Economic and Social Council

Statistical Commission
Fifty-fourth session
28 February–3 March 2023
Item 4 (d) of the provisional agenda*
Items for decision: crime and criminal justice statistics

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico on corruption measurement

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2022/324 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Drugs and Crime and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) on corruption measurement, which is presented to the Statistical Commission for its consideration. The report provides details of the context regarding the measurement of corruption and the statistical framework, provided as a background document, for measuring the different dimensions and impacts of corruption and the effects of the policies aimed at preventing and combating it. National statistical offices can play a key role in facilitating participation and coordination among relevant national institutions, implementing statistical standards on corruption measurement and ensuring data consistency and transparency.

The Commission may wish to welcome the statistical framework for measuring corruption in coordination with the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

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* E/CN.3/2023/1.

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Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico on corruption measurement

I. Introduction

1.   In 2022, at the fifty-third session of the Statistical Commission, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) submitted their joint report on crime and criminal justice activities (E/CN.3/2022/14), in which they described progress made, since their earlier report (E/CN.3/2013/11), on implementing the road map to improve the quality and availability of crime and criminal justice statistics at the national and international levels. According to the road map, prioritized activities are structured around three main pillars:

   (a)   Development of new methodological tools;

   (b)   Promotion of capacity-building activities;

   (c)   Strengthening of international data collection and analysis.

2.   In its decision 53/113 (see E/2022/24), the Statistical Commission expressed its appreciation for the progress achieved in improving the quality and availability of crime and criminal justice statistics, stressed the need to monitor progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and endorsed the conceptual framework for the statistical measurement of illicit financial flows, and the statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as "femicide/feminicide"), and welcomed the standardized Sustainable Development Goal 16 Survey.

3.   The Statistical Commission, at its fiftieth session, welcomed the *Manual on Corruption Surveys: Methodological Guidelines on the Measurement of Bribery and Other Forms of Corruption through Sample Surveys, 2018*, and requested UNODC to disseminate it widely.

II. Need to measure corruption

4.   Corruption takes many forms and affects all sectors of society with different drivers and consequences. Therefore, to monitor corruption effectively, a single indicator or definition remains insufficient.

5.   Assessments of the level of corruption have been produced at both the national and the international levels over recent decades, most of them based on perception-based indicators of corruption. Indices such as the control-of-corruption indicator of the World Bank or the corruption perceptions index of Transparency International serve to identify perceptions and drivers of corruption and raise awareness of the negative effects of corruption on sustainable development.

6.   The results of those measurements, however, do not provide the type of information that decision-makers require to monitor different types of corruption-related behaviours or to identify sectors, government procedures and formalities that are more vulnerable to corruption. Although important progress has been made in measuring bribery in households and businesses through the development of methodologies for Goal indicators 16.5.1 and 16.5.2, there is a lack of consolidated methodologies for producing reliable measurements of the magnitude of different

types of corruption beyond bribery, the risks associated with corruption, and the effectiveness of policies for preventing and tackling that corrosive phenomenon.

III. Mandate and process for developing a statistical framework for measuring corruption

7. The importance of measurement is embedded in article 61 of the Convention against Corruption, on the collection, exchange and analysis of information on corruption, in which Member States are called upon to consider analysing, in consultation with experts, trends in corruption in their territory, as well as the circumstances in which corruption offences are committed, and developing and sharing with each other and through international and regional organizations statistics, analytical expertise concerning corruption and information with a view to developing, insofar as possible, common definitions, standards and methodologies, as well as information on best practices to prevent and combat corruption. Each State Party shall consider monitoring its policies and actual measures to combat corruption and making assessments of their effectiveness and efficiency.

8. At its eight session, in 2019, the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption adopted resolution 8/10, in which UNODC was requested to continue expert-level consultations on identifying and refining methodologies on the issue of the measurement of corruption in order to develop proposals on a comprehensive, scientifically sound and objective framework for the purpose of assisting States Parties, upon their request, in measuring corruption, consistent with the Convention.

9. At its special session against corruption, held in 2021, the General Assembly adopted the political declaration entitled "Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation". In the declaration, UNODC was encouraged, in coordination with the Statistical Commission and in broad cooperation across the United Nations system, to develop and share a comprehensive, scientifically sound and objective statistical framework, grounded in methodological work and reliable data sources, to support States in their efforts to measure corruption, its impact and all relevant aspects of preventing and combating it, in order to inform and strengthen evidence-based anti-corruption policies and strategies, consistent with the Convention against corruption.

10. The process implemented by UNODC to develop a statistical framework included the following activities:

(a) Compilation of existing measurements of corruption at the international, regional and national levels conducted by government and non-governmental institutions, including methodologies and indicators;

(b) Internal consultation with experts from academia and international organizations to review existing research findings and international practices on corruption measurement assessing validity, relevance and feasibility;

(c) Hybrid consultation (in person and online) with national experts appointed by Member States to review existing practices for measuring corruption at the national level;

(d) Development of the first version of the statistical framework, including definitions of the main types of corruption to determine analytical building blocks for describing corruption, the factors that enable it and the capacity to deter it;

(e)   International consultation on the draft statistical framework involving national statistical offices, national experts appointed by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, academic experts, international organizations (World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and International Anti-Corruption Academy) and experts in non-governmental organizations;

(f)   Development of the final draft of the statistical framework on the basis of comments received during the international consultation, and the submission of the framework at the fifty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, to be held in 2023.

