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**Items for information: follow-up to the policy decisions of
the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council**

Policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-third session (see E/2012/24, chap. I.A), the present note is submitted to brief the Commission on policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council adopted in 2012 or earlier that are relevant to the work of the Commission. The note, furthermore, indicates the actions taken and proposed to be taken by the Commission and the Statistics Division, in an effort to respond to the requests made by the Assembly and the Council. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2013/1.



Policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

I. Follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

1. In its resolution 65/1, entitled “Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals”, the General Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to make recommendations for further steps to advance the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. At its sixty-seventh session, the Assembly considered reports of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/67/1) and on accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals: options for sustained and inclusive growth and issues for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015 (A/67/257). The latter report summarized recent progress and shortfalls in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and described the Secretariat’s reflections on and preparations for the post-2015 development agenda.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

2. Since the Economic and Social Council invited the Statistical Commission to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of indicators used by the United Nations system for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (see Council resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/27), the Commission has been discussing the technical aspects of development indicators, as well as related issues of capacity-building, on a continuous basis. At its forty-third session, the Commission considered a report of the Secretary-General on development indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (E/CN.3/2012/29), as well as the report of the World Bank on efforts in developing a plan of action on statistical development (E/CN.3/2012/16). At its forty-fourth session, the Commission will consider a report of the Secretary-General on the indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (E/CN.3/2013/21).

3. The Statistics Division launched the publication entitled *Millennium Development Goals Report 2012* on 2 July 2012. The report presents the yearly assessment of global progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. The data and analysis presented in the report were also used as an input for the aforementioned reports of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. The Division currently executes several multi-year statistical capacity-building projects covering a wide range of statistical areas, with special focus on data collection and the dissemination of Millennium Development Goal indicators. The Division also serves as a secretariat of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on the Millennium Development Goal Indicators, which is responsible for the development and analysis of data for the monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and targets. The group had its 21st meeting in February 2012 in

New York. The group has also established a task team on lessons learned in Millennium Development Goals monitoring to review the strengths and shortcomings of the current set of Millennium Development Goals indicators.

II. Broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product

A. Action requested the General Assembly

4. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012. The Conference marked the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the tenth anniversary of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002. The Conference was attended by more than 100 Heads of State and 487 ministers. It concluded on 22 June 2012 with the adoption of the outcome document entitled “The future we want” (see General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex).

5. One of the key paragraphs relating to the work of the Commission in the outcome document is paragraph 38, which reads:

We recognize the need for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decisions, and in this regard we request the United Nations Statistical Commission, in consultation with relevant United Nations system entities and other relevant organizations, to launch a programme of work in this area, building on existing initiatives.

6. Other paragraphs relating to statistics or data are:

(a) Paragraph 76, which reads in part:

We therefore resolve to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development, which will, inter alia:

...

(g) Promote the science-policy interface through inclusive, evidence-based and transparent scientific assessments, as well as access to reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development, building on existing mechanisms, as appropriate; in this regard, strengthen participation of all countries in international sustainable development processes and capacity-building especially for developing countries, including in conducting their own monitoring and assessments;

(b) Paragraph 251, which reads:

We recognize that there is a need for global, integrated and scientifically based information on sustainable development. In this regard, we request the relevant bodies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to support the regional economic commissions in collecting and compiling national inputs in order to inform this global effort. We further commit to mobilizing financial resources and capacity-building, particularly for developing countries, to achieve this endeavour;

(c) Paragraph 274, which reads:

We recognize the importance of space-technology-based data, in situ monitoring, and reliable geospatial information for sustainable development policymaking, programming and project operations. In this context, we note the relevance of global mapping and recognize the efforts in developing global environmental observing systems, including by the Eye on Earth network and through the Global Earth Observation System of Systems. We recognize the need to support developing countries in their efforts to collect environmental data.

