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Items for information: statistical capacity-building**Report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in
the Twenty-first Century and the World Bank on
statistical development****Note by the Secretary-General**

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2015/216 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) and the World Bank), which is presented to the Statistical Commission for information. The report outlines the efforts to draw attention to the importance of strengthening statistical capacity, especially in the context of supporting the Sustainable Development Goals. The report also highlights progress made in selected areas to improve official statistics in developing countries and reflects on emerging topics likely to affect national statistical systems such as the data revolution. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2016/1.



Report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century and the World Bank on statistical development

I. Introduction

1. Over the past four years, political attention on statistics for the development agenda has steadily grown. Starting with 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 the need for transparent, country-led and country-level results frameworks. The Forum marked the first instance in which global political leadership has endorsed a plan for official statistics, the Busan Action Plan for Statistics, which contained five priority areas for action that contribute to large and sustainable improvements in statistical capacity. The three principal objectives of the Plan are to: (a) fully integrate statistics in decision-making; (b) promote open access to statistics; and (c) increase resources for statistical systems. The endorsement of the Plan resulted in a number of key activities and initiatives, many of which have been documented in previous reports ([E/CN.3/2015/35](#), [E/CN.3/2014/30](#)).

2. Since the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission, political attention paid to and interest in statistics has been without precedent and is reflected in three major political outcomes over the course of 2015: the adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/313, containing the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; the adoption of Assembly resolution 70/1, containing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and the discussions on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals held at the annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

3. In the Addis Ababa Action Plan, the General Assembly makes explicit references to data and to the need for more high-quality data to be used for measuring, monitoring and planning efforts. Disaggregated data along socioeconomic strata is seen as essential to reaching out to those who are left behind, as is the need to strengthen national statistical systems and capacities by sourcing data from non-official sources such as the private sector and civil society and by harnessing the innovation potential provided by the data revolution. In paragraph 125 of resolution 69/313, the General Assembly indicates that high-quality disaggregated data is an essential input for smart and transparent decision-making, including in support of the post-2015 agenda and its means of implementation, and can improve policymaking at all levels. In paragraph 126, it indicates that it will seek to increase and use high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by sex, age, geography, income, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, and will enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Small Island Developing States, for this purpose and provide international cooperation, including through technical and financial support, to further strengthen the capacity of national statistical authorities and bureaux.

4. Similarly, there is a direct reference in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to monitoring, evaluation and accountability, which was not part of the Millennium Development Goals framework. Target 17.18 outlines that by 2020 there will be a need to enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

5. Last, in their discussions on Sustainable Development Goals implementation, held during their most recent annual meeting, the World Bank and IMF focused on data. In the communiqué for the meeting, the Sustainable Development Goals were described as charting a new course for development for the next 15 years and as being universal, integrated and aligned with the World Bank's corporate goals. Building on the "Billions to trillions" discussion held in the April 2015 meeting, the participants endorsed the World Bank's role and support for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, indicating that this would involve convening, connecting and coordinating with Governments, the United Nations, IMF, multilateral development banks, and the World Trade Organization, private sector and civil society to mobilize the financing needed and delivering development solutions at the country, regional, and global levels, including through South-South cooperation. They stressed the importance of strengthening data quality and coverage, and its availability for policymaking and for monitoring and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, and called on the World Bank and IMF to increase their support to developing countries in building national data capacity and investing in evidence.

6. The issue of data figures substantially in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and political attention will remain focused on it over the coming years. However, both the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) and the World Bank feel that it is important to build upon the Busan Action Plan in order to fill critical gaps in the understanding of development challenges and performance. Some of the international efforts to improve official statistics in developing countries are highlighted in section II of the present report.

