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Contribution by Latvia

to the CSTD 2023-2024 priority theme on "Data for Development"

PRIORITY THEME 1: Data for Development

1. **What are the major contributions and risks of data in relation to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

Major Contributions of Data to the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

Informing evidence-based decision-making: Data plays a crucial role in providing policymakers and stakeholders with accurate, timely, and relevant information to make informed decisions and prioritize sustainable development goals.

Monitoring progress: Data enables the tracking of progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It helps identify gaps, measure indicators, and evaluate the impact of interventions, facilitating evidence-based policy adjustments.

Enhancing accountability and transparency: Data fosters transparency by enabling citizens, civil society organizations, and governments to monitor progress, hold decision-makers accountable, and promote participatory governance.

Identifying and targeting vulnerable populations: Data can help identify marginalized or disadvantaged groups and enable targeted interventions to address their specific needs, reducing inequality and promoting inclusive development.

Mobilizing resources: Data-driven insights can attract investments and mobilize resources for sustainable development. Accurate and reliable data helps demonstrate the potential returns on investment and encourages private sector engagement.

Risks of Data in relation to the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

Data gaps and limitations: Many developing countries face challenges in data collection, including insufficient infrastructure, capacity, and financial resources. Limited availability and quality of data can hinder effective monitoring and decision-making.

Data privacy and security: As data collection and sharing increase, concerns about privacy and security emerge. Safeguarding personal information and ensuring data protection become crucial to maintaining public trust and preventing misuse or unauthorized access.

Data bias and inequality: Data collection methods and tools may inadvertently exclude or misrepresent certain groups, leading to biased or incomplete data. This can perpetuate inequalities and hinder accurate targeting of interventions, undermining the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Data ownership and control: Developing countries may face challenges in retaining ownership and control over the data they generate. Data dominance by multinational corporations or other external actors can limit access, inhibit local innovation, and perpetuate imbalances in the data ecosystem.

2. **How can developing countries benefit from the data revolution while considering risks?**

Strengthen data infrastructure: Developing countries can invest in building robust data collection systems, improving data and metadata quality, ensuring data interoperability,

granting access to the relevant administrative data sources and enhancing technical capacity to ensure reliable and comprehensive data for decision-making.

Promote data partnerships: Collaboration with international organizations, academia, civil society, and the private sector can help developing countries access expertise, resources, and technology needed to leverage the data revolution effectively.

Enhance data literacy and skills: Developing countries should prioritize the development of data literacy and analytical skills among their population. This enables individuals to engage meaningfully with data, understand its implications, and contribute to evidence-based decision-making. In this context we would like to draw attention to European Union's Open Data Portal[1] and "data.europa Academy"[2] that provide access to 36 national datasets (including high-value datasets) and e-learning platform.

Ensure data privacy and protection: Governments should establish legal frameworks and regulations that protect individual privacy, ensure data security, and prevent unauthorized access or misuse of data. This helps build trust in data initiatives and encourages citizen participation.

Foster data inclusivity and address bias: Efforts should be made to ensure data collection processes are inclusive, representative, and respectful of diverse populations. Investing in research and methodologies that reduce data bias and promote equitable data collection can lead to more accurate insights and targeted interventions.

Advocate for data ownership and control: Developing countries should advocate for fair data governance frameworks that ensure they retain ownership and control over the data they generate. This involves participating in global discussions, negotiating data-sharing agreements, and strengthening domestic data governance mechanisms.

By leveraging the data revolution while addressing the associated risks, developing countries can harness the power of data to drive sustainable development, bridge gaps, and achieve the 2030 Agenda goals.

3. **What national and international policies and support measures can help address the challenges of the developing countries in the area of data relevant for sustainable development, including scientific and research purposes, data quality, data capabilities and data governance, while taking into account the multiple dimensions of data?**

Addressing the challenges faced by developing countries in the area of data relevant for sustainable development requires a combination of national and international policies, as well as supportive measures. Here are some key initiatives that can help tackle these challenges while considering the multiple dimensions of data:

National Data Policies:

Develop comprehensive national data strategies: Governments can formulate data strategies that outline a vision and roadmap for harnessing data for sustainable development. These strategies should address data collection, sharing, interoperability, privacy, security, and capacity building.

