

Strategic Roadmap for the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses

Version 4, 19 September 2024

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

I. Introduction	5
I.A Background	5
I.A.1 Mandate	5
I.A.2 Importance of Statistical Business Registers (SBRs).....	5
I.A.3 Challenges and the Need for National Unique Business Identifiers.....	6
I.A.4 Development of the Global Initiative	6
I.A.5 Next Step	6
I.B Purpose and Scope	7
I.B.1 Overview of the Strategic Roadmap's Goals and Objectives.....	7
I.B.2 Scope of the Initiative: Target Countries and Regions	7
I.C Background	8
I.C.1 Importance of Unique Business Identifiers.....	8
I.C.2 Current Challenges in Business Registration and Statistical Business Registers (SBRs).....	8
II. Global Initiative Overview.....	9
II.A Objectives	9
II.A.1 Improve the Availability and Use of Unique Business Identifiers.....	9
II.A.2 Facilitate Access to and Sharing of Administrative Data for SBRs.....	10
II.A.3 Create and Maintain Statistical Business Registers.....	10
II.A.4 Strengthen Transparency in Business Registration.....	11
II.A.5 Encourage Mapping to Global Unique Identifiers	11
II.B Key Partners	12
II.B.1 Core Group of UNSD, Statistics Netherlands, Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation (GLEIF), UNCITRAL, and World Bank Group.....	12
II.B.2 International, Regional, and National Organizations	13
II.C Governance	13
II.C.1 Role and Purpose of the Core Group.....	13
II.C.2 Role and Purpose of the Advisory Group	13
II.C.3 Role of the UNCEBTS.....	14
II.C.4 Mandate and Responsibilities	14

II.C.5	Composition	15
II.D	Alignment with Global Standards	15
III.	Strategic Phases of the Use Cases.....	16
III.A	Phase 1: Assessment and Outreach	16
III.A.1	Country Assessment	16
III.A.2	Stakeholder Engagement	17
III.B	Phase 2: Technical Cooperation and Capacity Building.....	17
III.B.1	Legislation and Policy Support	17
III.B.2	Training and Development	17
III.C	Phase 3: Implementation and Integration.....	18
III.C.1	Pilot Programs	18
III.C.2	Global Mapping and Integration.....	18
III.D	Phase 4: Monitoring and Evaluation	18
III.D.1	Continuous Monitoring.....	18
III.D.2	Evaluation and Feedback.....	18
IV.	Use Cases and Practical Applications	19
IV.A	Cross-Border Trade	19
IV.B	Domestic Trade and Digitalization	19
IV.C	Regulatory Compliance	20
V.	Risks and Challenges	20
V.A	Data Privacy and Security	20
V.B	Technical and Operational Challenges	21
V.C	Political and Legislative Barriers.....	21
VI.	6. Conclusion and Next Steps	21
VI.A	Summary of Key Actions	21
VI.B	Call to Action	22
VI.C	Timeline	22

Executive Summary

The Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses (GIUIB), mandated by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2023, aims to improve the availability and use of national and global unique business identifiers in business registers, enhancing the access, sharing, and interoperability of administrative business information and their use for the creation and maintenance of Statistical Business Registers (SBRs) and thereby promoting transparency in domestic and cross-border business activities. This transparency in administrative and statistical business registration is essential for fostering trust and accountability in both the public and private sectors. This initiative is critical to ensuring that businesses are accurately identified within and across borders, promoting growth and prosperity, economic integration, and supporting regulatory compliance.

The strategic roadmap is designed to provide clear guidance for countries and stakeholders to implement unique business identifiers building on use cases in pilot countries. It emphasizes the importance of aligning national systems with international standards and improving access to administrative data. The initiative will be implemented through several key phases:

1. **Assessment and Outreach:** Initial country assessments will identify areas in need of legislative and system improvements, while outreach efforts will engage relevant stakeholders and build partnerships.
2. **Technical Cooperation and Capacity Building:** This phase will focus on providing legislative and policy support to strengthen the legal frameworks for unique business identifiers and deliver targeted training to build capacity.
3. **Implementation and Integration:** Pilot programs will be launched to test the practical integration of unique business identifiers within national systems, with a focus on establishing the unique identifiers at the national level and linking them to global frameworks such as the LEI.
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuous monitoring will ensure the initiative's progress, with regular evaluations and feedback loops to adapt strategies as needed.

The roadmap addresses challenges such as data privacy and security, technical and operational issues, and political and legislative barriers. By tackling these risks, the initiative will create a more transparent, efficient, and connected business registry environment for fostering transparency in national and global business activities.

The next steps involve mobilizing international collaboration, securing active participation from countries, and moving forward with the outlined phases. The initiative is expected to unfold over several years, with each phase building on the achievements of the previous one, ultimately leading to a globally harmonized system of unique business identifiers that strengthens business registration systems and supports global economic growth.

I. Introduction

I.A Background

I.A.1 Mandate

The Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses (GIUIB) was officially proposed to the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 53rd session in 2022 by the United Nations Committee on Business and Trade Statistics (UNCEBTS). Recognizing the critical need for standardized business identification systems for transparency in administrative and statistical business registration fostering trust and accountability in both the public and private sectors, the Commission endorsed the initiative, emphasizing the importance of improving the availability of single national unique business identifiers in administrative data sources. These identifiers are also considered essential for strengthening Statistical Business Registers (SBRs) in countries, enhancing the understanding of globalization, and improving the quality of economic data. The United Nations Statistical Commission requested further elaboration on the initiative and instructed the Committee to report on its progress at the fifty-fourth session in 2023.

At the 54th session, held in March 2023, the Statistical Commission formally endorsed the GIUIB and encouraged countries, along with relevant organizations, to coordinate their activities toward building a solid infrastructure for SBRs that rely on administrative business registries with single unique business identifiers. This endorsement marked a pivotal moment in the global effort to improve business registration systems and integrate global unique business identifiers as part of broader initiatives to modernize statistical frameworks.

I.A.2 Importance of Statistical Business Registers (SBRs)

Statistical Business Registers (SBRs) form the backbone of economic statistics, providing essential data for tracking and analyzing the structure and dynamics of businesses. As the demand for more integrated, coherent, and comparable statistics grows across countries and statistical domains, the importance of a robust SBR becomes increasingly clear. In addition to providing traditional economic data, SBRs must now capture information related to emerging phenomena such as globalization, digitalization, well-being, sustainability, and the gig economy. To remain relevant and responsive to these evolving needs, SBRs must be inclusive and exhaustive, reflecting the full scope of economic activities within a country.

An accurate and comprehensive SBR is essential for measuring economic activity in a way that supports informed policymaking, economic development, and sustainable growth. It ensures that national economic statistics are up to date and capable of describing complex, modern business landscapes. The inclusion of unique business identifiers in SBRs is crucial for linking administrative data sources, improving data quality, and enabling more comprehensive analyses of business activities and trends.

I.A.3 Challenges and the Need for National Unique Business Identifiers

One of the primary challenges in creating and maintaining high-quality SBRs is the lack of national unique identifiers for businesses in countries. Without a standardized identifier, it is difficult to accurately link data from various administrative sources, which leads to inefficiencies and gaps in the statistical representation of business activities. The UN Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers recommend the adoption of national unique legal identifiers to address these challenges. By promoting the use of a single identifier across different data systems, countries can improve the interoperability and thereby the integration and utility of their administrative business registers and other administrative registers like the building registers and employer and employee registers, ensuring that the data they collect is both accurate and actionable.

The use of unique business identifiers is not only a technical necessity but also a policy priority. As globalization deepens and digitalization accelerates, the ability to track and analyze business operations across borders is increasingly important. Global unique identifiers facilitate tracing cross-border and domestic business activities, ensuring that global business operations are transparent and that countries can collaborate on regulatory and economic oversight.

I.A.4 Development of the Global Initiative

With the mandate of the Statistical Commission in March 2023, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) with the Global Legal Entity Identity Foundation (GLEIF), Statistics Netherlands, and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) have continued to drive the initiative forward under the auspices of the UNCEBTS. In 2023, the initiative was further discussed through a series of webinars aimed at raising awareness and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders. These webinars brought together participants from central banks, national statistics offices, business registration authorities, and international organizations, reflecting the wide-reaching impact and importance of the initiative.

The webinar series reconfirmed the need for countries to establish national unique identifiers where they do not yet exist and to promote the sharing of administrative data for the purpose of maintaining accurate and reliable SBRs. This dialogue has been instrumental in building momentum and encouraging countries to take concrete steps toward improving their business registration systems.

I.A.5 Next Step

The need for a comprehensive strategic roadmap was identified to guide the global implementation of the initiative. In the remainder of this document, the strategic roadmap will set out the Roadmap's purpose, scope, objectives, key partners, and strategic phases of the use cases to demonstrate the value of sound business registration systems. These pilot projects will serve as important testing grounds for the integration of standardized unique identifiers into national systems and the potential impact on improving the overall quality and accessibility of business data and the creation and maintenance of statistical business registers.

I.B Purpose and Scope

I.B.1 Overview of the Strategic Roadmap's Goals and Objectives

The strategic roadmap for the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses is designed to provide a comprehensive guide for countries and international stakeholders in adopting and implementing unique business identifiers. This initiative is rooted in the recognition that the absence of standardized, universally recognized business identifiers poses significant challenges to the cooperation, integration and harmonization of both administrative and statistical business registration systems worldwide. By establishing a clear and actionable roadmap, the initiative aims to streamline processes, enhance the accuracy and reliability of statistical business registers (SBRs), and ultimately support countries in their efforts to modernize and strengthen their business registration and statistical frameworks.

The roadmap's primary goals are to foster global cooperation and consistency in the application and use of unique business identifiers and to improve the availability and use of unique business identifiers in countries around the world. This involves the establishment of unique business identifiers at the national level and aligning national systems with international standards, such as the Global Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) System, to ensure that businesses can be uniquely identified across borders. The roadmap also seeks to improve access to administrative data, facilitating better linkages between business registers and other critical data sources through standardized and universally recognized identifiers. Through these efforts, the initiative aims to enhance transparency, reduce duplication of efforts, and support global efforts to understand and monitor business activities, particularly in the context of globalization and cross-border trade.

I.B.2 Scope of the Initiative: Target Countries and Regions

The scope of the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses is both ambitious and far-reaching, targeting countries at various stages of developing their business registration and statistical systems. The initiative is particularly focused on supporting countries that are in the process of establishing or improving their Statistical Business Registers (SBRs) and those seeking to enhance their integration with global business networks. This includes nations with emerging economies that are increasingly participating in international trade, as well as developed countries that may need to refine their existing systems to meet new global (digital) standards.

