Economic and Social Council

Statistical Commission
Fifty-first session
3–6 March 2020
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 2019/210 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 report provides a summary of the recent activities of the High-level Group relating to its review of the implementation of the data revolution, the preparation of the document on financing the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, guidance on the engagement of the statistical community with other stakeholders and preparations for the third United Nations World Data Forum, to be held from 18 to 21 October 2020 in Bern.

The Commission will also have before it two background documents, on the implementation of the data revolution and on the financing of the Cape Town Global Action Plan.

Points for decision by the Commission are contained in paragraph 24 of the report.

_____

* E/CN.3/2020/1.

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

I. Introduction

1.   The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was established at the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission. It is composed of representatives from 22 national statistical offices and operates under the auspices of the Statistical Commission. In its decision 46/101, the Commission tasked the High-level Group with providing strategic leadership for the implementation process relating to the Sustainable Development Goals as it concerned statistical monitoring and reporting and fostering statistical capacity-building, partnership and coordination (see E/2015/24-E/CN.3/2015/40).

II. Membership

2.   As outlined in the terms of reference of the High-level Group, the 2019 rotation of its members was coordinated through the respective regional mechanisms. High-level Group members represent the countries in their respective subregions and are expected to consult on a regular basis with those countries to reflect the regional perspective in the work of the Group. The representative of each member is at the level of chief statistician and is tasked with providing strategic leadership.

3.   Through the 2019 rotation, the following 11 members were newly included in the High-level Group: Albania, Burundi, China, Finland, Mexico, Nepal, the Philippines, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The current full membership of the High-level Group is included in annex II. The Co-Chairs and the secretariat would like to thank the 11 members who rotated out of the Group for their hard work and contributions over the years.

4.   At the fourteenth meeting of the High-level Group, the Chair of the National Statistics Office of Mongolia, Ariunzaya Ayush, was elected Co-Chair of the Group, replacing Belkacem Abdous of Morocco. At its fifteenth meeting, the Group elected the General Director of the National Institute of Statistics of Angola, Camilo Ceita, to join Ms. Ayush as the second Co-Chair. The Chief Statistician of Hungary, Gabriella Vukovich, stepped down after having served as Co-Chair since the establishment of the Group.

5.   As outlined in its terms of reference, the High-level Group includes, as issue partners, representatives of regional commissions and regional and international agencies, as well as representatives of other entities that contribute to the discussions and work of the Group on specific topics. Before each meeting, the Group members agree upon which issue partners to invite on the basis of the items on the agenda. At its eleventh meeting, in May 2018, the Group decided to include the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century as a "standing issue partner", meaning that it is invited to attend all open segments of the meetings. In addition to issue partners, selected members of the United Nations World Data Forum programme committee are invited to the meeting immediately following meetings of the Forum to reflect on the Forum and its outcome. Over the years, 19 different organizations have been included in meetings of the High-level Group, namely, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, the Economic Commission for Africa,

the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Data-Pop Alliance, Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional (CEPEI), Development Initiatives, Open Data Watch, DataKind and World Wide Web Foundation. Previously, the High-level Group had developed a communications strategy, which has been updated and is available on the website of the Group.

6.   Over the past year, the High-level Group has received multiple requests for its members to join advisory boards or groups to represent the official statistical community. Most recently, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations requested four representatives to join the partnership council of the "50 X 2030" initiative, namely, Ecuador, Mongolia, South Africa and the State of Palestine.

III.   Review of the implementation of the data revolution

7.   The Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, in a report entitled "A world that counts: mobilizing the data revolution for sustainable development", sets out the main opportunities and risks presented by the data revolution for sustainable development. It also calls for action, especially by Governments and international institutions, to act to enable data to play its full role in the realization of sustainable development by closing key gaps with regard to access to and use of data. A background document on the review of implementation of the data revolution presents a review of how the recommendations of the Independent Expert Advisory Group regarding the data revolution have been addressed so far by the global data and statistical community. At its fifteenth meeting, in November 2019, the members of the High-level Group concluded that most recommendations had been addressed in some form and that there were no areas that needed to be addressed urgently and on which they should focus currently.

IV.   Implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, the Dubai Declaration and financing for data and statistics

A.   Implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data

8.   The Cape Town Global Action Plan has been a pivotal document in supporting the development of statistical systems to meet the data needs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is referred to as the main guiding document for many data and statistical initiatives. At its fifteenth meeting, the High-level Group agreed to form a subgroup that would review the implementation of the Global Action Plan. As a result, the group engaged in a new workstream focused on recommendations to increase and improve funding for data and statistics.

B. Dubai Declaration: financing for data and statistics

9.   Over the past few years, the High-level Group has been working on the topic of financing for the Cape Town Global Action Plan and data and statistics more generally. The Group also helped to organize events at the high-level political forum on sustainable development both in 2018 and 2019. Despite the work done, there is not yet sufficient traction towards increased financing and support for data and statistics and sustainable statistical systems.

