



DEPARTMENT OF
**ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

Global Forum on **Data Governance and Digital Transformation**

Date: 23-25 April 2024
Venue: Macau, SAR China

Concept Note

Executive Summary

Data and digital data governance in the public sector have become increasingly important in Governments' modus operandi and real-world applicability. Data are now integral to every sector and function of government—as essential as physical assets and human resources. Much of the operational activity in government is now data-driven or data-centric, and many Governments would find it difficult, if not impossible, to function without data.

This Global Forum seeks to address existing challenges and gaps in national digital data governance, data management and cooperation, focusing on enhancing the institutional capacities of countries to utilize, manage and govern data in a comprehensive, objective and evidence-based manner, through regional and global cooperation. The aim is to build awareness and develop institutional capacities in building national data governance frameworks in developing countries, especially those in Africa and the Asia Pacific region.

1. Background

Data is now a critical resource of Governments. Institutions will find it difficult, if not impossible, to function effectively without data. At the global level, the quantity of data is expected to increase more than five-fold from 33 zettabytes in 2018 to 175 zettabytes in 2025, with 49 per cent stored in the public cloud. Data and related issues and developments in the public sector have become increasingly important in terms of government analysis and operations, academic research, and real-world applicability and acceptance. Data are now integral to every sector and function of government—as essential as physical assets and human resources.

At the same, digital divides between and within developed and developing countries continues to widen, which is inhibiting developing countries from contributing to and benefiting from integration into the data economy. Governments are among the largest producers and consumers of data in many countries, and they also play a role in data regulation. Many developing countries, however, lack the institutional capacity to fully implement data management and governance, impeding them to fully reap the benefits of data.

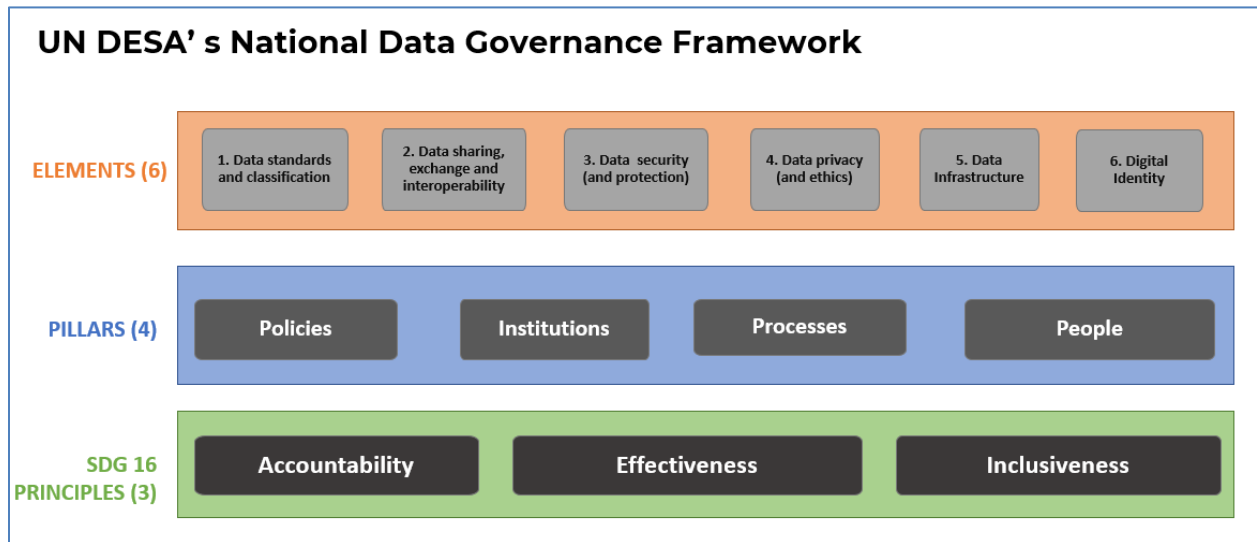
The propensity of data means that it also comes with a whole host of risks and challenges. Security, privacy and ethical issues are major concerns, and data literacy and institutional capacities remain insufficient in many areas, especially in developing countries, transition economies and countries in special situations. With the exponential increase in government data and the growing awareness of its enormous potential and attendant challenges, the need for effective data management and governance has gained new urgency.

