



# Economic and Social Council

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## Statistical Commission

### Forty-seventh session

8-11 March 2016

Item 4 (g) of the provisional agenda\*

**Items for information: coordination 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 2015/216 and past practices. It provides an overview of the work carried out by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2015 and summarizes the main conclusions of the Committee at its twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions, held in New York on 2 March 2015 and in Bangkok on 1 and 2 October 2015, respectively. The Statistical Commission may wish to take into account the views of the Committee in its discussions under the relevant agenda items, and is invited to take note of the report.

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\* E/CN.3/2016/1.



## **I. Introduction**

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities held two sessions in 2015. The twenty-fifth session of the Committee was held in New York on 2 March 2015 prior to the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission, and the twenty-sixth session of the Committee, hosted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, was held in Bangkok on 1 and 2 October 2015. Both meetings were chaired by the two Co-Chairs of the Committee: Deputy Director General, Statistics, of the European Central Bank, Werner Bier; and Chief Statistician and Director, Statistics Division of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Pietro Gennari. Mr. Bier's mandate ended with the Bangkok meeting, and Chief Statistician and Director of the Statistics Directorate, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Martine Durand, was elected as new Co-Chair. The present report provides an overview of the work conducted in 2015 and summarizes the main conclusions of the Committee at its twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions.

## **II. Membership**

2. The Committee currently has 45 members (see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/members.htm>), 40 of whom attended at least one session in 2015.

3. Given the increasing size of the Committee and in order to maintain its effective functioning, the Committee is currently considering the possibility of introducing additional criteria for membership and the possibility of granting formal observer status. The Committee has decided to consider this further at its sessions to be held in 2016.

## **III. Working methods**

4. 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 of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat 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](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm)).

5. Since the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, the Committee has developed joint statements on items in the agenda of the Commission that are important to the Committee. Such joint statements must receive large support from Committee members in order to serve as a mandate for the Co-Chairs to speak on behalf of the Committee. The Co-Chairs delivered three joint statements at the

forty-sixth session in 2015.<sup>1</sup> The Committee is planning to deliver joint statements again at the forty-seventh session.

6. The Committee is developing a multi-year work programme for the Committee and has decided to conduct a new survey on priority topics to be included in it. The Committee has stressed the need to translate work areas and discussions into specific outputs (publications, papers, websites) in order to increase the impact and visibility of its work.

7. At its twenty-sixth session, the Committee thanked the two Co-Chairs, Mr. Gennari and Mr. Bier, as well as the entire team supporting them, for their effective leadership. Mr. Gennari and Ms. Durand were re-elected to lead the Committee over the next two years.

## **IV. Work of the Committee in 2015**

### **A. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

8. The issue of sustainable development in the post-2015 era, currently addressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, has been on the Committee's agenda since its twentieth session, held in Frankfurt, Germany, in the fourth quarter of 2012.

9. The Committee has received regular briefings on the development of an indicator framework for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in view of the critical importance of international organizations in monitoring the implementation of the Agenda. Many Committee members contributed to the open global consultation process which took place in that regard; all stakeholders, including civil society, were also invited to submit comments. Committee members agreed to continue to support the current process in their respective areas of expertise.

10. The Committee also continued to stay informed about the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the newly formed High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity Building for Post-2015 Monitoring, a proposed world forum on sustainable development data and the work being undertaken on the transformative agenda.

### **B. Principles governing international statistical activities**

11. The Committee endorsed the principles governing international statistical activities at its sixth session, held in September 2005. The principles are inspired by the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, adopted by the Statistical Commission at its special session held in 1994 (see E/1994/29, para. 59). The list of good practices set out under each principle is intended to assist international organizations in their implementation of the principles.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2015, joint statements were delivered under the following sub-items of agenda item 3, Items for discussion and decision: 3 (a) (ii), Data in support of the post-2015 development agenda: emerging issue: the data revolution; 3 (a) (iii), Data in support of the post-2015 development agenda: big data; and 3 (l), Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

12. At its twenty-second session, held in Ankara, Turkey, in September 2013, the Committee reaffirmed the validity of the principles and decided to revise its preamble slightly so that it would reflect the fact that the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council (resolution 2013/21) and the General Assembly (resolution 68/261), in 2013 and 2014, respectively. The Committee endorsed the revised preamble (see [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/principles\\_stat\\_activities.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/principles_stat_activities.htm)) at its twenty-third session, held on 3 March 2014.

13. A task team has been mandated to create a more comprehensive list of good practices that will enable members to better implement the principles. The work of the team is based largely on the results of a web-based survey conducted in May and June 2014 on the implementation of the principles (see E/CN.3/2015/29). In addition, the Committee has committed to conducting such a survey at regular intervals, for example, every three to five years.

14. The Committee also encouraged its members to bring the principles to the attention of their own governing bodies, if they had not yet done so.

15. The task team is expected to finish its work in 2016, with the adoption of a new document by the Committee.

### **C. Big data**

16. The Committee held a special session on the theme “Showcasing the use of big data for international statistics” at its twenty-sixth session, demonstrating that Committee members have acquired relevant experience in the use of big data for international statistics. Committee members are committed to further exploring the potentialities of the new tools/data sources in responding to new data demands. The Committee stressed that the quality frameworks that apply to official statistics in general should also apply to the use of big data for official statistics. The link between the business sector (e.g., the mobile phone providers) and statistics needs to be reconsidered and may be redefined as a partnership. The greater variety of data used to compile official statistics will also require that staff possess a greater variety of skill sets. The Committee will consider big data again at a future session.

### **D. World Statistics Day**

17. The Committee encouraged its members to celebrate World Statistics Day 2015. Several shared their celebratory activities, which are reflected on the website dedicated to the Day ([worldstatisticsday.org](http://worldstatisticsday.org)).

### **E. Committee presence at international conferences**

18. Building on the positive experience emerging from the special sessions it had organized at the conferences convened on quality in statistics and at the 59th International Statistics Institute (ISI) World Statistics Congress, held in China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, from 25 to 30 August 2013, the Committee also organized a special session at the 60th ISI World Statistics Congress, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 26 to 31 July 2015.

19. The special session, convened on 30 July 2015 on the theme “Statistical indicators for monitoring and achieving the sustainable development goals”, received positive feedback. All conference papers and presentations prepared for the event are available from the website of the Committee (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/Session-ISI/Programme-Presentations-2015.htm>).

20. The Committee is currently also considering organizing a special session at the European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics, which will be held in Madrid from 1 to 3 June 2016. The World Tourism Organization, headquartered in Madrid, has offered to organize a session for the Committee at the conference; the session would be similar in format to that of the previous sessions.

## **F. 2016 sessions**

21. The Committee agreed that its twenty-seventh session would be held in New York, on the morning of 7 March 2016, in conjunction with the forty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission. The twenty-eighth session will be held at OECD headquarters in Paris during the fourth quarter of 2016.

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