

As adopted through silence procedure on 10 March 2021

STATISTICAL COMMISSION

5 March 2021

Fifty-second session

1 – 3 and 5 March 2021

Agenda item 7: Report of the Commission on its fifty-second session

**DRAFT DECISIONS**

(text subject to editing)

**Decision 1: Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Item 3a)**

**Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, and commended the Group for its continued work on the implementation of the global indicator framework;
- (b) Expressed its appreciation for the progress made on the regular review of methodological developments and issues related to the indicators and their metadata. Welcomed the creation of the subgroup on metadata to improve the quality of metadata and facilitate better implementation of the indicator framework;
- (c) Encouraged piloting of new indicator methodologies in countries with different contexts, to improve capacity, ensure acceptability and feasibility of implementation at the national level;
- (d) Agreed to the proposed annual refinements of the indicator framework as presented in the Annex of the report of the Group;
- (e) Encouraged the IAEG-SDGs to continue implementing and refining indicators and further requested the IAEG-SDGs to work with relevant custodian agencies to develop and test a methodology for indicators on sustainable tourism, so that it can be ready for submission for the 2025 comprehensive review as this indicator is of particular importance to LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS.;
- (f) Welcomed the dedicated work by the Group on COVID-19 challenges and SDG monitoring and the background document entitled “COVID-19 and the global SDG indicators”, as a useful and timely resource for countries to help identify SDG areas highly impacted by the pandemic;
- (g) Expressed its appreciation for the progress made by the three working groups on Geospatial information, Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) and the Measurement of Development Support, and took note of specific comments addressed to the three working groups on the work going forward;
- (h) Welcomed the dedicated work of the Group on data disaggregation, in particular the establishment of a task force on small area estimation and took note of the development of a compilation of tools and resources and the practical guidebook for data disaggregation. Encouraged further work on data disaggregation and small area estimation with a view to providing additional

comprehensive guidelines and tools for countries;

- (i) Encouraged the Group to further incorporate data innovation in its work, including the integration of geospatial information and statistics for the 2030 Agenda; the sharing of experiences and best practices on SDG monitoring; the automation of data and metadata transmission using SDMX; and the development of guidelines for geospatial information and SDMX;
- (j) Stressed the need for enhanced technical and financial support for countries to build capacity for monitoring, for the production of SDG indicators and for the modernization of statistical systems, including on SDMX, geospatial data integration and data innovation, in particular for African countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;
- (k) Encouraged the IAEG-SDG to explore ways to connect and align their work with the efforts of other international working groups and bodies, including the regional commissions;
- (l) Also noted the interest of some countries to become members of the IAEG-SDGs, to be considered by their respective regional mechanisms;
- (m) Requested the IAEG-SDGs and the custodian agencies to continue their dialogue to enhance the data flow process for global SDG reporting, including by identifying good practices in the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the SDGs and to further refine tools to effectively coordinate data requests to countries, enabling more comprehensive reporting and validation and dissemination of data, and to reduce national reporting burden, including by making efficient use of existing regional mechanisms (or data platforms) where possible;
- (n) Approved the proposed work programme of the IAEG on SDG Indicators, as described in section VI of the report.

## **Decision 2: Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Item 3a)**

### **Report of the Secretary-General on work for the review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the work for the review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, and took note of the proposed programme of work of the Statistics Division in cooperation with the United Nations system;
- (b) Expressed its appreciation for the work of the Statistics Division, in cooperation with the United Nations system, in support of the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020 and the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database;
- (c) Requested the Statistics Division to continue leading the coordination with the United Nations statistical system in the preparation of the annual progress report;
- (d) Expressed its appreciation for the capacity development activities carried out by the Statistics Division, the United Nations statistical system, and other partners to assist Member States in making

SDG data and indicators available;

