

## Draft Concept Note

### High-Level Group on Economic Statistics: towards a more holistic, integrated and user centric coordination mechanism

#### I. Introduction

1. This note describes considerations for the advancement of a holistic, integrated and user-centric programme on economic statistics of the United Nations Statistical Commission. Particularly, the note proposes a High-Level Group on Economic Statistics that should provide a major thrust for the implementation of actions in the strategic area of economic statistics and for the strengthening of basic statistics and their data integration. It is envisaged that the strategic direction will be determined through extensive user consultation, supported by an UN Global Forum on Economic Statistics to take into consideration the needs and priorities of the various professional groups and stakeholders in the public and private sectors in all regions of the world and for different levels of economic development, including statisticians, economists, policy analysts, market and trade analysts, academics, data suppliers and other data users.
2. The objective will be to strengthen the management, innovation and partnership capabilities of economic statistics programs of the global statistical system in areas of methodology, data and data integration, capacity building, coordination and emerging issues.

#### II. Background

3. At its 39th session in 2008, the Statistical Commission recognized the importance of increasing the coherence of basic economic statistics for enhancing the quality and analytical value of both basic economic statistics and macroeconomic statistics. This recognition subsequently led to several initiatives, such as the development of Guidelines on Integrated Economic Statistics, which was published in 2012.
4. At the 44th session in 2013, the Statistical Commission created the Friends of Chair group on the measurement of international trade and economic globalization (which was subsequently changed to the expert group on ITEGS in 2015). Its terms of reference include the explicit request to propose an appropriate mechanism for coordination of the work in this domain of economic statistics.
5. The Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics launched by the Statistical Commission at its 46<sup>th</sup> session in 2015 emphasized the strategic necessity of transforming national statistical systems and strengthening the coordination mechanisms between the global, regional and national levels. This Agenda responds not only to the regular requests for sound official statistics, but also to emerging needs, such as those arising from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The latter calls for data integration of persons, businesses and locations from surveys, administrative and big data sources. This data integration should meet the new demands for insights on the interrelated dynamics of the performance of the economy, industry and businesses on communities, families and persons and their use of the environment and natural resources.
6. These and other initiatives of the Statistical Commission and the United Nations more broadly cumulated in the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/hlg/Cape-Town-Global-Action-Plan/>

Strategic Area 1: Coordination and strategic leadership on data for sustainable development

Strategic Area 2: Innovation and modernization of national statistical systems

Strategic Area 3: Strengthening of basic statistical activities and programmes, with particular focus on addressing the monitoring needs of the 2030 Agenda

that was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission at its 48th Session in March 2017. This Global Action Plan calls upon the international statistical community to take action on the strategic area of modernizing and strengthening national statistical systems with a focus on modernizing the governance and institutional framework; applying statistical standards and new and secure data architecture for data sharing, exchange and dissemination; building multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development data; and facilitating the use of new technology and new data sources in statistical production processes, especially in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

7. Against this background, the High-Level Group builds on these existing internationally agreed initiatives and should provide a major thrust for the strategic area of economic statistics of the Global Action Plan, including the strengthening of basic statistics and their data integration.

### **III. Proposed Mechanism**

8. A holistic, integrated and user-centric approach for economic statistics should take into consideration the need for regular and broad consultation with the major stakeholders in the production and use of economic statistics. Therefore, it is proposed to establish a High-Level Group on Economic Statistics that is supported by a biennial UN Global Forum on Economic Statistics. These proposed mechanisms are broadly aligned with the principles of the High-Level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB), which is supported by the biennial UN World Data Forum on Sustainable Development Data.

### **IV. Purpose and Objectives**

9. The purpose of the High-Level Group on Economic Statistics will be to identify needs, priorities and emerging issues in Economic Statistics, and assist the United Nations Statistical Commission to efficiently and innovatively respond with a coherent global program in Economic Statistics across its programmatic elements.

10. The objectives of the High-Level Group on Economic Statistics include, among others, to provide a platform for strategic leadership for a sustainable system of Integrated Economic Statistics<sup>2</sup> and to promote the advancement of a more unified, user-centric and innovative system of Economic Statistics.

11. The UN Global Forum on Economic Statistics supports the High-Level Group and offers a user-centric consultative process and mechanism for strategies and action plans for Economic Statistics integrated with social-demographic, environmental and geospatial information systems. Against the backdrop of the 2030 Agenda, these strategies and action plans may advance the need for data integration of businesses, households, communities and the environment in secure database environments. This data integration and analysis at unit level and the links to sectoral and macroeconomic aggregates should enable cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis of the relationships between business characteristics, innovation, productivity, job creation and entrepreneurship. Linked data can also be used by groups of people in the community to detect patterns and trends in order to gain insights into their lives in terms of employment, income, wealth, health and education.

12. This platform for Economic Statistics should also identify emerging issues and new developments in science and policy frameworks and their integration in statistical production and organization. The UN Global Forum on Economic Statistics will bring together various

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Strategic Area 4: Dissemination and use of sustainable development data  
Strategic Area 5: Multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development data  
Strategic Area 6: Mobilize resources and coordinate efforts for statistical capacity building

<sup>2</sup> See Annex I the draft multi-year programme of work of the UN Statistical Commission, 2018–2022.

professional groups and stakeholders from the public and private sector from all parts of the world, including statisticians, economists, policy analysts, academics, data suppliers and other data users. This Forum will be organized every other year.

