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

Report of the 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 2024/312 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, which is submitted to the Commission for discussion and decision.

* E/CN.3/2025/1.



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 regional perspectives in the work of the Group. The current co-chairs are the Director General of the Institute of Statistics of Albania, Elsa Dhuli, and the Government Statistician of the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Samuel Annim. 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 Group met four times in 2024, in a mix of in-person and virtual meetings. Further information on the Group, including its current terms of reference, membership, past meeting documents and summaries and the list of standing issue partners, can be found on the website of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.¹ As stipulated in terms of reference of the High-level Group, there will be a rotation of members within each region in 2025, with new members starting their term on 1 June 2025. This process is managed by the regional statistical commissions of the United Nations, assisted by the respective Statistics Division of that regional commission.

II. United Nations World Data Forum

A. Background

3. The United Nations World Data Forum is organized by the High-level Group, with substantive support from World Data Forum programme committee, 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 (see E/2015/24 and E/2017/24). Members of the programme committee are selected to serve in a personal capacity and provide different perspectives from a cross section of the data and statistics community. The host country is an observer member of the committee. The Statistics Division supports the organization of the Forum in its role as secretariat of the High-level Group, the programme committee and the Statistical Commission.

4. Each United Nations World Data Forum has resulted in the release of an outcome document in which the progress of discussions around data and statistics leading up to the Forum is charted and the community's ambitions and aspirations are expressed. At the first United Nations World Data Forum, in 2017, the Cape Town Global Action Plan was launched, with a focus on where to concentrate statistical and

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

data capacity development efforts to establish the full range of reporting and monitoring needed to measure progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. In 2018, at the second Forum, the Dubai Declaration contained a call for an innovative funding mechanism to support the implementation of the Action Plan. Those documents were followed by the Global Data Community's Response to COVID-19, launched at the virtual United Nations World Data Forum in 2020, and the Bern Data Compact for the Decade of Action on the Sustainable Development Goals (2021), launched at the third Forum, in which the ways official statistics and national statistical offices (NSOs) position themselves during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and in the wider data ecosystem are respectively discussed. The Hangzhou Declaration (2023) was launched at the fourth United Nations World Data Forum to recommit the global community to accelerating progress in the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan, and included a call for a renewed commitment to work with all partners in the data ecosystem to drive innovation, trust, partnerships, the use of data, and impact of and investments in data and statistics.

B. Fifth United Nations World Data Forum

5. The fifth United Nations World Data Forum was held in Medellín, Colombia, from 12 to 15 November 2024 with the support of the Government of Colombia, led by the National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia (DANE), and from the governments of the Antioquia region and the city of Medellín. During the Forum, over 100 different events were held across three days, including four high-level plenary sessions, 60 panel discussions, 11 short-talk sessions, 12 learning labs, 10 locally focused sessions, 5 demonstration sessions and 5 announcement sessions. There were also three exhibition pavilions, including a "United Nations house" and various interactive stands around the venue.

6. The fifth Forum opened on 12 November 2024 with a pre-recorded address by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and in-person addresses by the Director General of the National Statistics Office of Colombia and the Secretary of Economic Development of Medellín. By the end of the Forum, over 2,000 people from more than 120 countries had attended in-person. Over 400 organizations were directly involved in the programme as speakers or session organizers, representing different data communities, such as academia, civil society, the private sector, national statistical offices, other government agencies and international and regional organizations. The fifth Forum was organized to attract more in-person attendance. Only the four high-level plenary sessions were broadcast from the venue. Simultaneous interpretation was provided for every session in the main programme in order to better connect the international and regional audience. As in the previous Forums, an online event platform made it possible to view the entire programme, watch the live broadcast plenary sessions, ask and answer questions, chat with participants and facilitate networking.

7. Communication and promotion activities for the Forum included an opening press conference, a large media space at the venue for interviews with high-level speakers, the publication of blogs, social media posts and traditional media reports and photography at the event.² Feedback from attendees was very positive, and the Forum was well received, as demonstrated by the significant number of messages and posts on the online event platform and on social media.

² For more information, see the United Nations World Data Forum website: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/undataforum/media/>.

C. The Medellín Framework for action on data for sustainable development: renewal of the Cape Town Global Action Plan at the fifth Forum

8. The Medellín Framework for action on data for sustainable development³ launched during the fifth Forum is designed as a second-generation document of the original Cape Town Global Action Plan unveiled at the first Forum, in January 2017.⁴ The Framework is meant to carry forward global action on sustainable development data for the remainder of the 2030 Agenda. At the centre of the revised action plan are 12 new priorities organized under four areas. Since its inception, the programme of the Forum has been organized across distinct and exploratory thematic areas; these now have direct correspondence to areas in the renewed Global Action Plan, strengthening the link between the Plan and the outcomes of the Forum.

