
Report of the 2nd Meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (Geneva, 8-10 September 2003)

I. Introduction

1. The CCSA held its second meeting in at the International Labour Office (ILO) in Geneva from 8-10 September 2003. The agenda is contained in annex I below, the list of participants in annex II and the list of documents in annex III.

II. Work of the CCSA Meeting

A. Opening of the meeting

2. The meeting was chaired by Andrew Flatt, Director of the Statistics Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP). In opening the meeting, Mr. Flatt on behalf of the Committee thanked the ILO for hosting the meeting.

B. Adoption of the agenda

3. The Committee adopted the agenda as set out in annex I.

C. Aggregation of national data to regional and global estimates

4. The Committee welcomed the report on "Aggregation of national data to regional and global estimates" (document SA/2003/8) commissioned by ILO in cooperation with the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP-HDRO and FAO. In particular the Committee commended the author, Prof. Tim Holt, for a thorough analysis of the relevant issues and for developing a detailed list of specific suggestions.
5. The Committee agreed with the recommendations on the need for good documentation for all MDG indicators (suggestion 1), clear time attribution (suggestion 3) and use of a uniform regional classification for MDG aggregates (suggestion 4), even though the persisting problem of diverging regional country classifications in the wider UN system was mentioned. With respect to accessibility of microdata (suggestion 2), Committee members suggested to qualify the recommendation taking into account legal and financial limitations. Also the responsibility of the primary collector to make data accessible was stressed.
6. There was no uniform view in the Committee on the principles of imputations (suggestions 5-8), including the question of whether to use implicit or explicit imputations for missing country data. The Committee members acknowledged that agencies currently use different practices, sometimes even within agencies for different data series. Different practices are motivated by (i) differences in the institutional legal frameworks, (ii) different degrees of political challenges and (iii) different perceptions about the intended use of certain indicators. Some committee members pointed out that

- explicit imputations force agencies to be more transparent, that they are helpful in recalculating regional groupings and that within the context of the MDG all countries have made a commitment to produce national data. Whilst some members emphasized the need to cooperate with NSOs on imputations others felt that imputations generally create disincentives to make the necessary investments in statistics at the national level.
7. With respect to specific imputation techniques (suggestions 9-12), the Committee agreed that these issues needed to be carefully considered by the technical experts in charge of producing MDG series. For this review the Committee encouraged the experts to seek technical inputs from a larger constituency of experts, including academia, possibly in the form of a 'virtual expert group on imputation'. In this context the need for a clear strategic decision on the frequency of producing indicators/imputations was emphasized.
 8. In its discussion on recommendations referring to aggregation techniques (suggestions 13-20), the Committee focused on the issue of estimating trends as they are one of the key elements of the MDG monitoring process. In this context WHO informed the Committee members that it is developing a model with UNICEF to directly estimate trends for maternal mortality. Due to the widespread political attention to MDGs, the need for producing easily understandable trend estimates was emphasized. Some committee members raised questions about the principle of using extrapolation techniques based on past trends, as the MDGs explicitly aim at changing trends through policy interventions.
 9. The Committee decided that in order to endorse a set of specific recommendations, further work was needed. In particular a distinction between more technical issues and issues of a strategic nature needs to be made. The frequency of producing data, the corresponding development of data sources (surveys, administrative sources), and the resource allocation between national and international reporting were identified as issues of a strategic nature, which require attention at a higher level. This was considered all the more pressing, as the Committee agreed that the MDGs provide a unique opportunity to both build capacity at the national level and improve cooperation at the international level.
 10. The Committee welcomed the World Bank's offer to provide the necessary resources to enable Prof. Holt to further develop his set of recommendations, and agreed that he would need clear terms of reference and the input of Committee members in that task. In this context also, the Committee asked the forthcoming Inter-agency Technical Meeting on MDGs to discuss and review the recommendations contained in SA/2003/8. The Committee also requested UNSD to develop - in close consultation with other international agencies - a proposal for addressing the strategic issues mentioned in paragraph 9 , to be considered at the next CCSA meeting.

