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

Report

Points for Action

Given that the GWG annual meeting was very short this time, only a few action items can be mentioned:

➡ **Set up an organizing and a programme committee for the conference in Kigali**

The organizing committee will deal with practical issues in setting up the conference, whereas the programme committee will only be concerned with the substantive side. One of the first tasks of the programme committee will be to draft a concept note for the conference.

➡ **List of assignments for the work on the UN Global Platform**

Staff of Statistics Canada, Statistics Netherlands and UNSD have taken on some tasks regarding the operation of the Platform, but a more elaborate list of assignments would be need to see how many staff members are needed and who can do what.

➡ **Preparing data management paper and business model**

Many of these questions regarding data management (including trusted data, trusted methods and trusted partners) have a direct bearing on the business model for the platform. The data management paper and business model may therefore have to developed together.

➡ **GWG Report to the Statistical Commission**

The GWG report needs to be submitted by the end of November 2018.

Agenda

Opening by Ronald Jansen, UNSD

Agenda item (1)   Overview of the work of the GWG – Niels Ploug

Agenda item (2)   5th International Conference on Big Data in Kigali – Niels Ploug

Agenda item (3)   Progress report of the UN Global Platform – Heather Savory

Agenda item (4)   Data Management of the UN Global Platform – Sylvie Michaud

Agenda item (5)   Progress report of the GWG Task Teams – Ronald Jansen

Agenda item (6)   Report to the Statistical Commission – Ronald Jansen

Agenda item (7)   Other business

Documentation

- Overview of the work of the UN Global Working Group on Big Data - Note by Niels Ploug, Statistics Denmark and co-chair of GWG

- Progress report on the UN Global Platform - Note by Heather Savory and Mark Craddock, ONS UK and co-chair of GWG

- Progress report of the GWG Task Teams – Note by Ronald Jansen, UNSD

- Report of GWG to the Statistical Commission – Note Ronald Jansen, UNSD

Participants

Countries: Ms. Heather Savory (United Kingdom - Chair), Mr. Niels Ploug (Denmark), Mr. Mohamed Abdul Kadir (Bangladesh), Mr. Barnabe Okouda (Cameroon), Ms. Sylvie Michaud (Canada), Ms. Sandra Moreno (Colombia), Ms. Angela Forero (Colombia), Mr. Maciej Truszczynski (Denmark), Mr. Omar Mohktar Abbas (Egypt), Mr. Paul Morrin (Ireland), Ms. Andrea Fernandez (Mexico), Mr. Robert Hermans (Netherlands), Ms. Carina Fransen (Netherlands), Mr. Ahmed Almufarji (Oman), Ms. Josie Perez (Philippines), Mr. Dominik Rozkrut (Poland), Mr. Janusz Dygaszewicz (Poland), Ms. Aseel Almansour (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Bertrand Loison (Switzerland), Mr. Hatem El Sherif (UAE), Ms. Latifa Al Shehhi (UAE), Mr. Mark Craddock, Mr. Gavin Phillips, Ms. Nicola Shearman, Mr. Robert Bumpstead (United Kingdom), Ms. Heli Mikkela (Finland, Observer)

Organizations: Mr. Koua Louis Kouakoa (African Development Bank), Mr. Momar Kouta (African Development Bank), Mr. Michal Skaliotis (Eurostat), Ms. Elham Saleh (GCC-Stat), Ms. Marzia Rango (IOM), Ms. Jillian Campbell (UNEP), Mr. Ivo Havinga (UNSD), Mr. Ronald Jansen (UNSD), Ms. Francesca Grum (UNSD), Ms. Gemma Van Halderen (UNESCAP), Mr. Steve MacFeely (UNCTAD), Mr. Trevor Monroe (World Bank)

Minutes

Agenda item (1)   Overview of the work of the GWG – Niels Ploug

Niels briefly presented the overview of the work of the GWG, since Bogota. Details are provided in the prepared note.

Agenda item (2)   5th International Conference on Big Data in Kigali – Niels Ploug

The 5th international conference will take place in the spring of 2019. Niels announced that the statistical office of Rwanda, the African Development Bank, UNECA, UNSD, DANE Colombia and Statistics Denmark will connect soon by video-conferencing to set up an organizing and a programme committee for the conference in Kigali. Volunteers are still welcome to contribute to either committee.

Agenda item (3)   Progress report of the UN Global Platform – Heather Savory

The UN Global Platform offers technology infrastructure and constitutes a network for data innovation to the official statistical community to facilitate global collaboration on trusted data, trusted methods and trusted learning.

Heather recalled how the Platform has evolved from an initial idea of the UN Global Working group on Big Data to a reality. She gave a quick overview of the status of the Platform in terms of available data, services, and partners. Details can be found in the prepared document.

Agenda item (4)   Data Management of the UN Global Platform – Sylvie Michaud

Sylvie highlighted the various elements, which should be reflected in a paper on the data management of the UN Global Platform. The GWG needs to define the concepts of trusted data, trusted methods, trusted partners and trusted learning. What are the criteria, which we will use? The GWG needs to agree on who will be the custodian of the various datasets, if data and algorithms need to be "open", and if software, services and tools will

be "platform independent". We also need to deal with issues of confidentiality and liability. We need to also deal with contracts for the trusted partners and for data and service providers, and deal with corresponding "exit strategies".

Many of these questions have a direct bearing on the business model for the platform, and the data management paper and business model may have to developed together.

Agenda item (5)   Progress report of the GWG Task Teams – Ronald Jansen

Progress of the task teams was highlighted via the Handbooks, Projects and Capacity development activities. A series of Handbooks are either completed or underway. In this regard, it was pointed out that an Advisory group is needed to certify this work.

Several projects are in progress: three projects with use of Satellite data (for measuring water extent, agriculture crop production and land cover, respectively), transactional data (for measuring price fluctuations) and mobile phone data (for measuring human mobility). Given the availability now of AIS and flight tracking data many more projects are expected to be started up.

Finally, a full-week workshop on use of Earth Observations for agriculture and environment statistics was held in Bangkok with participation of a dozen Asian countries. Training materials of this event will be made available on the platform for further use.

In this regard, the Task Team on Training, Skills and Capacity Development will get a re-start under new leadership of Statistics Poland. Volunteers to become member of this team are welcome.

Agenda item (6)   Report to the Statistical Commission – Ronald Jansen

As indicated in the note prepared by UNSD, the GWG report to the Statistical Commission for its 50th session in March 2019 will have to respond to the various requests made in Decision 49/107, including the creation of an Advisory group, addressing privacy concerns, progress on the platform and the presentation of the business case. The report can further give highlights from the GWG Open Day and the UN World Data Forum (in relation to GWG work), present projects and their progress, and describe the capacity development activities. The GWG report needs to be submitted by the end of November.

Agenda item (7)   Other business

There was no time left for any other business.