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## Statistical Commission

Fifty-first session

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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**Items for discussion and decision: coordination of  
statistical programmes**

## **Report of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System on coordination within the United Nations statistical system**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2019/210 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System. The report contains a brief history of coordination within the United Nations statistical system and a summary of the work undertaken by the Committee since its establishment by the Statistical Commission in 2014, in particular with regard to its coordination and advocacy functions. The report presents proposals on how to improve the Committee's efficacy and efficiency in those areas. The action to be taken by the Commission is set out in section VI of the report.

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\* [E/CN.3/2020/1](#).



## I. Background

1. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System was formally established by the Statistical Commission in its decision 45/112, in which it also mandated the group of the United Nations chief statisticians to follow up on the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair for improved coordination and report back to the Commission (see [E/CN.3/2014/13](#)).
2. The chief statisticians of the United Nations system, who had been meeting informally twice a year since September 2007, met officially for the first time in the new, more formal format on 10 September 2014, in conjunction with the twenty-fourth session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, held in Rome.
3. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System reported to the Commission for the first time in 2017 ([E/CN.3/2017/29](#)). In that report, the Committee informed the Commission about its main activities and outputs since its establishment. In particular, the Committee reported on its work in the area of data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the development of the Generic Statistical Quality Assurance Framework for a United Nations Agency and its work in the area of the principles governing international statistical activities, which had been brought to the attention of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.
4. The present document is the second report of the Committee to the Commission. It describes the Committee's work in the area of coordination within the United Nations system focusing on recent initiatives and improvements. The report concludes with proposals on how to further improve coordination and invites the Commission to provide guidance in this area.

## II. Membership and working methods

5. The Committee comprises the statistical services of United Nations funds and programmes, United Nations specialized agencies and the United Nations Secretariat, including the regional commissions, the mandates of which include the provision of international official statistics in the context of the principles governing international statistical activities. A full list of current members is contained in annex I to the present report.
6. The Committee formally adopted its terms of reference at its fifth session, in 2016, and can be found in annex II to the present report.
7. In addition to holding two annual sessions, the Committee works actively between sessions through task teams, following up on the decisions taken during its sessions. The task teams prepare documents on the progress made and the results of their work and report to the Committee. As the secretariat of the Committee, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat works closely with the Chair, facilitates communication among Committee members and prepares the reports on the regular sessions. Information on the work of the Committee is available on its public web page, hosted on the website of the Statistics Division.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/unsystem/>.

8. In addition to its reports to the Statistical Commission, the Committee contributes to the Commission's work through joint statements.<sup>2</sup>

9. The Committee operates in close collaboration with the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, of which all Committee members are also a member and which additionally convenes the international, regional and supranational organizations that are not part of the United Nations system, in order to address broader matters and issues regarding the entire global statistical system (see [E/CN.3/2020/6](#)).

10. According to its terms of reference, the Committee elects a Chair, who serves for a two-year period and is eligible for re-election for a second two-year term. The Chair may be the same person elected as the Co-Chair of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities representing the United Nations members of that Committee, to ensure the close coordination of the activities of the two Committees. The current Chair of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System is Angela Me, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, who was elected at the Committee's session held in Muscat in September 2017 and reconfirmed at the session held in Copenhagen in September 2019.

11. The United Nations statistical system, which can be loosely described as the set of all statistical units of the United Nations system, has grown significantly, reflecting the increasing complexity of the development phenomena with which the United Nations is concerned and demonstrating that solid and high-quality statistical information is an indispensable prerequisite for global development. The institutional complexity of the United Nations statistical system mirrors the institutional complexity of the Organization itself. Various layers can be roughly distinguished: the so-called secretariat units, including the Statistics Division, the five regional commissions, the Development Statistics and Information Branch of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Research and Trend Analysis Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Monitoring and Research Division of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) are all entities that operate under the same administrative, budgetary and programming procedures.

12. The statistical units of funds and programmes (for example, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund) have their own funding and therefore their own administrative and programming procedures.

13. Finally, the statistical units of the specialized agencies (such as the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization) are mandated by the governing bodies of each agency. The members of the specialized agencies, which decide on their budgets and programmes, are composed mostly of States, but in some cases, such as the International Labour Organization, employers' and workers' organizations are also members.

