Economic and Social Council

Statistical Commission
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Item 3 (n) of the provisional agenda*
Items for discussion and decision: international migration statistics

International migration statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

    The present report is submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices. It sets forth recent work undertaken by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics in 2018 to fulfil the requests of the Statistical Commission set out in its decision 49/101. In particular, the report covers: (a) the central role given to data and to the Statistical Commission in the recently adopted Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; and (b) the work of the Statistics Division and the Expert Group on methodological developments, including on the revision of the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*. Furthermore, the report describes other ongoing work, including capacity-building activities, as well as future priorities for the Statistics Division and the Expert Group to strengthen international migration statistics.

    Points for discussion by the Commission include: (a) approving the proposed terms of reference of the Expert Group; (b) expressing its views on and adopting the national migration data infrastructure as a comprehensive framework for use in developing capacity with respect to international migration statistics; and (c) commenting and providing guidance on the ongoing work and future priorities in the area of migration statistics.

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* E/CN.3/2019/1.

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I. Introduction

1.   More people than ever live in a different country from the one in which they were born. Furthermore, new migration patterns are appearing: modern communication technologies and the increased convenience of travel have made temporary and circular migration easier than ever; free movements within a region raise new measurement challenges even for countries with relatively developed statistical systems. From the perspective of countries of origin, building on the benefit of emigration is of paramount importance; in addition to better integration of immigrants in countries of destination, large numbers of returned migrants also raise the question of how they are to be reintegrated in their countries of origin.

2.   Increases in migration and changing patterns of migration have raised the demand to capture such phenomena with accurate and timely data. Calls for better data were made by Member States through global initiatives such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1), the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (Assembly resolution 71/1), the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (Assembly resolution 73/195) and a global compact on refugees, pointing to the need to strengthen national capacities to collect and use migration statistics to develop evidence-based migration policies and to guide the integration of migration into national development planning.

3.   Despite the unprecedented needs, statistics on international migration remain sparse. Basic statistics on migrant stocks[1] and flows are lacking in many countries. For instance, while population censuses are being conducted in most countries and information on international migration is being collected,[2] statistics on migrant stocks since 2005 are only available for 125 countries. Migrant stock data disaggregated by additional characteristics such as sex, age, country of origin and education are available in even fewer countries.[3] Data on migration flows are even scarcer.[4] Data on the size of emigration flows and stocks and their characteristics, which are of particular relevance to countries of origin, are almost non-existent. As part of data collection[5] from national statistics offices for the Demographic Yearbook of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, only 49 countries and areas have provided data on migration flows at least once since 2011 for at least one migration table. In brief, the number of countries and areas which can provide the Statistics Division with flow statistics on international migration remains low. Additional statistics that capture the complexity of migration

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[1] According to the current internationally agreed definition of a migrant, the "migrant stocks" are, in fact, composed of all persons who have experienced migration (i.e., a change of their country of usual residence), and it should more properly be referred to as the "number of persons who have ever resided abroad". However, its measure is often approximated by using proxy variables such as country of birth and/or citizenship. Given that "migrant stocks" is a widespread label, it is thus used in assessing data availability.

[2] Of the 183 countries or areas for which national questionnaires for the 2010 census round (2005–2014) are available, 178 included at least one question on international migration.

[3] Data on immigrants stocks, as measured by the number of foreign-born or the foreign population in a country, for the period 2005–2014 are available for only 125 of the 178 countries or areas that collected migration information in population censuses. When data are further disaggregated by country of birth or citizenship, the number of countries or areas with available data is 100. When data are disaggregated by educational attainment of migrants, only 51 countries or areas have such data. Note that some countries or areas might still have data available but have not yet reported it to the United Nations.

[4] Note that some countries or areas might still have data available but have not yet reported it to the United Nations. Data for European countries are compiled by Eurostat and are not included in the analysis.

[5] Annual questionnaires sent to countries are available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybquest.htm.

rarely exist; for example, there is no international definition of circular or temporary migration, and internationally comparable statistics are not available. [6] Measuring movements within a region that has implemented free movement policies is particularly challenging. Moreover, other than the overall estimate of remittances flows to countries, dimensions of the economic and social impact and contribution of migrants are not consistently measured.

4. Producing disaggregated data, including by sex, age and other key characteristics of migrants, to respond to the requirement in the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind, raises additional methodological challenges, including in terms of capturing smaller population groups as well as in adopting methods that properly reflect issues pertaining to those subpopulation groups.

5. Therefore, the challenges in producing statistics that reflect the complexity of migration and that inform national policies are multifaceted. They range from insufficient international standards and methodologies, a lack of harmonization, compilation and dissemination of statistics that have already been collected, a lack of coordination and integration of migration statistics generated from multiple sources within a country, as well as a lack of systematic analysis and research that help in understanding the determinants and impact of migration in countries of origin, transit and destination.

