



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
12 December 2014

Original: English

---

## Statistical Commission

### Forty-sixth session

3-6 March 2015

Item 4 (n) of the provisional agenda\*

**Items for information: statistical capacity-building**

## **Report of the World Bank and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) on statistical development**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2014/219, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the progress report of the World Bank and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) on efforts to draw attention to the importance of strengthening statistical capacity, especially in the context of supporting the post-2015 development agenda. The report also highlights progress in implementing the Busan Action Plan for Statistics and reflects on emerging topics likely to affect national statistical systems, such as the data revolution.

---

\* E/CN.3/2015/1.



## **Report of the World Bank and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) on statistical development**

### **I. Introduction**

1. At the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 29 November to 1 December 2011, heads of State, ministers and other representatives of developing and developed countries reaffirmed their commitment to effective international development. In doing so they took note of the need for transparent, country-led and country-level results frameworks based on a manageable number of output and outcome indicators. In support of the broad objectives of greater transparency, accountability and sustainable results, the Forum received and endorsed a global action plan for statistics, the Busan Action Plan for Statistics, which proposed five priority areas for action that contribute to large and sustainable improvements in statistical capacity. In each case, programmes of action were to be accompanied by indicators to monitor progress and measure results.

2. The Plan has three principal objectives: (a) fully integrating statistics in decision-making; (b) promoting open access to statistics; and (c) increasing resources for statistical systems. To achieve those objectives, five action steps were agreed. They describe priority areas for work to advance the goal of a global statistical system that produces high-quality statistics of relevance to policymakers, accessible to citizens, and sustainable with resources available domestically and, where needed, from external sources. The five priority areas of the Busan Action Plan are as follows:

- (a) Action 1: Strengthen and refocus national and regional statistical strategies with particular emphasis on improving statistical systems that address country-level development priorities. A key aim is to increase in-country capacity to respond to emerging and unforeseen needs. Strategies should be updated to reflect new challenges and opportunities while integrating international and domestic data collection activities;
- (b) Action 2: Implement standards for data preservation, documentation and dissemination that permit broader public access to statistics;
- (c) Action 3: Develop programmes to increase the knowledge and skills needed in order to use statistics effectively for planning, analysis, monitoring and evaluation, thus increasing transparency and accountability, and improving the accessibility of statistics at the national and international levels;
- (d) Action 4: Build and maintain results-monitoring instruments to track the outcomes of all global summits and high-level forums. Rigorous monitoring of global initiatives requires collaboration between national and international statistical organizations. Outcome documents should specifically recognize the need for statistical capacity development, including technical assistance, training and financial support;
- (e) Action 5: Ensure that financing for statistical information is robust and that funding instruments and approaches reflect the new modalities and actors in development finance.

## **II. Progress in implementing the Busan Action Plan for Statistics**

3. As a priority under action 1 of the Busan Action Plan, national strategies for the development of statistics have been refocused and implemented. Under the leadership of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) there has been continued support for developing countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies. In April 2014, PARIS21 officially launched the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2.0 Guidelines, updated based on nearly a decade of experience incorporating best practices and emerging national and international data needs. The guidelines further address specific issues affecting fragile States, small island developing States, sectoral strategies, infra-national strategies, regional strategies and other issues, including open data. In the current reporting year, the PARIS21 secretariat directly supported 26 countries or regional entities in national strategies or regional strategies processes, reviews, evaluations and support to establish national and/or regional partnerships in Asia and the Pacific region, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and at the global level.

4. In order to strengthen efforts in regional economic integration, PARIS21 also supports regional economic bodies to develop regional strategies for the development of statistics. In 2014, workshops were held with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). PARIS21 also organized a forum on statistical development for small island developing States during the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Apia, Samoa, from 1 to 4 September 2014.

5. In addition, as part of the current strategy to reinforce the national strategy process, PARIS21 has initiated a survey planning and costing module that will provide additional tools to assist planners. The module provides tools to assist in developing a national log frame of indicators and their information sources. The indicator is attributed to the survey or data collection exercise.