7. Those points were reiterated in resolution 67/214, entitled “Harmony with Nature”, in which the General Assembly encouraged all countries and the relevant bodies of the United Nations system to develop and strengthen the quality and quantity of basic statistical data on the three pillars of sustainable development and invited the international community and the pertinent bodies of the United Nations system to assist the efforts of developing countries by providing capacity-building and technical support. In the same resolution, the Assembly also recognized the need for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product (GDP) in order to better inform policy decisions, and in this regard recalled the request made to the Statistical Commission, in paragraph 38 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”, that the Commission, in consultation with relevant entities of the United Nations system and other relevant organizations, launch a programme of work in that area, building on existing initiatives.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

8. The Statistical Commission regularly considers items relating to environmental statistics and environmental accounting. At its forty-fourth session, the Commission will do so again under agenda items 3 (d), on environmental-economic accounting, and 3 (e) on environment statistics. For its consideration of the items, the Commission will have before it the report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (E/CN.3/2013/5) and the report of the Secretary-General on the revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (E/CN.3/2013/6). Both the proposed Framework for the Development of Environmental Statistics and the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting are considered important and indispensable tools for the formulation and monitoring of policies in support of sustainable development.

9. Furthermore, the High-level Forum on Official Statistics on 25 February 2013 will provide a forum for taking stock and sharing knowledge among national statistical offices and the statistical offices of relevant international organizations on their experiences and ongoing activities in the application of broader measures of progress to complement GDP. It will discuss the recent developments of such measures with respect to the three key dimensions of sustainable development, and seek ways to build synergy among them in the challenging context of conflicting priorities. To that end, the forum, with its free-flowing debate format, is expected to

help develop ideas on how the Statistical Commission can best respond to the mandate contained in resolution 66/288, in terms of both substance and mechanism.

III. Improving the quality and availability of statistics on crime and criminal justice for policy development

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

10. In its resolution 2012/18 on improving the quality and availability of statistics on crime and criminal justice for policy development, the Economic and Social Council, inter alia, acknowledged the need to ensure coordination in the collection and dissemination of statistics on crime and criminal justice among the various national institutions, and noted the need, expressed by the Statistical Commission in its decision 43/102, for national statistical offices to give sufficient consideration to the challenges of producing and disseminating statistics on crime within the national context and to work with partners in the criminal justice system. In particular, the Council welcomed the deliberations of the Statistical Commission at its forty-third session and the request made by the Commission to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico to prepare a joint report to be considered by the Commission at its forty-fourth session, which should include:

- (a) A road map of the steps needed to develop statistics on crime;
- (b) An assessment of the feasibility of developing an international classification of crimes for statistical purposes;
- (c) The ways in which the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice could cooperate with regard to the development of statistics on crime.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

11. At its forty-fourth session, the Commission will discuss the report of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico and UNODC on a road map to improve crime statistics at national and international levels (E/CN.3/2013/11). The report describes a road map to improve crime statistics by identifying a number of objectives and related actions. A gradual and coordinated implementation of listed actions over the next decade is suggested, subject to available resources. Constituent elements of the road map are the development of an International Classification of Crime, the development of statistical tools for difficult-to-measure crimes, the promotion of victimization surveys and the strengthening of national statistical systems on crime, in which national statistical offices should play a strategic role to facilitate the coordination of concerned national institutions, implement statistical standards and ensure data quality. In the context of a wide-ranging road map, a number of priority activities are proposed.

IV. Global geospatial information management

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

12. In its resolution 2011/24, the Economic and Social Council, recognizing, inter alia, the importance of integrating cartographic and statistical information, as well as spatial data, decided to establish the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, to be established and administered within existing resources and organized accordingly, and requested the Committee to present to the Council in 2016 a comprehensive review of all aspects of its work and operations in order to allow Member States to assess its effectiveness. The Council also encouraged Member States to hold regular high-level multi-stakeholder discussions on global geospatial information, including through the convening of global forums, with a view to promoting a comprehensive dialogue with all relevant actors and bodies and emphasized the importance of promoting national, regional and global efforts to foster the exchange of knowledge and expertise in order to assist developing countries in building and strengthening national capacities in that field.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

13. The Statistics Division, together with the Cartographic Section of the Department of Field Support, organized the second session of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management from 13 to 15 August 2012 in New York.

14. At the meeting, the Committee of Experts considered an inventory of issues relevant to many national geospatial information authorities and international organizations engaged in geospatial information management. One of the key issues identified was the need to link geospatial information to statistics, particularly with regard to linking information through geo-coding.

15. As an initial step towards establishing mechanisms to support the linking of geospatial information to statistics and to support the development of a statistical-geospatial framework in national statistical systems, the Commission will consider at its forty-fourth session a programme review entitled "Report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on developing a statistical-geospatial framework" (E/CN.3/2013/2). The report is based on a global consultation process and presents a review and analysis of users' needs and challenges, explores areas where the value and usability of official statistics can be enhanced through applying a location context and raises awareness of current national geospatial activities and how national statistics offices can play a role in linking socioeconomic and spatial information. It makes specific recommendations on how to achieve the linking of socioeconomic information to a location at national and international levels.

V. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions on strengthening national capacity in statistics and on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

16. The Economic and Social Council adopted two resolutions in 2005 and 2006 on the recommendation of the Statistical Commission. One was on strengthening statistical capacity (resolution 2006/6), and the other was on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme (resolution 2005/13). In resolution 2006/6, the Council called for an intensification of efforts to support national statistical programmes in strengthening their capacity. In resolution 2005/13, the Council emphasized the importance of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme for socioeconomic planning, and requested increased support for the Programme.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

17. At its forty-third session, the Commission conducted a programme review on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Census based on the report submitted by the United States of America (E/CN.3/2012/2). The Commission noted the successful implementation of the 2010 round of censuses so far, and urged all countries to make every effort to complete census-related activities by 2014. The Commission, in its decision 43/101, requested the Statistics Division, inter alia, to establish an expert group to begin work to assess the challenges faced in the 2010 round of censuses and to prepare a comprehensive report by the end of the 2010 round. It further requested the Division to prepare by 2015 a draft resolution on the 2020 World Population and Housing Programme for approval by the Statistical Commission and endorsement by the Economic and Social Council.

VI. Improving the collection, reporting and analysis of data on migration and people with disabilities

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

18. In its resolution 67/145 on trafficking in women and girls, the General Assembly stressed the need for the systematic collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data and comprehensive studies at both the national and the international levels and the development of common methodologies and internationally defined indicators to make it possible to develop relevant and comparable figures. It also encouraged Governments to enhance information-sharing and data-collection capacity as a way of promoting cooperation to combat the trafficking problem.

19. Furthermore, in its resolution 67/172 on the protection of migrants, the General Assembly called upon the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations and multilateral institutions to enhance their cooperation in the development of methodologies for the collection and processing of statistical

data on international migration and the situation of migrants in countries of origin, transit and destination and to assist Member States in their capacity-building efforts in that regard.

20. In its resolution 67/140 on realizing the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond, the General Assembly requested the United Nations system to facilitate technical assistance, within existing resources, including the provision of assistance for capacity-building and for the collection and compilation of national and regional data and statistics on disability, in particular to developing countries, and in this regard requests the Secretary-General, in accordance with existing guidelines on disability statistics, to analyse, publish and disseminate disability data and statistics in future periodic reports, as appropriate, on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities. The Assembly also requested the United Nations system, within existing resources, to update existing methodologies of disability data collection and analysis on persons with disabilities, to obtain internationally comparable data on the situation of persons with disabilities and to regularly include relevant disability data or relevant qualitative facts, as appropriate, in relevant United Nations publications in the field of economic and social development.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

21. The Commission continues to be active in those important policy areas, supporting the development of new methodologies where necessary and improving the collection of data. After an interruption of several years, the Statistics Division resumed in 2011 the collection of data on annual migration flows, through the regular *Demographic Yearbook* data collection system. The data furnished by Member States will be published in the *Yearbook*. The data on migrant stock will continue to be collected through the *Yearbook* census questionnaire. In view of the United Nations High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, scheduled to be held in the second half of 2013, the Division plans to organize a side event on migration and development during the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission to address the importance of improving international migration statistics for evidence-based policy decisions. In the area of disability statistics, the Statistical Commission, at its forty-third session, considered a report of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (E/CN.3/2012/21), which presented the work completed by the Washington Group as well as its workplan for 2012.

VII. Multi-year programme of work for annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

22. As mandated by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2006/44, a meeting of the Bureau of the Council with the chairs of the functional commissions is to be held annually in the early part of the year. In its decision 2011/208, the Council decided to adopt the following theme for its annual ministerial review for

2013: “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals”. The substantive contributions of the Council’s functional commissions and expert bodies are considered essential for the success of the reviews.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

23. At its forty-fourth session, the Commission will consider the report prepared by the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and by the Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (E/CN.3/2013/22). The report documents recent developments in the measurement of science, technology and innovation, with particular emphasis on efforts to revise guidelines on measuring research and development, support the implementation of the capitalization of research and development in national accounts and apply the concepts and methods of the Frascati Manual on a truly global basis. Among other things, the report highlights efforts to improve the comparability of innovation statistics based on business innovation surveys carried out worldwide.