14. In the field of statistical information management, this decentralized approach has enabled the various statistical units to develop a high degree of technical specialization, thereby allowing them to serve their specific constituencies and users well. On the other hand, this decentralization has created a need for a functioning coordination mechanism, in order to ensure coherent data outputs and the effective

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<sup>2</sup> To date, the Committee has delivered joint statements on the agenda items "Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2019 and 2018) and "National quality assurance frameworks" (2019).

utilization of scarce resources. Annex III contains a summary of the historical steps that led to the creation of the two current coordinating bodies, the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System.

### **III. Coordination within the United Nations system: the work of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development since 2017**

15. The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was created pursuant to decision 46/101 of the Commission, adopted at its forty-sixth session in 2015, to promote national ownership of the post-2015 monitoring system and foster capacity-building, partnership and coordination for post-2015 monitoring. The High-level Group consists of national statistical offices, with regional and international organizations as observers, operating under the auspices of the Commission.

16. In its decision 48/117, the Commission took note of the recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, expressed in an internal audit of the statistics subprogramme conducted in 2016, that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in consultation with the Commission, should explore the possibility of designating a senior official as United Nations Chief Statistician to coordinate statistical matters across United Nations entities. The Commission agreed that this topic should be discussed further by the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

17. Following the mandate provided by decision 48/117, the High-level Group reported on this topic to the Commission in 2018 and 2019, at its forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions, through both formal documents ([E/CN.3/2018/4](#) and [E/CN.3/2019/4](#)) and background documents,<sup>3</sup> taking extensive stock of existing mechanisms, providing historical context, identifying existing challenges and suggesting possible solutions.

18. In a background document submitted to the Commission at its fiftieth session, the High-level Group identified two main goals towards a more efficient United Nations statistical system: (a) “to have higher coordination that leads to a more effective and more efficient United Nations statistical system”; and (b) “to ensure that official statistics have a stronger voice in the United Nations that leads to better advocacy”.

19. In that same background document, the High-level Group concluded that the Statistical Commission was not in a position to change structures of the United Nations. However, as the Commission was the body that advocated for and governed the United Nations statistical system, it was its duty and task to reflect on the current situation. If there were opportunities or needs that were crucial for official statistics, they needed to be discussed. Finally, official statistics were tasked, pursuant to different United Nations resolutions, with providing data and statistics for the United Nations system, as well as for regions and countries. On the basis of those reflections and the different options that were evaluated, the High-level Group put forward three

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<sup>3</sup> Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/49th-session/documents/BG-Item3a-HLG-Chief-Statistician-E.pdf>; and <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/50th-session/documents/BG-Item3a-HLG-more-efficient-UN-stat-system-E.pdf>.

main recommendations that were discussed by the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session.

20. In a background document submitted by the Committee of Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System to the Commission at its fiftieth session,<sup>4</sup> the Committee contributed to the discussion on some of the recommendations made by the High-level Group. The Committee emphasized the complexity of coordination within the United Nations system, suggested that the Commission consider a series of actions and reflected on the following topics raised by the High-level Group:

- (a) Strengthening the capacity of coordination mechanisms;
- (b) Strengthening coordination at the global, regional and national levels;
- (c) Considering the establishment of a United Nations Chief Statistician;
- (d) Strengthening the voice of the Statistical Commission across United Nations intergovernmental bodies;
- (e) Strengthening the culture of cooperation within the United Nations statistical system.

21. At its fiftieth session, the Commission, in its decision 50/103:

- “(e) Recognized the urgent need for a better coordinated and more efficient United Nations statistical system, to reduce the reporting burden and to raise the standing of official statistics within the United Nations system, and, to that end, supported the following recommendations: (i) to immediately strengthen the existing coordination mechanisms, (ii) to then take the issue of official statistics to the higher political level, including the Economic and Social Council and (iii) to ensure the active involvement of the statistical community, as presented in the background document prepared by the High-level Group, as appropriate;
- (f) Noted that before taking a clear message to the higher political level, including the Economic and Social Council, further inclusive, efficient and transparent consultations, among Member States and entities of the United Nations system and members of other international statistical systems, would be necessary;”

#### **IV. Strengthening the existing coordination mechanisms: recent work of the Committee**

22. In this section, the Committee’s work in recent years is described, with a focus on how it effectively delivers better coordination within the United Nations statistical system.

