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**DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES IN  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Prepared by UNSD

1. At the forth CCSA meeting in September 2004 an earlier version of the Declaration of Principles for Statistical Activities in International Organizations was discussed. A drafting group was asked to finalize the text. The group was also working on a cover note to be used for the transmission of the Declaration of Principles to the Statistical Commission. However, the group was not able to reach consensus. Attached is the latest version of both texts circulated among group members in November 2004. The Committee is invited to use this version as a starting point for its further discussions.

(Note for Statistical Commission, 08-11-04)

## **DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS**

1. The role of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA), established in September 2002, is the coordination and improvement of the international statistical system at the level of professional statisticians working in the secretariats of international and supra-national organizations.. In its 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting (Geneva, September 2003) the CCSA discussed a report ‘Towards a Statistical System’ (written by ECE). Committee members agreed that the current international cooperation and coordination arrangements in areas such as data sharing, development of concepts and methods, as well as technical cooperation, could be still further improved.
2. The CCSA recalled the work of the Statistical Commission with regard to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, including good practices to implement the Fundamental Principles. While the CCSA recognized that the Fundamental Principles had been designed for national statistical systems, it felt that they were also a good starting point for improving the international statistical system, with enhanced transparency and accountability. Consequently, Committee members supported developing a set of principles for statistical activities in international and supranational organizations and agencies, as well as good practices for their implementation.
3. The Committee asked a drafting group<sup>1</sup> to develop a text. The attached “Declaration of Principles for International Statistics” is supported by the professional statisticians forming the CCSA membership.
4. While the ‘Declaration’ would obviously not in any respect be ‘legally binding’ for the organizations, each having their own governance structures and mandates, the organizations’ statisticians, in their professional capacity, agreed to endeavour to implement the elements of the Declaration.
5. Further steps towards the implementation of these Principles of International Statistics are envisaged by the CCSA, including developing a general framework for an International Statistical System:
  - Reinforcing the role of CCSA;
  - Developing a quality assurance framework for statistical activities in international organizations and posting information about the application of such a quality framework on a website;
  - Strengthening the co-operation among international organizations in developing technical infrastructures for data and metadata collection and

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<sup>1</sup> Members were Shaida Badiie (World Bank), Denise Lievesley (UNESCO), Heinrich Bruengger (ECE), Enrico Giovannini (OECD), Tom Griffin (UNDP), Guy Karsenty (World Trade Organization), Antonio Massieu (World Tourism Organization), Sylvester Young (International Labour Organization) and Willem de Vries (chair, United Nations Statistics Division).

- sharing (an example being the SDMX - Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange initiative);
- Developing programmes to develop professional skills of statisticians working in international organizations.
6. A report on the progress of such initiatives will be presented at the 2006 meeting of the Statistical Commission.

The Commission may wish to:

- a) Welcome the Declaration of Principles for International Statistics.
- b) Advise on their implementation.

## DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS

Bearing in mind that statistics are essential for sustainable economic and social development and that public trust in official statistics is anchored in professional independence and impartiality of statisticians, their use of scientific and transparent methods and equal access for all to official statistical information, the professional statisticians of international and supra-national organizations gathered in the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities have agreed that implementation of the principles and practices listed below will enhance the functioning of the international statistical system. In doing so, it recalled the adoption by the United Nations Statistical Commission, in its Special Session of 11-15 April 1994, of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and of the Declaration of Good Practices in Technical Cooperation in Statistics in its 30th Session of 1-5 March 1999.

### *Principle 1*

**High quality International Statistics as referred to in this Declaration, accessible for all, are a fundamental element of global information systems .**

Good practices to implement this principle include:

- Having regular consultations with key users both inside and outside the relevant organisation to ascertain that their needs are met
- Periodic reviewing of statistical programmes to ensure their relevance
- Compiling and disseminating of International Statistics based on impartiality

- Providing equal access to statistics for all users
- Ensuring free public accessibility of key statistics.

### ***Principle 2***

**To maintain the trust in International Statistics their production is to be impartial, free from conflicts of interest and strictly based on the use of professional ethical standards.**

Good practices to implement this principle include:

- Using strictly professional considerations for decisions on methodology, terminology and data presentation
- Developing and using professional codes of conduct
- Making a clear distinction, in statistical publications, between statistical and analytical comments on the one hand and policy-prescriptive and advocacy comments on the other.

