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**Economic and Social Council**

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**Economic Commission for Africa**  
**Statistical Commission for Africa**  
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**Sixth Session of the Statistical Commission for Africa**

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**Session IV: Outcomes of the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Statistical Commission:  
Africa Perspectives on main Areas**

## **Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention**

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### **Decisions brought to the attention of the Council**

#### **1. Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (49/101)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators,<sup>1</sup> and expressed appreciation to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group and its work streams for the progress made;
- (b) Agreed on the proposed annual refinements, as presented in annex II to the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, and the proposed timeline for the 2020 comprehensive review;
- (c) Expressed its appreciation for the progress made in the methodological development of tier III indicators, expressed concern that some of the Sustainable Development Goals still have a majority of indicators in tier III, and stressed that the further development of tier III indicators will need to continue to advance with urgency, with particular attention to Sustainable Development Goal indicators that are critical to small island developing States;
- (d) Requested the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to consider the feasibility of using tentative existing indicators as proxies for immediate use to monitor targets while tier III indicators are being finalized;
- (e) Also requested the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to clearly determine the dimensions and categories of data disaggregation required for the indicators in the framework, keeping in mind the resources needed and the key principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup> of no one left behind;
- (f) Welcomed efforts by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to improve data flows and global reporting, and also welcomed the draft guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals as an initial step to improve coordination and harmonization of national and international data systems and to ensure full transparency of data, metadata and data aggregates presented in the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database;
- (g) Requested the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to work jointly with custodian agencies and establish a fruitful dialogue between all parties, to further refine the guidelines by taking into account concerns raised at the forty-ninth session of the Commission and to prepare criteria for implementation of the guidelines that are based on best practices and on ways to limit the burden that the envisaged procedures may represent in terms of time and resources for both national and international statistical systems and that resolve outstanding issues;
- (h) Reiterated the urgent need for statistical capacity-building for countries to be able to fully implement the Sustainable Development Goal indicators;
- (i) Welcomed the recognition of the importance of data as a basis for evidence-based policies in the zero draft of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the proposed continuous engagement of the Bureau and the Statistics Division to advise on the statistical aspects of the proposed draft;
- (j) Welcomed, in this context, the proposed work of the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics, including the revision of international recommendations on statistics for international migration;

- (k) Approved the proposed work programme of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, as described in section V of its report.

## **2. High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (49/103)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,<sup>6</sup> and expressed appreciation for the work conducted by the High-level Group over the past year;
- (b) Agreed on the revised terms of reference of the joint subgroup of the High-level Group and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, as presented in annex III to the report of the High-level Group;
- (c) Welcomed the survey and the preliminary results on assessing capacity-building needs jointly conducted by the High-level Group and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century;
- (d) Recognized the need for a collaborative global effort to mobilize sufficient resources to assist with the collection of data needed to meet Sustainable Development Goal reporting requirements, especially those of the least developed countries and small island developing States;
- (e) Recognized the need for stronger coordination and a more efficient United Nations statistical system, as well as the need for a stronger voice for official statistics within the United Nations system;
- (f) Considered, in this context, an early proposal to establish a United Nations chief statistician, and requested the High-level Group to report back to the Commission at its fiftieth session with a proposal that further clarifies the role, seniority and functions of this possible position, among other options, taking into account what is likely to improve global statistical performance in a wider context of ongoing reform processes in the United Nations;
- (g) Requested the High-level Group to conduct consultations with relevant actors, especially the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System;
- (h) Acknowledged the importance of the Commission contributing to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, as stressed by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/313 of 6 July 2017 on the work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and requested the Bureau of the Commission, together with the High-level Group, to work closely together with the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council to ensure that one or more sessions of the high-level political forum are fully dedicated to data and statistics and to the needs for statistical capacity-building;
- (i) Welcomed the work of the High-level Group in exploring ways to establish a financing framework for the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data;
- (j) Acknowledged the work of the High-level Group and the programme committee in preparation for the second United Nations World Data Forum, to held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in October 2018, and reiterated that the Forum should provide the space for dialogue among different data communities, as well as data users such as the media, civil society and policymakers, and for the launch of new initiatives and partnerships for the realization of the data revolution;
- (k) Approved the proposed programme of work for the High-level Group, and requested the High-level Group to report thereon to the Commission at its fiftieth session.

