Statement provided by:
UN Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

Statement:

One important area of work concerns data and statistics about the death toll of the pandemic. In 2020, WHO and UN DESA convened the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on COVID-19 Mortality Assessment. The TAG has met regularly since early 2021.

Using a methodology developed by the TAG, WHO has proposed estimates of the excess mortality associated with the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 and 2021. According to the present report, WHO intended to release these estimates in December 2021. Unfortunately, however, the estimates of excess mortality are still not publicly available.

A key purpose in forming the TAG was to ensure a coordinated approach across the UN system in assessing the global death toll from COVID-19. For the same reason, publication of the next edition of the World Population Prospects (WPP) – the flagship collection of global population estimates and projections published biennially by the United Nations – was postponed from 2021 to 2022 so that the new WPP estimates of population and mortality for 2020 and 2021 could incorporate WHO’s estimates of the excess mortality associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In short, the timely completion and launch of WPP 2022 will depend critically on the rapid release of the excess mortality estimates prepared by WHO with the expert assistance of the TAG.