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**Report of the 7th Meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical
Activities (New York, 6 March 2006)**

I. Introduction

1. The seventh meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) was held in New York at the United Nations, on 6 March 2006. 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.

II. Work of the CCSA Meeting

A. Adoption of the agenda and other issues

2. The Committee took note that the proposed item 2 “Technical Cooperation” had been suppressed given the limited time in relation to the number of topics to be discussed.

3. The Committee also took note of the proposal by the chair to include under the agenda items, a discussion on the report prepared by the Group of the Friends of the Chair for the 37th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, on MDG Indicators. The proposal was endorsed and the item was included as agenda item 3. The revised agenda was adopted and is presented in Annex I.

B. Report of the task team of SDMX

4. The Committee took note of the report prepared by OECD on “The Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) Initiative: A Progress Report” (document SA/2006/5). The representative of OECD, on behalf of Paul Van den Bergh of BIS, presented the progress on the work of the task team. He reported that version 2 of the SDMX technical standards will be submitted to the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) for approval. The initiative would now move towards the draft Content Oriented Guidelines, which were to be finalized in about two weeks. The guidelines, to be used by statisticians when exchanging data and metadata, will be posted on the website together with a letter to be sent to heads of statistics in specialized agencies. An example was also provided of an initiative on a joint external debt statistics hub. Annex I of the SA/2006/5 report presents projects in which different institutions are using SDMX tools.

5. An example of an application of SDMX was also presented by the representative of UNICEF. The database package, DevInfo, has incorporated data formats, metadata formats, and registry based architecture, from three standard formats: SDMX, DDI standards (metadata in the

social sector), and Geographic Information from the UN Geographic Information Working Group.

6. Some participants expressed reservations about the ability of countries to use SDMX, mainly linked to costs, availability of the necessary human resources and technical capacity. However, the examples provided of initial work undertaken in countries by FAO, and the adoption of SDMX by most NCBs and NSIs in the European Union, provided evidence that countries could reasonably adopt SDMX, although gradually and with some assistance by the partner agencies. Participants agreed that it was crucial to clearly define the implementation plan. The Committee agreed to adopt SDMX in principle, stressing the importance of ensuring country ownership and their full engagement in the process. It was further decided that OECD, in collaboration with the six partner agencies and any other agencies that have already adopted SDMX and want to contribute, will develop the implementation plan to be presented at the next session of CCSA. Finally, the Committee agreed that it will seek endorsement of the SDMX initiative by the 2007 Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

C. Discussion on the report by the Friends of the Chair on MDG Indicators

7. Under agenda item 3, the Committee discussed ways to respond to the issues raised by the report by the group of the Friends of the Chair on MDG Indicators. It was remarked that the focus of the report had shifted from issues of capacity building in countries, to the ways data are estimated and compiled by international agencies. It was also remarked that according to the original intent of the process for the global monitoring of the MDGs, international agencies had been tasked with producing estimates at the regional and global level only. For these reasons, it was pointed out that CCSA should respond to the issues raised. The Committee took note of several suggestions by members on how to address such issues, including: applying the SDMX standards, and ensuring adherence by agencies to the principles for statistical activities in international organizations. The Committee recognized the concerns of countries on the imputation of figures by international agencies and on the quality of data disseminated by the agencies, while at the same time emphasizing the need for statistical capacity building in countries.

D. Report of the task team on quality assurance

8. The Committee took note of document SA/2006/3, "Progress report of the task team on the use and convergence of international quality assurance frameworks", prepared by Eurostat and presenting an overview of the approaches chosen to carry out the different tasks under the six areas of the project. It also expressed appreciation and congratulated Eurostat on the work done on the paper and in the preparation of the forthcoming conference on Data Quality.

9. Eurostat representative reported the progress in the work of the task teams that were formed around the six areas and announced that the first results of the surveys on the quality frameworks and the quality reporting mechanisms will be presented at the Newport Conference on Data Quality for International Organizations, 27-28 April 2006, while the full report with the results and recommendations for future work will be presented at the next session of CCSA in September 2006.

10. Participants pointed out that reporting on best practices in the UN Best Practices website would be a good way to improve the transparency of international agencies' activities and would represent an adequate way to respond to some of the concerns raised by the Friends of the Chair on MDG Indicators.

11. The Committee agreed that agencies should report the information to Eurostat as it had already been agreed in September 2005.

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

12. The Committee took note of document SA/2006/4, "Note on the Proposed Action Plan on training in Statistics for Staff of International Organizations", presented by IMF and outlining the developments in statistical training since the previous session of CCSA and describing the proposed action plan for future work.

