ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

49th session

Statistical Commission

BETTER DATA BETTER LIVES

6-9 March 2018
United Nations, New York

unstats.un.org @UNStats #UN49SC
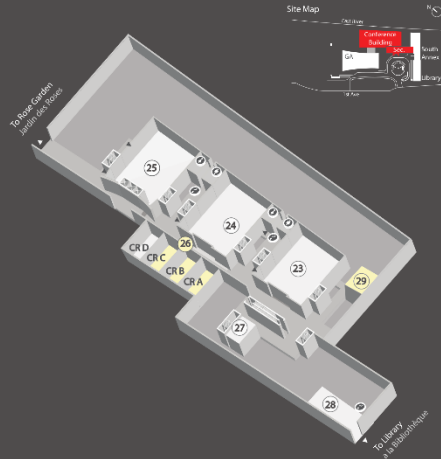
MAP

The Statistical Commission will take place in Conference Room 4 (highlighted in green below). Side events will take place in multiple conference rooms (highlighted in yellow below).
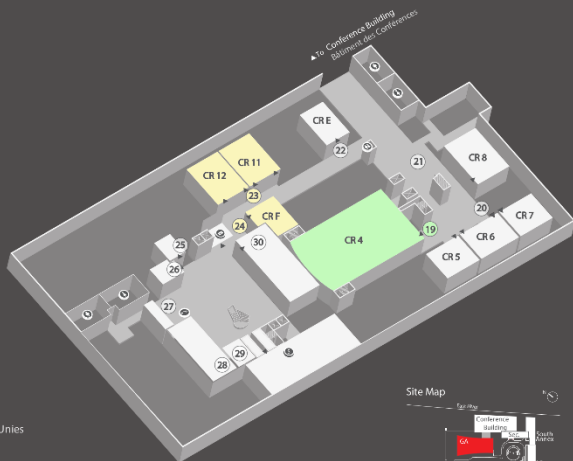
WELCOME

Dear Colleague,

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the 49th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

It has become a tradition that we offer an orientation session to welcome our colleagues who are participating in the Statistical Commission for the first time. All of us in the United Nations Statistics Division hope that this brief introduction to the Commission and to our Division will make this week as productive and agreeable as possible for you.

A short questionnaire will be passed around to help us assess the impact of this orientation session. We would be most grateful to receive your feedback.

Stefan Schweinfest

Director, Statistics Division

OVERVIEW

The **United Nations Statistical Commission**, established in 1947, is the highest body of the global statistical system. It brings the chief statisticians of Member States together from around the world. It is the highest decision-making body for international statistical activities, especially the setting of statistical standards, the development of concepts and methods and their implementation at the national and international levels.

The **Commission** oversees the work of the **United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)**, and is a functional commission of the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC or the Council)**.

During the session, delegates are encouraged to:

- Actively contribute.
- Be brief and concise in **oral interventions.**
- Share national practices, report routine activities or detailed expositions of methodology in **written form** rather than orally. Such country notes will be presented on the Commission website.

Delegates also have a chance to meet statisticians from:

- National Statistical Offices
- International Organizations
- Secretariat (UNSD)
- Other delegations at the reception on Tuesday evening

MANDATES

The terms of reference of the **Commission** state that it shall assist the **Council** (ECOSOC resolutions 8 (I) of 16 February 1946, 8 (II) of 21 June 1946 and 1566 (L) of 3 May 1971):

a) In promoting the development of national statistics and the improvement of their comparability;
b) In the coordination of the statistical work of specialized agencies;
c) In the development of the central statistical services of the Secretariat;
d) In advising the organs of the United Nations on general questions relating to the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistical information;
e) In promoting the improvement of statistics and statistical methods generally.

On 6 July 2017, the **General Assembly** (resolution 71/313) adopted the global indicator framework for **the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, as agreed upon by the Statistical Commission at its 48th session, as a voluntary and country led instrument that includes the initial set of indicators to be refined annually and reviewed comprehensively by the Commission at its 51st and 56th sessions.

It also requested the Commission to coordinate the substantive and technical work to develop international statistical standards, methods and guidelines, where necessary, to fully implement the global indicator framework to follow up and review the Sustainable Development Goals and targets; and to further refine and improve the global indicator framework.