### **3. Open data (49/105)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>9</sup> and agreed with the recommendations emanating from the international seminar on open data for the Sustainable Development Goals, held in Seoul in September 2017, which are described in section V of that report;
- (b) Noted the important role of the national statistical office in promoting data openness, not only for data under its own control, but also for data owned by the private sector, other government agencies or academia, and in this way in redefining the national statistical system to include all data producers and users, taking into account national legal frameworks;
- (c) Noted the urgent need for capacity-building and training for the development of new skills to implement open data initiatives in national statistical offices;
- (d) Stressed the importance of balancing the protection of confidentiality and openness of data;
- (e) Agreed to create a subgroup under the Friends of the Chair group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics to work on principles, guidance and support for implementation of open data in countries;
- (f) Requested that the subgroup deliver on the proposed tasks of reviewing the principles of and legal frameworks for open data, clarifying technical aspects and skills needed and providing guidance on implementation, including anonymization of data, as detailed in paragraph 21 of the report of the Secretary-General;
- (g) Also requested that the subgroup map open data principles to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and address the need for principles and tools for data interoperability;
- (h) Noted the interest of several countries in joining the subgroup;
- (i) Requested the Friends of the Chair group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics to report back to the Commission at its fiftieth session, including on the work of its subgroup on open data.

### **4. Household Survey (49/106)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys;<sup>10</sup>
- (b) Stressed the importance of household surveys as a source of data for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,<sup>11</sup> and recommended that the work on household surveys be considered in an integrated way as part of the current ecosystem of all data sources to meet the data needs for the Sustainable Development Goals, and that the strengths and weaknesses of all sources be outlined;
- (c) Welcomed the work done by the Intersecretariat Working Group to map Sustainable Development Goal indicators that can be derived from household surveys, and agreed that this work should continue in order to understand the contribution of household surveys in statistical production and identify existing gaps;
- (d) Supported the establishment of a trust fund for the implementation of technical coordination, methodological validation and standard-setting, and country consultation and advocacy, as specified in section III of the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group, welcomed in particular the cross-cutting approach taken by the Group, and encouraged the Group to

identify priorities in its workplan and elaborate on the required resources, which should also benefit small island developing States;

- (e) Recognized that many countries need additional resources and capacity-building efforts to conduct surveys to address data needs for the 2030 Agenda;
- (f) Recommended that the Intersecretariat Working Group develop modules that countries can integrate into existing surveys and provide guidance on different methodological areas;
- (g) Encouraged the Intersecretariat Working Group to work on updating the existing methodological guidance on household surveys with a cross-cutting focus, in particular sampling, disaggregation and multimode data collection, and taking into account specific country and regional contexts.

## **5. Big data for official statistics (49/107)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Congratulated the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics on the progress made, as detailed in its report;
- (b) Expressed its appreciation for the products delivered by the Working Group thus far in the form of handbooks, methods and training materials;
- (c) Urged the Working Group to make all of its products and services easily available, ensuring that the quality of each of those products is vetted by an appropriate advisory group whose membership might include experts from national statistical agencies, academia, scientific and technical partners and other communities, as appropriate;
- (d) Confirmed that the use of big data and other new data sources is essential for the modernization of national statistical institutions so that they remain relevant in a fast-moving data landscape;
- (e) Highlighted the opportunity for big data to fill gaps, make statistical operations more cost-effective, enable the replacement of surveys and provide more granularity in outputs;
- (f) Encouraged the Working Group to build on the success achieved thus far by delivering practical products and services for the global statistical system to support the production of statistics and indicators, including the Sustainable Development Goal indicators;
- (g) Commended the International Conferences on Big Data for Official Statistics organized by the Working Group for showcasing the latest developments, in particular the most recent, well-organized and graciously hosted conference, held in Bogota in November 2017, which included hands-on training;
- (h) Supported the Bogota Declaration, which gives direction on the way forward envisioned in this area;
- (i) Supported the plans of the Working Group to establish global data collaboratives and data services where the statistical community will work in partnership with technology companies, data providers and academia, including work to formulate standards and guidelines for data governance and information management;
- (j) Emphasized the need to carefully address societal challenges of trust, ethics, privacy, confidentiality and security of data;
- (k) Endorsed the proposal of the Working Group to further develop a global platform as a collaborative research and development environment for trusted data, services and applications, using exemplars from the Group's task teams to drive the development of a proof of concept based on a federated architecture of data hubs;

- (l) Agreed that the proof of concept phase for the global platform of the Working Group should run from now until March 2020, reiterated the need to present the business case for the platform, and requested that work on the legal, ethical and funding considerations be initiated during this phase and that steps be taken to enable access by small island developing States to big data;