11.   After the review by the Statistical Commission, UNODC plans to submit the statistical framework to the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption for its review and possible adoption during the tenth session of the Conference.

IV.   Building a statistical framework for measuring corruption

12.   Corruption is a hidden behaviour whose occurrence victims and institutions are not always willing or able to report and register. For reasons including fear of retaliation, reluctance to resist an established practice, co-responsibility or direct benefit from corrupt endeavours, those who experience, witness or identify corruption are less likely to report it to competent authorities than other crimes, as result of which data availability can be even more limited.

13.   To overcome that challenge, the statistical framework for measuring corruption includes a minimum set of core indicators and provides guidance regarding different data sources and standard methodological tools for producing simple, comparable and actionable indicators for measuring corruption across countries and time, strengthening national systems for collecting and producing data.

14.   Developing corruption measurements that can be used to track corruption over time is the first step in diagnosing its nature, magnitude and trends. The statistical measurement framework is focused on detecting and monitoring where and how levels of corruption manifest and change over time, as well as how they may respond to specific policies.

15.   Many countries and the international community have made substantive efforts in measuring corruption through the prevalence of bribery. The global indicator framework for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/313, contains definitions of two indicators for measuring progress on Goal target 16.5, on substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms, as follows:

(a)   Indicator 16.5.1: proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months;

(b)   Indicator 16.5.2: proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months;

16.   A number of countries have adopted the existing methodologies for measuring the two indicators and are already collecting and disseminating statistics on the indicators, with disaggregation by sector, type of procedure and bribery amount.

17.   Nonetheless, bribery is only one manifestation of the varied phenomenon of corruption. While the Convention against Corruption does not contain a single definition of corruption, it does include a list of universally agreed manifestations, including the following:

(c)   Bribery of national public officials;

(d)   Bribery of foreign public officials and officials of public international organizations;

(e)   Embezzlement, misappropriation or other diversion of property by a public official;

(f)   Trading in influence;

(g)   Abuse of functions;

(h)   Illicit enrichment;

(i)   Bribery in the private sector;

(j)   Embezzlement of property in the private sector;

(k)   Laundering of proceeds of crime;

(l)   Concealment;

(m)   Obstruction of justice.

18.   The first step towards accurate measurement is developing statistical definitions that are clear and comprehensive, as well as clearly defining the information to be obtained. To this end, it should be noted that behaviours that might be considered corrupt can occur between public and private parties, as well as between parties in the private sphere.

19.   The statistical framework, presented to the Statistical Commission as a background document, contains a list of indicators divided by type of corruption and measurement (measurement of direct corruption and of risk and responses). The framework is intended for use at the national level to support countries in defining national statistical systems for corruption. Indicators that cut across the different dimensions of corruption can provide comprehensive evidence for addressing corruption, but there is no single national metric of corruption that can capture the full complexity of the problem. It is impossible to compile a single national indicator of corruption based on the aggregation of sectoral indicators.

20.   The statistical framework is comprehensive and includes direct and indirect indicators. While some direct measurements of corruption are easier to understand, they are expensive and not always simple to implement. Indirect measurements may be useful for mapping the different types of corruption and understanding the context in which they occur, regardless of its prevalence.

21.   In the statistical framework, the multifaceted complexity of corruption is recognized through the incorporation of a multiplicity of sources that can include administrative records related to public finance and procedures (such as public procurement records and assets declaration records); household and business sample surveys on corruption; other sample surveys, including surveys of public services; expert-based interviews; individual anonymized records of corruption offences; anonymized court case files and whistle-blowing files; and administrative records derived from the criminal justice system and civil procedures at all stages of their processes.

22.   Also recognized in the statistical framework is the necessity to incorporate the gender perspective into corruption measurement. Where possible, the framework

serves to promote a nuanced analysis of the gender perspective that goes beyond the disaggregation of data by sex.

23.   It is acknowledged in the statistical framework that different contexts require different responses and that some indicators may therefore need to be adapted upon implementation. Hence, comparability across countries requires a holistic approach in which one indicator alone is not sufficient for deriving a definitive comparison.

24.   Similarly, the adoption of the framework requires a cross-sectoral and inter-institutional approach. Given the varied array of indicators and data sources included in the framework, its implementation requires the effective collaboration of multiple relevant stakeholders, which may already have the data required to compile the proposed indicators, with the possible need for some data adjustment and methodological guidance to produce standardized and reliable statistics.

25.   The statistical framework for measuring corruption promotes a culture of transparency, oversight and accountability, providing guidance to produce data that, once available, can be used to assess and monitor the effectiveness of anticorruption efforts.

V.   Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

26.   **The Commission may wish:**

(a)   **To welcome the statistical framework for measuring corruption and comment on its statistical validity;**

(b)   **To invite national statistical offices to actively collaborate with other relevant national institutions on implementing the statistical framework for measuring corruption;**

(c)   **To provide support to the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption for measuring corruption through a scientifically sound and objective statistical framework.**

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