- (e) Strongly supported the Data for Now initiative to build capacity in countries to utilize new data sources for more timely and disaggregated data and indicators and pointed out the importance of coordination among the various participating partners;
- (f) Endorsed the launch of a collaborative on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes and noted the need to build on related efforts in this area, in particular, ensuring a safe use of data and sensitive information;
- (g) Welcomed the efforts to implement a federated system of national and global data hubs; and noted the interest expressed by multiple countries to join the initiative;
- (h) Stressed the importance of carrying out statistical training, welcomed the efforts of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training, and took note of the materials developed by the Network;
- (i) Welcomed the launch of the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians;
- (j) Welcomed the survey to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on national statistical offices which allows sharing of experiences and can provide direction in the allocation of much needed support;
- (k) Recognized the positive outcome of the high-level side event on "The COVID-19 pandemic: How the data and statistical community stepped up to the new challenges", which brought to the fore the long lasting transformations to address the new challenges in national and global statistical systems resulting from the solidarity and collaboration efforts of all members of the data and statistical community.

### **Decision 3: Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Item 3a)**

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

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the HLG-PCCB and expressed its appreciation for the work conducted;
- (b) Expressed gratitude for the work of the High-level Group and the Programme Committee, during a difficult year for planning large-scale events, in conducting a virtual United Nations World Data Forum and launching the statement on the "Data community's response to Covid-19" to mark the occasion;
- (c) Recognized the continued effort to prepare for the postponed third United Nations World Data Forum in Bern, Switzerland, currently planned for 3-6 October 2021;
- (d) Supported the way forward to develop the outcome document for the third United Nations World Data Forum and asked the Secretariat to continue to use the Forum to engage and involve a

wide variety of actors working in the data space on new solutions, partnerships and initiatives;

(e) Noted the interest of the Latin American region and other countries to host the fourth UN World Data Forum;

(f) Approved the proposed way forward to develop guidance for national statistical offices on approaches to data stewardship, and strongly supported the establishment of a working group on data stewardship within the Commission, open to interested countries and stakeholders from other data communities and took note of the several requests by countries to be part of the group;

(g) Noted the need for the working group on data stewardship to maintain a dialogue and ensure synergy with other international and regional groups working on this topic; to take account of different national starting points and circumstances; and to consider the numerous case studies already conducted;

(h) Took note of the discussions of the High-Level event, which confirmed national statistical offices have a role to play as data stewards, subject to their legal frameworks, by applying their expertise and experience to a broader set of purposes. The working group on data stewardship will focus on the scope and significance of these purposes through collaboration and contributions from all parts of the data ecosystem;

(i) Welcomed the continuous focus on financing and implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan in the work of the group;

(j) Agreed with the programme of work of the HLG-PCCB and asked the HLG-PCCB to report back to the Commission at its 53<sup>rd</sup> session on its implementation and on the outcome of the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN World Data Forum.

#### **Decision 4: Coordination of statistical programmes (Item 3b)**

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Recognized that a well-coordinated and efficient statistical system is more important than ever, especially as the international statistical community and the statistical programmes must grapple with the additional challenges brought about by COVID-19;

(b) Acknowledged and appreciated the work carried out by the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the UN System (CCS-UN) as agile and responsive;

(c) Welcomed the *System-wide Road Map for Innovating UN Data and Statistics* as a solid commitment of the UN system to strengthen coordination and modernize UN statistics and data addressing the provisions of ECOSOC resolution [2020/5](#);

(d) Fully concurred with the identified priority activities, in particular the proposal of transforming the data.un.org portal into a single point of reference for UN system data in order to strengthen the position of the UN system as a primary provider of global data and statistics (see decision xxx);

(e) Suggested adding target 1.1 (“To improve existing data sources and increase use of new data sources to expand coverage, relevance and timeliness of data and statistics produced and disseminated

by the United Nations system“) as a priority, in light of the growing need for new data sources, in particular in the light of the current pandemic;

(f) In this context, emphasized the importance of national sources of data and the need for strengthening national statistical capacity recognizing that the *Roadmap* also aims to support national statistical systems by providing coordinated support to Member States;

(g) In this context also reiterated the continued importance of ECOSOC Resolution 2006/6;

