

Statistical Commission
Fifty-fourth session
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Item 3(a) of the provisional agenda

Background document
Available in English only

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

Strategy for the realignment of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for sustainable development data

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

Executive summary

During its [27th meeting](#), the HLG-PCCB discussed extensively the next steps for the revision of the [Cape Town Global Action Plan \(CTGAP\)](#) under two overarching questions: *what new national/regional priorities should be integrated in an updated CTGAP*; and *how can a global plan be meaningful for a national/regional context*.

There were four main points generated from this discussion:

- The global plan needs a new more assertive strategy to communicate a **set of ambitions clearly linked to more detailed plans at the regional and national level**.
- Any new global plan needs to be **outward looking to promote better partnerships, coordination, and capacity development efforts** with data users and other data producers/ custodians, including **more focus on the local and linked to the current policy context and multiple crises**.
- The global plan should continue to be **supported by periodic monitoring and evaluation of progress and lessons learnt** assessment.
- The revision should consider the important developments in the global data ecosystem and in countries and reflect the evolutions and changes in the strategic areas and actions.

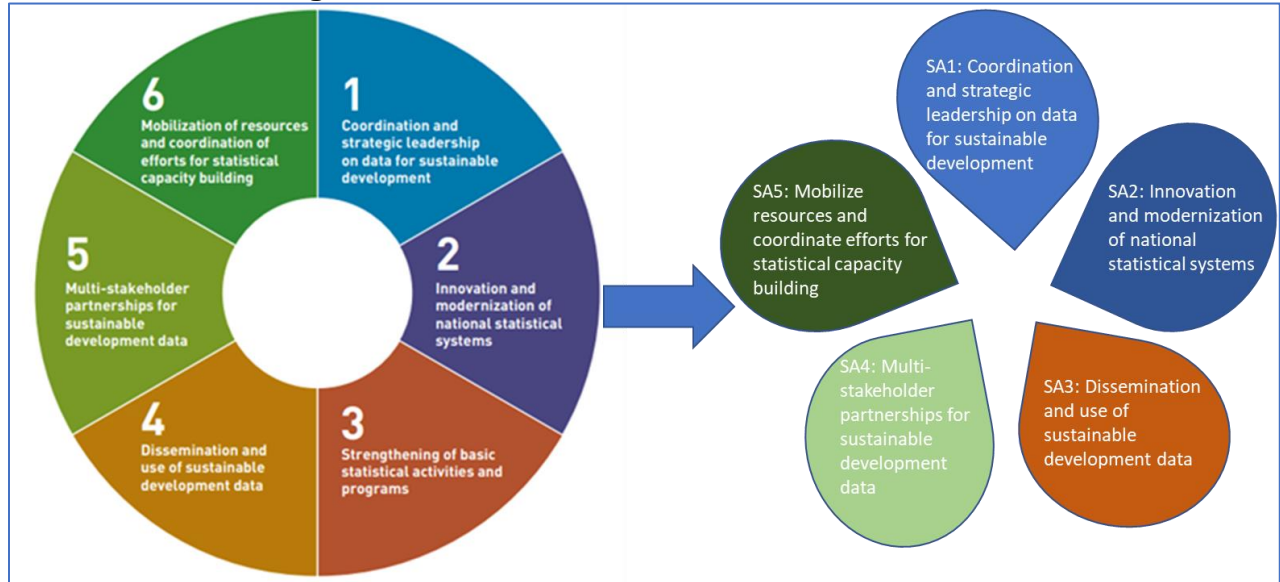
Based on these points and previous work done, the HLG-PCCB will consult the UN Statistical Commission at its 54th session (UNSC54) and the wider stakeholder base during the 4th UN World Data Forum (UNWDF) in Hangzhou, China, on a simpler and more outward looking framework for the global plan which follows three recommendations:

1. Maintain the name, **Cape Town Global Action (CTGAP)**, since it has gained recognition within the community and is referenced in the General Assembly resolution on the SDG indicators for the 2030 Agenda¹ but include new Introduction and Background sessions.

¹ A/RES/71/31

- Maintain the scope represented by the **six Strategic Areas (SAs)** but simplify the framework by first moving (SA3) basic statistical activities and programs within (SA2) on innovation/ modernisation (see illustration 1) with potential for a further merge between (SA5) multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development data and (SA6) mobilization of resources and coordination efforts for statistical capacity building.

Illustration 1: Strategic Areas



- Reduce the levels in the existing structure **developing a single list of by priority areas based on a combination the current objectives and key actions while also reflecting the current context** in the global data ecosystem and in countries. For further explanation, see discussion in this paper and new suggested text presented in Annex A.