6. Furthermore, development partners are working closely to improve economic statistics to meet rising demand from low-income countries. These data are essential to understand the drivers to eliminate poverty and promote income growth in the bottom 40 per cent. The data also underpin private sector investment decisions and functioning international capital markets; evidence indicates that better statistics lower borrowing costs for low-income countries. This work will aim to improve source data underlying economic indicators through targeted financial and technical assistance.

7. Other partners have been very active in undertaking activities that support action 1. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued to coordinate the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. Significant funding has been committed to research, country assessments and capacity-building, which is being coordinated by regional agencies such as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the regional FAO office for Asia-Pacific, and in Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank. The work is in keeping with the principles set out in the Busan Action Plan, since statistical capacity priorities will be developed through the preparation of strategic plans for

agricultural and rural statistics aligned with the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics process. Significant progress has been made on the research component, where more than 20 research topics are being developed, resulting in the production of technical papers, handbooks and training material guiding the work of technical assistance and training in countries. In terms of implementation at the country level, 20 countries have already received support in the field of strategic planning; workshops and training seminars were organized in Africa and Asia, support was provided to regional statistical schools, and long-term scholarships were provided for students in Africa.

8. Additionally, the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality Initiative, launched by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, is continuing to develop and improve comparable gender indicators on education, employment, entrepreneurship, assets and health (see [E/CN.3/2015/21](#)). The specific implementation steps that involve training, international guidelines and technical assistance are being developed by UN-Women and the Statistics Division in close collaboration with such key partners as the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the regional commissions and other regional institutions, and the representatives of national statistical systems.

9. The Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management has been created in order to effectively manage and utilize geospatial information and resources. The Committee seeks to guide the making of joint decisions and set directions for the production and use of geospatial information within national and global policy frameworks. In August 2014, the Committee convened the Global Forum on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information to reach out and develop best practices among both statistical and geospatial professional communities. The Committee is continuing to work with the Statistical Commission to carry out work on developing a statistical-spatial framework as a global standard for the integration of statistical and geospatial information. This work represents a step towards establishing a global information infrastructure for pooling multiple layers of data sources with an explicit spatial reference framework that is in keeping with actions 2 and 3 of the Busan Action Plan.

10. The call to document and disseminate survey microdata and deliver this data to researchers and users of data continues to expand rapidly. The PARIS21 secretariat and the World Bank continue to manage two key statistical programmes that provide key inputs into the open data agenda of the Busan Action Plan: the International Household Survey Network and the Accelerated Data Program. The Network (see [E/CN.3/2015/10](#)) and the Program have been very successful in improving data documentation and dissemination. By 2014, the Program provided technical and financial support in microdata documentation and dissemination to over 70 countries. More recently, this assistance has also included supporting the development of data dissemination policies in countries that focus on the release of survey microdata according to the statistical laws in the country. This allows for a thorough review of the statistics law and defines whether they have presented obstacles to open data access. Many countries are adopting specific policies that empower the National Statistics Office to release data. Alongside PARIS21 and the World Bank, AFRISTAT, the African Development Bank, the secretariat of the

Pacific Community and other partners are contributing to the implementation of the Program in several countries.

11. In response to certain barriers to data access, the International Household Survey Network recently released microdata anonymization tools to further remove those barriers. Countries often express concerns for the confidentiality of respondents and the need to maintain their trust by properly dealing with laws and regulations about confidentiality and privacy protection. This tool provides objective measures to determine the risk of identifying respondents in individual record-level data and provides methodology and the means of assuring that the respondent information remains confidential. Support to countries is being piloted, and a specific strategy for providing support and building capacity will have to be designed. This strategy will take into account the high level of complexity of this issue.