##### **A. Improving coordination in the context of data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

23. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System, like the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, receives regular briefings during its meetings on the development of and work on the indicator framework for the 2030 Agenda, in particular regarding the supporting role of international organizations to the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group. The Committee contributed

<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/50th-session/documents/BG-Item3a-CCS-UN-E.pdf>.

early on to the work on the selection of indicators for the global indicator framework by submitting a coordinated proposal to be considered by the Expert Group. That coordination effort had the advantage of reducing the overall number of proposed indicators and improving metadata documentation, which was appreciated by the members of the Expert Group. The Committee also contributed to the work of the Expert Group on suggested guidelines and criteria for data reporting and data sharing within the context of the 2030 Agenda. The work was carried out in collaboration with the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities.

24. In response to the increased demand for more up-to-date information for monitoring sustainable development, the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System has actively engaged in the topic of nowcasting with a view to providing regional and global real-time estimates and to supporting Member States with the adoption of these techniques using United Nations standards. Many United Nations statistical programmes already release estimates, forecasts and figures based on available information, including nowcasts. The publication of such timely figures has generally received a positive response, but many questions remain concerning methodologies, quality and validity of data sources, the combination of hard and soft indicators, the impact of revisions in the underlying data, dissemination strategies, potential confusion among some data users and relevance to some areas of sustainable development. In addition, agencies have explored this area of work separately until now, resulting in a lack of harmonization and missed opportunities to share experiences. The Committee is currently planning a training session for agencies that want to adopt nowcasting techniques, at which participants will discuss the current practices of Committee members in areas related to nowcasting, identify gaps where additional methodological work is needed and share successful communication strategies for these estimates.

## **B. Improving coordination through the Generic Statistical Quality Assurance Framework for a United Nations Agency**

25. In order to create a common understanding of the quality dimensions and quality assurance relevant for all United Nations entities and following a recommendation contained in the report of the Friends of Chair on the coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations system (E/CN.3/2014/13, para. 7), the Committee, with the assistance of a consultant and a task team led by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, drafted the United Nations Statistical Quality Assurance Framework. The Framework was presented to the Commission in 2017 and is available on the Committee's website.<sup>5</sup> The Framework, which is the United Nations equivalent of national statistical quality assurance frameworks, presents a generic framework that can be adapted to the specific circumstances of an individual United Nations entity.

26. Several United Nations entities have already developed and implemented their own statistical quality assurance frameworks, for example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. To facilitate the development and implementation of such frameworks by other United Nations entities, the United Nations Statistical Quality Assurance Framework includes a framework referred to as the Generic Statistical Quality Assurance Framework for a United Nations Agency. This framework is modelled on the national framework template and guidelines but

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<sup>5</sup> Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/unsystem/documents/UNSQAF-2018.pdf>.

tailored to the circumstances of United Nations entities rather than national statistical organizations.

27. Overall, the United Nations Statistical Quality Assurance Framework is aimed at promoting a statistical quality culture across the United Nations statistical system and at providing material for establishing individual such frameworks in United Nations entities.

### **C. Better coordination and improved communication within existing United Nations structures**

28. As codified in its terms of reference, the Committee enhances the visibility of and the support for regional and global statistical activities within the United Nations system by promoting, among senior United Nations management personnel, the relevance of statistics and the ethical principles related thereto. This includes the involvement of the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and, through them, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. The Committee also promotes the coordination of national statistical systems through the various constituencies at the national and global levels (see annex II, para. 13).

29. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination is the longest-standing and highest-level coordination forum of the United Nations, comprising the leadership of 31 member organizations. The underlying premise leading to the creation of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (the predecessor of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination) was that an institutional mechanism was needed to draw the disparate parts of a decentralized system of specialized bodies – each with its own constitution, mandate, governing bodies and budgets – into a cohesive and functioning whole. The call for coordination through consultation and recommendation in the Charter of the United Nations underscores the decentralized nature of the United Nations system. No central authority exists to compel organizations of the system to act in a concerted manner. Coordination and cooperation are contingent upon the willingness of system organizations to work together in pursuit of common goals.<sup>6</sup>

30. In the light of the importance of the principles governing international statistical activities,<sup>7</sup> in particular in the context of data reporting and data sharing within the context of the follow-up to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System brought the principles to the attention of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination in 2015.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See [www.unsystem.org/content/ceb](http://www.unsystem.org/content/ceb).

