

UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

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Agenda item 5: Programme questions (United Nations Statistics Division)

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Programme Statement

Thomas Stelzer

Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs

Ms. Chairperson,

Distinguished Delegates and Colleagues,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present to you the work programme of the UN Statistics Division for the next twelve months. Before doing so, I would like to make a few remarks, as usual, regarding the conduct of the 44th session of the UN Statistical Commission.

[Programme aspects related to the Statistical Commission]

We are happy to report that a total of 133 countries represented by their national statistical offices and 47 international agencies participated in the 44th session of the Commission. I would like to put on record my appreciation to all national statistical offices and international agencies that have helped in the preparation of the various side events. Special thanks go to the chairpersons and speakers at the Seminar on Big Data, the High-Level Forum on the Rio+20 outcome, the Learning Center events and other seminars during these 10 days. Thanks should also go to the Economic Commission for Africa for facilitating the exhibition. I am also thankful to a number of countries and agencies for the financial support they have provided to some developing countries to enable their participation here in the session, namely the United Kingdom, the World Bank, the ECOWAS Secretariat, Paris21, the African Development Bank, UNFPA and the donors of the EDGE project.

This Commission has considered 31 substantive papers, of which 13 were for discussion and 18 for information. The papers were posted on our website on time in all official languages. I understand that the Commission is generally satisfied with the working methods introduced a couple of years ago. Nonetheless, there is of course always scope for further improvement and I am pleased to learn that the Chair and the Bureau intend to launch an initiative of reviewing the working methods and we, as the secretariat, are of course committed to fully support this effort.

[Programme aspects related to the work of the United Nations Statistics Division]

Let me now turn more specifically to the work programme of the UN Statistics Division.

1. Monitoring the Global Development Agenda

Our immediate commitment in this context is to prepare the data framework underlying the 2013 MDG report of the Secretary General and to professionally lead up to the final assessment of the success of the MDGs in 2015. In this regard, I am grateful to the members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group for their continuing support and hard work. Whilst focusing on the task at hand, we will also engage in the ongoing and intensifying debate on new development goals. In particular, the international statistical community of official statisticians needs to ensure the feasibility, robustness and comparability of any proposed indicator frameworks and advise decision makers on the related necessary investments in statistical capacity building at an early stage. I am pleased that as a result of the lively debate during our High Level Forum, a “Friends of the Chair Group” will be formed to bring the professional expertise and principles from a statistical perspective into the debate on broader

measures, the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda. We at UNSD will of course fully and actively support the new group.

2. Strengthening the Global Statistical System

Obtaining the endorsement of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics by ECOSOC and the General Assembly will be one of the priority areas for the Division this year, together with developing guidelines for a better implementation of the Principles. We will also continue to work on the implementation of the National Quality Assurance Framework. Furthermore, we are committed to working closely with our UN system partners, especially the Regional Commissions, to better harmonize and integrate our work-programmes wherever possible, for the benefit of member states.

In 2013 UNSD will continue its focus on strengthening national statistical capacity, with the help of the Regional Commissions and other international partners. In 2012, we organized 28 national, regional and international workshops and 27 study visits, and serviced close to 1200 participants from more than 130 countries or territories. We provided funding for more than 350 participants from the developing countries.

3. Integrating geospatial and statistical information

As you know, ECOSOC has given UNSD the additional mandate to service the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM). I am particularly pleased to see that the specific topic of the integration of statistical and geospatial information has been taken up by the Statistical Commission this year, thanks to an excellent programme review prepared by Australia. This is a bold step towards establishing a global information infrastructure for pooling together multiple layers of data sources within an explicit spatial-statistical reference framework. We need to bring the two professional communities closer, for the benefit of policy decision makers and analysts. UNSD will strongly support the work of the newly established Expert Group in this field.

4. Improving our Data and Frameworks

In the field of social and demographic statistics, the Division will in 2013 focus on summarizing experiences acquired during the 2010 round of censuses and at the same time look forward and initiate the revision of the principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses for the 2020 round. The Division will also launch the revised set of principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system. We will continue to provide training and assistance to strengthen countries' capacity in producing and disseminating statistics on time use and violence against women, and in collaboration with UN Women, through the EDGE project, the Division will develop methodological guidelines to measure asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective.

In the areas of national and environmental-economic accounting, the Division will intensify its implementation efforts, together with its partners, especially the regional commissions. We will focus on scaling up at the national level coordination, advocacy and funding for the implementation of the System of National Accounts (SNA), including supporting statistics

and we will work with the UN Committee on Environmental- Economic Accounting (UNCEEAA) to develop a global programme for the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA). Furthermore the Division will focus on completing the SEEA-Energy and other methodological manuals, training materials and compilation manuals.

With respect to international trade statistics and economic globalization, under the guidance of the just established “Friends of the Chair group”, UNSD will improve guidelines and promote the use of business registers and basic economic and trade statistics, and work to link these data source in order to gain further insights in the global economic and financial cross-border interdependencies. UNSD will also continue its work on merchandise trade, trade in services and tourism statistics, and on SDMX for trade, external trade indices and trade-related classifications, and will continue to disseminate statistics through UN Comtrade, UN Monthly Comtrade and UN ServiceTrade.

Lastly, in the field of environment, industrial and energy statistics, the focus will primarily be on implementation: 1) of the newly endorsed Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) and the Core Set of Environment Statistics; 2) of the International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics and 3) of the new International Recommendations for Energy Statistics; the division will advance the methodological basis and data collection for the Natural Gas programme of the Joint Organizations Data Initiative (JODI). Moreover, our work on classifications will continue in close cooperation with the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications.

5. UNSD Work Programme 2014-2015

As you may know, the United Nations functions in a two-year budgetary cycle. Currently, the budget and work programme for the years 2014 and 2015 is being finalized for adoption by the General Assembly at the end of this year 2013. You will find the specific work programme with the detailed list of proposed outputs to be produced by the Statistics Division in 2014/15 in document E/CN.3/2013/CRP.1.

According to UN budget and programme procedures, and due to the fact that the budget approval process is now fairly advanced, this document is presented to the Commission for information. I, therefore, invite the Commission to take note of the Division's 2014/15 work programme. Any comments you may have are welcome and will certainly assist us in the future management of the Division.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Commission that following a decision of the General Assembly, the Division identified for its 2014/15 budget cost-cutting measures, amounting to close to 3% which translates into the loss of some posts. The Division will make every effort, to balance these cuts by efficiency gains, without affecting the substance of our programme delivery. Nonetheless, due to general cuts in the United Nations budget, the area of print publications will have to be reviewed, and the number and the volume of print publications may have to be reduced significantly. We will seek advice from you on

how to best implement these reductions without affecting our core function of data dissemination and provision of methodological support.

6. Update on the implementation of the current work programme 2012/13

I am pleased to report that the implementation of the 2012/13 programme is progressing smoothly. The Division has reached (and surpassed) its performance indicators and virtually all planned outputs will be produced in time. Nonetheless, due to changing priorities some adjustments will have to be made to our list of close to 500 programmed outputs. Some proposed output terminations and additions are contained in the Annex of the Conference Room Paper referred to above. I invite the Commission to approve these adjustments to our current work programme and authorize the Commission's Bureau to approve further adjustments, should they become necessary in the course of this year.

Thank you for your attention and your continued support.