D. Towards a Statistical System

11. The Committee expressed appreciation to ECE for the preparation of the report "Towards a Statistical System" (document SA/2003/9). Many Committee members agreed during the discussion that the current international cooperation arrangements regarding statistics, centering around the UN Statistical Commission, could be characterized as a "system", albeit a decentralized and loose one, which is primarily based on strong and shared professional ethics.

12. Committee members concurred that there is room for improvement of the current cooperation arrangements in areas such as shared data management, development of concepts and methods as well as technical cooperation. However, some Committee members expressed reservations as to whether the vision of a rules-based governance structure for an International Statistical System as outlined in the ECE report could be realized. The absence of a common decision making intergovernmental body was mentioned as the main impediment. In particular, statistical units in specialized agencies shared their difficulties in convincing their senior management why a strong commitment to an International Statistical System could be beneficial for their respective organizations. Some committee members also referred to unsuccessful attempts in creating Statistical Systems at a regional or sub-regional level as member states did not wish to delegate authority.
13. Still, Committee members who supported the idea of an International Statistical System emphasized that two factors created a unique opportunity, if not an imperative to move towards such a system, based on explicit principles and guidelines: (i) the arrival of new technologies, which increased efficiency at national and international level and which allowed rethinking of the current division of labour, and (ii) the unprecedented level of demand for international statistics.. In this context the importance of a framework of quality assurance was mentioned as an indispensable pre-condition for effective data sharing.
14. Whilst it was recognized that the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FP) were designed for the national context and were thus not directly applicable to the international statistical organizations, it was observed that the FP could serve, if not as a basis, but as a starting point for developing an improved international statistical system. In fact, the Committee decided that all agencies should evaluate themselves with the help of the questionnaire on the implementation of the FP to be disseminated by UNSD.
15. The Committee also agreed that it would be useful for future dialogue with users, to draft a "declaration of principles for statistical activities in international organizations", which would codify issues such as (i) confidentiality, (ii) need for user consultation, (iii) need for cooperation among the agencies, (iv) drive for effectiveness and efficiency, (v) avoidance of duplication, (vi) staff development and professional standards, (vii) statistical integrity and (viii) statistical organization . The Committee appointed a drafting committee consisting of OECD, UNESCO, IMF, ECE, World Bank, WTO/OMC, WTO/OMT, UNSD (chair) and Mr. Tom Griffin and asked them to prepare and circulate a first outline of the declaration of principles, by November 2003, with a view of presenting a more elaborate version to the next Committee meeting. To gain broad legitimacy and recognition at a higher level, the declaration of principles will be presented to the Statistical Commission and additional fora, such as governing bodies, ministerial conferences governing specialized agencies, the Chief Executives Board (CEB) and the Conference of the International Statistical Institute (ISI).

E. Harmonization of base years for index numbers

16. The Committee welcomed the report on harmonization of base years of index numbers prepared by UNCTAD (document SA/20003/10). The Committee adopted the recommendation contained in the report, that international organization should start the rebasement of their index numbers, using 2000 as base year and that they should implement this process by the end of 2005, subject to the availability of data.

Recognizing potential problems with respect to legal frameworks, or intra-institutional competencies, the Committee asked all members to report to the next CCSA meeting the extent of their implementation of this recommendation.

F. Proposal for the development of international guidelines for the presentation of statistical data and metadata.

17. The Committee welcomed the "Proposal for the development of international guidelines for the presentation of statistical data and metadata" prepared by OECD and contained in document SA/2003/11, including the draft working document, which presents the outline for the proposed manual in more detail. The proposed guidelines were considered to be a timely contribution to current general efforts to improve data quality dimensions. The important connection of this project with the SDMX initiative was stressed. As possible additional aspects to be addressed in the manual Committee members suggested (i) the need for maintaining classifications, including historical records of classifications (ii) extensive bibliographic references to the relevant academic body of work and (iii) explicit templates for metadata presentations. Whilst recognizing the potential need for different presentations depending on the media of dissemination, it was also suggested to emphasize commonalities in presentations, rather than differences. The need to develop adequate training materials based on the guidelines for use in a workshop for developing countries was also stressed.
18. The members of the Committee committed themselves to provide OECD (i) with a list of relevant reference materials of their institutions, (ii) with further comments and (iii) with the names of agency contact persons, in order to support OECD in its effort to finalize its report for presentation to the Statistical Commission in March 2004 as well as to advance the work on the handbook.

