UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

Expert Group Meeting on International Statistical Classifications
New York, 13-15 May 2013

Mandate of the Expert Group

Extract from the Report to the United Nations Statistical Commission 2012
(E/CN.3/2012/28)

Annex

Mandate of the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications

1. The Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications was charged by the Statistical Commission at its thirtieth session, held from 1 to 5 March 1999, with improving cooperation on international classifications and ensuring harmonization and convergence among classifications in the International Family of Statistical Classifications (E/1999/24, chap. VII).

2. The International Family of Statistical Classifications is comprised of those classifications that play a role as standard classifications in individual or multiple statistical domains and have been reviewed and approved as guidelines by the Statistical Commission or another competent intergovernmental body on such matters as economics, demographics, labour, health, education, social welfare, geography, environment and tourism.

3. The Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications will continue to be the central coordination body for the current and future work on classifications that are the responsibility of the Statistics Division, and for the coordination and review of other classifications that are the responsibility of other international organizations and that have been proposed for adoption by the Statistical Commission.

4. The Expert Group will continue to work towards ensuring harmonization and convergence in the development of the classifications within the International Family of Statistical Classifications. To ensure coordinated revisions within the Family, the Expert Group will continue to develop and progress strategies for the coordination and timing of revisions within the Family. Where a standard classification has changed, the Expert Group will encourage and assist custodians of other classifications to adopt the changes that reflect those made in the standard classification.

5. The Expert Group will establish long-term strategies for the further development of international classifications. It will be concerned primarily with requirements imposed on classifications arising from statistical applications, but may also take into consideration the requirements arising from non-statistical applications of the classifications. These applications include censuses, surveys and administrative activities in areas applicable to these classifications, analytical work requiring linkages between classifications, as well as requirements for policy decisions.

Terms of reference

6. A key function of the Expert Group is to assist and advise the Statistical Commission in:

(a) Promoting the adoption of best practices in the development of international classifications;

(b) Coordinating work on those standard classifications that are members of the International Family of Statistical Classifications, including examining changes

to classifications and clarifying their relationship to other international classifications;

(c) Promoting the adoption of the standard classifications of the International Family of Statistical Classifications within regional and national statistical systems to improve the international comparability of data;

(d) Assessing the appropriateness of requests for inclusion of classifications into the International Family of Statistical Classifications as standard classifications;

(e) Ensuring that the various classifications are suitable for use in the range of statistical activities in which they are to be applied and that they promote conceptual and methodological coherence in the statistical system, as well as reflecting practical considerations in data collection and compilation;

(f) Developing a strategic approach towards the future development of the International Family of Statistical Classifications.

7. The tasks of the Expert Group include advising on classification best practice principles; reviewing the concepts and principles of existing and emerging international classifications; facilitating the harmonization of related classifications; reviewing classifications against the criteria for inclusion in the International Family; and facilitating or undertaking classification reviews where appropriate. The Expert Group will also provide guidance to the Statistics Division and other custodians of international standard classifications on technical matters of classification revisions or development, as well as strategic planning for classifications work, if so requested.

8. The Expert Group will decide whether certain technical, analytical or exploratory tasks should be carried out by a suitable subgroup of the Expert Group. If the creation of a subgroup is warranted, the Expert Group will specify the goals and, if applicable, the lifespan of these subgroups. The subgroups should report back to the Expert Group for evaluation of their tasks and approval of their findings or decisions.

Items considered

9. The Expert Group considers issues of concern in developments in international classifications, best practices in developing classifications, implications of reviews on time-series, context and requirements imposed on classifications arising from statistical applications and strategies for implementing international classifications. In addition, the Expert Group may also choose to consider the requirements of classifications imposed from non-statistical applications. The Expert Group should also consider and provide guidance and support for the development of associated elements of classifications such as correspondences, companion guides and coding tools.

10. For new classifications, the Expert Group should confine its discussions, where possible, to the application of best practices in their development. The Expert Group should not consider decisions made on the subject matter by other expert groups unless it is related to ensuring the harmonization and convergence of classifications or to avoid the further proliferation of classifications.

11. Within the terms of the above resolutions, there is flexibility for the Expert Group to adjust, where necessary, its priorities and methods to meet new requirements and maintain a balance between matters of current concern and the longer-term development aspects of the official statistical system.

Convener

12. The Statistics Division will continue to be the convener of the Expert Group and will, to the extent possible, provide funds for the participation of developing countries.

Membership

13. The Statistics Division will continue to invite representatives from international organizations, developed and developing countries, custodians, major users of international statistical classifications and individual experts in the development and application of international classifications to become members of the Expert Group. To ensure a balanced view and consistency in discussion of all classification matters, the membership of the Expert Group will take into account balanced regional representation, as well as continuity in membership over consecutive periods.

14. The members of the Expert Group should be experts in the development and application of classifications, as well represent national and regional experiences in the application of the International Family of Statistical Classifications.

15. The Expert Group and its subgroups can invite guest experts to discuss topics that require a more specialized or broader knowledge in certain areas, without making these guests members of the Expert Group.

Term of office

16. Members of the Expert Group will be invited by the Statistics Division to participate in Expert Group discussions for a period of two years.

Frequency of meetings

17. The Expert Group should meet biennially or more frequently if required by the work programme.

Reporting

18. The work programme, decisions and recommendations of the Expert Group will be submitted to the Statistical Commission through the report of the Secretary-General on economic and social classifications, prepared by the Statistics Division.

Bureau of the Expert Group

19.   The Expert Group will elect a bureau, which will distribute tasks, carry out day-to-day management and act as a bridge between Expert Group meetings. The Bureau will not have any decision-making authority beyond those necessary to undertake its administrative roles. The Expert Group will also elect the Chair of the Bureau.

20.   A bureau is elected for a two-year period or until the next Expert Group meeting. Nominations are made by member(s) of the Expert Group. Elections are held at the beginning of a session.

21.   The Bureau will communicate electronically and will hold virtual meetings as necessary.

Secretariat support and other participants

22.   The sessions of the Expert Group are substantively serviced by the Statistics Division and may be attended by the regional commissions, other United Nations organizations, specialized agencies and related organizations, non-United Nations international organizations active in international statistical work and non-governmental organizations.

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