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Statistical Commission

**Report on the fifty-second session
(1–3 and 5 March 2021)**

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Statistical Commission

Report on the fifty-second session (1–3 and 5 March 2021)



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Note

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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Chapter I

Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

A. Draft decision for adoption by the Council

1. The Statistical Commission recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft decision:

Report of the Statistical Commission on its fifty-second session and provisional agenda and dates of the fifty-third session of the Commission

The Economic and Social Council:

- (a) Takes note of the report of the Statistical Commission on its fifty-second session;
- (b) Decides that the fifty-third session of the Commission shall be held in New York from 1 to 4 March 2022;
- (c) Approves the provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-third session of the Commission, as set out below:

Provisional agenda of the fifty-third session of the Commission

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

Documentation

Provisional agenda and annotations

Note by the Secretariat on the provisional programme of work and timetable

3. Demographic and social statistics:

- (a) Demographic statistics;

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General

- (b) Human settlements statistics;

Documentation

Report of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

- (c) Health statistics;

Documentation

Report of the World Health Organization

- (d) Disability statistics;

Documentation

Report of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics

- (e) Social statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Secretary-General
 - (f) Gender statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Secretary-General
 - (g) Statistics on drugs and drug use;
Documentation
Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
 - (h) Crime statistics;
Documentation
Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
 - (i) Education statistics;
Documentation
Report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
 - (j) Civil registration and vital statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Secretary-General
Report of the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics
 - (k) Ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data.
Documentation
Report of the Titchfield Group on Ageing-related Statistics and Age-disaggregated Data
4. Economic statistics:
- (a) National accounts;
Documentation
Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts
 - (b) Agricultural and rural statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
 - (c) Industrial statistics;
Documentation
Report of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization
 - (d) Business registers;
Documentation
Report of the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers

- (e) Energy statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Secretary-General
 - (f) International trade and economic globalization statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Secretary-General
 - (g) Digital trade and e-commerce statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics
 - (h) Service statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics
 - (i) Information and communications technology statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technology for Development
 - (j) Tourism statistics;
Documentation
Report of the World Tourism Organization
 - (k) International Comparison Programme;
Documentation
Report of the World Bank
 - (l) Price statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics
Report of the Ottawa Group on Price Indices
 - (m) Informal economy statistics.
Documentation
Report of the International Labour Organization
5. Natural resources and environment statistics:
- (a) Environment statistics;
Documentation
Report of the Secretary-General
 - (b) Environmental-economic accounting;
Documentation
Report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting

- (c) Climate change statistics.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General

6. Activities not classified by field:

- (a) Coordination of statistical programmes;

Documentation

Report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Report of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System

- (b) Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

Documentation

Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators

Report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General on the work for the review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

- (c) Follow-up to the policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council;

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General

- (d) Integration of statistical and geospatial information;

Documentation

Report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information

- (e) Big data;

Documentation

Report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics

- (f) Regional statistical development;

Documentation

Report of the Economic Commission for Europe

- (g) Governance, peace and security statistics;

Documentation

Report of the Praia Group on Governance Statistics

- (h) Open data;

Documentation

Report of the Working Group on Open Data

- (i) Working methods of the Statistical Commission;
Documentation
Report of the Bureau
 - (j) Data stewardship.
Documentation
Report of the Working Group on Data Stewardship
7. Programme questions (Statistics Division).
 8. Provisional agenda and dates of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission.
Documentation
Note by the Secretariat containing the draft provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission

Note by the Secretariat on the draft multi-year programme of work of the Commission
 9. Report of the Commission on its fifty-third session.

B. Decisions brought to the attention of the Council

2. The following decisions adopted by the Commission are brought to the attention of the Council.

52/101

Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Statistical Commission:

- (a) Welcomed the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators,¹ and commended the Group for its continued work on the implementation of the global indicator framework;
- (b) Expressed its appreciation for the progress made on the regular review of methodological developments and issues related to the indicators and their metadata, and welcomed the creation of the subgroup on metadata to improve the quality of metadata and facilitate better implementation of the indicator framework;
- (c) Encouraged the piloting of new indicator methodologies in countries with different contexts to improve capacity and ensure acceptability and feasibility of implementation at the national level;
- (d) Agreed to the proposed annual refinements of the indicator framework as presented in the annex to the report of the Group;
- (e) Encouraged the Group to continue to implement and refine indicators, and requested the Group to work with relevant custodian agencies to develop and test a methodology for indicators on sustainable tourism, in preparation for submission at the 2025 comprehensive review, as this indicator is of particular importance to the least developed countries, landlocked least developed countries and small island developing States;

¹ E/CN.3/2021/2.

