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Items for information

World Statistics Day

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2015/216 and past practices, the present report provides to the Statistical Commission a description of the activities undertaken by the statistical community to mark the second World Statistics Day, held on 20 October 2015, which was celebrated with the theme of “Better data. Better lives.” The report describes the coordination work undertaken by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and presents a summary and overview of activities undertaken around the world. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2016/1.



I. Brief history and mandate

1. In decision 45/113 of its forty-fifth session, the Statistical Commission proposed to celebrate the second World Statistics Day on 20 October 2015. During the forty-sixth session, the slogan “Better data. Better lives.” and a logo designed by the Graphic Design Unit of the Department of Public Information were formally revealed and a website was launched at worldstatisticsday.org.

2. In line with the requirement that United Nations observances be endorsed at the highest political level, consultations on a resolution of the General Assembly were initiated by the ambassador of Hungary, who served as a Vice-Chair of the Statistical Commission at that time. The draft resolution that resulted from the consultations was co-sponsored by 97 Member States, and was passed unanimously on 3 June 2015 as resolution 69/282. In the resolution, the Assembly designated 20 October 2015 as the second World Statistics Day, under the general theme “Better data. Better lives.” In addition, the Assembly decided to celebrate World Statistics Day on 20 October every five years.

II. Preparations and resources provided by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat

A. Informing countries, United Nations agencies and national statistical offices

3. Following a request by the Statistical Commission and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/282 on 3 June 2015, the Secretary-General wrote a letter to Heads of State and Government in order to bring World Statistics Day to the attention of all Member States. In the letter, the Secretary-General urged “all partners and stakeholders to work together to ensure that the necessary investments are made, adequate technical capacity is built, new data sources are explored and innovative processes are applied to give all countries the comprehensive information systems they need to achieve sustainable development”.¹ In addition, within their delegated authority, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs officially informed the heads of United Nations organizations and the Director of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat informed chief statisticians by letter and e-mail.

B. World Statistics Day 2015 logo

4. A logo for World Statistics Day 2015 was designed by the Department of Public Information and was made available in the six official languages of the United Nations. The logo was also used and adapted by national statistical offices and associations for a wide range of promotional materials and banners and translated into an additional 45 languages.²

¹ The full letter is available from <https://worldstatisticsday.org/blog.html?i=1002>.

² All logos are publicly available for download and use from <https://worldstatisticsday.org/resources.html>.

5. The Statistics Division also produced promotional buttons displaying the World Statistics Day 2015 logo, which were distributed at the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission and at other events. Additional promotional material produced by the Division included a banner displayed at the gate of United Nations Headquarters in New York during October 2015 and portable vertical banners, which were displayed at offices of the Division in New York on and around 20 October 2015.

C. World Statistics Day website

6. A dedicated website at worldstatisticsday.org was officially launched on 5 March 2015, together with the World Statistics Day 2015 logo, during the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission. During the months leading up to 20 October 2015, the website served as a platform to showcase and exchange ideas on ways to celebrate World Statistics Day. From the website's launch until 20 October, 142 posts were added to the page that informed the public about available resources and plans for World Statistics Day celebrations in countries and organizations around the world. After 20 October 2015, the website remained online, serving as an online repository documenting the activities and materials produced by various partners on the occasion of the second World Statistics Day. As at 3 December 2015, 256 posts were available on the website.

7. Since its launch on 5 March 2015, the World Statistics Day website had 64,000 sessions³ with 157,000 page views by 47,000 unique users. Traffic to the website reached a peak of 13,000 users and 30,000 page views on 20 October alone, which is a record-setting number for the various websites maintained by the Statistics Division. The high volume was the result of a large number of national statistical offices, international organizations and social media providing direct links to the official website. The website was designed with a responsive layout that supported browsing from mobile devices without losing content and quality, and 19 per cent of all users accessed the site through mobile devices.

8. A short video of an animation of the World Statistics Day 2015 logo was created by the Department of Public Information and hosted on the Statistics Division's YouTube channel.⁴ As at 3 December 2015, the video had been viewed close to 9,500 times, with a peak of 1,147 views on 20 October 2015.

D. Social media presence of World Statistics Day 2015

9. The second World Statistics Day celebration had a significant presence in the social media sphere. The hash tag #StatsDay15 was created by the Statistics Division to promote awareness of the event and help users find and disseminate messages related to the event. The hashtag was heavily used near the date of the celebration and after the event day, and tracked activities by national statistical offices and other partners worldwide. More specifically, the hashtag #StatsDay15 was used in more than 2,400 tweets by more than 1,500 contributors, reaching a

³ A "session" is a visit to the website that can include multiple actions and expires after 30 minutes of inactivity on the part of the visitor.

