



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 December 2020

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Fifty-second session

1–3 and 5 March 2021

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

**Items for discussion and decision: data and indicators for the
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Work for the review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2020/211 and past practices, provides a description of the work carried out by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in cooperation with other entities of the United Nations system, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It contains a description of the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals” (E/2020/57) on the basis of the data and analysis of the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators, as mandated by the General Assembly (see resolution 70/1, para. 83). In addition, the present report contains: (a) an update on the project of the Statistics Division funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to support countries on Sustainable Development Goal monitoring; (b) an update of the Data for Now initiative, jointly convened by the United Nations, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the World Bank and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network; (c) the establishment of a collaborative on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes; (d) an update on the work on the Federated Information System of national and global data hubs for the Sustainable Development Goals; (e) the work of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training; (f) the launch of the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians; and (g) the launch of a global online survey by the Statistics Division and the World Bank’s Development Data Group, in coordination with the five United Nations regional commissions to monitor the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on national statistical offices.

* E/CN.3/2021/1.



The Commission is invited to take note of the work carried out and to comment on the progress of the work and the proposed work programme. The action to be taken by the Commission is set out in paragraph 43 of the present report.

I. Introduction

1. In its decision 51/102, the Statistical Commission welcomed the work by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat carried out in collaboration and cooperation with the United Nations system to support the systematic follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national, regional and global levels and requested the Statistics Division to continue leading the coordination with the United Nations statistical system in the preparation of the annual progress report. That work was mandated by the General Assembly in paragraphs 4 and 11 of its resolution 71/313. It expressed its appreciation for the capacity development activities carried out by the Statistics Division and its partners to assist Member States in making data on the Sustainable Development Goals available, strongly supported the Data for Now initiative to build capacity in countries to utilize new data sources for more timely and disaggregated statistics and indicators, and welcomed the scaling up of the Federated Information System initiative by including more countries and increasing capacity at the national level. It took note of the common Internationalized Resource Identifiers for Sustainable Development Goals, targets, indicators and related data series, and encouraged the dissemination of data in linked open data format. Lastly, it welcomed the efforts of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training emphasizing the importance of carrying out statistical training and welcomed the efforts of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys stressing the need for an integrated and harmonized household survey programme within countries.

II. Sustainable Development Goals progress reports for 2020

2. In 2020, the Statistics Division produced a series of reports and publications reviewing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including: (a) the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals” (E/2020/57); (b) *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*;¹ (c) *Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2020*;² and (d) *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2020*.³

3. In his report entitled “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals”, the Secretary-General reviews progress made on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development amid the COVID-19 crisis using the most recent available data and estimates. In the report, he shows that the world was not on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals even before the pandemic erupted and highlights how the COVID-19 crisis is disrupting implementation efforts across the Sustainable Development Goals, undoing years and even decades of progress in some cases. The most recent evidence demonstrates that the poorest and most vulnerable people and countries are being affected most by the pandemic. He also emphasizes that data and statistics play an important role in informing both the immediate response to COVID-19 and the steps needed to get the world back on track to deliver the 2030 Agenda.

4. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020* is presented in an interactive platform on the Statistics Division’s website and in Sustainable Development Goal story maps, using appealing visual storytelling, including through infographics, to make the data on progress towards the Goals more accessible and understandable to a wider audience. It provides in-depth analysis of select indicators, both globally and

¹ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/>.

² Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/progress-chart-2020.pdf>.

³ Available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/GenderSnapshot_2020.pdf.

across regions, supported by an array of charts and maps, and includes a progress summary for Sustainable Development Goal targets with a 2020 deadline.

5. *The Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2020* presents a snapshot of global and regional progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals at the end of 2019 through a traffic-light dashboard covering the 17 Goals. Both of the aforementioned reports and the progress chart informed the discussion at the 2020 high-level political forum.

6. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2020* was prepared jointly by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Statistics Division. The publication brings together the most recent available evidence on gender equality across all 17 Goals, underscoring the progress made, but also the progress interrupted as a result of COVID-19. It also informed the discussion at the Sustainable Development Goals Moment 2020, convened by the Secretary-General on 18 September 2020.