(f) Welcomed the dedicated work of the Group on challenges relating to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and the background document entitled “COVID-19 and the global SDG indicators”, as a useful and timely resource for countries to help to identify areas of the Goals on which the pandemic has had a high impact;

(g) Expressed its appreciation for the progress made by the three working groups on geospatial information, on the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) and on the measurement of development support, and took note of specific comments addressed to the three working groups on the work going forward;

(h) Welcomed the dedicated work of the Group on data disaggregation, in particular the establishment of a task force on small area estimation, noted the development of a compilation of tools and resources and the practical guidebook for data disaggregation, and encouraged further work on data disaggregation and small area estimation with a view to providing additional comprehensive guidelines and tools for countries;

(i) Encouraged the Group to further incorporate data innovation in its work, including the integration of geospatial information and statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,² the sharing of experiences and best practices on monitoring of the Goals, the automation of data and metadata transmission using SDMX, and the development of guidelines for geospatial information and SDMX;

(j) Stressed the need for enhanced technical and financial support for countries to build capacity for monitoring, for the production of Sustainable Development Goal indicators and for the modernization of statistical systems, including on SDMX, geospatial data integration and data innovation, in particular for African countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;

(k) Encouraged the Group to explore ways to connect and align its work with the efforts of other international working groups and bodies, including the regional commissions;

(l) Noted the interest of some countries in becoming members of the Group, to be considered by their respective regional mechanisms;

(m) Requested the Group and the custodian agencies to continue their dialogue to enhance the data flow process for global reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals, including by identifying good practices in the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Goals and to further refine tools to effectively coordinate data requests to countries, enabling more comprehensive reporting and validation and dissemination of data, and to reduce the national reporting burden, including by making efficient use of existing regional mechanisms or data platforms where possible;

(n) Approved the proposed work programme of the Group, as described in section V of its report.

² General Assembly resolution 70/1.

52/102 Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the work for the review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals,³ and took note of the proposed programme of work of the Statistics Division in cooperation with the United Nations system;

(b) Expressed its appreciation for the work of the Statistics Division, in cooperation with the United Nations system, in support of the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,⁴ including *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020* and the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database;

(c) Requested the Statistics Division to continue leading the coordination with the United Nations statistical system in the preparation of the annual progress report;

(d) Expressed its appreciation for the capacity development activities carried out by the Statistics Division, the United Nations statistical system and other partners to assist Member States in making data and indicators for the Goals available;

(e) Strongly supported the Data for Now initiative to build capacity in countries to utilize new data sources for more timely and disaggregated data and indicators, and pointed out the importance of coordination among the various participating partners;

(f) Endorsed the launch of a collaborative on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes, and noted the need to build on related efforts in this area, in particular, ensuring safe use of data and sensitive information;

(g) Welcomed the efforts to implement a federated system of national and global data hubs, and noted the interest expressed by multiple countries in joining the initiative;

(h) Stressed the importance of carrying out statistical training, welcomed the efforts of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training, and took note of the materials developed by the Network;

(i) Welcomed the launch of the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians;

(j) Welcomed the survey to monitor the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis on national statistical offices, which allows sharing of experiences and can provide direction in the allocation of much-needed support;

(k) Recognized the positive outcome of the high-level side event on the theme “The COVID-19 pandemic: how the data and statistical community stepped up to the new challenges”, which brought to the fore the long-lasting transformations to address the new challenges in national and global statistical systems resulting from the solidarity and collaboration efforts of all members of the data and statistical community.

³ E/CN.3/2021/3.

⁴ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

52/103

Partnership, coordination and capacity-building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,⁵ and expressed its appreciation for the work conducted;

(b) Expressed gratitude for the work of the High-level Group and the programme committee, during a difficult year for planning large-scale events, in conducting a virtual United Nations World Data Forum and launching the statement on the global data community's response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)⁶ to mark the occasion;

(c) Recognized the continued effort to prepare for the postponed third United Nations World Data Forum in Bern, currently planned to be held from 3 to 6 October 2021;

(d) Supported the way forward to develop the outcome document for the third United Nations World Data Forum and requested the Secretariat to continue to use the Forum to engage and involve a wide variety of actors working in the data space on new solutions, partnerships and initiatives;

(e) Noted the interest of the countries of the Latin American region and other countries to host the fourth United Nations World Data Forum;

(f) Approved the proposed way forward to develop guidance for national statistical offices on approaches to data stewardship, and strongly supported the establishment of a working group on data stewardship within the Commission, open to interested countries and stakeholders from other data communities, and took note of the several requests by countries to join the group;

(g) Noted the need for the working group on data stewardship to maintain a dialogue and ensure synergy with other international and regional groups working on this topic, to take account of different national starting points and circumstances, and to consider the numerous case studies already conducted;

(h) Took note of the discussions of the high-level event on data stewardship, which confirmed that national statistical offices have a role to play as data stewards, subject to their legal frameworks, by applying their expertise and experience to a broader set of purposes, and that the working group on data stewardship will focus on the scope and significance of these purposes through collaboration and contributions from all parts of the data ecosystem;

(i) Welcomed the continuous focus on financing and implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data in the work of the High-level Group;

(j) Agreed with the programme of work of the High-level Group,⁷ and requested the Group to report to the Commission at its fifty-third session on its implementation and on the outcome of the third United Nations World Data Forum.

⁵ E/CN.3/2021/4.

⁶ Ibid., annex III.

⁷ Ibid., annex V.

