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Items for discussion and decision: big data**Report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics****Note by the Secretary-General**

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2020/211 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics. Responding to Statistical Commission decision 51/122, the report presents the developments of the United Nations Global Platform and its Regional Hub; and addresses a new funding model for the maintenance of the platform. The report also describes the achievements of the various task teams with their release of new handbooks, training workshops and collaborative projects on new data solutions. Further, the report lists priorities for the 2021 work program regarding the global training program and new projects on the global platform, and proposes a name change of the Global Working Group. Finally, the Commission is invited to comment on several points for discussion regarding promotion of the use of the UN Global Platform and the Regional Hubs for training and project activities, endorsement of the funding model and support for the global training program.

* E/CN.3/2021/1.

I. Introduction

1. In Decision 51/122 at its session in 2020, the Commission endorsed the United Nations Global Platform (UNGP) as a collaborative environment for data innovation by the global statistical community and a broad spectrum of stakeholder communities. The Commission also endorsed the governance structure and business model of the platform under the overall auspices of the Commission, while requesting further work on the funding aspects and on the coordination of activities of the regional hubs with those of existing initiatives at the regional level. In this regard, the Commission also urged the statistical community and its partners to mobilize resources and support for the UNGP and related training activities.

2. During 2020, the UN Global Working Group (GWG) on Big Data for official statistics addressed¹ the issues raised by the Commission and the measures taken are reflected in this report. Section II describes the organization of work of the GWG, while Section III reports on the progress made by the GWG task teams. The developments of UNGP, its regional hubs and the collaboration with the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data are described in Section IV, and the funding model of UNGP is explained in Section V. Section VI highlights the GWG events over the last year. Sections VII, VIII and IX describe the priorities for the 2021 work program, the name change of the GWG and the points for discussion, respectively.

II. Organization of work

3. Last year's report² described the organization of work of the GWG in sections II and V. Some further adjustments were made in 2020. The GWG is now led by only one Chair (from South Africa) and two vice-Chairs (from Denmark and UK). The vice-Chair from Denmark is coordinating the work of the task teams and the vice-Chair from UK is overseeing the UN Global Platform and the Regional Hubs. The Chair represents the GWG in all official functions, such as at the Statistical Commission, and leads the Advisory Board. An overview of the various bodies under the GWG is given on the GWG website³, which was upgraded in November 2020.

4. The coordination of the work of the task teams consists of harmonizing the approaches of acquisition of data, advancing methods library, developing e-learning courses and other training materials. It further consists of bringing together all the task teams' work on SDGs through the task team on Big Data and SDGs, and of linking the task teams on common topics, such as CO2 emissions by maritime transport, which is a topic for the Automated Identification System (AIS) task team as well for the task team on Earth Observations (EO). The task team on training, competencies and capacity development has a central role in coordinating the overall training program in the use of Big Data and data science. The Scientific Board assumes an oversight role over the quality of the outputs produced by each of the task teams.

5. In general, global data sets, methods, applications and services will reside on the UN Global Platform. Collaborative projects are expected to be built on the platform and on-line training activities would be globally accessed from the platform. However, for the activities taking place at the Regional Hubs decisions may have to be made on hosting certain projects, data, services, methods or training materials locally. The Technical Delivery Board will advise on those coordination issues and on the technical connections between the global platform and the four regional hubs. It also assures the quality and coherence of the platform's IT architecture and within that framework approves the project proposals in

¹ The full membership of the GWG met in November 2020, see <https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/events/2020/gwg-annual-meeting/>

² E/CN.3/2020/24

³ See <https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/about/membership.cshtml>

their various stages of development. The Advisory Board assumes the managerial oversight of the UN Global Platform and its connections with the Regional Hubs.

III. Task Teams of the global working group

6. The GWG delivers most of its work through task teams, which develop methods, prepare handbooks, conduct capacity building activities, acquire data, make algorithms available in the methods service, and demonstrate the active use of the data and services available on the UN Global Platform. The GWG has active task teams on the use of satellite imagery data, mobile phone data, scanner data, and AIS (vessel tracking) data, on Big Data and the SDGs, on privacy preserving techniques, and on training, skills and capacity building. Progress of each of these task teams is reported in this section. A more detailed overview of their work is given in the background document on the Commission website.

