



8th International  
Conference on  
**BIG DATA**  
& Data Science for Official Statistics

**BILBAO 2024**

Informing Climate Change and  
Sustainable Development Policies  
with Integrated Data

**BILBAO. SPAIN** | **10-14 JUNE 2024** | **#UNBigData2024**

## UN Global Platform

How the UN Statistics Division advances the use of state-of-the-art technologies in statistical offices by enabling access to large volumes of data and modern tools and methods

**Luis González Morales**

United Nations Statistics Division

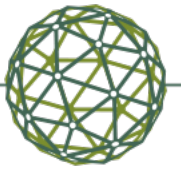




# Part One

**Origin and mandate of the UN Global Platform**

**Overview of initiatives & projects**



# Using big data and data science to enhance official statistics



2013: **Non-traditional sources** of data as potentially useful sources of statistical information



2014: Statistical Commission **strengthened mandates** aimed at enhancing use of big data and related technologies



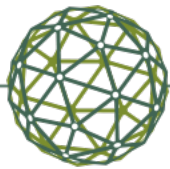
2017: the idea of a **Global Platform** for data, services and applications (UN Statistical Commission Decision 48/105(d))



2018: UN Global Platform emerges as a **cloud-based data collaboration space** for the statistical community



Condition for use: **Projects must benefit official statistics**

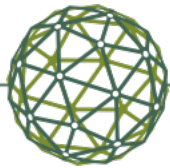


## On-going initiatives we support:

- Privacy-preserving data science
- Vessel tracking data (AIS)
- Climate & health indicators
- Statistical data portals (.Stat)
- Modernization of UN Data
- New trade data processing tools
- E-learning courses
- Data4Now

## Concluded initiatives:

- Using satellite imagery & machine learning to create modern crop maps in Senegal
- Concept & SDG extraction using semantic web technologies

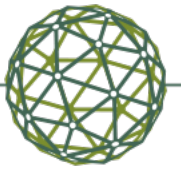


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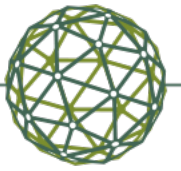
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# Privacy-preserving data science

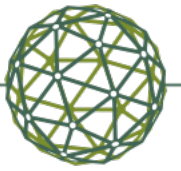
- **Goal:** Demonstrate international, privacy-preserving data joins between NSOs
- We built a secure, peer-to-peer privacy-enabled data network between several NSOs and the UN, to experiment and learn about the use of PETs in facilitating cross-border data science.



# Vessel-tracking data (AIS)

- **Goal:** Facilitate NSO access to terabytes of marine vessel location data in a cost-effective cloud-based computing environment
- We built data pipelines to continuously ingest AIS data and built a cloud-based Spark environment for data scientists to run their own solutions, resulting in 15+ research papers plus several data platforms, with data going back to 2018.

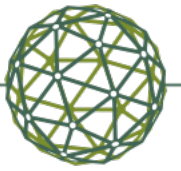




# Trade Data Tools

- **Goal:** Pilot software & tools to improve processing of IMTS trade data
- We collaborated with UN Comtrade to develop cloud-native microservices that enable secure, in-house processing of trade data within NSOs, providing training, platform services and systems designs expertise





## Part Two

### **The AIS Data Service and its impact**



# Evolution and impact: Harnessing high- frequency data for official statistics



**Data scientists** in the statistical community can access the location and movements of **all vessels globally**, with data back to **2018**.



Platform is overseen by the **UN Committee of Experts on Big Data** (UN-CEBD), established in 2014 (former UN GWG Big Data)



Real-time AIS updates on global vessel positions and speeds, **35k new records** every two minutes.



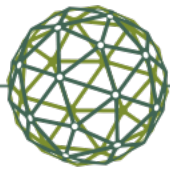
16.8 TB of data available in a cloud-based Kubernetes **Spark environment** with around 300 cores and 1,800 GB memory



15 NSOs, 16 intl organizations, 14 universities and 12 other government institutes use the AIS data on the platform in one or more projects