52/104 Coordination of statistical programmes

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Recognized that a well-coordinated and efficient statistical system is more important than ever, especially as the international statistical community and the statistical programmes must grapple with the additional challenges brought about by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19);

(b) Acknowledged and appreciated the work carried out by the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System as agile and responsive;

(c) Welcomed the System-wide Road Map for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics⁸ as a solid commitment of the United Nations system to strengthen coordination and modernize United Nations statistics and data addressing the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/5 of 18 June 2020;

(d) Fully concurred with the identified priority activities, in particular the proposal of transforming the data.un.org portal into a single point of reference for United Nations system data in order to strengthen the position of the United Nations system as a primary provider of global data and statistics;⁹

(e) Suggested adding target 1.1 (To improve existing data sources and increase use of new data sources to expand coverage, relevance and timeliness of data and statistics produced and disseminated by the United Nations system) as a priority, in view of the growing need for new data sources, in particular in the light of the current pandemic;

(f) In this context, emphasized the importance of national sources of data and the need for strengthening national statistical capacity, recognizing that the Road Map also aims to support national statistical systems by providing coordinated support to Member States;

(g) In this context, reiterated the continued importance of Council resolution 2006/6 of 24 July 2006;

(h) Reminded the Committee of the need to reduce the reporting burden imposed on countries;

(i) Recommended that members of the Committee continue to engage in frequent communication and closer collaboration with Member States through suitable mechanisms;

(j) Cautioned against imputation, nowcasting and forecasting unless they are produced in full consultation with countries and stakeholders and based on fully transparent methodologies;

(k) Welcomed the strengthened communication and cooperation with two major groups or offices, namely the United Nations Geospatial Network and the Development Coordination Office of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, and encouraged the Committee to further strengthen these strategic partnerships as well as partnerships with other international associations that produce statistical and geographical data, in particular in the context of the inter-agency mechanism to be established for the implementation of a new UNdata portal;

⁸ [CEB/2020/1/Add.1](#).

⁹ See [E/CN.3/2021/5](#); see also decision 52/116, para. (b).

(l) Noted that the challenges described in the Road Map are similar to the challenges that national statistical offices face, and requested that solutions and actions to be taken be shared with the statistical community at large;

(m) Requested the Committee to continue its work towards the implementation of the Road Map, taking into account the discussion at the current session of the Commission.

52/105

Economic statistics

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics,¹⁰ and commended the group for creating an inclusive assessment and drafting process to develop its recommendations through five global meetings, various regional high-level user-producer conferences organized jointly with regional commissions, individual interviews with members of the group and a comprehensive survey of statistical groups deemed to support the system of economic statistics;

(b) Expressed its appreciation for the initiative of the group to incorporate the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on statistical systems in the development of its recommendations so as to build a more efficient, responsive and resilient system to track the contrasting impact of the pandemic on different segments of the economy and society and to monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹¹ with geospatially enabled links to the economy, environment and well-being;

(c) Expressed its appreciation for the sustained efforts and valuable inputs of the representatives of countries, agencies and other entities in developing the recommendations;

(d) Approved the recommendations in the report aimed at transforming and modernizing national statistical systems using a problem-driven approach centred on the following four themes: (i) better networking and user consultations on emerging issues and priorities for a shared research agenda, strengthening analytical and data management capabilities for the system of economic statistics through a network of national data science centres, and promoting a whole-of-system approach and strong partnerships with academia and the private sector, (ii) better statistical infrastructure and data solutions through global co-production and co-investment in common data acquisition, infrastructure and technological solutions based on global policy priorities such as on climate change and on global statistical priorities such as for financial transaction data from multinational enterprises, (iii) better institutional arrangements and governance for statistical groups based on agreed common principles of networking, co-investment and shared responsibility between agencies and countries without hierarchical relationships between them, and (iv) better statistical framework of international standards with a continuous and iterative revision cycle through regular experimentation and testing to meet rapidly evolving user demand;

(e) Supported the proposal for regional commissions and regional and subregional agencies to play a key role in the experimentation and testing of methodological revisions of international statistical standards in countries, and recommended that the guidance from the experimentation and testing be made

¹⁰ E/CN.3/2021/7.

¹¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

available to all countries and incorporated into regular updates of international statistical standards to ensure their viability;

(f) Approved the recommendation to establish a new network of economic statisticians to facilitate networking, coordination and communication on new innovations, experiments and best practices for the purpose of making progress on priorities to keep economic statistics relevant, requested that its mandate be clearly defined and provide a transparent and collaborative horizontal coordination mechanism for all existing groups, and recognized the need for the network of economic statisticians to coordinate with other statistical committees and groups, as appropriate, for the purpose of measuring the multidimensional relationships between the economy, environment and society of the 2030 Agenda;

(g) Requested that the mandates of statistical groups in the system of economic statistics be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate;

(h) Supported the recommendation to explore the feasibility of a new committee of experts on population and well-being for the purpose of measuring the relationships between the economy and society, and human capital;

(i) Approved the recommendation to dissolve the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics.