<sup>7</sup> The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities endorsed the principles governing international statistical activities in September 2005 and reaffirmed them in a revised preamble in March 2014. In 2016, the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities adopted the new version of the good practices. All members of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System have individually endorsed the principles governing international statistical activities and committed to their implementation. Among the initiatives undertaken to that end, members have published the principles on their websites and have promoted awareness campaigns for the staff of their respective organizations.

<sup>8</sup> For more details, see [E/CN.3/2014/13](http://E/CN.3/2014/13).

#### **D. Most recent efforts by the Committee in pursuit of “higher coordination” and a “stronger voice” for United Nations statistics**

31. To respond to the call by the High-level Group to have “higher coordination” and to ensure that “official statistics have a stronger voice in the United Nations”, the Committee has, in the course of 2019, increased its efforts to incorporate the topic of statistical coordination into the United Nations reform agenda and to raise the profile of United Nations statistics within United Nations mechanisms and institutions. Although none of the members of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System has a specific budget or human resources allocated for the work of the Committee, they have made extra efforts to overcome institutional barriers and make the Committee a forum in which the practicalities of statistical coordination can be addressed. In 2019, the Committee started to engage with the main actors in the United Nations system that can influence institutional change in the delivery of United Nations statistical assistance at all levels: national, regional and global.

32. The reform of the United Nations development system launched by the Secretary-General is at the core of the efforts to improve the coordination of United Nations support for national statistics. The reform aims at strengthening United Nations country teams, reorganizing the resident coordinator system and providing strategic direction, oversight and accountability for system-wide activities and results. Much progress has been made with regard to coordination in the domain of statistics through the establishment of global and regional coordinating mechanisms. The Committee was originally established to improve the coordination of statistics in the United Nations system at the global level. However, in the spirit and context of the United Nations reform, it has now also turned its attention to coordination at the regional level (regional meetings of the Committee could be held) and national levels (with country teams), which also requires improved coordination efforts to better serve Member States. In that context, the Committee is also increasing its outreach and coordination efforts with the Development Coordination Office to ensure that United Nations country teams understand the importance of coordinating support for national statistics, that they have the operational tools to facilitate coordination and that they can call upon the best expertise that the United Nations can offer across all its entities.

33. In addition to a vision for better coordinated statistical capacity development, the Committee worked to facilitate the modernization of official United Nations data production, analysis and dissemination for faster, more accessible, innovative and relevant monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals. The ideas put forward by the Committee included: integrating complementary data sources to create new data solutions; encouraging national statistical systems to use new data sources; ensuring that the United Nations statistical system responds to emerging policy needs; developing a “One United Nations” statistics brand; and achieving full open data by all United Nations entities.

34. Addressing the combined agenda on improving coordination and modernizing United Nations statistics requires support and a political commitment that go beyond the internal United Nations statistical community. The Committee therefore started by seeking to engage senior United Nations management with a paper describing a vision for innovative and coordinated ways to deliver capacity development in statistics and a more dynamic system to deliver what the United Nations needs in terms of statistics. The paper was very well received, and the Committee was asked to translate this vision into an operational road map to be finalized by the first quarter of 2020.



## V. Towards better coordination

35. No single action can address the complexity of coordination and the need to promote official statistics at high political levels. In order to achieve maximum results, the Statistical Commission may want to contemplate a series of actions, including those set out below.

### A. Strengthening the capacity of coordination mechanisms

36. The statistical services of the United Nations system started working together informally in 2007 within their existing resources. Convinced of the importance of effective coordination within the United Nations statistical system, members of the Committee have, since then, dedicated part of their limited resources to attend Committee meetings, to assume the functions of the Chair of the Committee, to work substantively in task teams and to provide logistical support for meetings.

37. Since the Committee was formally established in 2014, its role, responsibilities and tasks have increased substantially. This is evidenced by an increase in the number of task teams working under the Committee and the number of documents drafted and events organized in between sessions.

38. The Statistics Division, which acts as secretariat of the Committee, provides basic logistical support, which is limited to facilitating the Committee's semi-annual meetings. However, in order to effectively support the increasing role of the Committee, the secretariat requires additional resources to work between Committee sessions to support all follow-up actions, such as researching and drafting documents for the Chair and task teams, drafting joint statements, organizing events (such as the planned training session on nowcasting) and outreach activities, and to improve communication between members of the Committee throughout the year. With those additional resources, the secretariat can support the Committee in becoming more operational and effective in its efforts to coordinate United Nations statistics.

