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

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

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2022/324 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report provides a summary of the recent activities of the High-level Group, covering preparations for the fourth United Nations World Data Forum, ongoing work related to the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, including the monitoring of its implementation and the realignment of the Plan to better support statistical and data capacity development efforts, and updates on global initiatives related to financing for data and statistics.

The Statistical Commission will also have before it two background documents: the strategy for the realignment of the Cape Town Global Action Plan and the results of the survey of national statistical offices on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan.

Actions to be taken by the Commission are contained in paragraph 19.

* E/CN.3/2023/1.



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

I. Introduction

1. The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was established at the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission. It is composed of representatives from 22 national statistical offices and operates under the auspices of the Commission. In its decision 46/101 (E/2015/24), the Commission tasked the High-level Group with providing strategic leadership for the implementation process related to the Sustainable Development Goals as it concerned statistical monitoring and reporting and fostering statistical capacity-building, partnership and coordination.

2. Members of the High-level Group represent their respective regions and are expected to consult regularly within them to reflect broader perspectives in the work of the group. To engage the wider data ecosystem, the Group also invites issue partners, as non-members and observer participants are known, to its open meetings, so that they can contribute technical advice and share their experiences. The current co-chairs are the President of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Ola Awad, and the Director General of the Institute of Statistics of Albania, Elsa Dhuli. The Group met four times in 2022, in a mix of in-person and virtual meetings. Further information on the Group, including its terms of reference, membership, past meeting documents and summaries, and the list of standing issue partners invited to all open meetings, can be found on the website of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.¹ In accordance with the Group's terms of reference, there will be a rotation of members from each region in 2023, with new members starting their terms on 1 June 2023. This process is managed by the regional statistical entities, assisted by the statistics division of the regional commission concerned.

II. Preparations for the fourth United Nations World Data Forum

3. The organization of the United Nations World Data Forum is led by the High-level Group, under the guidance of the Statistical Commission and in close consultation with Member States, international partners and other stakeholders, in accordance with Commission decisions 46/101 and 48/102. The High-level Group receives substantive support from the programme committee for the United Nations World Data Forum and the Statistics Division. Members are selected to serve in a personal capacity on the programme committee and come from across the data and statistics community. The Statistics Division provides the secretariat for the programme committee and the High-level Group. Three United Nations World Data Forums have been hosted by Member States: South Africa in January 2017, the United Arab Emirates in October 2018, and Switzerland in October 2021. Each host was represented by its respective national statistical office. In 2020, the Forum was held virtually due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which started the practice of holding the Forum in a hybrid format, allowing participants to follow both in person and virtually.

¹ See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/hlg/>.

4. Planning for the fourth United Nations World Data Forum, to be held in Hangzhou, China, is likely to be affected by the restrictions still in place because of the pandemic. While the hybrid delivery of the Forum was established as a good practice, an optimal balance between the virtual and in-person experience is an important consideration in holding the Forum. The in-person experience has several benefits since the Forum is a unique venue for experts and other stakeholders from the broad data community to network and have informal interactions. It also makes the important global, regional and national work showcased during the Forum, including the need for development support, more visible to policymakers and decision makers in Governments, the private sector and elsewhere. Once a decision has been made on the timing and logistics of the fourth Forum, it will be communicated in a timely manner to allow all stakeholders to make the necessary preparations to participate.

5. The High-level Group, with input from the secretariat, established a new programme committee for the fourth Forum, consisting of 23 members with experience spanning government, academia and professional organizations, the private sector, international and regional organizations, the donor and philanthropic sector, the geospatial information community and other parts of the data and statistics community. The committee retained eight members who had served on the committee previously, including the two co-chairs of the High-level Group, but the other members are new. The names and biographies of the members of the programme committee can be found on the website of the United Nations World Data Forum.² The host country is an observer member of the committee.

6. The programme committee met 10 times in 2022 and delivered several important outputs in preparation for the fourth Forum. The committee produced a new thematic structure covering four areas: innovation and partnerships for better and more inclusive data; maximizing the use and value of data for better decision-making; building trust and ethics in data; and emerging trends and partnerships to develop the data ecosystem. These thematic areas informed a call for programme proposals, which was open from May to June 2022. Almost 400 proposals were received. The committee assessed the strength of the proposals during two rounds of review and put together a programme from among these proposals of about 70 parallel sessions and 30 special events.³ The committee's other main deliverable for the programme is the framing and selection of speakers for the six high-level plenary sessions⁴ held during the Forum, which will include a call for data stories to provide short videos and multimedia to feature in some of the plenary sessions.

7. The group's workplan for 2023 can be found in the annex to the present report, including the remaining key actions and deliverables that need to be completed for the fourth United Nations World Data Forum and the preparations for the fifth United Nations World Data Forum, to begin later in 2023.