52/106

National accounts

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts,¹² expressed its appreciation for the activities undertaken by the members of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, the Working Group, the regional commissions, other regional organizations and countries to facilitate the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA) and supporting statistics, and endorsed the programmes of work for 2021 of the Working Group and the Advisory Expert Group;

(b) Endorsed the work programme for the update of the 2008 SNA and timeline for undertaking technical research, engaging in broad consultations and ensuring overall consistency with the other manuals of the system of economic statistics, but noted that the programme for updating the 2008 SNA is ambitious and will require significant resources from the statistical community;

(c) Expressed its appreciation for the in-kind contributions and the willingness of some Member States to contribute also financially to the update programme of the 2008 SNA;

(d) Welcomed the progress made on the preparation and elaboration of guidance on the relevant issues for the update of the 2008 SNA, encouraged Member States to participate in the evaluation process and experimentation and testing of the feasibility of the recommendations of guidance notes, emphasized the need for coordination and collaboration between countries and subregional, regional and international agencies to facilitate the experimentation and testing of the guidance notes, and stressed the importance of providing financial and in-kind support to countries with limited resources;

¹² E/CN.3/2021/8.

(e) Welcomed the work to develop guidance for measuring the digital economy, the informal economy, unpaid household service work, household income and wealth distribution, Islamic finance and global production arrangements, and the alignment of the system of health accounts, stressed that the monitoring and analysis of well-being and sustainability should not compromise, but rather enhance traditional analyses for macroeconomic statistics in extended or supplementary tables and thereby carefully consider the impact on the core accounts of SNA, and supported the work on developing the compilers' hub, digitizing of international statistical and classification standards, and enhancing the communication mechanisms for macroeconomic statistics;

(f) Noted the need for an adequate statistical infrastructure, including statistical business registers, legal framework and technology infrastructure to implement the proposed recommendations for the update of the 2008 SNA;

(g) Expressed its appreciation for the guidance notes developed by the Working Group on the recording of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) support measures in the national accounts, and encouraged the development of similar guidance on major issues in the future;

(h) Emphasized the need for continued attention devoted to capacity-building and funding for many developing countries to facilitate the implementation of SNA;

(i) Encouraged the continued reporting and evaluation of the availability and scope of official national accounts data reported by Member States, and noted the importance of quality information in support of international comparisons and a global understanding of the world economy.

52/107

Business and trade statistics

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics,¹³ and expressed its appreciation for the work carried out by the Committee;

(b) Endorsed the proposed workplan for 2021 and 2022, including the preparation of a manual on the global core set of principal business and trade indicators and a manual on the maturity model for statistical business registers;

(c) Welcomed the training and capacity-building programme for statistical business registers that applies the maturity model for building and maintaining statistical business registers in national statistical systems, and recommended the development of guidance on the integration of geospatial information in the statistical business registers building on country experiences;

(d) Welcomed the release of the Global Group Register to address issues of globalization and the role of multinational enterprises and noted that the need for the sharing of data among countries and agencies is essential for a comprehensive and coherent measurement of global value chains in the Global Group Register, moreover, requested guidance on how to preserve confidentiality in the sharing of data on multinational enterprises based upon country best practices, and welcomed the collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on the Analytical Database on Individual Multinationals and Affiliates;

(e) Endorsed revising the *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010* and the *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in*

¹³ E/CN.3/2021/9.

Services 2010, while ensuring consistency with the update of other statistical standards, such as the System of National Accounts and the *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual*, and recommended that the Committee take this work forward with the representation and active participation of countries from different regions and international agencies;

(f) Welcomed the creation of a new task team on the joint research agenda between business and international trade statistics for the revision of the trade-related standards, and recommended that the new task team also work on the development of new trade-related business indicators, on guidance for the integration of international trade-related characteristics of businesses in the statistical business registers, and on the promotion of the e-learning training programme on international trade statistics;

(g) Requested the Committee to actively coordinate the integration of the work programmes and working methods with the Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics as recommended by the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics to avoid duplication of work and advance the active collaboration between countries and agencies.

52/108

Environmental-economic accounting

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Expressed its appreciation for the work done by the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting over the past year, particularly in finalizing the revised System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Ecosystem Accounting, and recognized the significant contributions of the Chair, Bureau, editorial board and editor, as well as the countries, agencies and stakeholders that participated in the revision;

(b) Commended the inclusive and transparent process for developing the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, which brought together a wide range of stakeholder communities and saw broad participation in the multiple rounds of global consultations on issue papers, individual draft chapters and the complete draft of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting;

(c) Agreed to remove “Experimental” from the title of the revised SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, to adopt chapters 1 to 7 describing the accounting framework and the physical accounts as an international statistical standard, to keep all chapters together in one document, with chapters 8 to 11 describing monetary valuation and integrated accounting for ecosystem services and assets and chapters 12 to 14 describing the applications and extensions, and to regularly evaluate and report on the usefulness and pertinence of the accounts;

(d) Recognized that chapters 8 to 11 of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting describe internationally recognized statistical principles and recommendations for the valuation of ecosystem services and assets in a context that is coherent with the concepts of the System of National Accounts for countries that are undertaking valuation of ecosystem services and/or assets, and requested the Committee to promptly resolve the outstanding methodological aspects in chapters 8 to 11 as identified in the research agenda;

