

Terms of Reference of the Programme Committee for the sixth United Nations World Data Forum

(updated 19 May 2025)

Background

The purpose of the [UN World Data Forum](#) is to spur data innovation, nurture partnerships, mobilize high-level political and financial support for data, and build a pathway to better data for sustainable development. Since January 2017, our audience has grown from 2,000 people who attended the first Forum in Cape Town, South Africa to an active community of over 20,000 representing governments, civil society, the private sector, donor and philanthropic bodies, international and regional agencies, the geospatial community, the media, academia, and professional bodies; and has become one of largest global events dedicated to data and statistics in the calendar. The next Forum is planned in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia *provisionally* set between 9 and 12 November 2026.

Objectives and tasks

The purpose of the Programme Committee's is to provide substantive advice to the [High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination, and Capacity-Building \(HLG-PCCB\)](#) on the programme of the Forum. The Committee's role is to develop the programme of the next Forum as follows:

1. Re-establish the [Thematic Areas](#) and topic lists for the call for programme proposals;
2. Review and shortlist the proposals received for the parallel programme (sessions), once the call for programme proposals is launched;
3. Develop the concepts for the high-level plenary sessions, including identification and outreach to high-level speakers;
4. Promote and communicate the Forum among your networks and with relevant stakeholders
5. Contribute to publicity activities such as blogs, webinars, etc.

Membership composition

The table below shows the *indicative* composition of the Programme Committee with 26 members reflecting the key stakeholder communities involved in the Forum. The eventual selection should also consider regional and gender diversity.

Affiliation	Members	Affiliation	Members
Official statistics ¹	3	Private sector	3

¹ The two co-chairs of the HLG-PCCB represent the official statistics community and serve as a link between the Programme Committee, the HLG-PCCB and UN Statistical Commission. Former hosts representatives selected as observers.

Affiliation	Members	Affiliation	Members
Users and other partners (i.e. Civil society/ Non-Governmental Organisation)	5	Academia and professional organizations	5
International and regional agencies ²	5	Donor / philanthropic foundation	2
Media	1	National Geospatial Information Authority (NGIA)	1
Other Government: users and other producers	1	Total	26

Members serve in their personal capacity and not on behalf of their organisation or other entity. Thus, members should engage in Committee work personally and not rely on alternate representation. Members should also actively liaise within their networks and with relevant stakeholders on current areas of the programme and bring to the Committee's attention up and coming issues and topics.

The host country, represented by the National Statistical Office (NSO), serve as *an observer member* to ensure the link between the Committee and any local or national organising committee(s). Communication and other specialists from Committee member organisations can attend committee meetings as observers. A communication subgroup will provide additional space to discuss such activities around the Forum. It reports back to the Committee.

The Statistics Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs is the secretariat of the committee as it is to the HLG-PCCB and UN Statistical Commission. The secretariat will report regularly to the HLG-PCCB on the work of the Committee, in particular the status of the programme.

Selection process

The HLG-PCCB as part of its 'strategic leadership in the organisation' of the Forum, confirms the selection of members to the Programme Committee. It was past practice for the secretariat to prepare a nomination list covering the 26 positions on the Committee and for the HLG-PCCB to give approval or recommend alternates or substitutions to those nominated. Other methods of nomination and confirmation may be considered but the principles of data community, regional and gender diversity need to be maintained in any process.

Organisation of work

The Committee will work through virtual meetings and email exchange. Meetings are held for one hour per month and the review of documents/ response for inputs is anticipated to require an additional two-three hours work, but this will vary depending on the point reached in the event planning cycle.

Expected duration

² Including from the UN resident coordinator office

The Committee is expected to remain active until the end of 2026 to cover all preparations pre- and post-Forum. The following table provides key milestones for the first year of the Committee:

Time period	Task
September - October 2025	Review of the thematic areas
November 2025 - January 2026	Call for session proposals
February - May 2026	Review of the session proposals through multiple rounds by the Committee
May 2026	Development of programme proposal to be submitted to the HLG-PCCB
March - April 2026	High-level plenary session concepts, including identifying and securing participation of high-level speakers
July 2026	Final programme launched on website and registration opens