



# Economic and Social Council

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## Statistical Commission

### Forty-sixth session

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Item 4 (q) of the provisional agenda\*

**Items for information: follow-up to the policy decisions of the  
General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council**

## **Policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2014/219, the Secretary-General is honoured to transmit a report in order to brief the Statistical Commission on the policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council adopted in 2014, or earlier, that are relevant to its work. The report also indicates the actions that were taken or are proposed by the Commission and the Statistics Division in an effort to respond to the requests made by the Assembly and the Council. The Commission is invited to take note of the present report.

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\* E/CN.3/2015/1.



## **Policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission**

### **I. Follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals**

#### **A. Action requested by the General Assembly**

1. In General Assembly resolution 65/1, the Secretary-General was requested to report annually on progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals until 2015 and to make recommendations for further steps to advance the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. At its sixty-ninth session, the Assembly considered the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals: options for sustained and inclusive growth and issues for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015” (A/69/201). The report provided a review of progress achieved, an analysis of policy options for sustained, inclusive and equitable growth for achieving the Goals, and the road map for the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda. In particular, the report emphasized that effective collection, analysis and dissemination of data in a scientifically rigorous manner are crucial for success in goal-setting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of progress, and following up on accountability at the global, regional, national and subnational levels.

#### **B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division**

2. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs prepared the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2014*, which was launched by the Secretary-General on 7 July 2014 in New York. The report describes the yearly assessment of global progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, based on regional and subregional aggregates on the official indicators as provided by the partner agencies. The Division also prepared a statistical annex for the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/69/1), in which it provided official data on all the Millennium Development Goal indicators. The report of the Secretary-General on indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (E/CN.3/2014/29), submitted for the Statistical Commission at its forty-fifth session, also contains information on how the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal indicators initiated a review on lessons learned from the Goal monitoring process. In addition, the Division, in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), prepared the Millennium Development Goals Gender Chart 2014, which was launched at the fifth-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York on 10 March 2014. Section II.B of the present report provides information on additional ongoing work to prepare for a post-2015 monitoring framework.

## **II. Broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product**

### **A. Action requested by the General Assembly**

3. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, concluded with the adoption of the outcome document, entitled “The future we want” (General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex). In paragraph 38 of the outcome document, Member States referred to the work of the Statistical Commission and recognized the need for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decisions, and in that regard, requested the United Nations Statistical Commission, in consultation with relevant United Nations system entities and other relevant organizations, to launch a programme of work in this area, building on existing initiatives.

4. The request was reiterated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/214, entitled “Harmony with nature”, in which the Assembly encouraged all countries and the relevant bodies of the United Nations system to develop and strengthen the quality and quantity of basic statistical data on the three pillars of sustainable development and invited the international community and the pertinent bodies of the United Nations system to assist the efforts of developing countries by providing capacity-building and technical support. In the same resolution, the Assembly recognized the need for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decisions, and recalled in this regard the request made to the Statistical Commission, in paragraph 38 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

5. At the end of its thirteenth session, on 19 July 2014, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals adopted its outcome document ([A/68/970](#) and Add.1 and Corr.1), which contains 17 goals and 169 targets, thereby concluding its work. On 10 September 2014, in its resolution 68/309, the General Assembly took formal action on the Open Working Group’s proposal for sustainable development goals. The Assembly welcomed the report and decided that the Open Working Group’s proposal would be the main basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda, while recognizing that other inputs would also be considered in that intergovernmental negotiation process at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

6. In the outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, convened by the President of the General Assembly on 25 September 2013, Member States agreed to hold a high-level summit in September 2015 to adopt the post-2015 development agenda (see para. 26 of General Assembly resolution 68/6). Thus, the final phase of the intergovernmental consultations on such an agenda will culminate during the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly. As an input to the intergovernmental negotiations to be launched at the beginning of the sixty-ninth session, the Secretary-General was called upon to synthesize the full range of inputs then available and to present a synthesis report before the end of 2014 (resolution 68/6, para. 25). On 4 December 2014, the Secretary-General released the unedited advance version of his synthesis

report, in which explicit reference is made to the report of the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.

## **B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division**

7. At its forty-fourth session (26 February-1 March 2013), the Statistical Commission created the Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress (decision 44/114) in response to the request of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to launch a programme of work on broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decisions. The mandate given by the Commission was to build a work programme to develop broader measures of progress based on a stocktaking exercise of current national, regional and international practices in this field. The group was also requested to monitor closely the ongoing debate on development frameworks and to keep the Bureau of the Statistical Commission informed, undertaking an active dialogue with United Nations bodies and the policy sphere in order to ensure that a robust statistical measurement approach be incorporated from the outset in preparations for the post-2015 development agenda.