III. Database

7. The reports are accompanied by a comprehensive statistical annex⁴ and the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database.⁵ The Database contains the data on the global indicators used in the above-mentioned reports and includes both country-level data and regional and global aggregates. As at 4 November 2020, it includes data for 200 of the 231 unique indicators and more than 1.4 million data records. An accompanying metadata repository⁶ provides the metadata for the indicators. Access to the country-level data and the metadata ensures full transparency with respect to the data and methodologies used for global reporting.

8. The Database and metadata repository are maintained by the Statistics Division and contain data and metadata provided by international agencies and entities in accordance with their mandates; they are referred to as custodian agencies. For each value of the indicator, the custodian agency is also requested to indicate whether the national data were adjusted, estimated, modelled or the result of global monitoring.⁷ For example, national data may be adjusted for international comparability or, where data are missing, estimated. Since 2019, a more frequent database update cycle has been implemented in order to provide users with access to more timely data. In addition to an update in July, new data and data updates are provided in March, October and December.

9. The Working Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange for Sustainable Development Goal Indicators of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators has updated the global data structure definition –

⁴ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2020/secretary-general-sdg-report-2020--Statistical-Annex.pdf>.

⁵ Available at <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>.

⁶ Available at <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>.

⁷ The nature of the data is determined as follows: (a) country data: produced and disseminated by the country (including data adjusted by the country to meet international standards); (b) adjusted country data: produced and provided by the country, but adjusted by the international agency for international comparability to comply with internationally agreed standards, definitions and classifications; (c) estimated: estimated on the basis of national data, such as surveys or administrative records, or other sources but on the same variable being estimated, produced by the international agency when country data for a year or years are not available, when multiple sources exist or when there are data quality issues; (d) modelled: modelled by the agency on the basis of other covariates when there is a complete lack of data on the variable being estimated; and (e) global monitoring data: produced on a regular basis by the designated agency for global monitoring, based on country data. There is no corresponding figure at the country level.

originally released in 2019 – to reflect the revision of the global indicator framework and new data availability, and has agreed to align the data structure definition updates with the database update cycle. The latest available data structure definition is version 1.2, released on 6 October 2020.⁸ The global data structure definition is expected to be adopted by countries and international agencies implementing the data exchange standard for the reporting and/or dissemination of Sustainable Development Goal data and metadata. The Statistics Division maintains the database aligned with the global data structure definition and makes the data available through a Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) application programming interface,⁹ in addition to the previously provided application programming interface.¹⁰

10. The draft metadata structure definition for the Sustainable Development Goals approved by the Working Group was released at the beginning of 2020 based on metadata concepts used for the reporting of metadata for the global Goal indicators, and harmonized with internationally used metadata concepts. In 2020, the Statistics Division has worked on the development of the metadata template and authoring tool in support of metadata exchange. As of November 2020, an ongoing metadata exchange pilot is testing the metadata generated from the authoring tool in the SDMX format as well as the submission process to a platform. The tool can also generate reports showing the changes in the metadata by comparing with previously submitted metadata. The pilot will inform the establishment of metadata exchange in production and the further development of the metadata template and authoring tool and platform. In the meantime, the Division is working with custodian agencies on the alignment of the metadata to the metadata structure definition concepts and on transferring available global indicator metadata into machine-readable format. An SDMX application programming interface for metadata has been available as of October 2020.¹¹

11. The reports, Database and metadata repository are hosted on the Goal indicators website,¹² which is maintained by the Statistics Division. The website also contains information on the work and activities of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Goal monitoring and reporting toolkit for United Nations country teams.

IV. Work programme of the inter-agency working group on the global Sustainable Development Goals review

12. More than 50 international agencies and organizations contributed data and analysis to the progress reports and to the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database and metadata repository. In order to provide a working mechanism for the United Nations system to prepare the report, as mandated in the 2030 Agenda, the Statistics Division has been convening meetings and teleconferences with the agencies that provide data and analysis for the preparation of the annual progress reports and the regular updating of the database. Since 2017, face-to-face meetings have also been organized to allow for easier exchanges and more in-depth technical discussion.

⁸ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/sdmx-working-group/>.

⁹ Available at <https://data.un.org/SdmxBrowser/start>.

¹⁰ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/SDGAPI/swagger/>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>.

