



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2014

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Forty-sixth session

3-6 March 2015

Item 4 (j) 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

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2014/219. It provides an overview of the work carried out by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2014 and summarizes the main conclusions of the Committee at its twenty-third and twenty-fourth sessions, held in New York on 3 March 2014 and Rome on 11 and 12 September 2014, respectively. 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.3/2015/1.



I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities held two sessions in 2014. The twenty-third session of the Committee was held in New York on 3 March 2014 prior to the forty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission, and the twenty-fourth session of the Committee, hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), was held in Rome on 11 and 12 September 2014. Both meetings were chaired by the two Co-Chairs of the Committee: Werner Bier, Deputy Director General, Statistics, of the European Central Bank (ECB), and Pietro Gennari, Chief Statistician and Director, Statistics Division, of FAO. The present report provides an overview of the work conducted in 2014 and summarizes the main conclusions of the Committee at its twenty-third and twenty-fourth sessions.

II. Membership

2. In 2014, six new members joined the Committee, namely, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat. The Committee now has 45 members (listed in the annex), 36 of whom attended at least one session in 2014.

III. Working methods

3. 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, if appropriate. They prepare documents on progress 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 works closely with the Co-Chairs, 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 (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm).

4. At its twenty-fourth session, the Committee reviewed and confirmed its current working methods, in particular the working arrangements for task teams. The Committee agreed to regularly include in the agenda of its future sessions, presentations of the statistical work of member organizations and to define a multi-year programme for the Committee.

5. Since the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, the Committee has developed joint statements on items in the agenda of the Commission that are important to the Committee. Such joint statements must receive a high level of support from Committee members in order to serve as a mandate for the Co-Chairs to speak on behalf of the Committee. The Co-Chairs delivered four joint statements at the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission in 2013 and three joint

statements at the forty-fifth session in 2014.¹ The Committee is planning to deliver joint statements again at the forty-sixth session.

IV. Work of the Committee in 2014

A. Post-2015 development agenda

6. The post-2015 development agenda has been regularly in the Committee's agenda since the twentieth session held in Frankfurt, Germany, in the fourth quarter of 2012. The Committee and its members are prepared to play a leading role in measuring sustainable development in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and have contributed in various ways to the ongoing international processes.

7. At its twenty-fourth session, held in September 2014, the Committee discussed the topic quite extensively, with a strong focus on the modalities in which the Committee and its members can best contribute to the work of the newly established Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development. At that session, the Committee received a briefing by one of the Co-Chairs of the Expert Advisory Group, Enrico Giovannini. As a follow-up, the Committee submitted a joint contribution on this topic to the Expert Advisory Group on 16 October 2014, which focused on: (a) more efficient use of existing and new, non-traditional sources of data and metadata; (b) strengthened governance, coordination and partnerships; (c) fostering the necessary statistical capacity-building; and (d) role of the international statistical community. The document is available from the Committee website (at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/docs/IEAG.pdf>). In addition, individual Committee members submitted to the Expert Advisory Group relevant documentation on a "data revolution for development" and notes on what the ongoing data revolution means for their organization.

8. The members of the Committee contributed extensively to the statistical notes for the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, which were formally transmitted to the Open Working Group in March 2014. Member organizations provided contributions throughout the drafting process. Committee members also contributed to the assessment of the indicator proposal of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network which was conducted by the Statistical Commission Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress, in March and April 2014.² The Committee and its members will continue participating in the statistical activities related to the post-2015 development agenda and, in particular, in the work on identifying and measuring appropriate indicators.³

¹ In 2014, joint statements were delivered under the following agenda items: 3 (a) — Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (delivered by FAO); 3 (c) — Programme review: broader measures of progress (delivered by FAO); and 3 (d) — National accounts (delivered by ECB). In 2013, joint statements were delivered under the following agenda items: 3 (i) — Gender statistics (delivered by UNCTAD); 3 (k) — Health statistics (delivered by ECB); 3 (l) — Coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations system (delivered by UNCTAD); and 4 (o) — Common open standards for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata (delivered by ECB).

² See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/broaderprogress/work.html>.

³ A note on the work on the indicator framework for the post-2015 development agenda, prepared by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, was provided to the Committee session held in September 2014.

B. Principles governing international statistical activities

9. The Committee endorsed the principles governing international statistical activities at its sixth session in September 2005. These principles are inspired by the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, adopted by the Statistical Commission at its special session in 1994 (see [E/1994/29](#), para. 59). An integral part of the principles comprises the list of good practices under each principle, intended to assist international organizations in their implementation. At its twenty-second session, held in Ankara, Turkey, in September 2013, the Committee reaffirmed the validity of the principles and decided to revise its preamble slightly so that it would reflect the fact that the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council (resolution 2013/21) and the General Assembly (resolution 68/261), in 2013 and 2014, respectively. The Committee endorsed the revised preamble on 3 March 2014 at its twenty-third session. The revised preamble is available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accespublic/principles_stat_activities.htm.

