Report of the 26th Session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

I. Introduction

1. The 26th session was held at the ESCAP Conference Center in Bangkok from 1 to 2 October 2015. The session was chaired by the two Co-chairs of the Committee: Mr. Werner Bier, Deputy Director General, Statistics of the European Central Bank (ECB) and Mr. Pietro Gennari, Chief Statistician and Director, Statistics Division, of FAO. The agenda, documents presented and the list of participants of the present session are attached as Annexes I, II and III, respectively.

II. Work of the CCSA Session

A. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

2. Mr. Werner Bier, Deputy Director General, Statistics of the European Central Bank (ECB) welcomed the Committee members to the 26th session.

3. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda without changes (see Annex I).

B. ESCAP Statistics

4. ESCAP presented the current state of statistical development in Asia-Pacific and the pillars of its work on statistics focusing on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The diversity of the region is reflected in the statistical capacity of member States which has implications on their “readiness for the SDGs”. ESCAP serves as a platform for reaching consensus on issues of global relevance, as a datahub for the region and as a facilitator for exchanging experiences in the implementation of global standards. Capacity development is guided by a framework of regional core sets of statistics and implemented through domain-specific regional initiatives with strengthening and modernizing statistical institutions as key foundations. These country-driven initiatives are led, implemented and monitored by expert or high-level bodies comprising both countries and development partners, including many of the members of CCSA. Collaboration and coordination between countries and development partners are crucial in assisting countries in the region to be better prepared to monitor the SDGs.

C. Further developments in implementing SDMX

5. ECB briefed the Committee on major achievements, recent developments and key challenges ahead in the area of SDMX focusing on the role international organizations
could/should play in advancing the use of SDMX. Details are available in the speech of Mr. Werner Bier, chair of the SDMX Sponsors, delivered at the SDMX Global Conference 2015, on behalf of the seven sponsor organisations (see https://sdmx.org/wp-content/uploads/SDMX-Global-Conference-Speech-by-Werner-Bier.pdf).

D. Principles Governing International Statistical Activities

6. UNWTO introduced the report SA/2015/8 entitled “Principles Governing International Statistical Activities Revised Good Practices” with two annexes containing the “Principles Governing International Statistical Activities with revised good practices” (annex 1) and the “Evolution of the good practices as a result of the Survey of 2014 and list of barriers identified by the survey respondents” (annex 2). The documents were prepared by the task team (formed by UNWTO and FAO) established by the Committee at its 25th session to review the findings of the survey conducted in 2014 and to propose a more comprehensive and improved list of good practices that accompany the Principles for discussion at the 26th Session of the CCSA.

7. The Committee thanked UNWTO and FAO for the excellent and relevant work. During the discussion some members briefed the Committee about recent developments in the implementation of the Principles in their organization. In this context, the initiative of the UN agencies to have the Principles adopted by their principals through the Chief Executive Board (CEB) was welcomed. In general, it was observed that list of good practices should be specific to be meaningful and relevant, while at the same time it should be general enough to be inclusive of the different institutional set-up.

8. Specific suggestions made during the discussion include:

- to define the scope of the Principles specifically to statistics rather than data; this is particularly applicable for organizations that have large analytical function (“data in the context of statistics”);
- to define or describe the term “international official statistics”;
- to define some terms, such as “open data policy”;
- It was suggested not limit examples to “open data” but to also include “data sharing”;
- It was also suggested to include more references to existing tools, such as “Recommended Practices on the Use of Non-Official Sources in International Statistics”;
- Prioritization of good practices was found to be not practical;
- More reflection on quality assurance frameworks for international organizations was necessary;
- More reference to “big data” should be considered;
- Tools for implementation, currently at the end of the document, could be moved to the preamble (as a third paragraph);
- The term “countries” could be replaced by “constituencies” to make it more applicable to all member organizations;
Conclusions

9. Members are invited to submit written comments by 18 December to UNWTO and FAO. Committee members are also invited to join the task team. The task team will include these written comments as well as comments provided during this session to produce a new version of the list of good practices. The Committee is expected to adopt the improved document at its next session in March 2016.

