



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 December 2013

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Forty-fifth session

4-7 March 2014

Item 4 (q) of the provisional agenda*

Items for information: coordination and integration of statistical programmes

Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2013/235. It summarizes the main conclusions of the twenty-first and twenty-second sessions of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, held in New York on 25 February 2013 and in Ankara from 4 to 6 September 2013. The Statistical Commission may wish to take into account the views of the Committee in its discussions under the relevant agenda items. Furthermore, the Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2014/1.



I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities held two sessions in 2013. The twenty-first session of the Committee was held in New York on 25 February 2013 in the context of the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, while the twenty-second session of the Committee, hosted by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries, was held in Ankara from 4 to 6 September 2013. Both meetings were co-chaired by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Henri Laurencin, Head, Development Statistics and Information Branch, Division on Globalization and Development Strategies) and the European Central Bank (Werner Bier, Deputy Director General, Statistics). The present report summarizes the main conclusions of the twenty-first and twenty-second sessions of the Committee.

II. Membership

2. The Committee now has 39 members (see annex for a list), 35 of whom attended at least one session in 2013.

III. Working methods

3. In addition to holding two annual sessions, the Committee operates actively between sessions through a network of task teams, following up on the decisions taken during the regular sessions. The teams choose their own working arrangements and hold their own meetings, if appropriate. They prepare documents on progress made and the results of their work and report to the Committee for decision-making at its regular sessions. As the secretariat of the Committee, the Statistics Division works closely with the co-Chairs, facilitates communication among Committee members and prepares the reports of the regular sessions and the annual report to the Statistical Commission; it also maintains the web page of the Committee on the Division website (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm).

4. During the twenty-second session, the Committee endorsed the use of a newly developed logo, to be used in the letterhead of stationery used by the co-Chairs and on Committee outputs such as the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards.

5. Since the forty-fourth session of the Commission, the Committee has developed joint positions on items on the agenda of the Commission that are important to the Committee. Such joint statements must receive a high level of support from Committee members in order to mandate the co-Chairs to speak on behalf of the Committee. Committee members may still voice their support for or opposition to the joint positions in interventions addressed to the Commission.

IV. Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2013

A. Post-2015 development agenda and statistical capacity-building

6. At its twenty-second session, the Committee agreed that support by the statistical community in the formulation of a post-2015 development agenda was a high-priority issue and one that required statisticians of all agencies to become actively involved, pursuing a continuous dialogue with their respective sectoral or regional policy experts. Given that many different processes are under way simultaneously, it was considered critically important that Committee colleagues keep each other informed. The Committee also decided to prepare a general but brief note containing key messages that could be used by all members in their dialogues with Member States and policy experts. The Statistics Division, with support from the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), will initiate the drafting of such a note and seek inputs from Committee members.

B. Principles Governing International Statistical Activities

7. At its twenty-second session, the Committee reaffirmed the validity of the Principles Governing International Statistical Activities and decided to revise slightly the preamble to reflect the fact that the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics had recently been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council (and might be endorsed by the General Assembly in 2014). In this process, the term “international statistics” might be specified further.

8. The co-Chairs will write to those member organizations that have not subscribed to the Principles yet for various reasons and suggest that they do so now.

9. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Statistics Division will develop the short version of a questionnaire on the implementation of the Principles, taking into account the discussion held at the twenty-second session. The Committee will review the draft questionnaire at its twenty-third session, in March 2014. The survey shall then be conducted; its results and any follow-up actions shall be on the agenda of the twenty-fourth session of the Committee, in September 2014.

C. Quality assurance frameworks

10. At its twenty-second session, the Committee considered the topic of quality assurance frameworks and agreed that the national quality assurance frameworks supported by Committee members seemed sufficiently harmonized, as evidenced by the mapping exercise contained in the report of the Secretary-General on national quality assurance frameworks (E/CN.3/2012/13). Implementation of the frameworks could, however, be better coordinated. Committee members reiterated their commitment to technical assistance provided for such implementation.

11. The Committee also agreed to consider the possibility of organizing another conference on quality on the margins or as part of the 2014 European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics, to be held in Vienna from 3 to 5 June 2014.

D. Health statistics

12. The Committee welcomed the participation of the World Health Organization (WHO) in its twenty-second session and its two reports, on health statistics and on the process of revising the International Classification of Diseases, as important progress, and encouraged WHO to participate regularly in future sessions of the Committee for the benefit of all member organizations. The discussion focused on the best ways to coordinate many different stakeholders and views in processes involving the revision and endorsement of major methodological works.