(h) Reminded the Committee of the need to reduce the reporting burden imposed on countries;

(i) Recommended that members of CCS-UN continue to engage in frequent communication and closer collaboration with Member States through suitable mechanisms;

(j) Cautioned against imputation, nowcasting and forecasting unless they are produced in full consultation with countries and stakeholders and based on fully transparent methodologies;

(k) Welcomed the strengthened communication and cooperation with two major groups or offices, namely the *United Nations Geospatial Network* and the *Development Coordination Office of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group*, and encouraged the Committee to further strengthen these strategic partnerships as well as partnerships with other international associations that produce statistical and geographical data in particular in the context of the interagency mechanism to be established for the implementation of a new UN Data portal;

(l) Noted that the challenges described in the *Roadmap* are similar to the challenges national statistical offices face and requests that solutions and actions to be taken be shared with the statistical community at large;

(m) Requested the Committee to continue its work towards the implementation of the *Roadmap* taking into account the discussion at this Commission session.

### **Decision 5: Economic statistics (Item 3c)**

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Friends of the Chair Group on economic statistics and commended the Group for creating an inclusive assessment and drafting process to develop its recommendations through five global meetings, various regional high-level user-producer conferences organized jointly with regional commissions, individual interviews with members of the group, and a comprehensive survey of statistical groups deemed to support the system of economic statistics;

(b) Appreciated the initiative of the Group to incorporate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on statistical systems in the development of its recommendations so as to build a more efficient, responsive and resilient system to track the contrasting impact of the pandemic on different segments of the economy and society and to monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with geospatially-enabled links to the economy, environment and well-being;

- (c) Appreciated the sustained efforts and valuable inputs of the representatives of countries, agencies and other entities in developing the recommendations;
- (d) Approved the recommendations in the report aimed at transforming and modernizing national statistical systems using a problem-driven approach centred on the following four themes: (i) better networking and user consultations on emerging issues and priorities for a shared research agenda; strengthening analytical and data management capabilities for the system of economic statistics through a network of national data science centers; and promoting a whole-of-system approach and strong partnerships with academia and the private sector; (ii) better statistical infrastructure and data solutions through global co-production and co-investment in common data acquisition, infrastructure, and technological solutions based on global policy priorities such as on climate change and on global statistical priorities such as for financial transaction data from multinational enterprises; (iii) better institutional arrangements and governance for statistical groups based on agreed common principles of networking, co-investment, and shared responsibility between agencies and countries without hierarchical relationships between them; and (iv) better statistical framework of international standards with a continuous and iterative revision cycle through regular experimentation and testing to meet rapidly evolving user demand;
- (e) Supported the proposal for regional commissions and (sub) regional agencies to play a key role in the experimentation and testing of methodological revisions of international statistical standards in countries, and recommended that the guidance from the experimentation and testing are made available to all countries and incorporated into regular updates of international statistical standards to ensure their viability;
- (f) Approved the recommendation to establish a new network of economic statisticians to facilitate networking, coordination, and communication on new innovations, experiments, and best practices for the purpose of making progress on priorities to keep economic statistics relevant. Requested that its mandate is clearly defined and provides a transparent and collaborative horizontal coordination mechanism for all existing groups and recognized the need for the network of economic statisticians to coordinate with other statistical committees and groups, as appropriate, for the purpose of measuring the multidimensional relationships between the economy, environment, and society of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- (g) Requested that the mandates of statistical groups in the system of economic statistics are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate;
- (h) Supported the recommendation to explore the feasibility of a new Committee of Experts on Population and Well-being for the purpose of measuring the relationships between the economy and society, and human capital;
- (i) Approved the recommendation to dissolve the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics.

