

Terms of reference of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System (CCS-UN)

I. Background

1. The first meeting of United Nations entities on statistical programmes was held on 9 September 2007 in Madrid, on the margins of the tenth session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities. Since then, the group has met regularly twice a year, once in the spring on the occasion of the annual session of the Statistical Commission and once during the autumn on the occasion of the fall session of CCSA.

2. The Statistical Commission considered the coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations system during the 43rd, 44th and 45th sessions (see decisions 45/112, 44/112 and 43/112). In decision 45/112 the Commission “endorsed the proposal that the United Nations chief statisticians hold regular meetings, and mandated the group to follow up on the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair for improved coordination and report back to the Commission.”

3. In accordance with the decision of the Commission, the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System was formally established on 10 September 2014. Since then, it has held regular meetings and reported on their outcomes to the Commission. This document describes the mission, key activities and working modalities of the Committee.

II. Mission statement

4. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System promotes coherent and integrated system-wide United Nations actions to support statistics at the national, regional and international levels, following the principles governing international statistical activities, adopted by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2005, and the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015. Taking into account the comparative advantages of each member, the Committee encourages coordinated efforts by United Nations agencies and programmes in strengthening national statistical capacity through the definition of common approaches and joint interventions. The Committee supports in particular the modernization of national statistical systems and the reinforcement of their capacity to respond to new data demands for underpinning evidence-based policymaking, including the monitoring of global, regional and national development goals. Recognizing that national needs and priorities should guide the United Nations system’s efforts to support national statistical systems, the Committee supports the development and full implementation of international statistical standards in member States for the production of high-quality and internationally comparable data.

5. The Committee promotes the coordination of the statistical programmes of the United Nations system entities with the aim of “delivering as one”, by fostering synergies, avoiding duplication and overlap, and facilitating data exchange. It promotes the adoption of common quality criteria to drive the statistical production of all agencies of the United Nations system and supports the sharing of knowledge and good practices. It also defines common United Nations positions on statistical matters, to be reported at the Statistical Commission or at other coordination bodies, such as the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities.

III. Key activities and functions

6. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System establishes a network of statistical programmes in the United Nations system to enhance cooperation and coordination when helping Member States to improve their statistical capacity. The network also assists its members by defining solutions to common problems faced when managing or implementing regional or global statistical programmes.

7. The Committee promotes the use of harmonized international statistical standards and classifications and the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It helps to promote accountability by improving the transparency of statistical practices globally.

8. The Committee defines and promotes the implementation of a common United Nations data quality framework to ensure that all United Nations agencies apply the same high level of transparency, accuracy, timeliness and efficiency when collecting, processing and disseminating statistics. It also adopts common policies to ensure national ownership of the data disseminated by United Nations agencies while maximizing their comparability and adherence to international standards.

9. The Committee discusses ways of coordinating activities at the national level through United Nations country teams and national programmes by sharing and promoting coherence and producing joint products.

10. The Committee promotes the coordination of common capacity-building and technical assistance activities by undertaking common actions on specific topics, at the national, regional and global levels, to meet more efficiently the demand for skilled statisticians and data analysts, for both Member States and international organizations.

11. The Committee promotes coordinated data compilation and exchange to reduce the burden on reporting countries by promoting joint data collection activities and the sharing of statistics and facilitating the use of modern platforms and mechanisms to provide countries with the best solutions and access to databases.

12. The Committee provides common positions and statements on statistical matters to the Statistical Commission in order to provide Member States with a single and coherent view from the United Nations.

13. The Committee enhances visibility and support to regional and global statistical activities within the United Nations system by promoting, among senior United Nations management personnel, the relevance of statistics and the ethical principles related thereto. This includes the involvement of the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and, through them, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. The Committee also promotes the coordination of national statistical systems through the various constituencies at the national and global levels.

14. The Committee discusses and contributes to the debates on international global frameworks and monitoring systems such as the Sustainable Development Goals and others in order to achieve a better division of work and ensure quality in statistical outcomes.

15. The Committee discusses emerging topics related to new technical challenges, new data sources and ways of disseminating data, and changes in United Nations donors' strategies in order to achieve better results and enhance the statistical activities carried out by the various agencies, organizations, funds and programmes.

16. The Committee promotes the cross-fertilization of innovative ideas and best practices on methodology, statistical sources and assistance to Member States. It also discusses administrative and substantive solutions to facilitate the mobility of statisticians across the United Nations system, and the implementation of joint actions in line with the rules and regulations of United Nations agencies.

IV. Working modalities

A. Membership and level of representation

17. The Committee comprises the statistical services of United Nations funds and programmes, specialized agencies and the Secretariat, as well as the regional economic and social commissions, the mandates of which include the provision of international official statistics in the context of the principles governing international statistical activities.

18. Prospective members should register with the secretariat.

19. Representation in meetings is expected to be at the level of director of an organization's statistical service or the equivalent.

B. Organization

20. The Committee elects two chairpersons, who will serve for a two-year period and are eligible for re-election for a second two-year term. If possible, the terms of the two chairpersons should be asynchronous and overlap. The longer serving chairperson is referred to as the senior chairperson.

21. One of the chairpersons (ideally the senior chairperson) may be identical to the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities co-chair representing the United Nations members of that Committee, to ensure close coordination with the activities of that Committee.

22. The functions of the chairpersons are the following:

(a) To design the draft agenda with the support of the secretariat, on the basis of the decisions taken at the previous session and on subsequent requests by members;

(b) To chair the sessions of the Committee, including by preparing a summary of the discussion of each agenda item as a basis for the report of the session; in the absence of both chairpersons during a scheduled session of the Committee, the chair shall be temporarily assumed by another member;

(c) To propose draft minutes of the sessions, as prepared by the secretariat, to be approved by written procedure by all the members who attended the session;

(d) To represent the Committee in strategic meetings or discussions whenever its members consider it necessary;

(e) To invite, after consultation and in agreement with the members, observers to participate in the work of Committee.

23. The secretariat of the Committee is situated at the Statistics Division.

24. The functions of the secretariat are the following:

(a) To prepare the draft agenda in collaboration with the chairpersons and following consultation with members;

- (b) To ensure that all documentation is made available to its members in a timely fashion;
- (c) To organize the sessions of the Committee and coordinate with the agreed host of a given session;
- (d) To prepare draft minutes of each session in cooperation with the chairpersons, to be approved by written procedure by all the members who attended the session;
- (e) To create, host and keep up-to-date a protected website for the Committee;
- (f) To prepare the draft report to the Statistical Commission for approval by the members.

C. Meetings, decisions, minutes and reporting

25. The Committee will meet twice a year. The first session will take place every spring in New York on the margins of the session of the Statistical Commission (“spring session”), and the second session will place on the margins of the autumn session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (“fall session”), at the venue chosen for that session. The exact timing and length of the sessions will be decided by the chairpersons, in consultation with the members, upon proposal of the secretariat. The draft agenda is prepared by the chairpersons, with assistance provided by the secretariat and in consultation with members, on the basis of decisions taken at the previous session and subsequent requests by members.

26. The coordination of activities between sessions, for example, through electronic discussion groups, is an important and integral part of the work of the Committee.

27. Consensus during sessions is determined by the chairpersons and reported in the minutes of the session. A report on decisions and actions is prepared, in a timely manner, for adoption after each session by the secretariat. The report specifies the lead agencies responsible for any action or follow-up.

28. The Committee reports at least every two years to the Statistical Commission. Such reports are drafted by the secretariat, under the guidance of the chairpersons, and approved by the members.
