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**Report of the 8th Meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical
Activities (Montreal, 4 to 5 September 2006)**

I. Introduction

1. The eighth meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) was held in Montreal, at the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), from 4 - 5 September 2006. The Director of UIS, Mr. Hendrik Van der Pol, welcomed the participants. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Sylvester Young, Director of the Bureau of Statistics, International Labour Organization. The list of participants and documents presented are attached as annex 1 and 2 respectively.

II. Work of the CCSA Meeting

A. Adoption of the agenda and other issues

2. The Committee agreed to move item 3. Report of the task team on quality assurance, before the discussion on the Implementation of Principles governing International Statistical Activities (item 2), given that issues of quality assurance were considered to have relevance on the implementation of the principles. The revised agenda was adopted. The chair also welcomed the "Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries" as a new member of the Committee.

B. Report of the task team on quality assurance

3. The Committee took note of the "*Report of the task team on the use and convergence of international quality assurance frameworks*" (Document SA/2006/9), prepared by Eurostat and discussed the proposed Action Plan for the second phase of the project. The discussion focused on whether the Committee should adopt a common framework or more simply issue guidelines for those agencies who were interested in developing their own quality frameworks. The Committee also considered whether or not it was appropriate to use quality labels and discussed the possible scope of the quality framework.

4. It was agreed that the Committee should continue work on developing guidelines on the development of a quality assurance framework for the use of those agencies wishing to adopt one. The Committee would however not formally adopt one common framework for use by all agencies for quality assurance. It was also agreed that the guidelines would include examples of best practices and focus on implementation. There was consensus that issues of quality at this stage would cover data only and not broader areas of statistical activities such as development of standards and the delivery of technical cooperation. Eurostat will continue its work and propose

guidelines to be discussed at the 2007 September meeting at a special session to be devoted to this topic.

5. The Committee recommended that the practice of holding the Conference on Data Quality for international agencies back-to-back with the corresponding Eurostat Conference for national agencies be continued and that participation should also continue at the director level.

C. Implementation of Principles governing International Statistical Activities

6. The Committee took note of the paper prepared by UNSD on “*CCSA Note on Principles Governing International Statistical Activities*” (Document SA/2006/8), presenting suggestions on ‘implementation arrangements’, in response to the request made by the Statistical Commission at its 37th session in 2006. The Committee also reviewed the current presentation of the Principles, including their title, sub-title and preamble and agreed to eliminate the sub-title and modify the language of the preamble. A revised draft will be circulated to members for comments.

7. The Committee reviewed and discussed the proposals on ways to assess the implementation of the principles and agreed on the following: 1) all members, who are committed to do so, should review their practices in the light of the Principles and provide a self-assessment of their implementation using a common template. Eurostat will make available the questionnaire used for the self-assessment for the European Statistics Code of Practice which could form the basis of a template for self-assessment of the principles owing to the significant overlap between the two. A report based on the agencies’ self-assessment will be presented at the 2008 Session of the UN Statistical Commission; 2) the Committee will not invite countries to assess agencies’ compliance to the principles, although countries are obviously welcome to initiate the assessment and table specific issues related to the principles and their implementation; 3) the “peer-review” mechanism, in which an agency volunteers to have its practices reviewed by other members, is a good way to assess agencies’ practices and agencies may want to use it; 4) review of agencies’ practices should be a standing item in the agenda of the Committee at every session, although there will be no formal reconciliation mechanisms.

8. On the proposals concerning initiatives to implement the principles, the Committee agreed to continue the work already undertaken on the three priority areas for action, namely: (i) the development of quality assurance frameworks, (ii) the SDMX and (iii) training initiatives for staff of international organizations. On the additional proposed projects, members agreed to take forward the idea of compiling a set of best practices in international data collection exercises.

9. Finally, the Committee reviewed ideas to further disseminate and publicize the principles, among which they endorsed the following proposals: bringing the principles to the attention of agencies’ senior management; and extending the adoption of the principles to sub-regional organizations. The Committee took note of UNSD’s information note to members that the principles will also be brought to the attention of the High-Level Committee on Programmes at its next meeting at the end of September 2006.

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

10. The Committee took note of document SA/2006/10, “*Note on progress with the proposed action plan on training in statistics for staff of international organizations*”, presented by IMF, discussed the objectives and action plan of the newly developed CCSA training website, developed by IMF and UNSD, and took note of the document SA/2006/11 “*Background document on the Seminar on Human Resources and Training in Statistical Organizations*”, prepared by UNECE. Agencies, who had not yet responded to the survey carried out by IMF, were encouraged to do so and informed that the form to provide the requested information is available on the website of the Committee. Agencies were also requested to regularly update their details on the website and to consult it for suitable courses for their own staff.