10.   At the fourteenth meeting, held in Ulaanbaatar in May 2019, members of the High-level Group, along with invited issue partners, developed a set of key elements of a financing mechanism around three pillars: (a) to secure domestic funding; (b) to improve the efficiency of existing resources through better coordination; and (c) the increase the overall amount of funding. Those elements are set out in the background document on the financing of the Cape Town Global Action Plan.

11.   At its fifteenth meeting, held in Budapest in November 2019, the High-level Group members, along with issue partners, discussed why there had not been more momentum in securing resources for data and statistics. The Group also discussed ways to bridge the divide between recipient countries and donors to ensure a balance between the priorities of capacity needs of countries and aid efficiency for the donors.

12.   At its fifteenth meeting, the High-level Group formed a subgroup to revise and refine the working document of the High-level Group on financing for data and statistics. The subgroup consists of Angola, the United Kingdom, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century. The paper, entitled "Financing for data and statistics: enriched national statistical systems to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", is being transmitted to the Commission as a background document.

V. Engagement of the statistical community with other stakeholders

13.   In its terms of reference, the High-level Group is tasked with promoting engagement between the statistical community and other stakeholders. Over the past year, the members of the Group have discussed how to address this task, as engagement of the statistical community with other stakeholders is essential to addressing the data needs of the 2030 Agenda. At its fifteenth meeting, the Group concluded that the United Nations World Data Forum was the main avenue for bringing together all stakeholders and providing space for engagement. Its importance notwithstanding, there was no overall agreement that additional work in that area was needed.

VI. A more efficient United Nations statistical system

14.   At its fiftieth session, the Commission recognized the urgent need for a better coordinated and more efficient United Nations statistical system through the immediate strengthening of the existing coordination mechanisms, the raising of the issue of official statistics to the higher political level, and ensuring active involvement of the statistical community.

15.   The High-level Group agrees that more efficient coordination continues to be a concern, especially in the area of coordinated data flows and capacity development.

VII. United Nations World Data Forum

A. Preparations for the United Nations World Data Forum, 2020

16. The United Nations World Data Forum, 2020 will take place from 18 to 21 October 2020 in Bern. A programme committee was formed in June 2019, consisting of 24 members, including the two Co-Chairs of the High-level Group and the Chair of the Statistical Commission. The host country is an ex-officio member of the programme committee. The list of programme committee members for the United Nations World Data Forum can be found on the Forum's website (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/undataforum/index.html).

17. The programme committee has elaborated on the original six thematic areas[1] used to guide the development of the programme and has developed guiding questions to help to focus the inputs submitted for consideration to be included in the programme of the Forum.

18. In order to ensure a wide range of inputs from all key stakeholders, the Secretariat issued an open call for session proposals on 2 December 2019 through an electronic platform for submission, available on the Forum's website. The call is open until 31 January 2020. In addition, a separate call for exhibition proposals will be issued in the coming months.

19. The programme committee and the secretariat of the Forum have also developed a set of selection criteria to assess the session proposals and guide the decision-making process. Throughout the process, the programme committee or the High-level Group may request revisions to or the merging of some proposals. All applicants will be informed about the status of their applications by 31 March 2020. The proposed programme will be reviewed and finalized by the High-level Group.

20. Each United Nations World Data Forum is expected to conclude with a concrete outcome representing the views of the data and statistical communities. At the first Forum, held in Cape Town, South Africa, in January 2017, the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, which was drafted by the High-level Group, was launched and was later adopted by the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session as a guiding framework for modernizing statistical systems to meet the data needs of the 2030 Agenda. At the United Nations World Data Forum, 2018, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the Dubai Declaration: Supporting the Implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data was adopted. The Dubai Declaration is the basis for the work of the High-level Group on financing for data and statistics.

21. To prepare the outcome document for the United Nations World Data Forum, 2020, the High-level Group, at its fifteenth meeting, agreed to form a subgroup, whose members include Albania, Angola, Mexico, the Philippines, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the State of Palestine, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and the Secretariat. The outcome document will reflect the major steps to be taken towards the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan and concrete actions to modernize the global statistical system and increase the availability, timeliness and disaggregation of data.

---

[1] More information is available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/undataforum/index.html.

B. Process for decision on the host country for the United Nations World Data Forum, 2022

22.   The fourth United Nations World Data Forum will take place in the fourth quarter of 2022. The High-level Group agreed that there would be a rotation in the region hosting the Forum. The first two Forums have been hosted in South Africa and the United Arab Emirates, countries of Africa and Western Asia, respectively. The third Forum will be hosted by Switzerland, a European country. While countries in all regions can express interest and submit a bid, it would be ideal if a country in the Latin America and the Caribbean region or in the Asia and the Pacific region were to host the fourth Forum. The timeline for expressing an interest and submitting bids to host the United Nations World Data Forum, 2022 is as follows:

- A call for expressions of interest will be sent to all Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs in mid-January 2020, with a deadline for reply of 31 March 2020.