8. During 2014, the Friends of the Chair group continued its support of the intergovernmental process and its work to develop broader measures of progress and conducted the following activities:

(a) In March 2014, the Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission officially transmitted a compendium of 29 statistical notes to the Co-Chairs of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals as an input to the deliberations on the sustainable development goals. The statistical notes had been drafted under the auspices of the Friends of the Chair group by experts from many national statistical offices and international organizations, steered and coordinated by the Statistics Division;

(b) In March and April 2014, the Friends of the Chair group provided comments on the indicator proposal of the Sustainable Development Solution Network and an initial assessment of the 100 proposed indicators in terms of measurability, based on a consultation with Friends of the Chair group members and international organizations;

(c) In June 2014, the Friends of the Chair group provided the Open Working Group Co-Chairs with a correlation between available indicators and the targets contained in the Open Working Group's "zero draft," and an assessment of the broad data availability for these indicators in countries. This input was partly based on the work of the Friends of the Chair group on the indicator proposal of the Sustainable Development Solution Network;

(d) In September 2014, the Friends of the Chair group developed and tested a survey (a) to complete the compendium of national practices on broader measures of progress and (b) to obtain information on the availability of data for indicators to measure the Sustainable Development Goals and the associated 107 substantive

targets proposed by the Open Working Group.<sup>1</sup> On 14 October, the survey was sent to all countries.

9. At its forty-sixth session, the Commission will consider the report of the Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress (E/CN.3/2015/2). The report presents an overview of the activities of the Friends of the Chair since the last Statistical Commission session and key activities of other partners that are relevant for the implementation of a monitoring framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda. The report also presents a road map for the development and implementation of an indicator and monitoring framework for the post-2015 development agenda. Moreover, the report discusses expected data requirements and data gaps based on the first results of a survey to countries, the full results of which are presented in a second background document. Furthermore, the report suggests a workplan of the Friends of the Chair, which includes further work on globally agreed measures of progress.

10. At its forty-sixth session, the Commission will also consider the report of the Secretary-General on emerging issues (E/CN.3/2015/3), which highlights the main recommendation of the report of the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, available to the Commission as a background document. The group was created by the Secretary-General to provide advice on how to close the data gaps and strengthen national statistical capacities, to assess new opportunities linked to innovation, technical progress and the surge of new public and private data providers and to utilize the data revolution for sustainable development.

### **III. Global geospatial information management**

#### **A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council**

11. In its resolution 2011/24, the Economic and Social Council, recognizing, inter alia, the importance of integrating cartographic and statistical information, as well as geospatial data, decided to establish the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, to be established and administered within existing resources and organized accordingly, and requested the Committee to present to the Council in 2016 a comprehensive review of all aspects of its work and operations in order to allow Member States to assess its effectiveness. The Council encouraged Member States to hold regular high-level multi-stakeholder discussions on global geospatial information, including through the convening of global forums, with a view to promoting a comprehensive dialogue with all relevant actors and bodies and emphasized the importance of promoting national, regional and global efforts to foster the exchange of knowledge and expertise in order to assist developing countries in building and strengthening national capacities in that field.

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<sup>1</sup> The indicator sets used for this exercise does not imply any judgement on the part of the Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress or the Statistics Division on what indicators or indicator sets should be selected to measure the specific targets. Furthermore, if no indicator is listed under a specific target this by no means implies that no indicator exists or that it is difficult to create such an indicator; it only means that the analysed indicator sets did not contain any indicator that matched this target. For further details, see appendix 2 of the questionnaire: Note on the selection of indicators included in the questionnaire.

## **B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division**

12. The Commission considered the report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information ([E/CN.3/2014/31](#) and Corr.1) at its forty-fifth session and took note of the progress achieved in the establishment and the work of the Expert Group, including a proposal to convene a Global Forum on the topic on the margins of the fourth session of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management in August 2014. At its current session, the Commission will consider the report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information ([E/CN.3/2015/37](#)). The report details the outcomes of two key events organized by the Statistics Division, namely, the first Global Forum on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, held in New York, in conjunction with the fourth session of Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, and the International Workshop on Integrating Geospatial and Statistical Information, held in Beijing in October 2014.

13. The Statistics Division, together with the Cartographic Section of the Department of Field Support, organized the fourth session of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management held from 6 to 8 August 2014 in New York. At the meeting, the Committee of Experts considered and made progress on a number of critical issues relevant to many national geospatial information authorities and international organizations engaged in this field of work. Key decisions were made in relation to: a global geodetic reference frame; a knowledge base for geospatial information management; the integration of geospatial, statistical and other information; legal and policy frameworks; determining global fundamental geospatial data themes; geospatial information to support the post-2015 development agenda; national institutional arrangements; developing a shared statement of principles on the management of geospatial information; and implementation and adoption of standards. In its report, ([E/2014/46-E/C.20/2014/15](#)) the Committee of Experts adopted a decision recommending that a draft resolution on a global geodetic reference frame for sustainable development be referred to the Economic and Social Council for endorsement and further referral to the General Assembly.

14. In order to reach out to the global geospatial community, and as requested by the Economic and Social Council, the Statistics Division, together with the Cartographic Section of the Department of Field Support, organized the third High-level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management held in Beijing, from 22 to 24 October 2014, with the theme “Sustainable Development with Geospatial Information”. The Forum addressed the role of geospatial information in the post-2015 development agenda and current critical sustainable development matters, such as: mitigating and managing climate change and disasters; sustainable cities and human settlements; science, technology and innovation to measure and monitor progress; and working together across borders and regions. At the conclusion of the Forum, the Beijing Declaration was issued ([ggim.un.org/3rd%20HLF.html](#)).