7. Some new task teams are starting their work, notably a task team on the Rural Access Index and SDG 9.1.1, which is led by the World Bank, and a task team on the acquisition of global private sector data, which was proposed and approved at the GWG plenary meeting in November 2020. This team will approach global companies to negotiate access to their global data sources under global arrangements and will work closely with the co-investment use case on data acquisition, exchange and sharing recommended by the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics and the recommended UN network of economic statistician.

8. **The task team on Earth Observations** researches and practices methods to minimize the use of in-situ (survey and census) data and maximize the use of EO data for the production of agricultural crop statistics while improving the overall quality and reducing the cost. It further develops a three-stage training curriculum from introductory remote sensing knowledge to advanced courses with the overall goal to teach the fundamentals of using satellite imagery and provide programming skills with relevant use cases.

9. Since April 2020, FAO and UNSD have collaborated on a joint project on the UN Global Platform. Specifically, they use the Sen2Agri toolbox (developed by the European Space Agency) which allows for EO data processing and provides a user-friendly graphic interface for the classification of EO data into crop type maps. The project seeks to build in-country capacity in Senegal and Uganda in the operational use of this tool to produce official crop statistics. The World Bank has recently joined the task team adding to the toolbox of methods for agriculture statistics under the 50 x 2030 initiative, in particular for Malawi.

10. In October 2020, the UN Committee of Experts on Food Security, Agricultural and Rural Statistics (UN-CEAG) and the UN GWG task team on EO officially agreed to join forces in the use of earth observation for land cover mapping and agriculture statistics. Under this arrangement, the joint task team, chaired by Statistics Canada, will develop and implement a programme of work that would be monitored by both Experts groups and be reported on separately to the UN Statistical Commission.

11. In 2019, **the task team on mobile phone data** created 6 subgroups to develop guidelines and methodologies on the use of mobile phone data for disaster and displacement statistics, dynamic population mapping, information society statistics, migration statistics, tourism statistics, and for transportation and commuting statistics. The final draft of these guidelines is expected by early 2021. Further plans for 2021 are focused on developing e-learning and other training materials, and on conducting training workshops on the use of mobile phone data with the regional hubs and some national statistical offices (Indonesia and Oman).

12. **The task team on scanner data** was relaunched in Summer 2020 with the aim of building on the success of the first phase from May 2017 to April 2019. The second phase is planned to run from July 2020 to June 2022 and is chaired by UK ONS. The 2- year program will advance the work on price index

methods in the use of scanner data for price index calculations. This component will expand the current offering of methods and documentation relating to the calculation of price indices on the UN Global Platform. In addition, the second component of the program will have a focus on the development of classification methods at different level of complexity. This second component will – develop guidance on the process for classifying scanner data for price index compilation. The third component of the program covers trusted learning. This third component will- expand existing training material and produce a certified training course on using scanner data for the production of consumer price indices.

13. **The task team on AIS data** advances a program on the use of real time automated identification system (AIS) data on the location, speed, and status of ships for official statistics. The first component of the program is developing algorithms and methods for measuring freight transportation, traffic within harbours, international trade, fishery and CO2 emissions. This component further includes estimating port calls for 1200 ports on a weekly basis and exploring the integration of AIS with other datasets, such as customs data, shipping manifests or ship registers, to further improve the quality and scope of those estimations. The second component of the program pertains to the development of a multi-stage training curriculum on the use of AIS data from introductory knowledge to advanced courses with the overall goal to teach the fundamentals of using AIS data and provide programming skills with relevant use cases.

14. Following the release of the live AIS Handbook⁴ in February 2020, the task team organized a Hackathon⁵ with the use of AIS data in September 2020. The two winning teams had built applications on emissions of maritime transport by geographical location worldwide and on marine traffic going into the Panama Canal, respectively. A second Hackathon is planned for 2021. Plans for next year also include releasing an e-learning course and other training opportunities.

15. Given the large size of the AIS datasets, this work all taking place on the UN Global Platform. Because the increasing number of users and usage imply an increasing cost of platform services, further optimization of the AIS operations on the platform is planned for 2021.

16. **The task team on Big Data for SDGs** aims to provide Big Data tools for a concrete monitoring of SDG indicators. It conducted a survey to identify which of the 169 SDG targets could use Big Data. In 2021, it will produce a repository of ongoing Big Data activities that can relate to the use of Big Data for the SDG within the scope of the GWG. It will also initiate at least two projects focusing on specific SDG indicators, which will be supported by workshops or similar events.

