



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 December 2013

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Forty-fifth session

4-7 March 2014

Item 4 (r) of the provisional agenda*

**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 Economic and Social Council decision 2013/235, the Secretary-General is honoured to transmit a report to brief the Statistical Commission on the policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council adopted in 2013 or earlier that are relevant to its work. The report also 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 present report.

* [E/CN.3/2014/1](#).



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](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually on progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals until 2015 and to make recommendations for further steps to advance the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. In addition, in July 2012, the Secretary-General announced the names of the 27 members of a high-level panel to advise on the global development framework beyond 2015, the target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda submitted its report containing recommendations to the Secretary-General on 30 May 2013 ([A/67/890](#), annex). At its sixty-eighth session, the Assembly considered the report of the Secretary-General entitled “A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015” ([A/68/202](#)). The report provided an assessment of progress to date, and identified policies and programmes that have contributed to the achievement of the Goals and could help accelerate it. In particular, the report emphasized the need for better data and statistics, especially since the post-2015 agenda will entail measuring a wider range of indicators, necessitating new, disaggregated data to measure gaps between population groups.

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

2. The Statistics Division prepared the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*, which was launched by the Secretary-General on 1 July 2013 in Geneva. The report presents the yearly assessment of global progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, based on regional and subregional figures on the official goal indicators provided by the partner agencies. The Statistics Division also prepared a statistical annex, with all official figures on the Millennium Development Goal indicators, for the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization ([A/68/1](#)).¹

¹ See also E/CN.3/2014/29 for information on how the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal indicators has initiated a review on lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goal monitoring process, and section II.B of the present report for information on additional ongoing work to prepare for a post-2015 monitoring framework.

II. Broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

3. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, concluded on 22 June 2012 with the adoption of the outcome document, entitled “The future we want” (see General Assembly resolution [66/288](#), annex).

4. 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.

5. Those points were reiterated by the General Assembly in its resolution [67/214](#), entitled “Harmony with nature”, in which the 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 recalled in this regard the request made to the Statistical Commission, in paragraph 38 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, that the Commission, in consultation with relevant entities of the United Nations system and other relevant organizations, should 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

6. At its forty-fourth session (26 February to 1 March 2013), the Commission established a Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress as a response to the request made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development for the elaboration of a programme of work on broader measures of progress to complement GDP in order to better inform policy decisions. The Commission, in its decision [44/114](#), also supported the formation of the Friends of the Chair group, inter alia, to build a work programme to develop broader measures of progress. The Commission stressed that broader measures of progress have to be part of a larger information infrastructure/architecture in order to support development policy at all levels and need therefore to be linked to evolving sustainable development goals and any framework that will support the post-2015 development agenda and requested the Friends of the Chair group to closely monitor the ongoing debate on development frameworks and to keep the Bureau of the Statistical Commission informed, undertaking an active dialogue with United Nations bodies

and the policy sphere in order to ensure that a robust statistical measurement approach is incorporated from the outset in preparations for the post-2015 development agenda.

7. At its forty-fifth session, the Commission will consider the report of the Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress (E/CN.3/2014/4). The report discusses the prospects for a technically solid and globally agreed set of measures of progress and the measuring and monitoring of the goals of the post-2015 development agenda by reviewing existing proposals for a post-2015 development framework, elaborating the need for an integrated and technically robust measurement approach and identifying critical elements for the implementation of a new monitoring framework. A separate section contains key messages for policymakers, proposals for the further involvement of official statisticians in the ongoing debate and processes towards a post-2015 development agenda and proposals to carry on the work programme on broader measures of progress.

8. As an outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, a 30-member open working group of the General Assembly has been tasked with preparing a proposal on sustainable development goals. On 17 December the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals held an informal meeting on measuring progress to consult with the official statistics community. The Friends of the Chair group is involved in the preparations for that event.

III. Global geospatial information management

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

9. In its resolution 2011/24, the Economic and Social Council, recognizing, inter alia, the importance of integrating cartographic and statistical information, as well as geospatial 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

10. The Commission considered the item of developing a statistical-spatial framework in national statistical systems as a programme review at its forty-fourth session and strongly supported the linking of social, economic and environmental data to time and location attributes. At its current session, the Commission will consider the report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information (E/CN.3/2014/31).

11. Furthermore, the Statistics Division, together with the Cartographic Section of the Department of Field Support, organized the third session of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management from 24 to 26 July 2013 in Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. At the meeting, the Committee of Experts considered and made progress on a number of critical issues relevant to many national geospatial information authorities and international organizations engaged in this field of work. Key decisions were made in relation to: sustaining the global geodetic reference frame; developing a global map for sustainable development that is able to foster and provide a geographic approach to the goals of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda; emerging legal and policy challenges, including issues related to authoritative data; implementation and adoption of international standards for the global geospatial information community; and linking and integrating geospatial information with statistical and other socioeconomic data.

IV. 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

12. In 2005 and 2006 the Economic and Social Council adopted two resolutions on the recommendation of the Statistical Commission: (a) resolution 2005/13 on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme; and (b) resolution 2006/6 on strengthening statistical 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. In resolution 2006/6, the Council called for an intensification of efforts to support national statistical programmes in strengthening their capacity.

