



# HARNESSING THE DATA REVOLUTION

## ***South Africa hosts the first-ever United Nations World Data Forum.***

The stage was resplendent with the stars of the statistical universe as the inaugural United Nations World Data Forum got underway. The Minister in the Presidency responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, and the chairperson of the National Planning Commission of South Africa (who also has oversight of Statistics South Africa), the honourable Jeff Radebe, was joined by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr Wu Hongbo; Mr Stefan Schweinfest, Director, UN Statistics Division; and Dr Pali Lehohla, Statistician-General for South Africa and Head of Statistics South Africa. More than 1 000 data experts from over 100 countries have gathered at the forum, being held in Cape Town from 15 – 18 January. The forum is one of many steps being taken by the statistics and data community to rise to the huge challenge of putting systems in place to gather and analyse the data needed to inform the 169 targets and 230 indicators that support the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr Wu noted that one of the UN's strengths is its ability to use its convening power to bring people together to work on global solutions. The fact that there are more

than 1000 delegates representing all sectors of society at the forum is a testimony to the increasing level of collaboration that is enabling new approaches to improving data production. Full implementation of the SDGs will improve the lives of all and ensure the future of the planet.

Mr Radebe remarked that “data has become so critical in our daily lives that we hardly ever notice its use in every facet of life. It has become like the oxygen that we breathe. The only time we realise that we have a challenge is when it is not available”. He spoke to the fact that Agenda 2063, The Africa We Want, and Vision 2030, South Africa's National Development Plan, both align to the SDGs. Data needs to be freely available and accessible by all. In this way, the people who are served by the data will become more than another number in a statistical report, and will be capacitated to use the data to improve their lives.

The UN World Data Forum is not a one-time event, but the beginning of a new process of continuous collaboration. It will take place every two years under the guidance of the UN Statistical Commission. Work will continue to fully take advantage of the new initiatives and partnerships and to harness the potential of innovation and technology.



# WELCOME: THE HONORABLE JEFF RADEBE, MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

*It gives me great pleasure to welcome delegates to this, the first-ever United Nations World Data Forum, on behalf of the government of South Africa. It was in recognition of our capacity as a country that South Africa was chosen as the host of this forum above all other bidders in the world. This gesture is an affirmation of the capability of South Africa and the African continent to host such an important global occasion.*

This gathering takes its baton from other summits that we have hosted as the African continent, notably, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002 as well as the 56th Session of the International Statistical Institute in Durban in 2009.

It is a rare occurrence that one gets to be in the company of global experts who are entrusted with the measurement of every facet of life. The hosting of this important gathering, the United Nations World Data Forum, on the African land is of great international significance as it focuses on sharpening the tools for the use of new technology and the deployment of advanced techniques in the world.

The world has never known any form of measurement without data since the invention of counting as a tool by human kind. Today, data has become so critical in our daily lives that we hardly ever notice its use in every facet of life. It has become like the oxygen that we breathe. The only time we realise that we have a challenge is when it is not available.

The quest for good life and greener pastures has forced humankind to always search for innovative, necessary and attendant mechanisms to make life as palatable as possible. It is encouraging that the practitioners of data and information in the world have deemed it fit to meet from time to time, as in this gathering, to assess their relevance in providing data to the world at play.

We have always known in the developing world that whenever the stakes are high, the function of statistics will be called into action. The colonisation of Africa and other parts of the world has seen the deployment of statistics, where numbers even trumped methods to justify the oppressive and divisive edifice that was at construct.



Thus, colonisation was not only a political construct but a social and economic construct that derived from the violent discourse to a hegemonic assimilation of ideas and control of knowledge.

The post-2015 Development Agenda takes us forward within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. So are our own national development programmes. South Africa takes pride in its comprehensive National Development Plan (NDP), which has gained support across all political parties within our multi-party democratic system as well as within the civil society. We expect the National Development Plan to deliver substantive results by 2030. That way, South Africa will stake her claim within the world stage of development.

Technological innovations will always happen to challenge our thinking and usher in a new order. The world is currently seized by the need for faster data on our finger tips at all times. The proliferation of tablets, smart phones and other electronic gadgets makes it ever possible to collect data and process it instantly. A happy user – a satisfied customer – means that they will be back again for more data, even in advanced form. The challenge, for those in the area of official statistics, is how they turn their organisations around to meet the needs of their clients. Let those who have waited for too long for information to have a positive impact on their lives have access.



