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Background document
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Items for discussion and decision: social and demographic statistics

Strategic Recommendations for Strengthening Social and Demographic Statistics¹

Prepared by the Friends of the Chair Group on Social and Demographic Statistics

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¹ This document will not be formally edited

Strategic Recommendations for Strengthening Social and Demographic Statistics²

I. Introduction

1. The Friends of the Chair Group on Social and Demographic Statistics (FOCG-SD) was established by the Statistical Commission (Decision 52/116) to provide strategic recommendations for strengthening the social and demographic statistics pillar. This effort aims to better reflect society and its intrinsic connections with the economy and the environment.
2. The overarching goal of the FOCG-SD³ is to deliver specific recommendations for a more agile and responsive system of social and demographic statistics. This is essential to align with the principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind, while also anticipating statistical needs beyond 2030.
3. The Statistical Commission requested the FOCG-SD to (decision [54/104](#)):
 - (i) Identify methodological and data gaps for measuring social and demographic concerns,
 - (ii) Promote gender mainstreaming and an intersectional approach to data production, analysis, and use,
 - (iii) Encourage data integration within and across pillars.
4. Fostering horizontal data integration across the social, economic, and environmental pillars of sustainable development is fundamental for consolidating National Statistical Systems (NSSs). Only through this integration can social and demographic statistics, in combination with the environmental and economic dimensions, accurately reflect society, its members, their relationships, and their outcomes. Furthermore, this three-pillar integration is the cornerstone of resilience, equity, and human development, especially amidst the increasing risks associated with climate change and global crises.

II. Work streams and rationale

5. To fulfil its mandate, the FOCG-SD developed three distinct streams of work:
 - Workstream 1: Mapping and reviewing the collective global and regional work in the area of social and demographic statistics. This exercise included groups reporting to the UN Statistical Commission, groups reporting to UN regional statistical bodies, selected custodian agencies and Secretariat entities, and member countries of the Group.

² The preparation of this document was led by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).

³ Included in the Terms of Reference available at:

https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/session_54/documents/BG-3b-ToR_FoC_Social-E.pdf

- Workstream 2: Reviewing national approaches and identifying elements to be included in an overarching conceptual framework for social and demographic statistics and for better data integration within and across pillars.
- Workstream 3: Elevating the role of social and demographic statistics in the eyes of data users and producers. It involved looking for effective communication examples, identifying the connection with policymakers across all pillars, and exploring the NSOs' enabling role in this communication.

6. The initial mandate of the Group was to review the social and demographic statistics pillar and identify persistent data and methodological gaps. The activities over the first two years highlighted the need for a more structured path: the building and consolidation of a Central Framework for a System of Population and Social Statistics (CF-SPSS). This document presents a series of strategic recommendations for strengthening the social and demographic statistics pillar, including advancing the development of the proposed Central Framework.

III. Objectives of the strategic recommendations

7. The strategic recommendations are designed to significantly improve social and demographic statistics. This is to be accomplished by:

- Developing an overarching conceptual framework to integrate the broad and siloed pillar of social and demographic statistics.
- Strengthening and improving data production and enhancing the dissemination of population and social information.
- Promoting horizontal data integration across the three pillars of sustainable development.
- Establishing common elements throughout all statistical systems.

8. Integration between the pillars of sustainable development is necessary. Then, social and demographic statistics, together with the environment and the economy, will provide a more holistic approach for reflecting society and delivering insightful information to policymakers. This integration and interdependence should be part of any system from the design.

9. This document provides recommendations for the development of a new CF-SPSS that adopts and promotes an intersectional approach, mainstreaming relevant categories (such as gender, ethnicity, disability, etc.) in all phases of the statistical process. This integrated and intersectional perspective will position social and demographic statistics as the foundation for informing and achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

IV. Key Challenges and Opportunities for National Statistical Systems

11. National Statistical Offices (NSOs) are central to producing high-quality, relevant, timely, and frequent data that informs evidence-based policymaking. As the demand for more agile, responsive, and integrated information increases, NSOs are facing a complex environment shaped by rapidly evolving data requirements, technological innovation, increasing resource constraints, and shifting public expectations.

