

CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2019 HLPF

STATISTICAL COMMISSION

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The statistical community emphasizes the need for quality, accessible, open, timely and reliable disaggregated data as fundamental for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the full realization of its ambition of leaving no one behind. It also works towards establishing strong systems for reporting and reviews on the sustainable development goals (SDG) at all levels, national and subnational, and global. Thus, it strives to develop methodologies to innovate and modernize statistical production operations, to explore ways to integrate all data sources, including new and innovative sources outside the traditional statistical systems, and to analyze, visualize and disseminate data in an open, timely and effective way while ensuring the quality of statistics. The statistical community also agrees with the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems, especially in the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and other countries in vulnerable situations, to meet the data demands for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and for monitoring and reporting on the SDGs and targets. Furthermore, the statistical community calls for more and better financing to support the national statistical systems in meeting these data demands.

In this context, the Statistical Commission thanks the President of ECOSOC and provides herewith our most salient contributions to the 2030 Agenda, following the template suggested.

I. IDENTIFICATION OF GAPS, AREAS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION, RISKS AND CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING THE SDG

The Statistical Commission has identified insufficient statistical capacity as one of the key challenges for the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. The General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/313, which was adopted on the recommendation of the 48th Session of the Statistical Commission in 2017, stresses the urgent need “to intensify [...] support for strengthening data collection and statistical capacity-building, including capacity-building [...] in developing countries, particularly African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, middle-income countries, countries in situations of conflict and post-conflict countries, using all available means of support”.

The Statistical Commission and the GA resolution also stress the importance of using the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (CTGAP), launched at the first United Nations World Data Forum in Cape Town, South Africa, in January 2017, as the framework for discussion, planning, implementation and evaluation of statistical capacity-building pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda, established by the UNSC in 2015, together with the newly established Friends of the

Chair Group on Economic Statistics, the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics and other statistical entities advance the work of the CTGAP. In 2018, the 2nd UN World Data Forum was hosted by the United Arab Emirates which called in its Dubai Declaration for the establishment of an innovative funding mechanism to mobilize both domestic and international funds to support strengthening the capacity of national statistical systems. A recent study on financing challenges for developing statistical systems estimates the funding gap for operationalizing the six priority areas of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data to be between \$100 million (low ambition scenario) and \$700 million (high ambition scenario). The statistical community at the 50th session of the Statistical Commission supported the establishment of an innovative funding mechanism. The High-level Group continues to work on the case for financing for data and statistics, broadening the outreach and connections between the statistical and donor communities to support countries, advocating for more and better financing and contributing to better coordination across statistical capacity building initiatives.

The Statistical Commission is undertaking multiple efforts to strengthen the capacity of developing countries for the compilation and dissemination of global SDG indicators. In 2018, an e-handbook on the global SDG indicators to help countries in the compilation of the indicators has been launched. The Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training has continued to advance training in official statistics. The Federated Information System of national and global data hubs to facilitate integration of different data sources, promote data interoperability and foster collaboration among partners from different stakeholder groups is entering full implementation phase. Furthermore, the Commission endorsed principles and guidelines for national reporting and dissemination platforms.

In addition, the Statistical Commission's working group on Big Data for official statistics is providing strategic vision, direction and coordination for a global programme on the use new data sources and new technologies. It addresses concerns related to methodology, data quality, new skills and confidentiality, and promotes the practical use of Big Data sources, including capacity-building, training and the sharing of experience.

Furthermore, the newly established Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics was mandated by the Commission at its 50th session (2019) to initiate a broad consultation on the update of the statistical and institutional system of economic statistics. This broad consultation has the objective to consider how the system of economic statistics can be more relevant, responsive and robust for the measurement of the nexuses between the economy, society and the environment. This global consultation on these broader measures of equitable and sustainable economic performance should contribute to the measurement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through a broad dashboard of measures of the economy beyond the traditional measure of GDP. For the first time the Statistical Commission create a FOC Group consisting of statisticians and economists to ensure that the dialogue between users and producers is at the center of the update of the system of economic statistics.

