

Fourth Meeting of the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians

6 December 2023, Online

Conclusions

Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division, opened the meeting. He underlined the important role of the sprints that the Network has organized in collaboration with other bodies in bringing together statisticians from different statistical domains all over the world to discuss emerging statistical issues and propose solutions to them. He also noted the role of the beyond GDP sprint in setting the foundation for discussions on how to implement the proposals of the Secretary General to develop complementary metrics to GDP.

In her opening remarks, Aishath Shahuda, Co-Chair of the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians and Deputy Chief Statistician, Maldives Bureau of Statistics, encouraged Network members to share their views on the future areas of work that were proposed by the Network's Bureau.

The meeting began with a keynote presentation on "Measuring Informal Economy in Guatemala" before discussing the other topics in the agenda.

The members of the Network:

1. Expressed their appreciation for the work done by the Network's Bureau in organizing the online meeting and preparing the agenda.

Keynote presentation

2. Appreciated the keynote presentation which provided insights into how statistics on the informal economy are compiled in Guatemala.

3. Observed that, with the advent of digitalization, there may be a need to assess how to use possibly more cost-effective and timely alternative data sources such as big data rather than traditional surveys to compile statistics on the informal economy.

Overview of outcomes of the Beyond GDP sprint 2023 and proposed next steps

4. Appreciated the presentation on the findings and next steps of the beyond GDP sprint 2023 and welcomed the proposal to present the recommendations, including the key recommendation to form a multi-disciplinary expert group comprising experts from the social and demographic statistics, national accounts, environmental-economic accounting, environment statistics and geospatial statistics communities, academia and, where appropriate, the private sector, to explore how to take forward the recommendations, in a background document to the Network's report to the 55th session of the Statistical Commission for its endorsement.

5. Observed that this expert group can play a role, in collaboration with the Bureau of the Statistical Commission, in assessing and evaluating proposals to compile beyond GDP metrics from Member States and soon-to-be-formed high level group on beyond GDP.

Discussion on proposed topics for further work by the Network

6. Welcomed broadly the proposals to organize sprints on data strategies, housing and the use of artificial intelligence in statistical work to respond to the evolving economic landscape and user needs, but underscored that these sprints can avoid duplication with the work of other groups which are currently working on these topics by using these sprints to (a) provide a platform for these groups to share what they are doing with the objective to identify gaps that can be addressed and (b) broadcast and expand the work of certain groups such as the task teams working on recommendations 13 (access to private and administration data) and 14 (data sharing) of the G20 DGI-3 to a broader group of countries.
7. Suggested that the Network's Bureau should initiate discussions on how to prioritize the organization of these sprints.
8. Suggested organizing a sprint on the measurement challenges around the net zero agenda in terms of its impact on the economy, society and environment and welcomed the opportunity to provide more views on the above-mentioned proposals and suggest topics for future sprints by written procedure.