Moreover, the initiative is designed to address the needs of countries involved in both cross-border and domestic trade. For those engaged in international trade, the adoption of unique identifiers is crucial for ensuring that businesses can be accurately identified and linked across different jurisdictions, thereby facilitating smoother trade transactions and compliance with international regulations. Additionally, for countries focusing on the digitalization of trade and business processes, the initiative provides a framework for integrating unique identifiers into various digital platforms and administrative data sets, enhancing the efficiency and reliability of business operations.

The roadmap also emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, aiming to bring on board countries with diverse economic and administrative structures. By doing so, it seeks to create a globally coherent system where business entities, regardless of their location or size, can be consistently identified and linked within and across borders. This comprehensive approach ensures that the benefits of the initiative are broadly distributed, supporting global economic integration and the development of robust, transparent business ecosystems worldwide.

I.C Background

I.C.1 Importance of Unique Business Identifiers

Unique business identifiers are crucial for the accurate identification, tracking, and analysis of businesses across various administrative and statistical systems. In an increasingly globalized economy, where businesses frequently operate across borders and engage in complex, interconnected transactions, the need for a standardized system of identification has never been more critical. Unique identifiers ensure that each business entity is distinctly recognized within and across national jurisdictions, facilitating more reliable data collection, analysis, and reporting. This not only aids in the management and regulation of businesses but also enhances transparency and accountability, particularly in sectors like finance, trade, and legal compliance.

Moreover, unique business identifiers are integral to the creation and maintenance of Statistical Business Registers (SBRs), which are foundational for compiling accurate business statistics. These identifiers enable the seamless linking of data from multiple sources, including tax records, company registries, and trade databases, thereby supporting comprehensive and coherent statistical analyses. The implementation of such identifiers is also essential for integrating national business registers into global frameworks, like the Global Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) System, which aims to provide a universal method for identifying legal entities worldwide. By ensuring consistency and interoperability across different systems, unique business identifiers play a vital role in the effective functioning of both national and global economies.

I.C.2 Current Challenges in Business Registration and Statistical Business Registers (SBRs)

Despite the clear benefits of unique business identifiers, their implementation and use face several challenges, particularly in the context of business registration and the development of Statistical Business Registers (SBRs). One of the most significant challenges is the lack of standardized and universally recognized identifiers across different jurisdictions. In many countries, businesses are registered with multiple agencies, each assigning its own identification numbers, which are often incompatible with those used by other agencies or in other countries. This fragmentation leads to difficulties in linking data across systems, creating inefficiencies and inaccuracies in data collection and analysis.

Another challenge is the variation in the maturity and robustness of SBRs across different countries. In some regions, SBRs are well-established and integrated with other administrative data sources, while in others, they are either nascent or non-existent. This disparity hampers the

ability to produce consistent and comparable business statistics, both within and between countries. Furthermore, in many developing countries, the lack of resources and technical expertise poses significant barriers to the establishment and maintenance of comprehensive SBRs. These challenges are compounded by issues related to data privacy, security, and the legal frameworks governing the sharing and use of business data.

Additionally, the increasing complexity of global business operations, including the proliferation of multinational enterprises with intricate ownership structures, further complicates the task of ensuring accurate and consistent business identification. Without a coordinated approach to the implementation of unique business identifiers, these challenges are likely to persist, undermining efforts to improve the quality of business statistics and the effectiveness of regulatory oversight. Addressing these issues requires a concerted global effort, as outlined in this strategic roadmap, to promote the adoption of a standardized and universally recognized identifier and to support countries in building the necessary infrastructure and capacity for robust business registration and statistical systems.

From a sustainable policy perspective, by effectively identifying and tracking successful businesses through unique business identifiers, policymakers can more accurately target and deliver essential support services, such as access to finance, business development programs, and market expansion opportunities. This targeted support is crucial for nurturing the growth potential of these enterprises, ensuring they contribute optimally to the broader economy. Identifying entrepreneurship and high-growth enterprises is pivotal for advancing socio-economic development, particularly within the framework of a sustainable development agenda. These enterprises are often the engines of economic growth, innovation, and job creation, driving productivity and competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.

Moreover, in the context of sustainable development, the ability to identify and monitor high-growth enterprises enables governments to align business development initiatives with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals. By fostering responsible entrepreneurship that prioritizes sustainability, governments can promote economic growth that is inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sound. This alignment not only supports the achievement of national and international development goals but also ensures that economic gains are distributed more evenly across society, reducing inequalities and promoting long-term socio-economic resilience. The strategic implementation of unique business identifiers, therefore, plays a crucial role in empowering governments to strengthen business ecosystems, catalyze sustainable economic growth, and achieve overarching development objectives.

II. Global Initiative Overview

II.A Objectives

II.A.1 Improve the Availability and Use of Unique Business Identifiers

Another key objective of the initiative is to improve the availability and use of unique business identifiers in countries around the world. Unique identifiers are essential for distinguishing individual businesses within and across national borders, ensuring that each entity is distinctly

recognized in various administrative and statistical systems and that these systems preferably use the same unique identifier for entities to make it possible that e.g. different government agencies know exactly if they are dealing with the same entity. The widespread adoption of unique identifiers facilitates the accurate tracking and analysis of business activities, thereby enhancing the quality and reliability of data used for policymaking, regulation, and economic planning. Furthermore, by promoting the use of unique business identifiers, the initiative aims to reduce administrative burdens, eliminate redundancies, and improve the efficiency of government services. This objective is particularly important in the context of globalization, where the ability to identify and link businesses across jurisdictions is critical for effective international trade and cooperation.