G. Good practices in citation in the outputs of international statistical offices

19. The Committee considered the report on "Good practices in citation in the outputs of international statistical offices" (document SA/2003/12) prepared by UNESCO. It stressed the importance of good citations of data sets especially given the increasing use of electronic data dissemination. In this context, the need to educate users and data retailers about good practices was also emphasized, in particular with respect to the correct attribution of data sources. Documented good practices for citation were considered useful for this purpose.
20. The Committee encouraged its members to review their author manuals and citation standards in particular with respect to the web-disseminated data bases, with a view to developing explicit citation policies where they do not exist and to ensure their implementation, where they do exist. Furthermore the Committee encouraged UNESCO to integrate its work on good practices in citation into the proposed manual on presentation of statistical data and metadata and to include relevant materials in the UNSD website of "good practices".

H. Strengthening governance of statistical systems

21. The Committee considered the report on "Revisions policy for official statistics: A matter of governance " (document SA/2003/13), prepared by the IMF, which presents a set of 8

good practices related to data revision policies. These good practices were inspired by the fundamental principles of official statistics and aim at enhancing the credibility of statistical systems. The Committee members welcomed the work on these recommendations and suggested wider dissemination of this document for comments, for example through the UNSD website on good practices. The Committee also made a number of suggestions for additional aspects to be incorporated into the document, such as (i) incorporating issues pertaining to social and demographic statistics, (ii) addressing explicitly the international perspective of regional and global aggregates, (iii) emphasizing the need for proper archiving of old series and (iv) analyzing the financial and legal implications of revisions. The Committee agreed that the management of errors is a particularly sensitive, though important topic.

22. The IMF asked the Committee members for support in vetting the applicability of the recommendations in the socio-demographic field. It informed the committee members that a revised version of the document would be made available for the Balance of Payment Committee in January 2004. OECD offered its high-level-group meeting in April 2004 as a potential further forum for discussion.

I. Statistics at the subnational level

23. As the representative from HABITAT was unable to attend the meeting, the Committee decided to postpone consideration of this item to a future meeting.

J. Major new initiatives planned by organizations

24. In presenting new initiatives and plans for forthcoming events and activities, many committee members referred to their respective websites for further details. **ILO** drew attention to the forthcoming International Conference of Labour Statisticians (24 Nov.- 3 Dec. 2003) and ILO's intention to develop a data collection and dissemination strategy; **UNSD** announced the launch of its new newsletter for November 2003. **WHO** referred to its work on the "health matrix network" to strengthen health information systems. **UNESCO** announced a forthcoming report to the Statistical Commission on its review of science and technology data. Furthermore, UNESCO referred to (i) its work with USAID/UNICEF on the use of household data (ii) its primary school survey programme and (iii) its proceedings of a cultural statistics symposium; **OECD** presented its brochure on its 2003 programme, including among other areas international migration, SNA review, data dissemination, services statistics, e-government; **ECE** highlighted its programme on a gender statistics data base and on the measurement of sustainable development; Furthermore, ECE announced two projects to capture multinational enterprises and to develop good practices for making microdata accessible for researchers; **FAO** announced the formation of an international advisory board, which will first meet in April 2004; moreover, FAO has started to modernize FAOSTAT and intends to launch "Country-Stat" as a facility to exchange data and coordinate statistical activities. **World Bank** highlighted its workprogramme on ICP, the global trustfund for statistical capacity building and the support of the MDG indicators, in particular its common efforts with Paris21 to measure country capacity to produce the MDG indicators. **ECLAC** informed the committee on the various components of the workprogramme until 2005, which had been approved by the Conference of the Statisticians of the Americas in June 2003. **ESCAP** announced its focus on poverty statistics and an overhaul of its dissemination strategy. **WTO/OMC** reported on its cooperation with the World Bank to develop a training module on trade in services.

ESCWA announced that the focus of its 2004/05 programme would lie in the areas of national accounts, ICP and social statistics; **ECA** reported on its Committee for Development Information (CODI) meeting and the intention to develop a strategic framework for ECA addressing also the revitalization of its statistical databases. **CIS** referred to its cooperation with the SDMX initiative and announced the forthcoming session of council heads of statistical offices; **IMF** shared its experience in preparing booklets reviewing past activities and outlining future plans for the annual IMF meetings, which had proven a good vehicle for dialogue with countries. **PARIS21** announced that its evaluation report was now posted on the web. Furthermore, **PARIS21** reported on its plans for the new workprogramme 2003-2006. **UNCTAD** informed the committee on an ongoing expert group on the measurement of e-commerce. **UNDP** announced that the 2004 theme for its Human Development Report will be "cultural diversity".

K. Issues related to the work of the taskforces and inter-secretariat working groups

25. For the Intersecretariat Working Group on Prices, the ILO reported that the consumer price manual was in the formal editing stages; with respect to planned producer price manual, preparatory work, such as a workshop in South Africa was ongoing. The chair of the group would rotate to the IMF. For the Taskforce on Finance Statistics, the IMF reported that the group was working on training materials for external debt statistics; Representing the Taskforce on International Trade Statistics, the WTO/OMC reported that the a common trade data set will be on the web before the end of 2003. With respect to the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts UNSD as the secretariat reported that the five sponsor organizations were currently working on governing and financial arrangements for the process leading to an SNA 1993 Rev.1 by 2008. Speaking for the Taskforce on Trade in Services, OECD announced that some guidance material for compilation using the modular approach was now available on the web.

L. Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) Initiative.

26. The Committee received an oral update by the representative of IMF on the progress of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) Initiative and its four sub-projects on (i) batch transmission, (ii) vocabulary, (iii) metadata repository and (iv) a practical case study on external debt statistics. A detailed report will be presented to the Statistical Commission at its March 2004 session. The representative of IMF also announced that OECD will be the next chair of the SDMX. UNESCO expressed its interest to explore with the SDMX members the possibility to participate with its social statistics data sets.

M. Development of tourism statistics

27. The representative of the World Tourism Organization (WTO/OMT) introduced document SA/2003/16, which describes WTO/OMT's current programme as well as planned activities for the period 2004-2006 in the areas of developing standards, promoting implementation of standards and disseminating tourism statistics. The Committee noted WTO/OMT's current focus on improving national data and metadata. With respect to further development of standards, the Committee welcomed WTO/OMT's intention to consult extensively with other agencies - through appropriate fora such as expert groups and possibly an inter-secretariat working group - in order to ensure consistency with related frameworks, such as ISIC, CPC and BOP. WTO/OMT will take into account further comments on document SA/2003/16 received by Committee

members over the next weeks before finalizing the document for submission to the Statistical Commission.

N. Improving the quality of data used for indicators for the Millennium Development Goals and Targets.

28. In discussing document SA/2003/17, the Committee took note of UNSD's announcement to co-organize an Interagency Technical Meeting on MDG indicators with UNDP and UN-ECE to be held in Geneva from 10-13 November 2003. The purpose of the meeting will be (i) to examine those MDG indicators, where concepts and methods and consequently metadata are weak, (ii) discuss possible modifications of the indicator framework as a consequence of recent conferences and (iii) prepare for the 2005 comprehensive progress report. Committee members encouraged UNSD to include also issues such as the frequency of reporting, the relation between national and international MDG reports as well as the coordination of emerging programmes of statistical capacity building programmes at the country level in the agenda.