6. While non-traditional (big data) sources such as mobile phones records, earth observations and social media are proposed as potential sources of migration data, there has been no concrete case study to shed light on how they can be used to improve the availability of migration statistics for policymaking.

7. The present report details recent work undertaken by the Statistics Division and the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics in 2018 to improve migration statistics, in the context of: (a) the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; and (b) methodological developments and capacity-building initiatives, including the revision of the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*.[7] Furthermore, the report describes the ongoing work and future priorities for the Statistics Division and the Expert Group to strengthen international migration statistics.

II. United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics

8. The United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics is a group of subject matter experts from national statistical offices and migration-relevant line ministries of countries and from international, regional and subregional organizations, as well as other independent experts. The Expert Group first met in June 2017 and discussed data needs and methodological issues related to statistics on international migration in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The main focus of that meeting was to discuss and agree on the definition of migratory status for Sustainable Development Goal data disaggregation and to identify a list of relevant Goal indicators to be disaggregated by migratory status for global monitoring.[8]

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[6] A regional statistical definition of circular migration has been developed by the Economic Commission for Europe (see https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=44717) and relevant data are currently being collected by Eurostat.

[7] Available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesm/seriesm_58rev1e.pdf.

[8] Documents of the 2017 meeting of the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics are available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/meetings/2017/new-york--egm-migration-data.

9. The work of the Expert Group was welcomed by the Statistical Commission in its decision 49/101, in which the Commission also recommended that the Group continue its work in improving statistics on international migration by advancing methodologies to measure the phenomenon, including through the revision of the 1998 *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration* (see E/2018/24-E/CN.3/2018/37).

10. As of November 2018, the Expert Group consisted of representatives from 20 countries, 18 international/regional organizations, offices or initiatives and 4 independent experts. The main activities of the Group include: (a) providing guidance and technical support in advancing methodologies related to migration statistics, including the revision of the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*; (b) supporting activities that address data gaps and national needs for capacity development on migration statistics; and (c) facilitating coordination among regional and international agencies on the development of methods and capacity-building activities to avoid the duplication of efforts and to ensure that efforts at the national level are aligned.

11. The Expert Group will work through face-to-face and virtual meetings. The work carried out by the Group since July 2017 is described in the following sections, whenever applicable. The terms of reference for the Group have also been included in the present report (see annex I).

III. Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: implications for migration statistics

12. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was recently adopted in Marrakech, Morocco, in December 2018. The Global Compact is the first-ever global agreement under the auspices of the United Nations on a common approach to international migration in all its dimensions and represents a historic opportunity to improve international cooperation on migration and to strengthen the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development. The Global Compact sets out 23 objectives, the first among which is dedicated to migration statistics and calls for the collection and utilization of accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies.

13. Following the request of the Statistical Commission in its decision 49/101, the Bureau of the Statistical Commission closely followed the negotiations of the Global Compact from April to July 2018 and provided guidance to the negotiations on issues related to statistics, in particular under objective 1.

14. Objective 1 of the Global Compact gives an important role to the Statistical Commission, in terms of harmonizing methodologies and in regularly reviewing a global programme (to be developed) to strengthen national capacities to collect, analyse and disseminate migration data. The Global Compact also provides a comprehensive policy framework to help countries and the global statistical community to better understand data needs and the related data gaps for evidence-based policymaking.

IV. Methodological developments relating to migration statistics

A. Sustainable Development Goal indicators relevant to migrants and migration

15.   At the first meeting of the Expert Group, in June 2017, members agreed on the definition of migratory status for Sustainable Development Goal data disaggregation at the global level and on the list of Goal indicators for data disaggregation by migratory status for global monitoring.[9] The Expert Group further recommended that a technical report on measuring migration-relevant Goal indicators be prepared to provide guidance on how to produce and use data on those Goal indicators. The technical report would also cover definitions and metadata and identify currently available and potentially usable data for indicators to be disaggregated by migratory status. A draft version of the technical report was prepared by the Statistics Division and was circulated for consultation with relevant custodian agencies of Goal indicators and members of the Group. In addition, a mapping exercise was recently launched as part of the European Commission's MEDSTAT IV project to assess how many of the Goal indicators identified by the Group could be compiled on the basis of the data available in the project countries. The results of that exercise will be included in the technical report.