² See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/undataforum/partners/>.

³ A special events category was introduced to the call for programme proposals for the first time in 2022 and is meant to showcase more innovative and interactive formats, such as learning labs, demonstrations and announcements.

⁴ Four of the plenary sessions relate to the four thematic areas; the themes of the other two sessions are selected by the programme committee and the host. There is an arrangement whereby the opening day is organized by the host and the closing session is held jointly by the host and the Secretariat.

III. Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data

A. Background on the Plan

8. The Cape Town Global Action Plan was launched at the first United Nations World Data Forum, held in January 2017. It was endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session.⁵ In July 2017, the General Assembly adopted resolution [71/313](#) welcoming the Plan. The Plan currently comprises 6 strategic areas, 14 objectives and 66 key actions. In the five years since its launch, the data and statistical system has continued to evolve. The context around the Plan has changed as the world faces new and growing obstacles in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. While the annual Sustainable Development Goals Report provides some understanding of the impact of such obstacles, this is obscured by large and persistent gaps in data. In addressing this issue, the Plan remains influential and has been referenced by global initiatives established recently to finance data and statistics, such as the Bern Network on Financing Data for Development, the Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data, the Global Data Facility of the World Bank and the Complex Risk Analytics Fund. The Plan has also been mentioned in many reports and speeches made by senior United Nations officials.

B. Monitoring the implementation of the Plan

9. The High-level Group first considered a review of the Plan at its 21st meeting, held in February 2021. The first action taken was to assess the situation regarding the financing and implementation of the Plan through a survey of national statistical offices and to use this to help inform any changes to the Plan. The survey built on the series of global surveys on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on statistical operations. The second round of the survey on the implementation of the Plan was launched in November 2022. The results will be made available to the Commission in a background document.

C. Process and initial recommendations for the realignment of the Plan

10. Following the results of the first survey on the implementation of the Plan, the High-level Group established a subgroup at its 25th meeting, held in February 2022, to work on the realignment process that will be conducted over a two-year period and to present its outcomes in two stages, timed to coincide with the next two United Nations World Data Forums. The subgroup is composed of Albania, China, Ecuador, Mexico, Pakistan, Poland, Spain, the State of Palestine and issue partners (Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office).

11. At its 27th meeting, held in September 2022, the High-level Group discussed extensively the next steps for the realignment of the Plan under two overarching questions: what new national and regional priorities should be integrated in the updated Plan; and how could a global Plan be meaningful in a national and regional context. Based on these points and previous work done, the subgroup made three recommendations for the Plan going forward:

⁵ See the report of the Statistical Commission on its forty-eighth session ([E/2017/24](#)).

- Maintain the name, Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, since it has gained recognition within the community and is referenced in General Assembly resolution 71/313 on the work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
 - Maintain the scope represented by the six strategic areas of the plan but simplify the framework by bringing strategic area 3, on basic statistical activities and programmes, into strategic area 2, on innovation and modernization.
 - Reduce the levels of the existing structure by developing a single list of priority areas based on a combination of current objectives and key actions, while also reflecting the current context in the global data ecosystem and in countries.
12. Further details of the proposed realignment and preparations for the outcome document will be made available to the Commission in a background document.

IV. Financing for data and statistics

13. At the third United Nations World Data Forum, held in 2021, three initiatives on financing for data and statistics were launched: the Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data of the Bern Network on Financing Data for Development,⁶ the Global Data Facility of the World Bank⁷ and the Complex Risk Analytics Fund.⁸ As a follow-up to the launch of these initiatives, the United Nations, the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, together with the Bern Network and other partners, held a high-level event during the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly to advocate more and better funding for data and statistics. The event was aimed at encouraging donors to contribute to the two new funds – the Global Data Facility and the Complex Risk Analytics Fund – and to coordinate investments in data systems, such as through the Clearinghouse. The partners are also looking to all donors to commit to using 0.8 per cent of their total investments in data and statistics to support data systems in the countries where they work. Further information on the launch is available on the website of the high-level event.⁹ Additional updates on the Global Data Facility and the Clearinghouse are provided below.

A. Global Data Facility

14. The Global Data Facility will support investments in both the fundamentals and at the frontier of data and statistics. This includes key support to modernize data systems and tap into a range of new data sources for better decision-making, improved efficiency, and strengthened information integrity at scale. The Global Data Facility is country-led in every sense. It was designed in collaboration with low- and middle-

⁶ The Clearinghouse is an innovative, free online platform that development cooperation recipients, providers and others can use to close the widening data financing gap. The platform is designed to foster transparency, improve accountability and enhance coordination among donors and development cooperation recipient countries through the provision of timely information and analysis to better match the supply and demand for statistical support.

