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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

**Items for discussion and decision: data and indicators
for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development****Report of the High-level Group for Partnership,
Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics
for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development****Note by the Secretary-General**

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2016/220 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The present report provides a summary of the activities of the High-level Group since the previous session of the Statistical Commission. It highlights the outcomes of the Commission's meetings, held on 25 and 26 May 2016 and 29 and 30 September 2016, and provides details on the proposed global action plan for sustainable development data and the preparations for the first United Nations World Data Forum, to be held from 15 to 18 January 2017 in Cape Town, South Africa.

Points for decision by the Commission include: (a) proposed revisions to the terms of reference for the High-level Group; (b) the proposed global action plan for sustainable development data; and (c) the programme of work of the Group for 2017.

* E/CN.3/2017/1.



Report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-sixth session, the Statistical Commission agreed to establish the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, composed of representatives of 22 national statistical offices, and of regional and international organizations as observers, operating under the auspices of the Commission. The Commission tasked the High-level Group with promoting national ownership of the post-2015 monitoring system and fostering statistical capacity-building, partnership and coordination.

II. Membership and terms of reference

2. At its forty-seventh session, the Statistical Commission agreed to the terms of reference for the High-level Group (see annex I).

3. The criteria for membership in the High-level Group were established by the Statistical Commission to ensure equitable regional representation and technical expertise. The current composition was determined in 2015 through a consultation process in each region, coordinated by the respective regional statistical mechanism and supported by the United Nations regional commissions. Annex II presents the current list of members. As agreed by the Commission, the Chair acts as an *ex officio* member of the Group. The current terms of reference for the Group, as approved by the Commission at its forty-seventh session, in March 2016, state that the Group will be nominated for an initial period of two years, after which some members are expected to be rotated.

4. At the sixth meeting of the High-level Group, in September 2016, members agreed to specify the criteria for the rotation mechanism in the terms of reference for the Group. The proposed amended terms of reference are presented in annex III.

5. The High-level Group also agreed on a concept note describing mechanisms for the involvement of observers and a related communication strategy. The document was finalized at the fifth meeting of the Group and is available on the Group's website.¹

III. Meetings of the High-level Group

A. Fifth meeting

6. The fifth meeting of the High-level Group was held in Budapest on 25 and 26 May 2016, with the main objectives of reviewing the proposed global action plan

¹ <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/hlg/>.

for sustainable development data and discussing the preparations for the first United Nations World Data Forum.

7. The High-level Group held an intensive discussion about the global action plan. Members agreed to structure the plan into two main parts: an executive summary and the action plan. The proposed plan is submitted to the Statistical Commission at its present session as a background document.

8. The High-level Group has developed criteria to guide the selection of the host country for the United Nations World Data Forum. On the basis of these criteria, the Group agreed that the host country of the first Forum would be South Africa. The Forum is scheduled to be held from 15 to 18 January 2017 in Cape Town, South Africa.

9. The High-level Group also agreed to establish a programme committee to advise on the development of the programme of work for the Forum, drawing experts from national statistical offices, the private sector, academia, civil society and international and multilateral organizations, among others. The list of programme committee members and the programme for the first United Nations World Data Forum can be found on the Forum's website.²

B. Sixth meeting

10. The sixth meeting of the High-level Group was held in Budapest on 29 and 30 September 2016. The main objectives of the meeting were to review and finalize the global action plan, discuss the status of the preparations for the upcoming United Nations World Data Forum and review and finalize the workplan of the High-level Group for 2017, which is set out herein.

11. The High-level Group discussed and agreed upon criteria for the rotation of the membership of the Group. It was agreed that the existing regional mechanisms would continue to decide upon the country representation to the Group. It was suggested that not all members be rotated at once. See annex III for the revised terms of reference.

12. The High-level Group also discussed the global action plan, which integrates and expands upon points raised in the Transformative Agenda. The discussion addressed missing elements or additional inputs needed to finalize the plan. See section V for more details.