16.   Feedback received on the draft technical report points to the need for further development of methodologies in two specific areas in order to produce data disaggregated by migratory status. The first focuses on special sampling strategies to ensure the representativeness of migrants covered in multi-purpose household surveys. The second addresses the need to integrate household survey data with data collected through administrative sources or from population censuses. These two streams of methodological work will be undertaken by the Statistics Division and partners, under the guidance of the Expert Group. Feedback also pointed to the need to identify a list of gender-responsive and child-sensitive indicators that are relevant for migration and migrants.

17.   Finally, guidance provided in the draft technical report will also be tested in upcoming capacity-building activities in countries. Once finalized, the technical report will be shared with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to ensure its wide dissemination and use for Goal data disaggregation by migratory status.

B. Guidance note on a set of standard questions on international migration for population censuses and sample surveys

18.   In an effort to improve the quality and comparability of international migration statistics collected through national population censuses and sample surveys, a guidance note was prepared by the Statistics Division, with feedback from the Expert Group, on a set of standard questions on international migration. The guidance note was prepared on the basis of a comprehensive review of national census questionnaires for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses.[10] However, much of its content also applies to household surveys.

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[9] The recommendations of the 2017 meeting of the Expert Group are available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/meetings/2017/new-york--egm-migration-data/EGM%20Recommendations_FINAL.pdf.

[10] See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/census/document-resources/.

19. The guidance note covers two sets of questions. The first set relates to questions that distinguish migrants from non-migrants, including questions on country of birth, country of citizenship, country of birth of parents, household members who have ever resided abroad and household members currently residing abroad. The second set of questions seeks information about key characteristics of migrants. Those questions focus on the year or period of arrival in the country, the acquisition of citizenship and the reason for migration.

20. The sets of questions were also reviewed and considered for use in future surveys by national and international experts working under the regional programme on household international migration surveys in the Mediterranean countries, which is being implemented under the guidance of the European Commission and other international organizations.[11] Additional testing of the questions will potentially be carried out by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in its multiple indicator cluster surveys at the beginning of 2019.

21. Once the guideline note is finalized on the basis of results from further testing and feedbacks from countries, the Statistics Division will work with relevant partners, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF, to distribute it widely for use in countries.

C. Revision of the Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration

22. The revision of the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration* is underway. A number of consultative meetings were organized with members of the Expert Group and additional countries in Asia and Europe. Those meetings aimed to solicit feedback from countries on their experiences with the *Recommendations* and sought suggestions for their revision. Major issues being discussed include: (a) the trade-off between being a conceptual versus a practical publication; (b) the need to build stronger links with data needs for policymaking and to provide guidance on data analysis and data use; (c) revisiting the concept and definition of an international migrant; (d) covering new migration patterns and new data sources; and (e) incorporating relevant frameworks, such as the *International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics*[12] and the new guidelines of the International Labour Organization concerning statistics on international labour migration,[13] while ensuring harmonization across them.

23. Further consultations with countries in other regions will be carried out subsequently. A draft annotated outline is available as a background document. The revision will be carried out by the Statistics Division and the Expert Group. The first draft of the revised *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration* is expected to be available in 2021 for global consultation.

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[11] In collaboration with the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the World Bank.

[12] Available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-GQ-18-004.

[13] Available at https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_648922/lang--en/index.htm.

V. Capacity-building activities

A. National migration data infrastructure: a comprehensive framework for capacity development on international migration statistics

24.   In response to the mandate given by the Statistical Commission to its Bureau and to the Statistics Division to support the negotiation of the Global Compact, the Division, under the guidance of the Bureau, developed a comprehensive framework for capacity development on international migration statistics, on the basis of a proposed national migration data infrastructure (see annex II).[14] A national migration data infrastructure is a platform that brings together key stakeholders in a given country, including the main users of migration data, such as policymakers, the private sector, research and training institutions, civil society and data producers from the national statistical office and the statistical units of other relevant ministries.

25.   In accordance with the country-specific situation, the national migration data infrastructure should be led by an interagency coordination body that would coordinate efforts among all entities within the infrastructure.[15] The data infrastructure would start with an assessment of data needs for national migration policy and end with the proper dissemination and use of data for policy purposes. Guided by national migration data policy and the open data principle, the data infrastructure should have an agreed architecture for interrelated databases for migration data that could be used by policymakers, databases that would be robust, consistent, of high quality and interoperable. This network of databases would form the core of data support to drive policymaking on migration.

B. Initial assessment of national needs for capacity-building

26.   As a first step to help to better understand national needs to strengthen statistics on international migration, the Statistics Division conducted a survey among the 20 countries that are members of the Expert Group on their needs for capacity-building.[16]

27.   Analysis of the responses from 12 countries showed that the most challenging areas requiring international support are: (a) the production of data on drivers and the impact of migration; (b) the use of administrative records for migration data, especially border records and visas issuance records; (c) the integration of data sources; and (d) the use of migration data to inform policies. In terms of population censuses, while most countries have already included or are planning to include core migration topics such as country of birth, citizenship and duration of stay in their 2020 round of censuses, data analysis and dissemination will be more challenging. Also, asking a question regarding the reason for migration has not been very common

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[14] To be made available as a background document entitled "National migration data infrastructure – a comprehensive framework for capacity development on international migration statistics".