**“You cannot develop people. You must allow people to develop themselves...  
If real development is to take place, the people have to be involved.”**

**Julius Nyerere**  
*A great son of Africa and former  
President of Tanzania*

# WELCOME BY MR. WU HONGBO, UNITED NATIONS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

*The first United Nations World Data Forum comes at a crucial time for strengthening data and statistical capacity globally. Countries all around the world are mobilizing to carry out the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To do so, it is essential to have accurate, reliable, timely and disaggregated data. This will require everyone in the statistics and data community – from governments, the private sector, the scientific and academic communities and civil society -- to find ways to work across different domains and create partnerships and synergies.*

The Forum is closely linked to the process that resulted in the 2030 Agenda. As envisioned by the UN Statistical Commission, the Forum is a platform to foster collaboration among the wide range of data producers and users, to deliver better data for sustainable development.

We have made tremendous progress on statistics and data in the last decade, under the Millennium Development Goals, but now we need to take it to a whole new level.

What results can we expect from the Forum?

First, the Forum will serve as a launching pad where diverse data producers and users can get behind a new Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data. The Action Plan has been under development for the past year by statistical experts in a high-level group, and will be formally approved by the UN Statistical Commission when they meet in March.

Second, new partnerships should be created or strengthened and concrete commitments should be announced that will improve statistical systems, in support of the Global Action Plan.

Third, the Forum will help build consensus on data principles and other policy issues like open data and data privacy.



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This is a very exciting time to be involved in work on data and statistics. The data landscape is rapidly changing. I have high hopes that this first UN World Data Forum will be an important event to advance collective action to harness the data revolution for sustainable development, and help deliver better data for all.

# WELCOME TO CAPE TOWN!

*The City of Cape Town extends a warm welcome to all of you at the inaugural United Nations World Data Forum, being hosted by our balmy, summer City!*

The intention of this platform is to intensify cooperation with various professional groups, such as geospatial information managers, data scientists, and users, as well as civil society stakeholders. We are proud that South Africa was selected as the host country for this first Forum. More than 1,000 data experts from over 100 countries have come together with the ambitious agenda of building broad consensus as how to harness the power of data for sustainable development. This is something that the political leadership of the host City are extremely passionate about! When Cape Town was selected as the World Design Capital for 2014, we set out to find ways in which we could use design to make government more transparent.

In September 2014, the City of Cape Town took the ground-breaking decision to develop an Open Data Portal as part of our efforts to become the first truly digital city in Africa. This is because there can be no dispute about the relationship between technology and development.

We also believe that it is the responsibility of government to empower residents to hold their leaders accountable – and there is no better way to do this than to provide our residents with open data. We have since seen that this has created an opportunity to increase transparency and inspire new levels of innovation. Since the launch of the portal in January 2015 we have released 85 datasets. These include sets on our building footprints, tenders awarded, municipal arrears, MyCiTi bus routes and all our most recent budgets.

Our Open Data Portal has generated great levels of interest among other cities and national departments and the City of Cape Town has received numerous requests to share experience of our open data project with these interested parties. We have made our datasets available for events like Hackathons and Data Challenges and today some of our data is also being used in completed applications/tools.



We have also partnered with researchers, who have requested data identifying the benefits of public access centres, when using our SmartCape library internet facilities as the case study at the Harare Library in Khayelitsha. Our air quality data has been used in experiments which visualize and identify trends. In March last year, we also accepted a membership invitation from the World Council on City Data and we are excited to join the world's leading cities on this council.

It's an honour for us to be internationally recognized for finding and pursuing a way in which we can increase transparency for both broader social and economic benefit. With some of the best minds of governance in the room here for the duration of the conference, I look forward to the many other great ideas which are sure to be born here.

In the City of Cape Town we believe that sustainable progress is only made possible when we all work together. May our ties, relationships, programmes and delivery be strengthened by this gathering.