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

13. At its forty-fifth session, the Commission will consider the report of the Secretary-General on demographic statistics (E/CN.3/2014/16). The report provides updated information on the progress of the 2010 World on Population and Housing Census Programme and reports on the first Expert Group meeting on the revision of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* for the 2020 round of censuses.

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

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

14. The General Assembly held a high-level meeting on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals

for persons with disabilities, on 23 September 2013, during its sixty-eighth session. The theme of the meeting was “The way forward: a disability inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond”. In paragraph 4 (i) of its outcome document (General Assembly resolution [68/3](#)), the Assembly resolved to improve the collection, analysis and monitoring of disability data, to share data and statistics with relevant agencies and bodies within the United Nations system, including the Statistical Commission and to emphasize the need for internationally comparable data and statistics disaggregated by sex and age, including information on disability.

15. The General Assembly held a High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, on 3 and 4 October 2013, during its sixty-eighth session. In his report, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the human rights of migrants called for States to improve data collection and indicators in all areas relevant to migration, in order to make informed policy decisions ([A/68/283](#), para. 127).

16. Furthermore, in its resolution [68/4](#), in which it adopted the Declaration of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, the General Assembly emphasized the need for reliable statistical data on international migration, including, when possible, on the contributions of migrants to development in both origin and destination countries. The Assembly also noted the importance of this data for evidence-based policymaking and decision-making in all relevant aspects of sustainable development.

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

17. At its forty-fifth session, the Commission will consider the report of the Secretary-General on international migration statistics ([E/CN.3/2014/20](#)). The report describes the recent debates on international migration and development at the United Nations, which consistently call for the improvement of international migration statistics to better capture the complexity of the phenomenon. The report also presents information on the availability of migration statistics, which rely on a variety of data sources, and the Organization’s strengths and limitations as a source of information. The report will also introduce the current and planned work relevant to international migration statistics undertaken by the Statistics Division and the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, including data collection activities and global estimates regarding the migrant population.

18. The Commission will also consider the report of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics ([E/CN.3/2014/10](#)). The report describes the Group’s work on developing and testing questions on disability for use in censuses and surveys, joint work by the Washington Group and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on developing and testing question sets that focus on functioning in children and on barriers to full participation in education and the development of a model disability survey led by the World Health Organization (WHO).

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

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

19. As mandated by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2006/44, a meeting of the Council with the chairs of the functional commissions is held annually in the early part of each year. In its decision 2011/208, the Council decided to adopt the following theme for its annual ministerial review for 2014: “Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future”. The substantive contributions of the Council’s functional commissions and expert bodies are considered essential to the success of the reviews.

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

20. At its forty-fifth session, the Commission will consider the report of the Secretary-General on indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (E/CN.3/2014/29). The report elaborates the work carried out by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal Indicators and the Statistics Division in 2013 in the following areas: reviewing lessons learned from monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, improving the methodology for monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and strengthening statistical capacity-building for national monitoring. The report also presents an assessment of the availability of data to monitor progress towards the achievement of the Goals and describes the preparation of the yearly reports on progress towards their achievement.

21. The Commission will also consider the report of the World Bank and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS 21) on an action plan for post-2015 statistical development (E/CN.3/2014/30). The report presents recent initiatives to draw attention to the importance of strengthening statistical capacity, especially in the context of supporting the post-2015 development agenda. One such initiative is the signing of a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in statistics between the World Bank, the regional development banks, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations.

VII. Strengthening the Economic and Social Council

A. Action requested by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council

22. In the annex to its resolution 68/1, the General Assembly called for closer engagement between the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies in order to ensure that the richness of the work of its subsidiary machinery is fully harnessed. In that resolution the Assembly mandated the Council to provide guidance to the relevant bodies of the United Nations system in the economic, social, environmental and related fields through the adoption of a main theme,

which will be decided on the basis of inputs from the subsidiary bodies as well as Member States, starting in 2015.

23. By resolution [68/1](#), the General Assembly also established a new integration segment to consolidate the inputs of Member States, the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders and to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The integration segment will bring together the key messages on a theme that is closely related to an aspect of the Council's main annual theme. The integration segment marks an opportunity for the Commission to convey action-oriented recommendations to the Council for its follow-up at its annual session in July. The 2014 integration segment, which is expected to focus on the theme of sustainable urbanization, will take place early in May for a duration of three days. The Commission will be invited to take account, to the extent possible, of the bearing of its mandate on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable urbanization, and to provide inputs to the integration segment.

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

24. At its forty-fifth session, the Commission will consider the report of its Bureau on the working methods of the Commission ([E/CN.3/2014/3](#)). The report will discuss the implications of the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council for the work of the Commission.

25. The Commission will also have before it the report of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme on human settlements statistics ([E/CN.3/2014/17](#)), presenting a methodology to measure security of tenure in a consistent manner across countries and regions, which may be considered as a technical contribution to the integration segment of the Economic and Social Council entitled "Sustainable urbanization".