12. Donors are also intensifying and consolidating their support of developing country open data initiatives. In its first year of operation, the Partnership for Open Data implemented a series of activities in about 20 developing countries, under three broad categories: first, support of developing countries to plan, execute and run open data initiatives, second, increase in the reuse of open data in developing countries; and third, growth of the base of evidence on the impact of open data for development. A scoping study on the status of open data in developing countries and activities of donors in this area was finalized. One of the first actions of the new Open Data for Development partnership described below will be to publish this scoping study in the existing Open Data website and update it regularly. The World Bank, in consultation with the two grantees for the first year of Development Grant Facility support — the Open Knowledge Foundation Network and the Open Data Institute Ltd — has decided to merge the Partnership for Open Data with a parallel global effort in support of open data in developing countries, led by the International Development Research Centre and including various other organizations. The new, merged partnership will be called Open Data for Development and will be managed by the Centre. This change is expected to benefit the partnership in a number of ways: (a) by providing an increased likelihood of financial sustainability beyond the Development Grant Facility funding period, (b) by expanding the scope of programme activities while keeping the existing objectives and expanding them; and (c) by expanding the partnership with members from the existing Open Data programme. As a result of this merge, the overall funding of the Open Data for Development will be larger. It will include funds from the International Development Research Centre and from the Information and Networks in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (INASSA) programme, partially funded by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom Government.

13. In order to support action 3 of the Busan Action Plan, PARIS21 has organized several user-producer dialogues between national statistics offices and various user groups. In Lesotho, a high-level advocacy event brought together permanent secretaries, directors of planning and heads of international organizations for commitment and cooperation in the production and use of statistics. In addition, users from Ethiopia, Malawi, Papua New Guinea and Zambia were provided the opportunity to respond to the strategic objectives highlighted in the national development strategies through the said dialogues. In other countries such as the Philippines, Rwanda and Tunisia, several user groups were represented. Such

dialogues allow the respective communities to identify priority areas of action to improve user-producer interaction and, ultimately, the use of statistics in decision-making.

14. Through the Accelerated Data Program, the use of Microdata Outreach Workshops remains a vital component for increasing the use of statistics. These workshops bring users and producers of survey microdata together and are designed for specific targeted participants in the form of statistical literacy events with university students at academic institutions or reviewing microdata use for specific sectors. With the support of the Program, over 15 countries — including Colombia, Rwanda, Uganda, Uruguay and Sri Lanka — organized a workshop that brought together different stakeholders to evaluate data availability and methodology used to compute key monitoring indicators.

15. At its forty-fifth session in March 2014, the Statistical Commission created the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics (see [E/CN.3/2015/4](#)), and requested that it produce an inventory of ongoing Big Data activities in national statistics offices, provide examples of the use of Big Data in the production of official statistics, address concerns related to methodology, human resources, data quality and confidentiality, and develop guidelines to classify various types of Big Data sources. The Group consists of 28 members from developed and developing countries' national statistics offices and from various international and regional organizations. As a follow-up to this request, the Statistics Division and the National Bureau of Statistics of China jointly organized a three-day International Conference on Big Data for Official Statistics in Beijing, from 28 to 30 October 2014. In addition, the Global Working Group held its first meeting immediately after the Conference, reviewed its terms of reference and discussed the work programme for 2015. The Group agreed to set up nine task teams to work on the following topics: (a) training, skills and capacity-building; (b) using Big Data to monitor the sustainable development goals; (c) Big Data advocacy and communication; (d) mobile phone data; (e) social media data; (f) satellite imagery; (g) access and partnership; (h) cross-cutting issues, classification, frameworks and taxonomy; and (i) overall coordination of all the task teams. The World Bank, along with Mexico, has agreed to lead the task team on "Using Big Data to monitor the sustainable development goals". Each task team will develop its own work programme, time schedule and outputs in close consultation with the coordination team. A report of the Global Working Group will be presented to the Statistical Commission at its forty-sixth session in March 2015. At the same time, the Group will invite Commission members to express their views on the following: first, the terms of reference; second, the proposed task teams; third, the results of the inventory of Big Data activities in national statistics offices coming from a Statistics Division and Economic Commission for Europe survey; and fourth, the need to support pilot projects in developing countries that explore using specific Big Data sources for official statistics.

16. Moreover, the World Bank Strategic Research Program and the Innovations in Big Data and Analytics for Development Program are funding a project to evaluate new techniques for estimating socioeconomic variables using call detail records (mobile phone usage metadata). The project, working in collaboration with the Data-Pop Alliance — a new global initiative jointly created by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab and the Overseas Development Institute — has as its objective to evaluate the

performance of these big data-based approaches to measuring poverty and inequality, and to advance the conceptual, empirical and methodological thinking in their application to poverty measurement within low- and middle-income countries.

