



## Innovation and technology for more effective government spending and financing

India is pursuing ambitious, technology-driven reform that is making financial services and social protection payments accessible to underserved people, while also reducing leakage of public funds. This reflects part of one government's effort to more effectively plan and fund its sustainable development strategy, the main theme of the "Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2019", the latest assessment of the progress that countries are making in mobilizing financing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

JAM, as the Indian initiative is known, integrates a universal biometric digital identity registry, government-sponsored bank accounts for the unbanked, and mobile phone numbers to create a low-cost financial infrastructure that offers services previously out of reach for most Indians.

The J in JAM stands for 'Jan Dhan' bank accounts, which free citizens from minimum-balance requirements and provide them low-cost insurance and access to government loans and subsidies. More than 326 million accounts have been opened since 2014. These are now linked to citizens' unique identification numbers – 'Aadhaar', the A in JAM – to provide fraud protection while easing access to public and private services. Some 1.2 billion unique IDs have been issued since 2009. The M in JAM stands for mobile phone numbers, through which India's 1.16 billion mobile subscribers can access services. The initiative's positive impacts include saving the government some US\$ 8.1 billion, for example by reducing "leakages" of public expenditures that do not arrive at their intended destination.

Now in its fourth year, the "Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2019" is set for release on Thursday, 4 April 2019, in advance of the IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings and ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development. A collaboration by 60 agencies, led

by UN DESA, in close cooperation with the World Bank Group, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Development Programme.

The report focuses this year on government techniques and efforts to project public and private expenditures and investments over longer term periods and choose the most appropriate combinations of public and private sources to fund them. While governments are working at national level, systemic risks are rising, and the multilateral system is under strain. The report warns that a failure to reshape both national and international financial systems will result in the failure of the international community to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including eliminating extreme poverty and combatting climate change. The Task Force was mandated by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and is chaired by Mr. Zhenmin Liu, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs.

This report contributes to the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development which will take place from 15 – 18 April at the UN Headquarters. The SDG Investment Fair, which brings together government officials and investors, will also be held on 15 – 17 April. Later this month, the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters will also take place on 23 – 26 April with a focus on strengthening the role of taxation in mobilizing domestic resources for sustainable development. In addition, this year's ECOSOC Special Meeting on taxation and the digitized economy, environmental protection and reducing inequality, will be held on 29 April.

For more information:

Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2019, released on 4 April 2019

ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, 15-18 April 2019

SDG Investment Fair, 15-17 April 2019

18th Session of the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (Committee), 23 to 26 April 2019

2019 ECOSOC special meeting, "International Cooperation in Tax Matters", 29 April 2019



## Young people are changing the world

Across countries and continents, our world is witnessing a rise in youth engagement and even a ‘youth quake’ as one news outlet described the recent Global Climate Strike. Inspired by 16-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg, some 1.6 million young people in 125 countries took to the streets, demanding world leaders to take climate action – now. To navigate our planet out of harms way, there is already a plan of action in place; the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This April, young leaders

from different corners of the world, will join the 2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum with a mission: to put this plan into action.

The annual forum, labelled the largest annual gathering of youth advocates, takes place at a critical point in time. As UN DESA’s recent *World Youth Report* lays out, today’s young people face numerous challenges when it comes to education, employment and rising global inequalities.

It is therefore quite fitting that this year’s forum takes place under the theme “Empowered, Included and Equal”, inspiring us all to mobilize support for young people across the globe. After all, they offer 1.8 billion reasons for the world to stand by their side.

“Young people are a vast source of innovation, ideas and solutions. They are pushing strongly for the changes we need in the technology arena, in climate action, and in calling for inclusive and just societies,” UN Secretary-General António Guterres said when he launched the UN Youth Strategy last September. “Empowering young people, supporting them, and making sure they can fulfil their potential are important ends in themselves. We want this for all people, everywhere.”

Taking place for the eight-consecutive year, the forum serves as a critical platform to move these efforts forward. At this event, youth representatives and members of the international community, can highlight opportunities, raise concerns and discuss efforts to scale up actions across the world to meet young people’s needs and help them realize their rights.

