

Foreword

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The publication of the Special Issue on the future of economic statistics in the Statistical Journal of the International Association for Official Statistics (SJAOS) is taking place during unprecedented times. With just 10 years remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – the shared vision of all countries to end poverty and build a peaceful, sustainable world for all people – an ambitious Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs has been launched. This has mobilized governments, civil society, and businesses, and called on all people to act and make the Goals their own.

Official statistics support the Decade of Action in measuring the progress in delivering sustainable, inclusive and equitable development to everyone, everywhere – leaving no one behind. Amidst the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, everyday life is changing in unprecedented ways. The national, regional, and international statistical agencies around the world are exploring new ways to engage and to provide clear, up-to-date information to guide and monitor government support measures, and inform businesses and the general public about the economic, social, and environmental impact of this health crisis.

The decision of the Statistical Commission at its 50th session (in 2019) to create the Friends of the Chair Group (FoC Group) on Economic Statistics with the mandate to review the update of the system of economic statistics is more relevant than ever. In particular, it requested the FoC Group to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of the current system of economic statistics, take stock of the governance

arrangements of existing statistical groups and statistical initiatives, and provide recommendations on the working methods and the update of the system of economic statistics.

Good and steady progress has been made by the FoC Group in its assessment of the system of economic statistics, guided by extensive consultations of the statistical and user community of which the interim results are presented in the Guest Editorial of this Special Issue. Further work is needed to shape the final recommendations of the FoC Group to be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its 52nd Session in 2021.

This Special Issue on the future of economic statistics could not be timelier as it will allow us to consult with the academic community for official statistics. Therefore, we like to thank Pieter Everaers, Editor in Chief of the SJAOS for his generous offer to prepare a Special Issue of the SJAOS and Ivo Havinga, Assistant Director Economic Statistics, United Nations Statistics Division and Guest Editor of the SJAOS in managing the publication of this Special Issue of the future of economic statistics.

We look forward to the forthcoming discussion on the future of economic statistics on the online discussion platform of the SJAOS, which will be the opportunity for anyone working or interested in official statistics to contribute to the global consultation on the future of economic statistics.

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