Statistical Commission

Background document

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Item 3a of the provisional agenda

"Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and the "Report of the High Level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"

Update on the work of the High Level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Prepared by the High Level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

This document presents a brief summary of preparations for the UN World Data Forum 2018 to be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates from 22 to 24 October 2018, and brief updates on other activities of the HLG related to the Survey on capacity development needs conducted jointly with Paris21.

Two separate background papers are also available to this Commission:
"Does the United Nations need a Chief Statistician?", Report by the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-building; and "Development of a financing/funding mechanism for statistical capacity building of national statistical systems to support evidence-based follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda", Report by Joint Subgroup of the High-level group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Inter-agency and expert group on SDG indicators.

1. UN World Data Forum 2018

Preparations for the UN World Data Forum 2018 are well underway. The Programme Committee[1] began its work in August 2017, and hold virtual meetings to discuss the preparations for the Forum. One of the first tasks of the Committee was to revise the thematic areas of the UN World Data Forum to reflect the lessons learned from the first UNWDF held in 2017 in South Africa (Annex 1). The Committee has also developed concept notes for opening and closing of the high level segments of the Forum. Invitations have been issued to high level speakers.

The development of the programmatic aspects for the UNWDF 2018 are also in progress. For the UNWDF 2018, the programme is being developed through a call for session proposals which was carried out between 1 November 2017 and 3 February 2018. A total of 487 submissions were received. The Programme Committee is now working on the review of the submissions, and development of the substantive programme. The programme should be released on the Forum's website[2] by mid-April.

Other activities of the Programme Committee center around a communication campaign, which is lead by the Secretariat. It includes the development of a blog post series to generate interest in the Forum. The Committee has also discussed the purpose of the Forum to bridge the statistical and political spheres. The Committee also emphasizes the convening power of the UN to draw a wide audience interested in data and statistics.

2. Joint survey on capacity development needs

In late 2017, a survey on capacity development and immediate needs was jointly undertaken by the High-level Group and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21). The survey aims to identify immediate capacity development needs, among other aspects of capacity development. As of 25 January 2018, 75 responses have been received.

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[1] https://undataforum.org/WorldDataForum/partners/
[2] https://undataforum.org/WorldDataForum/

The Background document prepared by the Joint subgroup of the HLG/IAEG contains some preliminary analysis on of the survey. Additional preliminary findings, prepared by PARIS21 are available at http://www.paris21.org/capacity-development-40, point to a common challenge for countries in SDG implementation. Indeed, 24% of countries identified indicators in SDG2 as the top priority for capacity development. Countries identify "Improving coordination with data providers in the NSS" as the main priority for the NSO (70%), followed by strengthening human resource management (67%). Integrating new data sources and establishing partnerships with the private sector are also important. Improving individual competencies for staff is also relevant for most NSOs. Management skills are crucial for improving planning and reporting systems between producers of official statistics, as well as within the NSO itself. Respondents reported the need of cultivating leadership and strategic planning in their employees.

In terms of implementation, almost 50% of NSOs identify the lack of skilled staff as an obstacle to the success of capacity development programmes. Planning is also irregular; almost a one-quarter of countries indicated having prioritisation difficulties at the time of selecting capacity programmes. On financing, the composition of funds for capacity building differs considerably across regions; with 65% of training budget in African coming from external sources.

While these results are preliminary, a more detailed analysis will provide a more precise picture the elements that make a programme successful. These results will help strengthen technical cooperation efforts and contribute to a new approach to statistical capacity development.

3. Implementation notes for the Cape Town Global Action Plan

In Annex II of the Commission paper (E/CN.3/2018/4), the outline for the "notes on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan " is included. The notes are viewed as a collection of experiences and examples of implementation of various aspects of the Cape Town Global Action Plan. In late March 2018, an open consultation will be carried out to collect experiences from countries on national practices in the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan. Based on this, the "notes on implementation" will be fully developed into an outcome document to be presented at the UN World Data Forum 2018.

