

Statistical Commission

Fifty-third session

1 – 4 March 2022

Item 3(c) of the provisional agenda

Items for discussion and decision: working methods of the Statistical Commission

Background document

Available in English only

Revision to the Terms of Reference of the Statistical Commission

Prepared by the Bureau

Background Document under agenda item 3(c)

Revision to the Terms of Reference of the Statistical Commission

8 February 2022

Prepared by the Bureau of the 52nd session of the Statistical Commission, with support from the UN Statistics Division

Background

This background document was prepared to supplement document E/CN.3/2022/6 (in particular paras. 5-11) and following decision 52/116(b), in which the Statistical Commission "... 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 for how they could be updated and modernized".

The Bureau and a small drafting group prepared draft revision of the terms of reference, taking into consideration the responses from the 49 replies to the two open and global consultations.

Next steps

An "informal consultation" on the revision will be held on Tuesday, 1 March 2022 from 8:00 – 9:30 am Eastern.

***Statistical Commission
Updated Terms of Reference***

Ensuring the work in the field of statistics and data is adaptive to the changing statistical and data ecosystem

The Economic and Social Council,

PP1: *Recognizing* the importance of quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated statistics and data to measure progress toward and in supporting sustainable development and development goals of the United Nations and its Member States and ensure that no one is left behind, and as a basis for rapid and data-driven decision making,

PP2: *Recalling* General Assembly resolution 68/261 of 29 January 2014 in which the Assembly adopted the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and which stressed that, in order to be effective, the fundamental values and principles that govern statistical work have to be guaranteed by legal and institutional frameworks and be respected at all political levels and by all stakeholders in national statistical systems,

PP3: *Recalling also* General Assembly resolution 71/313 of 6 July 2017 in which the Assembly adopted the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and stressed that all activities of the global statistical system must be conducted in full adherence to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/6;

PP4: *Recalling further* ECOSOC Resolution 2006/6 of 24 July 2006 in which the Council called upon the United Nations system, including the United Nations Statistics Division and the regional commissions and international agencies, to support national efforts in building, developing, and strengthening national statistical capacities, in particular of developing countries,

PP5: *Recalling further* ECOSOC resolution 2020/5 of 23 June 2020 in which the Council called for strengthening coordination of statistical programmes of the various organs and agencies in the United Nations system, in which it identifies the Statistical Commission as the primary body for the coordination of the statistical programmes of the United Nations system,

PP6: *Bearing in mind* the evolution of the statistical and data system, the increased digitalization in every domain of life for which statistics and data are produced and the constant innovation of

statistical activities, the integration of statistical and geospatial information, and the necessity for statistical offices and national statistical systems to modernize allowing them to provide high quality, accessible, timely, reliable, disaggregated, open and interoperable statistics and data, drawing from all types of traditional and new data sources and fully utilizing geospatial information systems,

PP7: *Noting* the expanding role of national statistical offices in the changing data landscape where they are increasingly assigned data stewardship responsibilities in the national data systems,

PP8: *Noting* the importance of data privacy, data security, and protection of personal data, the ethical use of statistics and data, and the need to balance data use, transparency and accessibility with confidentiality and privacy protection, and to maintain trust in statistics and data,

PP9: *Further noting* the necessity to reduce the reporting burden on Member States, as suggested in the report of the Statistical Commission on its fiftieth session,¹

PP10: *Reaffirming* its resolution 8 (I) of 16 February 1946 concerning the establishment of the Statistical Commission, as amended by resolution 8 (II) of 21 June 1946, and its resolution 1566(L) of 3 May 1971, which indicated that the Commission shall assist the Council:

- (a) In promoting the development of national statistics and the improvement of their comparability,
- (b) In the coordination of the statistical work of the specialized agencies,
- (c) In the development of the central statistical services of the Secretariat,
- (d) In advising the organs of the United Nations on general questions relating to the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistical information,
- (e) In promoting the improvement of statistics and statistical methods generally,

¹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 4 (E/2019/34).*

OP1: *Reaffirms* the Statistical Commission as the primary body for the coordination of the global statistical programmes in general and of the United Nations statistical and data-related system;

OP2: *Recognizes* the Statistical Commission's achievements in and supports its current and future work in promoting the development of the national and international statistical and data systems by means of adopting international statistical standards and the frameworks for monitoring societal, economic and environmental progress;

OP3: *Calls upon* the United Nations statistical and data-related system to report on work on statistics and data within all domains to the Statistical Commission to enable the Commission to fulfil its function as the primary body responsible for the management of information and governance of statistics and data;

OP4: *Calls on* Member States to observe and uphold the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;

OP5: *Emphasizes* the importance for Member States to build resilient, agile, relevant, responsive and robust statistical and data systems adhering to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics that fully integrate geospatial information and to seek improved coordination across the national statistical and data systems through an expanded role of the national statistical offices in the changing data landscape where they are increasingly assigned data stewardship responsibilities in the national statistical and data systems;

OP6: *Emphasizes* the need for technological innovations to systematically modernize statistical offices and national statistical and data systems in response to the wide range of statistical and data sources, including, for instance, administrative records, privately held data and other data sets generated through new tools that can be integrated, after quality assurance, to produce statistics;

OP7: *Emphasizes* the need to promote practices for the generation of information aligned with principles that ensure comparability across time and space, data privacy and confidentiality of personal information, balancing privacy protection with data use, transparency and accessibility;

OP8: *Recognizes* the importance for national statistical and data systems to build partnerships with other actors of the statistical and data system and other actors outside of the official national data system and to integrate statistical and geospatial information to capture granular data to effectively leave no one behind;

OP9: *Considers* that the ultimate goal of the work of the Statistical Commission and that of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Regional Commissions in this respect should be the achievement of an integrated statistical and data system in the compilation, adhering to the Fundamental Principle of Official Statistics and ECOSOC Resolution 2006/6, and effective presentation, visualization and dissemination of international statistics and data by the organs and agencies of the United Nations system with special regard to the requirements of reviewing and appraising progress towards sustainable development, particularly in the context of major UN development agendas, taking into account the needs of the developing countries;

OP10: *Requests* the specialized agencies, funds and programmes, the regional economic commissions of the United Nations System, and other relevant programmes of the UN Secretariat to continue to cooperate fully with the Statistical Commission in their efforts to carry out these tasks as listed in OP9 and to regard them as of first importance in coordinating their work programmes, especially long-term programmes, and also work in new directions;

OP11: *Recognizes* the need to strengthen the digital, technological, and innovative capacities of the UN Statistical System and of national statistical and data systems to address the needs and potential of the evolving statistical and data system;

OP12: *Requests* the Statistical Commission with support of the Statistics Division as its secretariat to play the role as the apex forum for discussions, knowledge exchange, and sharing of best practices on statistics and data across all domains, to develop and maintain international standards and norm, tools and methodologies, to support and bolster the development of sustainable national statistical systems, to develop and build capacity of national systems, to advocate for the professional community of official statistics, and to ensure continued innovations to adapt to the changing statistical and data system;

OP13: *Requests* the UN Development System to assist the developing countries in strengthening their statistical and data systems adherent to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics as the basis for their development plans and the evaluation of their economic, social and environmental progress.