

UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

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Agenda item 5: Programme Questions
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Programme Statement

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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 43rd session of the UN Statistical Commission.

Programme aspects related to the Statistical Commission

I am happy to report that a total of 135 countries represented by their national statistical offices and 47 international agencies participated in the 43rd session of the Commission and its many side events. This year we have unprecedented 60 side events officially registered with the secretariat. I know there are also informal side events and many bi-lateral meetings. The annual session of the Statistical Commission is indeed the “event of the year” for the global statistical community.

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 events. Special thanks go to the chairpersons and speakers at the Seminar on “Counting the 7 Billion”, the High-Level Forum on Official Statistics, the Learning Center events and other seminars during these 10 days. Thanks should also go to the Economic Commission for Europe for facilitating the exhibition. I am also thankful to the United Kingdom, Paris21, ECOWAS Secretariat and the World Bank for their financial support to some countries for their participation.

This Commission has considered 32 substantive papers, of which 15 were for discussion and 17 for information. The papers were posted on time in all languages. The feedback I received was that the Commission is satisfied with the current methods of work, the documentation of the papers, and the split between discussion and information papers. The secretariat appreciates the guidance received from the Bureau and will work

with the Bureau to further review the methods of work and make appropriate changes if necessary.

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.

The First High Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management

The High Level Forum on GGIM, held in October, 2011 in Seoul, Republic of Korea was an overwhelming success. For the first time, geospatial information experts from many countries came together under the UN umbrella to discuss critical issues to advance the management of the global geospatial information and the integration of statistical and geospatial information. Back to back with the High Level Forum, the UN Committee of Experts on GGIM, established by ECOSOC in July last year, held its inaugural meeting. The Committee's second meeting will be in August this year in the UN Headquarters. We are grateful to the Government of Qatar for agreeing to host the second High Level Forum in 2013, in Doha. The advancement of the global geospatial information and its integration with statistical information represents a bold step towards establishing a global information infrastructure for pooling together multiple layers of data sources with an explicit spatial reference framework. We will report back periodically on this GGIM initiative to the Commission.

Monitoring Global Development Agenda

The Statistical Commission is facing increasing demand to support the development and monitoring of indicators in the various policy areas of global interest. We are intensifying our work in the monitoring of the progress towards the MDGs. A final report assessing the success of the MDGs would have to be prepared by 2015. In this regard, I am grateful to the members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group for the assistance over the years and for their continuing support as we move towards the final assessment. It is

important for the Commission to give this Inter-agency and Expert group its strongest support so that it can continue its professional work on development indicators.

As we move toward 2015, we can expect that there will be an intense debate on the development goals and targets and their monitoring through appropriate indicators. The Under-Secretary General has mentioned the so called “sustainable development indicators” as a possible replacement of the MDGs. It is absolutely indispensable that the professional statistical community be fully involved in this discussion early on, in order to ensure the feasibility and credibility of any proposed indicator frameworks. I am glad to inform you that the President of ECOSOC has written to the Chair of the Statistical Commission to ask for contribution from the Commission by the end of 2012. The secretariat will assist the Chair and the Bureau to draft an initial response based on the 2006 ECOSOC resolution and Commission decisions over the year. This draft will be consulted with the Commission members, the regional commissions and other regional groups, and the IAEG. The secretariat, together with the IAEG, will continue to monitor the discussion on the post 2015 development agenda and inform the Commission on any major development.

Strengthening the System

We have reviewed the revision of the preamble of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics this week and the Friends of the Chair Group will intensify its work during the year which will include a self assessment of the adherence to the Fundamental Principles. We will also continue to work on the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards and to implement the National Quality Assurance Framework. The Commission has approved the creation of a ‘Friends of the Chair’ Group to address the issues of coordination of the UN statistical activities. UNSD will serve as a secretariat to move this process forward.