9. The legacy of the fifth Forum will be the continued refinement and extension of the Medellín Framework with additional actions. In parallel to the development of this outcome document, issue partners from Open Data Watch and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) launched the “Commit to data” campaign⁵ and collected more than 50 commitments from the data community to support the implementation of the Medellín Framework.

D. Sixth United Nations World Data Forum and plans for an evaluation

10. The sixth host of the Forum was chosen through a competitive process, culminating in a vote at a special meeting of the High-level Group in September 2024. At the conclusion of the special meeting, the 14 members present decided by secret ballot that the sixth Forum would be hosted by Saudi Arabia and tentatively scheduled to be held from 9 to 12 November 2026.

11. The High-level Group, issue partners, the programme committee and next host met after the fifth Forum to reflect on its organization and discuss the lessons learned. The following points will be considered in preparation for the next Forum, to be held in Riyadh: target the participation by specific groups and networks; selecting a broader range of subjects and topics covered by the programme; making further changes to session formats, duration and the balance of the programme, aimed at in-person and hybrid participation; establishing clearer side-event policy and regulation; viewing the timing of the Forum with other events in the statistical and international calendar; and maintaining adequate and creative spaces for networking.

12. The High-level Group will investigate proceeding with an evaluation of the Forum at this critical stage of its maturity following its rotation across the main United Nations regions of the World. The scope and criteria of any evaluation are still to be established. It may be developed in two parts with a longer-term exercise planned around the sixth Forum while a more focused exercise is conducted around the lessons learned in the immediate time-frame prior to the sixth Forum. The first task in planning the sixth Forum will be the selection of a new programme committee, comprising 26 members with experience spanning government, academia and professional associations, the private sector, civil society organizations, international and regional organizations, the

³ Version dated 26 November 2024 available in English only at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/hlg/Medellin%20Framework%20for%20action%20on%20data%20for%20sustainable%20development.pdf>.

⁴ Adopted by the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session and welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/313 on the work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Action Plan currently contains 6 strategic areas, 14 objectives and 66 key actions.

⁵ See <https://commit-2-data.com/>.

donor and philanthropic foundations, national geospatial information authorities, the media and other parts of the data and statistics community.

III. Financing for data and statistics and the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development

13. The fourth International Conference on Financing for Development will take place in June 2025 in Seville, Spain. The High-level Group wishes to adopt a coordinated approach to strengthen the language in the outcome document of the Conference regarding the need for increased funding for data and statistics, in order ultimately to improve investment outcomes. An elements paper, which will serve as the starting point for negotiations around the Conference outcome documents, was published in November. A preparatory committee session was held in December, with two more sessions scheduled for February and April 2025, presenting key opportunities to influence the negotiations around the Conference outcome document. In the process, it is important for national statistical offices also to engage with other key stakeholders in the national statistical system, including central banks, revenue authorities and line ministries, to capture the wider agenda of the Conference process. It will also be valuable to identify champions and engage with national representatives in the negotiations, identify specific negotiation groups, civil society and other parts of the data ecosystem.⁶

IV. Revision of the terms of reference

14. The group wishes to update its terms of reference (see annex I to the present report) to strengthen its strategic decision-making role, including: (a) to define more clearly the role of the Group; (b) to align the areas of responsibility with the areas in the renewed global action plan; and (c) to improve the representation of members at meetings.

V. Workplan for 2025

15. The High-level Group agreed on a workplan for 2025, which is included in annex II to the present report.

VI. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

16. **The Statistical Commission is invited:**

- (a) **To take note of the present report on the work of the High-level Group;**
- (b) **To endorse the Medellín Framework for action on data for sustainable development;**
- (c) **To approve the scoping for an evaluation of the United Nations World Data Forum and the work of the High-level Group;**
- (d) **To approve the proposed update to the terms of reference of the High-level Group, as presented in annex I to the present report;**
- (e) **To review and approve the proposed workplan of the High-level Group for 2025, as presented in annex II to the present report.**

⁶ Further details on the process will be provided in a background document.

Annex I

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

(Amended version of 31 October 2024)

I. Role

1. The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as part of its strategic leadership in the organization of the United Nations World Data Forum, is the custodian of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for sustainable development data and its follow-up outcome documents resulting from successive Forums.

2. Through these activities, the High-level Group connects data and statistics for sustainable development, relating to the framework of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, with other parts of government and relevant external stakeholders, such as civil society (non-governmental organizations), the private sector, academia and professional associations, international and regional agencies, donor and philanthropic foundations, national geospatial information authorities and the media.