## **IV. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions on population and development**

### **A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council**

15. In 2014, the Commission on Population and Development of the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 2014/1 on the Assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. In the resolution, the Commission encouraged Governments to monitor their progress towards the implementation of the Programme of Action, the key actions for its further implementation and other internationally agreed development goals at the regional, national and local levels, and in that regard to make special efforts to strengthen their civil registration and vital statistics, and health information systems, and to develop the capacity of relevant national institutions and mechanisms to generate population data, disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other categories, as needed to monitor progress and ensure accountability.

### **B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division**

16. At its forty-sixth session, the Commission will consider the report of the Secretary-General on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme and on preparations for the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme (E/CN.3/2015/6) and the report of the Secretary-General on civil registration and vital statistics (E.CN.3/2015/22). Acknowledging population and housing censuses as one of the major sources for demographic statistics necessary for development planning, the former report will call for the endorsement of the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme for 2015-2024.

17. The Statistics Division continues to collect key demographic statistics disaggregated by sex, age and other categories, and publish them in the *Demographic Yearbook* and *Population and Vital Statistics Report*. During 2014, the Division provided direct technical support to Myanmar and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the conduct of their respective population and housing censuses and the processing of census data. With the aim of strengthening the capacity of relevant national institutions, the Division organized the Workshop on Integrating a Gender Perspective into the Production of Statistics targeting gender statistics and census experts, in Jordan, from 1 to 4 December 2014, and the Workshop on the newly revised Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, in Ethiopia, from 2 to 4 December 2014. In 2014, the Division also established the Global Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Group as a forum for the exchange of information and for forging strategic priorities among international and regional organizations in strengthening national civil registration and vital statistics systems.

## **V. Improving the collection, reporting and analysis of data on migration and persons with disabilities**

### **A. Action requested by the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council**

18. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2014/6 on Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and mainstreaming disability in the post-2015 development agenda, encouraged Member States, the United Nations system and all relevant stakeholders to improve disability data collection, analysis and monitoring for development policy planning, implementation and evaluation, taking fully into account regional contexts, to share, where appropriate, relevant data and statistics with relevant agencies and bodies within the United Nations system, including the Statistical Commission, through appropriate mechanisms, and to underline the need for internationally comparable data and statistics disaggregated by sex and age, including information on disability.

19. The General Assembly held a High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, on 3 and 4 October 2013, during its sixty-eighth session. In his report, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the human rights of migrants called for States to improve data collection and indicators in all areas relevant to migration, in order to make informed policy decisions ([A/68/283](#), para. 127).

20. Furthermore, in its resolution 68/4, by which it adopted the Declaration of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, the General Assembly emphasized the need for reliable statistical data on international migration, including, when possible, on the contributions of migrants to development in both origin and destination countries. The Assembly noted the importance of this data for evidence-based policymaking and decision-making in all relevant aspects of sustainable development.

### **B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division**

21. At its forty-fifth session, the Commission considered the report of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics ([E/CN.3/2014/10](#) and Corr.1). At the same session, the Commission also considered the report of the Secretary-General on migration statistics ([E/CN.3/2014/20](#)). The Statistics Division continues to collect migration statistics from national statistical offices for the publication of the *Demographic Yearbook*. The Division also organized, in collaboration with the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, a Workshop on Strengthening the Collection and Use of International Migration Data for Development, in Ethiopia, from 18 to 21 November 2014. The main objective of the workshop was to strengthen the technical capacity of Government officials involved in producing migration data and using data on migration to inform national migration policies and development planning. This was the first in a series of jointly organized events in the area of demographic statistics that are planned by two substantive divisions of the Department.



## **VI. Multi-year programme of work for annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council**

### **A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council**

22. As mandated by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2006/44, a meeting of the Council with the chairs of the functional commissions is held in the early part of each year. The theme of the annual ministerial review for 2015 is “Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: what will it take”. The substantive contributions of the Council’s functional commissions and expert bodies are considered essential to the success of the reviews.

### **B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division**

23. At its forty-sixth session, the Commission will consider the report of the Secretary-General on development indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals ([E/CN.3/2015/36](#)). The report describes the work carried out by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators and the Statistics Division in 2014 in the following areas: improving methodology for the monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, strengthening statistical capacity-building for national monitoring, preparing for the final evaluation of the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, and supporting the intergovernmental discussion on the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals for the post-2015 development agenda. The report presents an assessment of data availability to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and describes the preparation of the yearly reports on progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

24. The Commission will also consider the report of the World Bank and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) on an action plan for post-2015 statistical development ([E/CN.3/2015/35](#)). The report presents recent initiatives to draw attention to the importance of strengthening statistical capacity, especially in the context of supporting the post-2015 development agenda. The report also highlights progress in implementing the Busan Action Plan for Statistics and reflects on emerging topics likely to affect national statistical systems such as the data revolution.