12. The following challenges, identified through the three work streams, reflect the urgent need to strengthen the agility, adaptability, and resilience of statistical systems to ensure they remain fit for purpose. While many of these challenges are not unique to social and demographic statistics, they remain relevant for National Statistical Systems. Each challenge also presents opportunities for modernization and improved and more efficient statistical production.

Growing demand for timely and granular data

13. The demand for more timely and granular data is increasing rapidly, driven by stakeholders' needs to respond effectively to emerging social issues, crises, and dynamic changes. Timely, disaggregated, and well-integrated data are essential for evidence-based policy and planning. At the same time, the growing complexity of social phenomena and the diversity of available data sources present both opportunities and challenges for social and demographic statistics.

14. Challenges:

- **Ensuring timeliness for responsive action:** Stakeholders require current data to enable agile decision-making, particularly during pandemics, natural disasters, forced displacement, and climate-related mobility. Delays can limit the usefulness of statistics for responsive action.
- **Achieving granularity for targeted insights:** There is an increasing need for data with detailed spatial resolution, frequent updates, and disaggregation by key population subgroups, or with intersectional and differential approaches (e.g., to identify disparities and tailor policies), which can be resource-intensive and technically demanding.
- **Integrating statistical and geospatial information:** Linking statistical and geospatial data has become a standard expectation; however, this requires sophisticated methods and careful quality control.

15. Social and demographic statistics are well-positioned to meet many of these demands, given their flexibility and the wide range of topics they cover. The expanding data ecosystem—including administrative records, privately held data, citizen-generated data, geospatial information, and innovative methods—offers significant potential to enhance timeliness, granularity, and analytical power. Realizing this potential requires strengthened quality assurance, governance, and metadata frameworks.

Reliance on conventional data collection methods

16. Population and housing censuses, along with household surveys, remain indispensable for social and demographic statistics. They provide detailed information on population size, characteristics, and distribution, supporting policy design and monitoring of development goals. These traditional sources are often complemented by administrative records and used to validate insights from alternative or modelled data sources. Despite their central role, these conventional data sources face several challenges that highlight the need for strengthening and innovation:

- **Restricted access to administrative records:**
 - A significant portion of relevant administrative records is managed by private entities, creating challenges to access, standardization, and integration into official statistics.
 - Even when records are managed by public entities, privacy and confidentiality concerns can limit their use.
- **Challenges facing household surveys:**
 - Conducting large-scale household surveys has become increasingly costly and logistically complex, threatening their sustainability as primary data sources.
 - Declining response rates and attrition in longitudinal studies further challenge the quality and continuity of traditional surveys, requiring renewed investment and methodological innovation.
- **Fiscal constraints and decentralized data:**
 - Limited and declining public budgets and the fragmentation of data production across various government levels impede coordination and efficiency in data generation and sharing.
 - Global disruptions such as pandemics, conflicts, and climate shocks have intensified these constraints and created long-term data gaps. Social and demographic statistics are often among the first areas to face reductions, despite their centrality for understanding people's lives and well-being.
 - Decentralization can also lead to duplication, inconsistent standards, and legal barriers to data sharing and reuse, limiting efficient integration of diverse sources.
- **Limited use of citizen-generated data:**
 - When properly guided, citizen-generated data can enhance inclusiveness and help fill specific data gaps.
 - However, the absence of comprehensive frameworks, guidelines, and recommendations limits their potential to complement official sources. Many countries remain in early stages of experimentation and require clearer standards and safeguards to integrate these sources responsibly.

17. These challenges also present the opportunity to explore innovative financing mechanisms, including partnerships with the private sector, academia, and development partners, to help mobilize additional resources. Innovative data sources and technologies can complement traditional surveys, reducing costs while improving coverage and frequency

when appropriately governed. Strengthened frameworks for quality assurance, governance, and metadata management will be essential to fully realize these opportunities.

