

United Nations  Nations Unies

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)
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Dear Colleagues,

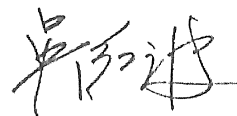
I am writing to follow up on our last discussion at the Chief Executives Board meeting on 18 and 19 November 2015 for the UN Statistical System to adhere to the “Principles Governing International Statistical Activities” (attached). Further information and practical guidelines for the implementation 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/acsub-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

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.
