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Item 3(b) and 3(c) of the provisional agenda \*

**Items for discussion and decision: Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and open data****Report of the Friends of the Chair Group on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and on Open data****Note by the Secretary General**

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Friends of the Chair Group on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and on Open Data. The report describes the work of the group toward the global survey on self-assessment by countries on the implementation of the FPOS, a background document supplementing the guidelines for the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and a background document on the implementation of open data.

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\* E/CN.3/2019/1.

## **I. Introduction/Background**

1. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FPOS)<sup>2</sup> were adopted at the global level by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/261 on 29 January 2014. The endorsement by the Assembly marked the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Principles by the Statistical Commission. From 2011 to 2015, a Friends of the Chair Group worked on selected dimensions of implementation of the Fundamental Principles in the context of the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of their adoption, which fell in 2014.

2. At the 48th session of the Statistical Commission in 2017, a Friends of the Chair Group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FOC-FPOS) was established again based on the decision of the Statistical Commission (decision 48/107) to work on selected dimensions of the implementation of the Fundamental Principles within the context of the preparation for the twenty-fifth anniversary of their adoption, in 2019.

3. In addition, at the 49th session of the Statistical Commission in 2018, a sub-group on open data under the FOC-FPOS was created based on the decision of the Statistical Commission (decision 49/105) to work on principles, guidance and support for implementation of open data in countries.

4. By integrating open data with its current work on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the global statistical community very purposefully allowed for the opportunity to re-think broadly how to implement the Principles in light of new data needs, including for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

## **II. Work programme**

5. The Friends of the Chair Group, constituted in February 2018, consists of country representatives and international agencies and organizations as observers. The Chair of the FOC-FPOS is assumed by New Zealand, with assistance from Australia. The full membership of the group is comprised of 11 country representatives and eight international agencies and organizations as observers (see Annex I for full membership).

6. The terms of reference of the group were developed in April 2018 and approved by the Bureau of the Statistical Commission (see Annex II for TORs). Concerning the organization of work, the group held a physical meeting on the sidelines of the 49<sup>th</sup> United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2018 and then held regular WebEx teleconferences every six weeks (16 May 2018, 27 June 2018, 8 August 2018, 19 September 2018, 31 October 2018 and upcoming 12 December 2018 and 23 January 2019) to review progress on their work programme.

7. The primary objectives of the Friends of the Chair Group include work on both the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and open data, carrying out activities using the Fundamental Principles as the overarching context for both.

8. To facilitate the organisation of activities, two work streams were developed with the first focused solely on the Fundamental Principles and comprising the following activities: 1) A global survey based on a self-assessment of implementation of the Fundamental Principles, which also includes specific topics related to open data practices; 2) The development of a background document that supplements the existing implementation guidelines of the Fundamental Principles to support their use, including case studies and which also aims to provide criteria to evaluate perceived non-compliance with the Fundamental Principles; 3) The analysis of other matters relating to the Fundamental Principles as they arise in other contexts, including the application of the Fundamental Principles in using non-official and non-traditional data.

9. The second work stream focused on open data in the context of the Fundamental Principles and comprises the following activities: 1) A mapping of the open data principles to the Fundamental Principles; 2) The development of a background document that synthesises existing open data work covering data

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/FP-New-E.pdf>

interoperability, implementation of open data practices and anonymization of data for official statistics; 3) The analysis of other matters relating to the implementation of open data in official statistics including legal frameworks, technical aspects and the capabilities needed, also included in the background document.

