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**Report of the 6th Meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical
Activities (Rome, 12-14 September 2005)**

I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) held its sixth meeting in Rome, hosted by FAO from 12-14 September 2005. The list of participants and documents presented are attached as annex II and III respectively. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Sylvester Young, Director of the Bureau of Statistics, International Labour Organization. Mr. Haluk Kasnakoglu, Director of FAO Statistics Division welcomed the group and opened the meeting of the Committee.

II. Work of the CCSA Meeting

A. Adoption of the agenda and other issues

2. The Committee adopted the agenda, with the inclusion of a new item proposed by UNSD, "The work of the Friends of the Chair on MDG Indicators and its implication on inter-agency work", to be discussed under other business. The order of agenda items was also revised to accommodate scheduling needs of some participants. The adopted revised agenda of the meeting is presented in Annex 1.

3. The chair welcomed the European Central Bank as a new member of the Committee and stressed the importance of the CCSA as a forum for international agencies to coordinate statistical activities. He also emphasized the importance of the highest level of representation of the agencies, which should be kept, to the extent possible, at the level of the director. He urged international agencies to take advantage of the CCSA meetings to achieve greater coordination among agencies.

B. Coordination of technical cooperation activities

4. The Committee took note of the document prepared by UNSD in collaboration with ECLAC, IMF, OECD and WTO/OMT (SA/2005/9). The Committee agreed to include at its eight Session in September 2006, a half-day special session to discuss coordination and approaches to strategic planning for capacity building activities. The Committee welcomed the offer by various agencies to provide the information already available to them on capacity building activities. UNSD will prepare a paper to outline an approach to define the scope of such work and propose activities to establish efficient coordination mechanisms. It was noted that Paris 21 would provide a substantial input to this, based on information collected for the Forum for African Statistical Development. It was further noted that in case FASDEV experience proved to be effective, attempts should be made to replicate it in other regions.

C. International Household Survey Network

5. Under agenda item 3, the Committee took note of document SA/2005/10, prepared by the World Bank with input from the members of the IHSN's Management Group, outlining progress achieved since the launch of the Network a year ago and highlighting areas and issues for future work. The Committee agreed that IHSN is an important initiative and represents a useful step towards better coordination of international efforts for household surveys in developing countries. The Committee agreed that successful implementation depends on addressing key issues - such as micro-data confidentiality - and will require full involvement of members of the Management Group and their review of the upcoming work program. The Committee also recognized that it will be crucial to involve national statistical offices at a later stage.

D. Classification of Statistical Activities

6. The Committee took note of the presentation by ECE on the process to revise the ECE classification of statistical activities for use in the "Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work" (document SA/2005/11). The Committee discussed whether it would be appropriate at this stage to consider adapting the proposed classification for wider use in the international statistical system. It was agreed that CCSA will await the completion of the process and the adoption by CES of the classification, before exploring the possibility of adapting the ECE classification to the needs of other international agencies. In connection with the CES process, members can provide comments directly to ECE on the proposed classification in its current structure by end of September.

E. Report of the task team on quality assurance

7. The Committee took note of document SA/2005/13, prepared by Eurostat on the development of a quality assurance framework for international and supranational organizations. It was noted that the overall objective of the project is to improve quality approaches and streamline reporting to ensure transparency on the level of quality of data being shared and being disseminated by international agencies. The Committee agreed that the project is very useful and should continue. Eurostat was mandated to further the process, using the current document as a basis and working with the task teams that have been formed around key areas as follows:

- a. Quality frameworks: Eurostat, IMF, ECB, FAO
- b. Systems for reviews: Eurostat, OECD, UNECE
- c. Quality reporting: Eurostat, FAO
- d. Labeling of statistical information: Eurostat, ECB
- e. Q2006: Eurostat, UNSD
- f. Implementation: Eurostat, ILO

8. Other agencies are welcome to join any of the above task teams of interest to them.

9. The Committee also took note of the planned event on quality in statistics for international organizations, to be held in connection with the next Eurostat Q2006 conference on data quality, to be held in Cardiff, Wales, 24-26 April 2006.

F. Inter-secretariat working group on services statistics

10. The Committee took note of the oral presentation by OECD on the formation of the Inter-secretariat Working Group on Services Statistics and the preliminary work done. It was agreed that the group--working at this stage as a virtual group-- will present a report on the process at the next session of the Statistical Commission in March 2006, highlighting priorities and possible areas of interest, including specifying links with work previously done in this area. In order to prepare the paper in time for submission to the next session of the Statistical Commission, OECD will obtain further inputs by members of the Inter-Secretariat Group by early October.