It is also a venue where young people and their roles as “critical agents of change” become apparent. Something last year’s keynote speaker, Salina Abraham, noted in her powerful address.

“They don’t only light fires, they keep them alive,” she said, stressing the potential of supporting youth and youth organizations, also advising the international community to “support, listen and engage.”

When addressing last year’s forum, Mr. Liu also emphasized the essential role that young people play for the SDGs. “I urge you to continue working with policy-makers and your governments to ensure that your voice is heard in their plans to implement the 2030 Agenda,” he said.

This year’s forum will serve as an important platform to channel young people’s contributions to world leaders and decision-makers, expected to join upcoming high-level

events at the UN in September. Youth participants will for example be able to debate and develop messages to feed into the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development (23 September), the Secretary-General's Climate Summit (23 September) and the SDG Summit (24- 25 September).

In addition to the forum's plenary and break-out sessions, many interesting discussions will also take place in the [SDG Media Zone](#). Wherever you are in the world, you can follow the discussions happening at the forum as well as in the SDG Media Zone, live via [UN Web TV](#). To engage and follow the events via social media, use [#Youth2030](#) and [#SDGLive](#).

Young people are changing the world. And they are proving that every effort – big or small – counts. As Ms. Thunberg put it after the Global Climate Strike. “We proved that it does matter what you do, and that no one is too small to make a difference.”

For more information:

[2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum](#)

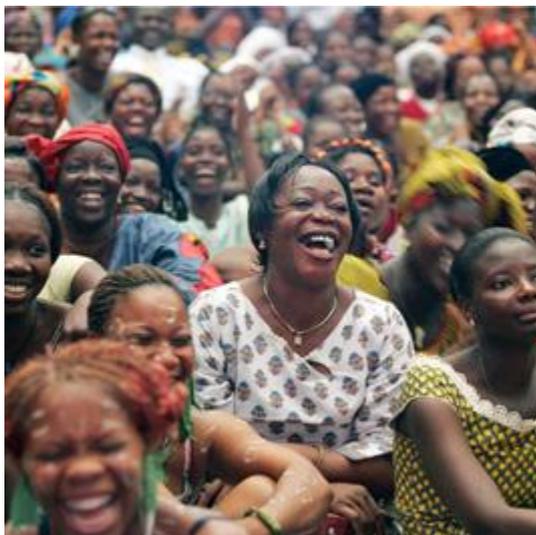
[World Youth Report](#)

[Youth 2030: UN Youth Strategy](#)

[Watch the Forum live via UN Web TV](#)

[SDG Media Zone](#)

## HIGHLIGHTS



### Countries to examine population mega-trends and their impact on realizing the Sustainable Development Goals

The world's population is growing larger and older. Currently at 7.7 billion, the global population is projected to increase to around 9.7 billion by 2050. At the same time, more people are on the move and more people are settling down in urban areas. How will these demographic “mega-trends” impact global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals? Assessing the interlinkages between demographic change, population programmes and sustainable development will be one of the tasks at hand when the Commission on Population and Development convenes at UN Headquarters in New York for its 52nd session on 1-5 April.

This year marks 25 years since the landmark International Conference on Population and Development was held in Cairo. The Commission will examine the gains that have been made in implementing the Programme of Action adopted 25 years ago, as well as the gaps and shortfalls in achieving its goals and objectives. The full implementation of

the Programme of Action is critical for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Programme of Action from the Cairo conference was the first of its kind in promoting a people-centred approach to development grounded in the respect for human rights, empowerment of women and environmental sustainability.

This year's session will celebrate the considerable progress made towards implementing the Cairo agenda over the past quarter century. Milestone achievements include greater access to sexual and reproductive health care, reductions in child and maternal mortality, increased life expectancy, reduced incidence of poverty, improved access to education, and advances in gender equality and empowerment of women.

But the pace of progress has been uneven both within and between regions and countries. While life expectancy has increased in all world regions, the current gap in life expectancy between countries in the more developed regions and the least developed countries is 15 years.