II.A.2 Facilitate Access to and Sharing of Administrative Data for SBRs

Facilitating access to and the sharing of administrative data for Statistical Business Registers (SBRs) is another critical objective of the Global Initiative. SBRs rely heavily on the integration of data from various administrative sources, such as tax records, company registries, customs, and employment databases. However, in many countries, access to this data is often restricted by legal, technical, or institutional barriers, limiting the effectiveness of SBRs. By advocating for improved data access and sharing, the initiative seeks to enhance the comprehensiveness and accuracy of business statistics, which are essential for informed decision-making and economic analysis. Additionally, better access to administrative data supports the efficient linking of different data sources, allowing for more robust and integrated SBRs. This, in turn, contributes to a more accurate representation of the business landscape, aiding in the formulation of policies that promote economic growth and development. Also, SBRs could decide to use a global identifier as the overarching identifier to link all the identifiers of the different data sources to.

II.A.3 Create and Maintain Statistical Business Registers

A key objective of the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses is to support countries in the creation and ongoing maintenance of comprehensive and reliable Statistical Business Registers (SBRs). SBRs are foundational tools for producing high-quality business statistics, enabling governments and policymakers to better understand the structure, dynamics, and contributions of the business sector to the economy. By establishing a well-maintained SBR, countries can ensure that data on all registered businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), large corporations, and multinational companies, is up-to-date, exhaustive, and linked across different administrative sources.

The creation of an SBR involves collecting and organizing administrative data from various government bodies. The integration of these datasets allows for a more complete picture of the business environment, ensuring that economic statistics reflect the realities of both domestic and international business operations. This integration also warrants the transformation of the recording of legal entities of businesses in statistical units meeting the requirements of official economic statistics. Moreover, maintaining an accurate and dynamic SBR requires continuous updating of business records, the incorporation of new businesses as they are registered, and the removal of entities that have ceased operations. This ongoing maintenance helps ensure the accuracy of national statistics and provides a reliable basis for policymaking and economic

analysis. Therefore, appropriate legislation has to be enacted along with the adoption of secure operational and technological procedures to ensure the required data exchange and sharing with the national statistical office to create and maintain the SBR for official statistical purposes.

II.A.4 Strengthen Transparency in Business Registration

One of the primary objectives of the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses is to strengthen cross-border transparency in business registration processes across countries. Transparency in business registration is essential for fostering trust and accountability in both the public and private sectors. When businesses are registered transparently, it ensures that information about their existence, ownership, and legal status is readily accessible and reliable. Business registers are almost always public registers; however, the accessibility of data differs (online availability, paywalls etc). This transparency helps to reduce the risks associated with fraudulent activities, such as the creation of shell companies or the concealment of beneficial ownership. Moreover, transparent registration processes enable governments, investors, and other stakeholders to make informed decisions based on accurate and up-to-date information. By standardizing and enhancing the transparency of business registration systems globally, this initiative aims to create a more predictable and secure business environment, which is crucial for economic stability and growth.

II.A.5 Encourage Mapping to Global Unique Identifiers

Another objective of the initiative is to encourage the mapping of national unique business identifiers to global unique identifiers, such as the Global Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) System. This mapping is crucial for ensuring that businesses can be consistently identified across borders, thereby facilitating international trade, investment, and regulatory compliance. The Global LEI System, based on specific ISO standards, provides a standardized approach to identifying legal entities engaged in financial transactions worldwide. By aligning national identifiers with global standards, the initiative aims to create a more interconnected and interoperable global business environment. This not only enhances the ability to monitor and regulate cross-border business activities but also supports the development of global registers that accurately reflect the ownership and legal structures of multinational enterprises. Encouraging the mapping to global unique identifiers is therefore essential for improving the transparency, efficiency, and security of global business operations.

II.B Key Partners

II.B.1 Core Group of UNSD, Statistics Netherlands, Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation (GLEIF), UNCITRAL, and World Bank Group

The success of the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses hinges on the collaboration between the key international organizations of the Core Group, each bringing unique expertise and resources to the table. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) plays a central role in coordinating the initiative, leveraging its experience in guiding global statistical practices and ensuring that the initiative aligns with broader United Nations objectives. UNSD's leadership is crucial for mobilizing global efforts and fostering cooperation among participating countries and organizations. UNSD is also serving as the Secretariat of the United Nations Committee on Business and Trade Statistics (UNCEBTS) mandated by the UN Statistical Commission to provide coordination and guidance for the development of business and trade statistics and foster their integration and harmonization.

Statistics Netherlands, as a leading national statistical office, contributes valuable insights and best practices derived from its extensive experience in managing statistical business registers (SBRs) and integrating administrative data. Their expertise is vital for developing guidelines and providing technical assistance to other countries, particularly in the areas of data collection, processing, and analysis.

The Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation (GLEIF) is another critical partner, managing the Global Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) System. GLEIF's involvement is essential for ensuring that the initiative's efforts to map national unique identifiers to global standards are effective and consistent. Their knowledge of the LEI System, based on ISO standards, helps ensure that the initiative promotes interoperability and standardization across borders.

The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) brings a legal perspective to the initiative. With its extensive experience in developing international trade law standards, UNCITRAL ensures that the initiative's efforts to promote unique business identifiers are underpinned by robust legal frameworks. Their input is crucial for addressing legal barriers to data sharing and for advocating the adoption of legislation that supports the use of unique identifiers in business registration and trade.

