

Statistical Commission

Forty-third session

28 February – 2 March 2012

Item 3 (k) of the provisional agenda

Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Background document

Available in English only

Draft Revised Preamble for the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division as Secretariat of the
Friends of the Chair Group on the Implementation of the
Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

1. This background document is to be read in conjunction with the progress report on the work of the Friends of the Chair (FOC) group on the Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FPOS) E/CN.3/2012/14. This report describes in section III. the ongoing work on the revision of the preamble of the FPOS.

2. Subsequent to the drafting of the above report, the FOC group had a round of exchanges on an initial concrete draft proposal for a revised preamble. The version below incorporates the comments received from nine members of the group. It should be noted that it does not necessarily reflect a full consensus by the group. It is presented to the Statistical Commission as work-in-progress, to seek the Commission's initial reaction and further guidance on how to take this effort to completion.

3. Based on the comments received from the Statistical Commission as well as from a proposed global consultation process in the months ahead, the FOC group will aim to finalize the revised preamble, which will be presented to the Statistical Commission for formal adoption by 2013.

Version 2 (20 February 2012)

Updated preamble of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics:

The Statistical Commission,

- Recalling recent decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)¹ highlighting the fundamental importance of official statistics for the national and global development agenda;

- Bearing in mind the critical role of high quality official statistical information in analysis and informed policy decision making in support of sustainable development, peace and security as well as for mutual knowledge and trade among the States and peoples of an increasingly connected world, demanding openness and transparency;

- Bearing in mind that the essential trust of the public in the integrity of official statistical systems and the confidence in statistics depends to a large extent on respect for the fundamental values and principles that are the basis of any society which seeks to understand itself and to respect the rights of its members; in this context a greater professional independence and accountability of statistical agencies are crucial;

- Bearing in mind that the quality of official statistics depends largely on the cooperation of citizens, enterprises and custodians of administrative records in providing appropriate and reliable data necessary for statistical compilations;

¹ 2010 World Statistics Day, 2006 Strengthening Statistical Capacity, 2005 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses

- Recognizing that the relevance of official statistics available to governments, businesses and societies requires continuous interaction between users and producers of statistics in order to meet users' needs, including the demand for appropriate disaggregation at all levels of governance;
- Recognizing the rapidly expanding technological possibilities for , providing user-friendly and equal access to official statistics to all users and for engaging in direct communication with diverse user groups and the related responsibility of national statistical systems to be the producers of authoritative data based on a strong statistical culture that includes a commitment to quality;
- Noting that the continuous evolution of scientific methods and the increased availability of new data sources and data types, such as geo-reference information, should allow to increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the statistical production process and to reduce reporting burden, while at the same time safeguarding confidentiality;
- Stressing the importance of a sustained process of statistical capacity building;
- Recognizing the increased role of regional, supranational and international statistical organizations in supporting the development of standards and methods to allow comparison among and within countries and in strengthening the quality of global data bases; recalling in this context the “Principles Governing International Statistics” by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities as well as the International Statistical Institute’s “Declaration of Professional Ethics”;
- Stressing that statistical principles in order to be effective have to be enshrined in the institutional frameworks that govern official statistical systems and be respected at all political levels and by all stakeholders in national statistical systems ;

Reaffirms the present Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, as adopted in 1994².

² Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No.9 (E/1994/29)