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International Symposium on the use of Big Data for official statistics
16-18 October 2019, Hangzhou, China

Concept Note

In September 2015, the international community agreed to 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets to be achieved by 2030 - a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. To monitor progress, a global set of SDG indicators has been developed which all countries are required to regularly report on. Traditional data collection methods, such as surveys or censuses, are not sufficient to address the increased demand for timely, frequent and granular data.

For this reason, the UN Statistical Commission created – in 2014 – the UN Global Working Group (GWG) on Big Data for official statistics to develop and test the use of new data sources and new technologies. The aim of the GWG is to lower the barriers of entry, particularly for developing countries, in the use of Big Data, such as satellite data, mobile phone data, scanner data, and social media data.

The symposium aims to increase the knowledge and skills of statistical offices in using new data source, tools and methods, and to foster collaboration among countries in the Asian-Pacific region in the use of Big Data for official statistics. The symposium will give an overview on the work of the GWG and its Task Teams. Special attention will be devoted to the UN Global Platform as a digital platform enabling international and regional collaboration. This platform enables statisticians, data scientists and other researchers from different countries and locations to work together on projects involving, for example, satellite data to estimate crop production.

The UN-China Centre on Big Data is being set up as a regional hub of the UN Global Platform, giving countries in Asia a better opportunity to advance the work on Big Data. This Centre will be useful to initiate and execute innovative data projects. The Centre will also serve as a training institute to develop new skills for staff of national statistical offices.

Participants at the symposium will be statisticians from national statistical offices in Asia as well as resource persons from national and international statistical agencies as well as from private sector and other stakeholder groups. The symposium will be conducted in English with simultaneous translation to Chinese.