Evolving public perception and trust in data systems

18. Public trust and engagement are critical for the effectiveness and sustainability of social and demographic statistics. Without confidence in data systems, participation in censuses and surveys declines, and support for innovative approaches, such as data linkages, is limited. Building trust requires more than strengthening NSOs' communication capacities—it also depends on transparent, collaborative approaches, partnerships to enhance statistical literacy, and clear links between data and policy. Some of the challenges include:

- **Declining response rates:** Public fatigue, skepticism, and concerns regarding the relevance and privacy of traditional data collection efforts have led to decreasing participation in censuses and sample surveys.
- **Limited public support for data linkages:** Efforts to integrate data across sources (e.g., administrative registers, surveys, geospatial systems) often face resistance due to perceived risks and lack of transparency.
- **Concerns over data confidentiality:** Persistent doubts about the security and confidentiality of personal information undermine trust in official statistics and discourage engagement with data collection efforts.

19. Strengthening transparency, communication, and data governance can enhance public trust, encourage participation, and facilitate the use of innovative sources and data linkage approaches. Trusted data systems enable more accurate, comprehensive, and inclusive statistics, supporting better policymaking and greater uptake of statistical products.

Absence of a comprehensive conceptual framework on social and demographic statistics

20. A clear conceptual framework is essential for capturing the complexity of social dynamics and producing coherent, policy-relevant statistics. Without it, social and demographic data risk fragmentation, limiting their usefulness for monitoring inclusive and sustainable development and informing cross-sectoral policies. Challenges faced by the NSS include:

- **Difficulty in capturing complex social dynamics:** In the absence of a unified model, designing statistical systems that accurately reflect society—an interconnected network of relationships in specific times and places—is challenging.
- **Fragmented integration across sustainable development dimensions:** Current data systems fail to fully integrate the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This fragmentation hinders comparability across domains and limits the ability to monitor progress comprehensively. Differences in quality, coverage, definitions, and classifications across data sources further constrain integration.

21. Developing an overarching conceptual framework would strengthen integration across domains and facilitate more coherent, comparable, and policy-relevant statistics. In addition, using advanced analytical tools—including AI and machine learning—can help model complex social phenomena and improve the integration of diverse data sources, provided they are used responsibly and transparently.

V. Elevating the Role of Social and Demographic Statistics

A. Positioning Social and Demographic Statistics

22. To increase the visibility and value of social and demographic statistics among users and producers, it is crucial to communicate their importance effectively. These statistics are critical for assessing well-being and quality of life, covering dimensions such as health, education, social relationships, and living conditions, which are key for informed and inclusive policymaking. They also serve as essential inputs for planning across sectors and provide denominators for many development indicators. Member States should formally recognize these statistics as a core pillar of national development planning and ensure predictable and sustained funding to maintain consistent time series and identify emerging issues.

23. Integrating gender and intersectional perspectives throughout statistical production is essential for ensuring that population groups are accurately represented and that inequalities are meaningfully captured. Using inclusive concepts, classifications, and methodologies improves coherence, reduces bias, and enhances the policy relevance of social and demographic statistics.

24. Furthermore, enhancing the capacity of NSSs to produce high-quality social and demographic data is vital, starting with capacity development strategies that support institutional strengthening, methodological innovation, and sustainable data production. This includes modernizing statistical infrastructure, investing in new data collection and analysis techniques, and ensuring NSOs can lead government-wide capacity building through consultations, training, and tailored guidance. NSOs must also be positioned to anticipate evolving social dynamics, crises, and stakeholder needs, and to assert their central role in producing actionable people-centered data.

B. Data Quality and Standardization

25. High-quality, internal, and internationally standardized data is fundamental for producing relevant, comparable and policy-relevant statistics. This requires rigorous methodological consistency and robust quality assurance mechanisms, particularly given the multidimensional nature of social and demographic statistics. Harmonization of concepts, definitions, classifications and methods is essential to elevate the credibility and coherence of statistical outputs.

