Speech of first Discussant Ms. Zuena Aziz, Principal Coordinator (SDGs Affairs), PMO at the Thematic Webinar Series-5 titled “Data Governance for Digital Government” to be held at 8.00 pm Bangladesh time on 22th July through Webex.

1. Thank you moderator Ms. Arpine Korekyan. I would like to thank UNDESA colleagues for inviting me here today to share my thoughts and insights on data-centric e-government. I welcome you dear organizers, fellow panellists, and participants who are connected to this webinar from different parts of the world.

2. I would also like to congratulate UNDESA on the successful launching of the ‘UN E-Government Survey 2020’ on 10th July and would like to express my sincere gratitude to contributors who were associated with it. The UN E-Government Survey is playing a vital role in terms of guiding governments to become more transparent, effective, and inclusive in public service delivery as well as ensuring the human development.

3. We are happy to see that Bangladesh has graduated from Middle to a High E-Government Development Index (EGDI) country in the 2020 Survey. It is the revelation of the adoption of the ‘Digital Bangladesh Strategy’ taken by the Government of Bangladesh led by the Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 2009, which aims to transform the country into a digitally developed nation by 2021 through ICT integration in support of good governance, law enforcement, employment, and growth. We are also encouraged that one of our data initiatives—‘SDG Tracker’- has become an example in this year’s E-Government survey.

4. In this global webinar on “Data Governance for Digital Government”, with a particular focus on chapter 6 titled “Towards data-centric E-Government” presenter Mr. Wai Min Kwok demonstrated very well, and I would say this chapter underlined the key areas towards data and E-Governance in a splendid way. Mr. Wai Min has rightly underlined governments' triple role as a data producer, consumer, and as a regulator of data and few challenges around data-centric E-Government.

5. I would like to highlight how Bangladesh is performing in line with data-centric E-government.

6. Bangladesh has introduced 'SDG Tracker' not only to facilitate the monitoring of SDG results but also to identify areas where to emphasize in terms of producing timely data. Concerned Government agencies put data into it. The
data is then validated with the support of the National Statistical Office. Afterwards, the approved data become public. All of these processes happen electronically. The government is using this tool to design appropriate policies and assess the annual progress of National SDGs Actions.

7. The Government of Bangladesh has introduced Open Government Data Portal to facilitate data innovation culture for public goods along with 153 countries. Bangladesh also adopted a National Open Government Data Strategy to envisage the data-driven E-government. There are several data initiatives undertaken by the local governments in Bangladesh. For example, District Data portal aims to develop a local level data ecosystem and empower local bodies to take decisions by engaging both state and non-state actors. Another data portal for Hon’ble Members of the Parliament (MP) has been launched recently to nurture informed decision-making culture across the government institutions.

8. However, governments around the world are integrating non-traditional data sources such as big data, real-time data, and geo-spatial data in their operations. Bangladesh is also experimenting the data analytics tools and different data modelling by using the potentials of new data technologies into their policies, especially in health policy. The increasing trend in dengue cases introduced major threats to the public health in recent times and to get rid of it, we have developed a predictive model to take timely decision by ensuring data from different sources like (a) hospital records, (b) entomological data, (c) meteorological data, (d) socio-economic and demographic data, and (e) mobility data.

9. Similarly, during this COVID-19 pandemic, the Government is taking the benefit of data intelligence platforms to save both lives and livelihood. By engaging telecoms, academics, doctors, volunteers, and e-commerce associations, government agencies are taking policy decisions where to deliver food assistance, where cash aid requires and which suspected person should go under test, etc. Different characters are acting proactively together to save the nation. It was possible because of the ‘Digital Bangladesh’ strategy of the government, which has helped setting up digital architecture by this time.

10. However, with a view to enabling the regulatory set-up, National Block-chain Strategy, National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence, National Internet of Things Strategy, Data Security Policy, Cyber-security strategy are being taken to welcome data innovations in the country.
11. Bangladesh has initiated programmes to enhance the capacities of officials in order to grab the benefits of advanced data solutions. For example, in collaboration with UNDESA, the Evidence-based decision-making project for SDGs was initiated in 2017. The mentionable result of the project is the dashboard for Youth, which is now just about to run as a national skills portal. Through the UNDESA collaboration, the scope has been created to work with the E-Government leadership Centre of Singapore National University, where 200 government officials are undergoing a capacity development programme on data analytics.

12. We know that data governance is the linking tool to set policies, strategies, data ecosystems, and technologies together. With the guidance of our visionary Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the National Data Coordination Committee has been formed to take and drive actions in terms of data generation, reporting, and results dissemination and data innovation. Quite a few service portals are online now, like the Skills portal, Agriculture portal, Judiciary portal, all payment portal, etc. I believe these will enable the environment of sharing data, linking data, interoperability, and data exchange facilities to ensure effective, accountable, and inclusive data governance in the near future.

13. Based on our data experiences what we have learned, in order to transform any government into data-driven Government, creation of a data ecosystem is obligatory and this ecosystem should be followed by few initiatives, like

   a) Experiment should get a priority to create example;
   b) Breaking the data silos;
   c) Capacity development for developing skills and transforming mind-set;
   d) Establish a Data Governance and Public Trust;
   e) Enrich domain knowledge by engaging academics;
   f) Data privacy and security;

14. I feel there are still challenges remain to face. Like

   a) Data literacy, which requires more capacity development initiatives;
   b) Practical and working knowledge, which demands collaboration and partnerships among the organizations, agencies, countries and sectors;
   c) Establish data governance guided by the principles of openness, inclusiveness, accountability, competence, and consistency.

15. I would like to conclude my remarks by thanking you all once again. I appreciate feedback and queries, questions in written format. My colleagues surely will come back to you with answers.