Regional Workshop on the Integration of Big Data and Geospatial Information for the Compilation of SDG Indicators in Arab Countries

13- 15 October 2020

**Information Note**

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The adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015 brought an increased attention to the need to enhance capacity of developing countries to strengthen institutional environments and to streamline statistical production processes, including by the integration of innovative data sources for the production and utilization of the SDG indicators. The global indicator framework for the monitoring of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with currently over 230 indicators represents an additional challenge for producers of official statistics and will require further development and adjustment of institutional and operational capacities of national statistical systems for the production of high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data.

Moreover, the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data recognized the need to facilitate the application of modern technologies and new data sources in mainstream statistical activities to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as tracking progress of the SDGs. In particular, it calls for the identification and removal of barriers to the use of new data sources, including registries and administrative data, geospatial information systems, and other innovative data sources.

In July 2016, ECOSOC adopted resolution 2016/27 on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management, in which it explicitly recognized the relevance of geospatial information for the various United Nations policy agendas, particularly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. and invited to report on all matters relating to geography, geospatial information and related topics as it is critical for ensuring that no one is left behind.

Geographic location is needed to know where a situation is present or where an event has occurred, and to allow decision makers to respond. The integration of geospatial information with data and statistics for SDGs is also instrumental for the production of a number of indicators and in enabling data interoperability across data ecosystems and linking data sets within and across countries.

Within the framework of the United Nations project for enhancing the capacity of Member States in compiling SDG indicators and to further explore and promote the use and integration of complementary data sources, including administrative data,innovative data (Big Data) and geospatial information, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in cooperation with United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), UN Environment Programme, UN Habitat, the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS), is organizing a virtual“regional workshop on big data and geospatial information for the compilation of SDG indicators in the Arab countries” during the period 13 - 15 October 2020.

1. **Objectives**

In preparation for the workshop, countries will be asked to assess the quality, accessibility and usability of available administrative records and non-traditional data sources, as well as specific opportunities to integrate geo-referenced data and geographic information systems, for the compilation of SDG indicators at the national level.

To this end, a short questionnaire will be developed and sent to the countries that will participate in the workshop. The results of the assessments will provide the basis for the discussions of workshop.

Specifically, the regional workshop aims to:

* discuss priority issues and challenges with regard to the use of administrative records and non-traditional data sources or innovative data sources, including Big Data, for timely decision making and service delivery at the local level;
* discuss issues and challenges with regard to the integration of geospatial information and statistics for effective and efficient implementation of SDGs.;
* share best practices in use of technology and innovative approaches, including the area of geospatial information systems, to enhance the production of data and statistics, specifically the SDGs indicators.

Expected outcomes

* To achieve a common and improved understanding of the technical issues and challenges involved in using non-traditional and administrative data sources in the production of statistics for the implementation and follow up and review of Agenda 2030;
* To clarify how new and non-traditional data sources can be integrated and mainstreamed into the national data and statistical systems for timely evidence-based decision making at all levels;
* To prepare a summary note including main challenges, case examples, and suggestions on how to integrate data sources in the production of data.

1. **Participants**

* Experts from national statistical systems, line ministries, academic and research institutions in the region, and other international and regional organizations: ESCWA, UNSD UN-Habitat, UNESCAP, UNDRR (United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction), AITRS and specialized research centers.

1. **Main areas of discussion**

The workshop consists of the following topics:

* challenges of mainstreaming non-traditional data sources and geospatial information systems into the national statistical systems;
* big data and other innovative sources of data, such as citizen-generated data, that could be used in the production of data and statistics on sustainable development;
* application of the fundamental principles of official statistics to data from other sources;
* progress, challenges, and opportunities in the integration of geo-spatial information systems to improve the production, analysis and use of SDG Indicators at the local, national, regional, and global levels, particularly as it relates to environmental data and indicators and their interlinkages with the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development.

1. **Documents**

* Expert reports;
* Countries’ presentations.
* Documents will be posted on meeting website [www.unescwa.org/events/events-list](http://www.unescwa.org/events/events-list)

1. **Languages**

The meeting will be in Arabic and English and there will be simultaneous interpretation.

1. **Venue and time of the meeting**

The meeting will be held during the period 13-15 October 2020 (Virtual)

1. **Administrative arrangements**

Virtual meeting will be arranged by ESCWA: Ms Zeina Sinno at [sinnoz@un.org](mailto:sinnoz@un.org)

1. **For further information, kindly contact:**

For substantive issues

UNESCWA Statistics Division

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| --- | --- |
| Mr. Ismail Lubbad  Statistician  Tel : + 961 1 978 358  E-mail: [lubbad@un.org](mailto:lubbad@un.org%0d‎) | Ms. Wafa Aboul Hosn  Chief of Economic Statistics  T. +961 1 978 353  Email: [aboulhosn@un.org](mailto:aboulhosn@un.org) |

For administrative and logistics issues

Ms. Zeina Sinno, Statistics Assistant - Tel: + 961 1 978 357 ‎Email: [sinnoz@un.org](mailto:sinnoz@un.org)

Mr. Christoph Rouhana, Project Assistant - Tel: + 961 1 978764 ‎Email:[rouhanac@un.org](mailto:rouhanac@un.org)