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Briefing on the Progress of the Working Group on Data Governance
by H.E. Ambassador Guilherme De Aguiar Patriota
Chair of the Working Group on Data Governance at All Levels
and Vice-Chair of the CSTD

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Commission on Science and Technology for Development

2026-2027 Inter-sessional Panel

Briefing on the Progress of the Working Group on Data Governance

Statement by:

H.E. Ambassador Guilherme De Aguiar Patriota

Chair of the Working Group on Data Governance at All Levels and Vice-Chair of the CSTD

Friday, 6 November 2026, Geneva

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Good afternoon to all of you, and thank you to the Vice-Chair, Mr. Xian Zhang, for giving me the floor to brief the Commission on the progress of the Working Group on Data Governance at All Levels.

It is a pleasure to join you today in my capacity as Chair of the Working Group.

This briefing comes at an important moment, as the Working Group concluded its eighth meeting only yesterday, following an intensive period of discussion and drafting of the Progress Report.

Allow me, therefore, to briefly update the Commission on three main areas:

- The progress we have made so far;
- The main messages emerging from the Progress Report; and
- The steps ahead.

A. The progress of the Working Group

Distinguished delegates,

Let me begin by briefly recalling our mandate and the progress made since I last reported to the Commission.

Under General Assembly resolution 79/1 on the Pact for the Future, including its Annex on the Global Digital Compact, the Commission was entrusted with establishing a dedicated Working Group on data governance at all levels, as relevant for development, and the Working Group was requested to submit its Progress Report to the General Assembly at its eighty-first session.

When I addressed the Commission at its annual session in April, we had completed the first two phases of our work. The first was a broad survey through which members and observers shared their views on the key dimensions of data governance at all levels. The second was the preparation of synthesis papers that organized and summarized the wide range of inputs received.

Since then, our focus has shifted to the third phase: the preparation of the Progress Report itself.

Following my April briefing, I asked a group of non-State members who had volunteered their expertise to lead the drafting of the substantive chapters. Their work resulted in a zero draft, which we discussed at our sixth meeting, held in June 2026 at the premises of the International Telecommunication Union.

This was followed by a further review process involving both State and non-State members. The drafters and reviewers then produced the first draft, which was discussed at our seventh meeting, hosted by WIPO in September. Members called for clearer language, less repetition and a balanced presentation of areas of convergence and differing perspectives.

In response, the leadership of the Working Group, together with my Vice-Chairs, Ambassador Muhammadou Kah of The Gambia and Ms. Claire Melamed of the UN Foundation, took on the role of penholder for the next stage of the revision, with the objective of improving the clarity, coherence and readability of the report while preserving its substantive balance.

With the support of the Secretariat and in consultation with the original drafters, we then undertook an intensive round of revision. This resulted in a more streamlined and coherent Progress Report, which formed the basis of our discussions at the eighth meeting this week.

B. Progress Report

Distinguished delegates,

Let me now turn to the Progress Report itself. I would like to highlight three key takeaways that emerge from our work.

First, data governance can support development, but its benefits are not automatic. Interoperability can help different data systems work together while respecting differences in legal and institutional frameworks. Likewise, trusted data flows can create important opportunities, including through digital trade, but greater flows do not by themselves translate into development gains.

However, countries also need the necessary infrastructure, skills, financing and safeguards to use data effectively, create value from it and retain a fair share of those benefits. This is also a message that resonated strongly in our discussion this morning.

Second, data governance must remain relevant as technologies evolve, particularly as data is foundational to and deeply embedded in emerging technologies such as AI. At the same time, technological change is creating new forms and uses of data, requiring governance frameworks to remain adaptable and responsive.

Finally, the report highlights the importance of sharing the benefits of data equitably. This requires more than access to data since countries and communities also need the capacity to use it and derive value from it. Capacity-building, international cooperation and inclusive participation should therefore go hand in hand, so that different needs and perspectives are reflected in how value is created and shared.

In preparing the Progress Report, I am pleased that our discussions have been constructive, with convergence emerging around human rights as a foundation, development as the overarching goal, and the importance of bridging capacity gaps.

At the same time, the report identifies several areas for further consideration, including:

- Strengthening the link between data governance and development;
- Respecting different national contexts and regulatory autonomy in regional and international approaches; and
- Ensuring that data governance remains relevant with other emerging technologies, while remaining within our mandate.

C. Next phase of the Working Group

Dear colleagues,

Let me conclude with a few words on the next phase of our work.

With the adoption of the Progress Report yesterday, the Working Group has completed an important stage of its mandate.

The immediate next step is to undertake final editorial work on the report before submitting it to the Commission at its annual session in April. We will then invite the Commission to consider the report and transmit it to the General Assembly, in line with the mandate given to the Working Group.

Over the past 18 months, State and non-State participants have worked together on data governance issues that are both politically sensitive and highly technical. One of the strengths of this Working Group has been that we have not shied away from these difficult questions. Instead, political engagement has been combined with technical expertise to narrow differences, deepen understanding and identify practical ways forward.

This will become even more important as data governance increasingly intersects with AI and other emerging digital technologies. Many of the issues we have examined will require further attention as national, regional and international approaches continue to evolve.

The future form and mandate of this process will, of course, be considered through the appropriate CSTD and General Assembly processes, including in the context of the Global Digital Compact review.

The Working Group has recommended that this process continue under a revised and enhanced mandate. I hope that the experience of the past 18 months, and the report we have adopted, will provide a useful basis for those deliberations.

More broadly, I hope our work can contribute to a stronger understanding of how data governance can support development through human-centred principles, more effective interoperability, trusted and development-oriented data flows, reduced asymmetries and a more equitable sharing of the benefits of the digital economy.

D. Closing

Before I close my update on the work of the Working Group, I would like to express my appreciation to my Vice-Chairs, the drafters and reviewers, and all members and observers for their constructive contributions throughout this process.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Secretariat for its logistical and substantive support to the Working Group. Despite the resource and financial constraints facing the Secretariat in the context of the UN80 reforms, it has continued to support the Group with dedication and professionalism. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of the Government of Switzerland, which provided additional support to the Secretariat during the revision and editing process.

Looking ahead, adequate resources will remain important to sustain this support and ensure the timely delivery of the Working Group's mandate.

With that, I conclude my briefing on the work of the Working Group. I welcome the comments, feedback and continued guidance of members of the Commission as we move into the next phase of this process.

I thank you for your kind attention.

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