26. Standardization enables comparability across regions, time periods, and population subgroups, supporting integration with global monitoring frameworks. Adopting international standards, such as the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FPOS) and the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses⁴, enhances the credibility and usability of the data and strengthens the ability of NSSs to contribute to international reporting. Development partners and international financial institutions are encouraged to expand their technical and financial assistance—including South-South cooperation and twinning arrangements—to help countries adopt international statistical standards and strengthen sustainable social and demographic statistical systems.

C. Building Trust and Participation in Official Data Ecosystems.

27. Effective stakeholder engagement is essential for improving the relevance, quality, and trustworthiness of social and demographic statistics. NSOs must adopt inclusive and proactive strategies to engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including:

- i. Respondents/informants and citizens: Engaging them beyond surveys, for example, through community-based monitoring or real-time reporting of patterns (e.g., expenditure), can provide more granular and timely statistics. Transparent communication about confidentiality safeguards and clear examples of how participation informs policy can counter declining response rates and strengthen public trust.
- ii. Other data producers and data holders: This includes government agencies, academic institutions, and private sector entities that collect valuable data for integration into official systems. Formalized data-sharing agreements and quality validation mechanisms are essential to ensure the reliability and ethical integration of these sources.
- iii. Data users: Policymakers, academia, civil society, and the public rely on statistics; understanding their needs is critical for ensuring the information is relevant and actionable. Strengthening statistical literacy among users and establishing regular consultations, feedback channels, and thematic webinars help ensure effective data use and clearer data-to-policy links. Collaboration with policymakers is essential to demonstrate the relevance of social and demographic statistics and reinforce their visibility. Clear communication about how data informs decisions, improves lives, supports accountability, and strengthens political support for robust statistical systems.
- iv. Traditionally underrepresented or marginalized populations: Special attention is necessary to ensure their representation through culturally appropriate

⁴ Another example is the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX), which has facilitated data interoperability and efficient dissemination.

methodologies, transparent communication, and ethical practices. Civil society organizations can support outreach to these groups, co-design data collection tools, and promote the use of data for accountability and inclusion.

- v. Cross-disciplinary and collaborative networks: Fostering communities of practice and research agendas supports innovation and utility across the entire production model, from needs identification to dissemination. Partnerships with academia should include joint research, access to anonymized microdata for approved researchers, and collaborative seminars. Engagement with the private sector can unlock new and timely information through data-sharing agreements, consultations on data needs, co-organized outreach initiatives, and recognition mechanisms for contributions to the public good.

D. Communication Strategies for Social and Demographic Statistics

28. Effective communication is a cornerstone of modern statistical systems. While NSOs traditionally focus on descriptive outputs, a user-centered or citizen-focused approach is necessary to increase accessibility and impact. NSOs must recognize the diversity of data users and diversify communication formats—such as simplified reports, interactive dashboards, infographics, and multilingual content—to enhance the reach and relevance of outputs. This includes ensuring that outputs are aligned with policy priorities and published in formats that facilitate direct application by decision-makers, researchers, and the public.

29. Using a "storytelling approach" that combines statistical narratives with compelling visualizations and contextual information helps explain complex trends and disparities, supporting evidence-based policy and fostering inclusivity by representing marginalized communities. Communication strategies must also address data quality and ethical considerations. Transparency about the strengths and limitations of new data sources, clear communication regarding data protection, and enhancing the communication skills of statistical staff are vital to maintain public trust. Engagement with media—including ongoing relationships with journalists, consultations on data usability, and targeted press releases—further strengthens the visibility and practical use of social and demographic statistics.

