

CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2020 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.

1. Key policies and measures to ensure “accelerated action and transformative pathways” for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

a. Critical gaps in implementing the 2030 Agenda within the area of responsibility of the intergovernmental body (bearing in mind interrelations with other goals and targets)

As the demand for data and statistics for monitoring the 2030 Agenda is extensive, the Statistical Commission continues to work to address data gaps, by supporting the development of statistical standards and methodologies. The lack of quality, timely and disaggregated data to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind is one of the critical gaps in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data helps to focus the capacity development needs for statistics and data

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.

One of the main challenges faced by the Statistical Commission and countries is the lack of resources. 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. 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.

Finally, the Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics undertook extensive consultations with existing statistical groups and with countries through regional seminars on the future of economic statistics on user-identified priority areas of development, existence of gaps in priority areas, and the current governance and working methods of statistical groups and is considering the need for a responsive, comprehensive and harmonized system of economic statistics, encompassing macroeconomic accounts, statistical business registers, international classifications, and granular data from household, business and trade statistics. The Statistical Commission’s FOC Group is a driving force to ensure that dialogue between users and producers

is at the center of the update of the system of economic statistics.

b. Priority measures to: i. accelerate action and ii. ensure transformative pathways to realize the decade of action for achieving the 2030 Agenda

A key priority measure is 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.

As laid out in the Dubai Declaration from the 2nd UNWDF held in 2018 in Dubai, the statistical community continues calls for more and better financing to support the national statistical systems in meeting these data demands.

Furthermore, the Statistical Commission identified as a priority the need for a better coordination of the UN statistical system in order to strengthen the voice of the statistical community in the dialogue with policy makers and reduce the data reporting burden and eliminate data discrepancies across the UN system. A better coordinated UN statistical system will help support national statistical offices in their efforts to provide data and statistics for sustainable development.

2. Contribution of the intergovernmental body to accelerated action and transformative pathways and realizing the decade of action and delivery for achieving the 2030 Agenda within its area of responsibility (including its cooperation with ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies)

The Statistical Commission continues to develop statistical standards that help provide the evidence needed. Better coordination of the UN statistical system through strengthening of the capacity of coordination mechanisms and better coordination at the global level will contribute to address a cohesive approach to realizing the Decade of Action.

The Statistical Commission contributes to acceleration action and transformative pathways in the following areas:

- 1) The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) revised the global SDG indicator framework, which significantly improves the overall quality of the indicator framework without adding burden to countries. The revised indicator framework was adopted by the statistical commission and will help the global monitoring of the 2030 Agenda.
- 2) The IAEG-SDGs will develop guidelines and build capacity to improve data disaggregation to measure the poor and people in vulnerable situations.
- 3) Capacity building projects carried out by UNDESA/Statistics Division and regional and international organizations directly respond to the need to enhance monitoring on SDG indicator by supporting countries in improving their statistical systems and overall access to better statistics and data, particularly linked to SDG indicators.
- 4) The Commission strongly supported the Data for Now initiative to build capacity in countries to utilize new data sources for timelier and disaggregated statistics and indicators. The Data for Now initiative aims to increase the use of robust methods and

tools that improve the timeliness, coverage and quality of data on the Goals. The initiative involves working closely with national statistical offices and all relevant government agencies to make innovative methods for data production and analysis easily accessible in order to support and monitor progress towards the Goals. National statistical offices identify the priority areas in which they most urgently need to address measurement issues, data availability and timeliness. The core team facilitates matches with partners that can offer innovative data solutions to address those priorities.

- 5) The development and use of SDMX data structure and metadata structure definition for the exchange and dissemination for SDG data greatly facilitate interoperability and use of data.
- 6) The Commission requested the High-Level Group on Capacity, Coordination and Capacity Building (HLG-PCCB) to establish a working mechanism to address the issue of data stewardship and the role of the statistical offices in the new data ecosystem. This is part of a much larger discussion on how governments should utilize government and private data for policy making, policy execution and the delivery of government services in an information and technology-based economy and society. A much better utilization of data already available within government and development of an adequate and integrated data infrastructure within government, and improved access to data in the private sector would allow a leap forward in closing existing data gaps for SDG data. For this to happen, governments would need to scale-up or further develop their digital strategies, update their regulatory frameworks for data access and use and provide adequate investment into their data infrastructure, especially their national statistical systems;
- 7) The third UN World Data Forum will be held in Bern, Switzerland in October 2020. The forum provides "Data compact for the Decade of Action" and is the critical space for constructive exchange among different data communities and users for the launch of solutions and new initiatives and partnerships. There is a desire to showcase some concrete commitments, especially news way of partnering with different segments of the global community whether Government, private sector, academia or civil society.
- 8) Household surveys are an important instrument for countries to provide disaggregated figures for SDG indicators, but there is much more potential usage than is currently being exploited. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys, in collaboration with IAEG-SDGs, is developing new guidance materials on producing disaggregated data through household surveys and through integrating household survey with other data sources. 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. The Group is also promoting innovative approaches in the area of household surveys that can be equally benefitted by countries at different levels of statistical development.
- 9) The Commission recognized the contribution of The UN Global Working Group on Big Data and the UN Global Platform as a collaborative environment for data innovation by the global statistical community and all its partners, including a broad spectrum of stakeholder communities.

3. Selected recommendations for accelerating progress and moving on transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action, for possible use in drafting the HLPF declaration.

Realization of the sustainable development agenda and the decade of action will require dedicated actions, and the Statistical Commission stands ready to offer its support to this vision.

The decade of action will also need proper funding. The Statistical Commission continues to support the establishment of an innovative financing mechanism, as called for in the Dubai Declaration. The goal is to mobilize both domestic and international funds as it is clear that financing is needed to help Governments strengthen capacity and build sustainable systems. We are also working on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data. This plan is a framework to leverage the activities related to the statistical capacity building necessary to achieve the scope and intent of the 2030 Agenda.

Investing in data and statistics for the SDGs and strengthening statistical capacities to address gaps in data on the Sustainable Development Goals in order to allow countries to provide high-quality, timely, reliable, disaggregated data and statistics and to fully integrate the Sustainable Development Goals in monitoring and reporting systems.

The Statistical Commission would eagerly contribute to a specific session on data and statistics. ECOSOC is in a position to support and enhance the visibility of statistical offices and statistical systems. Under the leadership of Statistical Commission, the official statistical community will continue to provide substantial contributions to the evidence needed for the decade of action.