Annex 1. Thematic areas of the UN World Data Forum 2018

The Programme of the UN World Data Forum is organized around six main thematic areas covering a wide range of topics. Throughout the forum, participants will have opportunities to interact in plenary sessions, break-out spaces, innovation labs, knowledge sharing spaces, exhibits and virtual forums.

- ### TA 1. New approaches to capacity development for better data

Supporting broad data ecosystems in countries

Thematic area 1 covers new approaches to capacity development to address the changing needs of data producers and data users in the context of new interdependencies and collaboration frameworks across data ecosystems. Sessions under Thematic Area 1 will focus on integrating statistical capacity building into strategic national planning; developing new skills within NSOs and in other government and non government agencies to fully harness the power of new data sources; developing new ways to measure outcomes and impacts; leveraging south-south cooperation and peer learning; fostering partnerships between public and private sectors; and broadening the donor base and creating financial instruments to support systems for SDG measurement.

- ### TA 2. Innovations and synergies across data ecosystems

Bringing data sources together and creating an enabling environment for the integration and use of non-traditional data sources

Thematic area 2 addresses innovations and synergies across different data communities by creating an enabling environment for the integration and use of new and traditional sources of data. The sessions under thematic area 2 will also explore how to champion the changing role of NSO's as they move from data producers to service providers; to nurture collaboration between NSOs and non-traditional producers of data; to integrate geospatial information and statistics; and to leverage opportunities and mitigate risks associated with use of big data and other new data sources. Sessions can also address data-driven algorithms for improved service delivery, uses of machine learning and predictive technology.

- ### TA 3. Leaving no one behind

Generating and leveraging data and statistics to ensure visibility and voice for everyone

Thematic area 3 focuses on making the most vulnerable visible through data. Sessions under thematic area 3 will center around improving availability, quality and understanding of data on specific groups; addressing issues related to capturing particularly vulnerable groups in data gathering through traditional and innovative approaches; addressing challenges in providing access to microdata to ensure that small groups are not left behind, while guaranteeing privacy and confidentiality; producing and using data effectively at city and local levels; and integrating geographical units of analysis (e.g., cities, human settlements, urban/rural areas) into data production and dissemination processes.

- ### TA 4. Understanding the world through data

Making data and statistics relevant and usable to all users; increasing data and statistical literacy and data communication; strengthening the use of data in journalism

Thematic area 4 covers data and statistical literacy and the importance of a proper use of data and statistics to understand the world around us. The sessions will explore how to bring quality data to decision makers; how to optimize the communication of data, tailor data communication strategies to different user groups, and how to empower citizens to use data in order to improve their own lives. The sessions will also aim to provide contextual information that helps make sense of today's abundance of data by strengthening data and statistical literacy and promoting best practices in data in journalism.

- **TA 5. Building trust in data and statistics**

Applying data principles and governance to new and existing data sources and implementing open data principles and practices

Trust in data and statistics is paramount to the production and use of data. Thematic area 5 focuses on building trust in data and statistics by applying ethical and data principles, governance and innovative technological solutions for new and existing data sources and implementing open data principles and practices. The sessions will discuss how data principles and good governance are essential in building trust in data and statistics; explore ways to strengthen the coordinating role of National Statistical Offices; discuss how to pragmatically embrace open data principles and adopt data standards in tandem with technology and user needs; draw attention to data privacy and security in a changing data ecosystem; identify areas where data principles and standards need to be expanded, particularly in relation to non-traditional sources data; and promote multi-stakeholder partnerships to develop inclusive standards and governance frameworks.

- **TA 6. How far have we come?**

A look at the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan; Addressing emerging challenges of fully harnessing the power of data to improve people's lives

Thematic area 6 is about taking stock of how far we have progressed, and taking practical steps towards fulfilling the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data. The sessions under this thematic area will also identify emerging challenges that need to be addressed by the global data community, focusing on issues such as: prioritizing the needs of developing countries in vulnerable situations; mobilizing strategic investments in modernization of National Statistical Systems; addressing all aspects of statistical capacity building; and fostering cooperation and coordination across stakeholder groups.