II. Progress in improving official statistics in developing countries

7. Improving official statistics in low-capacity environments requires activities on two fronts. First, effective and efficient delivery of statistical products requires strengthening national statistical systems (i.e., "horizontal" improvements to the system). Core activities supporting this front include strengthening the institutional and legal framework and the overarching data production framework. The second front involves a focus on improving the source data underlying key socioeconomic indicators (i.e., sector-specific "vertical" improvements to specific survey production and dissemination processes).

8. The paragraphs below highlight some of the efforts across both fronts. Not all of the activities under way to support capacity-building in Member States are

covered. Rather, the aim is to provide the Statistical Commission with a sense of the span of the activities.

9. PARIS21 remains the leader in designing and supporting horizontal improvements to statistical systems. This long-standing support to developing countries is provided through the design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies for the development of statistics. An expert reference group, with representatives from national statistical offices and regional organizations from all regions, has been established to continue the work concerning the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2.0 Guidelines in order to further address specific issues and align the guidelines with the latest developments of the international agenda. Additional updates have been made regarding small island developing States, regional strategies and the post-2015 era. The Portuguese and Spanish sites have also been updated, and more recent examples, tools and good practices have been included, in particular on sector strategies. The PARIS21 secretariat has directly supported over 25 countries or regional entities in processes involving national or regional strategies for the development of statistics, reviews, evaluations and support for establishing national and/or regional strategies in Africa, the Asia and Pacific region and the Latin America and Caribbean region and at the global level. PARIS21 also began raising awareness for future statisticians on the national strategies with lectures in four regional schools of statistics in Africa.

10. Horizontal improvements require supporting regional activities. In order to strengthen regional economic integration, PARIS21 continued to support regional economic bodies in the development of regional strategies for the development of statistics. In 2015, work was initiated with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Organization of Eastern and Caribbean States to develop and roll out regional strategies. Moreover, a cross regional forum on regional strategies was organized to discuss experiences, good practices and lessons learned in regional statistical cooperation. At the forum the lessons and experiences were documented and recommendations were made to inform the guidelines on regional strategies, which will be released in 2016.

11. Complementing PARIS21 activities, the World Bank continued to provide financial and technical assistance to improve national strategies for better statistics and to implement the priorities set out in such strategies, including through trust funds. World Bank lending-operations continued to provide support to national strategies in countries such as Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mongolia, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Statistics for Results Facility Catalytic Fund provided larger-scale support to eight International Development Association countries, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity-Building extended support to numerous countries (25 new projects approved in 2015) to improve aspects of their statistics. Countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States also benefited from a regional World Bank-managed statistical capacity-building programme established in 2012.

12. PARIS21, the World Bank and other international organizations are supporting "vertical" improvements to statistical systems focusing on specific indicators, products and services.

13. The World Bank, the multilateral development banks and regional agencies conducted various capacity-building and technical assistance activities in different

regions to enhance country capacity in national accounts, prices and purchasing power parities. In Africa, the African Development Bank (AfDB) held two regional workshops: in Senegal in June 2015; and in Zambia in August 2015. In Asia, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) held two regional workshops: in Thailand in June 2015; and in Indonesia in December 2015. ADB is also supporting countries with the construction of supply and use tables and the estimation of subnational purchasing power parities. In the Commonwealth of Independent States region, a regional workshop was organized by the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States in November 2015. In Western Asia, two regional workshops were organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA): one in December 2014 and one in August 2015 in Turkey. Moreover, ESCWA provided technical assistance on subnational purchasing power parity estimation to Egypt, the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. The World Bank supported regional partners with financial and technical assistance to implement these capacity-building activities. Looking ahead, capacity-building efforts will focus on the integration of consumer price index and purchasing power parity activities. This topic will be on the agenda of the upcoming expert group meeting on consumer price indices to be held in Geneva in May 2016.

14. 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 Commissions for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the regional FAO office for Asia-Pacific and, in Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and AfDB. The work 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 resulting in the production of technical papers, handbooks and training material guiding the work of technical assistance and in training in countries.