Background

The HLG-PCCB first discussed basic conducting a review of the [Cape Town Global Action Plan \(CTGAP\)](#) at its 21st meeting (February 2021). The first action taken was to assess the situation regarding the financing and implementation of CTGAP through a survey of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and use this to help inform any changes to the plan. As a result, the [Survey on the Implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data \(CTGAP survey\)](#) was developed in collaboration with the World Bank and PARIS21. Building on the [Survey of National Statistical Offices during COVID-19](#) series, the CTGAP survey began collection in late summer 2021 and 101 NSOs (out of 194) responded to a range of topics related to the strategic areas of the CTGAP.

The final results from the CTGAP survey were published on 4 February 2022 as a [background paper](#) to the HLG-PCCB's report to the UN Statistical Commission at its 53rd session (UNSC53). It highlighted areas of the CTGAP where implementation remained a priority such as the renewal of statistical legislation, a lack of broader frameworks for data privacy and protection, growing priority for additional coordination in the data ecosystem, use of administrative data, development of an open data strategy and new multi-stakeholder partnerships. On financing, the main result was the need for better certainty over the timing and levels of budgets, especially for large collection exercises like business and agricultural censuses. Overall, Covid-19's squeeze on NSOs remained apparent showing growing capability gaps and inequalities among NSOs related to connectivity issues, remote processing ability and general ICT infrastructure while at the same time greater demand pressures on all NSOs for data on health, social protection, education and the economy.

Following the results of the survey, the HLG-PCCB established a sub-group at its 25th meeting to work on the revision process which will be conducted over a two-year period and present its outcomes in two stages to be timed with the next two UN World Data Forums (UNWDF). The sub-group is composed of the following members: Albania, China, Ecuador, Mexico, Pakistan, Poland, Spain and State of Palestine together with issue partners Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD), the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The sub-group held its first meeting on 5 May 2022 to discuss the strategy and timeline for the revision process.

Basis for a simplified and outward looking framework

The [Cape Town Global Action \(CTGAP\)](#) was launched at the first United Nations World Data Forum (UNWDF), held in Cape Town, South Africa, from 15 to 18 January 2017. The UN General Assembly welcomed the document in its [resolution](#) on 7 July 2017. The CTGAP currently contains 6 strategic areas, 14 objectives and 66 key actions. In the years since its launch, the context around the plan has changed remarkably and not for the better, there are growing obstacles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) due challenges around pandemics, economic crisis, conflict, climate change, energy supply, living costs and food insecurity to name a few.

The UN's [annual reports](#) on the progress towards the SDGs provide some understanding of the impact of these challenges, but this is obscured by the large and persistent gaps in the data to measure this. For taking action on the issue of data, the CTGAP remains influential and is referenced in the establishment of recent global initiatives for the funding of data and statistics such as the [Bern Network](#), the [Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data](#), the [World Bank Global Data Facility](#) and the [Complex Risk Analytics Fund \(CRAF'd\)](#); as well as appearing in many reports and speeches made by senior UN officials.

As a result, HLG-PCCB members and issue partners continue to see the current CTGAP as being very relevant at the strategic area (SA) level for pushing progress on key areas such as data coordination, innovation, dissemination, multi-stakeholder partnerships and mobilising resources. The only change members and issue partners propose to make here is to view the strengthening of basic statistical activities and programs (currently SA3) through modernisation and innovation of the national statistical system (currently SA2).

At the objectives and key actions level of the existing plan, there is less awareness and use of these more detailed levels. HLG-PCCB members and issue partners at its [27th meeting](#) indicated a preference to simplify these levels. A more simplified plan would make it easier to realise other ideas generated in the discussion such as the periodic monitoring and evaluation of progress according to the plan and the generation of lessons learnt. It would also make it easier to communicate and link the plan with regional and national plans which are followed more thoroughly. As a starting point for this list of priorities, the UN secretariat will work the HLG-PCCB to adapt the objectives to the current context in the global data ecosystem and in countries. Then a process needs to be agreed to further develop, validate and consult wider on any final list of priority areas and ensure there is a balance between completeness, brevity, coherence, and level of ambition in this list. The secretariat presents an initial draft of the simplified plan in Annex A.

In addition to the simplification of the plan, there was an interest among the members and issue partners to make the plan more outward looking. A more outward looking approach aligns well with the outcomes of recent UN World Data Forums (UNWDF) such as the [Global data community's response to Covid-19](#) (2020) and the [Bern Data Compact for the Decade of Action on the Sustainable Development Goals](#) (2021) which set out how official statistics and National Statistical Offices (NSOs) position themselves during Covid-19 and with other stakeholders in the wider data ecosystem respectively.