The existing members of the core group would also like to invite World Bank to join the initiative as a key partner. The World Bank brings its extensive experience in working with countries to improve their business environments, promote regulatory reform, and foster economic growth. Through its global programs and projects, the World Bank can share its experience in implementing regulatory reform, unique business identifiers and establishing comprehensive Statistical Business Registers (SBRs). Additionally, the World Bank's expertise in private sector development and governance makes it a valuable partner in aligning the initiative with broader efforts to enhance the ease of doing business, improve regulatory environments, and facilitate access to global markets.

II.B.2 International, Regional, and National Organizations

In addition to the core partners, the involvement of various international, regional, and national organizations is essential for the broader implementation and success of the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses. These organizations, which include development banks, trade bodies, (associations of) business registers, and statistical organizations, play a pivotal role in extending the reach of the initiative to different regions and ensuring that its goals are tailored to local contexts.

It is recommended that International organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), could provide critical financial and technical support to countries in need of resources to implement unique business identifiers. Their potential involvement would support the alignment of the initiative with global economic and development agendas, such as poverty reduction, financial inclusion, and sustainable development.

The possible engagement of regional organizations, such as the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), could facilitate the implementation of the initiative at the regional level. These organizations can coordinate efforts among member states, harmonize policies, and promote the adoption of best practices. Their potential involvement would ensure that the initiative is adapted to the specific needs and challenges of different regions, fostering regional cooperation and integration.

Furthermore, international, regional, and national organizations can help raise awareness of the importance of unique business identifiers and advocate for their adoption by national governments. Through their networks and influence, they can mobilize political support, encourage the sharing of knowledge and resources, and promote the initiative's objectives as part of broader efforts to enhance global economic governance and development.

II.C Governance

II.C.1 Role and Purpose of the Core Group

The Core Group of the key partners is responsible for the successful implementation and coordination of the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses (GIUIB). This Group is tasked with providing strategic guidance, technical expertise, and day-to-day management throughout the initiative's lifecycle.

II.C.2 Role and Purpose of the Advisory Group

The Core Group will establish progressively an Advisory Group under the auspices of the UN Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics, as the initiative implements its use cases in countries. The Advisory Group is designed to bring together a diverse set of stakeholders, such as representatives from international organizations, national statistical offices, business registration authorities, and other relevant entities, to ensure that the initiative is informed by a wide range of perspectives and expertise. In particular, the broader advisory membership role is

to provide substantive expertise, to share specific regional and national knowledge, and to promote communication about the global initiative in their institutional environment.

II.C.3 Role of the UNCEBTS

The established by the UN Statistical Commission at its 50th session in March 2019 to provide coordination and guidance for the development of business and trade statistics and foster their integration and harmonization, brings a international statistical governance perspective to the initiative. The input from UNCEBTS is crucial in promoting coordination, integration and complementarity of programmes in business and trade statistics including the area on unique identifiers for businesses undertaking by the international statistical communities and support the reporting the initiative to the UN Statistical Commission.

II.C.4 Mandate and Responsibilities

The mandate of the Core Group in consultation with the Advisory Group includes several key responsibilities. Firstly, the group is responsible for establishing a collaborative platform that fosters cooperation between countries and international organizations, thereby strengthening national business registration systems and their integration with Statistical Business Registers (SBRs). This platform will also serve as a forum for sharing best practices, addressing common challenges, and developing joint strategies to promote the adoption of unique business identifiers.

Additionally, the Core Group in consultation with the Advisory Group is tasked with creating awareness of the importance of unique business identifiers at the national and global levels. This involves advocating for: 1) the importance of establishing unique business identifiers at the national level and 2) the benefits of mapping the national unique identifiers to the global standards, such as the Legal Entity Identifier (LEI), and promoting their integration into national business registration systems. The Advisory Group will also work on identifying and developing pilot projects that demonstrate the benefits of robust business registration systems and the mapping of national identifiers to global standards.

Another critical responsibility of the Core Group in consultation with the Advisory Group is to develop normative standards and implementation strategies that countries can adopt to strengthen their business registration systems. This includes identifying synergies between business registers and civil registration systems, as well as exploring ways to adapt the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda to the context of business registries.

Ultimately, the Core Group in consultation with the Advisory Group is responsible for the implementation of the Global Initiative's strategic stages of uses cases (see below), resulting in the launch of pilot programs in selected countries. These pilots are designed to test the practical integration of unique business identifiers within existing national systems considering the various practical applications of the unique business identifiers in national administrative and statistical systems and gaining insights into overcoming the risks and challenges in implementing the initiative.

II.C.5 Composition

The strategic roadmap is led by the Core Group of the key partner organizations such as the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation (GLEIF), Statistics Netherlands, UNCITRAL, and the World Bank Group.

Progressively, the Core Group will establish the Advisory Group under the auspices of UNCEBTS by inviting members from representatives of important national, regional, and international stakeholders as the need arises for the implementation of the use cases. A diverse membership of the Advisory Group, which should expand gradually in connection with the implementation of the use cases, ensures that the Advisory Group can draw on a wide range of expertise and resources, facilitating a holistic approach to the risks and challenges of implementing unique business identifiers in countries.

The initiative's work will be characterized by continuous engagement with stakeholders, fostering a collaborative environment that supports the initiative's goals of transparency, standardization, and global interoperability in administrative and statistical business registration systems.