15. In addition, 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 Secretariat is continuing to improve comparable gender indicators on education, employment, entrepreneurship, assets and gender differences in time use. 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.

16. Over the past year, the PARIS21 secretariat and the World Bank continued to manage two statistical programmes: the International Household Survey Network and the Accelerated Data Program. Both programmes have successfully improved the availability of well-documented data. Funding from the Development Grant Facility of the World Bank for the Accelerated Data Program will end at the close of 2015. By the end of the programme in 2015, assistance through the Accelerated Data Program, supported by documentation, dissemination and anonymization tools and guidelines developed by the International Household Survey Network, will have provided technical and financial support in microdata documentation and

dissemination to over 75 countries and documented over 3,000 statistical operations. More recently, this assistance 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. Clear dissemination policies provide guidance that enable agencies to release data in compliance with laws; the policies include direction on the preservation of confidentiality. Improved dissemination policies, combined with the tools and guidelines for documentation, dissemination and statistical disclosure control create the necessary enabling environment for greater release of microdata. Many countries are adopting policies that empower their national statistical offices to release anonymized data to the public or to selected researchers. Alongside PARIS21 and the World Bank, the Observatoire économique et statistique d'Afrique subsaharienne (AFRISTAT), AfDB, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and other partners are contributing to the implementation of the Accelerated Data Program in several countries.

17. During the final year of implementation of the Accelerated Data Program, PARIS21 organized a series of regional quality assessment workshops. The workshops provided a thorough review of a country's documentation processes and quality of output. It measured key performance indicators and established a results-based review of the programme. The reports will be available in early 2016. Moreover, the International Household Survey Network-developed "question bank" was introduced at the country level through a joint workshop undertaken by PARIS21 and the World Bank in Rwanda. The question bank will provide a new tool for countries to define consistent methodologies and concepts for managing and measuring indicators. It is likely that the World Bank will help to disseminate Sustainable Development Goals methodologies and concepts.

18. Although World Bank funding under the Development Grant Facility will no longer be available, PARIS21 will continue to implement selected activities and collaborate with partner organizations. The International Household Survey Network will also continue to support the tools such as the microdata cataloging tool (NADA) and the question bank, and provide direction on methodology and guidelines that have supported Accelerated Data Program activities.

19. Complementing the Accelerated Data Program/International Household Survey Network activities described above, the World Bank has been ramping up its support for data production in member countries, most notably for household surveys. With funding from the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity-Building, the World Bank will provide financial and technical support to approximately 20 countries over the next two years. It has also committed to work alongside its partners, most notably national statistical offices and other international organizations, to conduct national surveys that will assess whether people's lives are improving.

20. Beyond household surveys, PARIS21 has developed a data module for the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics that is designed to assist countries in planning statistical operations (i.e., data collections) focusing on country priorities. The application departs from the national development plan and the monitoring indicators identified as essential for measuring the success of development policy. It will be adopted to include the Sustainable Development Goals library and assist in the process of identifying data sources and mainstreaming new processes into the National Strategy for the Development of

Statistics and national planning framework. The tool will also provide a cost estimation module and help to advocate for the mobilization of funding for measuring development. It is expected that the application will be introduced in 2016 in select pilot countries.

21. PARIS21 is also working to deepen the use of official statistics. In order to increase the knowledge and skills needed to use statistics effectively for planning, analysis, monitoring and evaluation, PARIS21 organized several user-producer dialogues between national statistical offices and various user groups. In Benin, Cameroon, Mali and Senegal, statisticians and journalists gathered to increase dialogue between national statistical offices and the media. In addition, a data visualization workshop was held in Malawi, which involved journalists, representatives from national statistical systems line ministries and statisticians from national statistical offices. The workshop aimed at promoting statistical literacy, ensuring that statistical materials target the right audience and that citizens better understand statistical information. Regional data visualization trainings were also undertaken in the Pacific and in Eastern Europe. The trainings allowed participants to share national experiences and practices in data communication and visualization, gain expertise in the open-source statistical software package “R” for data visualization and produce interactive graphs for the office websites.