Improving our Data and Frameworks

In 2012 UNSD will continue its focus on working with countries on the

compilation of basic statistics with the help of the Regional Commissions and international agencies. In 2011, we organized 36 national, regional and international workshops and 58 study visits, and serviced close to 2300 participants from more than 150 countries or territories. We provided funding for more than 500 participants from the developing countries.

Our programme on the 2010 round of the Population and Housing Censuses is winding down. As of 1 January 2012, 142 member states have already conducted a census. Additional 45 countries have scheduled a census by 2014. This gives a total of 187 countries. To date, 87 percent of the world population has been enumerated. The programme review has given us a lot of ideas for the future. We will soon begin the process to work with the member states on the 2020 round starting with the ECOSOC resolution on population census in 2015.

The work on the indicators on violence against women is coming to a close. A manual is being circulated for comments and we will bring this manual to the Commission for adoption next year. In collaboration with the UN Women, the World Bank, OECD and other UN agencies, we are starting a programme of work on gender statistics to respond to the growing demand by countries for financial and technical support to improve the availability and use of gender statistics. The programme will include the data compilation on a set of agreed gender indicators, pilot work with partner countries for the development and testing of survey tools and measurement standards. A new gender statistics manual is also coming to completion. In a related area, we will organize an expert group meeting to address classification and measurement of time-use.

UNSD has recognized the importance of assisting countries and regions in their implementation of the SNA 2008, associated frameworks and classifications, and basic statistics. We have heard from the Friends of the Chair on the barriers limiting SNA implementation and will work with our partners to overcome some of these barriers. We will also begin work on assessing how the global emphasis on green growth and carbon emission would impact our current statistical frameworks, and to develop indicators on the green economy.

UNSD will continue its work on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics encompassing climate change statistics and to work with the countries to implement this Framework. We will monitor the Rio+20 processes and adjust our programme accordingly. We will start data collection on water and waste statistics. With the adoption of the Central Framework of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, we will move into the implementation phase. In this regard, we will inform the UN Rio +20 Conference on our work in the environmental area.

The work on upgrading the UN Comtrade is continuing and a side event on the new modality of releasing monthly trade data has been organized. In the coming year, we will progressively work to bring the new system online. We have also created a new on-line forum on trade statistics to engage the global audience on various trade related issues. We will continue to help in the implementation of the manuals approved in the past two years.

Enhancing data dissemination at country and global level

UNSD is committed to be the gateway to global statistical data. In our work programme, we will continue to assist countries in all aspects of data dissemination, especially with respect to the MDGs and the population census data. We will work with all stakeholders on this effort, especially the UN Regional Commissions and other sub-regional entities. At the global level, we will continue to improve UNdata as a gateway to access statistical information contained in the UN system databases and as a link to all data services provided by countries.

UNSD Work Programme 2012-2013 and Strategic Framework 2014-2015

As you may know, the UN functions in a two-year budgetary cycle. The budget and work programme for the years 2012 and 2013 was just recently formally adopted by the General Assembly in December 2011. The Commission had taken note of the Division's proposed work programme for 2012/13 in its 42nd Session.

As the Division is now embarking on its work to implement the about 500 mandated outputs (consisting of publications, servicing of meetings etc.), I intend to consult the Bureau on matters of strategic importance and possible necessary realignments. For example, a review of our dissemination methods, in particular a review of our print publications has been strongly suggested by member states during the last budget approval process. The UN as a whole has been encouraged to make concrete proposals on how to make the dissemination of its products more cost-effective. As statistical publications represent a significant portion of the overall UN publications, we will be called upon to take action. I have already initiated a move to predominantly electronic dissemination of our Monthly Bulletin of Statistics backed up by a print-on-demand policy. More such measures will have to be taken and the inputs of the Bureau members in this process will be very welcome.

With a view to the medium term planning we have also prepared a proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2014-2015. It is available as a background document for the Commission's review and comments. The detailed biennial programme plan for the 2014-2015 cycle will then be presented to the Commission at its 44th session in 2013.