13. The inter-agency working group:

(a) Reviews and discusses plans for the production of the annual Sustainable Development Goals progress report of the Secretary-General and the complementary, user-friendly annual report;

(b) Agrees on the structure, scope and coverage of the yearly reports and related contributions by the relevant organizations;

(c) Contributes to the regular updating of the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database, including by providing updates and refinements to the metadata, as needed;

(d) Exchanges information and updates on capacity development activities relating to statistics and indicators for the 2030 Agenda;

(e) Reports annually to the Statistical Commission as part of the present report.

V. Development cooperation and technical assistance activities of the Statistics Division on Sustainable Development Goal indicators

14. The Statistics Division and the nine other entities of the Secretariat have continued their close collaboration in the area of statistical capacity development. The joint \$10 million United Nations Development Account programme on statistics and data has been granted a one-year extension by the Development Account Steering Committee, with additional funding of \$1.5 million until the end of 2020, based on the excellent rate of implementation of the programme. With the participation of all the regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Statistics Division, the programme is being implemented to strengthen national statistical systems for the follow-up and review of the Goals, including by addressing specific data gaps. The programme is structured around four pillars: means of implementation, environment statistics and indicators, social and demographic statistics and indicators, and economic statistics and indicators with specific expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement for each pillar.

15. After March 2020, with the swift spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the strict limitations on travel between and sometimes even within countries, the programme coordinator, jointly with component leads and co-leads at the 10 entities, developed guidelines for a wide programmatic refocusing of the Development Account tenth tranche statistics and data programme. All planned activities requiring travel by staff members or participants were converted into (a) COVID-19 resilient activities such as webinars, the development and roll-out of e-learning courses and the translation of important guidelines and material into official United Nations languages other than English; or (b) COVID-19 response activities such as the development of collaborative data platforms, techniques and methodologies for the handling of non-traditional data sources to compile statistics and indicators in response to the need for monitoring and mitigation of the impact of the health crisis on people, society and the economy. It was acknowledged that governance and coordination mechanisms in place for this innovative programme had allowed for a quick and effective programmatic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and an exceptional extension to April 2021 was granted for the conclusion of the remaining activities by the 10 implementing entities.

16. Overall, by December 2020, more than 500 specific activities had been conducted under this programme in the form of country advisory missions, national training seminars, development of guidelines, e-learning courses and stocktaking events at the regional or interregional levels to promote exchanges among countries regarding challenges, good practices and lessons learned. Activities had covered more than 80 target countries, including 18 least-developed countries.

17. The Statistics Division continued to implement the project funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom, to make the Sustainable Development Goal indicators available to the broadest possible audience and to strengthen the capacity of countries in the compilation and use of the indicators covering 20 countries in Africa and Asia. Despite challenges linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, including a substantial reduction in funding, the project quickly adapted to remote work and included a component on COVID-19 data. Overall, the project has continued to perform well and received another A rating by the donor in their annual review. The project will run until the end of July 2021.

18. The main project objectives are effective monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and improved evidence-based policymaking. Improved capacity of the project countries, increased availability of Sustainable Development Goal indicators at the national and international levels and improved coordination of national statistical systems for Goal indicators are key elements for achieving those objectives. The creation or upgrading of national data and metadata platforms for Goal indicators, in collaboration with users, is an essential component in those efforts. Such platforms will have been set up in at least 15 of the project countries by the end of 2020, with strong support from partners. Several of the platforms have been actively used by decision makers and some also featured in the voluntary national reviews of project countries in 2020.

19. There has been similarly significant progress on metadata, a subject on which the project has continued to deliver training, undertaking either in-person or remote workshops with a number of countries. The trainings have included guidance on how to fill in the officially agreed metadata template that follows the newly established metadata structure definition and allows sharing of metadata according to the SDMX standard. The trainings have contributed to a substantial increase in the availability of national metadata, and almost half of the countries have made their national metadata available. The Statistics Division also conducted several activities on data modelling and data exchange, using the SDMX standard. As a result, national Sustainable Development Goal indicators from at least 13 project countries were available on the Division's prototype data exchange website, through which comparisons can be made between national and global indicators. This work will continue until data and metadata exchange has been established in all project countries.