[15] Activities to be covered by the interagency coordination body may include: (a) assessing gaps in migration data with a view to effective policymaking; (b) facilitating the integration of migration into other development policy areas; (c) enhancing data flows within the national statistical system, including by establishing the legal framework necessary for data sharing; (d) improving synergy with respect to concepts, definitions and data collection and dissemination methods; and (e) coordinating methodological developments in producing timely, reliable and policy-relevant statistics on international migration.

[16] The survey questionnaire will be made available as a background document entitled "Needs assessment among national statistical offices and line ministries working with migration data". The survey is in line with data requirements covered by objective 1 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (General Assembly resolution 73/195).

in countries. The use of new data sources, including big data, was also indicated as challenging for countries and warranting international assistance. Other areas that have been found to be less challenging but still requiring international attention include applying internationally agreed definitions and standards on migration statistics, collecting migration data through surveys, producing migration profiles and elaborating and implementing a comprehensive national strategy for improving migration data in certain countries.

28.   The assessment provides an initial overview of the needs of Expert Group member countries in terms of international support to strengthen their migration statistics systems. More in-depth assessments will be carried out using a toolkit developed by the Statistics Division, in consultation with the Expert Group.[17] The toolkit consists of a set of questions that were developed on the basis of the national migration data infrastructure described in section V.A above.

C.   Ongoing capacity-building activities to improve migration statistics

29.   In 2018, the Statistics Division launched a project, under the eleventh tranche of the Development Account, on the collection and use of international migration data in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The four-year project is being led by the Statistics Division, in collaboration with the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and IOM. The guidelines on the production of migration-relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators, which were requested by the Expert Group, will be one of the key outputs of the project. The guidelines will be used in capacity-building activities for countries in Asia and Latin America, together with other United Nations publications related to migration statistics,[18] as well as the toolkit for capacity-building described in paragraph 28 above. The Development Account project also covers capacity-building activities to help countries to report data for Goal indicator 16.2.2 on the total number of victims of trafficking in persons (see General Assembly resolution 71/313, annex).

30.   Capacity-building activities are also being carried out by other partner entities. For example, since 1996, the European Commission's MEDSTAT programme has been working with Mediterranean countries to improve migration data collection, including by supporting and implementing specialized household international migration surveys in Mediterranean countries. In Europe, the Economic Commission for Europe and Eurostat regularly organize work sessions on migration statistics to foster advances in this domain and facilitate the exchange of best practices. The Economic Commission for Europe has been holding annual capacity-building workshops for the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia to support the use of methodological guidance and to facilitate communication among countries, as well as among producers and users of migration statistics. Since 2015, ILO has been organizing regular migration workshops on labour migration statistics for 22 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, in collaboration with Statistics Korea. ILO

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[17] To be made available as a background document entitled "The toolkit to assess national migration data capacity".

[18] Including *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration: Revision 1* (available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesm/seriesm_58rev1e.pdf); "Principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses: Revision 3" (available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/NewYork/2014/P&R_Revision3.pdf); and the "Handbook on measuring international migration through population censuses" (available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/48th-session/documents/BG-4a-Migration-Handbook-E.pdf).

will also assist countries in implementing the revised draft guidelines concerning statistics on international labour migration,[19] which were endorsed by the twentieth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, in October 2018. The Global Migration Data Analysis Centre of IOM supports Governments in their efforts to improve migration data collection, analysis, sharing and use for policymaking at the national and regional levels, in collaboration with partners including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ILO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the African Union. With regard to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre also prepared guidelines for the harmonization of migration data management in the ECOWAS region, which were used to facilitate a regional training of trainers and training sessions at the national level in ECOWAS member States in 2017.

31.   In addition, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will be working with partners to assist countries in the implementation of the *International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics*, endorsed in 2018 by the Statistical Commission pursuant to its decision 49/115. Statistics Sweden, in collaboration with the African Union, will start implementing a project to strengthen national capacity in sub-Saharan Africa over the period 2019–2021. The project will take a regional approach to developing regionally-adapted guidelines, establishing national and regional networks and improving the identification and flow of migration data from countries. As part of its support for the 2020 census round, UNFPA, in collaboration with the Statistics Division and IOM, will provide support to ensure the timely processing, analysis and dissemination of migration-related census results, disaggregated and tabulated in accordance with international standards.

