Welcome to the confluence page on the update of the Handbook of Statistical Organization

The need for statistical organizations to adapt and develop was stressed in the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (E/CN.3/2017/3) and the final report of the series of conferences on a transformative agenda for official statistics (E/CN.3/2017/5), both of which were submitted to the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session (E/CN.3/2017/35). The monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related regional and national development policies requires national statistical systems to grasp the potential of innovative technologies in a rapidly changing data ecosystem while reinforcing leadership, coordination, communication and dialogue through institutional and organizational reforms, in compliance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, endorsed by the General Assembly in 2014.

At its 49th session, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) endorsed the proposed commented outline of the updated Handbook of Statistical Organization (E/CN.3/2018/5) with the aim of guiding chief statisticians and senior managers of statistical organizations in developing and maintaining statistical capacity that is fit for purpose. The UNSC required that the updated version of the Handbook consider the strategic development areas proposed in the Cape Town Global Action Plan (CTGAP) and the main outcomes of the series of conferences on a transformative agenda for official statistics. The UNSC suggested this approach being complemented with a series of thematic conferences at the regional and sub-regional level, at which senior statisticians may address recent institutional, organizational and technical developments addressing prospective challenges and opportunities to produce official statistics and indicators.

Following the decision of the UNSC, an Advisory Group was established in June 2018 with the task, at regular intervals or upon request, of providing overall guidance to the drafting team at UNSD and of ensuring a link with the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant bodies. The drafting team at UNSD, led by the Inter-regional Adviser on management and organization of national statistical systems, relies on the input from members of the Advisory Group as well as selected consultants with substantive expertise on the topics covered by the respective chapters of the updated Handbook.

The updated version of the Handbook will be conceived as a living document available on the Internet with a hard-copy version limited to the overview chapter (chapter II). This will allow a procedure to be put in place for regular updates of the document, for instance, every second year.

In March 2020 at its 51st session the UNSC (E/CN.3/2020/37) welcomed the progress in drafting the next edition of the Handbook and the organization of the thematic conferences. The Commission supported the coordination and consultation mechanisms established for the updating process and expressed its appreciation for the valuable role of the advisory group in guiding the overall drafting process. The UNSC suggested, during the editorial phase and where needed, to update the content of existing draft chapters and to further review the structure of the next edition of the Handbook. The UNSC also reiterated the importance of the Handbook to reflect recent methodological guidance provided by the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB) and the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs).

The need also for the overview chapter to be available in a hard copy version in all United Nations official languages, to reach the widest audience possible was stressed at the 50th session. Further the UNSC insisted that the Handbook reflects recent technological developments and the use of non-traditional data sources for the production of statistics and indicators and reiterated the importance of the Handbook being a living document on the web.

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