VI. Streamlining Work at Global, Regional and National Levels

A. Global and Regional Level

30. The current landscape of social and demographic statistics involves numerous actors, including UN agencies from the UN System, International and regional organizations, groups reporting to the UN Statistical Commission, groups reporting to UN regional statistical bodies, and country groups, regional bodies, and academia. While each contributes valuable expertise, strengthening the international statistical system requires the United Nations Statistical Commission to adopt strategic measures that streamline coordination and enhance

complementarity across initiatives. Key priorities include reducing fragmentation, enhancing collaboration, and ensuring efforts are mutually reinforcing. This involves periodic reviews of global and regional groups to identify overlaps, assess progress on mandates, and determine opportunities for consolidation. Regular exchanges among groups should also be encouraged to strengthen coherence and avoid duplication. Aligning global and regional initiatives with broader strategic objectives is essential to ensure that national, regional, and international efforts contribute to a unified and effective statistical ecosystem.

31. Establishing global mechanisms that actively promote experience-sharing would further support coherence. A shared platform or observatory could serve as a central repository for tools, guidance, and best practices, making resources more accessible.

32. These measures should also reinforce agile and responsive governance. The Friends of the Chair Group on social and demographic statistics recommends the creation of a **successor mechanism** to implement the Group’s recommendations. This mechanism would act as a focal point for coordination across the social and demographic statistical space, leverage existing work, liaise with thematic groups, and maintain strong linkages with the economic and environmental pillars.

B. National Level

33. Achieving a more integrated system of social and demographic statistics requires a deliberate, stepwise approach that aligns national priorities, resources, and capabilities. NSOs should focus on harmonizing definitions, classifications, metadata standards, and methodologies across all data sources, in line with international statistical standards and methods. Efforts should reduce fragmentation, promote interoperability, and enable seamless linking of datasets across thematic areas and geographic levels while filling existing critical measurement gaps. Integration should be guided by policy-relevant objectives, ensuring that data can inform targeted interventions, monitor social outcomes, and respond effectively to emerging societal challenges. Incremental improvements, supported by technical capacity-building and legislative facilitation—including adapting laws for innovative technologies—and strategies to enhance citizen participation are essential to ensure that the system remains sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to evolving information needs.

VII. Recommendations for a System Approach

A. Addressing Growing Demand for Timely and Granular Data

34. To generate granular data for targeted insights, NSOs must focus on detailed data collection and disaggregation by a wider range of variables (e.g., sex, age, ethnicity, disability). Achieving this requires rethinking traditional methods and tools, while leveraging technological solutions to enhance timeliness, efficiency, and coverage. Administrative records, already widely used in many countries, can enrich and validate traditional data, while

geospatial technologies—such as satellite imagery, GIS— as well as small area estimation methods can provide spatially precise information, particularly for areas with sparse survey coverage. For example, geospatial tools allow pinpointing the exact location of data points, enabling analysis at small geographic scales and supporting the identification of localized disparities and policy-relevant insights. Digital-first and multi-mode data collection, AI-driven processing, and cloud-based platforms further enhance the efficiency and frequency of updates, reduce reliance on costly field operations, and facilitate the inclusion of underrepresented populations.

35. For the integration of statistical and geospatial information, a key step is establishing a Geospatial Data Infrastructure (GDI) as a central repository for location-based data, linked directly with statistical databases. Promoting interoperability through common formats and standards, such as the Degree of Urbanisation (DEGURBA) and the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework, is essential to facilitate collaboration, reduce fragmentation, and enable coherent analyses across multiple data sources. Comprehensive geocoded datasets, supported by secure platforms and robust quality assurance, provide the foundation for detailed mapping, spatial dashboards, and other visualization tools that communicate complex, multidimensional information clearly, supporting evidence-based decisions at multiple geographic scales.

B. Going Beyond Traditional Data Collection Methods

36. Rising costs of traditional data collections and fiscal constraints require NSOs to strategically complement them with greater use of existing data sources. This includes the systematic integration of survey data with administrative records from public and private sectors, supported by formal data-sharing agreements, secure access protocols, and robust quality assurance procedures. To overcome fragmented data production, NSOs should lead the development of a unified national data infrastructure that enables interoperability and integration across diverse data sources.