### III. Summary of work stream outputs: FPOS and Open data

10. The following summary describes the work and outputs of the work stream on the Fundamental Principles:

a. Global survey on self-assessment by countries on the implementation of the FPOS:

- i. The questionnaire was largely based on earlier versions sent to countries by the UN Statistics Division in 2003 and 2012 respectively<sup>3</sup> to assess the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The new updated version of the questionnaire was prepared with the contribution of PARIS21, and with the aim of modernizing and improving previous versions, while still maintaining core questions similar to the original 2012 questionnaire to allow for the review of progress. Notable differences include revised and expanded options for each answer based on the FPOS implementation guide and the results of previous questionnaires as well as revision of the wording of questions to improve consistency of answers, since the 2012 report highlighted some contradictions between questions. The questionnaire also included new questions related to open data and non-official and non-traditional data to better appreciate the current situation of national statistical offices and their use of information from an expanded data ecosystem.
- ii. Over 80 countries have completed the questionnaire at the time of writing. It is anticipated that additional countries will complete the survey in the coming weeks. A full analysis of the results is provided in a background document for review by the Statistical Commission.
- iii. It is anticipated that the global survey will be launched for every five-year anniversary of the Fundamental Principles. Therefore, the next survey will be conducted in advance of the thirtieth anniversary of the Principles, in 2024.

b. Background document supplementing existing implementation guidelines, including the application of the Principles for non-official and non-traditional data:

- i. The background document includes a first section that supplements the existing *United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics: Implementation Guidelines*<sup>4</sup> to support their use and additionally provides criteria to evaluate perceived non-compliance. This section will also utilise information from the global survey on self-assessment by countries on the implementation of the FPOS and country experiences of implementation challenges, successes and best practices of the Fundamental Principles. The second section of the document will include a mapping of the Fundamental Principles against non-traditional and non-conventional data sources, aiming to highlight the applicability of the Fundamental Principles to these new data sources, which are becoming more widely used in countries and are beginning to be integrated in official statistical systems.

11. The following summary describes the work and outputs of the work stream on Open Data:

a. Background document on the implementation of open data:

- i. The background document on the implementation of open data synthesises existing open data work covering data interoperability, the implementation of open data practices and anonymization of data for

<sup>3</sup> See Report of the Secretary-General on Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (E/CN.3/2004/21) and (E/CN.3/2013/3) available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/globreview.aspx> and <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/44th-session/documents/doc13/2013-3-FundamentalPrinciples-E.pdf> respectively. See also the background document with further information on the 2012 questionnaire results which accompanies E/CN.3/2013/3 available at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc13/BG-FP.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> See [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/Implementation\\_Guidelines\\_FINAL\\_without\\_edit.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/Implementation_Guidelines_FINAL_without_edit.pdf)

official statistics. It also includes analysis of other matters relating to the implementation of open data in official statistics including legal frameworks, technical aspects and capabilities needed. An annex to the background document includes a mapping of the Fundamental Principles to the International Open Data Charter<sup>5</sup> to show interrelationships and where the principles may be integrated. The Open Data Charter is currently undergoing a global participatory process to assess whether any of the Charter's Principles need updating to include further advances in processes and principles related to open data. The FPOS group will adjust the mapping in the case there are significant changes.

#### **IV. Recent global activities highlighting the Fundamental Principles and Open Data**

12. The International Open Data Conference 2018<sup>6</sup>, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 27-28 September 2018, brought the global open data community together to define strategies to advance open data both locally and globally. A one-day pre-event was organized by Open Data Watch in collaboration with the UN Statistics Division on "National Reporting for the SDGs: Addressing Interoperability and Open Data" with NSOs. The event brought together relevant stakeholders, including representatives from national statistical offices, to discuss how to ensure national reporting platforms for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) integrate the principles of open data and interoperability. The pre-event provided a dedicated space for representatives of national statistical offices to share their experiences, including the challenges they are facing, and get to know the relevant stakeholder groups who are positioned to support them. A document highlighting outcomes of the pre-event is available at the following website: <https://opendatawatch.com/publications/iocd18-pre-event-outcome-report/>.

13. The event was a unique opportunity for statisticians to engage with open data practitioners from other data communities.