II.D Alignment with Global Standards

A central component of the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses is its alignment with established global standards, which is essential for ensuring the interoperability, consistency, and effectiveness of business registration systems worldwide. By aligning with global standards, the initiative aims to facilitate the seamless integration of national business registers into the broader international framework, thereby supporting global trade, regulatory compliance, and economic analysis.

One of the primary global standards that the initiative aligns with is the Global Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) System, which provides a universally recognized method for identifying legal entities engaged in financial transactions. The LEI System, based on ISO Standard 17442, is designed to ensure that entities are uniquely identified across borders, which is crucial for managing financial risk, enhancing regulatory oversight, and reducing the cost of regulatory reporting. By promoting the adoption of LEIs or mapping national unique business identifiers to the LEI System, the initiative supports the creation of a globally interconnected network of business identifiers, enhancing transparency and reducing the risks associated with cross-border transactions. The LEI also makes use of the ISO standards for Entity Legal Forms (ISO 20275) and Official Organizational Roles (ISO 5009).

In addition to the LEI System, the initiative also aligns with other international standards and guidelines, such as those developed by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and the United Nations Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers (SBRs). UNCITRAL's legislative guides emphasize the importance of legal certainty and transparency in business registration, which aligns with the initiative's goals of improving the quality and accessibility of business data. Similarly, the UN Guidelines on SBRs advocate for the use of

unique identifiers to link data from various administrative sources, which is critical for building comprehensive and reliable business registers.

By adhering to these global standards, the initiative not only facilitates better data integration and interoperability but also ensures that the practices and systems implemented by participating countries are in line with international best practices. This alignment is crucial for fostering trust and cooperation among countries, enabling them to participate more fully in the global economy. Furthermore, it provides a consistent framework that can be adapted to the specific needs and contexts of different countries, ensuring that the benefits of unique business identifiers are realized at both the national and international levels.

The initiative should also be able to benefit from the normative and operational guidelines developed for the UN Legal Identity Agenda (UN LIA) by leveraging a proven framework for identity management and apply it to the business context, ensuring robust, inclusive, and internationally recognized business identification systems. For example, the UN Legal Identity Agenda offers guidelines for creating and implementing legal frameworks. Moreover, the GIUIB can benefit from the UN LIA operational practices by adopting strategies for business registration, such as setting up centralized registries, ensuring data security, and creating mechanisms for data validation and updating. Additionally, the operational focus on continuous interagency and international collaboration on the updating of records, a hallmark of civil registration systems, can inform how countries can maintain accurate and current business registers. And finally, just as civil registration systems feed into vital statistics databases, the business registration systems promoted by the GIUIB can be integrated with Statistical Business Registers (SBRs) to provide comprehensive official statistics on the business landscape.

The initiative's commitment to global standards also underscores its role in supporting broader international development goals, such as those outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By enhancing the transparency and efficiency of business registration systems, the initiative contributes to the achievement of targets related to economic growth, industry innovation, and institutional development. This alignment with global standards ensures that the initiative is not only technically robust but also strategically positioned to support long-term global development objectives.

III. Strategic Phases of the Use Cases

III.A Phase 1: Assessment and Outreach

III.A.1 Country Assessment

The first phase of the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses focuses on assessing the current state of business registration systems in participating countries, both administrative and statistical. This assessment is crucial for identifying gaps and opportunities where the initiative can have the most impact. Using the [Maturity Model for Statistical Business Registers](#) (SBRs), countries will be evaluated on various criteria, such as the comprehensiveness of their business registers, the existence and use of unique business identifiers, and the legal and institutional frameworks supporting business registration. This model helps to pinpoint which

countries require enhanced legislation, more robust registration systems, and greater capacity to effectively implement unique identifiers. The results of this assessment will guide the prioritization of countries for targeted support and the development of tailored strategies that address specific national needs.

III.A.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Parallel to the country assessment, the outreach component of this phase involves engaging with relevant international and regional organizations to build a broad coalition of stakeholders. This outreach is essential for securing the cooperation and support needed to drive the initiative forward. Efforts will be made to establish partnerships with national statistical offices, trade bodies, business registries, and other key players who have a vested interest in the success of unique business identifiers. By fostering these relationships, the initiative aims to create a collaborative environment where knowledge, resources, and best practices can be shared. This engagement also helps to raise awareness of the initiative's goals and secure commitments from various stakeholders to participate actively in the project.

III.B Phase 2: Technical Cooperation and Capacity Building

III.B.1 Legislation and Policy Support

The second phase of the initiative focuses on providing technical cooperation and capacity building to help countries strengthen their legislative and policy frameworks. This includes offering guidance on the establishment and implementation of unique business identifiers at the national level, which is critical for the integration of national business registers into global systems. The initiative will work closely with national governments to encourage legislative reforms that align with international standards, such as those set by UNCITRAL and the Global Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) System. These reforms are necessary to create a legal environment that supports the use of unique identifiers and facilitates the linking of business data across different administrative systems. The goal is to ensure that countries have the necessary legal infrastructure to support the widespread adoption and effective use of unique business identifiers.

III.B.2 Training and Development

In addition to legislative support, this phase includes comprehensive training and development programs aimed at building the technical capacity of national agencies responsible for business registration and statistical business registers. Workshops and training sessions will be organized to disseminate best practices and provide hands-on experience in the implementation and management of unique identifiers. These programs will be tailored to the specific needs of each country, ensuring that local agencies are equipped with the skills and knowledge required to successfully integrate unique identifiers into their systems. Capacity-building initiatives will also focus on developing long-term institutional capabilities, enabling countries to sustain these practices independently in the future.