G. Report of the task team of SDMX

11. The Committee took note of the report prepared by OECD on “The role of SDMX in building the international statistical system” (document SA/2005/12). Participants agreed that the development of new technical standards under the auspices of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) initiative is an important step towards an agreed set of rules for data collection, with the potential of making data and metadata exchange more efficient. However, it was noted that in order to take the project further it would be useful to demonstrate its effectiveness by showing some concrete examples. The side event planned at the next Statistical Commission will present a useful opportunity for SDMX “sponsors” to make such presentations. Furthermore, it was stressed that information on financial implications and costs of this process would be useful. The Committee agreed that a decision on CCSA’s adoption of SDMX will be made at the next session in March 2006. In the meantime, all agencies are encouraged to send their comments and questions to the SDMX secretariat and agencies that are inclined to do so will explore joining the SDMX initiative.

H. Report of the task team on training for staff of international agencies

12. The Committee took note of the presentation by IMF of the work undertaken to assess existing training initiatives in international organizations for their staff (document SA/2005/14). The Committee welcomed this initiative and agreed to establish a network of representatives from all agencies to exchange information and training materials and explore possible new activities. IMF agreed to continue to play the leading role and will develop an action plan to be presented at the seventh session of the Committee in March 2006. Members will need to nominate their representative and send the related information to IMF by end of October. Agencies carrying out training courses also agreed to explore whether it would be feasible for them to include statisticians from other agencies and to assess legal and financial implications.

13. Information on the work of the network and training materials will be posted on the CCSA website.

I. Principles for statistical activities in international organizations

14. The Committee took note of the presentation by the chair on the work of the drafting team –composed by CCSA’s chair, ECE, IMF, OECD and UNSD-- on the document “Enhancing international statistics” (document SA/2005/16). The Committee expressed appreciation for the work done by the drafting teams and all CCSA members for reaching consensus on the

“Principles and practices”.^{a/} The Committee recognized the importance of the “Principles and Practices” on guiding professional statistical activities in international agencies. The Committee also agreed that the Principles and Practices (Annex of the document) could be used in different ways by agencies, individually or collectively with others, depending on their specific needs and circumstances. It took note of the fact that “the mandate and governance of individual international organizations may be such that not all these principles and practices may be applicable under current circumstances, even though they can be used for future improvements” (paragraph 6 of the document). The Committee took note of the particular constraints faced by the IMF and some other agencies.

15. The Committee decided that agencies should review their current practices in relation to these principles and disseminate the results of the review. The “Principles and practices” will be posted on the UNSD website on good statistical practices, including related information on its use by CCSA members based on extracts from other agencies’ websites.

16. In addition, CCSA has identified the following areas of work for further strengthening of cooperation and coordination of the statistical activities carried out by the international organizations: quality assurance framework, the SDMX, and training initiatives for staff.

J. Agenda, Dates and venue of the 2006 sessions of the Committee

17. The Committee agreed that its seventh session will be held in New York, in the afternoon of 6 March 2006. It further agreed that its eight session will be held in Montreal, hosted by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, from 4-5 September 2006. Agencies will submit to the CCSA Secretariat proposals for additional elements to be included in the agenda, besides those already agreed during this session. The Secretariat, in close consultation with the Chair, will circulate a proposed agenda for comments.

K. Other business

18. The Committee took note of UNSD’s oral report on the work undertaken by the Friends of the Chair on MDG Indicators and its implications on the inter-agency statistical work. The UNSD representative explained that the focus of the group has been on assessing national statistical capacity to produce the indicators, and that the assessment is being carried out on the basis of the data currently available in the MDG indicators database maintained by UNSD. The results of this assessment will be presented in a report to the next session of the Statistical Commission in 2006, to be used as a basis to develop plans and set priorities for strengthening country capacity in the production of the indicators. International agencies, on the other hand, will be encouraged to become involved by providing more detailed information on how they obtain country data and how they produce country estimates when data are not available. UNSD will continue to inform CCSA on the work carried out by the group.

19. The Committee noted the information on a proposal to establish a professional association of international statisticians, based on individual membership. CCSA welcomed the initiative and offered its support to the process of creating the association.

^{a/} / The “Principles and Practices for International Statistics” are attached to this report as Annex IV.