MEMBERSHIP

The **Commission** consists of **24 Member States** of the UN elected by the **ECOSOC** to serve a term of four years based on an equitable geographical distribution as follows:

Region	N	Current members
Africa	5*	EGY - KEN - ZAF - TGO
Asia	4	CHN - JPN - QAT - KOR
Eastern Europe	4	BLR - LVA - ROU - RUS
Latin America & the Caribbean	4	COL - CUB - MEX - PER
Western Europe & Others	7	CAN - DNK - DEU - NLD - CHE - GBR - USA

* : The ECOSOC has decided to postpone the election of one member from the African States

All other States are considered **Observers,** but the Commission traditionally treats Observer and Member States equally during its discussions. The **Chair, 3 Vice-chairs** and the **Rapporteur** are the 5 officers of the Commission, known as the **Bureau**. They are elected for a one-year term with the expectation that they will serve for a further year if available. Nominations of these officers are made by the Commission with elections held at the beginning of the session. In practice elections are by acclamation.
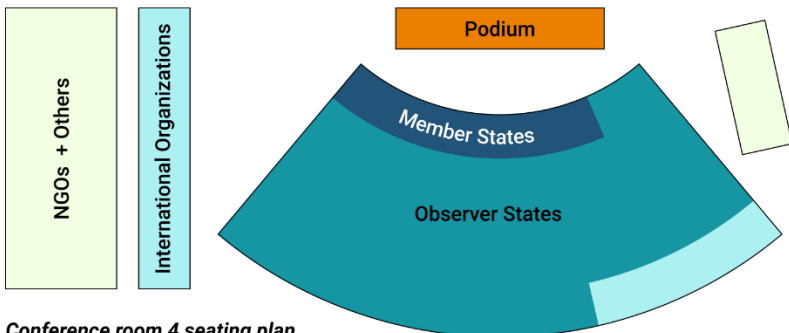

Conference room 4 seating plan

AGENDA

The agenda is organised in the following sections:

- Opening
- Election of officers for the year
- Adoption of the agenda and timetable
- Items for discussion and decision *(Tuesday - Thursday)*
- Items for information *(Thursday afternoon)*
- UNSD programme statement *(Friday morning)*
- Provisional agenda and dates for next year's session
- Adoption of the Commission report (decisions)

The adoption of the agenda is normally a routine matter; last minute changes are unusual.
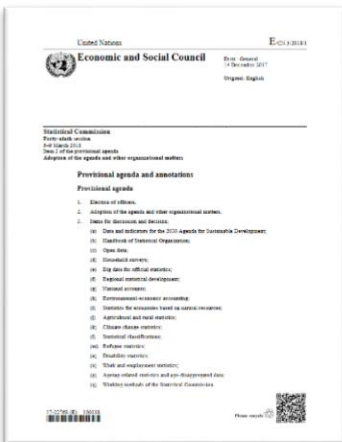
Items for discussion and decision are for the Commission to discuss and make decisions or take actions. The chair will mention the relevant document related to the item, an oral introduction will be given by the author, the chair will open the floor for discussion, and a summary will be made by the Secretariat (UNSD staff) after the discussion of each item.

Items for information refer to progress reports, which the Commission takes note of usually without further debate. Information items are handled as a block. However, the Chair will offer the Commission the opportunity to identify information items for which clarifications or updates are needed.

DOCUMENTS

There are three types of documents related to the Commission:

- **Official documents:** Formally edited and available in the 6 official languages of the UN. They are subject to a strict word limit and submitted to the Secretariat in December. They carry a formal document reference. For example: E/CN.3/2018/1 where E is for ECOSOC, CN.3 is for Statistical Commission, 2018 is the year and 1 is the document number.
- **Background documents:** Accompanying a specific agenda item. Not formally edited and therefore do not have a word limit. They are typically available in English only and become available at different times over the days before the Commission session starts.
- **Room documents:** Other documents which do not accompany a specific agenda item.

All **official documents** will be available electronically on the Commission website. They can be printed on demand in the conference room. Please contact the staff at the conference room with your request.

A few copies of **background documents** may be available on side tables in the conference room (for instance, the provisional agenda [E/CN.3/2018/1] and the provisional programme of work and timetable for the session [E/CN.3/2018/L.1]).

