

**INTERSESSIONAL PANEL OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION
ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

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Contribution by Portugal

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

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PRIORITY THEME 1: Data for Development

United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

Dear CSTD Member,

The [26th CSTD annual session](#) selected “Data for Development”, as one of the priority themes for its 27th session (2023-24 period).

Data, including for scientific and research purposes, are becoming a key strategic resource for sustainable development. If well managed, data can help overcome major global development challenges, such as poverty, food security, climate change, disaster risk management, and pandemics. If badly handled, they can generate unequal development outcomes. General Assembly’s resolution 77/150 of 14 December 2022 noted that the Commission on Science and Technology for Development could explore the connection between data and sustainable development, including data governance, while taking into account the multiple dimensions of data. The development implications of data, including data quality, data capabilities, and responsible data handling should also feature prominently in discussions about the Global Digital Compact and in the Summit of the Future, adding to the relevance of the CSTD’s perspectives on this issue as the UN focal point for STI for development.

Under this theme, the Commission will consider issues such as major contributions and risks of data in relation to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; how to ensure that developing countries benefit from the data revolution while considering risks; national and international policies and support measures that can help address the challenges of the developing countries in the area of data relevant for sustainable development, while taking into account the multiple dimensions of data.

The CSTD secretariat is in the process of drafting an issues paper on the theme to be presented at the CSTD inter-sessional panel meeting to be held in the second half of October 2023 in Portugal. In this context, we would like to solicit inputs from the CSTD member States on this theme. We would be grateful if you could kindly answer the following questions based on your experience in your country or region.

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 for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development include:

- a. **Informed Decision-Making:** Data provides valuable insights and evidence that can inform evidence-based policymaking, enabling governments and organizations to effectively address specific development challenges.
- b. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Data allows for the monitoring and evaluation of progress toward sustainable development goals, facilitating accountability and adaptive management approaches.
- c. **Identifying Priorities:** Data helps identify priority areas for intervention, highlighting regions and populations in need of special attention and resources.
- d. **Innovative Solutions:** Data-driven analytics can foster innovative solutions to complex development issues.

There are also significant risks associated with data in relation to sustainable development:

- a. **Data Privacy and Security:** The collection and use of vast amounts of data raise concerns about privacy breaches and the potential for data misuse, leading to risks of identity theft and other cybercrimes.
- b. **Data Inequality:** Unequal access to data and digital technologies can exacerbate existing disparities between developed and developing countries, leading to a digital divide.
- c. **Data Bias:** Data can be biased, leading to inaccurate representations of certain populations, which may result in policies that fail to address the needs of marginalized communities.
- d. **Data Monopolization:** The concentration of data in the hands of a few dominant entities may lead to monopolies and hinder competition, limiting opportunities for smaller players and innovation.

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

Developing countries can harness the data revolution through the following measures:

a. Capacity Building: Investing in building data literacy and technical skills among the population and public officials will enable developing countries to effectively collect, analyse and utilize data for decision-making.

b. Data Infrastructure: Developing robust data infrastructure, including reliable networks and data centres, is essential for enhancing data accessibility and security. Local data storage and processing enhance data sovereignty and safeguard sensitive information.

c. Data Partnerships: Collaboration with international organizations, private sector entities and other countries can help developing nations access data, expertise and resources, fostering sustainable development initiatives.

d. Data Governance: Implementing strong data governance frameworks ensures that data is collected, stored and utilized responsibly, respecting privacy and security concerns.

e. Regulatory Frameworks: Developing countries should establish clear regulations and policies regarding data collection, sharing, and use to protect citizens' privacy rights and promote responsible data practices.

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?

To address the challenges related to data for sustainable development, countries can consider the following policies and support measures:

a. Open Data Initiatives: Implementing open data policies allows for the transparent sharing of data, fostering collaboration and innovation in addressing development challenges.

b. Data Privacy and Protection Laws: Enacting robust data protection laws safeguards citizens' privacy rights and builds trust in data systems.

c. Data Sharing Agreements: Facilitating data sharing agreements between public and private sectors encourages the responsible use of data for research and development purposes.

d. Research and Innovation Funding: Allocating resources to support data-related research and innovation can drive technological advancements and support sustainable development projects.

e. International Collaboration: Collaborating with other countries and international organizations enables knowledge sharing, capacity building, and access to global datasets for tackling common development challenges.

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?

In the context of data for development, CSTD could play the following roles:

a. Knowledge Sharing: CSTD can serve as a platform for knowledge sharing, best practices, and lessons learned from different countries' experiences in utilizing data for sustainable development.

b. Policy Advocacy: CSTD can advocate for the importance of data-driven policies and strategies to address sustainable development challenges at both national and international levels.

c. Capacity Building: CSTD can promote capacity-building initiatives to enhance data-related skills and expertise in developing countries, empowering them to leverage data for development effectively.

d. Standards and Guidelines: CSTD can promote standards and guidelines for data governance, data quality and responsible data handling, providing a framework for countries to follow.

e. Facilitating Partnerships: CSTD can foster partnerships between governments, private sector entities and international organizations to support the responsible use of data for development projects.

f. Monitoring and Evaluation: CSTD can help establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of data initiatives on sustainable development goals, ensuring accountability and effectiveness.

g. Policy Recommendations: CSTD can provide policy recommendations to guide the development of national and international data-related policies that prioritize sustainable development objectives.

Please indicate contact person(s) responsible for projects/policies and international collaboration in this context in case we need clarification on the inputs.

Please send your responses and any further inputs on the theme to the CSTD secretariat (stdev@unctad.org) by **15 August 2023**. We look forward to receiving your valuable inputs.

Sincere regards,
CSTD secretariat