

**Provisional modalities on the arrangements for the work of the Statistical Commission at its 52<sup>nd</sup> session, 1-3 and 5 March 2021 (virtual)**

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We are about to embark on a very unique session of the Statistical Commission, against the background of an ongoing serious and unprecedented health crisis which makes it necessary to react responsibly, putting the safety and health of delegates and the staff of the Secretariat and their families first. At the same time, we must also show that we are pragmatic and sensible to the pressing priorities while ensuring business continuity and the fulfillment of the responsibilities attributed to this Commission.

2. It is anticipated that the physical distancing guidelines and constraints related to the ongoing situation of the COVID-19 global pandemic will continue to impact the work of the 2021 session of the ECOSOC, including with respect to its subsidiary bodies scheduled to meet during the first quarter of 2021.

3. In this regard, the President of ECOSOC in his letter dated 3 December 2020, encouraged the Chairs of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies to exercise flexibility in preparation of their sessions in 2021, and attached for their consideration a paper entitled, “Consideration of Implication of COVID-19 related limitations on in-person meetings for sessions of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies during the 2021 session of the Council”.

4. The Bureau virtually met on 8 December to discuss the options on the way forward and brainstormed the options and contingencies in light of the recent developments. The Bureau considered the ongoing extraordinary and unprecedented situation of the global pandemic, the continued risks and restrictions associated with international travel by representatives from capitals, quarantine requirements of the host country, as well as the guidance from the President of ECOSOC and UN Occupational Safety Health. Considering these limitations and guidance received, the Bureau also recognizes that during Phase II of the Secretary-General’s reopening plan, virtual meetings remain the preferred format. Therefore, holding of in-person meetings of the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Statistical Commission was not recommended.

5. Bearing in mind the prevailing conditions, the official guidance received from the President of ECOSOC, and building on the recent experiences from convening of the other subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the ECOSOC in 2020, the Bureau recommends, on exceptional basis and without setting any precedent, a combination of convening of informal meetings on a virtual platform with remote simultaneous interpretation, together with proceeding with a portion of the work of the Commission during its 52<sup>nd</sup> session through correspondence. In this context please refer to paragraph 8 of the attached paper from the President of the ECOSOC entitled, “Consideration of Implication of COVID-19 related limitations on in-person meetings for sessions of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies during the 2021 session of the Council”.

6. These limitations require from all of us an important degree of flexibility. The Bureau of the Commission hopes that these limitations are taken into consideration by all Member States when working on the organization of work of the Commission and also during the preparation and development of its substantive work. (General discussion on virtual platform and inputs to draft decisions).

7. The aim of these proposals is to explain the way in which the work of the Commission is going to be conducted, and to serve as the basis for the advanced version of the draft programme of work (L.1 annexed). This paper is subject to revision in light of the evolving situation concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and the related safety and health guidelines implemented at the UNHQ.

8. The proposals outlined in this document would only be applied as a temporary one-time measure during the extraordinary circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and would not, in any way, create a precedent for the work of the Commission.

9. Taking all this into consideration, the Bureau would like to present the following modalities proposals that have informed the advanced version of the draft programme of work (L.1) annexed to this paper.

## **1. Structure of the Programme of Work**

10. There will be 4 informal meetings of the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Statistical Commission convened on the virtual platform of ‘Interprefy’ which is supported by the UN Secretariat, and will be provided with the remote simultaneous interpretation in six official languages. In this regard, the Secretariat will reach out to delegations for training (onboarding) sessions on using the virtual platform with interpretation. Each virtual meeting will be of two hours; 9 -11 a.m. scheduled for 1-3 and 5 March 2021. The originally approved dates for the 52<sup>nd</sup> session i.e.; 2-5 March 2021, would be slightly adjusted owing to the limitations imposed by ongoing situation of the Covid-19 global pandemic.

## **2. General Discussion**

11. Due to the virtual nature of the session and the limited time of the meetings, Member States and entities invited to participate in the work of the 52<sup>nd</sup> session are invited to submit written statements and interventions starting 19 January 2021. Written statements referring to specific agenda items can be submitted by the Heads of Delegation or designated officials on their behalf (as provided in formal notification to the Secretariat). Under each agenda item, a template for statements will be available on the 52<sup>nd</sup> session’s website. Delegates are invited to submit the form, preferably as a pdf file, to the Secretariat ([hooper@un.org](mailto:hooper@un.org) and [wangl@un.org](mailto:wangl@un.org)). All forms received will be time-stamped and uploaded to the 52<sup>nd</sup> session website, in the language received, as soon as feasible (except over weekends). Please use a separate form for each agenda item. The submission of written statements will help facilitate discussions and general debate.

12. Keeping in mind that the standard duration for provision of remote simultaneous interpretation for virtual meetings is two hours, delegations intending to speak at the virtual meetings will be encouraged to indicate to the Secretariat ([leu@un.org](mailto:leu@un.org); [wangl@un.org](mailto:wangl@un.org);

[hooper@un.org](mailto:hooper@un.org)) their intention to take the floor, in advance of the meeting, taking into account capacity limitation of the virtual platform and to ensure that those who access the platform are accredited participants. The maximum time for national statements will be 2 minutes and 3 min. for group statements. The delegations are encouraged to submit their statements in written form, which will be posted on the website of the Commission. Due to the potential volume of submissions in a condensed period, we encourage written statements to be brief, provided in English if possible, focused on the main discussion items for the Statistical Commission, and **provided to the Secretariat by 19 February 2021.**

### **3. Action on proposals**

13. As noted in the guidance provide by the President of ECOSOC in his 3 December 2020 letter, that “in case the situation does not permit in-person meetings of the bodies and should no other means of taking action be available, proposals (which are usually recommended for adoption by ECOSOC), could be considered directly by the Council when the relevant agenda item is considered at the management segment meetings later in the year”. Moreover, the Chair intends to approach the President of ECOSOC to consider forwarding to the Council members the Commission’s request that it be allowed to take decisions also by silence procedure given the special circumstance in which the Statistical Commission operates. Should that be approved, the draft report of 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Statistical Commission including the text of the draft decisions could be adopted under silence procedure on the basis of a special approval from ECOSOC bearing in mind the specificity of the Statistical Commission and its inability of taking action at in-person meetings.

14. The Chair and the Bureau will make every effort for the conduct of the virtual meetings and consultations occur in an open, inclusive, efficient and structured manner while ensuring contribution from all stakeholders prior to decision making by silence procedure.

### **4. Side events**

15. A limited set of side events directly related to specific agenda items will be held virtually. Consistent with the practice of the Commission, the main sponsors will be in charge of arranging their side event and providing their own platform to hold the event.

17 December 2020