III.C Phase 3: Implementation and Integration

III.C.1 Pilot Programs

The third phase marks the transition from planning to action, with the launch of pilot programs in selected countries. These pilots are designed to test the practical integration of unique business identifiers within existing national systems. Countries selected for these pilots will serve as testing grounds for various strategies and technologies, allowing for the identification of potential challenges and the refinement of approaches before broader implementation. Throughout the pilot phase, close monitoring and evaluation will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives, gather feedback, and make necessary adjustments. This iterative process is crucial for ensuring that the final implementation strategies are both effective and scalable.

III.C.2 Global Mapping and Integration

Alongside the pilot programs, this phase will also explore the global mapping and integration of national unique identifiers with the LEI system. This involves promoting the alignment of national identifiers with global standards to facilitate the creation of a cohesive global network of business identifiers. By linking national systems with the LEI system, countries can contribute to and benefit from global registers that provide comprehensive insights into the legal structures and ownership of multinational enterprises and small businesses. This integration is key to improving the transparency and traceability of businesses across borders, enhancing global trade, and supporting international regulatory frameworks. A unique identifier recognizable worldwide would assist in creating a safe and reliable “connection” between a business, and all of the information that relates to it, thus making it possible for the small business to obtain visibility in bigger markets.

III.D Phase 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

III.D.1 Continuous Monitoring

The final phase of the initiative involves the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process across participating countries. Continuous monitoring is essential for tracking progress against predefined indicators and benchmarks, which will be developed to assess the effectiveness and impact of the initiative. Regular reporting mechanisms will be established to ensure that stakeholders are kept informed about the status of implementation in different countries. This transparency helps maintain momentum and allows for timely interventions if any issues arise.

III.D.2 Evaluation and Feedback

In addition to continuous monitoring, this phase includes structured evaluation and feedback processes designed to capture lessons learned and gather input from all stakeholders. Periodic reviews will be conducted to assess the overall success of the initiative, identify areas for

improvement, and ensure that the roadmap remains relevant and responsive to evolving needs. Feedback sessions with participating countries, international organizations, and other stakeholders will be crucial for refining strategies, addressing challenges, and adapting the initiative to changing circumstances. This iterative evaluation process ensures that the initiative remains dynamic and effective in achieving its long-term goals of improving business registration systems and fostering global economic cooperation.

IV. Use Cases and Practical Applications

IV.A Cross-Border Trade

One of the most significant use cases for unique business identifiers is in facilitating cross-border trade. In an increasingly interconnected global economy, businesses often operate across multiple countries, engaging in complex supply chains and international transactions. Unique business identifiers play a crucial role in ensuring that these businesses can be accurately and consistently identified across different jurisdictions. This is particularly important for streamlining customs procedures, reducing delays, and minimizing the risks associated with fraud and misrepresentation in international trade. Moreover, the unique identification of businesses is also used by the European Commission (Eurostat) to establish the EuroGroups Register (EGR). The OECD and United Nations Statistics Division have together established the Multinational Enterprise Information Platform (the former Global Group Register (GGR)). These regional and global registers collect and maintain information on the structure and activities of multi-national enterprises (MNEs) to facilitate cooperation between member states in improving the quality of cross-border statistics and policy making on MNEs .

By implementing a globally recognized system of unique identifiers, such as the Global Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) System, businesses can be traced and verified more efficiently, enabling smoother and more secure cross-border transactions. This traceability and verification based on unique identifiers will also benefit the payment transactions between businesses themselves because the unique identifier allows for access to additional information in national business registries linked to the unique identifier such as the name of the business owners, place of registration, ownership structure, etc. This enhances the transparency and trustworthiness of international trade, ultimately contributing to the growth of global commerce and the reduction of trade barriers.

IV.B Domestic Trade and Digitalization

In the context of domestic trade, the integration of unique business identifiers is vital for supporting digital trade initiatives and modernizing business operations. As countries increasingly shift towards digital economies, the need for reliable and interoperable business identifiers becomes more pronounced. Unique identifiers help ensure that businesses are consistently recognized across borders, across various digital platforms, including e-commerce sites, digital marketplaces, and online regulatory systems. This integration not only streamlines

business processes but also enhances the accuracy of data management and reporting. By adopting unique identifiers, businesses can more easily participate in digital trade, access new markets, and engage in innovative business models. Furthermore, governments can leverage these unified identifiers in the various administrative records to improve the delivery of public services, such as tax collection and business registration, thereby fostering a more efficient and inclusive digital economy.

IV.C Regulatory Compliance

Regulatory compliance is another critical area where unique business identifiers provide significant benefits. In today's globalized economy, businesses must navigate a complex landscape of international standards and regulations, ranging from financial reporting requirements to anti-money laundering (AML) laws. Unique business identifiers enable regulators to more effectively monitor and enforce compliance with these standards by providing a consistent and reliable means of identifying businesses across different jurisdictions. For instance, the use of the LEI System allows regulators to trace the ownership structures and financial transactions of multinational enterprises, thereby reducing the risk of regulatory breaches and enhancing the overall integrity of the financial system. Additionally, unique identifiers simplify the process of regulatory reporting for businesses, reducing administrative burdens and ensuring that they meet their legal obligations in a timely and accurate manner. This not only helps protect the global financial system but also promotes fair competition and a level playing field for businesses worldwide.

