

Summary Report

Fourth Organizational Sprint Meeting of the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians

Virtual Meeting, 2 February 2022

Introduction

1. The Fourth (Virtual) Organizational Sprint Meeting of the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians (Network) was organized on 2 February 2022 to determine the program of work for the Network for period 2022 and 2023. The meeting was also the last one for the Sprint. Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and Assistant Chief Statistician from Canada, Mr. Greg Peterson co-chaired the meeting, which was attended by around 30 participants from countries and international and regional organizations.
2. Mr. Schweinfest and Mr. Peterson provided the opening remarks. Mr. Schweinfest lauded the pioneering spirit shown by the participants of the Sprint in setting up the network and framing the issues in order to keep economic statistics relevant and efficient. He noted that the outcomes of the meetings will be presented to the 53rd session of the Statistical Commission for endorsement.
3. Mr. Peterson agreed with the views of Mr. Schweinfest. He also congratulated Statistics Netherlands and UNSD for successfully organizing the first meeting of the Data Access Sprint on 26 January 2022. In observed, he reiterated that the work of the network can add value to the economic statistical ecosystem without providing an extra layer of governance.
4. Participants approved the summary of the third organizational sprint meeting, which will be made available on the [meeting website](#).
5. The following is a summary of the discussions and the conclusions of the meeting.

User consultations

6. Mr. Peterson outlined the proposal to organize an annual capstone event that brings together data users and producers in a United Nations Global Forum on Economic Statistics (Global Forum) to ensure that statistical activities remain relevant, while Mr. Frantisek Bernadic of Eurostat introduced the proposal to organize a Eurostat/United Nations Global Conference on the Update of the Macroeconomic Statistics Standards (Global Conference) to address the new recommendations for the update of the SNA and BPM in the week of 14 November 2022. The Global Conference will create a platform for the exchange of views between high-level users and producers of macroeconomic statistics and other topics such as experimentation and testing of the recommendations for the updated SNA and BOP, and statistical capacity building. The Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts, Advisory Expert Group on national accounts and the Network can coordinate with one another by proposing topics on the agenda and co-organizing some sessions. One outcome can be a set of priorities that the Network can consider in its work programme. Also, the Global Forum will involve the organization of regional user consultations (“The Road to ...”) to gather the views of a broader range of users on topics that cover the update of the macroeconomic statistical standards as well as beyond the update of the current standards to consider the forward-looking agenda on economic statistics. The outcomes of the “the Road to ...” will lead up to the annual Global Forum

and inform the Global Conference.

7. Participants broadly welcomed the proposals to organize the two events. However, given that time needed to assess the impact of proposed changes in macroeconomic statistical standards into manuals, they advised that it would be useful to consider how to moderate the expectations of high-level users who may have the impression that their suggestions to change these standards can be made immediately. Participants also observed that one way to address user needs is to ask users for resources to tap into private data sources to produce less reliable but timely indicators to monitor the impact of sudden exogenous shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants further suggested the formation of a group to discuss the modalities of both events and maximize the synergies between them and that Eurostat prepare a revised draft of the concept note for the Global Conference.
8. Mr. Ivo Havinga, independent expert, presented the proposed outline of the synthesis report of the UN Network of the reports to the United Nations Statistical Commission. The report aims to provide a summary view of the UN Statistical Commission reports relevant for the system of economic statistics based on the four workstreams of the Network (i.e., better enabling the institutional arrangements and organization; better data and data solutions, statistical infrastructure and operations; better statistical methods and framework; and better networking, user consultation, and communication. It will facilitate dialogue with the relevant statistical committees and groups to determine shared priorities and actions to address challenges.
9. Participants agreed with the proposal outline of the synthesis report as it will provide a comprehensive, holistic and cross-cutting review of the Statistical Commission reports which are related to economic statistics and facilitate the identification of statistical gaps and priorities which can be addressed by the Network, in collaboration with the relevant statistical committees and groups.

Action: The Bureau will form a group to discuss the modalities of the Global Conference and Global Forum. Eurostat will prepare a revised concept note for the Global Forum. The Bureau will incorporate the proposed outline of the synthesis report into the background document for the report of the Network to the Statistical Commission.

Membership and co-chairs of the Network

10. Mr. Schweinfest informed participants that UNSD had worked together with the regional commissions to identify senior economic statisticians from their respective regions to join the Network to ensure inclusiveness and diversity. UNSD will next invite the candidates to join the Network, in coordination with the regional commissions. After that, a co-chair from a developing country will be appointed so that the role of the Bureau can be formalized. In the meantime, participants endorsed the proposal of Mr. Schweinfest to appoint Mr. Greg Peterson as one of the co-chairs.

Action: UNSD will finalize the membership of the Network, including the co-chairs, and update the Network after that.

Workplan for the Network

11. Mr. Peterson outlined the proposed themes for the rolling two-year workplan. These included globalization and supply chains of multinational enterprises; digitalization and technological innovation; urbanization; climate change; demographic shifts; inequality; and informal economy. Given the comeback of inflation, they also proposed to add prices, in particular, housing prices, to the

workplan.

12. Participants agreed with the proposed themes and also proposed that some criteria could be developed to prioritize them. They also observed that many themes have cross-cutting issues and are, thus, interdependent. Thus, the future thematic sprints will need to coordinate their work to identify common challenges in order to develop common fit-for-purpose recommendations. In addition, given the comeback of inflation, participants suggested adding prices, including housing prices, to the workplan of the Network. Another theme that was proposed as disaster risk reduction
13. Mr. Richard Heys, UK ONS, and Ms. Lianne Ippel, Statistics Netherlands, provided updates on the progress of the work of the Beyond GDP and Data Access Sprints, respectively. Both noted the dates of the meetings of the two thematic sprints in 2022. In particular, Mr. Heys noted that UNSD will send a letter to invite national statistical agencies to participate in the first meeting of the Beyond GDP Sprint will take place on 10 March 2022. This meeting will be followed by four more meetings. Ms. Ippel debriefed participants on the first session of the Data Access Sprint which was organized on 26 January 2022.

Action: UNSD to send invitation letter for Beyond GDP Sprint to national statistical agencies and coordinate with the IMF to invite the central banks to join the Sprint.

Closing remarks and next steps

14. Mr. Schweinfest and Mr. Peterson thanked participants for contributing to the remarkable progress in the work of the Sprint, which has created a pathway for the work of the Network going forward. They noted that the outcomes and recommendations of the meetings of the Organizational Sprint will be presented and discussed at the 53rd session of the Statistical Commission.