

Capacity Development and Consultation Workshop on a Vanuatu National Data Governance Framework

Atsuko Okuda – ITU Regional Director

Opening Remarks

Good morning,

My name is Atsuko Okuda, Regional Director of the International Telecommunication Union Asia and the Pacific! My apologies for not being able to join you yesterday but it is a great pleasure to join you today for this Capacity Development and Consultation Workshop on Vanuatu National Data Governance Framework.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to UNDESA and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) of Vanuatu for convening this national consultation workshop. The presence of stakeholders from various agencies and non-governmental sectors underscores the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration in shaping Vanuatu's digital transformation through the development of data governance framework.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the past two decades, Vanuatu has made significant strides in the development of telecommunications infrastructure and ICT policies. Initiatives such as the Government Broadband Network (GBN) and the integrated government (iGov) initiatives have bolstered the country's digital capabilities. Additionally, policies such as the National Information and Communication Technology Policy and the National Cyber Security Strategy demonstrate the country's dedication to harnessing the benefits of ICT while ensuring security and resilience.

However, challenges remain, particularly in data governance processes. The absence of an overarching national data governance policy or strategy calls for concerted efforts to bridge this gap. Today's workshop is a crucial step towards addressing this challenge and ensuring that the data governance framework is robust and responsive to the needs of Vanuatu.

This is where GovStack can play a pivotal role. GovStack, founded by ITU, GiZ, UNDIAL, and the Government of Estonia, offers a standardized approach to digital service development through its building block-based approach. It enables

governments to deliver services easier, faster, and more reliably by defining requirements, testing prototypes, and relying on technical specifications designed by leading global experts.

With GovStack, we have the opportunity to contribute to seamless data governance in Vanuatu. Its building block-based approach to government digital transformation dovetails perfectly with the goals for a national data governance framework, enabling Vanuatu to address challenges such as data classification, standardization, privacy, sharing, and digital identity more effectively.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight our recent collaboration with UNDESA where ITU delivered a national Digital Government Workshop, which saw participation from close to 200 digital transformation officers in the PNG. We also collaborated in Cambodia. These activities helped raise awareness around GovStack and the importance of a national and holistic approach to digital transformation of the government, in which data plays a foundational role.

Additionally, ITU is rolling out its Smart Villages and Smart Islands Initiative in about 15 countries in Asia and the Pacific connecting and empowering unconnected communities. In Vanuatu, we are

imploding a Smart Island initiative in South Malecula, in close collaboration with national governments, UN agencies, the private sector and implementation partners. This initiative, which is aimed at taking digital transformation to community level and leaving no one behind, is supported by a number of projects funded by the Joint SDG Fund, the government of Australia, the government of Japan, Asian Development Bank, Huawei, and the ITU. It has garnered tremendous support including that of G20 Members under the presidency of Indonesia in 2022. As we progress, more and more partners continue to commit and join the initiative.

To share a few examples of the impact this broad initiative is creating including in Vanuatu: through the program, new digital services of high priority such as e-police certification application, tele-education, telemedicine and e-payment are now being increasingly introduced and used by the beneficiary communities. Our journey continues this year, and we are working closely with national partners to increase digital learning opportunities as well as digital service capabilities on the ground. These and other digital services are enabled by a robust data governance framework you are discussing in this workshop.

I encourage all participants to actively engage in discussions, share their insights, and contribute to shaping the future of data governance in Vanuatu. Together, let us chart a course towards an inclusive and sustainable digital future.

Once again, I extend my gratitude to UNDESA, OGCIO, and all participants for your dedication to this important endeavor and look forward to our collaboration and cooperation.

Thank you.