20. Another project activity that has been given continued attention in 2020 is to increase the focus on user engagement around Sustainable Development Goal monitoring. While this part of the project encountered a setback due to COVID-19, 15 countries have user engagement strategies in place, and a majority of these have carried out a number of user engagement activities. In addition, the Statistics Division provided training and guidance in how to set up COVID-19 data hubs as one of the project activities to support the national statistical offices in taking an active role in responding to the pandemic with official statistics.

21. Overall, the level of activities under the project continued to be high in 2020, with countries staying committed to Sustainable Development Goal monitoring despite the challenges caused by the pandemic. There was a strong emphasis on coordination and collaboration. At the country level, a key area of focus was to work

not only with the national statistical office, but with the entire statistical system. The Statistics Division also actively sought contact and coordination with the United Nations country teams, in particular the resident coordinator offices. The Division also continued its information work with the project website and published three newsletters.¹³

22. The Statistics Division also produced an electronic handbook on Sustainable Development Goal indicators, a resource and a reference for countries on compilation of indicators.¹⁴ Furthermore, the Division, together with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Children's Fund, co-chairs the task team on data for the strategic results group on integrated Sustainable Development Goal implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. The task team aims to facilitate the provision of coherent support by United Nations country teams to national statistical systems for the localization and monitoring of and reporting on the Goals, including the indicators and targets.¹⁵

23. A comprehensive overview of the Statistics Division's activities on technical capacity-building, including those relating to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, is provided in this year's report of the Secretary-General on statistical capacity development (E/CN.3/2021/24). In addition, in its report, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.3/2021/4) provides information about the work on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data and the 2020 virtual United Nations World Data Forum. In its report (E/CN.3/2021/2), the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators provides information about its work to implement the global indicator framework, such as methodological work on the indicators, and efforts by its four working groups: the Working Group on Interlinkages; the Working Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange for Sustainable Development Goal Indicators; the Working Group on Geospatial Information and the Working Group on Measurement of Development Support.

VI. Data for Now initiative

24. The Data for Now initiative¹⁶ supports countries in the use of innovative sources, technologies and methods for the streamlined production and dissemination of better, more timely and disaggregated data on key areas related to specific sustainable development goals. This initiative is co-led by the Statistics Division, the World Bank, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, in close coordination with members of the national statistical systems in participating countries and partners from across the United Nations system, the private sector, academia, civil society and the development community at large. The initiative emphasizes country ownership, sustainability and scalability as the key principles guiding the design and execution of activities aimed at integrating new methods and sources into existing national statistical systems and explicitly seeks to avoid creating parallel data production processes at the country level.

¹³ More information about the activities under the project is available at <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/UNSD-FCDO/>.

¹⁴ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/wiki/display/SDGeHandbook/Home>.

¹⁵ See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unct-toolkit/>.

¹⁶ The Data for Now initiative was launched by Deputy Secretary-General on the margins of the General Assembly in September 2019. See <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/data-for-now/>.

25. Over the past year, Data for Now activities have focused on the priorities identified by the national statistical offices in an initial group of eight participating countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America,¹⁷ promoting the creation of partnerships that can offer innovative data solutions to address these priorities, while supporting the development of in-country skills and capabilities, with the support of funding from bilateral and multilateral donors. The initiative activities involve securing high-level support and government buy-in, engaging with key providers and users of data across the national statistical system, and communicating and disseminating results through the main channels of the national statistical office in each participating country. Reflecting both the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the desire to support other countries in the regions with similar challenges, the capacity development activities carried out by the core partners of the Data For Now initiative seek to maximize the use of online and remote delivery modes.

VII. Launch of a collaborative on use of administrative data for statistical purposes

26. A collaborative on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes was initiated in May 2020 as a response to the urgent need for more timely and disaggregated data to inform the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic effects. A key objective of the collaborative is to address both urgent and longer-term needs to access and use administrative data for statistical purposes in a coherent and cross-cutting manner, building on advances made in various sectors and by different partners. The collaborative is co-convened by the Statistics Division and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and has members from over 20 countries and regional and international agencies.