14. During the United Nations World Data Forum<sup>7</sup>, held in Dubai, UAE on 22-24 October 2018, the *Data Interoperability: A Practitioner's Guide to Joining Up Data in the Development Sector*<sup>8</sup>, was launched by the Collaborative on SDG Data Interoperability<sup>9</sup>. The Guide was developed as a practical tool to help improve the integration and reusability of data and data systems. New sections, examples and guidance will be added to the Guide over time to ensure its continued relevance and usefulness in this fast-evolving space. The tool is considered a living document and welcome by the Friends of the Chair Group as a resource for countries and included as a background document to this report as input to the Statistical Commission.

#### **V. Way forward**

15. At its first meeting, the Group discussed its mandate and timeline for the activities outlined by the Statistical Commission decisions, noting that the FPOS work had a well-established line of work throughout the years, while open data is a new area possibly requiring further work moving forward. Therefore, when reviewing the work mandated for the Group, it was decided that the FPOS work has concluded this round of review, but the periodic five-year reviews, aligned with the five-year anniversaries of the FPOS, of the global implementation of the FPOS should continue in order to chart progress and allow focus on aspects of implementation where needed, as well as share best practices. Therefore, it is recommended that the FOC-FPOS be resumed in time for the next review in advance of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Fundamental Principles, in 2024. In the meantime, any pressing issues, such as perceived non-compliance, should be considered by the Statistical Commission as necessary. In order for the open data work to continue, it is recommended to create a working group on open data, which would allow an opportunity to continue the collaboration between the international

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<sup>5</sup> See <https://opendatacharter.net/principles/>

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.opendatacon.org/>

<sup>7</sup> See <https://undataforum.org/>

<sup>8</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/wiki/display/InteropGuide/Home>

<sup>9</sup> The Collaborative was established in March 2017 at a side-event to the 48th UN Statistical Commission and convened by the UN Statistical Division (UNSD) and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD).

open data and statistical communities and also support delivery of the 2030 Agenda. If approved, the group would develop a terms of reference for the work going forward, based on the decisions of the Statistical Commission.

16. Some members of the FOC-FPOS have expressed interest to continue in the proposed Working Group on Open Data and New Zealand has offered to continue as Chair. Additional members are invited to express interest in joining.

#### **VI. Points for Discussion**

17. **The Statistical Commission is invited to:**

- a. **Express its views on the document containing the results of the survey on the self-assessment by countries of the implementation of the FPOS and open data;**
- b. **Express its views on the document on data interoperability and open data: *Data Interoperability: A Practitioner's Guide to Joining Up Data in the Development Sector*;**
- c. **Review and approve the document supplementing the guidelines for the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;**
- d. **Review and approve the document on the implementation of open data;**
- e. **Review and approve the proposal to consider the work of the Friends of the Chair Group concluded for this round of review and to be resumed in time for the next appraisal in 2024, and for a Working Group to be established in order to continue the work on Open Data and present its work at the 51st session of the Statistical Commission, and every two years thereon.**

**Annex I**

**Membership of the Friends of the Chair Group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics  
(FOC-FPOS)**

**Chair**

New Zealand

**Members**

Australia

Argentina

Egypt

Italy

Jordan

Malaysia

Mauritius

Poland

Suriname

United Kingdom

**Observers**

Collaborative on Data Interoperability

FAO

GGIM Secretariat

International Statistical Institute (ISI)

Open Data Watch

PARIS21

UN-ESCAP

World Bank

## Annex II

### Friends of the Chair Group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FOC-FPOS)

#### Terms of Reference

##### I. Background

The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics were adopted at the global level by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/261 on 29 January 2014. The endorsement by the Assembly marked the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Principles by the Statistical Commission.

From 2011 to 2015, a Friends of the Chair Group worked on selected dimensions of the implementation of the Fundamental Principles in connection with the twentieth anniversary of their adoption. At the 48th session of the Statistical Commission, a Friends of the Chair Group was created based on the decision of the Statistical Commission (decision 48/107) to work on selected dimensions of the implementation of the Fundamental Principles within the context of the preparation for the twenty-fifth anniversary of their adoption, in 2019.