Under-five child mortality rates have fallen by half since 1994. However, a child born in sub-Saharan Africa today is more than 15 times as likely to die before age 5 compared with a child born in the more developed regions. Overall, the benefits of social and economic progress have not been shared equitably.

In some countries, rapid population growth is putting added pressure on service delivery systems and scarce resources. Over time, increased access to education and health care, especially for women and girls, helps to lower birth rates, slowing population growth.

In other countries, historically low levels of fertility are contributing to population ageing and, in extreme cases, to population decline. Such trends present a challenge to sustained economic growth and to social protection systems for older persons.

In all countries, the shift from rural to urban living is bringing advantages for sustainable development, including reduced per capita energy consumption and improved access to services. However, urbanization must be managed well to avoid negative consequences resulting from unbridled urban growth.

In countries of origin and destination throughout the world, migration that is safe, orderly and regular is making a positive contribution to sustainable development. Implementing the 2030 Agenda will help to address the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel some people to leave their homes.

Attaining the shared objectives of the Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda will require a redoubling of efforts to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health care, protect reproductive rights, end poverty, advance quality education, ensure decent work for all, reduce social and economic inequalities, and ensure sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Meeting the demand for a high standard of living from a growing global population, while addressing the environmental impacts of human activities, including climate change, is one of the central challenges of the 21st century.

During its upcoming session, the Commission is expected to adopt a political declaration that reaffirms the commitment by UN Member States to implement the Programme of Action, reflecting also its relevance for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The declaration is expected to deliver further actions to ensure that the Programme's vision is made a reality, benefiting people and development.

For more information:

52nd session of the Commission on Population and Development



## Be part of something greater than the sum of its parts

Partnership is more than simple cooperation towards a common goal. Partnership is about building shared values and capitalizing on comparative strengths and sharing risks to achieve goals that would be impossible to accomplish alone. Every year, the ECOSOC Partnership Forum provides an opportunity to interact with the world's most influential thinkers and actors. The Forum engages high-profile representatives from governments and

non-state actors for dynamic discussions on how to define and promote effective partnerships and how partnerships can best advance the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The 2019 ECOSOC Partnership Forum, to be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 11 April, will focus on the theme "Partnerships driving the inclusive implementation of the SDGs." It will explore how inclusive national partnership platforms can effectively drive the implementation of the SDGs and address existing gaps.

The Forum will also feature innovative examples of partnerships for the SDGs and discuss how to raise the ambition for UN-associated partnerships to make them more effective, accountable and based on results.

Additionally, UN DESA is coordinating a half-day Expert Group Meeting on 12 April to consider the gaps, challenges and good practices learned specifically in regard to implementing SDG 17 in regard to implementing SDG 17, which is specifically about partnerships. The output of this multi-stakeholder meeting will inform discussions at the High-level Political Forum in July.

You too can join the global community of action for the SDGs! If you are already working in partnership for the Goals, register it now on UN DESA's [online platform](#) of multi-stakeholder partnerships and start sharing your experiences and progress with the world. Some examples of partnerships from the platform will be highlighted during the Partnership Forum.

If you are still searching for partners, browse the [platform's](#) more than 4,000 partnerships and voluntary commitments to find a cause that you and your organization can get behind. Register now to connect with a community of over 14,000 users and join a vast, vibrant ecosystem of SDG action. Acting together, we can make the future we want a reality.



## Traditional knowledge – an answer to the most pressing global problems?

Traditional knowledge is the foundation of indigenous peoples' identities, cultural heritage, civilizations, livelihoods and coping strategies over several centuries. Its promotion, protection and preservation is fundamental for the sustainability of the livelihoods of indigenous peoples, their resilience to human-made and natural disasters and the development of their communities. It

is also at the core of the rights of indigenous peoples.

The crucial role of indigenous knowledge for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for addressing the most pressing global problems is gaining international traction. Ahead of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues later this month, we spoke with Chandra Roy-Henriksen, Chief of the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

What are some of the threats for traditional knowledge? What can be done to protect it?

“Centuries of history of discrimination, exploitation, dispossession and colonization have led to the loss of traditional knowledge. Traditional knowledge is under threat and is being misused and misappropriated.