11. The Committee agreed that members would be given two weeks to provide any comments or inputs that might have on the “*Objectives and Action Plan of the CCSA Training Website*” prepared by the IMF. After that deadline, the document would be considered finalized and posted on the CCSA website.

12. The Committee was informed by the representative of the World Bank of their initiative to develop an e-learning course. Members were invited to provide inputs to the proposal to be circulated shortly by the World Bank.

E. Implementation plan of SDMX

13. The Committee took note of document SA/2006/13, “*The implementation of SDMX (Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange)*”, presented by the SDMX sponsors, setting out ways for CCSA to facilitate the implementation of SDMX, in particular how international organizations can use SDMX concepts and tools for their exchange of data and metadata both with national data providers and among themselves. The report also proposed a framework for the development of specific subject-matter nomenclatures and structures and the improvement of existing ones.

14. The Committee welcomed the live demonstration by FAO (document SA/2006/13/Add.1 “*Note on FAO CountrySTAT SDMX Project*” prepared by FAO), showing an overview of the project being undertaken by FAO's CountrySTAT Programme and its first results. The project uses SDMX formats and registry technology to improve accessibility and timeliness of data reporting from the country level. Progress in similar efforts being undertaken by the DevInfo group was also noted.

15. The Committee agreed that additional information would be helpful before requesting the UN Statistical Commission to commend the goals and progress of the SDMX initiative and to encourage member states to participate in further developments. Members asked the SDMX Sponsors Committee to supplement the note discussed with more information about the way in which member states and international organizations could contribute to content-oriented guidelines in specific subject matter domains. The Committee agreed that 1) the SDMX Sponsors would provide this supplemental note in advance of the CES Bureau meeting to be held in Washington on 19 October, so that it might be taken up in the margins of the meeting (as several CCSA and SDMX Sponsors will attend) and an SDMX item on the Bureau agenda might

benefit from some reference to this work in progress and 2) a final version of the note would be agreed upon by the CCSA members after its circulation at the end of October.

F. Country regional grouping and coding

16. The Committee took note of document SA/2006/14 “*Note on geo-nomenclatures and country groupings*” prepared by WTO, which presents a summary of discussions of the inter-agency Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics on enhancing transparency and coherence in geo-nomenclatures based on experiences of country coding drawn from OECD/UNSD's successful implementation of their joint trade data processing system. The Committee also took note of document SA/2006/15 “*Note on definition of regions for statistical analysis*”, prepared by UNSD, describing UNSD's practices with country coding and regional grouping and the adaptation of these regional aggregates to the requirements of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) monitoring and reporting.

17. After reviewing various issues concerning both practices on country coding and different regional groupings used by agencies, the Committee agreed to focus the work in this area on country coding. It was agreed that agencies would submit to UNSD their concerns and questions related to aggregations or disaggregations of countries and territories not currently covered by the M49. UNSD would review the requests and propose additional coding to be used consistently by all members for data and metadata exchange.

18. On the more complex issue of discrepancies in regional classifications used by member agencies, it was agreed that decisions should be left to inter-agency groups working on specific theme/projects, such as the Inter-agency and expert group on MDG Indicators (IAEG). The Committee was informed that the IAEG will review issues related to the MDG regional grouping at their forthcoming meeting in November 2006.

G. Review of CCSA functions

19. The Committee took note of document SA/2006/16 “*A note on CCSA history and current functions*” prepared by UNSD, on the background of CCSA mandate and current functions. The Committee agreed that UNSD and the chairman, in collaboration with other agencies interested in contributing to the exercise, will prepare a proposal on how to improve the way CCSA operates for discussion at the 9th Session of the CCSA. The proposal would include issues such as the duration of the sessions, the role of the Secretariat and the chairman, structure of the discussion and duration and modalities of special sessions.

H. Special session on Statistical Capacity Building

20. In conjunction with its 8th session, CCSA held a special session on Statistical Capacity Building. The framework for discussion was established in Document SA/2006/17, prepared by UNSD. The Committee also took note of the presentation by Paris 21 of their work on the Light Reporting Exercise, document “Support to Statistical Capacity Building” (unnumbered document) and “*Strengthening vital and health statistics in the Americas*” (unnumbered), prepared by PAHO/WHO.

21. The Committee discussed ways to improve inter-agency coordination of capacity building activities and technical assistance to countries. It also reviewed ways to increase sharing of information on ongoing and planned events, projects and programmes.

