

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**45th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION**  
**Agenda item 5: Programme questions (United Nations Statistics Division)**  
**7 March 2014, New York**

**Programme statement**

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Madame Chairperson,

Distinguished Delegates and Colleagues,

At this point in the proceedings it is customary to give you a brief overview of the programme activities of the UN Statistics Division; an opportunity for which I am grateful. But before doing so, I would like to make few remarks, as usual, regarding this 45<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Statistical Commission.

Conduct of the 45<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Statistical Commission

After a few years in the ‘wilderness’, we are back in these new facilities at the heart of the UN Conference building and as representatives in the Statistical Commission, we are still not only filling the room, but we are overflowing it. Over 130 countries and 40 international agencies are here to show that the global statistical community is vibrant, strong and ready to engage. And if the number of side events can be taken as an indicator of our engagement, then it is continuously growing! I would like to put on record my appreciation to the large number of national statistical offices and international agencies that have helped in the preparation of the various side events. Special thanks go to the chairpersons and speakers of our Friday Seminar and of the High-Level Forum. Thanks also to our colleagues from the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific for enlivening our proceedings with their video exhibition.

Participation from a broad range of countries is critical for the success of our session, so I am particularly thankful to a number of countries and agencies, namely the United Kingdom, the World Bank, the ECOWAS Secretariat, Paris21, UNFPA and the donors of the EDGE project,

for the financial support they have provided to some developing countries, and to others, sister organizations and bilateral donors who supported specific developing countries. All the support is gratefully acknowledged.

This Commission, again accomplished an enormous amount of work, covering a broad spectrum of statistical topics – considering 34 reports, we statisticians do love our numbers – reaffirming that the UN Statistical Commission is the heart and the driving engine of the global statistical system. Our common challenge is now that we must keep this dynamism alive throughout the year. This is, of course, done through a large number of task-forces, working groups, friends of the chair, which constitute the quiet underlying support architecture of the Statistical Commission. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all institutions and often individuals who work very hard on specific topics between the Commission sessions. We, at the UN Statistics Division, are this year very much looking forward to working very closely and continuously with the Bureau, and we will certainly make a special effort to keep all of you informed and involved.

#### Work programme of the UN Statistics Division

Let me now turn more specifically to the work programme of the UN Statistics Division. Our programme is of course governed by the budgetary decisions of the UN General Assembly and guided substantively by you – the UN Statistical Commission. We presented you last year our detailed list of over 500 outputs for the biennium 2014/15, and you have before you, for information, as a background document for this agenda item, our Strategic Programme Framework for the Biennium 2016/17, which will be presented as part of our regular budgetary procedures to the General Assembly later this year. I invite the Commission to take note of this planning framework. Any comments you may have are welcome and will certainly assist us in the future management of the Division.

At this point, I also need to inform you that the General Assembly, as part of general cost-cutting measures for the United Nations as a whole, reduced the allocation to the Division for 2014/15, resulting in the loss of three posts. We will make every effort to balance these cuts by efficiency gains to minimize the effect on the substance of our programme delivery.

Substantively, the Division has a full and challenging year before it. One key priority will be our continued engagement with the UN policy community to statistically support the global development agenda. One specific practical task at hand is the preparation of the 2014 MDG report, together with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG indicators. This group has also initiated preparatory work for the important final 2015 MDG report. Looking ahead we, together with the ‘Friends of the Chair group on Broader Measures’, will do our utmost best to engage with the processes that will lead to the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda. In this respect, allow me to call again upon all of you, all of us, to engage with our respective policy partners, in order to ensure that a strong voice of ‘statistical reason’ is heard at all stages

of the process. Beyond the formulation of the development agenda, we have heard the rallying cry of the 'Data Revolution'. As we discussed last Friday, this is at the same time a challenge and a huge opportunity. We, at the UN Statistics Division, will work hard to ensure that the United Nations in general and the UN Statistical Commission in particular will have a leading role in this data revolution and that the key focus is on strengthening the capacity of statistical organizations, covering issues of corporate business architecture and integrated statistics, cooperation among statistical organizations, partnerships in data, and open data. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, freshly endorsed by the UN General Assembly give us a strong ground to stand on. After they have served us well for the past 20 years, we will now have to serve them by collectively renewing our implementation efforts.

Dear colleagues,

We are, of course, committed to work with professional dedication on the many sectoral programmes, on which you guide us, and we attempt to do so in an increasingly integrated manner, emphasizing interlinkages. I will not be able to list them all, but allow me to highlight at least a few of our key work areas:

- Scaling up the implementation efforts for the SNA 2008 and further strengthening of supporting statistics;
- Intensifying the implementation of the 2012 SEEA and its related systems, as integrative frameworks in support of sustainable development;
- Continuing the support for the Friends of the Chair group on the measurement of international trade statistics and economic globalization, and in this respect continuing efforts on linking business statistics with international trade statistics;
- Facilitating the creation of a global working group on Big Data;
- Bringing the geospatial information and statistical community closer through the work of a joint Expert Group;
- Finalizing the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, as a first fundamental step to launch the 2020 Census Round;
- Preparing our flagship report on the World's Women 2015, which is part of our larger Gender Statistics Programme focussing through the EDGE project on methodological developments on asset ownership and entrepreneurship;
- Strengthening the implementation of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the new recommendations on industry and energy statistics;
- Working with the Friends of the Chair group to enhance the implementation of the fundamental principles;
- Continuously strengthening the functionalities of our data dissemination websites, in particular our flagship COMTRADE;

- Overhauling our general UNSD website – to become a modern means of effective communication (so expect more tweets)
- Launching the preparations for the 2015 World Statistics Day;
- And last but not least – continuing our comprehensive technical cooperation programme with numerous expert groups, workshops and study tours in the various fields mentioned above.

Dear colleagues,

If you think this is a lot, it is indeed; and this leads me to some final considerations regarding the way we operate. Firstly, I want to acknowledge here, that without the strong extra-budgetary financial support of a number of bilateral and multilateral donors, we would not be able to engage in a number of the emerging, cutting-edge issues. Secondly, a comprehensive programme, as the one outlined above, can only be successfully undertaken if we work in close and trusted partnership with many of you, at the national, regional, sectoral and global level. I would like to mention in this context our strategic alliance with the World Bank and the Regional Development Banks under the Memorandum of Understanding, signed last year by our Secretary General. I am also pleased to report that yesterday afternoon, we had a very constructive meeting with the Chief Statisticians of the UN System and the message that came through clearly is that we want to build a strong, mutually supporting UN statistical system; and last but not least, – under the heading partnership – I want to reiterate our strong commitment to intensify our cooperation with our closest partners – the UN Regional Commissions.

Finally, allow me to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues, and especially the Branch Chiefs Eszter, Keiko, Ivo and Ronald, as well as the whole orange-buttoned army whom you have seen in action this week. Their dedication and hard work are the reasons why UNSD can continue to provide the support and leadership that you – rightfully – expect from us.

Thank you for your attention and your continued support.