



21 October 2024

13:30 – 14:45

Onsite (sandwich lunch provided)

Side event at [CSTD 2024-2025 Inter-sessional Panel](#)

Pivoting to Inclusive and Equitable Economies - What Elements for an Integrated Approach to Global Data and AI Governance?

Background

In the global digital economy, the dividends of data innovation are unequally distributed. The United States and China account for 90% of the market capitalization of the world's largest digital platforms, 94% of all funding of AI start-ups (UNCTAD Digital Economy Report 2021), and 80% cumulative share in the AI patents granted worldwide (Stanford AI Index Report 2024). Developing countries who are latecomers to the digital economy find themselves unable to effectively integrate into global data value chains in a manner that brings development gains. They remain mere sources of raw data for transnational platform companies, lacking the opportunities to build the infrastructural and institutional capabilities for growing their domestic digital economies.

The absence of an international framework for cross-border data flows has entrenched power imbalances and inequalities (UNCTAD Digital Economy Report 2021). Policy considerations on data governance have not been attentive to the equal distribution of data value, especially, benefits for countries that are at the peripheries of the digital economy. Unless we change course, the majority world is staring at a future with little hope for home-grown productive capacities.

In recent months, the push for an international framework for data governance that can support inclusive and equitable digital economies has gathered momentum. The Global Digital Compact, adopted as an Annex to the Pact for the Future in September 2024, underscores the urgency for “strengthened data governance cooperation at all levels with the effective, equitable and meaningful participation of all countries and in consultation with relevant stakeholders”. Towards this, the Compact also proceeds to request the UNCSTD to establish a dedicated working group that can engage in a comprehensive and inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue for arriving at specific recommendations. This could include equitable and interoperable data governance at all levels as relevant for development; considerations of sharing the benefits of data; and options to facilitate safe, secure,





and trusted data flows, including cross-border data flows as relevant for development. The UN HLAB on AI governance in its final report released recently has also argued for a global AI data framework to establish common standards around AI training data provenance and use for transparent and rights-based accountability across jurisdictions. The report also calls for data stewardship and exchange mechanisms to catalyse flourishing local AI systems across the world.

Objective

A transformative future for digital economies is predicated on an appropriate convergence between the governance parameters of data and AI. This side event seeks to contribute to this critical and nascent policy conversation on the foundational elements of a coherent governance framework for data and AI that can lead to equitable and inclusive digital economies.

Target participants

UN agencies, civil society organisations, government representatives, intergovernmental agencies, research institutions.

Topics for the discussion

The side event will address the following questions through a multistakeholder panel discussion:

1. What key elements should underpin an integrated approach to data and AI governance at the international level from a development justice standpoint?
2. Under what conditions can cross-border data flows result in development gains for emerging digital economies and digital latecomers?
3. How do current regimes in international economic law pose barriers for equitable and inclusive data and AI governance?
4. What kind of global AI data framework will better address benefit-sharing concerns of developing countries that are exploring integration into global value chains?
5. What are some emerging insights on global to local policy frameworks for alternative digital economies?

Contact

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