

# Data experts gather to find solutions to world's biggest challenges at UN Forum

International data sectors from national statistical offices, the private sector, NGOs, academia and international and regional organizations are gathering in Dubai from Monday to Wednesday, in a bid to accelerate progress on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs)

The experts will launch innovative solutions to improve data on migration, health, gender and many other key areas of sustainable development at the second annual Forum, which takes place at the Madinat Jumeirah Convention Center.

The 3-day conference is packed with over 80 sessions and parallel events, and is seen as a crucial opportunity for major producers and users of data and statistics to find ways to deliver better data for policy makers and citizens in all areas of sustainable development.

Speaking ahead of the opening session, Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, underlined the critical importance of good data in order to achieve the SDGs: "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."

The conference takes place two months before the expected adoption by Member States of the [Global Compact for Migration](#), the first-ever UN global agreement on a common approach to international migration, and one of the high-level sessions will be on improving migration data to help set new strategies for how to better track the more than 258 million migrants around the world, including through real-time data sources such as call records: this will serve as a contribution to the December conference.

Financing for data and statistics, and ways to fill the funding deficit and data gaps that exists in many countries will be a focus topic of this year's Forum, at a time when developing countries face a gap of \$200 million per year and over 100 countries do not have comprehensive birth and death registration data: a lack of funding and capacity are serious constraints for many countries.

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.

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-resolution satellite images to map poverty, 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.

Several initiatives are focusing on how to better count minorities and vulnerable groups and to improve gender data, to ensure that no-one is left behind, and ensure the protection of human rights; and how data journalists can work with national statistical offices to better inform the public.