32.   Under the guidance of the Expert Group, the Statistics Division is currently developing a migration statistics portal to facilitate the storing and sharing of methodologies, data and metadata, as well as technical and other materials for capacity-building activities on migration data. Currently, the portal disseminates information on how national censuses collect information on international migration, on the basis of a review of national censuses carried out in the 2010 round and 2020 rounds.[20]

VI.   International Forum on Migration Statistics

33.   The Statistics Division, in collaboration with OECD, IOM and the Population Division, organized the first International Forum on Migration Statistics,[21] which was held in Paris on 15 and 16 January 2018. Mobilizing expertise from a wide range of disciplines, such as political science, economics, demography, development, geospatial science, sociology, statistics and information technology, the Forum included 5 plenary sessions with high-level speakers and 39 parallel sessions with over 200 presentations.

34.   Discussion at the Forum pointed to the importance of disaggregated migration data to monitor progress towards sustainable development and identified significant migration data gaps. Forum participants further acknowledged the leading role of national statistical offices in improving evidence and increasing data on migration, including by taking advantage of big data and other innovative approaches, while stressing the need to strengthen national statistical capacity as well as cooperation among international agencies. Finally, the participants also emphasized that effective

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[19] Available at https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_648922/lang--en/index.htm.

[20] See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/sconcerns/migration/index.cshtml.

[21] See http://www.oecd.org/migration/forum-migration-statistics/.

communication of data was necessary to overcome public misperceptions of migration and migrants.

35. The first International Forum on Migration Statistics succeeded in bringing together policymakers, official statisticians and experts from the private sector, civil society and funding agencies to share and discuss data needs for policymaking, issues in measuring migration and innovative methods, as well as to foster collaboration among all partners. The Forum was also instrumental in identifying areas where additional efforts were needed, including in terms of methodological developments, sharing good practices and capacity-building. The next International Forum on Migration Statistics will be held either in 2019 or 2020.

VII. Programme of work of the Statistics Division and the Expert Group

36. It is proposed that the Statistics Division and the Expert Group carry out the following activities in the period 2019–2020:

(a) Finalize the technical report on measuring migration-relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators;

(b) Finalize the guidance note on a set of standard questions on international migration for population censuses and surveys, after adapting and testing the questions in national censuses and surveys, and distribute the guidance note widely;

(c) Continue the work on other methodological developments, including the revision of the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*;

(d) Continue to develop technical materials and identify good practices related to migration statistics;

(e) Organize the second International Forum on Migration Statistics;

(f) Develop a global programme to strengthen national capacity on migration statistics, on the basis of the national migration data infrastructure outlined above, taking into consideration existing regional and subregional mechanisms, and provide estimates of the resources needed for the implementation of all its components.

VIII. Points for discussion and decision

37. **The Statistical Commission is invited to:**

(a) **Take note of the contribution of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division to the negotiations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration;**

(b) **Take note of the work carried out by the Statistics Division and the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics on the improvement of migration statistics;**

(c) **Express its views and adopt the terms of reference for the Expert Group;**

(d) **Express its views and adopt the national migration data infrastructure, which will be used as a comprehensive framework for capacity development on international migration statistics;**

(e) **Express its views and adopt the programme of work of the Statistics Division and the Expert Group, as set out in paragraph 36 above.**

Annex I

United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics

Terms of Reference
(December 2018)

A. Background

1. The United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics is a group of subject matter experts from national statistical offices, international, regional and subregional organizations, migration-relevant line ministries of countries, and other experts in the area. The Group first met in June 2017 in New York and discussed data needs and methodological issues relating to statistics on international migration, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[1]

2. In its decision 49/101, the Statistical Commission welcomed the work of the Expert Group (see E/2018/24-E/CN.3/2018/37). The Commission also recommended that the Expert Group continue its work on improving statistics on international migration through advancing methodologies to measure the phenomenon, including by revising the 1998 *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*.[2] The Commission also requested the Expert Group to undertake additional activities, including assessing data gaps and national needs for capacity development and ensuring proper coordination among international initiatives and programmes that support national statistical systems, with a view to producing and disseminating high-quality and fit-for-purpose statistics on international migration.

B. Objectives and tasks

3. The overall objective of the Expert Group is to improve statistics on international migration for effective policymaking through: (a) advancing methodologies on collecting, compiling and using statistics relevant to migration; (b) implementing activities that address data gaps and national needs for capacity development; and (c) enhancing the coordination of international and regional initiatives among countries and within countries.

4. The work of the Expert Group should respond to and be aligned with relevant international development and protection frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and a global compact on refugees.