### B. Strengthening coordination on the global level

39. The Statistical Commission is the collective expression of Member States on matters related to statistics. It is the primary forum in which the statistical work of United Nations system entities is guided and coordinated. The Commission's work is supported by a number of groups, whose ultimate goal is to coordinate the work of their members. The Committee is one of those groups. In that regard, the Commission recently discussed its working methods at its forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions (see [E/CN.3/2018/20](#) and [E/CN.3/2019/22](#)), recognizing the need to streamline the current arrangements to achieve more coordinated and coherent working methods. The topic will be further discussed by the Commission at its fifty-first session (see [E/CN.3/2020/27](#)).

40. The Committee welcomes the closer engagement of the Commission in its work, for example, its consideration of regular reports from the Committee for discussion rather than for information and its resultant provision of regular guidance to inform the Committee's work.

### **C. Strengthening the voice of the Statistical Commission across United Nations intergovernmental bodies**

41. The coordination challenges faced by the United Nations statistical system are often the same as those faced by national statistical systems, where responsibility for producing official statistics is often decentralized in thematic or regional institutions. Much of the statistical work undertaken by the agencies and departments of the United Nations system is mandated by bodies with no particular focus on statistical matters and in which member States are typically represented by line ministries (working at the national or subnational levels). Advocating for stronger coordination of United Nations statistical activities in these forums would amplify the voice of the Statistical Commission and strengthen its efforts to coordinate the work of the United Nations statistical system. The strategic participation of representatives of national statistical offices and the Statistical Commission in other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council or in higher-level intergovernmental bodies (such as those governing the specialized agencies) could give those bodies greater authority on statistical matters and push individual agencies to better coordinate their statistical work with that taking place elsewhere in the United Nations system.

### **D. Strengthening the culture of cooperation within the United Nations statistical system**

42. The culture of cooperation within the United Nations statistical system could be strengthened by encouraging entities of the United Nations system to share information on their work programmes more systematically, especially at the country level, and to have joint fundraising activities.

## **VI. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission**

43. **The Commission, also taking into consideration previous reports on this issue, is invited:**

(a) **To provide general guidance on how the Committee can further strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of its coordination role in the United Nations system at the global, regional and national levels;**

(b) **To request that additional regular budget resources be allocated to the secretariat of the Committee to enable it to adequately support the Committee in fulfilling its enhanced coordination function;**

(c) **To request the Committee to provide semi-annual updates on its work to the Commission.**

## Annex I

## List of members

<i>Organization</i>	<i>United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities</i>	<i>Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System</i>
United Nations Secretariat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>b</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistics Division	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistics Division
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>b</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Population Division	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Population Division
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>c</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic Commission for Africa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic Commission for Africa
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>c</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic Commission for Europe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic Commission for Europe
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>c</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>c</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>c</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
International Labour Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (UNESCO Institute for Statistics)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (UNESCO Institute for Statistics)
International Civil Aviation Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
World Health Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Universal Postal Union	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
International Telecommunication Union	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
International Atomic Energy Agency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
World Tourism Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<i>Organization</i>	<i>United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities</i>	<i>Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System</i>
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
United Nations Development Programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
United Nations Environment Programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
United Nations Children's Fund	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
United Nations Population Fund	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>c</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>c</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
International Organization for Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	–	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
World Bank Group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	–
International Monetary Fund	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	–
World Trade Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	–
World Meteorological Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	–	–
International Maritime Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	–	–
World Intellectual Property Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	–	–

<i>Organization</i>	<i>United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities</i>	<i>Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System</i>
International Fund for Agricultural Development	☑	–	–
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	☑	–	–
World Food Programme	☑	–	–
African Development Bank	–	☑	–
Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics	–	☑	–
Asian Development Bank	–	☑	–
Bank for International Settlements	–	☑	–
Caribbean Community	–	☑	–
European Central Bank	–	☑	–
Islamic Development Bank	–	☑	–
Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States	–	☑	–
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development	–	☑	–
Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century	–	☑	–
Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf	–	☑	–
Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries	–	☑	–
Eurostat	–	☑	–
Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa	–	☑	–

<sup>a</sup> See <https://www.unsystem.org/content/member-organizations>.

<sup>b</sup> Through the delegation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which is part of the delegation of the Secretary-General.

<sup>c</sup> As part of the delegation of the Secretary-General.