While scientific studies have investigated the tremendous potential of indigenous knowledge, few indigenous communities have gained from this. Innovations in science, technology, medicine, and pharmaceuticals are often based on ages-old indigenous traditional knowledge and genetic resources. Yet the proceeds from these breakthroughs rarely find their way to the communities that originally made them. It is essential to promote the right of indigenous peoples to maintain and safeguard their traditional knowledge, as enshrined in the 2007 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

How can the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples benefit everyone? How can it help us achieve the Sustainable Development Goals?

“Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge has been developed over generations through daily life practices and a close understanding of local environments. It can offer valuable responses to climate change, food insecurity, reducing inequalities and other challenges that we are trying to resolve through the Sustainable Development Goals. Traditional knowledge offers tremendous opportunities in such areas as land management, conservation, and scientific, technological and medical research.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development makes six specific references to indigenous peoples. These include a commitment to double the agricultural output of indigenous small-scale farmers and a commitment to ensure equal access to education for indigenous children. Countries have also committed to empower and engage indigenous peoples in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.”

## How is traditional knowledge generated and transmitted through generations?

“A product of learning through experience and oral traditions passed over centuries, indigenous traditional knowledge is generated, transmitted, and strengthened through rituals, metaphors, proverbs, songs, oral history, human interactions, ceremonies, languages, experiences and practices.

Protecting indigenous languages is fundamental to preserving traditional knowledge. It is through indigenous languages that this knowledge is generated and transmitted. Yet today, close to 2,700 languages are estimated to be in danger of disappearing forever. If we lose them, we also risk losing invaluable knowledge that could have provided answers to some of the world’s greatest problems.

Paradoxically, modern technology can help us preserve and revitalize indigenous knowledge and languages and pass them on to future generations. Partnerships between indigenous peoples and Governments, the UN system, businesses and, increasingly, the communications sector, can help to harness modern technologies to preserve the priceless ancient knowledge.”

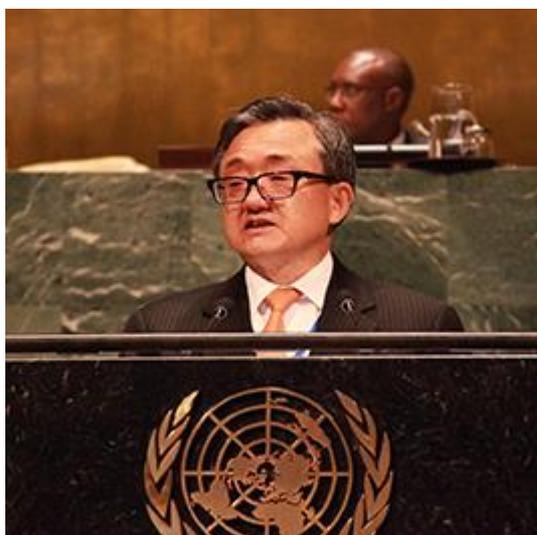
## What can we expect of the upcoming UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues?

“The theme of the 2019 session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is: ‘Traditional knowledge: generation, transmission and protection.’ Countries and indigenous peoples will come together to identify and share good practices that advance indigenous peoples’ rights. It will also be an opportunity to recommend actions that promote and protect indigenous peoples’ rights and preserve their traditional knowledge.

Partners from all over the world will be present and I would like to invite UN agencies and Member States to engage actively with indigenous peoples to make the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples a reality. The UN DESA-led 2015 UN system wide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples is a road map for the UN to support its Member States in this regard.”

For more information: [18th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues \(UNPFII\)](#)

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



### “Inherent power in data and statistics has never been more important”

Better data has the potential to improve our lives in many ways. From delivering better education, improving gender equality, to promoting inclusive societies where everyone is counted. Better data can even save our lives. Striving to deliver better data to improve the lives of people everywhere, the UN Statistical Commission recently concluded its 50th session.

“The inherent power in data and statistics has never been more important than it is today,” said UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin when he opened the 50th session of the Commission on 5 March 2019.