II. VALUABLE LESSONS LEARNED ON EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND ENSURING INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUALITY

The 2nd UN World Data Forum saw over 2,000 participants in attendance, coming from over 100 countries. Different data communities were well represented, including civil society organizations, research institutions, private sector entities, geospatial entities, and national statistical systems. Attendance at the second Forum was overall larger and more diverse than at the first forum, showing the increased level of collaboration across different data communities.

The outcome of the forum is reflected in the Dubai Declaration, which reconfirmed that the implementation of the 2030 agenda requires that national statistical systems transform and develop to be agile and responsive to meet the increased demands of data users. It also reconfirmed the need to support multi-source data collection programmes which integrate administrative data sources, while leveraging the power of new data sources and technologies through partnerships between national statistical authorities and the private sector, civil society, and the academia and other research institutions.

While the second Forum successfully broadened participation, an update of the institutional aspects of the statistical system may be needed to establish enduring interactions with policymakers and other data users. The newly established FoC Group on Economic Statistics by the Commission consisting of economists and statisticians already reflects this consideration. Some key areas for future work highlighted at the forum were how to better incorporate big data into the official data system, improving the sustainability of capacity development initiatives, the need for the data community to be more inclusive in its approach and better coordination at the national and international level as necessary for the effectiveness of the work of the statistics and data community. The UN Global Working Group on Big Data has an important mandate in this respect to take this work forward.

III. EMERGING ISSUES LIKELY TO AFFECT INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUALITY AT VARIOUS LEVELS

Effective policy development is dependent on a solid understanding of the interplay between the economy, society and the environment. National statistical programs must be responsive and provide the necessary data and insights in a timely manner that citizens count on to improve lives. An urgent update is needed to address the economic, social and environmental nexus in order to truly depict and attain the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind, and having meaningful SDGs.

For the measures of the nexus between the economy and the environment, the Statistical Commission has adopted the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) – Central Framework as a statistical standard and recommended the revision of the SEEA Experimental Economic Accounting. The SEEA provide an integrated statistical framework linking environment and economic information in a common framework. The SEEA EEA provides a geospatial perspective to measure ecosystem extent, condition and ecosystem services. Integrating environmental and economic information in the accounting framework provides a powerful tool to assess the contribution of the environment to the economy and the impacts of the economy on the environment thus informing integrated policies. The Commission is urging the use of SEEA for

policy processes, including in the 2020 review of SDG indicators, the Post 2020 biodiversity agenda, climate change, circular economy, etc.

The Statistical Commission stresses the importance of balancing the protection of confidentiality and openness of data; and emphasizes the need to carefully address societal challenges of trust, ethics, privacy, confidentiality and security of data. In this context, the Statistical Commission decided to extend the work of the Friends of the Chair Group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, to provide guidance on evaluation criteria and recommended actions to assist countries transition their official statistical systems towards compliance, and on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles when using new data sources for the production of official statistics;

Also, the Commission established a new working group on Open Data that will address the need for data interoperability principles and tools. The Group will provide guidance for the important role of national statistical offices in implementing open data principles.

IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION REGARDING THE PRINCIPLE OF “ENSURING THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND”

The Statistical Commission adopted in 2017 the global indicator framework, developed by its IAEG on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), which forms the basis for the annual progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals to inform the HLPF. Currently, the Statistical Commission continues its work on the global indicator framework, including annual refinements, a comprehensive review in 2020, and the completion of the methodological development of Tier III indicators and identification of proxy indicators. The IAEG-SDGs has also completed crucial work to define the dimensions and categories of disaggregation of the indicators and identify policy priorities for the most vulnerable population groups in direct response to the need to leave no one behind.