## **V. Composition and Structure of the High-Level Group on Economic Statistics**

13. The composition of the High-Level Group takes account of regional representation and existing regional mechanisms in order to ensure equitable regional representation, statistical and user interests and technical expertise. Considering the strategic purpose and objectives of the High-level Group of Economic Statistics, it would be appropriate to include high-level representation, such as Chief Statisticians or Directors of Economic Statistics of national, regional and international statistical agencies, senior policy analysts and managers from the public and private sectors, eminent academics, and internationally-recognised experts from the business community, non-governmental organizations and civil society.

14. The representation in the High-Level Group should also present the main programmatic issues of the regional commissions, such as the Conference of European Statisticians, European Statistical System (ESS), and the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy (CSSP), among others, and expert groups, such as ICP, SNA, Prices, Trade, and UNCEEA, among others. No formal reporting arrangements between the entities and the High-Level Group are foreseen. However, the High-Level Group will provide advice to the Statistical Commission on the overall coherence of the strategic direction and priorities of the global economic statistics program in view of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the related Global Action Plan.

15. Through equitable regional representation, all UN member countries will be consulted on the needs and priorities of an economic statistics programme under the Statistical Commission. Moreover, the programmes of individual domain specific expert groups could benefit from user-centric advice on a more holistic and integrated perspective that make the multi-dimensional approach to sustainable development more pertinent.

## **VI. Proposed Programme of Work**

16. The High-Level Group on Economic Statistics meets annually to facilitate the formulation of advice on the global work programme on economic statistics in line with its purpose and objectives, including recommendations for the multi-year programme of work of the Statistical Commission on Economic Statistics. A Bureau of the High-Level Group on Economic Statistics will coordinate the operational and technical work programme with stakeholders, specialized groups and the Secretariat. The Bureau will be supported by a Programming Committee for the High-Level Forum on Economic Statistics that will meet biennially.

## Draft multi-year programme of work of the Statistical Commission, 2018–2022

<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Approximate current frequency</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>
<b>1. Demographic and social statistics</b>						
(a) Demographic statistics/population and housing censuses	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
(b) Human settlements statistics	5 years		X			
(c) Health statistics	2 years		X		X	
(d) Disability statistics, including Washington Group on Disability Statistics	2 years	X		X		X
(e) Social statistics	5 years					X
(f) Gender statistics	2 years	X		X		X
(g) Poverty statistics	10 years	X				
(h) Statistics on drugs and drug use	3 years			X		
(i) Crime statistics	3 years		X			X
(j) International migration statistics	5 years		X			
(k) Refugee statistics	2 years	X		X		X
(l) Work and employment statistics	5 years	X				
(m) Education statistics	3 years		X			X
(n) Culture statistics	5 years				X	
(o) Household surveys	2 years	X		X		X
(p) Civil registration and vital statistics	2 years		X		X	
(q) Ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data	2 years	X		X		X
<b>2. Economic statistics</b>						
(a) National accounts	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
(b) Agricultural and rural statistics	2 years	X		X		X
(c) Industrial statistics	3 years		X			X
(d) Business registers, including Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers	2 years		X		X	
(e) Energy statistics, including Oslo Group on Energy Statistics	2 years	X		X		X
(f) International trade and economic globalization statistics <sup>a</sup>	Annual		X	X	X	X
(g) Digital trade and e-commerce statistics	5 years	X				
(h) Service statistics, including Voorburg Group on Service Statistics	2 years	X		X		X
(i) Information and communications technology statistics	2 years	X		X		X
(j) Tourism statistics	3 years			X		
(k) Finance statistics	2 years		X		X	
(l) International Comparison Programme	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
(m) Price statistics, including Ottawa Group on Price Indices and Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics	2 years	X	X		X	
(n) Statistics on science, technology and innovation	5 years	X				
(o) Informal sector statistics, including Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics	3 years	X			X	
(p) Transformative agenda/Handbook of Statistical Organization	2 years	X		X		X
(q) Short-term economic indicators	3 years			X		
<b>3. Natural resources and environment statistics</b>						
(a) Environment statistics	2 years	X		X		X
(b) Environmental-economic accounting, including London Group on Environmental Accounting	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
(c) Climate change statistics	5 years	X				

<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Approximate current frequency</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>
(d) Statistics for economies based on natural resources, including Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies Based on Natural Resources	2 years	X		X		X
<b>4. Activities not classified by field</b>						
(a) Coordination of statistical programmes	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
(b) Statistics of human development	5 years				X	
(c) Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and principles governing international statistical activities	5 years		X	X		
(d) International statistical classifications	2 years	X		X		X
(e) Common open standards for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata	2 years		X		X	
(f) Presentation of statistical data and metadata	10 years				X	
(g) Statistical capacity-building	2 years		X		X	
(h) Dissemination of statistics by the Statistics Division/Statistics Division publications	5 years			X		
(i) Development indicators/Millennium Development Goals/Sustainable Development Goals	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
(j) Follow-up to the policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
(k) Working methods of the Statistical Commission	5 years	X				
(l) National quality assurance frameworks	2 years		X		X	
(m) Integration of statistical and geospatial information	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
(n) Big data	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
(o) World Statistics Day	5 years				X	
(p) Regional statistical development	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
(q) Governance, peace and security statistics, including Praia Group on Governance Statistics	2 years	X		X		X
(r) Open data	2 years	X		X		X
(s) Programme questions (Statistics Division)	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Total number of items</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>

<sup>a</sup> Includes international trade statistics and statistics on international trade in services.