O. Coordination of data sets disseminated by different organizations covering the same subject matter.

29. The meeting took note of the examples contained in document SA/2003/18 of formal arrangements to ensure consistency in the dissemination of data by different organizations. While welcoming these individual efforts, the Committee emphasized that this issue had to be seen in the larger context of developing an improved international statistical system of shared data management. Also the importance of anticipating potential future problems of conflicting data dissemination was mentioned, for instance in the context of the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society. The Committee proposed three specific areas for future attention of the committee, namely (i) Consumer Price indices, (ii) human rights statistics and (iii) energy use indicators.

P. Other matters relating to the Statistical Commission.

30. The Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare the report to the Statistical Commission based on the two meeting reports of the CCSA in 2003;

Q. Other business

31. OECD suggested to the committee to take advantage of the forthcoming EU sponsored "Q2004 European conference on Quality and Methodology for official statistics", hosted by Germany in Mainz from 24-26 May 2004, to convene a satellite meeting on "quality management of international statistics". The Committee welcomed the proposal and asked OECD and UNSD to liaise with the sponsors and hosts of the Q2004 meeting regarding the logistical arrangements and to call a small programme committee to prepare such a satellite conference substantively.
32. With respect to the next meeting of the CCSA, the committee agreed with the UNSD proposal to convene it in the afternoon of Monday 1 March 2004 - immediately preceding the Statistical Commission session. Issues to be discussed are (i) implementation note on the harmonization of the baseyears for index numbers; (ii) draft declaration of principles; (iii) strategic issues related to MDG indicators, (iv) preparation for the Q2004 satellite conference; (v) agenda for the 2004 fall meeting; (vi) WHO

friends of the chair Statistical Commission report and its implications for CCSA.
Regarding the venue and the date for the fall 2004 meeting, tentatively New York 6-8
September 2004 was suggested.

Annex I

Provisional agenda

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. *Special half-day technical seminar: Aggregation of national data to regional and global estimates*
4. Towards a Statistical System
5. Harmonization of base years for index numbers
6. Proposal for the development of international guidelines for the presentation of statistical data and metadata
7. Good practices in citation in the outputs of international statistical offices
8. Strengthening governance of statistical systems
9. Statistics at the subnational level
10. Information items:
 - (a) Major new initiatives planned by organizations
 - (b) Issues related to the work of the task forces and inter-secretariat working groups
 - (c) Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) Initiative
 - (d) Development of tourism
 - (e) Improving the quality of data used for indicators for the Millennium Development Goals and Targets
 - (f) Coordination of data sets disseminated by different organizations covering the same subject matter
 - (g) Other matters relating to the Statistical Commission
11. Other business.
12. Report of the Meeting

Annex II

List of participants

United Nations entities and Programmes

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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|---|--|--|
| United Nations Statistics Division | Willem F. M. De Vries Stefan Schweinfest (Secretary) Francesca Perucci | devries@un.org schweinfest@un.org perucci@un.org |
| Economic Commission for Europe | Heinrich Brünger Lidia Bratanova Jean-Etienne Chapron Juraj Riecan Angela Me Darryl Rhoades | heinrich.bruengger@unece.org lidia.bratanova@unece.org jean-etienne.chapron@unece.org juraj.riecan@unece.org angela.me@unece.org darryl.rhoades@unece.org |
| Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific | Andrew Flatt (Chairman) | flatt.unescap@un.org stat.unescap@un.org |
| Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean | Hubert Escaith | hescaith@eclac.cl |
| Economic Commission for Africa | Malick Sy Oumar | moumar@uneca.org |
| Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia | Mariam Al Awadhi | malawadhi@escwa.org.lb |
| United Nations Conference on Trade and Development | Henri Laurencin | henri.laurencin@unctad.org |
| United Nations Development Programme | Haishan Fu Tom Griffin | haishan.fu@undp.org tom.griffin@which.net |
| United Nations Environment Programme | Ashbindu Singh | as@rona.unep.org |
| Specialized agencies and related organizations | | |
| International Labour Organization | Sylvester Young L. J. Johnson Sophy Lawrence R. J. Penber | young@ilo.org johnsonl@ilo.org lawrence@ilo.org penber@ilo.org |
| Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations | Haluk Kasnakoglu | haluk.kasnakoglu@fao.org |

