

Meeting of the UN entities on Statistical Programmes
New York, 25 February 2010
United Nations Headquarters
Conference Room B, Temporary North Lawn Building
3:00 – 5:00 pm

=====

Minutes

Attendance:

1. The meeting was attended by representatives from UNSD, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, ILO, UNWTO, UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNESCO, UNHABITAT, WHO and FAO.

Preparation of World Statistics Day:

2. UNSD briefed the meeting about the progress with the organization of the first World Statistics Day on 20 October 2010 as endorsed by the 41st session of the UN Statistical Commission. A logo and a designated website (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/wsd/Default.aspx>) for this occasion had been designed. Two global statistical events will be used to launch the observance – the IAOS Conference in Chile and the ICP 2011 round User Conference in Washington, D.C. to be organized by the World Bank. The UNSD Director announced that DESA will have an allocated space at the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai, which could be used by the UN System entities and other CCSA members for raising awareness and promoting the importance of official statistics. UNHABITAT volunteered to help coordinate UN entities participation at the World Expo 2010. Individual UN entities informed the group about the initiatives they have been planning in observance of the World Statistics Day, in particular UNCTAD and UNIDO announced their plans to coordinate initiatives locally in Geneva and Vienna respectively. Regional Commissions also reported that preparations for the celebration in their respective regions are well underway. It was agreed that UNSD will assist with the overall coordination of the events worldwide and publicize them on the designated website.

Coordination of the current round of Population, Housing, Economic and Agricultural Censuses:

3. At its previous meeting the group identified the coordination of activities related to the 2010 Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, and Economic and Agricultural Censuses as one of the cross-cutting issues for the entire UN system. Concerns were expressed that many countries receive inconsistent advices from consultants and that a better coordination between UNSD, UN Population Fund,

FAO and other institutions concerned such as UNESCO and WHO is needed when assisting countries with the programme implementation. Coordination between UNSD and FAO was considered particularly important as Population and Agricultural censuses are frequently carried out together by countries. In this context, the UNSD Census Knowledge Base could provide a wealth of detailed country information for coordination purposes. UN entities were urged to use the UNSD website and contribute to its further expansion by providing links or linking it to their websites. The group further agreed that any proposals for inclusion of additional questions in the census questionnaires on agricultural activities, health status or educational level should be consistent with the current international recommendations and standards.

Coordination of Technical Cooperation Activities:

4. UNSD briefed the meeting on the planned project on strengthening statistical capacity development in China and other developing countries in Asia funded by the Chinese Government, including a proposal for the establishment of an International Statistical Training Center in China. UNSD encouraged all UN entities to support the initiative, which could be seen as part of an overall UN system strategy in statistical capacity building. Some questions were raised regarding the modalities of the training center's organization and operations, which are still under discussion with Chinese authorities.

Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System – GIVAS:

5. The Director of UNSD updated the meeting on the progress with GIVAS initiative. Since the focus of the initiative is more on the analytical side and monitoring of the impact rather than on the necessary statistical information the UN entities agreed that under these circumstances the best response to this initiative would be to keep each other informed about ongoing activities and share the documents/information received. The meeting was also of the view that GIVAS could be a useful stimulus for UN entities to look into availability and timeliness of their own statistics. UNSD informed the meeting that it will continue to engage the global statistical community in the work on the rapid estimates, sentiment and composite indicators as a response to the global financial and economic crises.

UN –Data:

6. UNSD informed the meeting about ongoing discussions with software developers, such as e.g. Microsoft, in order to develop tools to further enhance quick access to UNdata and to improve the systems visibility and user friendliness.

7. The UNdata Data Managers meetings proved to be very successful and efficient in strengthening cooperation among UN entities in data dissemination. UNSD urged the other agencies to continue supporting the participation of their data managers in these meetings.

Other business:

8. The group was informed that a number of developing countries expressed concerns about the revision of the Human Development Index (HDI), more specifically about the lack of (i) transparency in the whole process; (ii) proper documentation of the methodology; and (iii) consultation with the Statistical Commission. The issue was also brought to the attention of the Commission at its current 41st session. Subsequently the Commission decided that its Bureau, together with experts from the regions, will undertake consultation with the Human Development Report Office on the methodologies and data used in the proposed revision of the HDI and will take appropriate decisions based on the consultations.
9. WHO presented a paper on the initiative of eight agencies working in global health to develop a common standard for health information, which among other components includes use of SDMX standard for transmission of data.
10. The group discussed some organizational aspects of future UN System meetings and agreed on the following:
 - (i) meetings held in conjunction with the UN Statistical Commission sessions to be announced as “closed meetings” to avoid attendance of uninvited participants. It is desirable to reserve the Thursday afternoon of the Commission’s week as a permanent time slot for these meetings;
 - (ii) meetings held in conjunction with the CCSA sessions to precede the official session of the Committee so a common position of UN entities on the issues discussed in it to be formulated and agreed.
11. The group agreed to hold its next meeting in conjunction with the 16th session of the CCSA in Vienna, Austria (1 - 3 September 2010).

Annex 1: Agenda

1. Preparation of World Statistics Day
2. Coordination of the current round of Population, Housing, Economic and Agricultural Censuses
3. Coordination of Technical Cooperation Activities
4. Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System – GIVAS
5. UN -Data
6. Other coordination issues