Welcoming Remarks of Karl-Frédérick Paul,

United Nations Resident Coordinator, The Gambia

His Excellency Lamin Jabbi, Minister of Communications & Digital Economy,
Mr. Juwang Zhu, Director of Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs,
My fellow UN colleagues,
Dear partners and stakeholders present,
Distinguished guests,

It is my great honor to welcome you all to this Capacity Development Workshop on the National Data Governance Framework and Digital Government in The Gambia, organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy of the Government of The Republic of The Gambia.

On behalf of the United Nations, I sincerely appreciate all of you for dedicating your time to participate in this important workshop.

Distinguished Guests,

Digitalization has become an essential resource for governments around the world, as crucial as physical infrastructure or human resources.

In today's landscape, the effective delivery of public services relies heavily on the efficient use of data and digital services, which enable governments to respond swiftly and accurately to the needs of their citizens.

As emerging technologies such as blockchain, machine learning, and artificial intelligence (AI) continue to develop, their success hinges on the integrity and governance of data.

The global pandemic starkly illustrated this reality. Through the strategic use of data and digital services, often combined with advanced AI, many governments successfully mitigated the crisis's worst effects, saving lives and maintaining essential services during a time of great uncertainty.

Developing countries like The Gambia hold significant potential in digital transformation despite facing challenges.

In this regard, I commend the Gambia government for its steadfast commitment to prioritizing digital transformation.

As we navigate these changes, it is essential to emphasize security and responsibility. Establishing effective and efficient data governance is a critical next step.

Data governance can impact public service delivery and can support to accelerate progress on national development priorities, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and leave no one behind.

Across all sectors of government, operational activities are increasingly driven by data, underscoring the pivotal role of high-quality data and robust analytical capacity in fostering evidence-based decision-making.

As the volume of data grows exponentially, the imperative for strategic data management and governance becomes ever more pressing.

Developing a comprehensive national data governance framework requires a whole-of-government approach, cutting across the mandates of many different ministries. I am pleased to see such diverse participation from various stakeholders reflecting a commitment to this collective endeavor.

Today marks the initial step toward establishing an effective national data governance framework. This means both embracing a long-term vision – that is aligned to broader Government strategies - but it also means identifying

practical low hanging fruits and quick wins that we can take forward immediately.

Digital transformation is a priority in the UN's cooperation framework and in the country implementation plan for the Gambia. In closing, I want to reiterate the UN's commitment to supporting the planning and implementation of an effective national data governance framework in the Gambia by bringing together technical expertise from across the UN system.

I wish you all an engaging and fruitful forum.

Thank you.