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Session Outcome Document

(2 pages max)

Session 385. Putting data justice at the heart of AI governance

IT for Change

Wednesday, 8 July, 11 to 11.45 AM

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2026/Agenda/Session/385>

A. Key Issues discussed

- Data justice must be built into data governance and AI governance from the onset. It is not to be retrofitted. Data governance is where the economics is, the control is; it is about justice and equity. Developing countries don't want extraction. They want to share equitably in the benefits of data and AI innovation.
- Data justice begins with understanding the experiences of communities affected by data and AI systems: farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous communities, women producers and so on. Data justice cannot be reduced to privacy, access, or interoperability. It is about infrastructural power. Who shapes data and AI systems? Who controls them? Who benefits from them?
- There is a big imbalance between people who create data and those who collect, process and create products out of data and harvest its value. Today, it is critical to bring data out of corporate enclosures and ensure its benefits to the wider public.
- As Artificial Intelligence re-organises production in global value chains, there's a new underdevelopment trap. The intangible assets of innovation patents accrue to the global North, while the low-paid labour of data work and the ecological costs (especially from critical mineral mining) are borne by the global South. Further, as the domestic economy's dependence on foreign AI models and cloud AI services increases, there is a rising foreign exchange deficit and the risk of reproducing a dual economy or two-speed structure.
- The push for a harmonised free data flows regime as the one-size-fits-all solution for development risks permanently entrenching data injustice, as it

does not recognize the deep asymmetries in digital infrastructure, capital, and bargaining power that leave countries at different starting points.

- International economic law and data and AI governance need to be relocated in the sovereign equality of states principle for us to effectively challenge data injustice.
- Environmental justice is integral to data justice.

Key Outcomes of the session:

- Data governance is structurally upstream of AI governance; every AI system is trained and deployed on the data flows. Treating data and AI conversations as separate would be an artificial and costly separation.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Actions:

- It is important to link the work of the UN CSTD Working Group on Data Governance to the Global Dialogue on AI governance. We need to ensure that the recommendations of the Working Group are integrated into AI governance conversations effectively.