### **Decision 6: National accounts (Item 3d)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (E/CN.3/2021/8), expressed its appreciation for the activities undertaken by the members of the

Advisory Expert Group, the Working Group, the regional commissions, other regional organizations and countries to facilitate the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA) and supporting statistics, and endorsed the programmes of work for 2021 of the Working Group and the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts;

- (b) Endorsed the work programme for the update of the 2008 SNA and timeline for undertaking technical research, engaging in broad consultations and ensuring overall consistency with the other manuals of the system of economic statistics, but noted that the programme for updating the 2008 SNA is ambitious and will require significant resources from the statistical community;
- (c) Expressed its appreciation for the in-kind contributions and the willingness of some Member States to contribute also financially to the update programme of the 2008 SNA;
- (d) Welcomed the progress made on the preparation and elaboration of guidance on the relevant issues for the update of the 2008 SNA, encouraged Member States to participate in the evaluation process and experimentation and testing of the feasibility of the recommendations of guidance notes, emphasised the need for coordination and collaboration between countries and (sub) regional and international agencies to facilitate the experimentation and testing of the guidance notes, and stressed the importance of providing financial and in-kind support to countries with limited resources;
- (e) Welcomed the work to develop guidance for measuring the digital economy, the informal economy, unpaid household service work, household income and wealth distribution, Islamic finance and global production arrangements, and the alignment of the system of health accounts, stressed that the monitoring and analysis of well-being and sustainability should not compromise, but rather enhance traditional analyses for macroeconomic statistics in extended or supplementary tables and thereby carefully consider the impact on the core accounts of the SNA, and supported the work on developing the compilers' hub, digitizing of international statistical and classifications standards, and enhancing the communication mechanisms for macroeconomic statistics;
- (f) Noted the need for an adequate statistical infrastructure, including statistical business registers, legal framework and technology infrastructure to implement the proposed recommendations for the update of the 2008 SNA;
- (g) Expressed its appreciation for the guidance notes developed by the Working Group on the recording of COVID-19 support measures in the national accounts and encouraged the development of similar guidance on major issues in the future;
- (h) Emphasised the need for continued attention devoted to capacity building and funding for many developing countries to facilitate the implementation of the SNA;
- (i) Encouraged the continued reporting and evaluation of the availability and scope of official national accounts data reported by Member States and noted the importance of quality information in support of international comparisons and a global understanding of the World economy.

### **Decision 7: Business and trade statistics (Item 3e)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics and expressed its appreciation for the work carried out by the Committee;

- (b) Endorsed the proposed work plan for 2021 and 2022, including the preparation of a manual on the global core set of principal business and trade indicators and a manual on the maturity model for statistical business registers;
- (c) Welcomed the training and capacity-building programme for statistical business registers that applies the maturity model for building and maintaining statistical business registers in national statistical systems; and recommended the development of guidance on the integration of geospatial information in the statistical business registers building on country experiences;
- (d) Welcomed the release of the Global Group Register to address issues of globalization and the role of multinational enterprises (MNEs), and noted that the need for the sharing of data among countries and agencies is essential for a comprehensive and coherent measurement of global value chains in the Global Group Register. Moreover, requested guidance how to preserve confidentiality in the sharing of data on MNEs based upon country best practices; and welcomed the collaboration with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on Analytical Database on Individual Multinationals and Affiliates (ADIMA);
- (e) Endorsed revising the International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010 (IMTS 2010) and the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010 (MSITS 2010) while ensuring consistency with the update of other statistical standards, such as the System of National Accounts and the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual. In addition, recommended that the Committee takes this work forward with the representation and active participation of countries from different regions and international agencies;
- (f) Welcomed the creation of a new Task Team on the joint research agenda between business and international trade statistics for the revision of the trade-related standards; recommended that this new Task Team also works on the development of new trade-related business indicators, on guidance for the integration of international trade related characteristics of businesses in the statistical business registers, and on the promotion of the e-learning training programme on international trade statistics;
- (g) Requested the Committee to actively coordinate the integration of the work programmes and working methods with the Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics as recommended by the Friends of the Chair Group on economic statistics to avoid duplication of work and advance the active collaboration between countries and agencies.