[1] https://data.europa.eu/en
[2] https://data.europa.eu/en/academy

Strengthen data governance frameworks: Establish regulatory frameworks that define data ownership, privacy rights, and data protection measures. This includes legislation on data sharing, open data, and data ethics, clear procedures for access to data for research and scientific purposes, ensuring that data governance mechanisms are transparent, accountable, and inclusive.

At the European Union level these questions are regulated by the Open Data Directive.[3] The legislative work is still continuing on the Proposal for a European Union Regulation on the European Health Data Space.[4] At the national level Latvia has drafted "Law on the Second Use of Data"[5] that aims to create public good by regulating second use of data for scientific research, development of products, services and innovations, teaching, testing and evaluation of algorithms and personalized healthcare.

Invest in data infrastructure: Allocate resources to improve data collection systems, enhance data and metadata quality, and ensure data interoperability. This involves building necessary physical and digital infrastructure, investing in technology and tools, and promoting data standards and protocols.

International Support and Cooperation:

Technical assistance and capacity building: International organizations and developed countries can provide technical assistance, training programs, and capacity building initiatives to support developing countries in enhancing their data capabilities. This includes data collection methodologies, analysis techniques, and data management practices.

Funding support: Mobilize financial resources through international cooperation mechanisms, such as development assistance, to help developing countries invest in data infrastructure, research, and capacity building.

Data sharing and collaboration: Encourage international collaboration on data initiatives, including partnerships between developed and developing countries, to facilitate knowledge exchange, data sharing, and collaborative research efforts.

Technology transfer and innovation: Promote technology transfer and innovation through international cooperation, allowing developing countries to access and adopt data technologies and tools that support sustainable development.

Support for Scientific and Research Purposes:

Promote open science and open data: Encourage the sharing of scientific research and data through open science initiatives and open access platforms. This enables broader access to scientific knowledge, fosters collaboration, and enhances the reproducibility of research. In order to increase the availability of data, Latvian public administration follows the principle of "open by default" which means that all information that is not specifically protected is accessible to the public in a way that is convenient for them.

Support research institutions and networks: Provide resources and funding to research institutions in developing countries, fostering research capacity and supporting data-driven research relevant to sustainable development.

[3] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1561563110433&uri=CELEX:32019L1024
[4] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52022PC0197
[5] https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/SaeimaLIVS14.nsf/webAll?SearchView&Query=([Title]=*datu*)&SearchMax=0&SearchOrder=4

Facilitate data collaboration: Establish mechanisms for data collaboration between research institutions, both nationally and internationally. This includes creating platforms for data sharing, joint research projects, and data-driven partnerships.

Data Quality Assurance:

Establish data quality standards: Develop national and international standards for data quality assurance to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of data used for sustainable development. This includes guidelines for methodology on data collection and metadata standards, data validation, and quality control.

Encourage data certification and auditing: Promote certification processes and independent auditing of data to enhance trust and confidence in data sources and improve data quality.

Addressing the challenges of developing countries in the area of data relevant for sustainable development requires a multi-dimensional approach that combines policy interventions, capacity building, international cooperation, and investment in data infrastructure. By adopting these measures, countries can leverage the potential of data for informed decision-making, evidence-based policies, and sustainable development.

4. In your country's view, what role could CSTD play in respect of data for development, including in the context of the Global Digital Compact?

CSTD can further develop the expertise of the Member States and facilitate experience sharing in order to contribute to the achievement of the SDG targets. CSTD should work further with stakeholders on data protection, this is an important task these days. High level data protection is required. Large companies are not regulated enough in the use of data, so governments are tasked with protecting individual's data by passing national and international laws. Each country has its own framework for data protection, which may differ from other countries. It is important that international cooperation and uniform international frameworks for data protection are established. Major amount of data concentrated in two countries – US and China. It is important to regulate this market, international data protection is needed. We need to understand what we want from the digitisation process in the future to make the right decisions. CSTD has an important role to play in addressing these issues.