



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
20 December 2019

Original: English

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## Statistical Commission

Fifty-first session

3–6 March 2020

Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**Items for discussion and decision: coordination of  
statistical programmes**

## Report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

### 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 to the Statistical Commission the report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities. The report provides an overview of the work carried out by the Committee in 2019 and a summary of the main conclusions of the Committee at its thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions, held in New York on 4 March 2019 and in Copenhagen on 12 and 13 September 2019, respectively. The Statistical Commission may wish to take into account the views of the Committee in its discussions under the relevant agenda items and is invited to take note of the report.

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\* E/CN.3/2020/1.



# Report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

## I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities is an inter-agency body that promotes coordination and cooperation across statistical programmes in regional, supranational and international organizations. As a forum of committed members, it fosters good practices in the statistical activities of international organizations, in accordance with the principles governing international statistical activities, and within the constraints of their own governance arrangements and resource envelopes. The members of the Committee are committed to contributing actively to the development of a coordinated global statistical system that produces and disseminates high-quality statistics, for example by facilitating the development and effective functioning of regional and national statistical systems.

2. The Committee held two sessions in 2019: the thirty-third session, held in New York on 4 March 2019, prior to the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission; and the thirty-fourth session, hosted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Copenhagen on 12 and 13 September 2019. The sessions were chaired by the Co-Chairs of the Committee: the Chief Statistician and Director of the Statistics and Data Directorate of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Martine Durand, and the Chief of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Angela Me.

3. The present report provides an overview of the work carried out by the Committee in 2019 and a summary of the main conclusions that it reached at its thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions.

## II. Membership, leadership and terms of reference

4. The Committee currently has 45 members,<sup>1</sup> 40 of which attended at least one session in 2019.

5. In addition to the two Co-Chairs, the work of the Committee was supported by three Vice-Chairs: the Director General of Eurostat, Mariana Kotzeva, the Director of the African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa, Oliver Chinganya, and the Director General of the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, Sabir al-Harbi.

6. At its thirty-fourth session, the Committee elected Ms. Me and the Director of the Development Data Group of the World Bank, Haishan Fu, as Co-Chairs for a two-year term. The Committee also elected Ms. Kotzeva, Mr. Chinganya and the Head of the Development Statistics and Information Branch of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Steve MacFeely, as Vice-Chairs for a two-year term.

## III. Working methods

7. In addition to holding two annual sessions, the Committee operates actively between sessions through a network of task teams, following up on the decisions taken during the regular sessions. The teams choose their own working arrangements and hold their own meetings, as appropriate. They prepare documents on progress

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/members.cshtml>.

made and the results of their work and report to the Committee for decision-making at its regular sessions. As the secretariat of the Committee, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat works closely with the Bureau, facilitates communication among Committee members and prepares the reports of the regular sessions and the annual report to the Statistical Commission; it also maintains the web pages of the Committee on the Division website.<sup>2</sup>

8. Since the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, the Committee has developed joint statements on items on the agenda of the Commission that are important to the Committee. Such statements must receive strong support from Committee members in order to serve as a mandate for the Co-Chairs to speak on behalf of the Committee. As in recent years, the first session of the year (the thirty-third session of the Committee), which was held on the margins of the Statistical Commission session in March 2019, was largely devoted to finalizing the Committee's joint statements, which were delivered by the Co-Chairs at the fiftieth session of the Commission, in 2019.<sup>3</sup> The Committee is also planning to deliver joint statements at the fifty-first session of the Commission.

9. The Committee has developed a multi-year work programme based on the results of a survey conducted on priority topics for coordination and/or sharing of experiences among members. The Committee is committed to translating work areas and discussions into specific outputs (publications, papers and websites) in order to increase the impact and visibility of its work.

## **IV. Work of the Committee in 2019**

### **A. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

10. Issues surrounding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have been on the agenda of the Committee at every session since its twentieth, which was held in Frankfurt, Germany, during the fourth quarter of 2012.

