



**United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least
Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)**

Statement by Ms. Rabab Fatima

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&

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**Interactive Dialogue on Leveraging data and digital
technologies and building effective institutions for a resilient
future in small island developing States**

29 May 2024 (4-6PM)

3 Minutes Intervention

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Recent global crises have acted as stark reminders of the data disparities that plague vulnerable countries, particularly SIDS. Many national data systems were not prepared to address unexpected data needs and withstand shocks.

In many SIDS, the lack of quality data on internet usage and associated barriers presents a significant hurdle for policymakers, investors, and content producers.

The data challenges are more pronounced on the demand side rather than the supply side.

The issue on the demand side is that, without accurate insights into how exactly people use the Internet, it is very challenging to develop the right policy responses and harness useful international support.

A question can be asked on why this type of data does not exist.

It is important to acquire this data at household or firm-level. However, surveys providing such granulated data is very expensive to conduct and will require a concerted effort from various partners.

It is time for the international community to step up and help at this more foundational level.

Increasing ODA dedicated to data and statistics will be an important step in yielding development results for years to come.

Supporting national statistical systems and crafting comprehensive data strategies will also provide a vital springboard for SIDS.

To make this happen, to bridge the data gap, and foster innovation, we also need to see better collaboration between regulators, statistical agencies, and the private sector.

We also need to learn from good practice, while recognizing the unique challenges of each country.

To better understand the extent and nature of digital transformation in SIDS, my Office, recently concluded case studies in Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

In Kiribati, we found advancements in submarine cable infrastructure hold promise for digital development, yet this must be scaled up to reach remote communities.

Meanwhile, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines grapple with slow digital adoption due to resource constraints. This highlights once again the need for capacity-building initiatives.

Finally, our research in Sao Tome and Principe underscored that utilizing the Universal Access and Service Funds would help expand broadband access and promote digital literacy.

Each of the case studies highlights the importance of tailored approaches to address unique challenges and opportunities.

Excellencies,

The Antigua & Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) rightly emphasizes the importance of data collection in building resilient economies.

Establishing a SIDS Center of Excellence, equipped with a dedicated Data Hub, can serve as a catalyst for knowledge-sharing and capacity-building across SIDS.

I encourage all stakeholders to support the full operationalization of the hub to address the data deficit in SIDS.

In conclusion, by strengthening institutional capacities, and fostering international cooperation, we can pave the way for a more resilient and prosperous future for all.

I thank you.