E. Special session on “Showcasing the use of big data for international statistics”

10. The special session started with introductory remarks by UNSD providing an overview of the United Nations’ work programme on big data. The session featured the following eight presentations presenting the use of big data from different angles:

- “Big data and official statistics – The role of the ICT sector” by Susan Teltscher, Head, ICT Data and Statistics Division, ITU
- “Use of geospatial and web data for OECD statistics” by Paul Schreyer, Deputy-Director, Statistics Directorate, OECD
- “Postal Big Data: towards full end-to-end predictability for international e-commerce” by Jose Anson, lead economist, Integrated Data and Economic Research, UPU
- “Bringing big data to the World Bank's knowledge and operations work” by Andrew Whitby, Data Scientist, Innovations Lab, World Bank
- “Implementing a Big Data strategy in the European Statistical System” by Pieter Everaers, Director Cooperation in the European Statistical System; International Cooperation, Eurostat
- “Big Data – Big noise: Its relevance to industrial Statistics in the context of SDG monitoring” by Mr Shyam Upadhyaya Chief Statistician, United Nations Industrial Development Organization
- “The use of Google Search data for Macro-economic estimations” by Per Nymand-Andersen, Adviser, Directorate General Statistics, ECB

11. The diverse presentations and rich discussion on this innovative subject demonstrated that Committee members have acquired relevant experiences in the use of big data for international statistics and are committed to further explore the potentialities of these new tools/data sources in responding to the new data demands. More work is needed to better understand how big data and official statistics best fit together and which data can be used for what purpose. More concrete examples are needed as the innovation in the area continues. It was stressed that the quality frameworks that apply to official statistics in general should also apply to the use of big data for official statistics. The link between the business sector (e.g. the mobile industry) and statistics need to be reconsidered and may be redefined as a partnership. The larger variety of data used to compile official statistics will also require a larger variety in the skill sets of staff.
Conclusions

12. The Committee will consider big data again in a future session.

F. Briefing on the development of an indicator framework for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

13. UNSD introduced document SA/2015/9 entitled “Briefing on the development of an Indicator framework for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: Accompanying note on the consultation process by United Nations Statistics Division”. The Committee was also briefed on the discussions on this topic at the UN System Meeting on 30 September 2015.

14. International organizations are critically important in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, the established process is country driven and reserves mostly an advisory position for international organizations.

15. An open global consultation process took place where everybody including civil society was invited to submit comments. Members of the IAEG-SDG are now considering the consolidated comments. The process is still characterized by consultations on many different levels: within countries, within regions and between International Organizations.

Conclusions

16. Members agreed to support the current process in the areas of their expertise, in particular to reach consensus on those indicators in the current proposal where there is a real difference of opinion among International Organizations.

G. Statistical support for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (UN World Forum on Data; Global Partnership; transformative agenda)

17. The Committee received briefings by various members on the different topics under this agenda item: Those members involved in the formation and the launch of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (26 September 2015) provided an update. The discussion focused on the need for the official statistical systems to be involved. There were different opinions on how to engage in this new initiative at this early stage. UNSD, furthermore, clarified that the newly formed High Level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity Building is the designated mechanism by the UN Statistical Commission on these matters. In particular this Group will discuss the follow up on the data revolution and the organization of the World Data Forum in 2016. Eurostat provided a presentation on progress of the work of the transformative agenda.
Conclusions

18. The Committee decided to stay informed on these initiatives.

H. The use of non-official statistics for international statistics

19. ECB introduced document SA/2015/10 entitled “The use of non-official statistics for international statistics”. The document proposes a CCSA special publication on the topic, which will include the papers presented at the CCSA Special Session at the European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics (Q2014) held in Vienna, Austria, on 3-5 June 2014. The document could also include additional papers prepared by members and submitted before the next session of the UN Statistical Commission.

Conclusion:

20. CCSA members should contact the ECB or the secretariat by 18 December if they wish to contribute to such a proposed publication. Based on the interest shown, the Committee will decide on whether or not to pursue such a publication. ECB will brief the Committee at its next session about interest received.

I. European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics (Madrid, 2016)

21. Eurostat briefed the Committee about the upcoming Q2016, which will be held in Madrid from 1-3 June 2015. UNWTO, headquartered in Madrid, offered to organize a CCSA session at the Q2016 similar in format than previous sessions. Members commented that the CCSA session held in Vienna in 2014 had a programme that was too tight and left too little time for discussion. This should be avoided in the future.

Conclusions

22. The Committee thanked UNWTO for offering to organize such a session and asked UNWTO to decide a topic and to solicit contributions from members. UNTWO will brief CCSA members on details at the next session in March 2016.

J. World Statistics Day

23. UNSD briefed the Committee on the status of preparation for the second World Statistics Day to be celebrated 20 October 2015. Agencies are encouraged to celebrate the day and CEB members will receive a letter from USG Wu to this regard. Several Committee members shared their plans for World Statistics Day.
Conclusions

24. Members are encouraged to send their activities to UNSD, so they can be showcased on the dedicated UNSD website (worldstatisticsday.org).


25. The Committee received a briefing by the ECB on the special session organized by CCSA at the 60th World Statistical Congress – ISI2015 in Rio de Janeiro (SA/2015/13). The session was held on 30 July 2015 and entitled “Statistical indicators for monitoring and achieving the sustainable development goals” and received positive feedback. All conference papers and presentations of the event are available on the CCSA website at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/Session-ISI/Programme-Presentations-2015.htm.

L. Preparations of the 47th session of the UN Statistical Commission

26. The Committee received a briefing by UNSD on the documents that will be considered by the UN Statistical Commission at its 47th session, which will take place 8-11 March 2016 in New York (SA/2015/11). A document from an earlier session entitled “Procedures for joint statements to the UN Statistical Commission” (SA/2015/3) was provided as a background document.

Conclusions

27. The Committee reaffirmed its procedures for joint statements as outlined in SA/2015/3 and decided to work on joint statements for the following agenda items for the upcoming 47th session of the UN Statistical Commission:

- Report of the Secretary-General on development indicators (lead agencies: FAO)
- Report of the High Level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity Building for post 2015 monitoring (lead agencies: to be determined)

28. The co-chairs, with the help of the secretariat, will reach out for volunteers in December, when the unedited versions of these documents have become available on the UNSC website.

29. The Secretariat will also share the “Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the CCSA” among Committee Members before its formal submission in December.
**M. Membership applications**

30. The Committee considered the formal application for membership received from the International Trade Center presented in document SA/2015/12. The Committee discussed the possibility of additional criteria for membership, such as the level of participation, the level of active contribution, a minimum size of the statistical unit and the possibility of instating a formal observer status for the Committee in addition to membership.

**Conclusions:**

31. The Committee decided to consider this further in a future session and to invite the International Trade Center as observer for the next session in New York.

**N. CCSA multi-year work programme**

32. The Co-chairs introduced the agenda item highlighting the need to develop a multi-year work programme for the CCSA. The programme endorsed in 2012 served as reference document. The importance of striking a good balance between one off items and items that will be on the agenda more regularly was mentioned. The items which have been proposed to be included in the multi-year programme of the Committee are the following: the SDG indicators process, partnerships in support of country statistical capacity to monitor the SDGs, use of Big Data (including legal/institutional aspects), obstacles in the implementation of the Principles Governing International Statistical Activities. Statistical infrastructure building, legal aspects of statistical operations and building registers, and the cost structure of statistical outputs (HR, IT) The possibility of conducting a new survey on priority topics to be included in the CCSA multi-year work programme was proposed. As a general point, it will be important to translate work areas and discussions into specific outputs (publications, papers, websites) to increase impact and visibility of the CCSA’s work.

**Conclusions:**

33. The Committee decided to collect further ideas for its future work programme and requested the co-chairs to conduct another survey. The Committee accepted an offer by Eurostat to prepare a first issue paper on the cost structures of statistical outputs for the spring session of CCSA and a more extensive document for the fall session.

**O. Elections**

34. The Committee thanked the two Co-chairs, Mr. Pietro Gennari and Mr. Werner Bier as well as the entire team supporting them for their effective leadership.

35. Mr. Pietro Gennari, Chief Statistician and Director, FAO Statistics Division, and Ms. Martine Durand, Chief Statistician and Director, OECD Statistics Directorate, were nominated for re-election and election, respectively.
36. The Committee endorsed the nominations and elected Mr. Gennari and Ms. Durand as the new Co-chairs of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities for the next two years.

**P. Agenda, dates and venues of the 2016 sessions of the Committee**

37. The Committee reconfirmed that its next session will be held on 7 March 2016 (morning) in New York on the margins of the 47th session of the UN Statistical Commission.

38. The Committee accepted the offer of OECD to host the 28th session of CCSA tentatively from 26 to 28 September 2016 at the OECD headquarters in Paris. Dates will be confirmed in due course.