C. Seventh meeting

13. The members of the High-level Group agreed to convene the seventh meeting of the High-level Group in conjunction with the United Nations World Data Forum, in January 2017, in Cape Town. The meeting will be held in two sessions, on 15 and 19 January. The main objectives of this seventh meeting will be: (a) to review the proposals for the host country of the second United Nations World Data Forum and take a decision on the host country, and (b) to take initial stock of the experiences gained at the first Forum.

² <http://undataforum.org>.

14. At the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission, the Co-Chairs of the High-level Group will provide an oral update covering the key outcomes of the January meeting, a brief summary of the main accomplishments of the first United Nations World Data Forum and any other developments that occurred between the submission of the written report and the session of the Commission.

IV. Joint subgroup of the High-level Group and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators

15. The joint subgroup of the High-level Group and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators held a meeting in the third quarter of 2016 to discuss the terms of reference for and purpose of the Group. An initial matrix on capacity-building needs for the indicators was developed.

16. The joint subgroup met on the margins of the fourth meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, in Geneva, in November 2016, and reviewed its terms of reference and workplan. The joint subgroup decided to conduct a mapping exercise on capacity-building needs in each country or region. As Latin America has already completed a similar exercise at the regional level, the group proposed to use that example as a possible template. The joint subgroup will review the Latin America mapping exercise and develop a set of criteria for all regions.

V. Preparation of the global action plan for sustainable development data

17. At its forty-sixth session, the Commission had before it a draft global action plan for sustainable development data. The plan is intended to provide a framework for the discussions on and the planning and implementation of the statistical capacity-building necessary to achieve the scope and intent of the 2030 Agenda. The plan acknowledges that that work is country-led and is carried out at the subnational, national and regional levels. Between June and September 2016, a small group of members of the High-level Group (Ecuador, Hungary, Switzerland, the United States of America and the United Nations Secretariat) held a number of conference calls to further develop the action plan. At its sixth meeting, the members of the High-level Group reviewed the global action plan and provided comments on missing elements.

18. Also at its sixth meeting, the High-level Group decided to hold an open consultation to allow all stakeholders, including statisticians from other national statistical offices, international and regional organizations and civil society, to provide inputs to the plan. The consultation was conducted in November 2016. A total of 40 contributions was received.

19. The global action plan will be presented at the upcoming United Nations World Data Forum in Cape Town and transmitted to the Commission in a background document.

VI. The United Nations World Data Forum

A. Preparations for the first Forum

20. Preparations are under way for the first United Nations World Data Forum, including developing programme content and addressing logistical aspects. As agreed upon by the High-level Group, the programme committee has advised on the development of the programme for the Forum. The Statistics Division, as the secretariat of the High-level Group and the programme committee, has coordinated with the host country's statistical office, Statistics South Africa, to ensure that the Forum is a success.

21. The website developed for the first United Nations World Data Forum³ contains all the information about the event.

B. Criteria and process for decisions on the host country for the second United Nations World Data Forum

22. On 11 October 2016, a call for expressions of interest to host the second United Nations World Data Forum was sent to Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. Member States were invited to submit their expressions of interest by 15 November 2016. Initial replies were followed up with a request for full proposals to be submitted by 15 December 2016. The High-level Group will review the proposals and make a decision at its next meeting, to be held in Cape Town on 15 January 2017.

VII. Workplan for 2017

23. At its sixth meeting, in September 2016, the High-level Group agreed on a workplan for 2017. The workplan is contained in annex IV.

VIII. Points for decision

24. The Statistical Commission is invited to:

(a) Approve the proposed revision to the terms of reference for the High-level Group, containing the rotation mechanism for members;

(b) Express its views on and approve the proposed workplan of the High-level Group for 2017;

(c) Adopt the global action plan for sustainable development data.

³ <http://www.undataform.org>.