## Annex II

### **Terms of reference of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System**

#### **I. Background**

1. The first meeting of United Nations entities on statistical programmes was held on 9 September 2007 in Madrid, on the margins of the tenth session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities. Since then, the group has met regularly twice a year, once in the spring on the occasion of the annual session of the Statistical Commission and once during the autumn on the occasion of the fall session of Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities.

2. The Statistical Commission considered the coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations system at its forty-third, forty-fourth and forty-fifth sessions (see decisions 43/112, 44/112 and 45/112). In its decision 45/112, the Commission endorsed the proposal that the United Nations chief statisticians hold regular meetings, and mandated the group to follow up on the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair for improved coordination and report back to the Commission.

3. In accordance with the decision of the Commission, the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System was formally established on 10 September 2014. Since then, it has held regular meetings and reported on its outcomes to the Commission. The present annex sets out the mission, key activities and working modalities of the Committee.

#### **II. Mission statement**

4. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System promotes coherent and integrated system-wide United Nations actions to support statistics at the national, regional and international levels, following the principles governing international statistical activities, adopted by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2005, and the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015. Taking into account the comparative advantages of each member, the Committee encourages coordinated efforts by United Nations agencies and programmes in strengthening national statistical capacity through the definition of common approaches and joint interventions. The Committee supports in particular the modernization of national statistical systems and the reinforcement of their capacity to respond to new data demands for underpinning evidence-based policymaking, including the monitoring of global, regional and national development goals. Recognizing that national needs and priorities should guide the United Nations system's efforts to support national statistical systems, the Committee supports the development and full implementation of international statistical standards in member States for the production of high-quality and internationally comparable data.

5. The Committee promotes the coordination of the statistical programmes of the United Nations system entities with the aim of "delivering as one", by fostering synergies, avoiding duplication and overlap, and facilitating data exchange. It promotes the adoption of common quality criteria to drive the statistical production of all agencies of the United Nations system and supports the sharing of knowledge and good practices. It also defines common United Nations positions on statistical matters, to be reported at the Statistical Commission or at other coordination bodies, such as the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities.

### III. Key activities and functions

6. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System establishes a network of statistical programmes in the United Nations system to enhance cooperation and coordination when helping Member States to improve their statistical capacity. The network also assists its members by defining solutions to common problems faced when managing or implementing regional or global statistical programmes.

7. The Committee promotes the use of harmonized international statistical standards and classifications and the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It helps to promote accountability by improving the transparency of statistical practices globally.

8. The Committee defines and promotes the implementation of a common United Nations data quality framework to ensure that all United Nations agencies apply the same high level of transparency, accuracy, timeliness and efficiency when collecting, processing and disseminating statistics. It also adopts common policies to ensure national ownership of the data disseminated by United Nations agencies while maximizing their comparability and adherence to international standards.

9. The Committee discusses ways of coordinating activities at the national level through United Nations country teams and national programmes by sharing and promoting coherence and producing joint products.

10. The Committee promotes the coordination of common capacity-building and technical assistance activities by undertaking common actions on specific topics, at the national, regional and global levels, to meet more efficiently the demand for skilled statisticians and data analysts, for both Member States and international organizations.

11. The Committee promotes coordinated data compilation and exchange to reduce the burden on reporting countries by promoting joint data collection activities and the sharing of statistics and facilitating the use of modern platforms and mechanisms to provide countries with the best solutions and access to databases.

12. The Committee provides common positions and statements on statistical matters to the Statistical Commission in order to provide Member States with a single and coherent view from the United Nations.

13. The Committee enhances the visibility of and the support for regional and global statistical activities within the United Nations system by promoting, among senior United Nations management personnel, the relevance of statistics and the ethical principles related thereto. This includes the involvement of the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and, through them, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. The Committee also promotes the coordination of national statistical systems through the various constituencies at the national and global levels.

14. The Committee discusses and contributes to the debates on international global frameworks and monitoring systems such as the Sustainable Development Goals and others in order to achieve a better division of work and ensure quality in statistical outcomes.

15. The Committee discusses emerging topics related to new technical challenges, new data sources and ways of disseminating data, and changes in United Nations donors' strategies in order to achieve better results and enhance the statistical activities carried out by the various agencies, organizations, funds and programmes.

16. The Committee promotes the cross-fertilization of innovative ideas and best practices on methodology, statistical sources and assistance to Member States. It also discusses administrative and substantive solutions to facilitate the mobility of statisticians across the United Nations system, and the implementation of joint actions in line with the rules and regulations of United Nations agencies.

