

**Statement by Ambassador Tore Hattrem
High Level Panel on “Strengthening Migration Statistics,
in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the New York Declaration**

Thank you for the possibility to participate in the High Level Panel on “Strengthening Migration Statistics in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the New York Declaration.

I am pleased to be part of this eminent panel to discuss how the statistical community can respond to the call for better migration statistics.

In my intervention, **I will be focusing on the following two point:**

1. First, I will give some general comments to the “Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration”, with a particular focus on further improvements of Migration Statistics.
2. Second, I will relate to the need for more harmonized data on forcibly displaced persons in the context of the “Global Compact on Refugees”; in addition to providing some comments on the need to improve data also on displaced persons in the context of the SDGs.

Let me FIRST begin by recalling that the New York Declaration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) both call for high quality, disaggregated and timely data on migration.

This provides a unique opportunity for improving national and international migration statistics.

However, the level of detail prescribed in the two global initiatives, combined with the requirements for timely data, will make it challenging to produce these statistics.

Norway welcomes the clear set of actions recommended to improve data and statistics on migrants in the Zero-draft of the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

GCM has its main emphasis on traditional data sources such as population censuses and household surveys – and for many countries, this will be the main source of data to describe both migrant stocks - and to a certain degree migrant flows. For the short term this is probably the best solution.

There are however some challenges with this approach. Surveys and censuses are very costly instruments and timely data are hard to achieve as censuses typically are carried out only every ten years – whereas many of the large household surveys are only carried out on a biannual basis. Hence the reliance on these traditional data sources will not resolve all data needs.

In Norway we have gradually moved away from the census and survey approach and for many years we have based our migration statistics on various administrative data sources. We established a Central Population register in 1964 where all residents in Norway are registered, including immigrants. From that time and onwards all our migration statistics have been based on data from this register.

When introducing the Population register we also introduced a national pin code that has later been utilized in a number of administrative registers within the Norwegian society. This has given us the opportunity to link data from the population register with data from other public registries, on for instance labor, education and income.

In addition, there is a link between the Population register and the permit data compiled by the Directorate of Immigration. This makes it possible to distinguish between the main categories of immigrants in Norway according to their initial reason for immigration (labour, protection, family, education).

This system of linked administrative data is used to produce the official Norwegian statistics on labor market participation, unemployment, education and income. Through the pin code we can identify immigrants in these data sets and see how they compare to the rest of the population. This gives us the possibility to not only say how many immigrants come to - and continue to stay – in Norway. We can also through these linked data see how immigrants integrate into Norwegian society.

We believe that this approach that combines different types of administrative data offers the best solution for monitoring migration - as well as measuring the effects of migration.

In our view, the GCM could to a larger degree encourage countries to also make use of such integrated administrative data to produce migration statistics as well as statistics on immigrant integration.

Let me now move over to my second point.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the world is witnessing a record numbers of displaced persons. At the same time, we also see a growing concern about the validity and reliability of the actual numbers on displaced persons.

Governments and international organizations need good data to assist refugees and to curb challenges of forced migration – and here better statistics plays an integral role. The need for better, more harmonized data on forcibly displaced persons is also specifically mentioned in the draft version of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

On this background, both the statistical and the humanitarian community identifies a need to improve the statistics on forcibly displaced persons. Together with UNHCR and Eurostat, Statistics Norway, has taken the lead in this work.

At the UN Statistical Commission in 2015, UNHCR, together with Statistics Norway presented a report where a number of challenges with the validity and reliability of the international statistics on refugees were identified.

The most important findings from the report were that there is a lack of a consistent terminology on displaced groups. In far too many countries, there is a lack of good data sources, and as a consequence there is a disparity between national and international refugee numbers – and the figures are difficult to compare.

The conclusion of the report, which later was supported by the Statistical Commission, was that further work on statistics on forcibly displaced populations was required and it was recommended to bring together international organizations and experts from national statistical offices and establish an Expert Group on refugee statistics.

The Expert Group arranged over the last two years two international conferences, gathered 40 national statistical authorities and 15 international organizations and produced two draft reports: “Recommendations on refugee statistics” and a “technical report on IDP statistics”. The two reports will be presented – for adoption – at this year’s Statistical Commission session. Later today a specific side event has also been devoted to this topic.

We believe that the work with the recommendations will contribute to improve the statistics in the countries. They will also serve as a guidance for countries on how to include the refugee and IDP perspective in the Sustainable Development Goals. The expert group itself will play an important role as a forum of experts that can guide the work in the countries.

Further, the work will now start to make the recommendations more operational, i.e. the development of practical manuals and guidance tools. This will be important to support national agencies in implementing the recommendations. In this work it will be important to ensure that they are applicable for countries and regions with different levels of access to data and competencies. Capacity development in this area will also be important.

Thank you for this opportunity to share some reflections on how the statistical community can respond to the call for better statistics on migrants and forcibly displaced groups.

I hope the experience from the Statistics Norway can be useful in this regard.