17. **The task team on privacy preserving techniques** focuses on approaches to preserve privacy in the statistical analysis of sensitive data and presents examples of use cases where such methods may apply. The methods enable protecting privacy of data while it is being processed rather than while it is at rest on a system or in transit between systems. The guidance materials are intended for use by statisticians and data scientists, data curators and architects, IT specialists, and security and information assurance specialists; so cryptographic technical details of the technologies are avoided.

18. After releasing a first handbook in 2019, the task team has started on a second handbook, which will link more to use cases in the statistical community. It is also working on the legal aspects of using these techniques as well as on learning materials for a training programme to increase awareness and help develop skills in the statistical community. E-learning courses are expected to be released in early 2021 in collaboration with academia and the open-source community.

⁴ See <https://unstats.un.org/wiki/display/AIS/AIS+Handbook+Outline>

⁵ See <https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/events/2020/ais-hackathon/index.cshtml>

19. **The task team on training, competencies and capacity development** proposes solutions to help build capacity for institutions that are embracing, or consider embracing, the use of Big Data in official statistics. The work includes projects to understand where national statistical offices (NSOs) currently are on their Big Data journeys and what the development needs are. The aim is to ensure that NSOs around the world are increasingly equipped to work effectively with non-traditional data to produce high-quality statistics. The task team also provides guidance to the other GWG task teams on common approaches to the development of training courses.

20. After delivering the Competency Framework⁶, a UN Big Data Maturity Matrix has been developed, which will enable NSOs to undertake a self-assessment of their current level of maturity working with Big Data. In this self-assessment, NSOs can identify their stage of development – and compare it to their set goals – in various dimensions of the use of Big Data, such as legal framework, IT infrastructure, human resources and Big Data applications in the production of statistics. The Version 1.0 of the Maturity matrix has been launched⁷. Work on developing a web-based application of the matrix, which will also offer guidance to bridge gaps, is ongoing.

21. In addition to guidance for other task teams in the development of training courses, guidance will be provided on using a Learning Management System (LMS) on the UN Global Platform. The LMS will be made available to all task teams for hosting their online training programmes. UN Global Platform is also considered for the storage of training products, with links to NSO case studies and big data applications.

IV. UN Global Platform and the Regional Hubs

22. The idea of a collaborative environment for use of Big Data was developed in Bogota in November 2017, which was followed by the implementation of the UN Global Platform (UNGP) by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) of the UK in the period 2018 to 2020. On 1 June 2020, ONS handed over the beta version of the platform to the UN community with the objective to scale it for global use.

A. Projects on the UN Global Platform

23. The UNGP is built around the technical and institutional architecture of global data sources, cloud-based infrastructure and services, and a community of experts which is driving the substantive and technical innovation. The purpose of UNGP is that the global statistical community can work collaboratively on those data sources and technology infrastructure in projects. The following projects (either in pilot, proof of concept and production phase depending on their level of maturity) are currently active on UNGP:

- Project of the EO task team building a data pipeline with the Sen2Agri toolbox using satellite data to estimate agricultural crop statistics; the project is in the pilot phase with dating being processed for Senegal.
- Project of the EO task team building an IT system for the ARIES modelling tool to measure ecosystem services; this project is in the proof of concept phase.
- Project of the AIS task team for estimating port calls for 1200 ports on a weekly basis to measure international trade activity; this project is in production⁸.

⁶ https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/task-teams/training/UNGWG_Competency_Framework.pdf

⁷ See <https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/task-teams/training/Big%20Data%20Maturity%20Matrix%20v1.0.pdf>

⁸ See <https://marketplace.officialstatistics.org/ttt-dashboards>

- Project of UK on processing of AIS data for the Faster Economic Indicators weekly outputs; this project is in production⁹
- Project of UNSD, OECD and UNESCAP implementing the .STAT technology on the UN Global Platform for hosting the national database of Cambodia; this project is in production¹⁰.
- Project of the task team on Scanner data to build a data pipeline on the platform using methods and algorithms developed by this team for the production of price indexes; this project is in proof of concept phase.
- Project of UNSD and OECD to maintain on UNGP a graph database for a global groups' register covering the top 500 multi-national enterprises; this project is in its proof of concept phase.