“In an era when the whole international community is mobilized to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we need data to inform policies, to understand the world we live in, and to monitor and assess progress,” Mr. Liu said.

Mr. Liu went on to stress the vast data needs of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to make sure no one is left behind. “This translates into a wide-spread need for more and better financing for data and statistics, not only for generating new capacities and using innovation to solve the data challenges of the 2030 Agenda, but also, for the basic underlying statistical systems and the strengthening of the existing statistical capacity,” he said.

Delegates from 135 countries, 50 agencies and 14 civil society organizations joined the session, which took place from 5 to 8 March 2019 at UN Headquarters in New York.

The Commission examined 32 official documents, covering a broad spectrum of technical statistical fields, including SDG indicators, capacity building programmes, modernization of statistical systems, big data, open data, quality assurance, national accounts, environmental-economic accounting, disaster-related statistics and international migration statistics.

The Commission also prepared for the upcoming 2020 review of the SDG indicator framework, by endorsing guiding principles, criteria and a timeline for the review.

Taking place before and in parallel to the official session, 87 side events were organized to complement and enrich discussions in key areas such as innovation and capacity building on data for sustainable development.

Discussions honed in on the future of economic statistics, the way forward on open data and data interoperability, the integration of statistics and geospatial information, and the role of national statistical offices in implementing the Digital Agenda.

Many of these events also showcased recent advances in the use of innovative data sources and methods in areas such as gender equality, migration, health, disability, sustainable agriculture, climate change and disaster-related statistics.

Multiple side-events focused on new strategies in financing for data and statistics, coordination among UN System agencies, and new approaches for leveraging the power of data and statistics in evidence-based Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of the 2030 Agenda, including a country-led system of federated SDG Data Hubs.

For more information:

For more information: [50th Session of the UN Statistical Commission](#)

## Today's youth are the cornerstone of tomorrow's society



By Elliott Harris, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist

Today's youth are the cornerstone of tomorrow's society. How well-equipped they are with education, skills and professional experience will determine their success and our future. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum, will take place on 8-9 April 2019, providing a platform for young leaders from around the world to engage in a dialogue among themselves and with United Nations Member States and to share ideas for advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for sustainable development, and the Paris Climate Agreement. The Forum serves as a unique space for young people to share their vision and elaborate their substantive contributions to United Nations upcoming meetings.

This month also sees the 2019 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up, to be held 15-18 April at UN Headquarters in New York. Among the important issues to be discussed by the Forum is finding the appropriate policy mix to make growth more inclusive and generate decent work opportunities for all.

*UN DESA's latest Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects* reviews global labour markets, with a focus on youth. Youth employment remains a global policy challenge. Since the global economic crisis in 2009, the number of young persons (aged 15-24) in employment has contracted by more than 15 per cent.

While this partly reflects extended education, globally, 21.2 per cent of young people were in neither employment, education nor training last year. According to ILO's "World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2019", this has long-term implications for income prospects of individuals, and over time, a high share of young people who are neither acquiring skills through education or employment acts as an obstacle to innovation and sustained economic growth.

While youth unemployment is a global problem, the challenge in Africa is particularly daunting. Africa has the youngest population in the world. Countries such as Niger, Uganda, Angola and Mozambique have a median age for their population of below 18

years, and the reduction in infant mortality coupled with slowing but still high fertility rates has translated into a significant “youth bulge” across the continent. It is estimated that about 10-12 million people in the continent are joining the labour force each year, a figure projected to rise further in the next decade. This potentially entails enormous economic benefits. Yet, translating this “youth bulge” into a “demographic dividend” critically depends on the capacity to generate productive jobs.

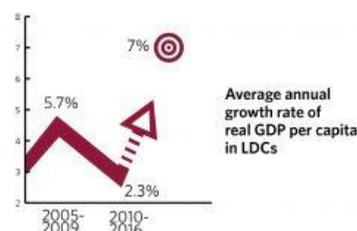
Future labour market situations hinge on initial experiences, including the ability to access the labour market, and on the skills and competencies acquired and continually updated through life-long education and training. A cohort of youth excluded from the labour market can negatively impact many spheres of society, making strategies for youth employment a central piece of sustainable development. Promoting youth capacity building and labour force participation with decent jobs, as well as swift school-to-work transitions remain crucial.

