

Suggested **Terms of Reference** for the **UN CSTD Multi-Stakeholder Working Group on Data Governance** as requested by paragraph 48 of the Global Digital Compact

1. Background and Mandate

The Working Group on Data Governance (WG-DG) is established under the directive of the United Nations General Assembly's Resolution [A/RES/79/1](#), as articulated in Paragraph 48 of the Global Digital Compact (GDC). It is tasked to engage in a comprehensive and inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue on data governance at all levels, as relevant for development.

2. Objectives

The Working Group will contribute to the achievement of objective IV of the GDC, and in particular it will aim to:

1. **Develop fundamental principles** of data governance at all levels (national, regional, and global) as relevant for development.
2. **Propose frameworks** to support interoperability between national, regional, and international data systems, ensuring alignment with international standards and protocols.
3. **Examine mechanisms** to promote fair sharing of the benefits of data, particularly for developing countries and marginalized communities.
4. **Provide options** to enable safe, secure, and trusted data flows, including cross-border data flows, in ways that uphold sovereignty, privacy, and security while advancing global development goals.

3. Scope of Work

The Working Group will:

- Conduct multi-stakeholder dialogues with governments, private sector entities, civil society organizations, academic institutions, technical community and international organizations.
- Analyze existing national, regional, and international data governance frameworks to identify good practices and existing gaps.
- Explore innovative mechanisms to address emerging challenges such as data sovereignty, data ethics, and artificial intelligence-related data governance.
- Develop policy recommendations and a roadmap to enhance international cooperation on data governance.

4. Composition and Participation

Membership: The Working Group will consist of experts from member states, representatives of academia, the private sector, the technical community, and the civil society, with equitable geographic and gender representation as outlined in the note of the Bureau of the CSTD of 21 February 2025. The Working Group will be open to observers, including all international organizations.

Chair/Vice-Chairs: The Working Group Chair is appointed by the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) in consultation with the Bureau of the CSTD.

One Vice-Chair will be selected from among the member States, and another Vice-Chair will be selected from among the Working Group members who represent non-government stakeholders.

Secretariat Support: Provided by the CSTD Secretariat.

5. Deliverables

The Working Group will:

1. Produce a report outlining fundamental principles of data governance, including detailed proposals for interoperability and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms.
2. Recommend actionable options for enabling secure and trusted data flows, including cross-border data arrangements.
3. Submit its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly by the **81st session**, including proposals for further follow-up actions.

6. Timeline

Phase I: Establish the Working Group and finalize membership by the end of March 2025.

Phase II: Hold a maximum of 5 Working Group meetings over a 12-month period until April 2026. The number and frequency of meetings will depend on the availability of resources, including meeting facilities. Some of the meetings may be held virtually.

Proposed meeting dates:

Meeting 1: 14 April 2025

Meeting 2: 12-13 May 2025 tbc

Meeting 3: 16-17 June 2025 tbc

Meeting 4: 29-30 September 2025 tbc

Meeting 5: 24-26 November 2025 tbc

Phase III: Draft recommendations and frameworks until 31 March 2026 and submit its report to the annual session of CSTD in April 2026.

Phase IV: Submit the progress report to the United Nations General Assembly before 10 September 2026.

7. Guiding Principles

The Working Group will operate based on the following principles:

- **Inclusivity:** Engage all relevant stakeholders in the dialogue.
- **Equity:** Prioritize the perspectives of developing countries and marginalized groups.
- **Transparency:** Ensure transparent and accountable processes
- **Openness:** All stakeholders can participate and provide inputs
- **Innovation:** Explore forward-looking and sustainable approaches to data governance.
- **Sustainability:** Align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

8. Reporting and accountability

The Working Group will:

- Provide regular updates to the CSTD and other relevant UN bodies.
- Publish a mid-term report and convene an open forum for wider-source feedback.
- Submit a progress report to the General Assembly no later than its **81st session**.