Statement by Pakistan at the 27th Session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development
16 April 2024

Agenda item 3. Science and technology for development
Priority theme: (a) Data for development

Thank you, Madam Chair,
Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

Data is a critical asset with the undeniable potential to help resolve pressing societal, environmental and economic issues. With the immensity of modern global challenges, it is essential that, while pursuing the promotion of prosperity, member states jointly leverage data to address global developmental challenges such as climate change and pandemics.

Harnessing the true potential of data requires overcoming data fragmentation in a manner that benefits national developmental priorities while also facilitating gains from cross border data sharing opportunities. Conversely, negligent handling of data and data flows can contribute to adverse de-development outcomes and exacerbate inequality.

The rising proclivity for viewing data as merely a business asset with profit-making purposes also requires considerable re-assessment. Data must also be viewed as a public good which is to be used for common benefit and social development.

Madam Chair,

My delegation would like to highlight some key measures in leveraging data for global development:

First, the development of a robust, inclusive, development-oriented and equitable global data governance framework for cross-border data sharing, whilst preserving data sovereignty, is essential to successfully combating global development challenges. To this end, my delegation supports an inclusive member state led and member state driven approach to developing interoperable global standards in global data governance.

Second, bridging the digital divide requires considerable flow of adequate financing for the development of infrastructural and technical capabilities. It is essential that the international financial architecture is reformed in a manner that expands the fiscal space for global south economies to invest in data literacy, analytical skills, technical expertise and digital infrastructure development.

Third, open access to reliable data is essential to support evidence-informed policymaking. For governments to improve the quality and reliability of information extrapolated from data, technical assistance and capacity building programmes are needed to improve statistical systems, crucial for tracking the SDGs and targeted interventions.

Fourth, balanced cross-border data flows with protections against misuse and widespread availability of open-source online communities and softwares allow for learning by doing and building of local expertise in the global south. Encouraged by this, Pakistan became one of the fastest growing mobile phone app markets in the world with app downloads rising by 35.4 percent compared to the preceding year. This is a critical process in knowledge-sharing, fostering innovation and promoting entrepreneurship which needs broader support and recognition.

Finally, the rapid development of artificial intelligence as a data-dependent technology with deeply transformative effects at the global level makes it even more critical to develop adequate norms and ethics of usage surrounding emerging technologies.

People centric and inclusive data governance requires global collaboration at multiple levels, including investing in infrastructure, promoting digital literacy and empowering global south voices in global data policymaking. My delegation remains ready to support a holistic and inclusive dialogue on the fundamental principles of global data governance under the auspices of the CSTD and relevant UN fora.

I thank you.

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