More projects will be on-boarded, including a project deploying the Rural Access Index tool¹¹ for testing against national data sources and a project to develop a “Data as a Service” functionality.

B. Technical Delivery Board

24. The Technical Delivery Board (TDB) of the UN Global Platform, chaired by Canada, provides strategic direction and oversight regarding the development of UNGP and its relation to the Regional Hubs. TDB reviews and approves proposals of the three project phases from proof of concept to pilot to production. Several projects and the phase, in which they are, have been described above. Approval of projects depends on the feasibility, the available substantive and technical support, the roadmap and the estimated cost of services consumed on the platform. TDB encourages the task teams and GWG members to put forward further project proposals accompanied with indications on how the project will be supported both with human and financial resources.

25. TDB wants to increase its interaction with task teams through more regular meetings with the task team leads. Those meetings will help to better explain the potential of UNGP and its services, and how UNGP can help with task team activities. UNGP provides an important sandbox for exploration, with low barriers to entry. The platform model of UNGP implies that the value of UNGP increases exponentially with the level of participation, contribution and expert networking. The key values of UNGP are (a) its network of experts; (b) a ready-built platform that manages collaboration, learnings, projects, data, services and algorithms; and (c) the quality focus of NSOs on coherence, interpretability and repeatability. UNGP presents opportunities for NSOs to complement and enhance their innovation activities, which may be “trapped” by internal provisioning and limits. These are the differentiators from other data platforms.

C. Global Partnership for Sustainable Development data

26. The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data¹² (GPSDD) is an initiative of the United Nations Foundation¹³. GPSDD wants to actively achieve better data for better decisions and better lives by, among others, forging collective action by driving global collaboration to improve the production and use of data in critical areas; communicating the value of investing in data and of multi-stakeholder collaborations on data; bringing together multiple data communities at global and national level to spur innovation and collaboration; and by helping ensure the interoperability of technology platforms for assembling, accessing, and using data.

⁹ See <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/datasets/weeklyshippingindicators>

¹⁰ See <http://camstat.nis.gov.kh/?locale=en&start=0>

¹¹ See <https://rai.azavea.com/>

¹² See <http://www.data4sdgs.org/whatwedo>

¹³ See <https://unfoundation.org/what-we-do/initiatives/> for more details

27. As is evident from the above, GWG and GPSDD are very well aligned in their objectives, and collaboration on the UN Global Platform fits with all the aspirations. UNSD and GPSDD have taken concrete steps in the advancing their collaboration in the management of the UN Global Platform. GPSDD has agreed to manage the contracts with data and service providers and evaluates the user needs on UNGP. UNSD and GPSDD have hired a consultant to review the UNGP with respect to user needs, user friendliness and other improvements with assessment report to be drafted by the end of 2020.

D. Regional Hubs in support of the UN Global Platform

28. To facilitate in-person training and project activities using the UN Global Platform, three regional hubs have been established in 2018, namely in China, Rwanda and UAE. A fourth regional hub is being established in Brazil with full support of the National Institute of Brazil for Geography and Statistics (IBGE). UNSD and IBGE are finalizing an institutional agreement for this purpose. These regional hubs will bring the community of official statisticians together at regional level to work on projects using Big Data and data science for the estimation of statistics and SDG indicators and to conduct corresponding training and capability-building activities.

29. The regional hub in China has its own office space in Hangzhou, is fully equipped and fully staffed. The basic budget for the hub is in place and has been approved by the Chinese government. An opening and signing ceremony of the regional hub was run as a virtual event in early December 2020 attended by the Under Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Commissioner of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of China. Details of the ceremony and the accompanying international big data seminar are on the regional hub website¹⁴. At this occasion, NBS China extended an invitation to all members of the GWG to visit the regional hub in Hangzhou, China, once the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

30. The regional hub for Africa is hosted in Kigali at the Data Science Campus and the training center of the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), with additional significant support and guidance provided by UNECA. The NISR has secured the budget and the technical infrastructure. The government approved the creation of a separate division in NISR, of which the positions are expected to be filled by January 2021. ONS, UK has partnered with NISR in developing the Data Science Campus in Kigali. In 2021, the regional hub plans to organize workshops with UNECA and UNSD, and wants to share real cases and projects, for example on the analytics of digital payments and on the use of earth observations for agriculture statistics.