5. More specifically, the Expert Group will:

(a) Advance methodologies to measure the migration phenomenon for data-driven policymaking and for monitoring progress towards the 2030 Agenda, including through the revision of the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*;

(b) Develop a global programme, and provide estimates of the resources needed in that regard, to strengthen national capacity on migration statistics that includes: (i) developing technical materials such as needs-assessment tools;

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[1] The main focus of the meeting was to discuss and agree on the definition of migratory status and to identify a list of relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators to be disaggregated by migratory status for global monitoring. For further information, please see the documents of the 2017 meeting of the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics, which are available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/meetings/2017/new-york--egm-migration-data.

[2] Available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesm/seriesm_58rev1e.pdf.

(ii) providing guidance and technical support to countries in identifying and addressing data gaps and national needs; and (iii) making recommendations to be considered by the Statistical Commission;

(c)   Facilitate coordination among regional and international agencies on the development of methods, as well as capacity-building activities, to avoid the duplication of efforts, optimize the use of resources and ensure that activities are consistent and aligned with national needs. The Expert Group will also collaborate with other relevant United Nations mechanisms, such as the International Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, the United Nations Network on Migration and other regional migration statistics groups, on issues related to statistics on international migration.

C. Membership

6.   Members should be senior representatives from countries, regional agencies and academic institutions. Countries should be represented by both national statistical offices and relevant line ministries. Initial agencies, countries and other members have been selected on the basis of their mandates and commitment to the advancement of statistics on international migration. Additional member countries were added following recommendations from regional commissions to also include major migrant-sending countries.

7.   Members will be part of the Expert Group for an initial period of two years, after which a rotation will be proposed by the Co-Chairs of the Group, with a view to ensuring equitable regional representation, including members of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The rotation will be implemented in a way that ensures institutional knowledge is preserved and that the work of the Group can continue smoothly. Members are expected to be active in the deliberations and activities of the Group.

8.   The Expert Group may invite other agencies, countries or individuals as resource persons or observers, if needed. The membership may be increased or decreased as the exigencies of the work require and on the basis of available resources.

9.   The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat serves as the secretariat of the Expert Group. The Division, in close consultation with the Co-Chairs, proposes the programme of work for the Group, coordinates the overall work of the Group, organizes regular meetings, prepares and maintains records of discussions and agreements and reports to the Statistical Commission. In addition, the Division will lead and contribute to various areas of work on methodological development and capacity-building.

10.   The Co-Chair positions will rotate on a 2-year cycle. One Co-Chair is selected from international entities and the other from representatives of national statistical offices. The Expert Group will elect the Co-Chairs by majority vote from among the volunteers expressing an interest in the positions. The two Co-Chairs will work closely with the Statistics Division on strategic planning in relation to the programme of work of the Expert Group and oversee the work of the task forces. They will also report to the Group on work progress, problems identified, solutions recommended and decisions to be made.

D. Organization of work

11.   The Expert Group will meet face-to-face at least once a year, supplemented with additional virtual meetings as necessary. Participation in the face-to-face meetings is self-funded. A limited number of developing countries that are members of the Expert Group may receive funding, when available, to support their participation in the meetings.

12.   The Expert Group will establish task forces on specific topics, when needed. The task forces will have clear terms of reference, with clear time frames for the completion of their work, and will report back to the Expert Group.

E. Expected duration

13.   The work of the Expert Group will be ongoing. The terms of reference will be reviewed when needed and as requested by the Statistical Commission.

Current members of the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics (December 2018)

Countries (20)

Canada

Ecuador

Egypt

Georgia

Ghana

Indonesia

Italy

Jamaica

Jordan

Mexico

Morocco

Norway

Republic of Moldova

Russian Federation

South Africa

Sri Lanka

Switzerland

Thailand

Uganda

United States of America

Organizations, offices and initiatives (13)

ECOWAS

Eurostat

Financing for Sustainable Development Office

Global Pulse

ILO

IOM

OECD

Population Division

UNESCO (Institute for Statistics)

UNFPA

UNHCR

UNICEF

UNODC

Regional commissions (5)

ECA

ECE

ECLAC

ESCAP

ESCWA

Independent experts (4)

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Statistics Division

Abbreviations: ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECE, Economic Commission for Europe; ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; ECOWAS, Economic Community of West African States; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; ILO, International Labour Organization; IOM, International Organization for Migration; OECD, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund; UNHCR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund; UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Annex II

National migration data infrastructure: a framework for capacity development

1.   The present section describes key components of a national migration data infrastructure that will be used as a framework for capacity development. A national migration data infrastructure is a platform that brings together key stakeholders in a country, including the main users of migration data, such as policymakers, the private sector, academia, civil society and data producers from the national statistical offices and the statistical units of other relevant ministries (see figure).

