

## **PRINCIPLES GOVERNING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES**

Bearing in mind that statistics are essential for sustainable economic, environmental 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 Chief Statisticians or coordinators of statistical activities of United Nations agencies and related organizations, agree that implementation of the following principles will enhance the functioning of the international statistical system.

In doing so, they note that on 14 September, 2005, the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities agreed that these principles could be used by all agencies to guide their work depending on their specific needs and circumstances and that agencies should review their practices in relation to these principles; they further recalled the adoption by the *United Nations Statistical Commission* of the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* in its Special Session of 11-15 April 1994, and the endorsement of the *Declaration of Good Practices in Technical Cooperation in Statistics* in its 30th Session of 1-5 March 1999.

### **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
- 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 legislation**

**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