



UNITED NATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

STATISTICS DIVISION

United Nations Statistical Commission

Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics

Fifth plenary meeting, 21 October 2018, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Agenda item 6 – Report of the GWG to the Statistical Commission

Report of the GWG to the Statistical Commission

Note by Ronald Jansen, UNSD

1. Introduction

At the 49th session of the Statistical Commission in March 2018, the GWG reported on the development of the UN Global Platform, on the 4th Conference on Big Data and the Bogota declaration and on the work of the GWG task teams. This report was for discussion and the decision taken by the Statistical Commission contained the following elements (Decision 49/107):

- (c) Urged the GWG to **make all its products and services easily available** ensuring that the quality of **each of these products is vetted by an appropriate advisory group** whose membership might include experts from national statistical agencies, academia, scientific and technical partners, and other communities as appropriate;
- (d) Confirmed that the use of Big Data and other new data sources is essential for the modernisation of national statistical institutions so that they remain relevant in a fast-moving data landscape;
- (e) Highlighted the opportunity for Big Data to fill gaps, to make statistical operations more cost effective, to enable the replacement of surveys, and to provide more granularity in outputs;
- (f) Encouraged the GWG to build on the success so far, by **delivering practical products and services for the global statistical system** to support the production of statistics and indicators including the SDG indicators;
- (g) Commended the GWG conferences on Big Data for Official Statistics for showcasing the latest developments, specifically commended the most recent, well organized and graciously hosted conference in Bogota, Colombia, which included hands-on training;
- (h) Supported the Bogota Declaration which gives direction on the envisioned way forward in this area;
- (i) Supported the GWG plans to establish global data collaboratives and data services where the statistical community will work in partnership with technology companies, data providers and academia, including work to formulate standards and guidelines for data governance and information management;

- (j) Emphasized the need to carefully address societal challenges of trust, ethics, privacy, confidentiality and security of data;
- (k) Endorsed the GWG proposal to further develop a global platform as a collaborative research and development environment for trusted data, services and applications using exemplars from the GWG task teams to drive the development of a proof of concept based on a federated architecture of data hubs;
- (l) Agreed that the proof of concept phase for the UN GWG Global Platform should run from now until March 2020, reiterated the need to present the platform's business case and requested that work on the legal, ethical and funding considerations are initiated during this phase and also to take steps to enable access of SIDS to big data;
- (m) Underlined the importance of capacity development activities, especially for developing countries, in the use of satellite data, mobile phone data and other new data sources, such as data from e-commerce platforms;
- (n) Requested that the GWG links its work closely with initiatives ongoing at regional level, paying attention to different user needs and circumstances and trying to avoid duplication of efforts;
- (o) Took note of the interest expressed by Rwanda to host the fifth conference on big data in official statistics in 2019 and the Republic of Korea to host the sixth conference;

2. Response of the GWG to the requests of the Statistical Commission

The GWG needs to respond to the requests made by the Commission in Decision 49/107. This means that the report needs to address the following action points.

- i. Make all its products and services easily available and create an advisory group for quality control
- ii. Deliver practical products and services for the global statistical system to support the production of statistics and indicators including the SDG indicators
- iii. Address societal challenges of trust, ethics, privacy, confidentiality and security of data
- iv. Further develop a global platform as a collaborative research and development environment for trusted data, services and applications; and complete the proof of concept phase for the platform by March 2020
- v. Proposal for the sustainable business model of the platform
- vi. Capacity development activities, especially for developing countries

3. Other parts of the Report

The introduction of the Report will reiterate the requests of the Commission and will foreshadow the responses of the GWG. The next sections of the Report could potentially be as follows:

- Progress on the UN Global Platform

- Products and services being delivered through the Platform – progress reports of the GWG Task Teams
- Initial work on data management and privacy preserving techniques
- Capacity development activities
- Next steps

The GWG report will this year be for information