13. WHO agreed that in addition to having the eleventh revision of the International Classification of Diseases formally adopted by its governing body, it would submit that revision to the Statistical Commission for comments in an appropriate way.

E. Recommended practices on the use of non-official sources in international statistics

14. Recalling that many countries follow well-established data quality frameworks and insist that international and supranational organizations also follow best practices, the Committee set up a task team on the matter in September 2010. The team, which was originally led by the Economic Commission for Europe, has, since the eighteenth session of the Committee, been led by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

15. At its twenty-second session, the Committee endorsed the recommended practices on the use of non-official sources in international statistics.

F. Special session entitled “New approaches for data collection, analyses and dissemination”

16. A special session entitled “New approaches for data collection, analyses and dissemination” was included in the agenda of the twenty-second session as a result of a survey among members conducted in February 2013.

17. The session included the following presentations: “Africa’s information highway and Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) implementation on the continent”, by the African Development Bank; “A free and flexible platform for data collection, analysis and dissemination”, by FAO; “New approaches for data collecting from the Internet: the case of Google Trends” and “Communicating statistics: turning statistics into knowledge”, by the European Central Bank; and “Changing data sources for central bank statistics”, by the Central Bank of Turkey. During the discussion, many organizations shared their experience and there was general agreement that an ongoing exchange of views and experiences was not only desirable but could result in a natural convergence of approaches and tools used by member organizations.

18. The Committee recognized the need for close cooperation between regional organizations, such as the regional commissions of the United Nations and supranational organizations, and international organizations when collecting statistics from countries. The Committee decided to continue to discuss new approaches for data collection, analysis and dissemination in the context of its work. In particular, the Committee decided to focus on the following two themes in the immediate future: organizational aspects of SDMX implementation and certain elements of dissemination tools.

G. Other issues discussed

1. Network of statisticians working in international organizations

19. The Committee finalized its consideration of the topic of the network of statisticians working in international organizations and decided that the network should continue as an informal network.

2. Human resources

20. The Committee also finalized its consideration of the topic on defining the profile of international statisticians and recruitment policies. The World Trade Organization, in collaboration with the Committee secretariat, will assess how best to present such profiles on the Committee website.

3. Dissemination of microdata by the international organizations

21. The Committee considered a draft report on the topic of the dissemination of microdata by the international organizations from the World Bank and will continue its discussions on the issue at its twenty-third session, in March 2014.

4. Fifty-ninth International Statistical Institute World Statistics Congress (Hong Kong, August 2013)

22. The Committee organized two sessions on international statistics for decision-making at the fifty-ninth International Statistical Institute World Statistics Congress. The sessions were well attended and received positive feedback. All the material is available from the Committee website (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/ISI.htm>).

5. Other business

23. During the two sessions it held in 2013, the Committee also received updates on progress made by the Friends of the Chair on the coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations system, on the integration of geospatial information and statistics and on the implementation of SDMX in national accounts and in international merchandise trade statistics presented by relevant lead agencies.

H. Administrative matters

24. The Committee is grateful to Shaida Badiie from the World Bank and Mr. Laurencin from UNCTAD for their outstanding service and contributions to the work of the Committee since its inception. Both are founding members of the Committee and retired from their positions in August and September 2013, respectively.

25. The Committee elected Mr. Bier, Deputy Director General, Statistics, European Central Bank, and Pietro Gennari, Director, Statistics Division, Economic and Social Development Department, FAO, as co-Chairs of the Committee for the next two years.

26. The Committee agreed that its twenty-third session would be held in New York, on the morning of 3 March 2014, in conjunction with the forty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission. The Committee was pleased to accept the offer of FAO to host the twenty-fourth session in Rome in September 2014.

Annex

Members of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities*

African Development Bank
Afristat
Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics
Asian Development Bank
Bank for International Settlements
Caribbean Community
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
Economic Commission for Africa
Economic Commission for Europe
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
European Central Bank
Eurostat
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
International Atomic Energy Agency
International Labour Organization
International Monetary Fund
International Telecommunication Union
Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries
United Nations Children's Fund
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
United Nations Development Programme
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
United Nations Environment Programme

* As of November 2013.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

United Nations Population Fund

Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Universal Postal Union

World Bank

World Health Organization

World Tourism Organization

World Trade Organization