(e) Requested the Committee to make clear the different statuses of chapters 1 to 7, 8 to 11 and 12 to 14, both in the introduction and in the chapters themselves;

(f) Encouraged countries to implement the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting depending on their priorities, and, recognizing the challenges to compiling the

accounts in practice, requested the Committee to continue to develop compilation tools which make use of global data sources and to create an implementation strategy and methodological and implementation guidance materials for countries in support of continued capacity-building;

(g) Welcomed the progress of the Committee in mainstreaming the use of SEEA in policy, including climate change, circular economy, sustainable finance and biodiversity policy, and particularly encouraged the Committee to engage in the monitoring framework of the post-2020 global biodiversity agenda and participate in the proposed expert group under the auspices of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to provide the connection between the biodiversity and official statistical communities;

(h) Supported the proposal to establish a working group to draft a methodological document for ocean accounting, SEEA Ocean, in support of the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, given the high policy demand for ocean accounting and the global importance of the ocean economy, and noted the importance of adequate funding for this activity;

(i) Supported the formation of a working group on business accounting and SEEA and the preliminary road map, noting the benefits to both the public and private sectors in aligning SEEA and private natural capital accounting approaches, exchanging data and jointly managing resources, and recognized the importance of participation from both national statistical offices and the private sector alike, as well as the need for adequate funding to make sufficient progress in this area of work;

(j) Welcomed the update provided on the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism, and, noting the interest from countries in this work, agreed to the finalization process for the document, including the Committee's review prior to final consideration by the World Tourism Organization Committee on Statistics for its subsequent presentation to the Commission.

52/109

Migration statistics

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General,¹⁴ and expressed appreciation to the Statistics Division and the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics for the work undertaken to strengthen the availability and use of international migration data;

(b) Reiterated the importance of promoting consistency between migration flows and population stocks, of distinguishing international migration from international temporary mobility, and of aligning the definition of migration flows with a country's measurement of the resident population, to ensure consistency in the production of national migration statistics, while striving to promote their comparability at the international level;

(c) Welcomed the alignment of the proposed conceptual framework with the latest related internationally agreed concepts and definitions, as described in the report before the Commission, including of resident population, and took note of the ongoing discussion on other types of population in the European Union;

¹⁴ [E/CN.3/2021/11](#).

(d) Endorsed the revised conceptual framework on international migration and mobility and related concepts and definitions as the core elements for the upcoming revision of the 1998 *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*;

(e) Emphasized that challenges reside in the implementation of the revised framework and accompanying definitions, including potential issues with international comparability of migration flows, with the measurement of international temporary mobility and stateless and displaced populations, and to some extent in countries relying on administrative registers to produce international migration data;

(f) Therefore, requested the Statistics Division and the Expert Group to be mindful of these challenges in the next steps towards the revision of the 1998 *Recommendations*, and in particular:

(i) To prioritize the work on international migration while clarifying the components of international temporary mobility that will be considered in the revised *Recommendations*;

(ii) To take into account the different migration data ecosystems and related data capacity in countries;

(iii) To reflect relevant experience of countries producing international migration statistics based on registered population;

(g) Took note of the proposed comprehensive programme of work of the Statistics Division and the Expert Group, fully supported it, and welcomed the expression of interest by several countries in contributing to its implementation with the support of regional commissions and institutions;

(h) Acknowledged the need (a) to provide guidance on data integration and on the potential of using non-traditional data sources, in particular to measure international temporary mobility, and (b) to strengthen statistical capacity and resources in support of countries' efforts to improve migration data;

(i) Recognized with appreciation the various initiatives at regional level to improve the production, dissemination and management of timely and comparable migration data and statistics;

(j) Welcomed the organization of the third International Forum on Migration Statistics in 2022 by the Statistics Division and the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, as a platform to share best practices and national and international experiences in the production and use of relevant, high-quality and disaggregated statistics on international migration, acknowledged the success of the second Forum, hosted by Egypt, and encouraged the organizers of the third Forum to build on experiences gained.

52/110

Regional statistical development

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia¹⁵ on regional cooperation and main achievements of statistical development in the region;

¹⁵ E/CN.3/2021/12.

(b) Expressed its appreciation for the work undertaken in the region over the past five years since the previous report, especially in regard to cooperation and coordination in regional statistical capacity development and alignment of the priorities of regional statistical work with the United Nations data strategies, regional and national statistical priorities, with a focus on modernizing official statistics, using technology, big data, register-based data sources and linking geospatial and statistical information;

(c) Took note of the development of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia data portal and the outline of its substantive content, as well as the expression of interest by other regional and subregional organizations in the data portal as a key to data management and dissemination, to the development of online training tools, and to efforts at improving data exchange through innovation;

(d) Noted the work on interregional statistical cooperation among the statistics divisions of the United Nations regional commissions, in particular in harmonizing the methods and presentation for statistics on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁶

52/111 Management and modernization of statistical systems

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on management and modernization of statistical systems,¹⁷ and congratulated the drafting team on the achievement of the fourth edition of the Handbook, entitled “Handbook on Management and Organization of National Statistical Systems”;