31. The regional hub in UAE is managed by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Center, which is now part of the Cabinet office of UAE. The first phase for the hub is increasing awareness of the use of Big Data in the region. This will be done in collaboration with regional organizations (GCC-STAT and UNESCWA) by organizing joint training workshops and joint webinars. The regional hub in UAE would like to specialize in certain fields, for example, in finance statistics in a project with Master Card. The hub will reach out to other communities for collaboration on projects, especially other government entities, universities and the younger population in general.

V. The community model as a funding strategy for the UN Global Platform

¹⁴ See <https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/regional-hubs.cshtml#china>

32. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) of the UK invested significantly in the creation of the UN Global Platform (UNGP) in the period 2018-2020. On 1 June 2020, ONS, UK officially handed over the UNGP to the UN community. At that moment, the sustainability of UNGP had become a collective responsibility of the global statistical community. The financial and technical support for the maintenance of UNGP now need to be delivered by the community. The community model is based on three pillars: in-kind contribution, base funding for the Cloud infrastructure and core services and project funding for additional data and services. The growth of the platform comes from growth of in-kind participation and of increase in project funding.

33. A joint letter signed by the Chief Statisticians of South Africa, Denmark, and the UK, and by the Director of the UN Statistics Division was sent to all members of the global statistical community in April 2020 inquiring about possible contributions, financially or in-kind, to the UN Global Platform. In total, 44 institutes (40 countries and 4 agencies) responded. About 50% of the institutes were willing to contribute technical staff, and about 45% were interested to contribute in-kind to project and training activities. Only 25% indicated that they could contribute financially to specific activities. In some comments it was noted that, whereas the COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to show the benefits of new data solutions, it also reduced the available funds of the institutes.

34. As mentioned UNGP is actively being used for projects with a few hundred experts providing in-kind contributions. More IT experts are needed to effectively support the increasing number of projects. Another weakness – at this moment – is the lack of sustained funding to pay for the necessary services of UNGP. The core services, of UNGP are the Cloud services and some support services, including user access, document and management services. At current usage this amounts to about \$300,000 per year. This is called the base funding of UNGP. Additional data and service, such as for the AIS data projects, currently amount to another \$300,000 on a yearly basis. This part is called the project funding, and more projects will require more funds. The Chinese government helped substantially for the period of June to December 2020 by providing \$400,000 to support the platform.

35. At its plenary meeting in November 2020, the GWG supported the community model and agreed to create a Finance Committee to develop a strategic approach to fund-raising for the UN Global Platform.

36. The Friends of the Chair (FOC) group on Economic Statistics proposes in its report to the UN Statistical Commission various key activities including collaborative actions on co-investment and co-development for global statistical infrastructure, operations, and data solutions. This could be achieved through common technological solutions for the integration of geospatial data, the use of data science, the use of nowcasting techniques, and the production of high frequency statistics. The FOC recommends using the UNGP for this purpose. This proposal by the FOC aligns very well with GWG proposal of co-funding in the community model for UNGP.

VI. Events organized by the GWG

A. 6th International Conference on Big Data for Official Statistics, 31 August – 2 September 2020, virtual

37. This Conference¹⁵ was successfully organized as a virtual event by Statistics Korea, UNSD, UNESCAP and the GWG over 3 consecutive days with a total of 12 sessions. The main themes were "the COVID-19 response by the statistical community", "Big Data and Sustainable Development Goals" and

¹⁵ See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/bigdata/conferences/2020/>

"Global data collaboration and global training program". A total of 1700 participants had registered for the event. Recordings of all sessions are available on the conference website.

38. In the opening segment Minister Ki-Young Choi (Ministry of Science and ICT) of Korea addressed the conference and emphasized the increasing importance of Big Data in our societies because of the continuing rapid development of the digital technologies. The Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, Ms. Alisjahbana, also spoke and noted three points for further discussion: (a) using big data to analyse inequalities and vulnerabilities in our societies, (b) the need for investing in basic ICT infrastructure and skills, and (c) strengthening environmental statistics and accounts to support the green recovery across economies and societies.

