



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 December 2017

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Forty-ninth session

6–9 March 2018

Item 4 (l) 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

The present report is submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practices. It provides an overview of the work carried out by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2017 and summarizes the main conclusions of the Committee at its twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions, held in New York on 6 March 2017 and in Muscat on 27 and 28 September 2017. 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.

* [E/CN.3/2018/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities is an inter-agency body that promotes coordination and cooperation across statistical programmes in regional, supranational and international organizations. As a forum of committed members it fosters good practices in the statistical activities of international organisations, in accordance with the principles governing international statistical activities, and within the constraints of their own governance arrangements and resource envelopes. The members of the Committee are committed to contributing actively to the development of a coordinated global statistical system that produces and disseminates high-quality statistics, for example, by facilitating the development and effective functioning of regional and national statistical systems.

2. The Committee held two sessions in 2017: the twenty-ninth session, held in New York on 6 March 2017, prior to the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission; and the thirtieth session, hosted by the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf in Muscat on 27 and 28 September 2017. Both sessions were chaired by the two Co-Chairs of the Committee: the Chief Statistician of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Pietro Gennari; and Chief Statistician and Director of Statistics of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Martine Durand. The mandate of Mr. Gennari ended at the conclusion of the thirtieth session. The Chief of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Angela Me, was elected as new Co-Chair.

3. In the present report, the Secretary-General provides an overview of the work carried out by the Committee in 2017 and summarizes the main conclusions it reached at its twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions.

II. Membership, leadership and terms of reference

4. The Committee currently has 45 members,¹ 39 of whom attended at least one session in 2017.

5. In order to ensure that it could continue to function effectively, in view of its increasing size, the Committee revised its terms of reference.² In order to support the Co-Chairs in organizing its work between sessions, the Committee established a bureau that comprised three Vice-Chairs. between sessions.

6. At its thirtieth session, the Committee elected Eurostat, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf as Vice-Chairs.

III. Working methods

7. 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, as appropriate. They prepare documents on progress

¹ See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/members.htm>.

² The revised terms of reference are available from <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub/TOR%20final.pdf>.

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 Bureau, 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.³

8. Since the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, the Committee has developed joint statements on items on the agenda of the Commission that are important to the Committee. Such statements must receive strong support from Committee members in order to serve as a mandate for the Co-Chairs to speak on behalf of the Committee. As in recent years, the first session of the year (the twenty-ninth session of the Committee), which is held in the margins of the Statistical Commission session in March 2017, was largely devoted to finalizing the Committee's three joint statements, which were delivered by the Co-Chairs at the forty-eighth session of the Commission, in 2017.⁴ The Committee is also planning to deliver joint statements at the forty-ninth session of the Commission.

9. The Committee has developed a multi-year work programme based on the results of a survey conducted on priority topics for coordination and/or sharing of experiences among members. The Committee is committed to translating work areas and discussions into specific outputs (publications, papers and websites) in order to increase the impact and visibility of its work.

IV. Work of the Committee in 2017

A. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

10. Issues surrounding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have been on the agenda of the Committee at every session since its twentieth, which was held in Frankfurt, Germany, during the fourth quarter of 2012.

11. The Committee continued to receive regular briefings on the development of the indicator framework for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals, in view of the critical supporting role of international organizations as custodians of indicators in their respective areas of work and in view of their respective mandates in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In 2016, the Committee established a task team, in collaboration with the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System, which developed a document outlining guiding principles of data reporting and data sharing for the global monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (version 1).⁵ The Co-Chairs transmitted the document to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators on 4 October. (see also [E/CN.3/2018/2](#), para 17). Through the document, Committee members have indicated their commitment to achieving the highest statistical standards in reporting on the Goals, in particular with regard to accuracy, comparability and transparency, and to discussing with national authorities any

³ http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm.

⁴ In 2017, joint statements were delivered under the following agenda items: 3 (a), "Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2 statements) and 3 (e), "Quality assurance in the global statistical system".

⁵ See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/Principles_stat_activities/Ltr-CoChairs-Principles.pdf.

concern a country may have within the framework of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the principles governing international statistical activities.

12. The Committee also continued to stay informed about the work of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see paras. 13–14 below).

B. Capacity development and training

13. The Committee held a special session on the theme “Revitalizing capacity development in data and statistics” at its thirtieth session, at which it demonstrated the innovative work undertaken by some of its members in this area. During the special session, the Committee agreed to continue its work on new approaches to capacity development and to explore the best ways it bring its work in this area to the attention of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, possibly through issue partners. The Committee will also consider presenting some of the initiatives at the second United Nations World Data Forum, to be held in Dubai from 22 to 24 October 2018 (see also [E/CN.3/2018/4](#)).

14. The Committee presents on its website materials and tools for strengthening training and human resources development among national and international statistical agencies. The information set out on the website is based on early initiatives to coordinate training activities within the Committee.⁶ The Committee continues to be involved in matters of statistical training and supports the establishment of a global network of regional training centres (see [E/CN.3/2018/3](#) and [E/CN.3/2017/28](#)).

C. Coordination of International Household Surveys

15. At its thirtieth session, the Committee discussed the topic in a panel discussion, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, which included presentations by the United Nations Children’s Fund, the Statistics Division and the World Bank. The main outcomes of the discussion were reported back to the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys through its common members (see also [E/CN.3/2018/7](#)).

D. Open data policies

16. The Committee held its initial discussion on open data policies at its thirtieth session. The Committee exchanged views on a workplan suggested by the World Bank. It decided to establish a task team to be led by the World Bank, which would, inter alia, conduct a survey among Committee members regarding their adherence to current open data practices. The task team will then prepare for submission to the Committee a document outlining the feasibility for members to move towards common open data standards. It will also draft relevant common standards for open data and develop effective mechanisms for information exchanges. The Committee is prepared to contribute to any mechanism set up by the Statistical Commission on this topic (see [E/CN.3/2018/4](#)).

⁶ See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/ccsa_training/ccsa_training_resources.htm.

E. Nowcasting techniques

17. The Committee, at its thirtieth, session also discussed the definition, importance and limitations of existing nowcast estimates as well as a possible way to advance these techniques on the basis of a document prepared by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Committee will consider this topic again at its 2018 sessions on the basis of further work performed by members.

F. Publications by the Committee

18. The Committee publishes on its website various outputs, including the special issue paper entitled “Case studies: using non-official sources in international statistics” (2016),⁷ which complements a paper entitled “Recommended practices on the use of non-official sources in international statistics”,⁸ published by the Committee in 2013. Other publications, as well as the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards, are available from the Committee’s website, which is hosted by the Statistics Division.⁹

G. Committee presence at international conferences

19. As in the past, the Committee organized a special session during the 61st World Statistics Congress, held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 16 to 21 July 2017. The special session, convened under the theme “The value and costs of national and international statistics”, received positive feedback. All conference papers and presentations prepared for the event are available on the website of the Committee.¹⁰ The Committee has in the past also organized special sessions at the International Statistics Institute (ISI) World Statistics Congresses held in 2013 and 2015.

H. 2018 sessions

20. The Committee agreed that its thirty-first session would be held in New York, on 5 March 2018, in conjunction with the forty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission. The thirty-second session will be held in Vienna during the fourth quarter of 2018.

⁷ Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub/2016docs-28th/E-publication.pdf>.

⁸ Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/practices.pdf>.

⁹ http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm.

¹⁰ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/ISI.htm>.