

## Statement for Statistical Commission at ECOSOC meeting

*[Background: The theme of the 2021 ECOSOC Substantive Session and HLPF is “**Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development; a 5 minutes overview of the statistical commission contribution is expected.]***

The enormous health, societal and economic challenges imposed by Covid have increased the need and importance of high quality data and statistics in today’s world. It has equally placed demands on the skills and expertise resident in national statistical offices that allow for data standardization, integration, and robust analysis to allow policy makers to see things sooner and act faster. It has given greater prominence to data gaps for targeted decisions that help to reduce inequities and the differential impact of the virus on populations and industrial sectors. The global statistical community has shown amazing resilience and agility, innovation and partnerships to strengthen its relevance and help in evidence based decisions.

To make this less theoretical, let me illustrate through a couple of examples from my own agency, Statistics Canada:

Effectively and efficiently managing our inventories and supply and demand of Personal Protective Equipment has been vital. We brought in our expertise in epidemiological modelling and demand forecasting to help

leaders make informed decisions on supply chains for gloves, gowns, respirators and masks, through a cloud-based data repository fuelled through good data standards and supplemented by data from surveys of evolving public and private sector demands.

- By integrating data with a standard geographical frame, we built the Canadian Geospatial Explorer. This interactive map enables decision makers and citizens to visualize and access key data such as: age and gender distribution; ethnocultural variables; language proficiency; and health data such as pre-existing conditions to better plan vaccine distribution, to target messages by language and the most effective communications channel, and soon to correlate vaccination efforts with economic and social impact.
- COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting our citizens and sectors of our economy.
  - In July, we reported an unemployment rate for South Asians that
  - was more than twice that of overall population.
  - And the unemployment for Black communities was even higher.
  - Businesses owned by visible minorities suffered higher revenue losses.
  - Fewer of them had the cash reserves or the ability to take on more
  - debt in order to keep their businesses going.
  - Meanwhile, one in three households comprised of ethnocultural

- minorities reported difficulties paying the costs of transportation,
- housing, food and clothing compared to 1 in 5 for the overall
- population.

We are using our expertise to do contact tracing and through surveys providing a better picture of anti-body prevalence. These types of insights are critical for policymakers to develop targeted programs and subsequently assess their impacts. The ability to know sooner allows them to act faster. Like Statistics Canada, many NSOs have and continue to step up and play a prominent role in our collective efforts to build back better.

While most National Statistics Offices have worked hard to provide policy makers with sound statistical information, restrictions on mobility and lock downs have equally had a profound impact on how national statistical offices conduct their work, how they carry out a census with minimal or no contact, and how surveys that usually require a visit to a retail outlet of a household are conducted when that is not possible. Many have experimented and implemented new ways to fill data gaps, routinely producing flash estimates, real-time data modelling by building on strong statistical frameworks and systems. For example, we now produce the consumer price index without stepping into a single grocery store and have been producing the labour force survey estimates without a single face to face interview.

The leadership, efforts and impact of the Statistical Commission have never been more needed or impactful to ensure ideas are shared, that capacity is strengthened, and that no NSO is left behind. The 52nd session

of the Statistical Commission will be virtually convened from March 1 to 3 and then on the 5th, 2021. The Bureau and the Secretariat are in the process of preparing for the session and asking ECOSOC to allow technical decisions to be taken via silence procedures.

The work of the Commission is focused on 3 priorities:

1. Contributing directly to the 2021 theme of resiliency and sustainability;
2. Leveraging opportunities to work with other areas of ECOSOC and improving coordination; and
3. Building resiliency into national statistical systems

The Statistical Commission continues to lead the global statistical system in providing the best available data and statistics to build an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Key topics for discussion are the response of the global statistical system to COVID, the emerging role of National Statistical Offices as “Data Stewards”, better coordination of the UN Statistical System and a number of technical and strategic topics such as the “Future of Economic Statistics”. Each of these topics is directly linked to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and to the modernization of the international statistical system necessary to address the evolving data ecosystem and to respond to critical policy needs.

National Statistical Offices have embraced alternative data sources

including administrative records, scanner data, earth observation data and are playing a “de facto” role of data stewards through the provision of services including data curation, data literacy and the provision of data quality tools and/or assessments. The topic of data stewardship, being examined by the Statistical Commission is one example of how the international statistical system is evolving to assist in the data ecosystem modernization journey.

As a technical body, the Statistical Commission’s main contribution is to adopt standards and methodologies which provide for solid measures that are independent, comparable, and scientifically grounded, providing high-quality evidence for evidence-based decision making.

Harnessing new data sources, creating new statistical information and becoming data stewards requires adequate funding. The Statistical Commission continues to support the establishment of an innovative financing mechanism, as called for in the Dubai Declaration, to build resilient and sustainable modern national statistical systems globally that can provide the information policy makers need to make sure we leave no one behind.

The Statistical Commission is leveraging opportunities to build partnerships and coordination. Data is a team sport, and NSOs must play a leading role. Partnerships provides opportunities to learn, become more efficient and effective. The Statistical Commission works in close cooperation with many groups including the Commission on the Status of Women, the Population Commission, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

the Commission on Social Development, and the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UNGGIM) to name a few. These partnerships have enabled the statistical community to better respond to emerging issues such as the need for more geo-located population, economic and social statistics.

At the heart of a strong global statistical system is effective coordination. The Statistical Commission continues to review the coordination mechanisms of the UN Statistical system, particularly in the area of statistical capacity development, based on the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, which was approved by the General Assembly.

An example of enhanced coordination is in the Friends of the Chair on Economic Statistics, which has completed its work and developed a series of recommendations that are designed to improve coordination across the system of economic statistics and address the interlinked nature of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of Sustainable Development.

Specific to COVID19 and its impact on national statistical offices, the UN Statistics Division and the World Bank's Development Data Group collaborated with the regional commissions to launch a COVID-19 survey of national statistical offices, with the objective of monitoring the impact of the pandemic on statistical operations and the evolving needs of countries around the globe. Three rounds of the survey have been carried out to

inform the global statistical community, donors, development partners and the public and to ensure that contingency plans and strategic decisions are based on evidence and the needs of member states.

My final point is related the impact of COVID19 on the statistical systems and the need to build more resiliency into the system as a bridge to the future. Not all national statistical systems have had the resources to pivot to the new virtual reality. Some national statistical systems face enormous challenges as a result infrastructure and resource constraints. Without strong, robust national statistics, policy makers are forced to make decision based on none or flimsy evidence. The Statistical Commission is providing guidance and tools and ensuring adequate resourcing to build modern statistical systems.

Good data and statistics are the foundation of effective policy making and the work of the international statistical community under the leadership Statistical Commission has never been more prominent. Better data means better lives. Strong national and international statistical systems are critical in building back better together. Thank you.