## Decent work and economic growth in numbers



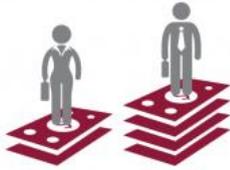
Globally, labour productivity has been on the up and unemployment has decreased. However, we need to make more progress to increase employment opportunities, especially for young people. Informal employment and labour market inequality must be reduced, particularly the gender pay gap. To ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth, we also need to promote safe and secure working environments and improve access to financial services.

For least developed countries, the real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita fell sharply from 5.7 per cent in 2005–2009 to 2.3 per cent in 2010–2016. That is only one third of the SDG 8 target of 7 per cent annual growth.



Labour productivity measures how much economic output an average employee produces. At the global level, productivity grew by 2.1 per cent in 2017. This is the fastest growth registered since 2010.

Earning inequalities are still pervasive: men earned **12.5 per cent more** than women in 40 of 45 countries with data



Globally, 61 per cent or nearly two in every three workers were engaged in informal employment in 2016. Excluding the agricultural sector, 51 per cent of all workers fell into this employment category.

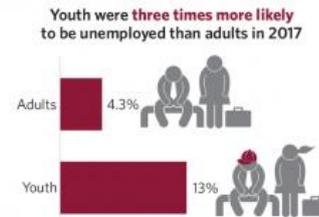
Data from 45 countries suggest that women still earn less than men: in 89 per cent of these countries, the hourly wages of men are, on average, 12.5 per cent higher than those of women.

The global unemployment rate in 2017 was 5.6 per cent, down from 6.4 per cent in 2000. Youth are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults, with the global youth unemployment rate at 13 per cent in 2017.

Worldwide, 152 million children between 5 and 17 years are victims of child labour; almost half of them (73 million) work in hazardous child labour.

For more information:

Sustainable Development Goal 8  
Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018



## Standardization of geographical names – why does it matter?



In today's digital world, standardized geographical names are vital. They help us find our way in society and they also help us organize the world we live in. They also play a key role in our efforts to achieve sustainable development, providing fundamental channels of communication, facilitating cooperation among local, national and international organizations. We also need standardized geographical names in emergency situations. Without them, it can be challenging to respond to crises.

This month, the “new” United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) will convene for its 2019 Session from 29 April to 3 May 2019 at UN Headquarters in New York. The session, organized by UN DESA's Statistics Division, brings together over 150 experts from national naming authorities and academia to discuss strategies and methodologies by which the standardization of geographical

names throughout the world can be advanced for the benefit of all citizens, Governments and non-governmental organizations.

The Session aims to increase awareness of geographical names standardization, share the benefits that names provide to the daily functions in national economies and highlight its role as an enabler in preserving cultural heritage. It is hoped that delegates will be further empowered to strengthen their efforts to collect, manage and disseminate geographical names and forge partnerships and alliances to advance geographical names standardization.

The Group of Experts has had a robust work programme spanning over 50 years, 30 sessions and 11 conferences and many significant milestones. In November 2017, the group was dismantled and recreated with the same name and new working methods. The 2019 session therefore heralds the first session of the new body, with a new agenda and over 90 papers for information and discussion, covering topics such as toponymic training, place names supporting sustainable development, toponymic data files and gazetteers, romanization systems, exonyms, geographical names as cultural heritage, and toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use. In keeping with its new standing the group will be formally launching its new website and a prototype of the world geographical names database web GIS application.

The week's activities include, special presentations, side events featuring working group and divisional meetings, an orientation session for new attendees and special workshops on "Linked Data Developments" and "The Unanswered Questions Relation to Indigenous Toponymy".

The meetings will be streamed live via UN Web TV.

For more information:

United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

1-5 April New York	Commission on Population and Development fifty-second session
8-12 April, New York	Committee of Experts on Public Administration, 18th session
8-9 April, New York	ECOSOC Youth forum
15-18 April, New York	2019 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up
22 April – 3 May, New York	18th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

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