27. The collaborative has discussed key areas of focus and agreed to take a cross-cutting approach. To help to ensure that the work does not overlap with other, more thematically focused work, an inventory of resources was created that provides a variety of materials, including recommendations, guidelines, courses, tools and practical case studies from countries. The collaborative is also organizing webinars on selected topics. The inventory and the webinars can be found on the homepage of the collaborative.¹⁸

28. Three task teams have been established on some of the cross-cutting challenges identified as key priority areas by the members of the collaborative. Task team 1 focuses on institutional framework, coordination and partnerships and is co-led by Chile, Denmark and Kyrgyzstan. Task team 2 addresses data management and standardization and is co-led by Namibia and Norway. Task team 3 is co-led by Ecuador and Uruguay and discusses technical interoperability and linking. Each task team agrees on key areas of focus based on identified gaps. As the work progresses, it is expected that concrete materials and tools will be developed to complement the materials already available.

¹⁷ Bangladesh, Colombia, Ghana, Mongolia, Nepal, Paraguay, Rwanda and Senegal.

¹⁸ See <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/admin-data/>.

VIII. Federated Information System for the Sustainable Development Goals

29. The primary purpose of the Federated Information System for the Sustainable Development Goals initiative is to facilitate the exchange of data, information and knowledge to achieve the 2030 Agenda by unlocking new and traditional sources of Goal-related data, including geospatial information, allowing data users greater freedom to select the information products and services that best meet their needs, providing an open, participatory infrastructure and governance framework for value-creating interactions between multiple producers and consumers of data.¹⁹ Its strategy is based on the following three pillars: (a) building a global network of autonomous, authoritative national Goals data hubs that invites participation and creates significant value for all participating countries; (b) providing the tools and services that make it easy for Goals data producers and consumers to interact with each other in mutually rewarding ways; and (c) designing and maintaining a technological infrastructure capable of scaling rapidly, encouraging positive network effects and synergies with other national, regional and global initiatives.

30. The Statistics Division has established an Open Sustainable Development Goal Data Hub and is supporting an increasing number of member States in the adoption of web geospatial information system and interoperability data standards to strengthen their monitoring of and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals. These activities seek to enhance the capacity of statisticians to use new software and technology infrastructure to improve the integration of statistical and geospatial information for monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level. At its fiftieth session, in March 2019, the Statistical Commission welcomed the progress in the implementation of the Federated Information System of national and global data hubs and stressed the need to mobilize resources and provide the necessary technical support to all countries wishing to join the System. However, the lack of additional resources has slowed the pace of implementation of the System.

IX. Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training

31. The Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training, established to address the data demands of the 2030 Agenda and the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, has continued its work to foster training in key areas of official statistics. At its third annual meeting, held on 4 March 2020 on the margins of the fifty-first session of the Statistical Commission, the founding and advisory group members discussed the way forward and welcomed additional members. There are currently 25 members, including two regional training institutes from the African region, as requested by the Commission at its fifty-first session. The Network is managed by a board consisting of the Network's Chair, the three task team leaders and the secretariat. In addition, a Stakeholder Advisory Group provides input and guidance on the direction and focus of work. The membership of Group was expanded from 8 to 12 countries in 2020 to better reflect the interests and training needs of low- and middle-income countries.

32. At the third annual meeting, the Network decided to continue the work of the task teams agreed in 2019 that addresses the following topics in statistical training: (a) specific demands from national statistical offices to meet data needs for the Goals; (b) an e-learning community of practice and an online gateway for training courses;

¹⁹ Available at <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/>.

and (c) statistical literacy in the context of the 2030 Agenda. These task teams have made good progress in their work.

33. The task team on addressing specific demands of national statistical offices prepared four case studies, of which two show challenges and opportunities in situations where the supply of training might be higher than the demand and good coordination among agencies is key. The other two highlight areas of substantial needs and strong demand, but limited supply. Work is expected to continue in 2021.

34. The task team on an e-learning community of practice and an online gateway has continued to work on improvements of the “UN SDG: Learn” landing page for courses in statistics.²⁰ The landing page gives an overview of available e-learning and face-to-face courses and provides links to courses offered by the various agencies. Only courses the various providers decide to upload will be shown. In 2020, the task team also agreed to develop a few microlearning courses and discussed how to provide course evaluations, best practices for course evaluation overall and the development of practical guidance for the evaluation of statistical courses.