# ACKNOWLEDGING THE EXCEPTIONAL

*Awards in recognition of the exceptional contribution made by the following individuals in the field of statistics were conferred on the following people by Minister Radebe.*



## **HANS ROSLING**

Hans Rosling was born in Uppsala, Sweden. From 1967 to 1974, he studied Statistics and Medicine at Uppsala University, and in 1972 he studied Public Health at St. John's Medical College, Bangalore, India. He became a licensed physician in 1976 and from 1979 to 1981 he served as District Medical Officer in Nacala in northern Mozambique. On 21 August 1981, Rosling began investigating an outbreak of konzo, a paralytic disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His investigations earned him a Ph.D. at Uppsala University in 1986. Dr Rosling is the founder of Gapminder Foundation. He is the father of data visualisation and unveils the beauty of statistics.



## **ENRICO GIOVANNINI**

Enrico Giovannini (born 6 June 1957) is an Italian economist and statistician. Since 2002 he is full professor of Economic Statistics at the University of Rome Tor Vergata. He is Senior Fellow of the LUISS "School of European Political Economy", member of the "Commission Economique de la Nation" of the French Government, and co-chair of the "Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development" established by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. He is also chair and member of several boards of Italian and international organisations. From April 2013 to February 2014 he was Minister of Labour and Social Policies in the Italian government. From August 2009 to April 2013 he was President of the Italian Statistical Institute (Istat). From January 2001 to July 2009, he was Director of Statistics and Chief Statistician of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).



## **AMINA MOHAMMED**

Amina J. Mohammed (born 27 June 1961) is the current Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, and former Minister of Environment of Nigeria. Previously, Amina Mohammed was a key player in the Post-2015 development process, serving as the Special Adviser to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Post-2015 development planning. In this role, she acted as the link between the Secretary-General, his High Level Panel of Eminent Persons (HLP), and the General Assembly's Open Working Group (OWG), among other stakeholders.

Prior to this position, Mohammed served as Founder and CEO of the Center for Development Policy Solutions and as an Adjunct Professor for the Master's in Development Practice program at Columbia University. Previously, she acted as the Senior Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on the Millennium Development Goals after serving three presidents over a period of six years. In 2005, she was charged with the coordination of Nigeria's debt relief funds toward the achievement of the MDGs. From 2002-2005, Mohammed coordinated the Task Force on Gender and Education for the UN Millennium Project.



## **KATHERINE WALLMAN**

Katherine K. Wallman is an American statistician in the U.S. Office of Management and Budget who has served Chief Statistician of the United States since 1992. In that role, she provided coordination, guidance, and oversight for the Federal Statistical System of the United States.

She retired recently. In 1983 she was elected as a Fellow of the American Statistical Association. She served as president of the American Statistical Association in 1992, and Chairman of the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2004-5.





“Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require everyone in the statistics and data community - from governments, the private sector, the scientific and academic communities and civil society - to find ways to work across different domains and create partnerships and synergies.

**Mr Wu Hongbo**

*United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
for Economic and Social Affairs*





## What you need to know about the World Data Forum

### 1. Conference mobile application

*We have an app! Go to the Google Play Store/App Store, search for Stats SA UNWDF 2017 and install it.*

### 2. Wi-fi connection

*To download the app (and post about the Forum on social media), you need Wi-fi. We have it!*

*UN World Forum*

*Password: @capetown2017*

### 3. Social platforms

*Use #UNDataForum to share your experience of the first ever United Nations World Data Forum*

- *Follow @UNDataForum and @StatsSA for regular updates*
- *The presentations will be available on SlideShare [www.slideshare.net/StatsSA](http://www.slideshare.net/StatsSA)*
- *Videos will be available on the UN DESA Youtube*
- *Live Streaming: [www.undataforum.org](http://www.undataforum.org)*

### 4. Interpretation units

*These are available outside Auditorium 1.*

*Please produce your passport/ID to obtain a unit. These are to be returned after use.*

### 5. Official Gala dinner

*Everyone is invited to the official conference Gala dinner, hosted by MTN and Stats SA at Ratanga Junction in Century City. This will take place on Tuesday, 17 January at 19:00. Transport will depart outside the ICC from 18:30. Those attending the dinner must RSVP via*

*A) The Conference Mobile application.*

*B) At the Bag Collection Booth on the 1st Floor (The last booth marked Gala Dinner RSVP/Media/Exhibitor). The barcoded Accreditation Tag will need to be tagged to confirm attendance.*

*Entertainment will be provided by Yvonne Chaka Chaka, the UN Goodwill Ambassador.*