13. The Committee congratulated IMF for its role in leading the task force. It was remarked that agencies had agreed to provide the necessary information to IMF, in order for IMF to be able to further the work in this area. Members, who had not done so yet, would also need to nominate their representative, as agreed at the CCSA session of September 2005.

14. The Committee also took note of the proposal to have a side meeting during the forthcoming CES in June 2006. The meeting would be coordinated by IMF.

F. Other business

15. The Committee took note of WTO proposal for CCSA to consider the issue of regional country grouping and coding. The concerns raised by WTO included: the need for transparency and consistency in the countries and regions nomenclature; and whether or not there is a need to reach harmonization across agencies or only ensure transparency and create a registry.

16. The Committee recognized the difficulties involved, but agreed that this is an important topic and should be addressed. It was pointed out that as a first step, CCSA should look at the work that has already been done in some fora to harmonize classifications. It was therefore agreed that UNSD and WTO would prepare a paper on the work done to arrive at a common MDG country grouping and on the classifications used in trade statistics, respectively.

17. The Committee took note of the discussion on how to address the issue of coordination of capacity building activities among CCSA members. It was agreed that a half day session would be held at the next meeting of the Committee to cover this topic. UNSD would coordinate the organization of the session and would invite papers by other organizations. One item already proposed for the special session would cover coordination of capacity building support and activities and the presentation of a more in depth analysis of the outcomes of the *Light reporting exercise on donor activities in Africa*, conducted by PARIS21. (See also paragraph 20 below)

18. The Committee took note of the concern raised by Eurostat on the work undertaken by the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Health Statistics, in particular on its membership and terms of reference.

19. The Committee also noted that, on the proposal to establish a professional association of international statisticians put forward in September 2005 by the UNDP representative, a paper would be circulated shortly to members by ESCAP.

20. The Committee took note of the proposal by some participants, that since it was now four years after the formation of CCSA, it would be useful to review the mandate of CCSA and its reporting structure to other high-level bodies. It was suggested that UNSD, in collaboration with other partner agencies, would prepare a paper on this topic. The following agencies volunteered to be part of the drafting group: OECD, ECE, ECB, ILO, and UNDP.

21. Finally, PARIS21 made a brief presentation on the Light Reporting Exercise (LRE) and related Report entitled: "Review of support to statistical capacity building in Sub Saharan Africa: From reporting to collaboration". The reports (Volume I and II) were made available to CCSA members. The Committee took note of the strong support of the initiative from several members. It was also suggested that at the special half-day session on technical cooperation at the next CCSA session, an agenda item would be devoted to reporting and mechanisms of coordination of statistical capacity building activities. The Committee finally took note of a suggestion that a Forum be organized on coordination of support to statistical capacity building.

F. Agenda of the September 2006 session of the Committee

22. The Committee took note of the provisional list of proposed agenda items for the eighth session to be held in Montreal, hosted by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, from 4-5 September 2006. These included: coordination of capacity building activities, the International Household Survey Network, country regional grouping and coding, an implementation plan for SDMX, international quality assurance frameworks, statistical training for staff of international agencies, vital statistics, and a review of CCSA functions.

23. Agencies might also submit to the CCSA Secretariat their proposals for additional items to be included in the agenda, besides those already suggested during this session. It was agreed that the Secretariat, in close consultation with the Chair, would make a final assessment of the items suggested, also taking in consideration the time available for discussion, and circulate a proposed agenda for comments.

Annex I

Revised agenda

Monday 6 March 2006

Afternoon session, 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm.

1. Adoption of the agenda (UNSD; *Document SA/2006/1*)
 2. Report of the task team on SDMX (OECD; *Document SA/2006/5*)
 3. Discussion on the report by the Friends of the Chair on MDG Indicators
 4. Report of the task team on quality assurance (Eurostat; *Document SA/2006/3*)
 5. Report of the task team on training (IMF; *Document SA/2006/4*)
 6. Agenda for the eighth session of the Committee in September 2006
- Other business

Annex II

List of participants

United Nations entities, programmes and funds		
Department of Economic and Social Affairs		
United Nations Statistics Division	Paul Cheung Francesca Perucci (Secretary)	paul.cheung@un.org perucci@un.org
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Annex III

List of documents

<i>Document No.</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Title or description</i>
SA/2006/1	1	Adoption of the Agenda
SA/2006/2		Not issued
SA/2006/3	4	Report of the task team on quality assurance
SA/2006/4	5	Report of the task team on training
SA/2006/5	2	Report of the task team on SDMX