35. The task team on statistical literacy discussed various approaches for improving literacy among user groups and agreed to establish an inventory of statistical literacy materials. Some of the task team members are also collaborating around the development of an e-learning course on statistical literacy. Three out of five modules have already been published and are available on “UN SDG: Learn”.

36. The Stakeholder Advisory Group met in September 2020 and provided input to the work of the Network. General feedback was very positive, and a few additional suggestions and proposals were made, in particular related to the need for additional e-learning courses on various topics. Information about the current membership, outputs and plans of the Network can be found on the Network’s homepage.²¹

37. The background document on the work of the Network²² provides more details on the progress made and materials developed, including among others, the “UN SDG: Learn” statistics gateway, practical guidance on the evaluation of statistics courses and suggested approaches for establishing or further developing national, sustainable in-house training programmes.

X. Launch of the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians

38. The Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians was launched by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the virtual 2020 United Nations World Data Forum on 20 October 2020, in conjunction with the celebration of World Statistics Day. The Network connects statisticians, data scientists and experts, geospatial information experts, data management and results reporting officers and economists in United Nations country teams around the world to produce and use better data for the Sustainable Development Goals.

39. The Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians seeks to help national governments build resilient and sustainable national data and information systems for the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through collaboration, coordination, knowledge sharing, networking and technical support. Two weeks after

²⁰ Available at <https://www.unsdglearn.org/statistics/>.

²¹ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/GIST>.

²² The background document is entitled “Progress report of the Global Network of Institutes for Statistical Training (GIST)”.

the launch of the Global Network, almost 700 statisticians and data experts around the world joined the network.

40. The Global Network is built on the Yammer platform, and members of the Network can use it:

(a) To increase collaboration among national statistical offices and systems, resident coordinator offices and regional and international organizations;

(b) To share knowledge and best practices on the production and dissemination of data and official statistics for Sustainable Development Goal implementation and monitoring;

(c) To build new partnerships and foster synergies in data development to support the production and dissemination of data and official statistics for Sustainable Development Goal implementation, monitoring and reporting;

(d) To get support from a pool of experts on different topics and from different statistical domains, related to data and statistics for Sustainable Development Goal implementation, monitoring and reporting;

(e) To connect with colleagues anywhere and anytime through the web browser and the easy-to-use mobile application for Android and iOS;

(f) To share, comment and celebrate the launch of their or others' new tool, data solution, report or event.

XI. Survey to monitor the impact of the coronavirus disease crisis on national statistical offices

41. In May 2020, the Statistics Division and the World Bank's Development Data Group, in cooperation with the statistics divisions of the regional commissions, launched a COVID-19 survey of national statistical offices, with the objective of monitoring the impact of the pandemic on statistical operations and the evolving needs of national statistical offices. The survey seeks to inform the global statistical community, donors, development partners and the public and to ensure that contingency plans and strategic decisions are based on evidence and the actual needs of countries. It also enables the prioritization of resources and supports technical cooperation to navigate the crisis.

42. The first three rounds of the survey took place in May, July and October 2020, and further rounds are planned to take place every two to three months. The results of each round, based on the responses provided by more than 100 national statistical offices around the world, are made available on the Statistics Division's COVID-19 response website and on the World Bank's COVID-19 data website at the aggregated level.²³ Data from the survey are also be available to countries and partners at a more disaggregated level, depending on individual countries' consent to data sharing.

²³ See <https://covid-19-response.unstatshub.org/statistical-programmes/covid19-nso-survey/> and <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/survey-of-national-statistical-offices-nsos-during-covid-19>.

XII. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

43. The Commission is invited:

(a) **To take note of the work carried out by the Statistics Division in cooperation with the United Nations system and its proposed programme of work, and to comment on the progress of work;**

(b) **To express its views on the Data for Now initiative;**

(c) **To endorse the launch of a collaborative on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes;**

(d) **To express its views the continuation of the implementation of the Federated Information System of national and global data hubs;**

(e) **To express its views on the progress of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training and take note of the materials developed by the Network;**

(f) **To express its views on the launch of the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians;**

(g) **To express its views on the survey to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on national statistical offices.**
