrastructure, build capacity in data analysis, and establish strong data protection laws.

Inclusive data practices are essential for ensuring that marginalized groups benefit from data-driven development. This involves engaging communities in the data collection process, adapting tools to local contexts, and disaggregating data to capture diverse perspectives. Addressing bias in data collection and analysis is also crucial for achieving equitable outcomes in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Developing international standards for data governance is vital for facilitating cross-border collaboration on global challenges. This requires collaboration among countries, international organizations, and stakeholders to develop flexible standards that reflect diverse needs and contexts. Standards should be based on principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in the process.

Monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are essential for ensuring compliance with international standards. Capacity building and technical assistance can help countries implement these standards effectively. By investing in infrastructure, building capacity, and establishing international standards, countries can harness the power of data to drive sustainable development and achieve the SDGs.

UNCTAD and related UN agencies can play a crucial role in ensuring that developing countries reap the benefits of data. Firstly, they can provide technical assistance and capacity-building programmes to help these nations build the necessary skills and expertise for effective data collection, processing, and analysis. Secondly, these agencies can offer policy advice and guidance to help developing countries develop robust data protection laws, cybersecurity measures, and regulatory frameworks for data governance. Thirdly, they can facilitate

partnerships between developing countries, international organizations, and the private sector to promote the responsible and ethical use of data and foster innovation.

Additionally, UNCTAD and related UN agencies can play a role in promoting best practices by sharing lessons learned from other countries and regions to help developing countries implement effective data strategies. They can also advocate for the importance of data-driven development and the benefits it can bring to developing countries at the international level. Finally, these agencies can conduct research and analysis on the impact of data on development and share their findings with developing countries to inform their policies and strategies.

In conclusion, data has the potential to drive sustainable development and achieve the SDGs, but realizing this potential requires concerted efforts to overcome challenges and develop robust governance frameworks. By investing in infrastructure, building capacity, and establishing international standards, countries can harness the power of data for the benefit of all.

Thank you.