Annex I

Version of the terms of reference for the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, agreed upon by the Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session

Terms of reference for the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will establish a global action plan for monitoring and reporting Sustainable Development Goal statistics and in this function will:

(a) Provide strategic leadership for the Sustainable Development Goal implementation process as it concerns statistical monitoring and reporting within the framework of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;

(b) Promote national ownership of, and foster capacity-building, partnership and coordination for, the follow-up and review system of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including ensuring consistency between national and global monitoring and reporting;

(c) Recommend priority areas to target funding for statistical capacity-building and advocate for resource mobilization, management and monitoring;

(d) Review and make recommendations as appropriate and in cooperation with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to facilitate modernization and harmonization of data infrastructures and identify ways to leverage the resources and potential contributions of the private sector;

(e) Advise on how to harness the opportunities provided by the data revolution to support the Sustainable Development Goal implementation process, following up on the recommendations of the report entitled “A world that counts: mobilizing the data revolution for sustainable development” by the Secretary-General’s Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, and taking into account the levels of development of the countries;

(f) Promote engagement between the statistical community and other stakeholders working on the monitoring of globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

(g) Provide guidance on the content and organization of a United Nations World Forum on Sustainable Development Data, and lead the efforts of the global statistical community to reach out and cooperate with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, academia and the private sector.

2. In undertaking its work, the High-level Group will consult closely with the Co-Chairs of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group in relation to statistical capacity-building for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal indicators. It will also engage with existing joint initiatives for statistical capacity-building and technical assistance, such as those undertaken under the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), the Memorandum of Understanding of the Development Banks with the United Nations on cooperation on statistical activities and other coordination and cooperation agreements in order to avoid any duplication of work and to extend efficiencies as they are identified.
3. The High-level Group will comprise 22 member representatives of national statistical offices, with balanced geographical representation following broadly the distribution in the Inter-Agency and Expert Group. Members of the High-level Group will be nominated through existing regional mechanisms^a for an initial period of two years, after which some are expected to be rotated as agreed by the respective regional mechanisms. It is preferred that members of the High-level Group not serve concurrently as members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group. The members of the High-level Group will elect two Co-Chairs. The High-level Group will include, as observers, representatives of regional commissions and regional and international agencies. The High-level Group will seek inputs from countries that are not members of the High-level Group, through their respective regional mechanisms. The Statistics Division will act as the secretariat of the High-level Group.
4. The High-level Group will operate under the auspices of the Statistical Commission and will report to it annually, seeking its guidance.
5. The mandate and functioning of the High-level Group will be reviewed by the Statistical Commission as needed.

^a Statistical Commission for Africa, Conference of European Statisticians, Statistical Conference of the Americas, Committee on Statistics, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

Annex II

Members of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The following are currently members of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

*Chair of the Statistical Commission**

- Brazil

Eastern Africa

- Mozambique
- Rwanda

Middle and Southern Africa

- South Africa

Western Africa

- Côte d'Ivoire

Northern Africa

- Tunisia

Western Asia

- State of Palestine
- Yemen

Central, Eastern, Southern and South-Eastern Asia

- Mongolia
- Pakistan
- Malaysia
- Kazakhstan

Oceania

- Vanuatu

Caribbean

- Bahamas
- Saint Lucia

Central and South America

- Argentina
- Ecuador
- El Salvador

Eastern Europe

- Hungary

Southern Europe

- Italy

North America and Northern and Western Europe

- Denmark
- Switzerland
- United States of America

* The Chair of the Statistical Commission is an ex officio member of the High-level Group.

Annex III

Proposed revised version of the terms of reference for the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Terms of reference for the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will establish a global action plan for sustainable development data and in this function will:

(a) Provide strategic leadership for the Sustainable Development Goal implementation process as it concerns statistical monitoring and reporting within the framework of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;

(b) Promote national ownership of, and foster capacity-building, partnership and coordination for, the follow-up and review system of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including to ensure consistency between national and global monitoring and reporting;

(c) Recommend priority areas to target funding for statistical capacity-building and advocate for resource mobilization, management and monitoring;

(d) Review and make recommendations as appropriate and in cooperation with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to facilitate modernization and harmonization of data infrastructures and identify ways to leverage the resources and creativity of the private sector;

(e) Advise on how to harness the opportunities provided by the data revolution to support the Sustainable Development Goal implementation process, following up on the recommendations of the report entitled “A world that counts: mobilizing the data revolution for sustainable development” by the Secretary-General’s Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, and taking into account the levels of development of the countries;

(f) Promote engagement between the statistical community and other stakeholders working on the implementation and monitoring of globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

(g) Provide guidance on the content and organization of a world forum on sustainable development data, and lead the efforts of the global statistical community to reach out and cooperate with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, academia and the private sector.