17. PARIS21 takes stock of resources that are being directed to statistical systems in the Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS), which is instrumental in informing activities under action 5 of the Busan Action Plan. The annual PRESS exercise provides a snapshot of such ongoing support to statistical development across the globe, and presents an overview of major trends. Significant findings from the latest 2013 PRESS round include: (a) support to statistics reached US\$ 394 million in calendar year 2013; (b) almost 90 per cent of support to statistics is aligned with national strategies for the development of statistics, up from 32 per cent in 2011; and (c) a large share of global support to statistics continues to come from a very small number of providers.

18. Further, based on the PRESS experience conducted at the international level, PARIS21 launched a pilot exercise named Country Report on Support to Statistics (CRESS) at the country level. CRESS is an initiative led by the country to gather all data relating to the funding of the National Statistical System, whether deriving from domestic resources or external aid. It has currently been implemented in six African countries (Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi and Senegal).

### **III. Emerging topics contributing to the post-2015 development agenda**

19. The illustrative goals and targets in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, while bold and practical, will require responsive statistical systems with the capacity to track the development progress of countries across a much broader spectrum of development challenges and priorities compared with the current Millennium Development Goals Framework. While this will place considerable additional burdens on national statistical systems, it is imperative that with the well-being of people at the forefront of national and international development efforts, no one is left behind and everyone is counted. This means relevant and useful data must be made available and accessible on a timely basis and in the right format, while respecting confidentiality, where appropriate. National statistical systems will play a crucial role in the implementation of the data revolution at the country level, while multilateral partnerships, cooperation and coordination are key elements to bring forth an effective data revolution at the local, national, regional and international levels. These will all be essential to build capacity and strengthen national statistical systems to deliver the right data, to the right people, at the right time.

20. In this regard, the Secretary-General of the United Nations appointed an Independent Expert Advisory Group for Sustainable Development (see [E/CN.3/2015/3](#)) on the Data Revolution to underpin the critical role of data for any new goal framework. The Group was mandated to provide a report by the end of October 2014 to inform the Secretary-General's synthesis report on post-2015, and to provide advice on what a data revolution for development would mean in practice, how it could be funded and what institutional and governance implications it would possibly entail. The recent report, "A World That Counts: mobilising the

Data Revolution for sustainable development”, lays out five key recommendations to take the data revolution forward:

- (a) Develop a global consensus on principles and standards;
- (b) Share technology and innovations for the common good;
- (c) New resources for capacity development;
- (d) Leadership for coordination and mobilization;
- (e) Exploit some quick wins on SDG data.

21. The PARIS21 project, Informing a Data Revolution, is currently preparing a road map for a data revolution in the spring of 2015 as part of the lead-up to the General Assembly in September, where it is expected that the new development agenda will be agreed and launched. The road map aims to set out a broad programme of action to help developing countries meet the challenges of the post-2015 development agenda and the data needs related to the sustainable development goals. It is based on the information collected and analysed as part of the Informing a Data Revolution project and is designed to help countries to deal with and overcome the problems they face in improving the availability and use of data for their development. The road map will build on what is already in place, as well as other documents, especially the report published by the Independent Expert Advisory Group. While the road map has been driven by the post-2015 development agenda, the emphasis is on building the capacity and putting the infrastructure and systems in place to meet the data challenges of the next 15 years. Its aim is to identify the types of activities to be undertaken and how they can be accomplished, who will need to be involved and what it might cost. The project has also compiled an inventory of innovative uses of new technologies, new data sources and new organizational approaches that can help to meet challenges, reduce costs and improve efficiency of statistical systems in developing countries. In addition, a metabase has been designed to display a wide variety of metadata relating to statistical capacity across both developing and developed countries. The Metabase generates country profiles to display a set of information across six dimensions: access, innovations, timeliness, soundness, institutions and use and serves as both a baseline and a means of monitoring progress over time.

22. PARIS21 consulted various partners, stakeholders and individuals for input on the initial findings of the project, and will continue to seek input throughout the finalization phase of the road map document through multi-stakeholder dialogues organized globally. The consultation process with the participating countries and the relevant stakeholders has been a key aspect of the project.