First Meeting of the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians
1 November 2022
Conclusions

Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division, opened the meeting. He observed that the Network can play a middle-level strategic coordinating role between the decisions made by chief statisticians and director generals at the Statistical Commission and the various domain-specific statistical expert groups in the area of economic statistics. To do so, the Network will need to understand well the issues that the various economic statistics groups are working on in order to provide the appropriate strategic guidance. Also, the increasingly multi-dimensional nature of economic statistics implies that the Network will need to coordinate its activities closely with other communities such as the economic-environmental accounting and socio-demographic statistics communities. It is also important for the Network to understand well the needs of the users of economic statistics. Further, the Network should anticipate emerging socioeconomic and environmental challenges and work agilely to expedite the formulation of statistical responses to these challenges.

In his opening remarks, Andre Loranger Co-Chair of the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians and Assistant Chief Statistician, Strategic Data Management, Methods and Analysis, Statistics Canada, encouraged participants to contribute to the discussion to ensure that their organization's priorities are reflected in the work program of the Network. He also hoped that the work done by the Network serves to become part and parcel of NSOs' regular programs in putting out statistical information that meets user needs.

The meeting discussed the outcomes of the Network's completed and ongoing sprints, and how the outcomes can be incorporated into the 2023 work plan of the Network and the draft report of the Network to the 54th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

The members of the Network:

1.   Expressed their appreciation for the work done by the Bureau in organizing the virtual meeting and preparing the comprehensive agenda.

2.   Agreed to provide written comments on the presentations, beyond GDP Prospectus and draft Report of the Network to the 54th session of the Statistical Commission by 14 November 2022.

Progress report and 2023 work plan

3.   Appreciated the excellent collaboration between the leads of the data access sprint, organizational sprint, beyond GDP sprint and Measurement of Inflation of Owner-Occupied Housing in the CPI sprint and Bureau of the network in organizing the sprint meetings.

Data access sprint

4.   Supported the proposal to (a) continue work on global value chain use cases in 2023 in horticulture, semiconductors, e-commerce, retail trade and tourism, which can leverage on the outcomes of the [7th International Conference on Big Data and Data Science](#) and (b) work on capacity building initiatives together with the CEBD Task Team on Capacity Building.

5.   Underscored the need to establish win-win mutually beneficial sustainable partnerships between statistical agencies and the private sector and, in some instance, public sector data providers and observed that the success of these partnerships would depend on the ability of statistical agencies to perform the role of data stewards effectively to ensure the efficient utilization of all data sources while safeguarding data quality, confidentiality and security.

6.   Observed that, in addition to challenges in getting access to private sector data, statistical agencies also face challenges in normalizing and standardizing these data, which are typically compiled in different formats due to different business accounting practices, for the compilation of economic statistics.

Organizational sprint

7.   Appreciated the excellent collaboration between the Bureau of the Network and relevant regional commissions in organizing the virtual regional consultations which have taken place so far.

8.   Observed that the inclusive approach of the Network in organizing the virtual regional consultation can facilitate the establishment of partnerships with various statistical communities, including the economic-environmental accounting and socio-demographic communities and the growth of sub-network of economic statisticians in the various regions.

9.   Noted the common focus on beyond GDP as a priority among the regional commissions, but also observed the increasing importance of topics such as digitalization and globalization.

Beyond GDP sprint

10.   Supported, in general, the direction of travel of the sprint and the proposal to develop an integrated statistical system which gives clarity around how the range of statistical standards and outputs can be utilized to give a comprehensive picture of the modern world, and delivers a coherent framework within which users can utilise different data in varied ways to meet complex policy questions, but noted the need for practical guidance on how the system can be implemented in countries, and to communicate the benefits of the system to policymakers and other users.

11.   Recognized that the proposal is ambitious and warrants the adoption of an incremental approach by implementing agencies in producing the required data on a sustainable basis.

12.   Agreed to provide, by written procedure, suggestions on (a) new topics for sprints which are related to beyond GDP and (b) how to engage the global north and south, by 14 November 2022.

Measurement of Inflation of Owner-Occupied Housing in the CPI sprint

13.   Agreed with the recommendations and next steps of the sprint to encourage national compilers of the CPI to include a measurement of the OOH in the national CPIs and request

the Ottawa Group and the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Price Statistics to explore and further document the existing methods of calculating OOH in the CPI and

14.   Observed the multiple uses of the CPI in countries, including for tracking food security and noted the need for the weights in the CPI to be updated more frequently by exploring the use of annual household expenditure data from the national accounts instead of using survey data, which are conducted infrequently due to the costs involved.

Draft Report of the Network to the 54th session of the Statistical Commission

15.   Appreciated the tremendous effort of the Bureau of the Network in preparing the initial draft report, agreed, in general, with the content of the initial draft report.

16.   Supported a broadening of the scope of work of the Network beyond economic statistics with the need to adopt a multidimensional approach for the work on the proposed integrated statistical system for inclusive and sustainable wellbeing.

17.   Agreed that it would be useful to circulate the draft report to colleagues in their agencies for feedback, while noting the tight deadline to finalize the report by 28 November 2022.