## **6. Environmental-economic accounting (49/110)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Expressed its appreciation for the work of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, as detailed in its report,<sup>18</sup> noted the increased uptake and growing importance of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), and urged the Committee to scale up its work on the implementation of SEEA;
- (b) Requested that the Committee of Experts continue to work on coordinating activities in support of SEEA, making available prominently on its website the super calendar, its work programme and a list of the groups working under the auspices of the Committee and the terms of reference of those groups;
- (c) Supported the advancement of the research agenda of the SEEA Central Framework, and requested the Committee to develop compilation material to support implementation in countries and to advance the work on linking SEEA to Tourism Satellite Accounts in support of the measurement of sustainable tourism;
- (d) Agreed with the revision process of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, and encouraged countries to contribute financially and in kind to the revision process and to continue to experiment and test ecosystem accounts as input to the revision process;
- (e) Stressed the importance of developing global SEEA databases based on existing national or international data sets, whenever possible, reiterated the importance of countries approving the information in the database prior to dissemination, and emphasized the need to strengthen and improve basic statistics in support of SEEA implementation;
- (f) Commended the Committee of Experts for its efforts to strengthen capacity-building in countries through increased coordination, e-learning, face-to-face workshops and in-country technical assistance, ensuring that countries' needs are met in an efficient manner, and encouraged the Statistics Division to expand its support to countries, building upon the successful implementation of the United Nations Development Account project and the experience of the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project funded by the European Union;
- (g) Noted the clarification provided by the Secretariat with regard to the use of the appropriate energy statistics and balances held in international databases as source data for the compilation of national SEEA energy accounts;
- (h) Highlighted that the implementation of SEEA facilitates the breaking up of the silos within the national statistical office and national statistical system, thereby harmonizing concepts, definitions and terminology across the national statistical system;
- (i) Noted the strong support for using SEEA in compiling Sustainable Development Goal indicators when relevant, and requested that the Committee of Experts take an active role in the Sustainable Development Goal indicators process in view of the review of the indicators in 2020;
- (j) Took note of the communications strategy, and welcomed the newsletter and the efforts to promote SEEA within the statistical community and to policymakers and other stakeholders;

- (k) Requested that oceans statistics be integrated in the work of the revision process of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, and noted the interest of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Environment Programme in taking the lead in this work;
- (l) Welcomed the release of SEEA Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in collaboration with the Statistics Division, and encouraged its implementation.

## **7. Statistics for economies based on natural resources (49/111)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Commended the Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies Based on Natural Resources for the work carried out, as detailed in its report;<sup>19</sup>
- (b) Endorsed the handbook on statistics for economies based on natural resources, and urged that it be published quickly;
- (c) Acknowledged that the Group had completed its original work assignment, but noted that there is a larger area of work related to natural resources that should be addressed, and requested the Bureau to consult with stakeholders to decide on the most appropriate work arrangements.

## **8. Agriculture and rural statistics (49/112)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on recent developments in agricultural and rural statistics;<sup>20</sup>
- (b) Congratulated the Global Strategy Steering Committee and the regional partners on the excellent work done in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, and noted with appreciation the results achieved in implementing its objectives in the research and development of cost-effective methodologies for food and agricultural statistics, training materials and the delivery of technical assistance to countries;
- (c) Supported the preparation of a second action plan for the Global Strategy, with a focus on implementing cost-effective methods at the country level, and requested the inclusion of the Latin American and Caribbean region in the implementation of the second action plan;
- (d) Commended the work being carried out by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics to advance methodological developments in agricultural statistics, and supported its continued efforts;
- (e) Endorsed the proposed guidelines for the collection of food data in household consumption and expenditure surveys, and urged their implementation in order to improve international comparability in this area;
- (f) Took note of the final draft of volume 2 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020, and encouraged Member States to use it as a reference for the implementation of the 2020 round of the census of agriculture;
- (g) Urged Member States to conduct at least one census of agriculture in the period 2016–2025;
- (h) Requested countries, resource partners and other donors to mobilize resources for the implementation of the 2020 round of the census of agriculture;
- (i) Welcomed the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics, in partnership with the European Commission, the Organization for Economic



Cooperation and Development and the World Bank, on developing an international and integrated definition of urban and rural areas, and supported the proposal to submit this definition for discussion at the fiftieth session of the Commission, in 2019;

- (j) Welcomed and supported the advancement in the definition of small-scale food producers, and requested that further work be carried out.

## **9. Work and employment statistics (49/117)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the International Labour Organization on recent developments in work and employment statistics,<sup>26</sup> fully supported the wide implementation of the new standards for statistics on work, employment and labour underutilization, adopted at the Nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, and acknowledged the contribution of the standards to the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators related to decent work;
- (b) Noted the implications of the new standards on national labour-force statistics programmes, and requested guidance to develop a communications strategy to introduce the changes to users and guidance on how labour-force statistics can be used in policymaking;
- (c) Urged the International Labour Organization and its partners to speed up the process of issuing practical guidance and survey tools and to provide assistance to countries in a timely manner during their transition to the new standards for work statistics;
- (d) Commended the methodological work and extensive consultation process carried out by the International Labour Organization in preparation for the forthcoming Twentieth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, and welcomed the proposal to update the 1993 International Classification of Status in Employment to enable monitoring of recent changes in employment relationships, including the new identification of dependent contractors;
- (e) Supported the proposal of the International Labour Organization to undertake a review of existing guidelines and standards relating to statistics on the informal sector and informal employment in close collaboration with the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics.