

COORDINATION OF DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS
IN THE CONTEXT OF FOLLOW-UP TO MAJOR UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS

Note by UNSD

1. At its last meeting in Vienna (September 2001) the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities had provided feedback to the draft report entitled “An assessment of the statistical indicators derived from United Nations summits and meeting”, prepared by the Friends of the Chair of the Statistical Commission. This draft report was subsequently discussed and critically reviewed by an expert group meeting organized by the UN Statistics Division in October 2001. The finalized report was presented to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-third session (March 2002) as document E/CN.3/2002/26. It contained a set of specific recommendations.
2. The Statistical Commission “welcomed the comprehensive report presented by the Friends of the Chair and commended Tim Holt for his leadership (...). It welcomed the indicator architecture built on three tiers and the technical evaluations contained on the United Nations Statistics Division web site. It noted that further work to strengthen the web site was needed”. The Commission also “endorsed the recommendations made in the report, in particular recommendation No.6 on establishing a standing committee for indicators, supported by the Division as secretariat” (Report of the Statistical Commission, thirty-third session, E/CN.3/2002/31 para. 66).
3. The Economic and Social Council in its substantive session in July 2002 deferred consideration of the report of the Statistical Commission to its resumed session in October 2002.
4. The UN Statistics Division proposed to the Bureau of the Statistical Commission a list of countries to serve on the standing committee on indicators, as well as terms of reference for the group (see appendix). As the Bureau agreed with the proposal, UNSD is currently in the process of approaching the selected countries, to facilitate a first round of exchanges.

Appendix

Terms of reference for the Standing Advisory Committee on Development Indicators

Background

In its resolution 2000/27, the Economic and Social Council requested the Statistical Commission, as its authoritative technical advisory body, to:

- Provide leadership in the field of conference indicators;
- Conduct an in-depth technical analysis of conference indicators;
- Make recommendations regarding a limited list of conference indicators;
- Develop and recommend to the Council a mechanism of statistical review for future proposed indicators.

As a result, at its 32nd Session (2001) the Statistical Commission established a group of “Friends of the Chair” to consider these issues further and report thereon to the Commission at its 33rd session (2002). The group was led by Professor Tim Holt (UK) and presented its final “Report of the Friends of the Chair of the Statistical Commission on an assessment of the statistical indicators derived from United Nations summit meetings” (E/CN.3/2002/26) at the 33rd session of the Commission containing 31 recommendations (See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2002.htm>). Inter alia, the report recommends the Statistical Commission to “establish a standing committee to take responsibility for indicator issues and to act on behalf of the Commission between meetings to ensure that no undue delay occurs.” The Commission welcomed the report and endorsed the recommendations made in it, in particular the recommendation on “establishing a standing committee for indicators, supported by the Division as the secretariat. That would enable the Commission and the regional and the national statistics systems to remain engaged in a dialogue with international, regional and national policy makers, and in particular to be involved at an early stage in the future development of new indicators.”

Tasks

1. The Committee will maintain the framework provided by the Friends of the Chair’s report. This includes (i) establishing new indicators in response to future UN conferences and summits, (ii) keeping under review the proposed hierarchical framework and priorities, and (iii) reviewing and refining existing indicators over time.

In particular, the United Nations Statistics Division, in close cooperation with the lead policy officials and as a result of the consultation process recommended in para. 100 of the Report, will prepare recommendations for the Standing Committee. The Committee may request its secretariat to investigate certain related issues and prepare a brief report. The Committee will review these recommendations and either act on behalf of the Commission or prepare itself recommendations for the Commission as appropriate. In this process the Committee takes care that the criteria for selecting indicators that were developed by the Friends of the Chair (paras. 52-55 of the report) are being applied.

Furthermore, that Committee will be responsible for the periodic review and improvement of all statistical indicators and should, when such a review results in change, provide an approach to support countries in moving to the improved indicator while maintaining continuity with the recent past. These periodic reviews of individual statistical indicators within the framework should be included within the appropriate work programmes of statistical review and revision that are regularly reported to the Statistical Commission.

2. The Committee will continuously improve the UNSD metadata website <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/indicatorfoc/> and particular attention to the health and nutrition indicators.

Administrative issues

The Committee will conduct all its business electronically and will be supported by the UN Statistics Division, which will be acting as its secretariat.

The Committee will provide ad hoc reports to the Statistical Commission either on the request of the Commission or on its own initiative.

The Statistical Commission may review and change the membership of the Committee at each session.

Proposed list of countries for the Standing Advisory Committee on Development Indicators

Australia

Brazil

Hungary

Indonesia

Italy

Malaysia

Norway

Palestine

South Africa

UK