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Items for information: coordination of statistical programmes

Report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2021/224 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities. The report provides an overview of the work carried out by the Committee in 2021 and a summary of the main conclusions of the Committee at its thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth sessions. The Statistical Commission may wish to take into account the views of the Committee in its discussions under the relevant agenda items and is invited to take note of the report.

* [E/CN.3/2022/1](#).



I. Historic context

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities is an inter-agency body that promotes coordination and cooperation across statistical programmes in regional, supranational and international organizations. The Committee currently has 45 members,¹ 29 of which are also members of the Committee for the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System. Some 41 members of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities attended at least one of the two sessions in 2021, both of which were held virtually. The Committee's terms of reference are available online.²

2. The Committee operates through a network of task teams and generally holds two formal sessions per year. The thirty-seventh session was held remotely on 26 February 2021, prior to the fifty-second session of the Statistical Commission, and the thirty-eight session was held remotely on 5 and 8 November 2021.

3. In addition to the two current Co-Chairs, Angela Me (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and Haishan Fu (World Bank), the work of the Committee was supported by three vice-chairs: Mariana Kotzeva (Eurostat), Oliver Chinganya (Economic Commission for Africa) and Steve MacFeely (formerly United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, now World Health Organization).³ The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat serves as the secretariat of the Committee; it also maintains the web pages of the Committee on the Division website.⁴

II. Work of the Committee in 2021

A. COVID-19

4. The challenges brought by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) to international statistical programmes remained one of the main topics that occupied the Committee in 2021. Throughout the pandemic, the international statistics community has continued to work together, in partnership with national statistical offices and systems around the world, to ensure that the best-quality data and statistics are available to support decision-making during and after the crisis. Members continued to work together in two main areas: assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the work of national statistical offices to tailor technical support to the new needs and better coordinate different efforts, including building and rebuilding capacity; and delivery of international statistics that could describe almost in real-time the rapid social and economic changes triggered by the pandemic.

1. Committee publication entitled "How COVID-19 is changing the world: a statistical perspective"

5. The United Nations and other member organizations of the Committee collect and make available free of charge a wealth of impartial data and statistics in the spirit of promoting fact-based planning. In this spirit and in response to the pandemic, the Committee had created a new publication entitled "How COVID-19 is changing the world: a statistical perspective", the first two volumes of which were published in 2020.⁵ A third volume was published in March 2021. All volumes are available on the

¹ See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/members.cshtml>.

² <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/documents/TORfinal.pdf>.

³ See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/documents/Table-Chairs.pdf>.

⁴ See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/>.

⁵ Volume I was released on 13 May 2020, and volume II on 1 September 2020.

Committee's website as well as member organizations' websites.⁶ A total of 39 international organizations have thus far contributed to the publication, which presents a snapshot of some of the most recent information available on how COVID-19 is affecting the world. Owing to the high interest from their users, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) translated all three volumes of the publication into Russian.⁷

6. The publication received excellent feedback, including from the Office of the Secretary-General and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.⁸ The Committee also conducted a broader assessment of the usefulness and usage of the publication, which revealed that outreach for volume I was the most successful. Social media, especially Twitter, proved to be a valuable tool in reaching a wider audience. However, given that the lack of data and the inconsistency in metrics tracked across organizations was a challenge in assessing the outreach of past publications, the Committee decided to develop a more cohesive plan for collecting metrics for future joint publications.

7. The Committee will issue a fourth volume in 2022 to document the next phase of the pandemic.

2. Country needs assessment and related surveys

8. The Committee received regular briefings on the global needs assessment survey conducted by the World Bank and the Statistics Division in collaboration with the regional commissions. The first four rounds of the survey took place in May, July and October 2020 and May 2021, covering various thematic areas. The aggregated results of each round have been made available on the website of the Division and the World Bank. Disaggregated data from the survey have also been made available to Committee members, upon request, subject to individual countries consenting to the sharing of data. The Committee was also briefed on the preliminary results of the most recent round in August and September 2021, convened by the Division, the World Bank and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, focusing on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (see also [E/CN.3/2022/4](#), paras. 22–24).

9. In September and October 2020, the Partnership, a member of the Committee, conducted a short survey,⁹ developed with the World Bank and the Statistics Division, on how international organizations have been affected by the pandemic. Some of the main findings were that, as more than 90 per cent of the organization had shifted to remote working and as travel restrictions were in force, the most affected areas of work were the delivery of technical assistance (80 per cent) and the collection of data (65 per cent). However, most members perceived coordination on the international level to be strong and coordination with partner countries to be positive. Members also reported being generally well prepared for a continuing or future crisis by virtue of their remote working setup. However, many members expected their work with countries to be affected despite moves to remote or e-learning.

⁶ See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/pubs/>.

⁷ The Russian translations are also available on the website of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/pubs/>.

⁸ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2020-05-14/note-correspondents-the-virtual-meeting-of-the-chief-executives-board>.

⁹ See https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/CCSA_Final.pdf.

B. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

10. Following Statistical Commission decision 52/101(m), in which the Commission requested the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and custodian agencies to continue their dialogue to enhance the data flow process for global reporting, including by identifying good practices and further refining tools to effectively coordinate data requests to countries, the Co-Chairs of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group and of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the Committee for the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System, together with some key custodian agencies, held two meetings, in May and September 2021, to discuss how to implement this decision and address countries' concerns. Key recommendations from the meetings were reported by the Group in [E/CN.3/2022/2](#) (see paras. 13–16). The Co-Chairs of the Group and of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the Committee for the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System will continue to have regular meetings in order to ensure that dialogue remains open to address further concerns.

11. In its decision 52/101(j), the Commission stressed the need for enhanced technical and financial support in order for countries to build capacity for monitoring, for the production of Sustainable Development Goal indicators and for the modernization of statistical systems. In response to this request, the Committee – through a member survey – has collected information on capacity-building activities by custodian agencies and other organizations that support the production of Goal indicators. Material collected through the survey will be made available in a knowledge base on a Group webpage on the subject of capacity-building. More details were reported by the Group in [E/CN.3/2022/2](#) (see paras 18–19).

C. Strengthening the interlinkages with the geospatial community

12. Over the past years, the Committee has intensified its work in the area of geospatial information and started engaging further with the geospatial community, in particular the United Nations Geospatial Network, which is “a coalition of entities within the United Nations system which engage in geospatial information management activities”.¹⁰ The United Nations Geospatial Network reports to a complementary subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, and offers a practical mechanism that the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities can use to support the integration of statistical and geospatial information within the United Nations system.

13. As a first joint activity, the Committee and the United Nations Geospatial Network organized a workshop on the integration between geospatial and statistical information in international organizations and Member States. The workshop – held virtually from 28 April to 12 May 2021 and hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – provided members of the Committee and the Network with the opportunity to share best practices, lessons learned and transferable skills among international organizations on the following themes: (a) the production of statistics and geospatial

¹⁰ “The Network mission is to strengthen the coordination and coherence of geospatial information management within the United Nations system, including its overarching trends, technology, practices, data, needs, capacity-building, and partnerships. The Network is composed of designated representatives, nominated by United Nations system entities. Representatives are to be considered as the most senior geospatial professional within their entity and are supported by a nominated alternate representative.” (see <https://ggim.un.org/UN-GGIM-Thematic-Groups/>).

information through integrated methodologies and enabling technologies; (b) the visualization and dissemination of geospatial information and statistics; and (c) technical assistance and capacity-building delivered to Member States to improve integration between national statistics and geospatial information. Each of the four sessions of the workshop was attended by between 150 and 200 participants.

14. The Committee and the Network agreed to develop the operational capacity of their members and foster the collaboration and coordination of technical assistance delivered to Member States. Specific activities in this area are guided by the mandates of the respective intergovernmental bodies for both the Committee and the Network and include: (a) agreeing to pursue a common vision and joint plan of action for mutually strengthening statistical and geospatial integration within the United Nations system, through fostering inter-agency cooperation; (b) empowering representatives of international organizations to improve the operational integration and interoperability of statistics and geospatial information within their organization; and (c) promoting the sharing of resources and experiences.

D. Other work areas

15. The Committee contributed an article entitled “Spotlight 8.1: The need for a new global consensus on data: A call to action” to the *World Development Report 2021*¹¹ in which it highlighted the possible need for a global data convention.

III. Publications and presence at international conferences

A. Publications by the Committee

16. The Committee publishes various outputs on its website, including the new publication “How COVID-19 is changing the world: a statistical perspective”, three volumes of which have been published thus far.¹²

17. Earlier publications include the special-issue paper entitled “Case studies: using non-official sources in international statistics” (September 2016),¹³ which complements a paper entitled “Recommended practices on the use of non-official sources in international statistics” (November 2013).¹⁴

B. Committee presence at international conferences

18. The Committee has regularly organized special sessions at relevant international conferences such as the World Statistics Congress of the International Statistical Institute, the International Association for Official Statistics conference and the European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics. Most recently, the Committee organized a session on the theme “Do we need a global data convention to achieve sustainable development?”¹⁵ at the United Nations World Data Forum of 2021, which was held from 3 to 6 October in Bern and for which the Committee published a blog post entitled “A global data convention to safeguard sustainable development.”¹⁶

¹¹ World Bank, *World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives* (Washington, D.C., 2021).

¹² See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/pubs/>.

¹³ Available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub/2016docs-28th/E-publication.pdf>.

¹⁴ Available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/practices.pdf>.

¹⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNcq-unRJyM>.

¹⁶ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/undataforum/blog/a-global-data-convention-to-secure-sustainable-development/>.

IV. Future work

19. The Committee will continue its work in the relevant areas as outlined above. It will hold its thirty-ninth session ahead of the fifty-third session of the Statistical Commission. The fortieth session will be held during the fourth quarter of 2022.

V. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

20. The Commission may wish to take into account the views of the Committee in its discussions under the relevant agenda items and is invited to take note of the present report.
