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UN World Data Forum 2018 to mark a new milestone in the journey toward making better sustainable development data for all a reality

Almost 2,000 data leaders from government, business and civil society come together to launch innovative solutions to improve data on migration, health, gender and many other key areas of sustainable development

(New York/Dubai, 21 October) -- The United Nations World Data Forum 2018 is set to kick off on 22 October in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, bringing together nearly 2,000 data leaders from more than 100 countries.

The data experts -- from national statistical offices, the private sector, NGOs, academia and international and regional organizations -- will gather 22-24 October to collaborate and tackle data gaps and challenges, launch new initiatives and identify mechanisms to increase financing and support for better data for sustainable development.

With over 80 sessions and parallel events, the Forum, which is being held at the Madinat Jumeirah Convention Center, is a crucial opportunity for major producers and users of data and statistics to find innovative solutions that deliver better data for policy makers and for all citizens in all areas of sustainable development and increase trust in data. Filling data gaps on important areas of sustainable development will be addressed, including on migration, health, gender and the environment, among others.

High-level speakers opening the Forum include UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed; HE Reem Bint Ebrahim Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Co-operation, UAE; and HE Omar Al Olama, Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence, UAE.

This second UN World Data Forum builds upon the innovative work at the inaugural Forum, held in Cape Town, South Africa, in January 2017. "The Cape Town Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data launched at the first Forum set the framework for what needs to be done," said Mr. Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, who will be speaking at the Forum. "But we need implementation and financing, which will be a major focus in Dubai. It is essential to have accurate, reliable, timely and disaggregated data, tracking the unprecedented range of economic, social and environmental goals in the 2030 Agenda. At the UN World Data Forum, I expect new partnerships to be forged, commitments announced and support boosted."

HE Abdullah Nasser Lootah, Director General of the UAE Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority and Chairman of the Organising Committee of the UN World Data Forum 2018, said: "We are delighted to be hosting this prominent world-class data event, and we welcome the leaders, decision makers and data experts from all around the world who are taking part in it. We are looking forward to making this edition a benchmark for strengthening international cooperation and to outlining a joint international framework to channel data and technology towards implementing local, regional and international development plans, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 2030."

Innovative Solutions

The 2018 Forum will feature a high-level session on **improving migration data**, to help set new strategies for how to better track the over 258 million migrants around the world, including through real-time data sources such as call records. It will serve as a contribution towards an international conference in December in Marrakech, Morocco, where a global compact for migration will be adopted by Member States, to help ensure safe and orderly movements of people and the services they need.

A high-level session on **financing for data and statistics** will focus on identifying mechanisms to fill the funding gap and improve the delivery of funds both domestically and internationally, providing much-needed resources to national statistical systems. Developing countries, alone, face a deficit of US\$ 200 million per year to close the funding gap. Despite big strides in data collection, large data gaps remain: e.g. over 100 countries still lack comprehensive birth and death registration data. A lack of funding and capacity are serious constraints for many countries.

The Forum will launch or advance a number of practical solutions, including for the use of non-traditional **data sources** such as mobile phone and bank records, social media, earth observations and geospatial data. Projects to be showcased include the use of high-res satellite images to map poverty and measure soil fertility and improve agricultural productivity. Some sessions will look at the benefits and risks of using new data sources for the public good, including issues of **data privacy and governance**.

Other issues to be examined at the Forum include the need for **open data** and how to facilitate data sharing and integration of new data sources into official statistics. Several initiatives are focusing on how to better count minorities and vulnerable groups and to improve **gender data**, so that we leave no one behind and ensure the protection of human rights; and how data journalists can work with national statistical offices to better inform the public.

Background

The Forum was established as agreed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2016 based on a recommendation by the UN Secretary-General's Independent Expert and Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development. With support from the Statistics Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, a number of partners – including governments, international organizations such as the World Bank and UNICEF, and several civil society organizations and research institutes -- are working together to organize the Forum, hosted by the UAE Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority.

For Media: Press wishing to cover the Forum on-site but who have not registered can register in person at the convention center each day of the event with a national ID or other form of identification showing the media organization they represent.

Opening press briefing: Sunday, 21 October, 2:00pm; **Closing press briefing:** Wednesday, 24 October, 12:30pm -- at the Madinat Jumeirah Convention Center, with livestreaming.

For more information see UNDataForum.org, or follow on Twitter [@UNDataForum](https://twitter.com/UNDataForum).

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