STATISTICAL COMMISSION

Fifty-first session

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Agenda item 3(c): Future of Economic Statistics

Report of the Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics (E/CN.3/2020/7)

Oral introduction

Introducer: Mr. Anil Arora, the Chair of the Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics

Chair,

The Commission has before it the report of the Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics. The Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics was created by the Statistical Commission during its fiftieth session to assess of the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of the current system of economic statistics. The report contains a description of the outcomes of the first and second meetings of the Group held in 2019, along with the results of the global and regional user consultations on matters related to the update of the system of economic statistics and its governance arrangements.

Consultation activities and discussions in the past year have led to an acknowledgment that the current system needs to be more responsive and agile to meet the collective needs of users and the focus should be on improving the current system rather than recommending major changes to it.

The proposed work of the Group in its second and final year falls across four dimensions: documenting the operations of the current system; improving connections between working groups by establishing networks; challenging working groups to operate in new ways, with a focus on experimentation and capacity-building; and increasing engagement with a broad range of users and other potential partners.

At its third meeting on Sunday 1 March 2020, the Group agreed on its work programme for 2020. The Group decided on concrete challenges related to the update of the system of economic statistics. These challenges have a focus on experimentation and are formulated in in terms of five use cases to take stock of ongoing work, advance the work through networking of statistical groups, and provide a road map to take the work further. These use cases are formulated in terms of project proposals related to the role of MNEs; digital platforms; household distributional measures; digital versions of statistics standards; and the metadata model for international classifications. For each of the challenges, detailed Terms of Reference for the project proposals have been formulated that bring multi-disciplinary teams of experts together from different statistical groups to trial new cross-domain working methods. Each of the projects will produce guidance notes along agreed timelines building on practices in selected developed and developing countries. In addition, the project members will be asked to report on the successes and challenges of the network approach as an innovative working method and the agile solutions used inside the network.

The Group at its third meeting also proposed to trial new working methods for existing statistical groups by opening-up the membership of inter-secretariat working groups and inter-agency taskforces and adopt the *Committee of Experts* as the common naming convention for groups in the domain of economic statistics in addition to City Groups. Also, a new Committee is proposed that will be tasked with the coordination of the methods, data and capacity building for the measurement of the economy-society nexus, including the measurement of human capital. Each of the existing and new statistical groups will be requested to adopt a standard template for its terms of reference with a mandate and governance for four functional areas in a sub-domain of economic statistics: coordination, methods and standards, data, and capacity building.

The Group at its third meeting also supported the proposal for the organisation of the first UN Forum on Economic Statistics in the fall of 2020. The Forum would bring together high-level users, partners, and producers of economic statistics from different regions of the world, creating an

opportunity for a dialogue on strategic issues between the different communities. Users and other partners are expected to increase their awareness of the already existing products of the system of economic statistics, in terms of its breadth, timeliness or level of detail, and of plans to improve it. Technology partners and data providers are expected to bring their experience and capacity to support official statistics in meeting the user demands. The outcome of the Forum will be put forward by the Group for further reflection and discussion at the 52nd UN Statistical Commission in 2021.

With reference to the report of the FOC Group to the Commission, the Commission is invited to express its views on the progress made by the FOC Group in its work and on its proposed programme of work for 2020. Moreover, the Commission is invited to dissolve the statistical groups that are no longer active in the domain of economic statistics, as listed in paragraph 30 of the report: the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics, the Expert Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics, the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics and the Inter-Agency Working Group on Debt Statistics.

We look forward to the considerations of the Commission.

Thank you.