## **IV. Working modalities**

### **A. Membership and level of representation**

17. The Committee comprises the statistical services of United Nations funds and programmes, specialized agencies and the Secretariat, as well as the regional economic and social commissions, the mandates of which include the provision of international official statistics in the context of the principles governing international statistical activities.

18. Prospective members should register with the secretariat.

19. Representation in meetings is expected to be at the level of director of an organization's statistical service or the equivalent.

### **B. Organization**

20. The Committee elects a Chair, who will serve for a two-year period and is eligible for re-election for a second two-year term. The Chair may be the same person elected as the Co-Chair of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities representing the United Nations members of that Committee, to ensure the close coordination of the activities of the two Committees.

21. The functions of the Chair are the following:

(a) To design the draft agenda with the support of the secretariat, on the basis of the decisions taken at the previous session and on subsequent requests by members;

(b) To chair the sessions of the Committee, including by preparing a summary of the discussion of each agenda item as a basis for the report of the session; in the absence of the Chair during a scheduled session of the Committee, the chair shall be temporarily assumed by another member;

(c) To propose draft minutes of the sessions, as prepared by the secretariat, to be approved by written procedure by all the members who attended the session;

(d) To represent the Committee in strategic meetings or discussions whenever its members consider it necessary;

(e) To invite, after consultation and in agreement with the members, observers to participate in the work of Committee.

22. The secretariat of the Committee is situated in the Statistics Division.

23. The functions of the secretariat are the following:

(a) To prepare the draft agenda in collaboration with the Chair and following consultation with members;

(b) To ensure that all documentation is made available to its members in a timely fashion;

(c) To organize the sessions of the Committee and coordinate with the agreed host of a given session;



- (d) To prepare draft minutes of each session in cooperation with the Chair, to be approved by written procedure by all the members who attended the session;
- (e) To create, host and keep up-to-date a protected website for the Committee;
- (f) To prepare the draft report to the Statistical Commission for approval by the members.

### **C. Meetings, decisions, minutes and reporting**

24. The Committee will meet twice a year. The first session will take place every spring in New York on the margins of the session of the Statistical Commission (“spring session”), and the second session will place on the margins of the autumn session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (“fall session”), at the venue chosen for that session. The exact timing and length of the sessions will be decided by the Chair, in consultation with the members, upon proposal of the secretariat. The draft agenda is prepared by the Chair, with assistance provided by the secretariat and in consultation with members, on the basis of decisions taken at the previous session and subsequent requests by members.

25. The coordination of activities between sessions, for example, through electronic discussion groups, is an important and integral part of the work of the Committee.

26. Consensus during sessions is determined by the Chair and reported in the minutes of the session. A report on decisions and actions is prepared, in a timely manner, for adoption after each session by the secretariat. The report specifies the lead agencies responsible for any action or follow-up.

27. The Committee reports at least every two years to the Statistical Commission. Such reports are drafted by the secretariat, under the guidance of the Chair, and approved by the members.

## Annex III

### History of coordination in the United Nations system

#### A. Background

1. The United Nations statistical system has a long tradition of coordination and cooperation, which are based to a large extent on a shared vision of professional ethics. The Subcommittee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination was active from 1966 to 2001 and had early on invited non-United Nations organizations such as Eurostat and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to participate regularly in its work as observers. In 2002, the Subcommittee was replaced by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities. According to its terms of reference, the Committee focuses its work on the following six main activities:

- Efficient functioning of the statistical system
- Common standards and platforms
- Development of methodologies
- Inter-institutional support
- Outreach
- Advocacy for statistics

2. The members of the Committee are international and supranational organizations whose mandates include the provision of international official statistics in the context of the principles governing international statistical activities, and which have a permanent embedded statistical service in their organization and regular contacts with countries. Of the now 45 members of the Committee, about half are part of the United Nations system, while the others represent other regional and global organizations. The Committee meets twice a year at the level of the directors of statistical offices and functions practically mainly through a number of ad hoc task teams. An annual report on its ongoing activities is made available to the Statistical Commission.

3. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, established as a global coordination mechanism to include all international organizations that are active in the field of official statistics, has served the statistical community well. However, the Committee was not necessarily the appropriate and suitable platform for the coordination by United Nations entities of their statistical programmes and outputs, which may involve discussion of United Nations-specific issues. Therefore, in 2007 the directors of statistical programmes of the United Nations system began to meet informally twice a year on the margins of the session of the Committee. During those meetings, United Nations-specific topics were addressed.