V. Risks and Challenges

V.A Data Privacy and Security

One of the primary risks associated with the implementation of unique business identifiers is the concern surrounding data privacy and security. As businesses increasingly operate in a digital environment, the sharing and usage of business data across different platforms and jurisdictions raise significant privacy concerns. Stakeholders worry that the centralized collection and management of business identifiers could expose sensitive information, making it vulnerable to unauthorized access, data breaches, or misuse. To address these concerns, it is crucial to establish robust data protection frameworks that govern the personal information collected, stored, shared, and used in business registries, at the same time realizing that business registers mainly contain information on companies and businesses as public information. This involves implementing strong encryption standards, secure data transmission protocols, and stringent access controls. Additionally, clear guidelines on data ownership and consent must be established to ensure that businesses have control over their information and that their data is used in a manner consistent with legal and ethical standards. By addressing these privacy and security concerns, the initiative can build trust among stakeholders and encourage broader adoption of unique business identifiers.

V.B Technical and Operational Challenges

The integration of unique business identifiers into existing national and global systems presents several technical and operational challenges. One of the key challenges is the need to harmonize disparate systems that may use different formats, standards, and technologies for business registration and identification. This lack of uniformity can lead to technical difficulties in linking data across systems and ensuring that unique identifiers are consistently applied and recognized. Additionally, countries with less advanced digital infrastructure may face significant challenges in upgrading their systems to support the implementation of unique identifiers. To mitigate these issues, it is essential to invest in the development of interoperable technologies and standards that facilitate seamless data integration across different platforms. This includes providing technical support and capacity-building initiatives for countries that require assistance in modernizing their systems. Furthermore, pilot programs can be used to test the integration of unique identifiers in controlled environments, allowing for the identification and resolution of technical issues before full-scale implementation.

V.C Political and Legislative Barriers

The successful implementation of unique business identifiers also faces potential political and legislative barriers. In some countries, there may be resistance from various stakeholders who perceive the initiative as a threat to their autonomy or as an unnecessary imposition of international standards. This resistance can manifest in delays or opposition to the legislative reforms needed to establish and enforce the use of unique identifiers. Additionally, the process of passing new legislation can be complex and time-consuming, particularly in countries with fragmented or unstable political environments. To overcome these challenges, it is important to engage in proactive advocacy and stakeholder engagement. This involves working closely with policymakers, business leaders, and other influential groups to build a consensus around the benefits of unique business identifiers. Demonstrating the tangible advantages, such as improved transparency, enhanced regulatory compliance, and economic growth, can help to garner the necessary political support. Moreover, providing technical assistance and sharing best practices from countries that have successfully implemented similar reforms can help to ease the legislative process and address concerns from resistant stakeholders.

VI. 6. Conclusion and Next Steps

VI.A Summary of Key Actions

The strategic roadmap for the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses outlines a comprehensive approach to improving administrative and statistical business registration systems worldwide. The initiative begins with a thorough assessment of current systems, identifying countries in need of enhanced legislation and technical support. It then moves into outreach, engaging with international and regional organizations, and establishing partnerships to build a broad coalition of stakeholders. Following this, the roadmap details a phase of technical cooperation and capacity building, providing critical guidance on legislation, policy reform, and best practices for implementing unique business identifiers. The third phase focuses on the

practical application of these identifiers through pilot programs and the integration of national identifiers with global systems like the LEI. Finally, the roadmap emphasizes continuous monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that the initiative remains dynamic and responsive to evolving challenges and opportunities. By adhering to these strategic actions, the initiative aims to foster a global environment where businesses are transparently and uniquely identified, facilitating smoother trade, enhanced regulatory compliance, and overall economic growth.

VI.B Call to Action

For the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses to achieve its full potential, active participation and commitment from countries around the world are essential. Governments are encouraged to recognize the long-term benefits of adopting unique business identifiers, not only for their own domestic economic development but also for their integration into the global economy. This initiative provides an opportunity for countries to modernize their business registration systems, align with international standards, and enhance their ability to participate in global trade. By committing to the initiative, countries can position themselves as leaders in transparency and innovation, improving their business environments and attracting more investment. It is crucial that national governments, in collaboration with their statistical offices and business registries, take proactive steps to join the initiative, allocate the necessary resources, and engage in the proposed pilot programs. The collective effort of participating countries will be instrumental in achieving the initiative's goals, making a significant contribution to global economic stability and growth.

VI.C Timeline

The roadmap for the Global Initiative on Unique Identifiers for Businesses is structured around a clear and realistic timeline, designed to ensure steady progress and tangible results. Depending on the number of pilot countries and funding secured where the different use cases are being implemented, the initiative is expected to unfold over several years, with each phase building on the achievements of the previous one. The first phase, Assessment and Outreach, is anticipated to take place over the initial six to twelve months, during which time countries will be assessed, and key stakeholders engaged. The second phase, Technical Cooperation and Capacity Building, will span the next twelve to eighteen months, focusing on the development and implementation of legislative reforms, as well as the training of national agencies. The third phase, Implementation and Integration, is projected to begin in the third year, with pilot programs being launched and evaluated over a period of twelve to twenty-four months. During this time, efforts to integrate national identifiers with global systems will also be intensified. The final phase, Monitoring and Evaluation, will be ongoing, with continuous monitoring starting in the fourth year and regular evaluations conducted annually thereafter. This phased approach ensures that the initiative progresses in a structured manner, allowing for adjustments and refinements as necessary, while maintaining momentum towards the ultimate goal of establishing a globally harmonized system

of unique business identifiers.