39. The Conference sessions dealt in general with the role of the statistical community in COVID-19 response and the implications for SDG monitoring. Many applications were presented in areas like monitoring economic impact on jobs, businesses or specific sectors, such as tourism, or like monitoring the reduction in human mobility to contain the spread of the disease. Some of the GWG task teams presented their work, such as the use of mobile phone data for tourism, migration, population and transport; the use of satellite data for agriculture, environment and oceans; and training in use of new data sources and new technologies. One session explicitly addressed the co-investment and co-funding of the UN Global Platform. The final session of the Conference highlighted the latest developments of the platform and the regional hubs in China, Rwanda and UAE.

B. Seoul Declaration

40. The GWG took the opportunity of the 6th international conference to draw attention to some important issues in its Seoul declaration, such as mainstreaming the use of Big Data for compilation of official statistics and SDG indicators, increasing support for the UN Global Platform and the regional hubs, promoting use of privacy preserving techniques and moving forward quickly on the implementation of a global program on training and certification in the use of Big Data and data science for official statistics. The full Seoul declaration is given in Annex 1.

C. Other events

41. Due to COVID-19 no physical events have taken place since early 2020. There have been several virtual events organized by GWG in addition to the 6th Conference on Big Data, namely

- AIS Hackathon¹⁶, organized in September 2020 with participation of 17 teams from all around the world.
- The GWG Road to Bern webinar¹⁷, in October 2020, with presentation on the new Data Science Competence Center at the Federal Office of Statistics of Switzerland, and presentations of the winners of the AIS Hackathon
- Asia-Pacific Stats Café¹⁸ where the GWG Vice-Chair (Mr. Niels Ploug) participated in a discussion on the Prospect of Big Data for Official Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The event was subsequently followed up with three thematic Café's involving GWG members, one each on the use of big data for environment statistics, social and demographic statistics, and economic statistics.

UNESCAP, as a member of the GWG, also encouraged data innovation and use of Big Data for official statistics to be a feature of the 2020 Asia-Pacific Statistics Week and together with UNSD mentored several

¹⁶ <https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/events/2020/ais-hackathon/index.cshtml>

¹⁷ <https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/events/2020/road-to-bern/default.asp>

¹⁸ <https://www.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-stats-cafe-series-prospect-big-data-official-statistics-asia-and-pacific>

papers to be further developed, submitted and published in the Dec 2020 issue of the Statistical Journal of the International Association for Official Statistics.

42. GWG members have also used regional intergovernmental forums to advance the work of the GWG, namely

- The 7th session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics discussed embracing Big Data for official statistics and decided it should feature in the Committee's programme of work with an emphasis on sharing country research, experiences and good practices and facilitating capacity development.
- At the 7th Statistical Commission of Africa, UNSD and Rwanda jointly presented on the UN Global Platform and the Regional Hub for Africa in Kigali, and invited all African member states to use the platform and the hub, which have been created for international collaboration on innovative data solutions and for training activities in the use of Big Data and data science.
- Finally, UNSD contributed to the 9th session of the Statistical Commission of Organization of Islamic Cooperation by presenting on the work of the GWG and invited all OIC members to use the UN Global Platform.

VII. Priorities for the 2021 work program

A. Global training program

43. The highest priority for the GWG in 2021 will be rolling out the global training program in the various areas of Big Data and data science. The training courses on privacy preserving techniques are in an advanced stage, while the courses on use of satellite data for crop statistics, the use of scanner data for price index calculation and the use of AIS data for international trade statistics are being outlined in detail. These courses will be given at introduction, intermediate and advanced levels. It is envisioned to introduce these courses with separate short modules for raising awareness on the subject matter for a broad audience. In parallel, a Learning Management System (LMS) is being implemented on the UN Global Platform so the online courses can be managed and run by the GWG itself. The task team on training, competencies and capacity development will coordinate the development of the courses and conducting the courses through the LMS.

B. Regional hubs

44. 2021 will be the year that the activities will kick-off in the various regional hubs. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic made it not possible to bring people together. Hopefully, this situation will end in 2021 and in-person activities can resume. The regional hub in China has brought together an international advisory committee to propose training and project activities. In a similar sense, the regional hubs in Rwanda and UAE are gearing up as well. It is expected that the courses developed by the task teams can immediately be rolled out at the regional hubs.

C. UN Global Platform

45. In 2021, several projects (ARIES, Global Group Register, Data as a Service) which are currently in the proof of concept phase will enter the pilot phase, in which they will deliver tangible results. It is expected that with some additional IT experts and some additional funding, several more projects can be executed on the platform, which are currently in the pipeline (on rural access to all season roads and on mapping of informal settlements).