### **Decision 8: Environmental-economic accounting (Item 3f)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Expressed its appreciation for the work done by the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting over the past year, particularly in finalizing the revised SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, and recognized the significant contributions of the Chair, Bureau, editorial board and editor, as well as the countries, agencies and stakeholders who participated in the revision;
- (b) Commended the inclusive and transparent process for developing the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, which brought together a wide range of stakeholder communities and saw broad participation in the multiple rounds of global consultations on issue papers, individual draft chapters and the complete draft of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting;



- (c) Agreed to remove the “Experimental” from the title of the revised SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, adopt chapters 1-7 describing the accounting framework and the physical accounts as an international statistical standard, keep all chapters together in one document, with chapters 8-11 describing monetary valuation and integrated accounting for ecosystem services and assets, and chapters 12-14 describing the applications and extensions, and regularly evaluate and report on the usefulness and pertinence of the accounts;
- (d) Recognized that, Chapters 8-11 of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting describe internationally recognized statistical principles and recommendations for the valuation of ecosystem services and assets in a context that is coherent with the concepts of System of National Accounts for countries which are undertaking valuation of ecosystem services and/or assets, and requested the Committee to promptly resolve the outstanding methodological aspects in chapters 8-11 as identified in the research agenda;
- (e) Requested the Committee to make clear the different statuses of chapters 1-7, 8-11 and 12-14, both within the introduction and the chapters themselves;
- (f) Encouraged countries to implement the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting depending on their priorities and, recognizing the challenges to compiling the accounts in practice, requested the Committee to continue to develop compilation tools which make use of global data sources and to create an implementation strategy and methodological and implementation guidance materials for countries in support of continued capacity building;
- (g) Welcomed the progress of the Committee in mainstreaming the use of the SEEA in policy, including climate change, circular economy, sustainable finance, and biodiversity policy, and particularly encouraged the Committee to engage in the monitoring framework of the post-2020 global biodiversity agenda and participate in the proposed expert group under the auspices of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to provide the connection between the biodiversity and official statistical communities;
- (h) Supported the proposal to establish a working group to draft a methodological document for ocean accounting, SEEA Ocean, in support of the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, given the high policy demand for ocean accounting and the global importance of the ocean economy, and noted the importance of adequate funding for this activity;
- (i) Supported the formation of a working group on business accounting and the SEEA and the preliminary roadmap, noting the benefits to both the public and private sectors in aligning the SEEA and private natural capital accounting approaches, exchanging data, and jointly managing resources, and recognized the importance of participation from both national statistical offices and the private sector alike, as well as the need for adequate funding to make sufficient progress in this area of work;
- (j) Welcomed the update provided on the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism and, noting the interest from countries in this work, agreed to the process of the document’s finalization, including the Committee’s review prior to final consideration by the UNWTO Committee on Statistics for its subsequent presentation to the Commission.

### **Decision 9: Migration statistics (Item 3g)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary General and expressed appreciation to the Statistics Division and the *United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics* for the work undertaken to strengthen the availability and use of international migration data;
- (b) Reiterated the importance of promoting consistency between migration flows and population stocks; of distinguishing international migration from international temporary mobility; and of aligning the definition of migration flows with the country's measurement of resident population, to ensure consistency in the production of national migration statistics, while striving to promote their comparability at the international level;
- (c) Welcomed the alignment of the proposed conceptual framework with the latest related internationally agreed concepts and definitions, as described in the report before the Commission, including of resident population, and took note of the ongoing discussion on other types of population in the European Union;
- (d) Endorsed the revised conceptual framework on international migration and mobility and related concepts and definitions as the core elements for the upcoming revision of the 1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration;
- (e) Emphasized that challenges reside in the implementation of the revised framework and accompanying definitions, including potential issues with international comparability of migration flows; with the measurement of international temporary mobility and stateless and displaced populations; and to some extent in countries relying on administrative registers to produce international migration data;
- (f) Therefore, the Commission requested the Statistics Division and the Expert Group on Migration Statistics to be mindful of these challenges in the next steps towards the revision of the 1998 Recommendations. In particular, it requested:
- a. to prioritize the work on international migration while clarifying the components of international temporary mobility that will be considered in the revised Recommendations;
  - b. to keep into account the different migration data ecosystems and related data capacity in countries;
  - c. and to reflect relevant experience of countries producing international migration statistics based on registered population.
- (g) Took note of the proposed comprehensive programme of work of the Statistics Division and the Expert Group, fully supported it, and welcomed the expression of interest by several countries to contribute to its implementation with the support of regional commissions and institutions;
- (h) Acknowledged the need to (a) provide guidance on data integration and on the potential of using non-traditional data sources, particularly to measure international temporary mobility, and the need to (b) strengthen statistical capacity and resources in support of countries' efforts to improve migration data;
- (i) Recognised with appreciation the various initiatives at regional level to improve the production, dissemination and management of timely and comparable migration data and statistics;