**15+ major research papers** have expanded state-of-the-art research methodology using AIS for statistical purposes



# The AIS Service on the UN Global Platform

- **Platform-as-a-service:** users should be able to build their own solutions (like PortWatch)
- Built using modern **cloud-native** technologies (K8s, spot instances, serverless)
- Extensive **partnerships** with NSOs in user experience & peer review of technology architectures
- In-house **operations** and **engineering**
- Users **prototype solutions** in Notebook environments
- Also provides a **remote data processing interface** to execute pipelines remotely for remote execution by partners

```
[10]: # Create a sparksession with the name emissions_training
# The builder pattern is used to chain configuration options
spark = SparkSession. \
    builder. \
    appName('Emissions_Training'). \
    config('spark.jars.packages'). \
    config('spark.sql.parquet.enableVectorizedReader', "false"). \
    getOrCreate()

Date range should be on ISO format. Date input as (YYYY-MM-DD)
In here we define the timerange of our emissions estimation

[11]: start_date = datetime.fromisoformat("2022-03-24")
end_date = datetime.fromisoformat("2022-03-31")

With the information collected earlier, the ais.get_ais() can filter the positions for our area and time of interest:

af.get_ais(sparkSession, start_date,
           end_date=end_date,
           h3_list=h3_list,
           columns=List_of_columns_to_retain)

[12]: ais_sample=af.get_ais(spark,start_date,
                          end_date = end_date,
                          h3_list = h3_indices_int)
```

4) Bringing vessels characteristics up to IMO GHG 4 report standard

The bottom-up method of the IMO GHG4 report relies on a set of matrices (lookup tables) that summarize naval architecture and machinery knowl based on standard inputs, such as fuel type and IMO category. In this section, we will transform the default AIS variables into IMO GHG4 compliant

**Note:** The transformation from AIS and Lloyds vessel specifications to the IMO GHG4 standard is currently performed using Pandas. The function:

```
ef.adapted_imo(PandasDataFrame)
```

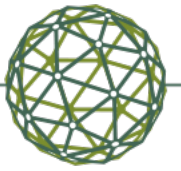
runs faster with a Pandas transform than with a PySpark DataFrame. This is because a cosine similarity is calculated using a full matrix. A future versi

While the AIS data provides some information on vessel characteristics, it lacks essential details for estimating emissions, such as engine type, fuel t Register, is necessary to fill these gaps. The UNGP provides access to Lloyds Ship Register for this purpose.

To create a vessel specifications DataFrame that conforms to the IMO GHG4 standard, follow these steps:

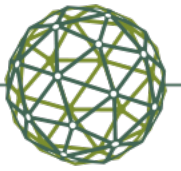
1. Identify unique vessel IDs using the IMO Number or Maritime Mobile Service Identity Number (MMSI), both of which are unique identifiers.
2. Read the Ship technical data file from Lloyds Ship Register as provided by the UNGP.

Serializing Mem: 323.71 / 3379.20 MB



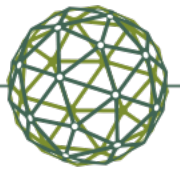
# Behind the scenes: Data engineering

- Data contract with ExactEarth allow data for statistical purposes
- Data engineering efforts are a partnership between UN, ADB, and ONS
- Built using AWS Serverless Application Model in Python
- AWS Lambda functions run every two minutes to pull data from API and process



# Behind the scenes: Computing environment

- AWS Kubernetes cluster runs Spark jobs efficiently using a mixture of on-demand and pre-emptible instances
- Critical partnership with NetApp
- Cluster expands and shrinks as resources are needed; typical usage is 300 cores, 1800 GB ram
- Can grow to much more than this, shrink to much less, as needed



# Using high-frequency AIS data for statistical purposes: expanding the state of the art

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- ✓ March, D., Metcalfe, K., Tintoré, J., & Godley, B. J. (2021). Tracking the global reduction of marine traffic during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Nature communications*, 12(1), 2415.
- ✓ Al-Saadi, N. (2021). Global economic impacts of COVID-19 after isolating countries from each other. *PLOS ONE* | <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.259818>.
- ✓ Pham, K. H., & Luengo-Oroz, M. (2020). From plague to coronavirus: On the value of ship traffic data for epidemic modeling. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2003.02253*.
- ✓ Hoffmann Pham, K. E., & Luengo-Oroz, M. (2020). From plague to coronavirus: vessel trajectory data from ship automatic identification systems for epidemic modeling. *Journal of Travel Medicine*, 27(6), taaa072.
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- ✓ Verschuur, J., Koks, E. E., & Hall, J. W. (2020). Port disruptions due to natural disasters: Insights into port and logistics resilience. *Transportation research part D: transport and environment*, 85, 102393.
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