46. Out of the ongoing review of the UN Global Platform, recommendations for improvements are expected to be reported in early 2021. Implementation of those improvements may come with a cost. The newly established Finance Committee for the UN Global Platform can take the current situation plus the

recommended improvements into consideration for its plans to secure longer term financial stability for the platform.

VIII. Name change of the GWG

47. The Friends of the Chair group on Economic Statistics proposed an alignment of naming of the various expert groups under the UN Statistical Commission. The UN Global Working Group on Big Data for official statistics can be consistent with that approach. The name is proposed to change to UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics with the abbreviation UN-CEBD.

IX. Points for discussion

48. **The Commission is invited to:**

- (a) Acknowledge and support the work done by the task teams, including the handbooks, methods, projects and training courses, and support the creation of a new task team on the acquisition of global private sector data;**
- (b) Promote the use of the UN Global Platform and the Regional Hubs for training and project activities, including for the compilation of fast indicators to inform policies on emerging issues; and especially encourage statistical institutes from Least Developed Countries and Small Island Development States to use the capabilities of the UN Global Platform in their service delivery;**
- (c) Endorse the community model as a funding strategy for the UN Global Platform to ensure its sustainability for the longer term, and in this regard**
 - (i) encourage all members of the global statistical community to make in-kind contributions by making experts available;**
 - (ii) encourage all members of the statistical community and its partners to contribute financially to the platform either directly or through project funding; and**
 - (iii) support the creation of a Finance Committee to further develop a strategic funding approach.**
- (d) Encourage and support a timely implementation of a global program on training and certification in the use of Big Data and data science for official statistics.**
- (e) Endorse the change of name of the global working group to UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics (UN-CEBD).**

ANNEX I – Seoul Declaration

Recalling the mandate of the United Nations Global Working Group (GWG) on Big Data for Official Statistics to provide strategic vision, direction and coordination for a global program on the use of Big Data and advanced technologies in the compilation of official statistics and of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, including the developing necessary capacity and skills in national statistical systems.

Recalling the adoption of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data by the Statistical Commission at its 48th session in March 2017 to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which requires the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of an unprecedented amount of data and statistics at local, national, regional and global levels and by multiple stakeholders, bringing together Governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing necessary resources

Reiterating the Kigali Declaration of the GWG that the UN Global Platform

- should provide technological infrastructure as a service for all UN Member States, especially Least Developed Countries and Small Island Development States, to facilitate their access to global data sets and state of the art tools and services;
- should also connect all its partners, including the UN agencies as well as government agencies, private sector companies, research institutes, academia and civil society organizations, to work jointly on common goals;
- should facilitate the exchange, development and sharing of data, methods, tools and expertise, and accelerate data innovation for official statistics and SDG indicators; and
- should provide an environment for capacity development activities to teach and develop new competencies in the areas of Artificial Intelligence, data science, machine learning and privacy-preserving techniques;

Reiterating the Kigali Declaration of the GWG that the UN Global Platform should have multiple hubs in various regions of the world to build capacity and deliver regional support including for official statistics, working under a well-defined governance framework;

The UN Global Working Group at its 6th International Conference on Big Data for Official Statistics is

- Calling on the statistical community to embrace the use of Big Data for compilation of official statistics and SDG indicators by establishing new partnerships with multiple stakeholders, bringing together Governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing necessary resources;
- Calling on the statistical community and its stakeholder communities to increase support to the UN Global Platform through in-kind and financial contributions, to ensure sustainability of the platform for the longer term;
- Calling on the statistical community to promote the use of the Regional Hubs of the UN Global Platform for training and project activities;

- Encouraging all statistical institutes, especially those from Least Developed Countries and Small Island Development States, to use the capabilities of the UN Global Platform in their own service delivery;
- Calling on the statistical community and its public and private sector partners to continue their efforts in finding secure and trusted solutions for data sharing using appropriate privacy preserving techniques;
- Encouraging all stakeholder communities, including private sector, to share data, methods, technology and learning materials on the UN Global Platform for social good;
- Promoting the use of the UN Global Platform for the compilation of fast indicators to inform policies on emerging issues and key priority agendas in real-time, making swift course adjustments possible; and
- Moving forward quickly on the implementation of a global program on training and certification in the use of Big Data and data science for official statistics;