(j) Welcomed the organization of the 3rd International Forum on Migration Statistics in 2022 by the Statistics Division and Population Division of DESA, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as a platform to share best practices and national and international experiences in the production and use of relevant, high quality and disaggregated statistics on international migration. Acknowledged the success of the 2nd forum hosted by Egypt and encouraged the organizers of the 3rd forum to build on experiences gain.

### **Decision 10: Regional statistical development (Item 3h)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on regional cooperation and main achievements of statistical development in the region;
- (b) Expressed its appreciation for the work undertaken in the region over the past five years since the previous report, especially in regard to cooperation and coordination in regional statistical capacity development and alignment of the regional statistical priorities work with the United Nations data strategies, regional and national statistical priorities, with a focus on modernizing official statistics, using technology, big data, register based data sources and linking geospatial and statistical information;
- (c) Took note of the development of the ESCWA data portal and the outline of its substantive content, as well as the expression of interest by other (sub) regional organizations in the data portal as a key: to data management and dissemination, to the development of online training tools, and to efforts at improving data exchange through innovation;
- (d) Noted the work on interregional statistical cooperation among the statistics divisions of the United Nations regional commission, in particular in harmonizing the methods and presentation for statistics on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Decision 11: Management and modernization of statistical systems (Item 3i)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on Management and modernization of statistical systems; and congratulated the drafting team on the achievement of the fourth edition of the Handbook titled “Management and organization of national statistical systems”;
- (b) Endorsed the revision process and the work of the Advisory Group, and expressed appreciation to the members of the Advisory Group for their valuable role in guiding and contributing to the drafting of the Handbook;
- (c) Took note of the immediate next steps and stressed the need for the swift transfer of the Handbook to a user-friendly web solution with the suggested functionalities including high-quality automatic translation features;
- (d) Reiterated the need for a printed version of the overview chapter, to be available in all official UN languages; proposed, if possible, to have additional chapters and the glossary available in print

with translation in all UN languages; and acknowledged the expression of interest by some countries and regional organizations to assist in the translation process;

(e) Supported the proposed updating and revision mechanisms including tasks and responsibilities of the Advisory Group, suggested areas of future updates and noted that some countries offered to join the Advisory Group and thus contribute to keeping the Handbook a living and up-to-date reference document, that benefits the whole national statistical system; and

(f) Reaffirmed the important role of the thematic conferences to inform the Handbook on specific country initiatives, good practices and challenges from all regions; and requested to organize, as soon as this will be possible, the remaining thematic conferences which were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to hold rotating thematic conferences in the future.

### **Decision 12: Big data (Item 3j)**

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for official statistics and the background document on the task teams; supported and appreciated the work delivered by the task teams, including the handbooks, methods, projects and training courses;

(b) Urged the working group to continue strengthening the institutional environment, methodology and quality assurance framework in the use of Big Data, among others, in the form of manuals on Big Data and data science for Official Statistics; and requested that the deliverables of the working group will be applicable to the needs of national statistical offices, and with focus on monitoring the progress on the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) Supported the creation of a new task team on the acquisition of global private sector data; and requested that this task team establishes constructive arrangements with global companies in sharing data with the global statistical community;