In this connection, UN DESA has conceived the project supported by the UN Peace and Development Fund, entitled “Developing institutional capacities for digital data management and cooperation to advance progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals”, to support developing countries to assess key data management and governance challenges and strengthen government officials’ and stakeholders’ knowledge of sound and secure data management. This project seeks to address existing challenges and gaps in digital data management and cooperation, focusing on enhancing the institutional capacities of countries to utilize, manage and govern data in a comprehensive, objective and evidence-based manner, through regional and global cooperation.

Under the research framework established by UN DESA, digital data governance is supported by the three principles of Sustainable Goal 16 (accountability, effectiveness and inclusiveness) and examined through the lens of the four pillars (policy, institutions, people, and process) and six elements (see following illustration)¹. This allows for a comprehensive and holistic examination of

¹ United Nations (2020), United Nations E-Government Survey 2020: Digital Government in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development, UN DESA, p. 166.

the various procedural components which together enable effective, accountable, and inclusive data governance.



2. Objectives of the Global Forum

This Global Forum seeks to address the existing challenges and gaps in implementing national digital data governance frameworks among countries, through enhancing the institutional capacities of countries to utilize, manage and govern data in a comprehensive, objective and evidence-based manner, through regional and global cooperation. The aim is to build awareness and develop institutional capacities in building national data governance frameworks in developing countries, especially those in Africa and the Asia Pacific region.

3. Link to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has made data a focal point, acknowledging that data are key to effective decision-making and that timely, reliable, quality and disaggregated data are needed to facilitate the measurement of progress towards sustainable development and to ensure that no one is left behind. The latter imperative is reflected in multiple global indicators and entails not only reaching the poorest and most vulnerable groups but also combating rising inequalities within and among countries.

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Given the cross-cutting nature of data management and coordination, its development and application would contribute potentially to the attainment of most SDGs and targets. Specifically, the Global Forum relates to the following SDGs and selected Targets, including:

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; target 8.2. Achieve higher levels of economic productivity and target 8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises

Goal 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation: target 9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure; 9.b Support domestic technology development, research and innovation; 9.c significantly increase access to information and communications technology

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries; target 10.2 empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all; target 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient; target 11.1 ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums; target 11.3 enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management

Goal 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; target 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (e-government); target 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (e-participation); target 16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements (access to data and information)

Goal 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development – TECHNOLOGY); target 17.6 Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation; Target 17.9 Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building

4. Expected Outcomes

The following are the expected outcomes of the Forum:

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- To build institutional and individual capacities, with participants get insight on issues of national digital data governance frameworks
- To build a shared understanding on issues of the digital data governance in the public sector
- To facilitate and support twinning arrangements between project countries and other developing countries that have put in place institutional and regulatory frameworks for sound and secure digital data management, data governance and data cooperation – for peer learning and mutual exchange of experience and expertise
- To identify the next course of actions and potential interventions with a proposed timeline

The outputs of each of the sessions and a follow up action plan will be captured in the summary report. A policy brief may be issued by UN DESA as a result.

5. Date and Venue

Date/time: 23-25 April 2024

Venue: Casa Silva Mendes, Macau, People's Republic of China

Number of participants (international and national): 50-80

(Note: By invitation only; including organizers, resource persons and support staff)

6. Participants

It is expected that the participants for the workshop to include:

- Ministers and senior government officials
- Experts from the private sector, civil society, think tanks, academia, with knowledge and experience in national data governance frameworks, digital transformation and sustainable development
- Senior officials and expert representatives from UN DESA and other international organizations

7. Languages

The Workshop will be conducted in English.

8. Surveys and evaluation

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Pre-workshop surveys and post-workshop evaluations will be circulated. A follow-up questionnaire could be sent out to participants after the Workshop.

9. Organizers and Facilitators

The Workshop is jointly organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), in collaboration with UNU-Macau.

Following are our knowledge partners:

1. China National Academy of Governance
2. Tsinghua University
3. Fudan University

10. Documentation

- [UN E-Government Survey 2020, Chapter 6](#)
- [SDG Progress Report 2023 \(Special Edition\)](#)
- [Global Sustainable Development Report 2023](#)
- [UN Secretary-General's Report on Our Common Agenda](#)

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For any question, please contact:

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