37. In addition to administrative records, non-traditional data sources—such as satellite imagery, mobile phone data, web-based data, and citizen-generated information—can help fill critical data gaps, improve timeliness, and enhance coverage of hard-to-reach populations. Concurrently, NSOs should establish structured frameworks for the collection, validation, documentation, and ethical use of these data, guided by international references⁵ and clear quality, privacy, and confidentiality protocols. Strengthening technical capacity, methodological research, and governance, along with sharing country experiences and good practices, will be essential to ensure that innovative data sources enhance official statistics without compromising trust, coherence, or policy relevance.

⁵ Like the Copenhagen Framework on Citizen Data, which is still being developed: see The Copenhagen Framework on Citizen Data (v1.0). <https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/citizenData/events/The-Copenhagen-Framework-on-Citizen-Data-v1.pdf>

38. Revising national laws may be necessary to address legal obstacles to using innovative technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), for data collection and statistical production, while adhering to the FPOS. To foster a more inclusive data ecosystem, national strategies should promote inclusive approaches and enhance citizen engagement in data practices, ensuring statistical work is technically sound, socially relevant, and participatory.

C. Improving Perception and Trust in Data Systems

39. Building trust and reversing declining response rates requires a user-centric approach embedded from the design stage, aiming for shorter, more relevant, and easier-to-complete surveys. NSOs should clearly communicate the tangible societal benefits of participation, using concrete examples of how data informs policies, equitable resource allocation, and improved outcomes for different population groups. Institutionalized consultations, feedback channels, and sustained partnerships with users and communities can further strengthen engagement and responsiveness to data needs.

40. Improving public support for data linkages requires greater transparency and robust governance frameworks, and adherence to internationally recognized standards, including the FPOS. Data systems should clearly communicate what data are linked, for what purpose, and how confidentiality is protected. Establishing independent oversight mechanisms and implementing differential privacy and other advanced anonymization techniques can mitigate perceived risks and provide strong technical safeguards.

41. To minimize concerns about data confidentiality and sustain confidence in official statistics, NSOs must demonstrate security through verifiable actions, including regularly publishing reports on security measures and enforcing strict access controls. Communication campaigns explaining data security technologies and legal protections can help build confidence.

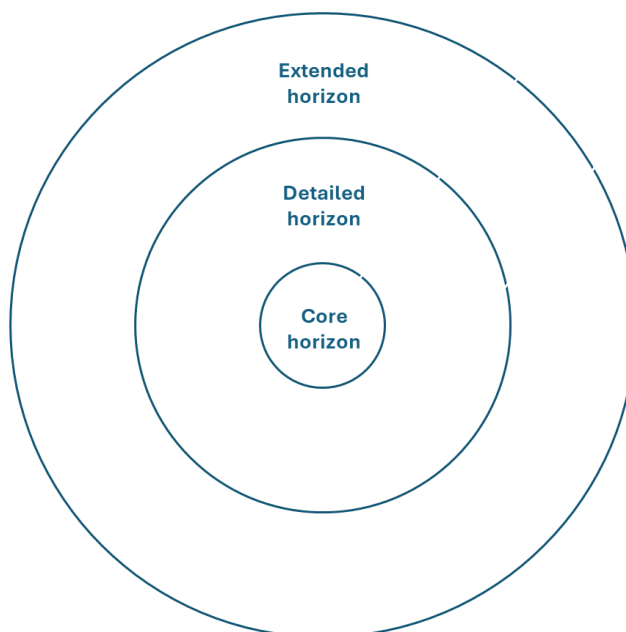
D. Setting the Foundations for a Conceptual Framework

42. The CF-SPSS could benefit from a structured approach using a model of concentric circles or "horizons" (see Figure 1). The innermost circle would represent a core horizon of fundamental statistics that are policy relevant, and most countries can produce in the near term, serving as a feasible and universal foundation. Subsequent, outer horizons would define increasingly detailed and complex topics, to be produced progressively based on specific needs, capacities, and levels of statistical maturity.