20. The Committee welcomed the trend of an increasing number of agencies expressing interest in joining CCSA. The Secretariat was asked to approach agencies that are currently not members of the CCSA.

Annex I

Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Sixth Session

Rome, 12-14 September 2005

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Revised agenda

Monday, 12 September 2005

Morning session 10:30 am – 1 pm

1. Adoption of the agenda (UNSD; *Document SA/2005/8*)
2. Technical cooperation (UNSD; *Document SA/2005/9*)
3. Household survey network (World Bank; *Document SA/2005/10*)

Monday, 12 September 2005

Afternoon session 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm

4. Classification of Statistical Activities (ECE; *Document SA/2005/11*)
5. Report of the task team on quality assurance (Eurostat; *Document SA/2005/13*)
6. Inter-secretariat Working Group on Service Statistics

Tuesday, 13 September

Morning session 10 am – 1 pm

7. Report of the task team on SDMX (OECD; *Document SA/2005/12*)
8. Report of the task team on training (IMF; *Document SA/2005/14*)
9. Principles for statistical activities in international organizations.
(Draft Team – UNSD; *Document SA/2005/15*)

Tuesday, 13 September

Afternoon session

No plenary session, afternoon available for side events and bi-lateral discussions.

Wednesday, 14 September
Morning session 10 am – 1 pm

10. Agenda, dates and venue for the eight session of the Committee in 2006
11. Other business
12. Report of the Meeting (UNSD; *Document SA/2005/16*)

Wednesday, 14 September
Afternoon session

No plenary session, afternoon available for side events and bi-lateral discussions.

Annex II

Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities Sixth Session Rome, 12-14 September 2005

List of participants

United Nations entities and programmes		
Department of Economic and Social Affairs		
United Nations Statistics Division	Paul Cheung Francesca Perucci (Secretary)	paul.cheung@un.org perucci@un.org
Economic Commission for Europe	Heinrich Brünger	heinrich.bruenger@unece.org
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	Hubert Escaith	Hubert.escaith@cepal.org
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
Specialized agencies and related organizations		
International Labour Organization	Sylvester Young	young@ilo.org
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Haluk Kasnakoglu	haluk.kasnakoglu@fao.org
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Diane Stukel	d.stukel@uis.unesco.org
World Bank	Shaida Badiee	sbadiee@worldbank.org
International Monetary Fund	William E. Alexander	walexander@imf.org
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Tetsuo Yamada	t.yamada@unido.org
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World Trade Organization	Guy Karsenty	guy.karsenty@wto.org
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Other international and non-governmental organizations		
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Annex III

List of documents

<i>Document No.</i>	<i>Agenda item(s)</i>	<i>Title or description</i>
SA/2005/8	1	Adoption of the Agenda
SA/2005/9	2	CCSA's responsibility in the coordination of technical cooperation activities – Prepared by UNSD
SA/2005/10	3	International Household Survey Network (IHSN) – Prepared by the World Bank
SA/2005/11	4	The role of SDMX in building the international statistical system – Prepared by the OECD
SA/2005/12	7	The role of SDMX in building the international statistical system – Prepared by the OECD
SA/2005/13	5	Training of statisticians at select international organizations: A work in progress – Prepared by IMF
SA/2005/14	8	Training of statisticians at select international organizations: A work in progress – Prepared by IMF
SA/2005/16	9	Enhancing international statistics – Prepared by the draft team

Annex IV

Principles and practices for international statistics ^{a/}

1) High quality international statistics, accessible for all, are a fundamental element of global information systems

Good practices include:

- Having regular consultations with key users both inside and outside the relevant organisation to ascertain that their needs are met
- Periodic review of statistical programmes to ensure their relevance
- Compiling and disseminating international statistics based on impartiality
- Providing equal access to statistics for all users
- Ensuring free public accessibility of key statistics

2) To maintain the trust in international statistics, their production is to be impartial and strictly based on the highest professional standards

Good practices 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

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

Good practices include:

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

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 include:

- Aiming continuously to introduce methodological improvements and systems to manage and improve the quality and transparency of statistics

^{a/} Presented at the Sixth Session of the Committee for Coordination of Statistical Activities, as Annex 1 to Document SA/2005/16.

- 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

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 include:

- Facilitating the provision of data by countries
- Working systematically on the improvement of the timeliness of international statistics
- Periodic review 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

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 or for purposes mandated by legislations

Good practices 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

7) Erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics are to be immediately appropriately addressed

Good practices include:

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

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 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

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 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

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 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