

UN Statistical Commission

1947-2017

Celebrating
70 years
of global statistical
cooperation



The United Nations Statistical Commission at 70 years

1946 – 1950: Getting started

- The United Nations Statistical Commission established by ECOSOC as a subsidiary body with 12 members
- United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO, now UNSD) instituted as the central statistical unit within the United Nations Secretariat; Henry Campion (UK) appointed the first director
- First steps toward the development on international standardizations and classifications
- World Statistical Congress - convoked by the United Nations to coincide with the first post-war congress of the International Statistical Institute - Washington, D.C., September 1947
- Subcommittee on Statistical Sampling
- First edition of the United Nations Demographic Yearbook (1949)
- First International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC) (1949)



Global context

- 1945
End of WW II
- 1945
Creation of the United Nations
- 1947
Marshall Plan for Europe
- 1947
General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) signed

1st session of the UN Statistical Commission (Lake Success, 27 January – 7 February 1947).
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1950s: Fundamental work

- Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) (1950)
- System of National Accounts - 1953
- Principles for statistics of external trade (1953)
- Definitions in basic industrial statistics (1953)
- Recommendations for migration statistics (1953)
- Principles for a Vital Statistics System – Recommendations for the Improvement and Standardization of Vital Statistics (1953)
- International Definition and Measurement of Standards and Levels of Living (1954)
- First Principles and Recommendations for National Population Censuses and General Principles for a Housing Census (1958)



Global context

Reconstruction of the world economy

Cold War

Rapid industrialisation

6th session (Lake Success, 1951): Harry Champion (UK), chair (third from left) talks with UN Secretariat members assigned to aid the Commission during the course of its meetings. They are (left to right) W.R. Leonard, P.J. Loftus, and W.J. Bruce. UN Photo/MB

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1960s: First revisions and new programmes

- First Interagency Meeting on Statistical Activities (Geneva, 1966)
- 1970 World Population and Housing Census Programme
- System of national Accounts - 1968
- International Standard Industrial Classification, second revision
- Classification by broad economic categories
- Commission membership increased to 24 members, its current size



Global context

United Nations
Development Decade
(1960-1970)

Civil rights movement

Decolonisation

Exchanging views shortly before the meeting (from left to right): Mr. Raymond T. Bowman (United States), and Mr. T.V. Ryabushkin (USSR) during the 11th Session (New York, 1960) UN Photo/MB

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1970s: Co-operation and technical assistance

- Technical assistance integrated five-year scheme, in co-operation with the specialized agencies, established
- The role of official statistics in advancing development objectives under the Second United Nations Development Decade strongly acknowledged
- Comprehensive report International technical co-operation in statistics, 1979-1983, prepared by the United Nations Statistical Office jointly with the statistical offices of the regional commissions, specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and a number of individual countries
- Environment statistics: Stressing the importance of co-ordination at an early stage of the work between the United Nations system and other international bodies
- National Household Survey Capability Programme
- World Programme of Industrial Statistics
- 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme



Global context

1971-1980
Second United Nations
Development Decade

1972
United Nations
Conference on the Human
Environment

1973
Oil embargo

1976
United Nations
Conference on Human
Settlements

Stagflation

1979
Second oil crisis

20th Session (1979): At the presiding table, from left: Derek Blades, Statistical Office; Ms. Nancy Ruggles, Assistant Director-in-Charge, Systems and Standards Branch, Statistical Office; Simon A. Goldberg, Director, Statistical Office; Mikhail A. Korolev (Soviet Union), Chairman of the session; and Miss Caroline St. Claire, Secretary. UN Photo

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1980s: Renewed commitment to coordination

- Continuing need for evaluation of technical cooperation in statistics
- Stressing the need for cooperation among international organizations in exchange of information and experiences
- Work on the use of administrative records for statistical purposes
- Handbook on Statistical Organization (1980)
- 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics
- 1984 Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics
- 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme



Global context

Debt crisis and
development
setbacks

Recession

1989
Fall of the Berlin Wall

21st Session (New York, 1981)
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1990s: Fundamental Principles

- First edition of the World's Women (1991)
- International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems (1991)
- System of National Accounts - 1993
- System of Environment-Economic Accounts 1993 (interim publication)
- Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS)
- Practical guidelines for good practices in technical cooperation in statistics
- 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme
- Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (1994)



Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Global context

1990
World Summit for Children

1992
United Nations Conference
on Environment and
Development

1994
International Conference
on Population and
Development

1995
United Nations Climate
Change Conference

1995
Fourth World Conference
on Women

1997-98
Asian crisis

Globalisation

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2000s: Strengthening statistical capacity

- ECOSOC Resolution on “Strengthening statistical capacity” (2006/6)
- Establishment of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA)
- Human settlements programme
- Access to microdata: Proposed set of principles and guidelines, underlying the extreme importance of ensuring confidentiality and maintaining public trust.
- 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme
- System of National Accounts – 2008
- System of Environmental-Economic Accounts for Water (2007)



Global context

2000
Millennium Summit.

2002
World Summit on
Sustainable Development.

2002
International Conference
on Financing for
development

2003 and 2005
World Summit on the
Information Society

40th Session (New York, 2009)
UNSD Photo/EG

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2010 Forward: SDGs and new data sources

- The data revolution presents new opportunities for national statistical offices
- Big data for official statistics
- Development of an international statistical geospatial framework
- National data quality assurance framework
- UN General Assembly endorses Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (2014)
- SEEA 2012: Central Framework, Experimental Ecosystem Accounting and Applications and Extensions
- Revised Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System (2014)
- Agreed as a practical starting point on a proposed global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016)
- 2020 World Population and Housing Statistics Programme



Global context

2007-2008
Global economic and
financial crisis

2012
United Nations
Conference on Sustainable
Development

2015
United Nations Sustainable
Development Summit

46th Session (New York, 2015)
UNSD Photo/EG

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