### ***Principle 3***

**The public has a right to be informed about the mandates for the statistical work of the organisations.**

Good practices to implement this principle include:

- Making decisions about statistical work programmes publicly available
- Making documents for and reports of statistical meetings publicly available.

### ***Principle 4***

**Concepts, definitions, classifications, sources, methods and procedures employed in the production of International Statistics are chosen to meet professional scientific standards and are made transparent for the users.**

Good practices to implement this principle include:

- Aiming continuously to introduce methodological improvements and systems to manage and improve the quality and transparency of statistics
- Enhancing the professional level of staff by encouraging them to attend training courses, to do analytical work, to publish scientific papers and to participate in seminars and conferences.

- Documenting the concepts, definitions and classifications, as well as data collection and processing procedures used and the quality assessments carried out and making this information publicly accessible
- Documenting how data are collected, processed and disseminated, including information about editing mechanisms applied to country data
- Giving credit, in the dissemination of International Statistics, to the original source and using agreed quotation standards when re-using statistics originally collected by others
- **Making officially agreed standards publicly available.**

### *Principle 5*

**Sources and methods for data collection are appropriately chosen to ensure timeliness and other aspects of quality, to be cost-efficient and to minimise the reporting burden for data providers.**

Good practices to implement this principle include:

- Facilitating the provision of data by countries
- Working systematically on the improvement of the timeliness of International Statistics
- Periodic reviewing of statistical programmes to minimise the burden on data providers
- Sharing collected data with other organisations and collecting data jointly where appropriate
- Contributing to an integrated presentation of statistical programmes, including data collection plans, thereby making gaps or overlaps clearly visible
- Ensuring that national statistical offices and other national organisations for official statistics are duly involved and advocating that the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics are applied when data are collected in countries.

### *Principle 6*

Individual data collected about natural persons and legal entities, or about small aggregates that are subject to national confidentiality rules, are to be kept strictly confidential and are to be used exclusively for statistical purposes.

Good practices to implement this principle include:

- **Putting measures in place to prevent the direct or indirect disclosure of data on persons, households, businesses and other individual respondents**

- **Developing a framework describing methods and procedures to provide sets of anonymous micro-data for further analysis by bona fide researchers, maintaining the requirements of confidentiality.**

### *Principle 7*

**Erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics are to be appropriately addressed.**

Good practices to implement this principle include:

- Responding to perceived erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics
- Enhancing the use of statistics by developing educational material for important user groups.

### *Principle 8*

Standards for national and International Statistics are to be developed on the basis of sound professional criteria, while also meeting the test of practical utility and feasibility.

Good practices to implement this principle include:

- **Systematically involving national statistical offices and other national organisations for official statistics in the development of international statistical programmes, including the development and promulgation of methods, standards and good practices**
- **Ensuring that decisions on such standards are free from conflicts of interest, and are perceived to be so**
- **Advising countries on implementation issues concerning international standards**
- **Monitoring the implementation of agreed standards.**

### *Principle 9*

Coordination of international statistical programmes is essential to strengthen the quality, coherence and governance of International Statistics, and avoiding duplication of work.

Good practices to implement this principle include:

- Designating one or more statistical units to implement statistical programmes, including one unit that coordinates the statistical work of the organisation and represents the organisation in international statistical meetings
- Participating in international statistical meetings and bilateral and multilateral consultations whenever necessary
- Working systematically towards agreements about common concepts, classifications, standards and methods
- Working systematically towards agreement on which series to consider as authoritative for each important set of statistics
- Coordinating technical cooperation activities with countries between donors and between different organisations in the national statistical system to avoid duplication of effort and to encourage complementarities and synergy.

### *Principle 10*

**Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contribute to the professional growth of the statisticians involved and to the improvement of statistics in the organisations and in countries.**

Good practices to implement this principle include:

- Cooperating and sharing knowledge among international organisations and with countries and regions to further develop national and regional statistical systems
- Basing cooperation projects on user requirements, promoting full participation of the main stakeholders, taking account of local circumstances and stage of statistical development
- Empowering recipient national statistical systems and governments to take the lead
- Advocating the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in countries
- Setting cooperation projects within a balanced overall strategic framework for national development of official statistics.