To ensure that statistical systems have the capacity to meet the data demands to ensure that no one is left behind, the Statistical Commission gives particular attention to vulnerable groups where statistical production needs further development, including people living with disabilities, older people, and migrants. The Statistical Commission has contributed to the negotiations of the Global Compact for Migration. The Global Compact’s first objective is dedicated to migration statistics and calls for the collection and utilization of accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies. Accordingly, the Commission is accelerating the finalization of revised Recommendations on Statistics for International Migration to guide the data collection, analysis and dissemination of migration statistics and statistical capacity building in countries.

In the context of the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses endorsed by the Statistical Commission in 2015, a set of methodological advice has been developed to ensure the use of contemporary technologies in conducting population and housing censuses as well as geo-referencing of small area census statistics, in support of spatial and statistical disaggregation for the purpose of generating accurate and geo-referenced SDGs.

The Statistical Commission noted and supported the establishment of the United Nations Legal Identity Expert Group in September 2018. The main objective of the expert group is to provide

advice to countries and develop a unified United Nations position in regard the definition of legal identity in the context of the holistic model for civil registration, vital statistics and identity management, thus ensuring the interoperability of civil registration and identity management systems as main sources of regular and comprehensive vital statistics.

Standards for monitoring the decent work-related SDG indicators are being advanced, and the Statistical Commission will take up the review of existing guidelines and standards relating to statistics on the informal sector and informal employment as part of the update of the statistical system of economic statistics led by the Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics. Coupled with this, the Statistical Commission, mandated its Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS) to continue to work on data disaggregation dimensions and categories for gender relevant SDG indicators and to provide inputs.

Household surveys are an important instrument for countries to provide disaggregated figures, but there is much more potential usage than is currently being exploited. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys will develop new guidance materials on disaggregation based on household survey data. The materials should be linked up and coordinated with other ongoing work to support countries in producing and making more disaggregated SDG indicators available., which is an important contribution regarding the principle of ensuring that no one is left behind. Also the measurement of unpaid household work is on the research agenda for economic statistics.

New data sources, such as satellite data, mobile phone data, payment card data or social media data, are being tested by the statistical community specifically to obtain additional levels of granularity, higher frequency and timelier data for policy purposes.

The Statistical Commission requested its Secretariat, the Statistics Division to develop a global set of climate change statistics and indicators and work is currently underway which will involve, inter alia, a Global Consultation on Climate Change Statistics and Indicators. Furthermore, the Statistical Commission is providing a greater focus on disaster-related statistics given the importance of the Sendai Framework for Disaster-risk Reduction, urging increased capacity building efforts. Finally, the Commission is focusing on SDG indicators that are critical to SIDS, and proposed a list of proxy indicators for immediate use to monitor targets related to Goals 13 and 14 on Climate Change and Oceans, while Tier III indicators are finalized.

V. AREAS WHERE POLITICAL GUIDANCE BY THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM IS REQUIRED

The HLPF is an important forum where discussions should focus on how to ensure the political commitment for building strong data and statistical systems that would help ensure the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It has become evident that without the necessary data, the implementation of the Agenda would be seriously hindered and, the ambition of no one left behind would not be realized.

In particular, the HLPF could provide guidance and support to the statistical community on how to mobilize resources, domestically and internationally to ensure that all countries have the necessary data and statistical system in place to meet the data demands of the 2030 agenda.

The HLPF could also ensure the support at the national and international level to promote and establish a strong dialogue between the statistical and the political communities to ensure that data are relevant and presented and disseminated to meet users' needs and to promote the use of data by policy makers.

VI. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON WAYS TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS IN EMPOWERING PEOPLE, ENSURING INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUALITY

The Statistical Commission needs to play a more active role in the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development as requested in GA Resolution 71/313 (work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda). To give statistics and data and their sources the importance they deserve in terms of policy formulation, one or more sessions of the HLPF should be fully dedicated to data and statistics, their utilization and sources, and to the needs for statistical capacity building. Moreover, where appropriate, the measurement aspect of the SDGs under review could be blended in other sessions on the successes, challenges and lessons learned in their implementation.