**Q. Actions to be taken by the Committee**

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<th>Lead Agency</th>
<th>Participating Agencies</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Actions/Output</th>
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<td>A. Adoption of the agenda</td>
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<td>B. ESCAP Statistics</td>
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<td>C. SDMX</td>
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<td>E. Special session “big data”</td>
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<td>F. Indicator framework for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda</td>
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<td>G. Support for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Dev. Agenda</td>
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<td>H. Use of non-official data</td>
<td>ECB</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>18 Dec 2015 Mar 2016</td>
<td>Contact ECB if interested in contributing to a publication</td>
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<td>I. Q2016</td>
<td>UNWTO</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Dec 2015</td>
<td>UNWTO to decide topic and solicit contributions; Interested members to contribute to session</td>
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<td>J. World Statistics Day</td>
<td>UNSD</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Oct 2015</td>
<td>Members to send activities to UNSD; Activities reflect on website</td>
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<td>K. ISI 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>L. 47th Session of UNSC</td>
<td>Co-chairs</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Dec 2015 –</td>
<td>Identify lead agencies and work</td>
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<td>M. Membership application</td>
<td>Co-chairs/Secretariat</td>
<td>Mar 2016</td>
<td>on joint statements on: SDGs, HLG for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity, and big data</td>
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<td>N. Multi-year programme</td>
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<td>Mar 2016</td>
<td>Invite ITC as observer for next session</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. Agenda, dates, venue for 2016 sessions</td>
<td>Co-chairs</td>
<td>OECC and others</td>
<td>Fall 20146</td>
<td>Confirm fall 2016 dates</td>
</tr>
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Annex I

Provisional agenda

Thursday, 1 October 2015 (09:00 – 18:00)

1. Welcome and adoption of agenda 09:00 – 09:15
2. Presentation by ESCAP 09:15 – 09:45
3. Further developments in implementing SDMX (oral report, ECB) 09:45 – 10:15
   Coffee break 10:15 – 10:30
   Lunch break 12:00 – 14:00
5. Showcasing the use of big data for international statistics (special session, lead: ECB) 14:00 – 18:00
   Social event 19:00

Friday, 2 October 2015 (09:00 – 16:00)

7. Statistical support for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (UN World Forum on Data; Global Partnership; transformative agenda (oral update by UNSD and EUROSTAT and background document) 09:45 – 10:30
   Coffee break 10:30 – 11:00
8. The use of non-official statistics for international statistics (follow up to the CCSA session organized at the European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics, 3-5 June 2014, Vienna) (report by ECB SA/2015/10 and background document) 11:00 – 11:15
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| 10. | **World Statistics Day** (information item, oral report by UNSD)  
     (for reference: <worldstatisticsday.org>) | 11:30 – 12:00 |
| 11. | **Briefing on the CCSA special session on International Statistics:**  
     “Statistical Indicators for Monitoring and Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at the 60th World Statistics Congress – ISI2015” (report by ECB SA/2015/13) | 12:00 – 12:30 |
| | *Lunch break* | 12:30 – 14:00 |
| 12. | **Preparations of the 47th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission:** Joint statements  
     (list of Commission document 2016 (SA/2015/11 and background document SA/2015/3)) | 14:00 – 14:30 |
| 13. | **Elections** | 14:30 – 14:45 |
| 14. | **CCSA multi-year work programme** (background document SA/2012/7 Annex) | 14:45 – 15:30 |
| 15. | **Other business and closing** (SA/2015/12 ITC application) | 15:30 – 16:00 |
Annex II

List of Documents

SA/2015/7  Provisional agenda for the 26th session
SA/2015/8  Review of Good Practices of the Principles Governing International
Statistical Activities and Annex I and Annex II

Special session on showcasing big data

Agenda for the special session

Presentations:

- Big data and official statistics - the role of the ICT sector - by ITU
- Use of geospatial and web data for OECD statistics - by OECD
- Postal big data: towards full end-to-end predictability for international e-commerce - by UPU
- Big data for development at the World Bank Group - by World Bank
- Implementing a big data strategy in the European statistical system - by Eurostat
- Big data - Big Noise: its relevance to industrial statistics in the context of SDG monitoring - by UNIDO
- The use of Google search data for macro-economic nowcasting - by ECB
- Remote sensing for agricultural statistics - by FAO

SA/2015/9  Briefing on the development of an indicator framework for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda
SA/2015/10  The use of non-official statistics for international statistics
SA/2015/11  The list of Statistical Commission documents 2016
SA/2015/12  Application for CCSA membership by International Trade Centre
SA/2015/13  Briefing on the CCSA special session on International Statistics: Statistical Indicators for Monitoring and Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at the 60th World Statistics Congress - ISI 2015
SA/2015/14  ESCAP presentation: ESCAP statistics: Implications for Agenda 2030 [a.k.a. SDGs]

Background documents

Item 3  Further developments in implementing SDMX
Item 7  Statistical support for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda
        Transformative agenda for official statistics in support of the post 2015 development agenda
Item 8  The use of non-official statistics for international statistics
Item 12  Preparations of the 47th session of the UN Statistical Commission
Item 14  CCSA multi-year work programme SA/2012/7 Annex
### Annex III

List of Participants

*In alphabetical order of the organization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Participants</td>
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<td>World Health Organization (WHO)</td>
<td>Bedirhan Ustun</td>
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<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP/SIAP)</td>
<td>Margarita Guerrero</td>
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