

**United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics**  
**Technical Meeting on Indicators and Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework of**  
**International Migration Statistics,**  
**Rabat, Morocco, 20 – 22 June 2022**

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

1. The technical meeting was convened by the United Nations Statistics Division, in cooperation with the Haut Commissariat au Plan of Morocco. This was the 4th meeting of the Expert Group on Migration Statistics to continue the work on the revision of the 1998 *UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*, as requested by the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in 2019 in its decision 50/117.
2. The meeting was opened by Mr. Mohammed Mghari, representing the Secretary-General of the Haut Commissariat au Plan of Morocco, Mr. Ayache Khelifa. Mr. Nicolas Martin Laborde, head of the office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Morocco delivered welcome remarks, followed by Mr. Diego Iturralde, Chief Director of Demography, Statistics South Africa, co-chair of the Expert Group and Ms. Francesca Grum, Assistant Director of the United Nations Statistics Division.
3. The meeting was held in a “soft” hybrid format. The **objectives** of the meeting were: to conclude the work of task force 1 by agreeing on core and additional indicators on international migration and temporary mobility, and their primary and secondary topics for disaggregation, to be brought to the attention of the Statistical Commission for endorsement; reflect on data collection and production strategies as well as opportunities and challenges associated with the operationalization of the revised conceptual framework and related definitions for statistics on international migration and mobility, endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its 52nd session in 2021; and review and discuss data integration methods.
4. To accomplish the above objectives, the expert group adopted a practical approach with guiding questions to be answered from the countries’ perspective, being mindful of level of national statistical development and related data challenges.

**Indicators and their topics for disaggregation**

5. Following a presentation of the overall report on *Indicators for International Migration and Temporary Mobility*, produced by Task Force 1, the Expert Group reviewed indicators proposed to address each of the six identified policy areas and agreed on which indicators should be retained as core, for broad production in all countries, and which should be additional ones. The final agreement on the list of core international migration indicators was based on how the proposals benchmark against indicators currently produced in countries, and feasibility to produce the proposed indicators and their topics for disaggregation.

6. There was overall agreement that **indicators** should respond to key policy areas and feasible at country level, if not now at least in a foreseeable future. Furthermore, the agreed list of indicators and associated topics for disaggregation need to be in line with the conceptual framework and accompanying definitions endorsed by the Statistical Commission.
7. It was also considered necessary to clarify at the beginning of the TF1 report, and in footnotes attached to tables, that dissemination of indicators by single country of birth or citizenship may not be possible due to **data protection and privacy concerns**. In general, it was agreed that data privacy should be highlighted to address the issue of small numbers for certain disaggregations.
8. The Expert Group also recommended to be more explicit on terminology used in the report, and to indicate, as needed, in footnotes **the link to the conceptual framework** and accompanying definitions, and to other frameworks relevant to migration statistics.
9. Both core and additional **indicators for Policy Area 1** “Improve the measurement of international migration and temporary mobility flows and stocks” were discussed at length. Following the conceptual framework, the core indicators proposed are thought as building blocks with the view that over time countries will be able to produce them incrementally.
10. In particular, when discussing indicators on **temporary mobility**, all agreed as additional, the Expert Group recognized that this topic is new and was first introduced by the revised conceptual framework. The majority of experts emphasized the difficulties faced in producing most of the proposed indicators on temporary mobility. Some experts also mentioned that they need time to introduce this new concept in their national statistical system and study how to produce data for this group.
11. **Indicators for Policy Area 2** “Address irregular cross border movements and visa overstays”, were also discussed at length. Discussions revealed that, although this policy area is extremely relevant, the topic is highly controversial and contested. Most NSOs do not produce these indicators or do so on a pilot basis and does not publish them. For the most part, estimates are produced by academia, not on a regular basis, and quality is often unknown. The Expert Group advised softening the formulation of these indicators, noting that referring to them as true values (“number of ...”) can mislead the interpretation of these indicators, as these are usually estimated values with an important degree of uncertainty. In addition, it was highlighted that most data sources for indicators proposed for Policy Area 2 lie outside the realm of the NSO, therefore, requiring strong interinstitutional cooperation and data sharing. Therefore, the Expert Group agreed to have all indicators for Policy Area 2 as additional indicators. Countries with capacity to produce these indicators should continue to do so and should share their experience for other countries to follow.
12. **Core indicators for Policy Areas 3 to 6**, were also discussed, highlighting that out of 21 proposed core indicators, 19 are SDG indicators and the other 2 are traditionally produced by countries.
13. During the discussion, indicators and the list of their primary and secondary topics for disaggregation were reviewed and refined, taking into account practices, aspirations and challenges at national level. The agreed list of indicators consists of a set of migration-specific indicators on stocks and flows of