II. Objectives

3. The objectives of the High-level Group are:

(a) To promote national ownership of, and foster capacity-building, partnership and coordination for, the follow-up and review system of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including to ensure consistency between national, regional and global data and statistics;

(b) To recommend priority areas to target funding for statistical capacity-building and advocate for resource mobilization, management and monitoring;

(c) To review and make recommendations as appropriate and in cooperation with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to facilitate the modernization and harmonization of data infrastructures and identify ways to leverage the resources and creativity of the private sector;

(d) To promote engagement between the official statistics community and all other stakeholders working on the implementation and monitoring of globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

III. Membership

4. The High-level Group will comprise 22 member representatives of national statistical offices. Members will be nominated through existing regional mechanisms¹ for an initial term of two years. A rotation of the members will take place every two years on the basis of the following criteria: two members will be replaced from each region where there are four or five members, and one will be replaced where there are three members or fewer.² It is preferable that members of the High-level Group not

¹ Statistical Commission for Africa, Conference of European Statisticians, Statistical Conference of the Americas, Committee on Statistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

² Currently, there are five members from Africa, two from Western Asia, four from Asia, one from the Pacific, two from the Caribbean, three from Latin America, one from Eastern Europe and four from Europe and North America.

serve concurrently as members of its sibling group, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. The members of the High-level Group will elect two Co-Chairs. One or both Co-Chairs are also expected to rotate every two years. However, when they step down, they are invited to serve for an additional term of two years as members.

5. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will act as the secretariat.

IV. Organization and conduct of the work

6. The High-level Group will work in close consultation with its sibling group, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, through its Co-Chairs and the Chair of the Statistical Commission, who are invited to its meetings. The High-level Group will also seek inputs from non-member countries through their respective regional mechanisms.

7. To engage the wider data ecosystem in its work, the High-level Group will invite issue partners, as regular non-member and observer participants are known, with expertise in a specific area of interest to contribute their technical advice and share their experiences. The criteria for their invitation will depend on the strategic priorities established by the High-level Group and on to the nature of the topics for discussion at each meeting or stage of a workstream. A standing list of issue partners will be maintained as the invitation list to the group's meetings.

8. The group will meet four times per year with the following conventions, with exceptions made according to the preferences of members and needs of the agenda:

(a) All regular meetings will be open by default for issue partners to attend and for other non-members by invitation only;

(b) In-person/hybrid meeting will be held prior to the session of the Statistical Commission each year and on the first day and day after the United Nations World Data Forum, in years when it takes place. Other meetings will normally be held virtually;

(c) Special meetings may be convened to discuss specific issues and usually in a closed session.

9. The strategic nature of the group requires the leadership level for each member country to be at the Chief Statistician (or equivalent) of the national statistical office (NSO), with the following conditions:

(a) The Chief Statistician can designate other high-level colleagues having appropriate capacities from the NSO to attend meetings on their behalf in the event of a temporary absence or on a permanent basis, as appropriate. However, strategic decisions defined in advance in the meeting agenda will require the physical or written representation of the Chief Statistician.

(b) Regular attendance at meetings is required; non-participation by a member country in two consecutive meetings will incur a notice by the secretariat to their regional mechanism and, if non-participation continues into a third meeting, then the secretariat will request an out-of-cycle rotation of that member through their regional mechanism.

V. Expected duration

10. The High-level Group will operate under the auspices of the Statistical Commission and will report to it annually, seeking its guidance.

11. The mandate and functioning of the High-level Group will be reviewed by the Statistical Commission as needed.

VI. Annual work plan

12. In line with the mandate and further guidance given by the Commission, the High-level Group will plan its activities and deliverables according to an annual work plan presented for approval each year to the Commission.

Annex II

Workplan: January–December 2025

1. Preparations for the United Nations World Data Forum to be held in 2026 in Riyadh

- (a) Selection of the Programme Committee (July 2025)
- (b) Review of thematic areas and key topics (October 2025)
- (c) Launch of the public call for programme proposals (by November 2025);
- (d) Launch of the seventh host country selection process (December 2025).

Deliverables

- Thematic area and key topic framework
- Announcement of the call for programme proposals
- Announcement of the call for the seventh host country

2. Scoping for an evaluation of the United Nations World Data Forum and the work of the group

Establish the scope and timetable for the evaluation.

Deliverables

- Background document on the scoping of the evaluation

3. Medellín Framework for action on data for sustainable development: further refinement and implementation work

- (a) Refinement of the action list;
- (b) Incorporate any outcomes and actions on financing for data and statistics from the preparatory work leading up to the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development;¹
- (c) Further development and leveraging of the “Commit to data” campaign.

Deliverables

- Background document on inputs for the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
- Preparatory document on the desired outcomes for the sixth Forum

4. Meetings

- (a) 37th meeting: 2 March 2025, Statistical Commission, United Nations Headquarters, New York;
- (b) 38th meeting: April 2025, virtual/hybrid (to be confirmed);
- (c) 39th meeting: July 2025, virtual/hybrid (to be confirmed);
- (d) 40th meeting: November 2025, virtual/hybrid (to be confirmed).

¹ Further details on the process will be provided in a background document.