22. To facilitate greater awareness and the use of microdata by all data users, the Accelerated Data Program organized a number of workshops on microdata outreach. The workshops bring users and producers of survey microdata together and are modified according to the target group participating. They comprise a range of statistical literacy events. Audiences included university students and researchers at academic institutions, journalists and policymakers from a wide range of sectors. The workshops provided an opportunity to show what microdata is available and how microdata can help policymaking in a broad range of sectors. As an extension of the workshop process, the Accelerated Data Program continued to provide support to countries, including Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam, to bring together different stakeholders to evaluate data availability and methodologies for computing monitoring indicators.

23. Another equally important component is to ensure that sufficient resources are being directed to statistical systems. The PARIS21 annual Partner Reporting on Support to Statistics exercise provides a snapshot of ongoing support to statistical development across the globe and presents an overview of major trends. Findings from the latest 2015 round of the exercise include: (a) support to statistics reached \$448 million in 2013, which is \$120 million less than in 2011 and 2012, respectively; (b) the share of official development assistance dedicated to statistics fell to 0.24 per cent in 2013, from about 0.33 per cent in 2011 and 2012; and (c) a large share of global support for statistics continues to come from a very small number of providers.

24. Based on the Partner Reporting on Support to Statistics exercise conducted at the international level, PARIS21 continued to undertake the Country Reporting on Support to Statistics exercise. The country-level exercise gathers all data relating to the funding of the national statistical systems, whether derived from domestic resources or external aid. It was implemented in three countries in 2015 (Malawi, Philippines and Viet Nam). In addition, PARIS21 facilitated a high-level advocacy

event during the AFRISTAT members' ministers of finance/planning meeting, which focused on the need to fund statistical development in the post-2015 context.

III. Leveraging the strength of collective actions

25. Delivering on the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require collective action. The data agenda is no exception. In addition to strengthening existing partnerships, greater collaboration will be needed, both internationally and at the regional and country levels. The data needs of developing countries must be championed, and all actors will need to remain as engaged as possible to ensure that these remain in the forefront. Existing and new partnerships will have to spread their net far beyond the traditional statistical community. Luckily, a broad range of new development players see official statistics as essential to delivering on the 2030 Agenda. These new actors bring fresh ideas, experiences and technologies that can foster collaborations and approaches to improving statistics. Various initiatives are already in place that can support these new actors in the data ecosystem.

26. One initiative helping to support these new actors is the PARIS21 project on informing a data revolution, which was completed in the last quarter of 2015. The road map, launched at the Cartagena Data Festival held from 20 to 22 April 2015, sets out a broad programme of actions around four pillars (capacity and resources; principles and standards; technology, innovation and analysis; governance and leadership) to help developing countries and development actors to meet the challenges and the data needs related to the Sustainable Development Goals. It is based on the information collected and analysed as part of the project and is designed to help countries overcome problems in improving the availability and use of data for their development.

27. In addition, the newly established Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, which was launched in September 2015, brings together over 70 champions that represent the full range of data producers and users critical to harnessing the data revolution for sustainable development. It is led by Governments, companies, civil society organizations, international organizations and statistical and data communities from around the world. The Partnership aims to sustain political commitment, align strategic priorities and norms, strengthen capacities, foster innovation and build trust in the current data ecosystem. This international multi-stakeholder initiative will attempt to leverage and amplify current efforts that have the potential to harness the data revolution by encouraging knowledge-sharing and learning, mobilizing new and making better use of existing resources, and facilitating collaborations to address barriers to producing, accessing and using data towards sustainable development.

28. There is still much to do on the data agenda. However, a strong foundation is being built, there is a broader set of partners ready to help with new ideas and approaches and politicians are backing efforts to make this ambitious agenda a success.