



DOHA DECLARATION ON A DATA REVOLUTION IN THE ARAB REGION

(agreed upon at the Arab Forum on Building Statistical Capacity for a Data Revolution)

10 – 11 October 2016

Doha, State of Qatar

Preamble

More than 150 representatives from international and regional institutions, national statistical offices (NSOs), academia, research institutes and business community met on 10-11 October 2016 in Doha, State of Qatar to discuss opportunities and challenges of the Data Revolution in the Arab region in supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Forum has been organized jointly by the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics (MDPS) of the State of Qatar together with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) and the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat).

The Participants thanked the organizers of the Forum for putting together an inspiring and most relevant programme and expressed their deepest gratitude to the host country, State of Qatar, for their generous hospitality.

Having recognized the significance of Data Revolution¹ for statistical follow-up and review to the 2030 Development Agenda and progress towards achievement of the SDGs, in concluding the discussion at the Forum, the Participants agreed to the present Doha Declaration on Data Revolution.

Participants representing various international and regional institutions and NSOs and private institutions:

1. *Emphasize* that the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda underpinned by the SDGs calls for a fundamental change and transformation of the National Statistical Systems (NSSs) to be able to produce the quantity and quality of data needed to monitor progress towards the SDGs whilst ensuring that no one is left behind. The increase in demand for data by all parts of society requires a “Data Revolution” with a programme of action in principles and standards; technology, innovation and analysis; capacity and resources; and leadership and governance.

2. *Recognize* the many persisting obstacles that NSSs are facing, from inadequate funding to weak coordination between line ministries, NSOs, central banks and other government data

¹ *Characterized by the volume, variety, and speed with which data are becoming available from the use of modern technologies such as mobile phones, Internet of Things, sensors and geospatial (GIS) data*



producers, and the challenge to produce more timely data with better accessibility. The Data Revolution will not automatically bring solutions to those challenges but makes these issues even more urgent.

3. *Are convinced* about the great potential of the Data Revolution in the Arab region that would include, among others, the opening up of new data sources coming from Big Data, such as call detail records, geospatial data, and data extracted from social media and other private sources. Areas of application could include public health, transportation, tourism and migration flows.

4. *Stress* that the Data Revolution goes beyond new and smart data and includes changes and new approaches in the methods of data collection, processing, storage and visualization.

5. *Recognize* the heterogeneity in the pace of advancement in the modernization of official statistics in the Arab region that comprise high, medium and low income countries, as well as fragile states including those currently facing conflicts. A country-led road map for the Data Revolution requires a tailor made approach for each country. The Data Revolution will be different from one country to another. A key issue to be addressed in all countries is to develop institutional and governance frameworks that open access to new data sources, including research and private data, while maintaining high standards of privacy and confidentiality.

6. *Call upon* regional and international organizations including Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS), Partnership for Statistics in 21st Century (PARIS21), Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat), Statistical, Economic and Social Training and Research Institute for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) to establish a broad and functioning partnership in support of Data Revolution in Arab NSSs. The partnership should also bring on board various stakeholders including universities, civil society and business sector at local, national and regional levels.

7. *Call upon* all stakeholders in the NSSs to set up public and private partnership mechanisms that would facilitate the transfer of knowledge and the sharing of new data arising through research and development as well as innovation in the production of official statistics.

8. *Call upon* the UNESCWA to lead, in cooperation with other relevant agencies, efforts in establishing a Regional Trust Fund for financing and fostering the Data Revolution in the Arab region.



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9. *Invite* the MDPS of the State of Qatar to set in motion, in collaboration with relevant international and regional agencies, a process that will lead to a Data Revolution Road Map for the Arab region. A road map with specific action points would be developed.