



DIGITAL ECONOMY REPORT 2021

Cross-Border Data Flows and Development: For Whom the Data Flow

UNCTAD Trade and Development Board

21 June 2022, 10.00–13.00 (Geneva time)

The *Digital Economy Report 2021* takes a deep dive into the development and policy implications of cross-border flows of digital data. Digital data are an increasingly important economic and strategic resource, and is quickly emerging as a key development issue. The importance of data has been further accentuated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The surge in the use of digital solutions was accompanied by the steepest increase in data flows in one year since 2013.

At the same time, due to digital divides and inequalities, countries remain unequally prepared for harnessing digitalization and data for sustainable development. Differences in readiness can be seen in terms of connectivity and data infrastructure, digital entrepreneurship and skills as well as in terms of financial resources and institutional capacities for digital transformation. Many governments are also struggling to secure technical and analytical expertise needed to identify opportunities and potential risks associated with data and to regulate them.

How the world governs and harnesses digital data for the global good will greatly influence the ability to achieve all the sustainable development goals. The multidimensional nature of data requires them to be addressed through a governance framework that factors in economic and non-economic dimensions, including human rights and security. As stressed in the *Digital Economy Report*, the current context of data governance is fragmented. Existing regional and international regulatory frameworks are either too narrow in scope or too limited geographically, failing to enable cross-border data flows while properly addressing risks. And developing countries are underrepresented in existing processes.

This session of the Trade and Development Board invites member States, following a presentation of the main findings of the Report, to reflect on its analysis and policy recommendations. The Report calls for innovative governance approaches that reflect the multiple and interlinked dimensions of data, balance different interests and needs, in a way that supports inclusive and sustainable development with the full participation of all countries. It is expected that the session will focus on the way forward towards strengthening global data governance in a balanced and inclusive manner that enables cross-border data flows, facilitates equitable sharing of gains from data while properly addressing relevant risks.

Speakers (tentative)

- Ms. Rebeca Grynszpan, Secretary-General, UNCTAD
- Ms. Shamika N. Sirimanne, Director, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD
- Mr. Sushant Kumar, Director, Responsible Technology team, Omidyar Network (*remote*)
- Mr. Andrin Eichin, Head, Data Policy, Swiss Federal Office of Communications, Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications
- Ms. Amazouz Souhila, Senior Policy Officer, Department for Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission (*remote*)