⁴ The video is available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhdM21AZwPg>.

total audience of 36 million Twitter users during the last two weeks of October and the first two weeks of November 2015.

10. Overall, the second World Statistics Day generated significant traffic to the Statistics Division's Twitter account, UNStats (@UNStats). In particular, the number of new followers in October 2015 increased 17 per cent with respect to the previous month, and there was an increase in impressions from 33,000 to 68,000.⁵ The most popular tweet was about the World Statistics Day 2015 Data Visualization Challenge, which was organized by the Division in collaboration with the Office of Information and Communications Technology. The most popular mention of a tweet with the #StatsDay15 hashtag came from the Gates Foundation, while the top follower (the account with the most followers itself) was "UN Human Rights" (@UNrightswire) and the most popular media tweet was a photo of Division staff displaying the slogan "Better data. Better lives." Further details on the social media presence of World Statistics Day 2015 will be available in a background document to be circulated at the forty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission.

III. Country activities

11. Activities to celebrate World Statistics Day 2015 were organized by national statistical offices, statistical associations, universities and other partners in more than 110 countries and areas.⁶ Outreach activities with the media were the most popular activity: press briefings were held in many countries to present statistical work to a wide public, in many cases in conjunction with the release of new statistics or information related to a census just held or being held. World Statistics Day was used in a large number of countries and areas as an opportunity to report on the results of recent surveys or censuses and release new statistics of interest for the general public as a way to draw media attention. Chief statisticians and their staff appeared in radio and television interviews and many statistical offices held open houses (often in their libraries) or organized exhibitions showcasing their work. One national statistical office thanked citizens in large newspaper advertisements for their contributions to better data. Popular activities included international and national conferences, seminars and round tables, often with the participation of ministers and other senior government officials. Such events were generally held under the umbrella topic "Better data. Better lives." and focused on issues related to indicators involving the Sustainable Development Goals, modernization, transformation, innovation and cooperation. Promotional videos were produced by a number of national statistical offices under the theme "Better data. Better lives." A large number of offices also challenged users to competitions and quizzes, including a poetry competition, a video contest on the theme "My profession is a statistician", a creative activity using statistical charts and a writing competition. Quizzes on various topics and data were usually made available online. Overall, outreach activities were very creative and included a World Statistics Day parade, time capsules, a Peking opera original performance of "I am a statistician", advertisements on ATM receipts, advertising signs on main roads and public buildings, advertisements on football stadium screens, advertisements on taxis and much more (see worldstatisticsday.org).

⁵ An "impression" is defined as times a user is served a tweet in timeline or search results.

⁶ Based on information available to the Statistics Division as at 3 December 2015.

12. In many countries, the observance of World Statistics Day 2015 was also linked to a national or regional statistics day celebration such as African Statistics Day and Caribbean Statistics Day, or to the anniversary celebration of the national statistical office. In addition to the events organized by national statistical offices, a number of activities were organized by universities and various local or regional associations.⁷ More details on country activities can be found in a background document to be circulated at the next session of the Statistical Commission.

IV. Activities by international/regional organizations

13. Some 20 international and regional entities observed World Statistics Day. Activities included the organization of seminars, the release of publications and press releases by their head of organization or chief statistician. More details can be found in a background document to be circulated at the next session of the Statistical Commission.

V. Conclusions

14. With the participation of countries, international and regional organizations and representatives of civil society, including research institutions, media and other producers and users of official statistics, the celebrations of World Statistics Day 2015 succeeded in raising awareness about the role played by good data and statistics in informing decision-making by all actors in society, particularly as the world embarks on implementing the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

15. Based on the positive experience from the first World Statistics Day, which was celebrated in 2010, and taking advantage of the opportunities offered by new social media and web-based communication platforms, the World Statistics Day 2015 campaign reached a record number of people and helped bring together a wealth of information on the various initiatives being undertaken at all levels to promote the availability and use of better data for better lives. Following the decision by the General Assembly to celebrate World Statistics Day every five years, the Statistics Division will continue maintaining the World Statistics Day website and updating it with additional information from partners as it becomes available. Preparations for the celebration of the third World Statistics Day in 2020 will start in 2019, when the Statistical Commission will consider “World Statistics Day” again in accordance with its multi-year programme.

⁷ Initiatives by universities and other local or regional organizations can be found online at <https://worldstatisticsday.org/blog.html?ot=other>.