

Highlights of the expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics: the role of international organizations

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1. The UNSD, in collaboration with the Siena Group on Social Statistics, convened an expert group meeting on Setting the Scope of Social Statistics in New York on 6-9 May 2003. (The report of the meeting is available on the CCSA website.)
2. In response to the Statistical Commission's call for a more systematic development of social statistics, this meeting sought to address the challenges facing social statistics and develop a concrete strategy for furthering the development of social statistics. The expert group meeting's final product was a set of recommendations that will serve as a guide in formulating a work programme for social statistics through the year 2015, to be presented to the next Statistical Commission for consideration.
3. The international organizations were well represented in the expert group meeting. In addition to experts from 18 countries, representatives of six international organizations and seven regional or sub-regional organizations or institutions participated. These include FAO, UNESCO, ILO, IMF, UNDP, World Bank, AFRISTAT, African Population and Health Research Center, CARICOM, ECE, Eurostat, SIAP and TES Institute.
4. The discussions covered a wide range of issues and topics including the need for a conceptual framework, the importance of standards and metadata, the low political commitment to social statistics, the importance of coordination, and capacity building in social statistics (see report of the EGM).

5. Coordination in social statistics was discussed at length, and experts called for improved coordination among international agencies and organizations engaged in the area of social statistics. The current problems of conflicting standards in social statistics were also raised, and experts looked to international organizations to work jointly in harmonizing international standards.
6. The expert group meeting came up with a long list of recommendations. Of particular note is the recognition that all actors—UNSD, international and regional organizations, national statistical offices and line ministries, professional training institutes, etc.—need to work together to achieve progress in the development of social statistics. The group therefore requested that UNSD, in collaboration with all partners, develop a work programme for social statistics through 2015 to set the scope and complement future programme activities in social statistics.
7. UNSD is currently drafting this work programme, based on the recommendations of the expert group meeting. Development of the work programme for social statistics is a joint effort of UNSD and international and regional partners, as well as NSOs. UNSD will circulate the draft work programme to all relevant international agencies and other partners, including those who were unable to participate in the expert group meeting, before the end of September 2003. International agencies and organizations, regional commissions and other relevant organizations will be requested to provide feedback within a reasonable amount of time.