43. The number and content of these horizons should remain flexible and be defined by a successor mechanism, guided by user needs, the maturity of the NSS, and public policy priorities. This balance is essential to ensure that the framework encourages methodological and technological advances without creating implementation burdens that exceed national

capacities. This model aligns with current international recommendations on data sources and thematic areas.

Figure 1. Concentric horizons approach for the CF-SPSS



44. Any global statistical framework, such as the CF-SPSS, must acknowledge the varying work structures and resource levels across countries. The framework should therefore be sufficiently flexible, allowing each country to select the most appropriate sources for its specific context, ensuring feasible, prioritized, and sustainable implementation.

45. The CF-SPSS, in its core horizon, must be a general reference framework that seeks to standardize, with real possibilities for consensus and implementation, supported by training programs for comparable social and demographic measures. The framework elements must include:

- People: Population stock, flows, and characteristics of individuals.
- Relationships: Families, households, communities, and institutions, reflecting interactions that collectively build society.
- Social Outcomes: Assessed using both objective (e.g., education, health, time use, income) and subjective (e.g., satisfaction with education or health care services, sense of purpose) measures.
- Places: Geography as an element for analysis and a link across themes.
- Time: To understand and anticipate changes, with time series, life perspectives, and cohort-based analysis.

46. The creation and consolidation of a CF-SPSS requires a fundamental shift towards a system-based approach. Statistical systems must move beyond siloed data to an integrated, holistic model that reflects the interconnected nature of human behavior, viewing society as an interconnected network. This will improve the measurement of social outcomes by observing not only *what* is happening but also *why*.

47. To build a statistical ecosystem that can show the causal relationships between the three dimensions of sustainable development, the CF-SPSS should provide the setting for a shared data architecture with standardized definitions and a common metadata framework to ensure seamless data linkage and interoperability.

48. The CF-SPSS will need to consider three key elements:

- A common language: Universal, multidisciplinary definitions for concepts and terms that enable harmonized description.
- Structure: Similar to the structure of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), ensuring coherence and consistency, and interactions with the economy and the environment.
- A set of principles: Governing scope and boundaries, valuation, universality, and other properties essential to a system describing society.

49. Meaningful standardization and sustained improvements in data quality under the CF-SPSS will require long-term and predictable resourcing, strong institutional ownership, and continuous technical support. Experience from comparable global frameworks demonstrates that progress depends on multi-year investments at global, regional, and national levels; clear governance arrangements with regular consultative mechanisms to ensure relevance and country ownership; and ongoing technical assistance, including guidance, training, and peer learning, to support phased and feasible implementation across diverse national contexts.

VIII. Successor Mechanism

50. Consolidating this new approach requires a successor mechanism to ensure cohesion and progress. First, an overarching coordinating body is needed within the United Nations Statistical Commission to serve as the central liaison among the diverse stakeholders and expert groups in social and demographic statistics. This body would be responsible for streamlining communication, following statistical activities, preventing duplication, and promoting a unified vision.

51. The proposed successor mechanism would be tasked with advancing and implementing these recommendations, starting with the development of the CF-SPSS. This framework must be:

- Designed as a general reference model to provide a clear path for NSOs to standardize and harmonize their social and demographic indicators.
- Centered on people and their well-being while considering its interconnections with the economic and environmental pillars.
- Aligned with broader international objectives.
- Broad enough to incorporate specific topics and references from established international manuals and guidelines (e.g., for measuring the informal economy, Guidelines for Measuring Well-being, OECD Guidelines on Measuring Trust ⁶).

52. To operationalise these functions, it is recommended that the Statistical Commission establish a Committee of Experts on Population and Social Statistics (UN CEPSS).

IX. Expected Outcomes

53. The UN CEPSS is expected to develop the CF-SPSS to promote the generation of population-based statistical information with temporal and geographic references, aligned with the economic and environmental pillars, that is:

- A Central Framework for a System of Population and Social Statistics (CF-SPSS) to generate timely, comprehensive, and relevant social and demographic data.
- Common standards for social and demographic statistics, providing definitions of key statistical identities for the state and development of society, its inclusiveness, sustainability, and its interactions with the economy and environmental pillars.
- Inventory of new methodologies and data sources for generating population information and social statistics.

