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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Items for discussion and decision: Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Main points from the High Level Forum on Official Statistics –  
Financing for data and statistics  
Monday, 04 March, 2019**

Prepared by United Nations Statistics Division  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

## **Main points from the High Level Forum on Official Statistics – Financing for data and statistics, Monday, 04 March, 2019**

### Summary Notes by UNSD.

1. The High-Level Forum on Official Statistics, organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in conjunction with the 50th session of the UN Statistical Commission, was dedicated to discuss the topic of more and better financing for data and statistics in support to the strategic framework to strengthen national statistical systems and their capacity to fully implement the Cape Town Global Action Plan (CTGAP).
2. The Forum took place on Monday, 4 March 2019, and was attended by approximately 260 participants from national statistics offices, regional and international organizations, and a few representatives of civil society, academia, the private sector and the donor community, including philanthropic foundations. The Forum was an opportunity to build upon ongoing discussions on financing statistics and data and addressing the strategic framework set out in the CTGAP and to advocate for and build broader support for financing for statistical capacity development. Experts from the donor community, together with statisticians, discussed global policy and advocacy, domestic resource mobilization, the evolving role of donors and innovative ideas to support more and better financing for data and statistics, under the scope of the CTGAP and the oversight of the Statistical Commission.
3. The Forum was organized around a keynote and two guided discussions, moderated by Mr. Rajesh Mirchandani of the UN Foundation. See Annex 1 for the agenda.

### Summary of the Forum

4. The keynote address was delivered by Mr. Jørgen Elmeskov, Chief Statistician of Denmark as a member of the Statistical Commission's High-level Group for Partnerships, Coordination and Capacity Building (HLG-PCCB). The presentation highlighted the work<sup>1</sup> of the HLG-PCCB in the area of funding for data and statistics in the context of the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Data for the 2030 Agenda. It was stressed that there are critical needs for better coordination, stronger advocacy, and the establishment of a financing mechanism. Coordination among donors and countries is essential to ensure funds are spent efficiently, and economies of scale are achieved. Overall, there needs to be stronger advocacy to place financing for data and statistics at the heart of the financing for development discussions. The HLG-PCCB calls for the establishment of an innovative funding mechanism to strengthen the capacity of national data and statistical systems. It was also stressed that the HLG-PCCB, as a body of the Statistical Commission, is well positioned to take the financing for data and statistics conversation forward.
5. The first panel discussed how financing for data and statistics fits into the overall work and advocacy efforts by the Financing for Sustainable Development process. It is well

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<sup>1</sup> Please see: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/50th-session/documents/BG-Item3a-HLG-financing-paper-E.pdf>

known and agreed upon that statistics and data are essential for the full implementation of the 2030 agenda and to monitor progress on the SDGs; however, it is challenging to have policy makers focus on the necessary structural developments and resources to improve and increase availability of data and statistics.

6. The second panel focused on how to align the needs and priorities of national statistical systems with the donors' agendas and priorities, reflecting upon the earlier discussion on financing for sustainable development and the need to enhance support for data and statistics. Reflecting on the first panel, the second panel discussed domestic resource mobilization, the evolving role of donors and innovative ideas to support more and better financing for data and statistics, within the scope of the CTGAP and under the oversight of the UN Statistical Commission.

### Key points

7. The main key points from the Forum include:
  - There is an urgent need to communicate and advocate for financing for data and statistics by the statistical community to gain political traction and raise the profile of financing for data and statistics. National statistical offices and statisticians need to reach out to politicians to make the case for financing for data and statistics. A common language needs to be determined for donors and statistics to co-create data and statistics
  - The need for more alignment between countries' priorities and donors' activities was emphasized. It was stressed that the statistical community needs to better understand the needs of the broader development priorities of politicians in order to position the National statistical offices/systems to be part of the solution to address policy makers' needs.
  - The panelists emphasized that there is an urgent need for financing for data and statistics that feed into the narrative of Financing for Development process and the outcomes of this event feed into this process. It was suggested that links be established with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and its seven action points, which touch upon national prioritization and recognize the importance of data and statistics for sustainable development.
  - Better advocacy for more resources for data and statistics is essential to strengthen national statistical systems. Countries need to be at the forefront of advocacy for financing data and statistics. The panelists highlighted ways to amplify statistics and data work in the larger financing for sustainable development dialogue, by bringing the message to other processes and events taking place in the coming months. Champions in development policy circles need to be identified to increase the relevance of data and statistics and promote regular dialogue with politicians.
  - In order to increase investment in data and statistics, there is a need to stimulate demand. Investments in data production are not sufficient, as more needs to be done to increase data use. By making statistics more relevant and aligned to policy

makers' needs, the statisticians can stimulate demand and increase investments in data and statistics.

- Bringing together representatives from the political arena and the statistical community in this Forum is an important step to establish a link and opens doors for the statistical community to come into the ECOSOC and HLPF processes.
- Some of the next steps and opportunities to advance the work on financing for data and statistics of the HLG-PCCB as a body of the Statistical Commission include, the 50th session of the Statistical Commission, the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up, the HLG-PCCB's meetings, the High-Level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC in July, and the SDG Summit at the General Assembly in September.
- The panelists discussed the urgent need for the statistical community to bring their voice to other fora -- such as for instance the Bretton Wood Institutions and OECD - - to make the case for financing for data and statistics.
- In particular, the outcome of this High-Level Forum on Official Statistics on the critical need to increase financing for data and statistics can be reflected in the review and consultation processes leading to the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development. By connecting these events, the data and statistical community can bring data and statistics into the agenda of Financing for Sustainable Development.
- The HLF-OS panelists also recalled that the Dubai Declaration, announced at the UNWDF in 2018, called for the creation of a demand-driven financing mechanism driven by countries' development priorities. There was strong support for the launch of a funding facility at the United Nations World Data Forum in 2020; however, there the panelists stressed that there is an urgent need for immediate action in order not to lose momentum.

## **Annex 1. Agenda**

Moderator: Mr. Rajesh Mirchandani, UN Foundation

Keynote address: Financing for data and Statistics, Mr. Jørgen Elmeskov, Statistics Denmark

Panel 1: Through a guided discussion, panelists will share their experience on global policy and advocacy on financing and share what works and where changes are needed to address the funding gap for more and better financing for data and statistics.

- H.E. Ms. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Permanent Mission of Ghana to the UN (tbc)
- H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN
- Ms. Shari Spiegel, Financing for Sustainable Development Division, DESA
- Ms. Mayumi Endoh, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD

Panel 2: Reflecting on the first panel, the second panel will discuss domestic resource mobilization, the evolving role of donors and innovative ideas to support more and better financing for data and statistics, under the scope of the CTGAP and the Statistical Commission.

- Ms. Malaefono Taua-Faasalaina, Samoa Bureau of Statistics
- Mr. Zachary Mwangi, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and Chair of the UN Statistical Commission
- Ms. Sarah Lucas, Hewlett Foundation
- Mr. Arun Thangaraj, Global Affairs Canada
- Mr. Stefan Andersson, Statistics Sweden

Concluding remark and the way forward

- Mr. Julio Santaella, National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI)
- Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, UNSD