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|--|---|--|
| United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization | Denise Lievesley Brian Buffett | d.lievesley@unesco.org b.buffett@unesco.org |
| World Health Organizations | David Evans Colin Mathers Mie Inoue | evansd@who.int mathersc@who.int inouem@who.int |
| World Bank | Shaida Badiee Eric Swanson | sbadiee@worldbank.org eswanson@worldbank.org |
| International Monetary Fund | Carol Carson | ccarson@imf.org |
| United Nations Industrial Development Organization | Tetsuo Yamada | t.yamada@unido.org |

Other international and non-governmental organizations

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|--|---------------------------------|---|
| Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development | Enrico Giovannini Denis Ward | enrico.giovannini@oecd.org denis.ward@oecd.org |
| Statistical Office of the European Communities | Pedro Díaz Muñoz | pedro.diaz@cec.eu.int |
| World Tourism Organization | Antonio Massieu | amassieu@world-tourism.org |
| World Trade Organization | Guy Karsenty | guy.karsenty@wto.org |
| Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States | Mikhail Korolev | korolev@cisstat.com cisstat@online.ru |
| European Central Bank | Gerard Salou | gerard.salou@ecb.int |
| Bank for International Settlements | Stuart Feder | stuart.feder@bis.org |
| PARIS21 | G rard Chenais | gerard.chenais@oecd.org |
| Expert | Tim Holt | tholt@socsci.soton.ac.uk |

Annex III

List of documents

| <i>Document No.</i> | <i>Agenda item(s)</i> | <i>Title or description</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---|
| SA/2003/7 | 2 | Proposed agenda |
| SA/2003/8 | 3 | Aggregation of national data to regional and global estimates – Report by Tim Holt (ILO Consultant) |
| SA/2003/9 | 4 | Towards a statistical system – Report by ECE |
| SA/2003/10 | 5 | Harmonization of base years for index numbers – Report by UNCTAD |
| SA/2003/11 | 6 | Proposal for the development of international guidelines for the presentation of statistical data and metadata – Report by OECD |
| SA/2003/12 | 7 | The citation of datasets – Report by UNESCO |
| SA/2003/13 | 8 | Revisions policy for official statistics: A matter of governance – Report by IMF |
| SA/2003/14 | 9 | Statistics at the subnational level – Report by HABITAT (<i>Not issued</i>) |
| SA/2003/15 | 10(c) | Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) Initiative: Challenges and opportunities – Powerpoint presentation by IMF |
| SA/2003/15/Add.1 | 10(c) | Overview of the Metadata Common Vocabulary – Report by OECD |
| SA/2003/16 | 10(d) | Development of tourism statistics – Report by WTO/OMT |
| SA/2003/17 | 10(e) | Progress report on development of indicators for monitoring implementation of the Millennium Development Goals – Report by UNSD |
| SA/2003/18 | 10(f) | Coordination of data sets disseminated by different organizations covering the same subject matter – Report by UNSD |
| SA/2003/19 | | Report of the 2 nd meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities |

| <i>Document No.</i> | <i>Agenda item(s)</i> | <i>Title or description</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Unnumbered | 6 | Draft Data and Metadata Presentation Manual |
| Unnumbered | 10(a) | Highlights of the Expert Group Meeting on Setting the Scope of Social Statistics: The role of international organizations |
| ESA/STAT/AC.88/04 | 10(a) | Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Setting the Scope of Social Statistics, New York, 6-9 May 2003 |
| Unnumbered | | List of participants |