



Session Outcome Document

Data first in the AI era – The case for Data Governance

United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Thursday, 10 July 2025, 13:00 – 13:45 CEST

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/498>

Key Issues discussed: Looking Beyond 2025 (5–8 bullet points highlighting achievements, emerging trends, challenges in 20 years, figures, success stories and opportunities for WSIS beyond 2025)

- Data have become a cornerstone of development and the lifeblood of digital economies. They fuel algorithms and artificial intelligence, drive international trade in services, inform logistics, and shapes markets, communication, and politics.
- National and regional approaches to data governance are limited given the already large and increasing international flows of data; data can be copied and shared across countries and regions with great ease. International data governance is essential.
- Principles for international data governance are a useful first step towards reaching consensus on an international data governance framework as they set out in broad terms what we hope to achieve and how we propose to achieve it; the [UN CEB endorsed principles](#) offer one such normative basis.
- The Global Digital Compact (GDC) offers a vision for an open, free, and secure digital future that benefits all people. Established through the GDC, the Commission for Science and Technology (CSTD) Working Group for data governance across all levels is an opportunity to advance consensus towards international data governance through multistakeholder dialogue with Member States, civil society organizations, and multilateral organizations.
- In doing so, the relationship between enabling innovation, fostering a vibrant digital and data economy, and protecting the rights and interests of the people must be carefully examined.
- Grounded in international human rights frameworks, international data governance must ensure equitable access to data and the benefits of data to close the digital and data divide. International data governance must ensure protections of dignity, autonomy, and such as privacy of all including of vulnerable populations such as children. International data governance must reduce proliferation and fragmentation in data governance approaches and



instruments, ensuring technical interoperability as the foundation to harness the benefits of data from economic and commercial to benefits for the public good.

- Poor data governance is not just a policy gap; it is a security and development risk. Effective, technically interoperable international data governance grounded in human rights is essential for robust cybersecurity and the foundation for AI governance.

Tangible Outcomes of the session

- A call to action to advance international data governance through multistakeholder dialogue grounded in international human rights frameworks to ensure equitable access to data and its benefits and to ensure protections for all including vulnerable populations such as children.
- A commitment to leverage existing mechanisms for consensus building, chiefly, the CSDT Working Group for data governance across all levels, to advance towards a technically interoperable, human rights-based international data governance framework.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Action Plan for the WSIS+20 Review and Beyond (2–5 bullet points presenting concrete actions and guidance to inform the WSIS+20 Review by UNGA and build the multistakeholder vision of WSIS beyond 2025)

- The interest in AI and AI governance has helped raise awareness for the importance of consensus building towards an international data governance framework as robust data governance is the bedrock for AI governance, however, the importance of this dialogue on international data governance must be further amplified going forward and not be absorbed into the AI governance conversation.
- As the lifeblood of digital economies and with its role in AI development, data is a key 21st resource. Access to data and its benefits will either widen or narrow the digital divide. The approach forward for data governance is contested due to diverging interests, with some actors arguing for national or regional over international approaches.
- To protect the rights of people including vulnerably populations and to enable inclusive development, international data governance is essential, and the United Nations and its Member States, including through the CSTD Working Group, have an important role to play in consensus building towards an international data governance framework.