Annex

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON POPULATION AND SOCIAL STATISTICS

A. Mandate

1. The objective of the Committee of Experts on Population and Social Statistics is to provide strategic vision, coordination, and technical guidance for the development and strengthening of population and social statistics.
2. To achieve this objective, the programme of work of the Committee will focus on:
 - a. Fostering coordination, integration, and complementarity of statistical programmes and initiatives relevant to population and social statistics;
 - b. Providing technical guidance for harmonising statistical standards (i.e., concepts, definitions, classifications, and methodologies) across statistical domains in the area of population and social statistics, and identifying and addressing gaps to further support their harmonisation and integration;
 - c. Developing a Central Framework for a System of Population and Social Statistics, promoting integration with the economic and environmental pillars;
 - d. Facilitating the exchange of experiences, practices, and knowledge among Member States and organisations; and
 - e. Engaging with users of population and social statistics (for example, in the academic, civil society, private, and government sectors) and formulating a statistical response on emerging policy issues.
3. Serving in a coordinating role for the Statistical Commission for population, social, and related statistics, the Committee will ensure that it organises its activities in a complementary manner with existing groups and other stakeholders covering population and social statistics, as well as economic, environmental, and other relevant statistics.
4. In elaborating its work programme, the Committee shall identify the most promising avenues to foster the integration, organization, and, if appropriate, the expansion of social and demographic statistics to increase their quality and relevance with respect to the needs of users. It will emphasize population and its relationships, highlighting social outputs that show differences over time and location.
5. Recognizing the ambition of this task, the Committee will pursue an incremental approach that keeps momentum while respecting existing capacities and resources.
6. The Committee will review its mandate periodically and, if appropriate, will submit an amended mandate to the Statistical Commission for discussion and decision.

B. Governance

Frequency of Meetings and Reporting

7. The Committee will meet once a year, and in special circumstances, ad-hoc meetings may be organised.
8. The Committee will prepare a periodic report for submission to the Statistical Commission.

Membership

9. The Committee is a country-led expert group body of the Statistical Commission, comprising senior officials and subject-matter experts from Member States, international and regional organisations, and academic institutions, as well as independent experts, with a broad and in-depth knowledge of population and social statistics.
10. The Committee will make its best effort to ensure equitable geographical distribution and gender representation in its membership.
11. The Committee members serve for three years, renewable for multiple terms. Those who wish to join the Committee should inform the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs of their intention in writing through the appropriate channels.

Co-Chairs

12. The Committee will elect, from among its members, two Co-Chairs for a period of three years, renewable for one term, taking into account geographical representation. The role of the Co-Chairs is to develop, in close cooperation with the Secretariat, a multi-year strategic framework and an annual programme of work for the Committee, monitor progress of the various components of the programme and set the agenda for the meetings.
13. The Co-Chairs and the Secretariat, when needed, will represent the Committee at international meetings and will play a key role in fundraising and in promoting and communicating the work of the statistical community with other communities, namely the scientific, academic, business, and policymaking communities. The Co-Chairs will engage stakeholders and seek their support and resource mobilisation for the Committee's activities.

Task Teams

14. The Committee of Experts will convene task teams to carry out its work programme and/or in support of specific projects. These task teams will have clear terms of reference with a limited lifetime and will be composed of members of the Committee who express interest in being part of it, and non-members of the Committee with the relevant technical expertise.

15. It has been recognized that a task team dedicated to advancing the development and implementation of the Central Framework for a System of Population and Social Statistics (CF-SPSS) should be established from the outset of the Committee, following a sequenced, inclusive, and pragmatic approach. A key initial step will be to determine the prioritization of activities and tasks and to define the composition of the core horizon as specified in the strategic recommendations of the Friends of the Chair Group on social and demographic statistics.

Secretariat

The Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs will serve as the secretariat of the Committee.