- Interested countries will submit detailed bids to host the United Nations World Data Forum, 2022 by 31 August 2020.

- A decision on the host country for the United Nations World Data Forum, 2022 will be taken and announced by the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the third United Nations World Data Forum, to be held in Bern in October 2020.

VIII.   Workplan for November 2019 to October 2020

23.   The High-level Group agreed on a workplan for November 2019 to October 2020, which is included in annex I.

IX.   Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

24.   **The Statistical Commission is invited:**

(a)   **To take note of the present report presenting the work of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;**

(b)   **To approve the way forward in the area of financing for data and statistics;**

(c)   **To review and discuss the way forward to achieve a better coordinated and more efficient United Nations statistical system;**

(d)   **To review and approve the proposed workplan of the High-level Group for 2020.**

Annex I

Proposed workplan of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, November 2019 to October 2020

1. **Further activities on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan on Sustainable Development Data**

    (a)   Refine the paper on a financing mechanism for more and better data and statistics:

    (i)   A subgroup will prepare the refined background document;

    (ii)   Members of the subgroup are Angola, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century;

    (b)   Review the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan:

    (i)   A subgroup will prepare a review;

    (ii)   Members of the subgroup are Hungary, South Africa and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century.

    Deliverables:

    - Background paper on a financing mechanism, presented to the fifty-first session of the Statistical Commission in March 2020

    - Paper on the review of the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan

2. **Review and assessment of the current status of the implementation of the data revolution**

    (a)   Review the recommendations of the data revolution report and how they can be further implemented;

    (b)   Prepare a review document to be presented to the Statistical Commission.

    Deliverables:

    - Collection of case studies on best practices presented on an interactive website

    - Review document on the current status of the implementation of the data revolution, presented to fifty-first session of the Statistical Commission in March 2020

3. **Preparations for the United Nations World Data Forum, 18–21 October 2020, Bern**

    (a)   Provide inputs and hold consultations as requested by the programme committee;

    (b)   Suggest keynote speakers;

    (c)   Contribute to sessions as needed;

    (d)   Review and approve final programme;

    (e)   Prepare outcome document for the United Nations World Data Forum, 2020:

(i)   A subgroup will prepare the outcome document;

(ii)   Members of the subgroup include Albania, Angola, Mexico, the Philippines, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the State of Palestine, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and the Secretariat.

Deliverable: Outcome document presented at the United Nations World Data Forum, 2020

4.   Meetings

(a)   Fifteenth meeting of the High-level Group, 5–7 November 2019, Budapest;

(b)   Videoconference on an efficient United Nations statistical system: January 2020 meeting. The videoconference will be focused on a more efficient United Nations statistical system and establishing the common position of the High-level Group;

(c)   Sixteenth meeting of the High-level Group: 1 March 2020, New York;

(d)   Videoconference on the programme for the United Nations World Data Forum: May 2020;

(e)   Videoconference on the outcome document of the United Nations World Data Forum: May 2020;

(f)   Seventeenth meeting of the High-level Group, Bern, October 2020:

(i)   *18 October 2020, a.m.* Purpose will be to review the proposals for the United Nations World Data Forum, 2022 and reach a decision on the host country, to be announced on the final day of the United Nations World Data Forum, 2020;

(ii)   *22 October 2020, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.* Purpose will be to present the initial review of the United Nations World Data Forum, 2020 and prepare a short summary document on lessons learned; additional topics will be added, as needed.

Annex II

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

The following countries are members of the High-level Group as of July 2019:

Sub-Saharan Africa: Angola, Burundi, Senegal and South Africa

Northern Africa and Western Asia: Morocco, Saudi Arabia and State of Palestine

Asia and the Pacific: China, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines and Tajikistan

Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

North America and Europe: Albania, Finland, Hungary, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Chair of the Statistical Commission:[1] Kenya

_____

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

Annex III

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

A. Fourteenth meeting, 22–25 May 2019, Ulaanbaatar

1.   The fourteenth meeting of the High-level Group was held from 22 to 25 May 2019 in Ulaanbaatar. The meeting consisted of a one-day members' meeting on 22 May and a three-day session from 23 to 25 May, at which selected issue partners were invited to participate. The main topics discussed at the meetings included preparations for the United Nations World Data Forum, 2020, the implementation and financing of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data and financing for data and statistics, a more efficient United Nations statistical system, components of a financing mechanism and next steps for the High-level Group.

B. Fifteenth meeting, 5–7 November 2019, Budapest

2.   The fifteenth meeting of the High-level Group was held from 5 to 7 November 2019 in Budapest. The meeting consisted of a one-day members' meeting on 5 November and a two-day session on 6 and 7 November, at which selected issue partners were invited to participate. The main topics discussed included engagement of the statistical community with other stakeholders, review of the implementation of the data revolution and preparations for the United Nations World Data Forum, 2020.

––––––––––––––––