Figure
Comprehensive national migration data infrastructure
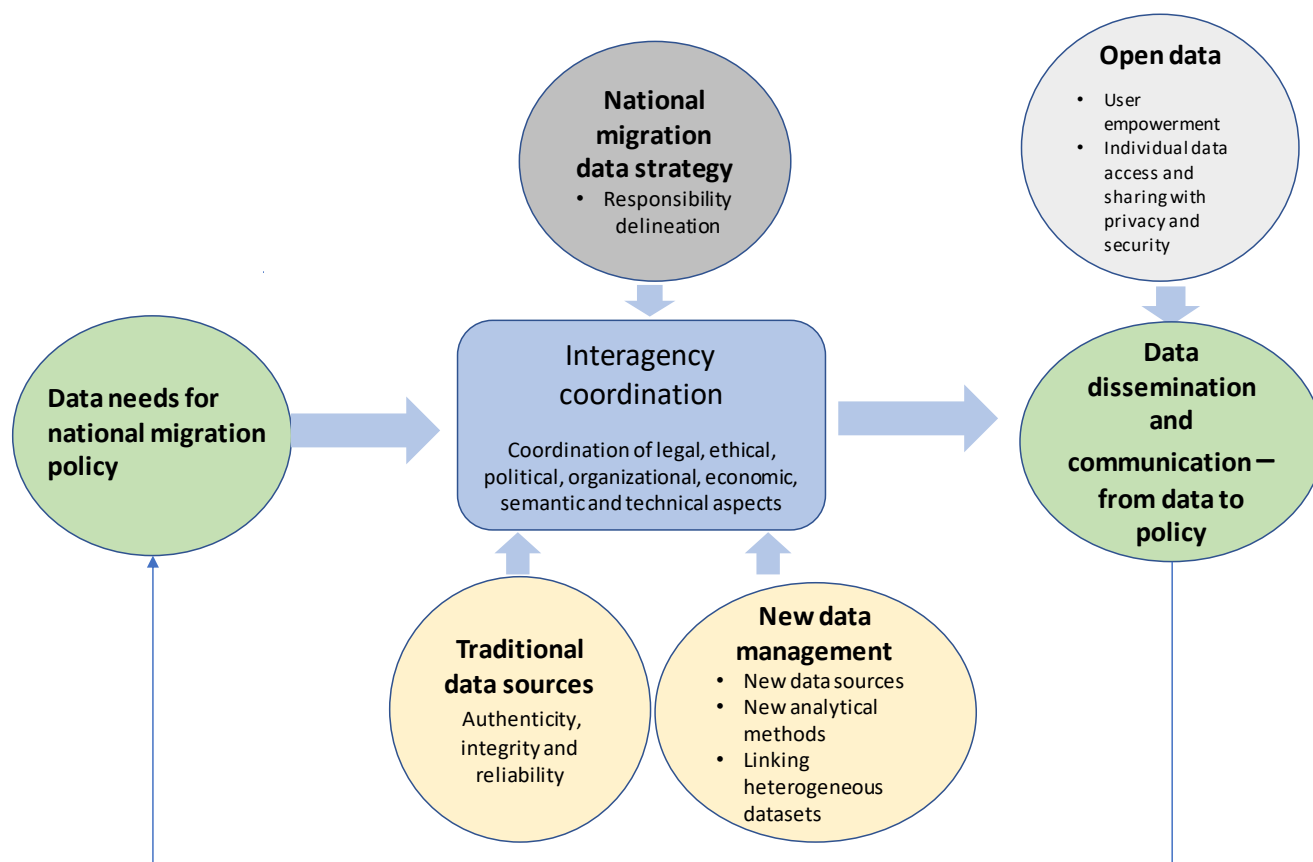
2.   In accordance with the country-specific situation, the national migration data infrastructure should be led by an interagency coordination body that would coordinate efforts among all entities within the infrastructure.[1] The data infrastructure would start with an assessment of data needs for national migration policy and end with the proper dissemination and use of data for policy purposes. Guided by national

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[1] Activities to be covered by the interagency coordination body may include: (a) assessing gaps in migration data with a view to effective policymaking; (b) facilitating the integration of migration into other development policy areas; (c) enhancing data flows within the national statistical system, including by establishing the legal framework necessary for data sharing; (d) improving synergy with respect to concepts, definitions and data collection and dissemination methods; and (e) coordinating methodological developments in producing timely, reliable and policy-relevant statistics on international migration.

migration data policy and the open data principle, the data infrastructure should have an agreed architecture for interrelated databases for migration data that could be used by policymakers, databases that would be robust, consistent, of high quality and interoperable. This network of databases would form the core of data support to drive policymaking on migration.

