Digital Nations ministerial declaration

Better Data, Better Societies

We, the Digital Nations Ministers, met in Lisbon, Portugal, on 14 November 2023, under the chairmanship of Mário Campolargo, Secretary of State for Digitalisation and Administrative Modernisation of Portugal, to discuss the digital government agenda in line with the theme of “Better data, Better Societies”.

We recognize the transformative power of data in shaping our societies and driving progress across all sectors, and firmly believe that by harnessing the potential of data in an ethical, transparent, responsible, inclusive, and equitable manner, we can create better societies for all.

With this shared vision, we declare our commitment to the below principles of "Better Data, Better Societies" to guide our collective actions and endeavours:

1. **Ethical and Fair Data Use**: We acknowledge that data-driven decisions and algorithms have profound societal impacts and ethical considerations should guide decision-making processes when using data for policy development or public service delivery. By adopting ethical frameworks and guidelines, we seek to minimize harm and maximize the benefits of data-driven technologies. We commit to ensuring ethical and fair data use, addressing biases, and avoiding discriminatory practices. We will strive to promote fairness, accountability, and transparency in the design, deployment, and evaluation of data-driven systems.

2. **Data Privacy and Security**: We recognize that privacy and security are fundamental rights in the digital age. We pledge to uphold the highest standards of data privacy protection, respecting individuals' rights to control their personal data. We will prioritize data security measures to safeguard against unauthorized access, breaches, and misuse. By promoting responsible data handling practices, we aim to foster trust and confidence in the data ecosystem.

3. **Empowerment through Data**: We acknowledge that access to accurate, comprehensive, and timely data is essential for empowering individuals, communities, and organizations. We commit to promoting open data initiatives, ensuring data transparency, and fostering data literacy for all citizens. By equipping people with the necessary knowledge and skills, we strive to enable active participation in shaping their own lives and the society at large.
4. **Collaboration and Data Sharing**: We understand that collaboration and data sharing are crucial for addressing complex societal challenges. Governments should foster a culture of collaboration, breaking down silos, and promoting interdisciplinary partnerships. We pledge to actively support data sharing initiatives, fostering collaboration among different government agencies and departments, as well as with trusted external partners. By working together, we aim to unlock the full potential of data for driving innovation, improving public services, and enhancing policy development while respecting data protection regulations, intellectual property rights, privacy, and security considerations.

- **Inclusion and Equity**: We recognize that data should be inclusive and equitable, reflecting the diversity of our societies. We commit to overcoming digital divides, ensuring equal access to data and technology. We will strive to address bias and data gaps that disproportionately affect marginalized communities. By promoting diversity in data collection, analysis, and decision-making processes, we aim to build fair and just societies.

- **Transparency and Accountability**: Governments should be transparent about their data usage practices. We commit to providing clear information to individuals about how their data is collected, used, and shared. We will further establish mechanisms for individuals to access and correct their data, and provide avenues for redress in case of data misuse or breaches.

By endorsing this declaration, we commit ourselves to the pursuit of better data practices, recognizing their immense potential to shape more inclusive, fair, and prosperous societies. We invite individuals, organizations, and governments worldwide to join us on this journey towards harnessing the power of data for the collective benefit of humanity. Together, we can realize the vision of “Better Data, Better Societies.”

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