# Annex 4: Documenting global data governance principles

*(for more information see https://unsceb.org/international-data-governance-pathways-progress)*

1. Data governance approaches may vary depending on the heterogeneity of laws and social constructs within a country context. These approaches may also vary depending on the role of actors in an ever-evolving data ecosystem (World Bank, 2021). But in a world where data is shaping our lives, the decisions of individual actors in the data ecosystem can no longer be made in isolation as they have wider societal consequences. Along with actors, advanced technology innovations ("Guiding Principles for Automated Decision-Making in the EU") also play a role in how data are used to create insights that benefit all of society in a safe, ethical, and equitable manner. A principle-based approach can help create a common understanding, values, and goals into data governance approaches and frameworks. The principles while addressing current challenges will also need to be forward-looking and adapt to new changes in the data ecosystem. Universal data governance principles collectively designed and agreed can help create a foundation for decision-making for all types of data, data transactions for both humans and machines.

2. While rules, policies, regulatory and institutional mechanisms will need to adapt and be codified for successful implementation of data governance approaches for the 21st century (World Bank, 2021), common principles can help change behaviours, mindsets and practices towards data governance, a concept still not well understood by the different actors in the ecosystem. A recent survey and study conducted as part of this report (Govlab, 2023) highlights the lack of clarity, consistency, and adaptability to the fast-changing digital landscape in existing principles and data governance approaches. Governments and other stakeholders are still in early stages of implementation, which presents an opportunity to integrate a unified set of data governance principles that can further inform data strategies, implementation, and action plans in concrete terms and avoid siloed and fragmented approaches.

3. The design of the principles needs to also consider calls for a new social contract more broadly where the role of digital systems and data play a transformative role in achieving the intended development outcomes. A preliminary proposal for a universal set of data governance principles is presented here based on study of existing principles (Govlab, 2023). These principles are grounded on recent work of several stakeholders, most notably The World Bank, UNCTAD, Lancet Commission and Transform Health. The proposed principles will go through a wide set of stakeholder discussions and review before being finalized.

4. In the below three main clusters of principles are summarized as (a) Value, (b) Trust, (c) Equity.

### a) Value: Increase data use and reuse to realize greater economic and social value

"Value-driven Data Principles" strive to maximize the economic and social value of data through increased use and reuse. This is achieved by focusing on interoperability, mutuality and solidarity, and establishing a culture of data use and reuse. Within this category data is viewed as a foundational asset to society. Harmonizing definitions, standards, and classifications can lead to greater efficiencies across diverse stakeholders and data sources. Additionally, promoting mutuality and solidarity in data governance can ensure that the value of data is used for the greater good and not solely for private profit, and help design a data governance framework that takes into account both individual and collective needs, interests and responsibilities. Finally, it is also crucial to create a culture of data use and reuse by providing access to technology and data literacy education, thus empowering people throughout society to work with and comprehend data.

### b) Trust: Foster trust through safeguards that protect people from the harm of data misuse

The “Trust” category aims to foster trust by implementing safeguards that protect people from harm resulting from data misuse. This is achieved through a human rights-based approach for data protection, which prioritizes safeguarding access to personal data before enabling use and reuse. Data use and reuse is centred around people and responsible data practices are followed in a sustainable manner. The security and protection of infrastructure and systems through which data flows is ensured by strengthening regulations, enforcing due process limitations, and protecting against identification and discrimination of individuals and social groups. The principles of transparency and accountability, as well as data quality and integrity, are also essential to fostering trust in the use and reuse of data.

### c) Equity: Create more equitable access to the benefits of data

The "Equity" category encompasses a set of values and principles aimed at promoting fairness, inclusion, and the equitable distribution of benefits when it comes to the collection, processing, use, and management of data. These principles seek to ensure data collection, analysis, and use are free from bias and discrimination, and that algorithms and other data-driven technologies are transparent and explainable. They assume a certain degree of self-determination and active engagement of all individuals and communities in the data ecosystem, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic. These principles promote data stewardship, which entails both the protection of data and their ethical re-use for public good.