11. The Committee continued to receive regular briefings from the Statistics Division on the revision of the indicator framework for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals, in view of the critical supporting role of international organizations as custodians of indicators in their respective areas of work and in view of their respective mandates in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

12. Given the crucial importance of population data in computing many Sustainable Development Goal indicators, the Committee formed a task team to review the use of population data for the global monitoring of the Goals, as such data are one of the main sources of differences between Goal indicators published by custodian agencies and national indicators. The task team, led by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, submitted a preliminary report to the Committee in early 2019, in which it proposed to (a) upgrade the World Population Prospects (i.e. to prioritize the production of annual population estimates by single years of age, starting in the 2021 revision of the World Population Prospects); (b) to enhance and improve metadata for population estimates; and (c) to continue the preferential use of World Population Prospects data in the global monitoring of progress towards the Goals. The Committee requested the task team to explore the

<sup>2</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/>.

<sup>3</sup> In 2019, joint statements were delivered under the following agenda items: 3 (a), "Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"; 3 (b), "Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics"; 3 (c), "Open data"; and 3 (n), "International migration statistics".

possibility of developing international recommendations for population estimates and to the finish its work by March 2020.

13. The Committee also continued to be briefed on the work of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## **B. Geospatial information for statistics**

14. The Committee held a special session on geospatial information for statistics at its thirty-second session, during which members had the opportunity to share their activities regarding the uses of geospatial information systems and which featured a wide variety of presentations. Subsequently, the Committee conducted a stocktaking exercise to form a basis upon which to decide in which areas it might be useful for members to coordinate and create a common platform, including to engage meaningfully with the geospatial community. The survey, conducted in the middle of 2019, indicated that many agencies use geospatial data and tools mainly at the dissemination stage and that much more could be done at the data-collection and data-processing stages. The survey highlighted areas of common interest, which could serve as excellent opportunities for collaboration among Committee members. Preliminary results were first presented at the special session organized by the Committee at the sixty-second International Statistical Institute World Statistics Congress, held in Kuala Lumpur in August 2019, and then at the Committee's thirty-fourth session, in Copenhagen. The Committee decided to move from more informal cooperation happening at the technical level towards a more institutional framework of collaboration. As a first step, Committee members could share with all other members the tools and applications that they have already developed.

15. The Committee decided to reach out to the United Nations Geospatial Network to pursue the integration of the geospatial and the statistical communities, possibly through means of joint activities. As a first step, the Co-Chairs participated by videoconference in the meeting of the Network in September 2019. A phone call between the Chairs of the Committee and the Network is scheduled for January 2020.

## **C. Open data policies**

16. The Committee held initial discussions on open data policies at its thirtieth session and established a task team, led by the World Bank, that assesses Committee members' open data practices. The Committee regularly discusses the results of the task team's assessment of Committee members' use of open data practices.

17. In its most recent assessment, considered at the thirty-fourth session, the task team reaffirmed that most Committee members had generally incorporated the principles of open data into their dissemination practices and that some amount of progress had been made in the two areas identified in the assessment conducted in 2018 as areas for improvement: non-proprietary file formats and licensing. On the basis of these findings, the Committee decided to explore options for establishing a general-purpose data licence approach for use by United Nations agencies. The task team will provide a brief update on its work in March 2020, including a proposal on how and when to conduct a full assessment on open data practices.

## **D. Publications by the Committee**

18. The Committee publishes on its website various outputs, including the special issue paper entitled “Case studies: using non-official sources in international statistics” (September 2016),<sup>4</sup> which complements a paper entitled “Recommended practices on the use of non-official sources in international statistics” (November 2013).<sup>5</sup> Other publications, as well as the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards, are available on the Committee website.<sup>6</sup>

## **E. Committee presence at international conferences**

19. The Committee organized a special session on geospatial information for statistics during the sixty-second International Statistical Institute World Statistics Congress, held in Kuala Lumpur from 18 to 23 August 2019. The presentations are available on the Committee website.

## **F. 2020 sessions**

20. The Committee agreed that its thirty-fifth session would be held in New York on 2 March 2020, in conjunction with the fifty-first session of the Statistical Commission. The thirty-sixth session will be held in Washington, D.C., to be hosted by the World Bank, during the fourth quarter of 2020.

## **V. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission**

21. The Commission is invited to take note of the present report.

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<sup>4</sup> Available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub/2016docs-28th/E-publication.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/practices.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/>.