

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Coordination Segment

Panel 5: Harnessing data, science, technology and innovation to advance digital progress

Statement by H.E. Mr. Muhammadou M.O. Kah
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Question: The Global Digital Compact requested the CSTD to establish a multi-stakeholder working group to discuss and develop, in a holistic manner, fundamental principles of data governance that promote interoperability and responsible practices, address data privacy and security concerns, and take into account diverse national perspectives. *How can data governance contribute to addressing critical challenges such as the digital divides, technology transfer and capacity-building for vulnerable countries? Additionally, what strategies can be employed to ensure that emerging technologies like AI are harnessed responsibly to promote health, inclusion, economic growth, and environmental sustainability, while aligning with diverse national perspectives on data privacy and security? (4 minutes initial intervention)*

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

- Data governance is one of the most pressing challenges—and opportunities—of our time. The Global Digital Compact’s call to establish a multi-stakeholder working group within the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) represents a response to the imperatives of our era to collectively shape a future where data serves as a force for good.
- Preparations are underway to establish the CSTD Multi-Stakeholder Working Group on Data Governance to assemble a diverse and inclusive panel that represents government, academia, civil society, business, and technical communities.
- The data divide remains a stark reality for the world, particularly in vulnerable countries and communities where technology transfer and capacity-building are urgently needed. So how can we ensure that robust data governance contributes to bridging these divides while protecting the privacy and security of our citizens?
 - First, when we establish transparent and consistent data governance frameworks, we create an environment of legal certainty that empowers innovators, businesses, and consumers alike. Moreover, clear avenues for redressing cases where safeguards fail will reinforce this trust, ensuring that people remain at the center of our data policies.
 - Secondly, the importance of interoperability cannot be overstated. By aligning our legal and technical standards, we could create pathways for seamless data flows that enhance cooperation and facilitate the global exchange of ideas and best practices. This is especially crucial in addressing global challenges—from poverty and hunger to climate change and public health—where timely access

to reliable data can inform policies, measure progress, and identify gaps in our efforts.

- To harness responsibly data and data-enabled technologies like AI, we need strategies that are as multifaceted as the challenges they present. A dual approach—integrating top-down guidelines with bottom-up insights—could be an effective solution. On one hand, governments can provide the overarching policy frameworks necessary to harness the benefits and mitigate the risks from rapidly evolving technologies. On the other hand, the lived experiences and insights of local communities, businesses, civil society organizations, businesses and local technical experts are indispensable. By integrating these diverse perspectives, we can develop data policies that are both robust and responsive to the nuances of different national and cultural contexts.
- I must emphasize the importance of inclusive dialogue. As we navigate the intricate interplay between data governance and technological innovation, we must remain mindful of the broader societal implications.
- At international level, vulnerable countries, often underrepresented in global discussions, must have their voices amplified in shaping frameworks that directly impact their developmental trajectories. Their insights will be invaluable in crafting policy recommendations that are equitable, practical, and culturally sensitive. The forthcoming working group on data governance at the CSTD will ensure balances in all aspects concerning regions, genders, public and private sectors and different levels of development. It is through the lens of these varied experiences that we can fully appreciate the complexities of data governance.
- In conclusion, while not underestimating the challenges ahead, I am hopeful that our collective journey towards effective data governance is full of promise. By developing holistic policy recommendations that address interoperability, responsible data practices, data privacy, and security concerns, we can pave the way for transformative data innovation. As we embark on this task, let us be guided by the principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. Let us strive to create legal and technical infrastructures that not only spur economic growth and technological advancement but also ensure that the benefits of data are enjoyed by all—across borders, sectors, and communities.

(End 584 words)
