UN Statistical Commission

1947-2017

Celebrating 70 years of global statistical cooperation
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

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1947-2017
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)
- 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 Campion (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
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
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 counties
- 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

1979
Stagflation

Second oil crisis

Stagflation

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
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
- 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics
- 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme
1990s: Fundamental Principles

- 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
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

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
The United Nations Statistical Commission at 70 years

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
- SEEA 2012: Central Framework, Experimental Ecosystem Accounting and Applications and Extensions
- 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

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