Only the **draft report on the session** and any **draft resolutions** (if applicable) will be distributed desk to desk to delegations.

PAST SESSIONS
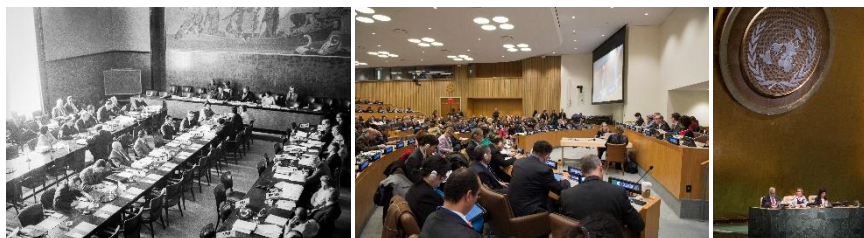
48th session (2017): Adopted the **global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets** of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

47th session (2016): Agreed, as a practical starting point, the **proposed global indicator framework** for the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

46th session (2015): Established the **Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs)**. Launched the **2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme**.

44th session (2013): Endorsed the **Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES)**. Established the **Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information**. Revised the **Central Product Classification (CPC)**.

43rd session (2012): Adopted the **System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)**.

**42nd session (2011)**: Adopted the **International Recommendations for Energy Statistics (IRES)**.

41st session (2010): Endorsed the first **World Statistics Day**. Adopted **International Merchandise Trade Statistics** methodology.

40th session (2009): Adopted the **System of National Accounts 2008**.

Special Session (1994): Adopted the **Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics**.

PAST CHAIRS
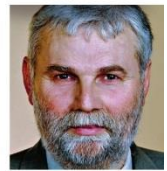
SECRETARIAT (UNSD)

The UNSD acts as **Secretariat** of the Commission. Other functions include:

- Coordinating statistical activities of the UN System
- Promoting good statistical practices
- Harmonizing statistical standards
- Undertaking statistical capacity building
- Compiling statistics at the global level

Its current work programmes are:

- Big data for official statistics
- Demographic and Social Statistics
- Development indicators
- Energy Statistics
- Environmental-Economic Accounting
- Environment Statistics
- Gender Statistics
- Geospatial Information
- Industry Statistics
- National Accounts
- Statistical Classifications
- Tourism Statistics
- Trade Statistics

In these subjects, UNSD disseminates statistical data compilations and develops methodological publications:

All publications available at: https://unstats.un.org/

RESOURCES

You can view and download all information related to the Commission from its website, including agenda, official documents, background documents, calendar of side events and a note with practical information about New York:

https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/49th-session

The large number of acronyms used by multiple international organizations can be confusing at times, here is a cheat sheet:

ADB	Asian Development Bank		**IMF**	International Monetary Fund
AfDB	African Development Bank		**IOM**	International Organization for Migration
AITRS	Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics		**IRENA**	International Renewable Energy Agency
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations		**ISI**	International Statistical Institute
BIS	Bank for International Settlements		**ITU**	International Telecommunication Union
CARICOM	Caribbean Community		**OHCHR**	Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
CEMAC	Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa		**OIC**	Organization of the Islamic Conference
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa		**OSGEY**	Office of UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States		**PPD**	Partners in Population and Development
EASTC	Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre		**SADC**	Southern African Development Community
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa		**SESRIC**	Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe		**UNCCC**	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America & Caribbean		**UNCTAD**	UN Conference on Trade and Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States		**UNDP**	UN Environment Programme
EEC	Eurasian Economic Commission		**UNEP**	UN Population Fund
EFTA	European Free Trade Association		**UNESCO**	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia & the Pacific		**UNFPA**	UN Population Fund
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia		**UN-Habitat**	UN Human Settlements Programme
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Union		**UNHCR**	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization		**UNICEF**	UN Children's Fund
GCC-STAT	Statistical Center of the Gulf Cooperation Council		**UNIDO**	UN Industrial Development Organization
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank		**UNISDR**	UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency		**UNODC**	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
ICAO	The International Civil Aviation Organization		**UNWTO**	World Tourism Organization
ICC	International Criminal Court		**WHO**	World Health Organization
IDEA	Int. Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance		**WMO**	World Meteorological Organisation
ILO	International Labour Organization		**WTO**	World Trade Organization