(d) Supported the use of the UN Global Platform and the regional hubs for training and project activities; requested that data, projects and training resources be available and shared with all members of the global statistical community; welcomed greater transparency on the security of data held within the Global Platform and requested the development of a data governance policy;

(e) While noticing the interest of some countries already, encouraged all Member States to be involved in the activities on the UN Global Platform, and especially encouraged greater involvement of the least developed countries and small island developing states, including in the governing bodies of the global working group;

(f) Endorsed the community model as a supporting and funding strategy for the Global Platform which, if suitably complemented with an explicit business model that identifies clearly what the commitments and benefits are for the participants, would ensure its sustainability for the longer term; and encouraged all members of the global statistical community to make experts available as in-kind contributions; and calls upon international development partners to support especially least developed countries and small island developing states in financing their UN Global Platform and Regional Hubs projects;

- (g) Requested accounting transparency and accountability if financial or in-kind contributions are made to the platform; and supported the creation of a finance committee with a clear governance structure to further develop the funding approach;
- (h) Strongly supported the timely implementation of a global programme on training and certification in the use of big data and data science for official statistics; and
- (i) Endorsed the change of the name of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics to United Nations Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics.

**Decision 13: International statistical classifications (Item 3k)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications and expressed its appreciation for the work carried out by the expert group;
- (b) Endorsed revising of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), Revision 4 and the Central Product Classification, Version 2 and approved the draft terms of references of the new Task Teams created for the revision;
- (c) Reiterated the importance of the consistency of ISIC with the statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community (NACE), and other regional classifications and highlighted the need for the coordination of the revision processes of these classifications with the update of the System of National Accounts, manuals of international trade statistics, and other statistical manuals and for maintaining the correspondences between the international classifications;
- (d) Highlighted that international classifications are instrumental to achieving better governance and better data, and enhancing the data stewardship role of national statistical offices;
- (e) Requested a clarification of the proposed recurrent revision cycle for the ISIC and possibly other international classifications starting with the update of the ISIC structure in 2022 and the final ISIC document in 2023 submitted to the Statistical Commission to enable better understanding how the countries should implement the anticipated changes in their work programs;
- (f) Took note of the revision process initiated for International Standard Classifications of Occupations (ISCO)-08 and encouraged the alignment between the future revision cycle of ISIC and the revision of ISCO;
- (g) Noted the interest of both countries and agencies to actively participate in the revision processes of the international classifications and requested UNSD to follow-up with these countries and agencies;
- (h) Welcomed the proposed work programme of the expert group including the work on the classification of business functions and the classification of statistical activities;
- (i) Encouraged the work on new and innovative approaches for the development and maintenance of international statistical classifications, such as the use of metadata modelling and semantic web technologies for linked data in an effort to reduce the time and cost associated with their recurrent

review and revision processes;

(j) Endorsed the new mandate and governance as proposed by the expert group and the change of the name into “Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications”.

#### **Decision 14: Household surveys (Item 3l)**

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys and expressed appreciation for the activities undertaken by the Working Group;

(b) Endorsed the revised Terms of Reference of the Working Group and commended the Group's efforts in placing greater focus on national priorities and in welcoming representatives of national statistical offices as full members; stressed that the work of the group should be demand driven and focused on countries' priorities; took note of the interest from several countries to join the Working Group;

(c) Emphasized the importance of household surveys in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially by improving data on people who are vulnerable;

(d) Welcomed the Group's timely support to countries in addressing the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic on national household survey programmes, including by sharing innovative methodological solutions and stressed the need to continue addressing these challenges;

(e) Stressed the need for a coordinated household survey programme within countries as well as for coordination at the regional and global level; appreciated the work of the Group in this area and requested intensified efforts;

(f) Welcomed the annotated outline of the paper on “Positioning household surveys for the next decade”; appreciated its wide consultation with national statistical offices and other key partners; emphasized that household surveys should be considered as an integral part of a whole data ecosystem and in relation to other data sources; and requested the Group to further develop the paper, taking into consideration inputs from the broad consultation;

(g) Strongly supported further strengthening the role of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys, guided by the principles for its future work programme as described in section V of the report, and in close collaboration with other partners including the regional commissions;

(h) Requested the Group to address the need for capacity building on survey methodologies including on innovative approaches; to encourage testing of new methods; and to promote sharing of national experiences for peer-to-peer learning, and in close collaboration with other partners including the regional commissions and institutions.

