

2nd Meeting of the Friends of the Chair on Economic Statistics

UNHQ, New York, USA 2-4 December 2019

7. Governance of the system of economic statistics

7b. Guiding principles for governance arrangements of statistical groups

Governance arrangements should be conducted using a set of guiding principles and objectives. Stemming from the initial discussions of the FOC group at its first meeting, the guiding principles for a review of the governance arrangements of statistical groups can be distilled as follows.

Coordination

One of the guiding principles should emphasize coordination to improve the speed and responsiveness of service delivery and establish greater coherence between the deliverables. This *coordination principle* should facilitate the desired outcomes of making the system of economic statistics relevant and more responsive in meeting the challenges and opportunities faced by countries in monitoring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With a decentralized and stove-piped approach still present in the existing governance structure, the *coordination principle* should facilitate a collective response to address the increased complexity of the system of economic statistics and the need for global statistical operations and infrastructure to facilitate collaboration between statistical agencies. The *coordination principle* should also allow for an assessment of the effectiveness of the collaborative relationships of statistical groups operating between and within the domains of macroeconomic statistics, business and trade statistics, price statistics, and household economic statistics.

An important element of coordination is consultation on priorities. Discussions on priorities and the need to continue this dialogue was noted at the first meeting of the FOC. Looking forward, a consultation mechanism could include a periodic cycle of UN global forums on economic statistics where open and transparent user consultations would foster a collective buy-in from countries and agencies on a global program on economic statistics with agreed global priorities. A global program would also allow for better and shared communication on the update of the system of economic statistics and the early participation of countries in the experimentation and testing of the update of the system.

A global multi-year program on economic statistics based on global priorities would also facilitate the necessary coherence between programs of work of the statistical groups, strengthen the performance management and enhance accountability, and the effective management of resources. The vertical bottom-up mechanism should ensure appropriate consultation with member states on their needs and ownership of the work program. The overall outcome would be a work program that is global but led by countries.

Accountability

Concerning the emphasis of FOC Group on the effectiveness and efficiency of the governance structure in producing the deliverables, an *accountability principle* could be adopted. In this context, accountability refers to specific commitments by each group regarding its outputs and

timetable for the deliverables. As well, this principle effectively means assigning specific accountabilities and decision-making authority to various groups. Obviously, consultation and coordination would be required so as not to make unilateral decisions that would have unintended impacts on the overall system. This principle should strengthen the performance management culture and ensure the effective management of resources of the implementation of mandates.

Transparency

Decisions regarding the direction of the system of economic statistics should be achieved through consultation with stakeholders and be transparent for users and members of the statistical community. The *transparency principle* could address the emphasis of the FOC Group on setting global priorities for the update of the system of economic statistics through agreed mechanisms of user consultation and dialogue.

This section highlighted three guiding principles for the review of the governance arrangements of the system of economic statistics. In the remainder of the note, a first attempt is made to apply the three guiding principles for the review of the present state of the governance arrangement and the description of options for the proposed future state of the governance arrangements.