international migration (Policy area 1=4 core); a set of migration-related indicators on stocks and flows of selected temporary population subgroups (Policy area 1=4 additional); and a set of migration-specific indicators on irregular migration (Policy area 2=8 additional). The list also identifies a set of indicators relevant for analysis of integration and rights of international migrants by recommending 19 SDGs indicators and 2 indicators traditionally produced by NSOs, to be disaggregated by migratory status (Policy areas 3 to 6= 21 core in total).

14. Additional indicators presented in the report under policy areas 3 to 6 were not discussed at the meeting. They will remain as is and the secretariat will implement minor changes, if needed, to ensure consistency with decisions taken at the meeting on other indicators. The secretariat will implement all agreed changes and finalize the report to be presented for discussion at the UN Statistical Commission.
15. The Expert Group thanked Task Force 1 for their work over the years, and for a rich report, and closed the task force.

#### Data sources, data collection and production strategies

16. The Expert Group reiterated that, as indicated in Policy Area 1, data collection on immigrant and emigrant population stocks and immigration and emigration flows is needed for the implementation of the revised conceptual framework. Experts confirmed that data on international migration stocks does exist in all countries, but data on flows is not produced as frequently as the stock. Often, administrative registers are maintained by a large number of stakeholders at national level, which results in a complex data panorama.
17. Data sources used for the production of statistics on international migration include traditional population censuses, household surveys (specialized migration surveys or other-purpose household surveys) and administrative data sources. In particular, it was clear that while countries mainly use population censuses or population registers for measuring stocks, they use a variety of data sources for measuring flows.
18. Similarly, in the study of migrant characteristics, as needed to address different aspects of Policy Areas 3 to 6, population censuses and administrative registers would be main data sources for computing proposed indicators for international migrants and disaggregating them by other relevant topics, while household surveys, such as specialized migration surveys and Labour Force Surveys, would meet the particular demand for data on the socioeconomic characteristics of international migrants as long as the sample design and size are adequate.
19. Common challenges include the existence of different terminology across data sources, barriers for collaboration and data sharing among institutions, lack of quality control of the data that is not primarily collected by NSOs, incomplete data, among others. **Country practices** indicate that currently there are mainly three different approaches for measuring migration stocks and flows, as follows:

- a. Many countries use a combination of field-based data collection and administrative registers for the production of international migration statistics.
  - b. A group of countries relies on field-based data collection, namely population censuses and household surveys.
  - c. A number of countries relies on administrative data sources for producing both stocks and flow data; these are mainly countries that have a well-established register-based statistical system.
20. The Expert Group found that countries using field-based data collection, be it solely or in combination with administrative data, face challenges in the production of annual data for immigration and emigration flows. Countries that generate statistics based on registers face challenges related to the rigidity of the system and established legal definitions.
  21. The meeting underlined the urgent need of producing periodical and reliable data for migration statistics, taking full advantage of data sources available at country level . It was emphasized that countries should have a vision to move towards an **ecosystem that relies heavily on the use of administrative registers for migration statistics**, and at the same time, it takes full advantage of sample surveys relevant to migration, alternative data sources and innovative methods.
  22. The Expert Group stressed that the production of international migration statistics is an integral part of the national statistical systems (NSS), and as such, should be included in national strategies for the development and modernization of statistics (NSDS). **Modernization** of national statistical systems with the use of administrative data sources requires certain conditions that should be met in advance, though these conditions might change from one country to another, depending on the current status of the existing national statistical system. A long-term **strategy** for gradually moving to a register-based statistical system is a necessary element for modernizing the production of international migration statistics, addressing issues like the need for a legal framework that enables NSOs to access and use of individual data for statistical purposes, proper financial and human resources, maintaining effective and continuous collaboration with stakeholders, and strong leadership that entices trust among stakeholders.
  23. It was also pointed out that an initial **diagnostic of availability** of administrative data sources for migration statistics is crucial before going forward. There are tools for this kind of diagnostic analysis, developed by UNSD in collaboration with the Expert Group, by ILO and by UNICEF. In light of the list of indicators agreed by the Expert Group in this meeting, UNSD will review the tool proposed by the Group, also considering recent experience gained in its use in the LAC region.
  24. Diagnostic of the availability of administrative data sources will be the initial phase for developing strategies to modernize existing data collection systems and improve the capacity to produce timely and reliable data for stocks and flows.
  25. **Quality assessment** of data and metadata contained in these various sources also needs to be a key element in the overall strategy for moving towards effective use of administrative data sources for the production of migration statistics. The use of tools to assess the quality of administrative data and

metadata was encouraged, in the framework of the United Nations National Quality Assurance Frameworks Manual for Official Statistics, and building on guidelines produced by Eurostat and ECE, specific for migration data.

26. Experts also noted that, in the long run, a more effective use of administrative data, will result in cost savings in the production of population statistics, including international migration statistics, and may address the issue of observed decreasing response rates in censuses and household surveys. This fact needs to be highlighted and utilized as a strong argument when making the case for using administrative registers for migration statistics.
27. The Expert Group decided that, considering that there is a wide variation among countries in measuring stocks and flows, the technical report to be prepared by Task Force 4 on operationalization of the revised conceptual framework, should provide country case studies to illustrate different approaches that aim to produce or estimate annual flow data for immigration and emigration.
28. It was underlined that, in order to meet data requirements for the implementation of the revised conceptual framework, related statistical programs such as civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and population and housing census (PHC) should promote the collection of information on foreign-born, foreign-citizens (country of birth and country of citizenship) and stateless people. To this end, the Expert Group agreed to contribute actively to the upcoming revision of the *Principles and Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses* for the 2030 census round. In addition, the experts recommended that the upcoming revision should make a special effort to address data needs for Policy Area 1.
29. It was decided that, given that countries are at different stages and use different approaches, the revised *Recommendations on International Migration Statistics* need to be operational enough to provide practical guidelines for countries at all levels of statistical capacity to make use of available data, in line with the conceptual framework, to produce core indicators in Policy Area 1. The recommendations will highlight the key guiding principles and will be accompanied by the final Technical reports of task forces and additional background and hands-on material, including country studies, for access and use by the broad user community.

#### Data integration

30. The Expert Group welcomed the draft technical report of Task Force 3 on data integration for statistics on international migration, provided extensive feedback, and agreed to contribute additional country cases or other technical materials. It was further agreed to have the key findings of this report integrated in the revised *Recommendations*.

#### Next steps

31. As next steps, the secretariat committed to integrate the rich feedback provided by the Group into the report of Task Force 1 and finalize it, by Q3 2022. Task Force 3 will finalize their technical report by end of 2022, and Task Force 4 will continue their activities, focusing on data quality issues and formulation of practical guidelines.

32. By December 2023, the Group agreed to have a final version of the revised *Recommendations* to be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its 55<sup>th</sup> session in 2024, for endorsement.