To apply a more outward looking approach to the plan, the UN secretariat suggests presenting additional information matching any final list of priorities, as discussed above, or more detailed list to a stakeholder set to better clarify where partnerships, coordination and mutual capacity development efforts are needed with the wider data ecosystem. The list of stakeholder types could be adapted from the segmentation analysis of those interested in the UN World Data Forum (see illustration 2 below).

Illustration 2: Mapping priorities to stakeholders

SA	Priorities	Academia / Professional body	Civil society	Donor / Philanthropic body	Government (Policy/decision makers)	Government (Data producers)	Government (NSS)	International agency/ UN	Media	Private Sector
4	Multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development data									
	4.1 Data quality assurance	X	X		X	X	X			X
	4.2 User engagement	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	4.3 Public-private partnerships			X	X	X				X

In line with the approach to simplify the presentation of the global plan, the UN secretariat proposes to use a reduced set of stakeholders adapted from table B above: by selecting academia, civil society, donors, media and the private sector as primary and distinct stakeholders; combining UN and international agencies into one category; and splitting Government into policy/decision makers, data producers and national statistical system (NSS)². Again, the HLG-PCCB and issue partners should decide on a process to validate and consult on this stakeholder list and the appropriate matching to the final list of priorities.

Further areas of work

Beyond the work to set the prioritization and stakeholder identification and matching, further thinking is needed on the following;

- How to adopt a more assertive communicate strategy for a new plan aimed at the new policy context?
- How to include linkages to regional/national plans and the local level in a new CTGAP?
- How to adopt periodic monitoring and evaluation of progress with the new CTGAP and create lessons learnt?

² Note, there is no need to list the national statistical office (NSO) as it is assumed they are stakeholders of every priority within the global plan.

Timetable

Steps	Responsible	Timeline	Status
26 th meeting HLG-PCCB: discuss starting point for the revision with full group	ALL	22 June	Completed
1 st draft of new preamble for the revised CTGAP	UNSD/ outcome subgroup	16 July	Further consultation with the group needed during 27 th meeting
27th meeting HLG-PCCB: discuss new context for global plan	ALL	27-28 Sep	Completed
<i>Updated position paper</i> on the new CTGAP framework (following 27 th meeting discussion)	UNSD	31 Oct	Completed
<i>Review position paper</i> and agree on “principles” and level of detail from paper to include in UNSC54 report	UNSD/ Subgroup	31-4 Nov	Completed
<i>Review draft of UNSC54 report</i> with content from position paper included (as agreed by subgroup)	ALL	4-25 November	Completed
28th meeting HLG-PCCB: discuss background paper/ side event on new framework	ALL	15 Dec	Completed
Side event on new CTGAP framework during UNSC54	UNSD/ Subgroup	1 Feb	Completed
<i>Further develop framework</i> and organise events around UNSC54	UNSD/ Subgroup	Jan/Feb	Pending
29th meeting HLG-PCCB: further discussion	ALL	26 Feb	Pending
Announcement at 4 th UNWDF (Hangzhou 2023)	UNSD	27 April	Pending
<i>Start work on the 2nd phase:</i> full revision of the CTGAP	All	2024	Pending

Annex A: Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data

Prepared by the High-level Group for Partnership,
Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics
for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB)

(as of 29 January 2023)

I. Introduction

Quality and timely data are vital for enabling governments, international organisations, civil society, private sector and the general public to make informed decisions and to ensure the accountability of representative bodies. Effective planning, follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of an unprecedented amount of data and statistics at local, national, regional and global levels and by multiple stakeholders. The 2030 Agenda explicitly calls for enhancing capacity building to support national plans to implement the sustainable development goals.

National statistical systems (NSS) face the urgent need to adapt and develop in order to meet the widening, increasing and evolving needs of data users, including for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is a wide range of statistical capacity among countries, with individual countries setting their own national priorities. Some countries are facing steeper challenges than others. The modernization and strengthening of national data and statistical systems will require the full, active, and focused commitment of government policy leaders and the international community. Developing countries, particularly African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries and other countries in vulnerable situations will also require cooperation and partnerships to support these processes when domestic resources are insufficient.

We call for policy leaders to achieve a global pact or alliance that recognizes the funding of NSS modernization efforts is essential for the full implementation of Agenda 2030.