10. In May and June 2014, the Committee conducted a web-based survey among its then 43 member organizations regarding the implementation of the principles governing international statistical activities. A total of 37 Committee members out of 43 (86 per cent) completed the survey. This high response rate underlines the importance attached to the exercise by the international organizations and their commitment to the principles. In the context of the survey, many also provided valuable contributions with respect to the identification of barriers to the implementation of the principles, as well as additional good practices designed to complement the existing ones. The Committee discussed the results of the survey at its twenty-fourth session. Those detailed results are being made available to the Statistical Commission as a background document.

11. Based on the results of the survey and the discussion at its twenty-fourth session, the Committee committed to undertaking the following next steps.

12. Committee members will further intensify their efforts to overcome existing barriers and difficulties, for example, through stronger governance, improved dialogue with users and open data policies, common (internal) dissemination platforms, the use of the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) and improved coordination between regional and international organizations. The Committee members will also use simple mechanisms, such as the publication of the principles on their website and advocacy campaigns among staff, to build knowledge of the principles and to facilitate their implementation.

13. The Committee encouraged its members to bring the principles to the attention of their own governing bodies, if they had not yet done so. The Committee also welcomed the initiative by the United Nations organizations to seek endorsement of the principles at the highest level of their organizations (see document [E/CN.3/2014/32](#) on the work of the Committee).

14. The Committee established a task team mandated to create a more comprehensive list of good practices which will enable members to better implement the principles. Further, the Committee committed to repeating such a survey at regular intervals, for example every three to five years. A side event will be organized during the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission with the

aim of providing information to Member States on the status of implementation of the principles.

C. Dissemination of microdata by international organizations

15. At its twenty-third session, the Committee endorsed the document entitled “Microdata dissemination best practices”, which is available from the Committee website (at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/microdata.pdf>). The document was developed based on a proposal put forth by a member organization at the sixteenth session (Vienna, 2010) to review the practices of microdata release in international organizations. A task team guided the debate on how international organizations can best manage the access to microdata while protecting confidentiality. The task team developed the above-mentioned document which encompasses a compilation of best practices in developing policies and methodology on the access to microdata in international organizations. After being discussed at the twenty-second session, the document was endorsed at the twenty-third session, as noted above.

D. Organizational aspects of SDMX implementation

16. The Committee devoted a special session during its twenty-fourth session to the topic of organizational aspects of SDMX implementation. Six member organizations shared their experience with SDMX, focusing on the various synergies and efficiency gains of using the SDMX standards as part of modernizing the statistical system. One particular experience shared was the successful cooperation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in establishing joint data collection in the area of consumer price indices (CPI). Through this collaboration, IMF will make CPI data and metadata available to ILO, FAO and the Division in electronic format (SDMX), thereby allowing them to terminate their own CPI data collection. The result will be a reduced reporting burden for Member States. The Committee agreed to play an important coordination role in converging to common international reporting templates and to further develop this concept as part of a future side event or Committee session.

E. The Committee presence at international conferences

17. In 2012, after a series of separately organized Conferences on Quality in International Statistics (Wiesbaden, Germany, 2004; Newport, United Kingdom, 2006; Rome, 2008 and Helsinki, 2010), held back to back with the European Conferences on Quality in Official Statistics, the Committee decided to integrate this activity as a regular session into the European Conference. The first such session was held in Athens in 2012.

18. At the European Conference on Quality in Statistics held in Vienna, from 2 to 5 June 2014 (Q14), the Committee organized a special session on “Measures for enhancing the quality of international statistics: serving policymaking with international statistics”. The session, which was based on the Committee document

entitled “Use of non-official sources in international statistics”, received highly positive feedback. All conference papers, presentations and pictures of the event are available from the Committee website (at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub-public/cdqio-2014.htm>).

19. Building on the positive experience emerging from these Quality Conferences, the Committee organized its first special session at the 59th ISI World Statistics Congress, held in China, Hong Kong SAR, from 25 to 30 August 2013. The proposal of the Committee for a session at the upcoming 60th ISI World Statistics Congress, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in July 2015, was recently accepted.

F. Upcoming 2015 sessions

20. The Committee agreed that its twenty-fifth session would be held in New York, on the morning of 2 March 2015, in conjunction with the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission. The twenty-sixth session will be held in the fourth quarter of 2015.

Annex

Members of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities as of November 2014

African Development Bank (AfDB)

Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS)

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Bank for International Settlements (BIS)

Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa (Afristat)

European Central Bank (ECB)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISSTAT)

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

PARIS21

Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat)

Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)

Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat)

Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Institute for Statistics
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
(UN-Women)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
United Nations Population Division (UNPD)
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
Universal Postal Union (UPU)
World Bank
World Health Organization (WHO)
World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
World Trade Organization (WTO)
