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

Day 1 (2 May 2024)
Opening Remarks by

Mr. Juwang Zhu
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His Excellency, the Honourable Charlot Salwai, Prime Minister of Vanuatu,

The Honourable Johnny Koanapo, Minister of Finance,

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear Participants,

On behalf of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, I express my deep appreciation to all of you, for joining this Capacity Development and Consultation Workshop on a National Data Governance Framework.

We are honoured to co-organize this important Workshop in collaboration with the Government of Vanuatu, and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer.

[Vanuatu's e-government development and today's context of data governance]

Data from the UN E-Government Survey demonstrates that significant improvements have been made by Vanuatu in its e-government development.

Vanuatu has moved up seven places in the Survey's global ranking from 2020 to 2022.

Vanuatu is now ranked 135th out of 193 countries, in the Survey's E-Government Development Index, or EGDI.

This shift has moved Vanuatu to the highest quartile of mid-level ranking countries in the Survey, reflective of marked advances in Internet connectivity and in enabling the provision of e-government services.

All of this progress has been made despite the challenges of being a Small Island Developing State.

And as an aside, this leads me to note and congratulate Vanuatu on its graduation from the Least Developed Country category in December 2020.

We're here today to discuss data governance – but I also want to acknowledge the overall good governance and hard work it takes to steer a country into this kind of development direction – it is a credit to you all.

[Today's context of data governance]

Distinguished Participants,

Data is an indispensable part of e-government. Data is a critical resource of Governments, and its effective governance is essential in the public sector.

Indeed, data are integral to every sector and function of government. Many institutions would find it difficult, if not impossible, to function effectively without data.

A national data governance framework is therefore critical.

Not only is there a need for data classification and standards, in ensuring effective data collection, use, reuse, sharing and exchange, but there is also a need to inform data risk and security management, legal and regulatory compliance, putting data at the centre of public policy and decision-making.

It is in this context that UN DESA is implementing a capacity development project on "Developing institutional capacities for digital data management and cooperation to advance progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals".

Funded by the UN Peace and Development Fund, this Project aims to support countries in developing national data governance framework for ensuring data quality, access and usage, and for enhancing data security and personal data privacy, through consultation and collaboration.

With your indulgence, we hope to achieve these two objectives:

- First is to build and develop institutional and individual capacities, in understanding and developing digital data policies and strategies, and in supporting the national digital transformation in Vanuatu.
- Second, the Workshop will also be a consultation platform to explore and advance a national data management and governance framework in Vanuatu.

We are grateful for the participation of senior officials and experts, from among government and non-government stakeholders, taking precious time out of your busy schedule to join us here.

Together, let us have an honest, candid and action-oriented discussion about the current challenges and opportunities to advance digital data governance – to tap on the vast potential of data for sustainable development in Vanuatu.

I wish all an engaging and fruitful workshop.

Thank you.