(b) Endorsed the revision process and the work of the advisory group, and expressed appreciation to the members of the advisory group for their valuable role in guiding and contributing to the drafting of the Handbook;

(c) Took note of the immediate next steps, and stressed the need for the swift transfer of the Handbook to a user-friendly web solution with the suggested functionalities, including high-quality automatic translation features;

(d) Reiterated the need for a printed version of the overview chapter, to be available in all official United Nations languages, proposed, if possible, having additional chapters and the glossary available in print with translation in all United Nations languages, and acknowledged the expression of interest by some countries and regional organizations in assisting in the translation process;

(e) Supported the proposed updating and revision mechanisms, including tasks and responsibilities of the advisory group, suggested areas of future updates, and noted that some countries had offered to join the advisory group and thus contribute to keeping the Handbook a living and up-to-date reference document that benefits the whole national statistical system;

(f) Reaffirmed the important role of the thematic conferences to inform the Handbook on specific country initiatives, good practices and challenges from all regions, and requested the organization, as soon as possible, of the remaining thematic conferences, which were postponed owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as the holding of rotating thematic conferences in the future.

¹⁶ See General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

¹⁷ [E/CN.3/2021/13](#).

52/112 Big data

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics¹⁸ and the background document on the task teams, and supported and appreciated the work delivered by the task teams, including the handbooks, methods, projects and training courses;

(b) Urged the Global Working Group to continue strengthening the institutional environment, methodology and quality assurance framework in the use of big data, including in the form of manuals on big data and data science for official statistics, and requested that the deliverables of the Working Group be applicable to the needs of national statistical offices, and focus on monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals;¹⁹

(c) Supported the creation of a new task team on the acquisition of global private sector data, and requested that the task team establish constructive arrangements with global companies in sharing data with the global statistical community;

(d) Supported the use of the United Nations Global Platform and the regional hubs for training and project activities, requested that data, projects and training resources be available and shared with all members of the global statistical community, welcomed greater transparency on the security of data held within the Global Platform, and requested the development of a data governance policy;

(e) While noting the interest already expressed by some countries, encouraged all Member States to be involved in the activities on the Global Platform, and especially encouraged greater involvement of the least developed countries and small island developing States, including in the governing bodies of the Global Working Group;

(f) Endorsed the community model as a supporting and funding strategy for the Global Platform which, if suitably complemented with an explicit business model that identifies clearly what the commitments and benefits are for the participants, would ensure its sustainability for the longer term, encouraged all members of the global statistical community to make experts available as in-kind contributions, and called upon international development partners to support, in particular, least developed countries and small island developing States in financing their Global Platform and regional hubs projects;

(g) Requested accounting transparency and accountability if financial or in-kind contributions are made to the Global Platform, and supported the creation of a finance committee with a clear governance structure to further develop the funding approach;

(h) Strongly supported the timely implementation of a global programme on training and certification in the use of big data and data science for official statistics;

(i) Endorsed the change of the name of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics to the Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics.

¹⁸ [E/CN.3/2021/14](#).

¹⁹ See General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

52/113 International statistical classifications

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications,²⁰ and expressed its appreciation for the work carried out by the Expert Group;

(b) Endorsed revising the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), Revision 4, and the Central Product Classification, Version 2.1, and approved the draft terms of reference of the new task teams created for the revision;

(c) Reiterated the importance of the consistency of ISIC with the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community and other regional classifications, and highlighted the need for the coordination of the revision processes of these classifications with the update of the System of National Accounts, manuals of international trade statistics and other statistical manuals and for maintaining the correspondences between the international classifications;

(d) Highlighted that international classifications are instrumental to achieving better governance and better data and enhancing the data stewardship role of national statistical offices;

(e) Requested a clarification of the proposed recurrent revision cycle for ISIC and possibly other international classifications, starting with the update of the ISIC structure in 2022 and the final ISIC document in 2023 submitted to the Statistical Commission, to enable better understanding of how the countries should implement the anticipated changes in their work programmes;

(f) Took note of the revision process initiated for the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)-08, and encouraged the alignment between the future revision cycle of ISIC and the revision of ISCO;

(g) Noted the interest of both countries and agencies in actively participating in the revision processes of the international classifications, and requested the Statistics Division to follow up with these countries and agencies;

(h) Welcomed the proposed work programme of the Expert Group, including the work on the classification of business functions and the classification of statistical activities;

(i) Encouraged the work on new and innovative approaches for the development and maintenance of international statistical classifications, such as the use of metadata modelling and semantic web technologies for linked data in an effort to reduce the time and cost associated with their recurrent review and revision processes;

(j) Endorsed the new mandate and governance as proposed by the Expert Group and the change of name to the Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications.

²⁰ E/CN.3/2021/15.