22. Participants agreed that more work was needed for CCSA to agree on specific recommendations on various issues related to the coordination of statistical capacity building efforts. The Committee endorsed the proposal by UNSD of forming four Task Teams to further this work, as follows:

Task Team 1 – Reporting mechanisms on statistical capacity building activities, led by Paris 21 (ECE, Eurostat, World Tourism Organization, World Bank, Paho)

Task Team 2 – Capacity building through regional training initiatives for national statisticians (and regional training centers), led by UNSD (ILO, FAO, Paris21)

Task Team 3 – Review of modalities for coordination of technical cooperation programmes at the sub-regional level, led by the World Bank (USND, Eurostat, ESCWA, African Development Bank, World Tourism Organization)

Task Team 4 – Assessment of the effectiveness of capacity building activities in Africa, led by UNSD (WHO, Paris21, World Bank, African Development Bank)

Task Team leaders were requested to send out terms of reference for their teams by the end of October. It was agreed that other agencies who wanted to volunteer their participation in the task teams would indicate so once the terms of reference were circulated.

I. Other business

23. The Committee took note of the oral presentation by WHO on progress made by the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Health Statistics and their plans for a meeting in November 2006, to be held in conjunction with the IAEG meeting in Geneva.

24. The Committee was informed by UNSD of plans to hold a meeting of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, Cluster 10 on Statistics, in conjunction with the next IAEG meeting in Geneva.

J. Nomination of the chairman for 2007/2008

25. The Committee proposed to extend the mandate of the current chairman, Mr. Sylvester Young, for the next two-year term. Mr. Young was pleased to accept to remain in office as chair, although for one year only, until the end of the 2007.

K. Dates and venues of 2007 sessions

25. The Committee agreed to hold the 9th Session in New York in the morning of 26 February 2007, in conjunction with the 37th session of the Statistical Commission. The Committee was pleased to accept the offer by the World Tourism Organization to host the 10th Session in Madrid from 10-11 September 2007.

Annex I

Revised agenda

Monday, 4 September 2006

Morning session 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

1. Adoption of the agenda (UNSD: Document SA/2006/7)
2. Implementation of Principles governing International Statistical Activities (UNSD: Document SA/2006/8)
3. Report of the task team on quality assurance (Eurostat: Document SA/2006/9)
4. Report of the task team on statistical training (IMF: Document SA/2006/10; and ECE: Document SA/2006/11)

Monday, 4 September 2006

Afternoon session 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm

Special session on Statistical Capacity Building (UNSD: Document SA/2006/17)

Tuesday, 5 September 2006

Morning session 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

5. Implementation plan of SDMX (OECD: Document SA/2006/13)
6. Country regional grouping and coding (WTO: Document SA/2006/14; and UNSD: Document SA/2006/15)
7. Review of CCSA functions (UNSD: Document SA/2006/16)
8. Nomination of chair for 2007/2009
9. Other business

Tuesday, 5 September 2006

Afternoon session

No plenary session. UNESCO Institute for Statistics side event

Annex II

List of participants

Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities
Eighth Session
Montreal, 4-5 September 2006

List of participants

United Nations entities programmes and funds		
Department of Economic and Social Affairs		
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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	Ahmed Hussein	hussein@un.org
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Henri Laurencin	henri.laurencin@unctad.org
United Nations Development Programme	Claes Johansson	claes.johansson@undp.org
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Annex III

List of documents

SA/2006/6, Report of the 7th meeting, New York, 6 March 2006

SA/2006/7, Provisional agenda

SA/2006/8, CCSA note on principles governing international statistical activities - Prepared by UNSD

SA/2006/9, Report of the task team on the use and convergence of international quality assurance frameworks - Prepared by Eurostat

SA/2006/10, Note on progress with the proposed action plan on training in statistics for staff of international organizations, Form for CCSA Training Network and CCSA training website: Objectives and action plan - Prepared by IMF

SA/2006/11, Background document on the Seminar on Human Resources and Training in Statistical Organizations - Prepared by ECE

SA/2006/13, The Implementation of SDMX (Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange) - Prepared by the SDMX Sponsors

SA/2006/13/Add.1, Note on FAO CountrySTAT SDMX Project - Prepared by FAO

SA/2006/14, Note on Geo-nomenclatures and country groupings - Prepared by WTO

SA/2006/15, Note on definition of regions for statistical analysis - Prepared by UNSD

SA/2006/16, A note on CCSA history and current functions - Prepared by UNSD **Special session on Statistical Capacity Building**

SA/2006/17, Statistical capacity building: Framework for discussion - Prepared by UNSD

Unnumbered, Strengthening vital and health statistics in the Americas - Prepared by PAHO/WHO