This global plan is intended to provide a framework for discussion on, and planning and implementation of efforts to modernize and strengthen data and statistical systems that can provide the data necessary to achieve the scope and intent of the 2030 Agenda. The plan acknowledges that this work will be country-led, and will occur at sub-national, national, and regional levels. This global plan is proposed to leverage and coordinate these many efforts, and those of international organizations and other partnerships.

Regional, national and local organizations will have the opportunity to develop or adjust their action plans and road maps related to data for the SDGs in line with the Global Action Plan. Regional and national/local specificities can thus be addressed, and the production of regional and national indicators facilitated by capacity building and technical assistance targeted to the specific needs of regions and countries, where needed.

In order to monitor the implementation of the SDGs at an even more detailed level, action plans to improve the availability and quality of sectoral data and indicators may also be developed with the involvement of relevant international organizations.

II. Background [Secretariat recommends shortening this section further]

In the document “*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”, Member States underscored the importance of “quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data... to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure no one is left behind”. (Paragraph 48) Furthermore, Member States recognized the crucial role of “increased support for strengthening data collection and capacity building”, and committed to addressing the gap in data collection for the targets of the 2030 Agenda, so as to better inform the measurement of progress. (Paragraph 57).

In the same document, “*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”, sustainable development goal 17 “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development” and targets 17.18³ and 17.19⁴ refer directly to capacity-building linked to data, monitoring and accountability.

The United Nations Statistical Commission was mandated to develop a global indicator framework for the follow-up and review of the 2030 sustainable development agenda. The Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs) was established to conduct the work necessary to identify the indicators and ensure the full implementation of the related data development programmes. In March 2016, at its forty-seventh session, the UN Statistical Commission “agreed, as a practical starting point, with the proposed global indicator framework” as developed by the IAEG-SDGs. In June 2016, ECOSOC took note of the report of the report of the UN Statistical Commission and adopted its decisions, including on the global indicator framework. Some of the indicators will require strengthening of capacity building efforts to produce the necessary data, while others will require further methodological work and/or definition of standards .

In the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July 2015, Member States noted the importance of drawing on new data sources to meet user needs. “National statistical systems have a central role in generating, disseminating and administering data. They should be supplemented with data and analysis from civil society, academia and the private sector” (Paragraph 125).

The global statistical system is called upon to take decisive actions to transform how data and statistics are produced and disseminated to inform development policy decision, with the vital support of governments and in closer partnership with stakeholders from academia, civil society, the private sector, and the public at large. This will entail the concerted and sustained accounting and coordination of existing efforts and the strategic investment of resources in order to significantly address existing gaps in the technical and institutional capacities of national statistical systems, and thereby improve the coverage, quality and frequency of data and statistics, made available through transparent and public access.

Accordingly, at its forty-sixth session, the United Nations Statistical Commission agreed to establish the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for the 2030 Agenda (HLG-PCCB), comprising Chief Statisticians from 23 national statistical offices representing other countries in

³ Target 17.18, “By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts”.

⁴ Target 17.19, “By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity building in developing countries”.

their respective regions.⁵ The HLG-PCCB was tasked to promote national ownership of the 2030 Agenda monitoring system and fostering statistical capacity building, partnerships and coordination. NSOs must coordinate its implementation at the country level. To further ensure national ownership, HLG-PCCB has prepared this action plan, which will be submitted for endorsement to the UN Statistical Commission at its annual meetings in March 2017. [*Secretariat recommends adding more recent developments*]

III. Guiding Principles

At its third meeting held in New York in January 2016, HLG-PCCB members agreed to develop a proposal for a Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (as a successor of the Busan Action Plan for Statistics from 2011),⁶ with the aim to outline the necessary actions to generate quality and timely data on a routine basis to inform sustainable development at the requested level of disaggregation and population coverage, including for the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. The plan is also intended to fully account, communicate, and coordinate existing efforts, as well as to identify new and strategic ways to efficiently mobilize resources and thereby address the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Independent Expert and Advisory Group on Data Revolution for Sustainable Development as well as the priorities identified in the "Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics."⁷

Key principles underlying the Plan are:

- *Completeness of scope.* The Plan shall address all aspects of coordination, production and use of data for sustainable development. The plan shall describe necessary steps to modernize and strengthen statistical systems. The plan shall address short, middle and long-term actions, with particular focus on building the infrastructure and the capacity needed to support local, national, regional and global statistical requirements. The plan is to be perceived as a living document, open to potential adjustments at a later stage to account for future development.
- *Accountability.* The modern production of statistics requires comprehensive interaction among data providers, producers and users. Therefore, trust among data providers, producers and users of statistics is key for the effective functioning of the national, regional, and global statistical systems in full adherence with the *UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*. Accordingly, the plan identifies national statistical systems, under the leadership of National Statistical Offices as the necessary and appropriate leaders of this effort.
- *Cooperation.* The Plan recognizes the crucial role of cooperation among countries, regional organizations, and other international organizations and stakeholders in supporting countries' plans and efforts in capacity building. The Plan recognizes the expertise and abilities of these key stakeholders as essential resources for progress and modernization. Indeed, they have a crucial role in capacity building exercises and in carrying out statistical capacity building efforts in their areas of work. Nonetheless, the role of international organizations and regional entities to the development of methodologies and data in their respective programmes must be conducted in full consultation and coordination with National Statistical Offices. Coordination and streamlining of these activities are necessary to avoid duplication of efforts and channel effort to furthering the Agenda.

IV. Overview of Strategic Plan

⁵ The Chair of the Statistical Commission is an ex-officio member of the HLG.

⁶ http://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/Busanactionplan_nov2011.pdf

⁷ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-4-Transformative-agenda-for-official-statistics-E.pdf>

The Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data proposes five strategic areas, each associated with several priorities.

Strategic Area 1: Coordination and strategic leadership on data for sustainable development

Priority 1.1: Strengthen coordination of national statistical and data systems and the coordination role of national statistical offices

Priority 1.2: Strengthen data governance and stewardship in the country, with involvement of all parts of the data and statistical system, including all data stakeholders

Priority 1.3: Improve mechanisms of coordination and data sharing between national statistical systems and regional and global statistical and data systems

Priority 1.4: Modernize governance, institutional and legal frameworks to allow national statistical systems to fully embrace open data and inclusive data principles and meet the demands and opportunities of constantly evolving data ecosystems

Priority 1.5: [new priority on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics]

Strategic Area 2: Innovation and modernization of national statistical and data systems, with particular focus on addressing the monitoring needs of the 2030 Agenda

Priority 2.1: Modernize statistical standards, and promote data interoperability to facilitate data integration and data exchange across different parts of the system and different stages of data and statistical production process

Priority 2.2: Facilitate the application of new technologies, and use of innovative data solutions, including from registries and administrative data and from other new data sources,

Priority 2.3: Innovate household survey programmes to facilitate interoperability and integration, implement inclusive and respondent-centric approaches, and new and mixed modes

Priority 2.4: Ensure the implementation of population and housing census programmes, and full development of CRVS

Priority 2.5: Improve the quality of national statistical registers and expand the use of administrative records integrating them with data from surveys and other new data sources

Priority 2.6: Strengthen and expand System of National Accounts and satellite accounts, and the System of Environmental Economic Accounts

Priority 2.7: Integrate geospatial data into data and statistical production programmes at all levels, including by encouraging the use of new technologies and supporting the implementation of the GSGF.

Priority 2.8: Promote fully inclusive data and statistical systems to ensure that data are relevant and reflect the realities of all parts of the population and mainstream gender equality in the whole data value chain

Priority 2.9: Support the strengthening and further development of methodology, techniques and standards to ensure coverage of people with disabilities, all age groups, migrants and refugees, vulnerable groups, and other groups that are important in the national context.

Strategic Area 3: Dissemination and use of sustainable development data

Priority 3.1: Develop and promote innovative strategies to ensure proper dissemination and use of data for sustainable development

[Secretariat recommends a further merge between Strategic Area 4 and 5]

Strategic Area 4: Multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development data

Priority 4.1: Develop and strengthen partnerships of national and international statistical systems with governments, academia, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders involved in the production and use of data for sustainable development

Strategic Area 5: Mobilize resources and coordinate efforts for statistical capacity building

Priority 5.1: Ensure that resources are available to implement the necessary programmes and actions as outlined in this global action plan (both domestic and from international cooperation)

Conclusion

The implementation of this Plan shall address gaps in national statistics and statistical coordination identified in response to the 2030 Agenda. It is essential that such gaps be addressed so as to better enable the use of country-generated statistics in the calculation of global SDG indicators. However, the guidance described in the Plan shall not be restricted to capacity building for SDG indicators alone. Rather, the goal shall be to strengthen the national statistical systems so that they can be most responsive to statistical needs to achieve the 2030 Agenda and beyond.

Periodically, the HLG-PCCB shall review and, if necessary, update this Plan to maintain its effectiveness. Additionally, the group shall develop an annual implementation programme featuring milestones as a means to measure the Plan's progress. The HLG-PCC shall report its progress assessment regularly to the UN Statistical Commission, and, as appropriate, to other relevant bodies, such as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the UN World Data Forum.