52/114 Household surveys

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys,²¹ and expressed appreciation for the activities undertaken by the Working Group;

(b) Endorsed the revised terms of reference of the Working Group²² and commended the Group's efforts in placing greater focus on national priorities and in welcoming representatives of national statistical offices as full members, stressed that the work of the Group should be demand-driven and focused on countries' priorities, and took note of the interest from several countries in joining the Group;

(c) Emphasized the importance of household surveys in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,²³ especially by improving data on people who are vulnerable;

(d) Welcomed the Working Group's timely support to countries in addressing the challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic for national household survey programmes, including by sharing innovative methodological solutions, and stressed the need to continue to address these challenges;

(e) Stressed the need for a coordinated household survey programme within countries as well as for coordination at the regional and global levels, appreciated the work of the Working Group in this area, and requested intensified efforts;

(f) Welcomed the annotated outline of the paper on positioning household surveys for the next decade, appreciated its wide consultation with national statistical offices and other key partners, emphasized that household surveys should be considered as an integral part of a whole data ecosystem and in relation to other data sources, and requested the Working Group to further develop the paper, taking into consideration inputs from the broad consultation;

(g) Strongly supported further strengthening the role of the Working Group, guided by the principles for its future work programme as described in section V of the report, and in close collaboration with other partners, including the regional commissions;

(h) Requested the Working Group to address the need for capacity-building on survey methodologies, including on innovative approaches, to encourage testing of new methods, and to promote sharing of national experiences for peer-to-peer learning, and in close collaboration with other partners, including the regional commissions and institutions.

52/115 Data and metadata presentation and dissemination

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on data and metadata presentation and dissemination,²⁴ and recognized the importance of data and metadata dissemination, noting with appreciation the work of the Statistics Division in this area;

²¹ E/CN.3/2021/16.

²² Ibid., annex I.

²³ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

²⁴ E/CN.3/2021/17.

(b) Endorsed the vision and way forward for the implementation of the new UNdata portal as the main entry point to authoritative statistical data and metadata from the United Nations system and other participating international and regional organizations, in line with countries' priorities and with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere and the System-wide Road Map for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics developed by the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System;²⁵

(c) Agreed on the need to implement a federated data governance architecture that ensures the consistent data integration of authoritative national and international sources of official statistics, as well as the effective coordination of multiple data dissemination channels;

(d) Requested that the new UNdata portal be based on interoperability standards for automated data and metadata exchange, including in particular the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange, and support the use of modern data validation, analytics and visualization tools, while considering efficiency and cost-effectiveness;

(e) Underlined the need to clearly define the scope and target users of a new UNdata portal, and to prioritize the needs of national users, to ensure that adequate metadata are provided alongside the data, and to ensure the maximum use of official national data in accordance with the guidelines on Sustainable Development Goal data flows developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, while leveraging the capabilities of national data platforms;

(f) Stressed the need for continuous investment, especially in training and capacity-building for the use of modern digital technologies, including for information technology security, in international agencies, countries and all participating partner entities, in order to ensure the sustainability of the UNdata portal;

(g) Endorsed the establishment of an inter-agency and expert mechanism for the full development and implementation of a new United Nations data hub and the regular review and update of its data and metadata, agreed with its proposed terms of reference,²⁶ and welcomed expressions of interest by countries and international agencies in supporting the work of the new mechanism.

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Work programme of the Statistics Division

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Took note of the oral report presented by the Director of the Statistics Division concerning the work programme of the Division, including the current activities, plans and priorities, and noted the update on the general budgetary and liquidity situation of the Organization and its possible implications for the divisional work programme;

(b) Took note of the challenges arising from the ongoing liquidity crisis and of the efforts undertaken to mitigate its impact, in this context, requested that all vacant positions – especially senior-level positions – be filled as soon as possible, stressed the importance of these positions in delivering the Division's mandated programme of work in support of the three pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals (economic, social and environmental) and to provide the senior leadership needed to effectively engage Member States and the United Nations system at the

²⁵ CEB/2020/1/Add.1.

²⁶ E/CN.3/2021/17, annex.

global, regional and country levels, and in this regard welcomed the commitment of the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General to strengthen the Organization's human resource basis to make the United Nations a data-driven organization;

(c) Requested the Bureau to carefully review which modalities for the current virtual session (for example, side events, written statements) worked well and could be employed in future sessions, and in this context, invited the Bureau to launch a transparent and participatory review process of the 50-year-old terms of reference of the Commission and elaborate possible proposals for how they could be updated and modernized;

(d) In line with paragraph (f) of its decision 51/125 and paragraph 64 of the report of the Bureau on working methods,²⁷ tasked the Bureau with initiating a Friends of the Chair process to review the area of social and demographic statistics, similar to the process of the Friends of the Chair review of economic statistics, 2019–2021.

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Information items

The Statistical Commission took note of the following reports:

Report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities²⁸

Report of the Secretary-General on demographic statistics²⁹

Report of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on cultural statistics³⁰

Report of the Secretary-General on climate change statistics³¹

Report of the core group of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics³²

Report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Programme³³

Report of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors³⁴

Report of the Secretary-General on statistical capacity development³⁵

Report of the Secretary-General on policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission³⁶

Report of the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks³⁷

Report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information³⁸

Report of the Secretary-General on World Statistics Day³⁹

²⁷ E/CN.3/2020/27.