In addition, at the 49th session of the Statistical Commission, a sub-group under the FOC-FPOS was created based on the decision of the Statistical Commission (decision 49/105) to work on principles, guidance and support for implementation of open data in countries.

##### II. Objectives and Tasks

The primary objectives of the Friends of the Chair Group include work on both the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and open data.

Decision 48/107 agreed to the following work programme, contained in paragraph 4 of E/CN.3/2017/9:

- 1) To develop and agree on suitable tools and methods for assessing the implementation of the Fundamental Principles;
- 2) To conduct a global assessment before its fiftieth session in 2019, which will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Fundamental Principles by the Statistical Commission;
- 3) To review and, if necessary, update the current implementation guidelines;
- 4) To re-evaluate the mechanisms focused on how to best address perceived non-compliance with the Fundamental Principles;
- 5) To examine any matters relating to the Fundamental Principles as they may arise in other contexts, such as quality assurance or the use of non-official and non-traditional data.

Additionally, decision 48/107 further instructs the Group:

- 1) Cautioned against changing the Fundamental Principles at this point and encouraged the group to focus its reflection on implementation and to examine a potentially widened scope of the Fundamental Principles with respect to non-official and non-traditional data;
- 2) Requested the group to take into account current discussions on open data, big data and quality assurance;
- 3) Also requested the group to propose ways to give the Fundamental Principles higher visibility, in particular beyond the community of official statistics;

The Commission requested in its decision 49/105 that the subgroup on open data deliver on the proposed tasks of reviewing principles and legal frameworks for open data, clarifying technical aspects and skills needed and providing guidance on implementation, including anonymization of data, as detailed in paragraph 21 of E/CN.3/2018/6. Further, the Commission requested that the subgroup map open data principles to the Fundamental Principles and address the need for data interoperability principles and tools.

### **III. Membership**

The Friends of the Chair Group will consist of country representatives and international agencies and organizations as observers. The Chair of the FOC-FPOS will be assumed by New Zealand, with assistance from Australia. The Group will be comprised of country representatives from Argentina, Egypt, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Poland, Suriname and the United Kingdom. The International Statistical Institute (ISI) is an observer. Additional country representatives may join the Group as well as international organizations as observers, in particular those that expressed interest during the 48th and 49th Statistical Commission or expressed interest to the Chair.

The United Nations Statistics Division will be the secretariat for the Group.

### **IV. Organization of Work**

The Working Group will work through electronic exchanges and periodic meetings whenever possible. Where feasible, the meetings will be conducted in conjunction with other meetings taking place throughout the year.

### **V. Expected duration**

The Group will report back to the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session on the work of the Group regarding the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the work on open data with a set of recommendations on whether its work is complete or needs to continue, especially given that the open data mandate is new.

### **VI. Proposed activities**

In line with the mandate and further guidance given by the Statistical Commission, the FOC-FPOS will carry out its activities using the Fundamental Principles as the overarching context for both work streams. To facilitate the organisation of the activities, two work streams are proposed with the first focussed solely on the Fundamental Principles, namely:

- 1) A global survey based on a self-assessment of implementation of the Fundamental Principles questionnaire, followed by peer-review case studies on implementation;
- 2) The development of a background document that supplements the existing implementation guidelines of the Fundamental Principles to support their use, including case studies and which would also aim to provide criteria to evaluate perceived non-compliance with the Fundamental Principles;
- 3) Analysis of other matters relating to the Fundamental Principles as they arise in other contexts, including the application of the Fundamental Principles in using non-official and non-traditional data.

The second work stream will focus on open data in the context of the Fundamental Principles, namely:



- 1) A mapping of the open data principles to the Fundamental Principles and other relevant principles used in other groups such as the Global Working Group for Big Data;
- 2) The development of a background document that synthesises existing open data work covering data interoperability, implementation of open data practices and anonymization of data for official statistics;
- 3) Analysis of other matters relating to the implementation of open data in official statistics including legal frameworks, technical aspects and the capabilities needed.