

الأمم المتحدة
اللجنة الاقتصادية والاجتماعية لغربي آسيا

UNITED NATIONS
Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia



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Commission économique et sociale
pour l'Asie occidentale

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26 September 2017

Dear Mr. Zhenmin,

Subject: Principles Governing International Statistical Activities

I refer to the letter on the subject matter ref. DESA-17/00404 concerning a call by the Chief Executives Board for the UN Statistical System to adhere to the "Principles Governing International Statistical Activities".

I am pleased to inform you that UN-ESCWA is fully committed to the compliance of the Principles, and practices in its statistical work. UN-ESCWA also supports implementation of the "Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics" (A/RES/68/261) in the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mohamed Ali Al-Hakim".

Mohamed Ali Al-Hakim
Under-Secretary-General
Executive Secretary



Mr. LIU Zhenmin
Under-Secretary-General
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations
NY, USA

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OFFICE OF THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR THE UN CONFERENCE
TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 14
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (DESA)
ROOM S-2922, UN SECRETARIAT BUILDING, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017
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REFERENCE: DESA-17/00404

23 March 2017

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to follow up on our last discussion at the Chief Executives Board meeting on 18 and 19 November 2015 for the UN Statistical System to adhere to the “Principles Governing International Statistical Activities” (attached). Further information and practical guidelines for the implementation of these principles can be found on the website of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) which had first developed these principles in 2005 (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/principles_stat_activities.htm). At that time all UN entities committed to these principles at the level of their respective Chief Statisticians.

As we all set out to support the Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, this is a particularly opportune moment to reaffirm the UN Statistical System’s commitment to these principles.

Member States of the United Nations have elevated their commitment to a set of similar principles from the technical to the highest political level, by passing a resolution in the General Assembly on the “Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics” (FPOS) in 2014. Therefore, I would like to invite you, as chief executive of your organization to follow the lead of the Member States. In this regard, DESA is fully committed to the compliance of the “Principles Guiding Statistical Activities of International Organizations” and practices in our work, in accordance with current UN Rules and Regulations and other administrative issuances. Whilst recognizing that these principles may be used by agencies in different ways, depending on their institutional circumstances, Member States will appreciate a strong signal from the UN system to adhere to these principles that are very much in line with the FPOS.

I would therefore like to encourage you to express the same commitment.

Yours sincerely,



WU Hongbo

Under-Secretary-General
Secretary-General for the UN Conference to Support
the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14

Members of the Chief Executives Board

Attachment:

**PRINCIPLES GOVERNING INTERNATIONAL
STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES²**

Bearing in mind that statistics are essential for sustainable economic, environmental and social development and that public trust in official statistics is anchored in professional independence and impartiality of statisticians, their use of scientific and transparent methods and equal access for all to official statistical information, the Executive Heads of the organizations of the United Nations System assembled in the Chiefs Executive Board, agree that implementation of the following principles will enhance the functioning of the international statistical system.

In doing so, they note the endorsement of these principles by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities on 14 September, 2005; these principles were reaffirmed by the Committee with a new preamble in March 2014. They further recall the adoption by the United Nations Statistical Commission of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in its Special Session of 11-15 April 1994; the Fundamental Principles were reaffirmed by the Statistical Commission with a new preamble in March 2013 and subsequently endorsed by the Economic and Social Council on 24 July 2013 (Resolution 2013/21) and by the United Nations General Assembly on 29 January 2014 (Resolution A/RES/68/261).

- 1) High quality international statistics, accessible for all, are a fundamental element of global information systems.
- 2) To maintain the trust in international statistics, their production is to be impartial and strictly based on the highest professional standards.
- 3) The public has a right to be informed about the mandates for the statistical work of the organisations.
- 4) Concepts, definitions, classifications, sources, methods and procedures employed in the production of international statistics are chosen to meet professional scientific standards and are made transparent for the users.
- 5) Sources and methods for data collection are appropriately chosen to ensure timeliness and other aspects of quality, to be cost-efficient and to minimise the reporting burden for data providers.

² The identical text of these Principles, with appropriate modifications in the two preambular paragraphs has been adopted by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) and subsequently been signed as a professional commitment by the Chief Statisticians of all UN System entities.

6) Individual data collected about natural persons and legal entities, or about small aggregates that are subject to national confidentiality rules, are to be kept strictly confidential and are to be used exclusively for statistical purposes or for purposes mandated by legislation.

7) Erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics are to be immediately appropriately addressed.

8) Standards for national and international statistics are to be developed on the basis of sound professional criteria, while also meeting the test of practical utility and feasibility.

9) Coordination of international statistical programmes is essential to strengthen the quality, coherence and governance of international statistics, and avoiding duplication of work.

10) Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contribute to the professional growth of the statisticians involved and to the improvement of statistics in the organisations and in countries.



General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 March 2014

Sixty-eighth session
Agenda item 9

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 29 January 2014

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/68/L.36 and Add.1)]

68/261. Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

The General Assembly,

Recalling recent resolutions¹ of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council highlighting the fundamental importance of official statistics for the national and global development agenda,

Bearing in mind the critical role of high-quality official statistical information in analysis and informed policy decision-making in support of sustainable development, peace and security, as well as for mutual knowledge and trade among the States and peoples of an increasingly connected world, demanding openness and transparency,

Bearing in mind also that the essential trust of the public in the integrity of official statistical systems and confidence in statistics depend to a large extent on respect for the fundamental values and principles that are the basis of any society seeking to understand itself and respect the rights of its members, and in this context that professional independence and accountability of statistical agencies are crucial,

Stressing that, in order to be effective, the fundamental values and principles that govern statistical work have to be guaranteed by legal and institutional frameworks and be respected at all political levels and by all stakeholders in national statistical systems,

Endorses the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics set out below, as adopted by the Statistical Commission in 1994² and reaffirmed in 2013, and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2013/21 of 24 July 2013:

Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Principle 1. Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the Government, the economy

¹ These include General Assembly resolution 64/267 on World Statistics Day and Economic and Social Council resolutions 2005/13 on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, 2006/6 on strengthening statistical capacity and 2013/21 on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

² For the original preamble used on the occasion of the initial adoption of the Fundamental Principles in 1994, see chapter V of the report of the Statistical Commission on its special session (*Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 9 (E/1994/29)*). More information on the Fundamental Principles and their history is available from the website of the Statistics Division.

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and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens' entitlement to public information.

Principle 2. To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.

Principle 3. To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.

Principle 4. The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.

Principle 5. Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.

Principle 6. Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.

Principle 7. The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.

Principle 8. Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.

Principle 9. The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels.

Principle 10. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.

*73rd plenary meeting
29 January 2014*