²⁸ E/CN.3/2021/6.

²⁹ E/CN.3/2021/18.

³⁰ E/CN.3/2021/19.

³¹ E/CN.3/2021/20.

³² E/CN.3/2021/21.

³³ E/CN.3/2021/22.

³⁴ E/CN.3/2021/23.

³⁵ E/CN.3/2021/24.

³⁶ E/CN.3/2021/25.

³⁷ E/CN.3/2021/26.

³⁸ E/CN.3/2021/27.

³⁹ E/CN.3/2021/28.

Chapter II

Provisional agenda and dates of the fifty-third session of the Commission

1. On 10 March, the Commission approved the draft provisional agenda, as set out in document [E/CN.3/2021/L.2](#), and the dates of the fifty-third session, under silence procedure pursuant to Council decision 2021/213, and entrusted the Bureau with streamlining and finalizing it. The Commission also decided to recommend the provisional agenda to the Council for approval (see chap. I, sect. A).
2. The Commission had before it the following documents, which were introduced by a representative of the Office of the Director of the Statistics Division:
 - (a) Note by the Secretariat on the draft provisional agenda and documentation of the fifty-third session of the Commission ([E/CN.3/2021/L.2](#));
 - (b) Note by the Secretariat on the draft multi-year programme of work of the Statistical Commission, 2021–2025 ([E/CN.3/2021/29](#)).
3. Also on 10 March, under the same silence procedure, the Commission decided to recommend to the Council that its fifty-third session be held from 1 to 4 March 2022.
4. Also on 10 March, under the same silence procedure, the Commission approved its draft multi-year programme of work for 2021–2025 ([E/CN.3/2021/29](#)).

Chapter III

Report of the Commission on its fifty-second session

On 10 March, the Commission adopted the draft report on its fifty-second session, including the decisions contained therein, under silence procedure pursuant to Council decision 2021/213, and entrusted the Rapporteur with streamlining and finalizing it.

Chapter IV

Organization of the session

A. Opening and duration of the session

1. Pursuant to Council decision 2021/213, and taking into account the prevailing conditions relating to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that are affecting the working arrangements and the available technological and procedural solutions in the interim period, the Statistical Commission did not hold formal meetings during its fifty-second session. The Commission held four virtual informal meetings with remote simultaneous interpretation from 1 to 3 and on 5 March 2021, pursuant to Council decision 2021/213.
2. The Commission conducted its business during the fifty-second session through correspondence and informal consultations and considered proposals, under silence procedure pursuant to Council decision 2021/213.

B. Attendance

3. The virtual informal meetings of the fifty-second session were attended by the representatives of the 24 States members of the Commission. Also in attendance at the meetings were observers for other States Members of the United Nations and for non-member States, representatives of United Nations system organizations and observers for intergovernmental, non-governmental and other organizations.

C. Election of officers

4. The Commission elected the following officers by acclamation, under silence procedure pursuant to Council decision 2021/213:

Chair:

Kawasaki Shigeru (Japan)

Vice-Chairs:

Gabriella Vukovich (Hungary)
Julio Alfonso Santaella Castell (Mexico)
Anil Arora (Canada)

Rapporteur:

Osman Sankoh (Sierra Leone)

D. Agenda and organization of work

5. The Commission adopted its provisional agenda, as contained in document [E/CN.3/2021/1](#), under silence procedure pursuant to Council decision 2021/213. The agenda read as follows:
 1. Election of officers.
 2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
 3. Items for discussion and decision:
 - (a) Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
 - (b) Coordination of statistical programmes;

- (c) Economic statistics;
 - (d) National accounts;
 - (e) Business and trade statistics;
 - (f) Environmental-economic accounting;
 - (g) Migration statistics;
 - (h) Regional statistical development;
 - (i) Management and modernization of statistical systems;
 - (j) Big data;
 - (k) International statistical classifications;
 - (l) Household surveys;
 - (m) Data and metadata presentation and dissemination.
4. Items for information:
- (a) Demographic statistics;
 - (b) Culture statistics;
 - (c) Climate change statistics;
 - (d) Disaster-related statistics;
 - (e) International Comparison Programme;
 - (f) Common open standards for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata;
 - (g) Statistical capacity development;
 - (h) Follow-up to the policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council;
 - (i) National Quality Assurance Frameworks;
 - (j) Integration of statistical and geospatial information;
 - (k) World Statistics Day.
5. Programme questions (Statistics Division).
6. Provisional agenda and dates for the fifty-third session of the Commission.
7. Report of the Commission on its fifty-second session.

6. The Commission also approved the provisional programme of work and timetable of the session ([E/CN.3/2021/L.1](#)), under silence procedure pursuant to Council decision 2021/213.

7. The Commission also adopted a decision under silence procedure pursuant to Council decision 2021/213, in which it invited the following intergovernmental organizations to participate as observers at its fifty-second session: Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics; Arab Maghreb Union; Bank for International Settlements; Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa; Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre; Central African Economic and Monetary Community; Eurasian Economic Commission; and European Free Trade Association.

E. Documentation

8. The documents before the Commission at its fifty-second session are available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/52nd-session/documents>.