⁷ The Global Data Facility is a new World Bank-hosted fund to support data and statistics priorities at the global, regional, national and community levels. It is designed to enable improvements in, and strengthen human capacity for, data collection, data management, data governance, data analysis, data-sharing and data use and reuse for transformational social and economic development.

⁸ The Complex Risk Analytics Fund is a new United Nations-hosted fund to coordinate investments in risk data and analytics to enable faster and more targeted, efficient and effective programmes for people in fragile and crisis-affected settings.

⁹ See <https://datawithpurpose.org/>.

income country partners based on country priorities, including prioritizing flexibility and adaptive approaches, and is intended to serve as a primary implementation mechanism for the Cape Town Global Action Plan. It is also intended to help implement key recommendations contained in the World Bank's 2021 World Development Report, entitled "Data for Better Lives". The Global Data Facility has been designed to catalyse significant additional financing and support from international organizations, including the World Bank's International Development Association and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and to incentivize countries to increase domestic financing for data and statistics systems, infrastructure, institutions and human capital.

15. Importantly, the Global Data Facility has also been designed to serve as a global coordination mechanism for a spectrum of partners, practitioners and country clients to support data for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and addressing multiple global crises. This includes close collaboration with the High-level Group, continuing coordination with the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, continuing coordination and complementarity with the Complex Risk Analytics Fund and the Data for Decisions Fund of the International Monetary Fund, and leveraging the Clearinghouse to help inform priorities for support from the Global Data Facility. The Global Data Facility will act on key lessons from the World Bank's decades of experience as a trusted fiduciary and in the management of global trust funds for data and statistics. Additional information on the Global Data Facility is available on the website of the World Bank.¹⁰

B. Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data

16. As of November 2022, the Clearinghouse hosts 17 provider profiles, accounting for the majority of official development assistance to statistics; 23 recipient profiles, with plans under way for expansion; statistical laws and national strategies for the development of statistics for over 100 countries; 36,000 new detailed projects from the latest official development assistance data; and, for the first time, project-level data from during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Clearinghouse will host the relevant results of the forthcoming survey on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan conducted by the World Bank, the Statistics Division and Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century. Behind the scenes, the Clearinghouse secretariat, run with support from Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and Open Data Watch, has collaborated closely with the Data for Development team of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on harmonized methodology to improve the measuring and monitoring of aid for statistics for the OECD Creditor Reporting System.

17. In addition to the broader financing for statistics landscape, the Clearinghouse also offers a revamped channel on financing for gender data, which provides information on financing for gender data over the previous 10 years, among other analyses and resources. This content is intended to help contextualize national and international investments in gender data within the broader funding directed towards development data and statistics for the benefit of development partners, civil society organizations and the public. These stakeholders can also use the information to drill down to specific countries in order to identify gaps in financing for gender data and explore relevant capacity-building projects to better inform decision-making and bring projects to scale. More information on the Clearinghouse is available on its website.¹¹

¹⁰ See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/global-data-facility>.

¹¹ See <https://smartdatafinance.org/>.

V. Workplan for 2023

18. The High-level Group agreed on a workplan for 2023, which is included in the annex to the present report.

VI. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

19. **The Commission is invited:**

(a) **To take note of this report presenting the work of the High-level Group during 2022;**

(b) **To endorse the continued monitoring of the Cape Town Global Action Plan and the way forward for realigning the Plan;**

(c) **To review and approve the proposed workplan of the High-level Group for 2023 as presented in the annex.**

Annex

Workplan for January–December 2023

1. Preparations for the fourth United Nations World Data Forum: Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China

- Programme release and start of in-person registration
- Encourage the organization of local Forum meet-ups, with a call and other means
- Set up and launch the online event platform
- Consultation and launch of the outcome document

2. Preparations for the fifth United Nations World Data Forum: Medellín, Colombia

- Review the membership of the programme committee and its terms of reference
- Review and revision of the thematic areas for the call for programme proposals

Deliverables:

- Final programme and online event platform (fourth Forum)
- Outcome document (fourth Forum)
- Programme committee terms of reference (fifth Forum)
- Call for programme proposals (fifth Forum)

3. Cape Town Global Action Plan

- Complete review/new recommendations of first phase: new framework
- Begin work on second phase: full revision

Deliverables:

- Background paper on the second-round results from the Cape Town Global Action Plan implementation review
- Background paper on the strategy for the realignment of the Cape Town Global Action Plan

4. Meetings

- 29th meeting: 26 February 2023, Statistical Commission, United Nations Headquarters, New York
- 30th meeting: April/May 2023 (to be confirmed), virtual/hybrid (to be confirmed)
- 31st meeting: September/October 2023 (to be confirmed), virtual/hybrid (to be confirmed)
- 32nd meeting: December 2023 (to be confirmed), virtual/hybrid (to be confirmed)