#### B. 2011–2014 review: formation of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System

4. The Statistical Commission, at its forty-second session, held from 22 to 25 February 2011, adopted decision 42/110, in which it, inter alia, urged the Statistics Division to take a central role in assisting Member States in addressing issues of data discrepancies and consistency with international organizations, paying special attention to issues of consistency of data disseminated by United Nations agencies; stressed the need in that context for an authoritative agency in the United Nations

system to coordinate statistical activities; asked relevant United Nations authorities to review the situation; and requested the Statistics Division to report to the Commission on that issue at its forty-third session (see [E/2011/24-E/CN.3/2011/37](#), decision 42/110, para. (k)).

5. That decision was adopted in the context of discussions at the Statistical Commission held in response to concerns raised by Member States regarding the statistical content of the 2010 *Human Development Report* prepared by the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme.

6. Following the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations ([E/CN.3/2012/15](#)), which provided the background regarding the establishment and roles of the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division and described the status of statistical coordination, a Friends of the Chair group was formed to give further consideration to the issues and propose recommendations for consideration by the Commission.

7. The Friends of the Chair group worked for two years, presenting an interim report to the Commission in 2013 ([E/CN.3/2013/13](#)) and its final findings in 2014 ([E/CN.3/2014/13](#)). It is worth mentioning that the group included four international organizations representing the four broad categories of the United Nations institutions, namely, secretariat units, including regional commissions (the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia), specialized agencies (the International Labour Organization) and funds and programmes (the United Nations Children's Fund) as full members – a status that is traditionally reserved for Member States only. According to the reports the participation of representatives of Member States and United Nations organizations was definitely considered crucial, as they contributed to a better understanding of the rules and legal aspects ([E/CN.3/2013/13](#), para. 4).

8. The work of the Friends of the Chair group culminated in its final report to the Commission in 2014 ([E/CN.3/2014/13](#)), in which the group took stock of various aspects of coordination, such as (a) data collection and dissemination and data quality; (b) the development and implementation of statistical standards; and (c) organizational arrangements. In particular, the group observed that:

“The United Nations statistical system consists of so-called secretariat units, funds and programmes and specialized agencies.<sup>9</sup> In essence, all statistical units in United Nations entities operate in an independent, decentralized manner, with their own mandates and constituencies and varying degree of programmatic supervision by member States. Against this organizational background, it would be difficult and time consuming to pursue a legal or institutional approach, adjusting or amending mandates, with coordination being made a requirement. Hence, based on recognition of the fact that it is impractical to ‘enforce’ collaboration institutionally, effective cooperation in statistical programmes must continue to be built practically on goodwill.” ([E/CN.3/2014/13](#), para. 10).

<sup>9</sup> Statistical units and programmes within the United Nations system, the so-called secretariat units, include the Statistics Division, the five regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). Funds and programmes include, for example, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund. Specialized agencies include the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

9. On the basis of its observations, the group made a range of proposals for immediate and mid-term action as well as for future consideration (*ibid.*, paras. 20–23), the most prominent of which was that:

“The meeting of the United Nations Chief Statisticians, as constituting the group responsible for the statistical coordination of the statistical programmes of United Nations entities, should be further strengthened and developed. It is recommended that this group be given a mandate to keep the Statistical Commission regularly informed on the group’s work and progress in improving coordination within the United Nations statistical system.” (*ibid.*, para. 20)

10. On the basis of the work of the Friends of the Chair group, in its decision 45/112, the Commission:

(b) Stressed that effective coordination is essential, especially in the area of data sharing in order to reduce the reporting burden on countries;

(c) Supported the long-term vision for an effective global data-collection mechanism;

(d) Stressed the importance of effective coordination among the agencies of the United Nations system and the national statistical offices in order to promote the use of official statistics by the agencies and to avoid duplication and discrepancies in statistical sources;

(e) Endorsed the proposal that the United Nations chief statisticians hold regular meetings, and mandated the group to follow up on the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair for improved coordination and report back to the Commission.”

11. Following that decision, the chief statisticians of the United Nations system met officially for the first time in the new, formal format on 10 September 2014. The newly constituted Committee of Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System first reported to the Commission at its forty-eighth session in March 2017.