3. Key databases within the migration data infrastructure consists of two main types, classified by their sources: (a) traditional data sources, including censuses, surveys and administrative sources; and (b) non-traditional data sources, such as geospatial information, including satellite images, and other types of unstructured data generated from business transactions, mobile phone tracking and social media.

A. Data needs for national migration policy

4. Demands for official statistics by policymakers to support their work have been on the rise. For example, countries with a big influx of immigrants are interested in the number and characteristics of immigrants, as well as the smaller geographic units in which they reside in order to determine how well integrated migrant are into society, how migrants contribute to the national and local economy, and whether public services are prepared to accommodate the needs of immigrants. For countries with large-scale emigration, a major policy interest is in better understanding aspects of their citizens living abroad, including the total number, their characteristics and the countries to which they have moved. The data needed to answer those policy questions should be clearly articulated.

B. National migration data strategy

5. Establishing a national migration data strategy is an important step in building a migration data infrastructure. The strategy needs to elaborate on or stipulate the responsibilities of different government institutions and private sector entities in collecting and producing migration statistics. Data integration should be a core element of the national migration data strategy and the sharing of data among producers should be encouraged, or better yet, required, by statistical legislation.

C. Traditional data sources

6. Traditional data sources for international migration include population censuses, sample surveys and administrative sources. There is a need to ensure that timely and high-quality migration statistics are collected, processed and disseminated from all traditional data sources.

7. For example, key migration questions such as country of birth and country of citizenship should be asked in censuses and surveys, and the information collected should be disseminated in a timely manner and be of high quality. For in-depth analysis of the impact of migration on a society, surveys need to be planned carefully so that they ask not only the right questions but also adopt the appropriate sampling strategy.

8. Administrative data are extremely important for migration measurement. For example, border control entities either collect embarkation and disembarkation cards or have information from passport and visa scanning, ministries of labour possess data on work permits granted to foreigners, ministries of education have information on foreign students attending school in the country, and population registers or registers of foreigners maintain data on people residing in the country. Such

information cannot be readily obtained through censuses or surveys. To make migration data relevant and timely, the use of administrative data should be encouraged. This means that more information should be captured, compiled and shared within the migration data infrastructure.

D. New data management

9. Information on migration is usually captured through multiple data sources. For a comprehensive picture, it is necessary to integrate information from different data sources, including censuses, surveys and administrative data, within the country and among countries.

10. Mobile phones, Internet-based tools and platforms, such as social media and online payment services, and digital sensors and measures such as satellite imagery represent potential innovative or "new data" sources of migration data. Existing migration studies based on those new data sources attest to their potential. Bringing together private data producers, analysts, data scientists and technologists to conduct additional research and experiments in this area would be essential. Furthermore, connecting the latest research and technology with the community of official statistics is crucial to fully integrating new data into the migration data infrastructure.

11. Innovative approaches to the integration of multiple data sources should be promoted. The use of new data should be explored to enhance the availability and timeliness of migration statistics, while ensuring that privacy, ethical and human rights issues are adequately addressed and while taking the quality of data into consideration.

E. Data dissemination and communication – from data to policies

12. An important post-data production step, which is often overlooked, is to ensure that data are disseminated and well communicated to policymakers and the general public and that such data are properly used. Statistical offices need to communicate effectively to help policymakers, the media and the general public to identify, understand and make full use of trusted sources of data and statistics, in order to support the planning, implementation and monitoring of development efforts at all levels of decision-making.

13. This element is particularly important to promoting fact-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration, as stated in objective 17 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

14. Data dissemination in a country should be guided by the open data principle. That is, data that is disseminated should be of high quality, well documented, respect data privacy concerns, free, easily accessible and usable.[2] The embrace of the open data principle by national statistical offices and other government agencies will enable users to take advantage of data that are complete, timely and adhere to standards.

15. Open data are crucial to yet challenging for migration statistics. Many countries would need guidance in implementing open data principles, with respect to, inter alia: (a) establishing communications and outreach programmes to engage all stakeholders; (b) revising laws or legal frameworks to allow for provisions that are necessary to ensure that data are open and accessible, while fully respecting data

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[2] The open data principle was thus defined during an international seminar on open data for the Sustainable Development Goals, held in Seoul from 25 to 27 September 2017.

privacy concerns; and (c) developing data interoperability principles and tools, given that data interoperability is an important tool for ensuring that open data are usable (see E/CN.3/2018/6).

16.   National statistical offices have an important role to play in introducing open data principles. Their experience and technical skill in setting standards for data collection and dissemination are key in issuing guidelines on metadata, data anonymization and data privacy in the context of open data.

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