

Statistical Commission
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Background document
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Items for discussion and decision: Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics

Main points from the seminar on emerging issues ‘Towards Better Information Systems for the 2030 Agenda – use of administrative records, Big Data and geospatial information’ Friday March 4th 2016

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Note by the Chair of the Expert Panels

- The context of the need to provide data for monitoring and doing policy analysis on the SDGs has reinforced the need for national statistical institutions to draw on the full range of data sources. The pledge to leave no one behind and the corresponding need for data granularity underlines this requirement.
- The three substantive panels dealt with respectively, civil registration and vital statistics; business registers; and registration of spatial units. Across the three panels, a number of issues reappeared, suggesting a need to address these in a systemic and crosscutting manner.
- The final panel dealing with the way forward concluded that the High-Level Group on post 2015-monitoring would provide the best anchor for future work and reflection on the issues. Hence, it was recommended to the Statistical Commission to mandate the HLG to take on this task and to report back at the 2017 meeting of the Commission.

The issues to be considered by the High-Level Group to a large extent overlap with those of the Transformative Agenda and include:

- Building on the remarks of the President of the General Assembly ways need to be found to generate high-level political commitment behind the access to non-traditional data sources.
- Based on the experience in the respective panels mechanisms for cross-country coordination need to be identified to strengthen the legitimacy of and political backing for such access.
- Thoughts are needed on how to favor an enabling legal framework that balances the right of access by statistical institutions with demands for privacy and data protection.
- While an enabling legal framework is necessary it is not a sufficient condition for exploiting new data sources and thought needs to be given to the role of partnerships with data providers and how they are appropriately structured.
- Progress on monitoring the SDGs will call for capacity building in a number of dimensions, including at the level of training, use of modern technology and managing transformation. Coordinating capacity-building requirements will allow for a programmatic approach with countries in the driving seat and facilitate the input from donors.
- The need for stronger coordination mechanisms was underlined both across regions within individual statistical topic areas and across data sources to achieve deeper integration. It was noted that intra-regional coordination of individual topic areas in many respects played an important role but global outcomes should be strengthened through inter-regional coordination. Likewise, a recurrent theme of the deliberations was the need to achieve deeper integration and interoperability across different data sources to build the information systems necessary to monitor the SDG's.