#### **Decision 15: Data and metadata presentation and dissemination (Item 3m)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on Data and Metadata Presentation and Dissemination and recognized the importance of data and metadata dissemination, noting with appreciation the work of the Statistics Division in this area;
- (b) Endorsed the vision and way forward for the implementation of the new UNdata portal as main entry point to authoritative statistical data and metadata from the United Nations system and other participating international and regional organizations, in line with countries' priorities and with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere and the road map for innovating United Nations data and statistics developed by the Committee of Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System;
- (c) Agreed on the need to implement a federated data governance architecture that ensures the consistent data integration of authoritative national and international sources of official statistics, as well as the effective coordination of multiple data dissemination channels;
- (d) Requested that the new UNdata portal be based on interoperability standards for the automated data and metadata exchange, including in particular SDMX, and support the use of modern data validation, analytics and visualization tools, while considering efficiency and cost-effectiveness;
- (e) Underlined the need to clearly define the scope and target users of a new UNdata portal, and to prioritize the needs of national users, to ensure that adequate metadata is provided alongside the data, and to ensure the maximum use of official national data in accordance with the guidelines for SDG data flows developed by the IAEG-SDGs, while leveraging the capabilities of national data platforms;
- (f) Stressed the need for continuous investment, especially in training and capacity building for the use of modern digital technologies, including for IT security, in international agencies, countries and all participating partner entities, in order to ensure the sustainability of the UNdata portal;
- (g) Endorsed the establishment of an Inter-Agency and Expert Mechanism for the full development and implementation of a new United Nations data hub and the regular review and update of its data and metadata; agreed with its proposed Terms of Reference; and welcomed expressions of interest by countries and international agencies to support the work of the new mechanism.

**Decision 16: Programme questions (Statistics Division) (Item 5)**

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Took note of the oral report presented by the Director of the Statistics Division concerning the work programme of the Division, including the current activities, plans and priorities. It also noted the update on the general budgetary and liquidity situation of the organization and its possible implications for the divisional work programme;
- (b) Took note of the challenges arising from the ongoing liquidity crisis and of the efforts undertaken to mitigate its impact. In this context, the Commission requested that all vacant positions – especially senior level positions - be filled as soon as possible. It stressed the importance of these positions in delivering the Division's mandated programme of work in support of the three pillars of the SDGs (economic, social and environment) and to provide the senior leadership needed to effectively engage Member States and the UN system at the global, regional and country-level. In this

regard, the Commission welcomed the commitment of the SG-Data Strategy to strengthen the organization's human resource basis to make the United Nations a data driven organization;

(c) Requested the Bureau to carefully review which modalities for the current virtual session (e.g. side events, written statements etc.) worked well and could be employed in future sessions. In this context, the Commission also invited the Bureau to launch a transparent and participatory review process of the 50-year old terms of reference of the Commission and elaborate possible proposals of how they could be updated and modernized;

(d) In line with an earlier decision 51/125(f) (in conjunction with E/CN.3/2020/27 para.64) the Commission also tasked to Bureau to initiate a Friends of the Chair process to review the area of social and demographic statistics, similar to the process of the FOC review of Economic Statistics 2019-2021.

**Decision 17: Information items (3b and 4a – 4k):**

The Statistical Commission took note of the following reports:

Report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Report of the Secretary-General on demographic statistics

Report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics on cultural statistics

Report of the Secretary-General on climate change statistics

Report of the core group of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics

Report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Programme

Report of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors

Report of the Secretary-General on statistical capacity development

Report of the Secretary-General on policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

Report of the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks

Report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information

Report of the Secretary-General on World Statistics Day