2. In undertaking its work, the High-level Group will consult closely with the Co-Chairs of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group in relation to statistical capacity-building for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal indicators. It will also engage with existing joint initiatives for statistical capacity-building and

technical assistance, such as those undertaken under the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), the Memorandum of Understanding of the Development Banks with the United Nations on cooperation on statistical activities and other coordination and cooperation agreements in order to avoid any duplication of work and to extend efficiencies as they are identified.

3. The High-level Group will comprise 22 member representatives of national statistical offices, with balanced geographical representation following broadly the distribution in the Inter-Agency and Expert Group. Members of the High-level Group will be nominated through existing regional mechanisms^a for an initial period of two years, after which some are expected to be rotated on the basis of the following criteria: two members will be replaced from each region where there are four or five members, and one will be replaced where there are three or fewer members from the regions.^b It is preferable that members of the High-level Group not serve concurrently as members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group. The members of the High-level Group will elect two Co-Chairs. One or both of the Co-Chairs are also expected to rotate every two years. However, when they step down they are invited to serve for an additional term of two years as members.

4. The High-level Group can include, as issue partners, representatives of regional commissions and regional and international agencies as well as other specific representatives as decided by the members of the High-level Group. The High-level Group will seek inputs from countries that are not members of the High-level Group, through their respective regional mechanisms.

5. The Statistics Division will act as the secretariat of the High-level Group.

6. The High-level Group will operate under the auspices of the Statistical Commission and will report to it annually, seeking its guidance.

7. The mandate and functioning of the High-level Group will be reviewed by the Statistical Commission as needed.

^a Statistical Commission for Africa, Conference of European Statisticians, Statistical Conference of the Americas, Committee on Statistics, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

^b Currently, there are five members from Africa, two from Western Asia, four from Asia, one from the Pacific, two from the Caribbean, three from Latin America, one from Eastern Europe and four from Europe and North America.

Annex IV

Proposed programme of work for the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Proposed 2017 workplan for the High-level Group

1. Meetings

Seventh meeting of the High-level Group: 15 and 19 January, Cape Town, South Africa

- 15 January 2017, morning, Cape Town

Purpose: (a) update by the Secretariat on First United Nations World Data Forum; and (b) review of proposals and selection of a host country for the second United Nations World Data Forum. The host country for the second Forum will be announced on the last day of the first Forum.

- 19 January 2017, morning, Cape Town

Purpose: discuss the outcomes of the first United Nations World Data Forum and plans to develop a short summary document on lessons learned.

Eighth meeting of the High-level Group: Sunday, 5 March 2017, New York

- Sunday morning, prior to the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission

Ninth meeting of the High-level Group: September/October 2017, to be decided

2. Forum

First United Nations World Data Forum: 15-18 January 2017, Cape Town

3. Global action plan (from the global action plan workplan — may be updated if the workplan is adjusted)

- 16 January 2017 — Introduction of the global action plan at the United Nations World Data Forum, Cape Town
- March 2017 — Presentation to the Statistical Commission for endorsement by members
- May/June 2017 — Endorsement by the Economic and Social Council
- July 2017 — High-level political forum on sustainable development: Side event to provide an update on the global action plan
- September 2017 — General Assembly: Endorsement of Assembly
- September 2017 — General Assembly: Side event to provide an update on the global action plan

4. Joint subgroup

The workplan for the joint subgroup will be based on the outcome of the meeting of the group held in Geneva in November 2016.
