

Statistics

In 2014, the United Nations continued its work on various aspects of statistics, mainly through the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In January, the General Assembly stressed the critical role of high-quality official statistical information in informed policy decision-making and endorsed the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. In March, the Statistical Commission welcomed the first draft of the guidelines on how to strengthen implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, as presented by the Friends of the Chair group in a document that accompanied its main report. The Commission asked the Friends of the Chair group to continue working on the document and invited countries to contribute to the implementation guidelines by submitting comments and good practices. The Commission also established a technical committee responsible for advancing the research agenda of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework; established the Friends of the Chair group to carry out the evaluation of the 2011 round of the International Comparison Programme; welcomed the progress made in Asia and the Pacific to strengthen statistics through regional cooperation; and stressed the importance of the effective coordination of UN statistical activities and endorsed the proposal that UN chief statisticians hold regular meetings. The Commission further decided to celebrate the next World Statistics Day (20 October 2015) under the general theme of “Statistics for better decision-making—statistics for better development/life”.

Statistical Commission

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2013/235 [YUN 2013, p. 1260], the Statistical Commission held its forty-fifth session in New York from 4–7 March [E/2014/24]. The Commission recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft decision on the report of the Commission on its forty-fifth session and the provisional agenda and dates for its forty-sixth (2015) session.

The Commission brought to the Council’s attention decisions on implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics; programme review; environmental-economic accounting; international trade and economic globalization statistics; information and communications technology for development;

the international comparison programme; disability statistics; big data and modernization of statistical systems; UN Statistics Division publications; coordination of statistical activities in the UN system; World Statistics Day; and regional statistical development. It took note of 18 reports considered during the session [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], as well as the oral report presented by the Acting Director of the UN Statistics Division concerning the Division’s activities, plans and priorities and the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2016–2017 [dec. 45/115].

The Commission had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report [E/CN.3/2014/3] of the Bureau on the review of the Commission’s working methods. The report contained a series of recommendations for the Commission to consider in deciding on appropriate changes in its working methods.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/102)], the Statistical Commission supported the Bureau’s recommendation to strengthen the role of the Bureau in playing an active role in the intersession period, consulting with and informing countries and international organizations; and invited the Bureau to implement the main recommendations for the next session of the Commission.

On 13 June, by **decision 2014/219**, the Economic and Social Council took note of the report of the Commission on its forty-fifth session; decided that the forty-sixth session would be held in New York from 3 to 6 March 2015; and approved the provisional agenda and documentation for that session.

Demographic and social statistics

Population and housing censuses

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2013/235 [YUN 2013, p. 1260], the Secretary-General reported [E/CN.3/2014/16] on the progress of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme during the period 2010–2013; the revision of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*; and the release of the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*.

At the end of November 2013, 205 countries or areas in the world had conducted a population and housing census, which represented the enumeration of more than 91 per cent of the world population. It was estimated that coverage would increase to 97 per cent by the end of the census round, which spanned

from 2005 to 2014. In preparation for the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme, the Statistics Division organized the first (New York, 29 October–1 November 2013) and second (New York, 29 April–2 May 2014) Expert Group Meetings on Revising the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*. Participants agreed that the third revision of that international statistical standard would be submitted to the Statistical Commission for adoption in February 2015.

In February 2013, the Statistics Division finalized the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*, the major international statistical standard for civil registration and vital statistics. The Division also maintained a civil registration and vital statistical knowledge centre to facilitate the international exchange and sharing of knowledge and information on civil registration and vital statistics.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the Secretary-General's report.

Disability statistics

The Statistical Commission had before it the report [E/CN.3/2014/10 & Corr.1] of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics on activities to improve the quality, availability and comparability of disability statistics. Prepared with inputs from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), the report described the work of the Washington Group on developing and testing questions on disability for use in censuses and surveys; joint work by the Washington Group and UNICEF on developing and testing question sets on child functioning and disability and on barriers to full participation in education for use in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and other surveys focused on children; and the development of a model disability survey led by WHO. The Commission was invited to comment on those activities; consider and approve the workplan of the Washington Group for 2014; urge support through UN regional offices for training, cognitive and field testing, technical assistance and workshops; and express views on the status of collaborative efforts to improve the quality of disability statistics and on recommendations for strengthening those efforts.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/109)], the Commission commended the collaboration between the Washington Group and UNICEF, particularly in developing the new questionnaire modules on child functioning and disability for use in surveys, and on environment and school participation to capture the environmental aspects of child disability. It welcomed the collaboration between the Washington Group and WHO on disability measurement, and encouraged the two parties to work together to develop the model disability survey instrument and to meet the objectives of both parties by including in the model survey the questions

developed by the Washington Group. The Commission supported the work programme of the Washington Group for 2014–2015 and took note of the change in the implementation timeline of the eleventh revision of the International Classification of Diseases.

Drug statistics

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/19 & Corr.1] of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on the challenges faced by countries and international and regional organizations in the collection and reporting of data on the supply and use of drugs, and on improving the quality and availability of drug statistics at the national, regional and international levels. The report gave recommendations for improving methodologies; promoting and reinforcing the role of national statistical offices; developing capacity to improve data collection and reporting; and improving international data collection and analysis. UNODC suggested that stakeholders review the regional and international mechanisms for collecting and reporting drug statistics with a view to streamlining the processes; that national statistical offices take a lead role in ensuring the quality of drug statistics and promoting coordination for the collection and reporting of drug statistics; and that the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Narcotics Drugs establish a joint group to develop standards and guidelines for priority indicators.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the report.

Gender statistics

The Statistical Commission had before it a report [E/CN.3/2014/18] of the Secretary-General on gender statistics, which summarized the recent activities of the UN Statistics Division and the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics under the umbrella of the Global Gender Statistics Programme. It also reported on the results of capacity-building efforts to strengthen gender statistics programmes in countries and on the organization of the seventh meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics.

Following the recommendations of the Statistical Commission [YUN 2013, p. 1261], the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics had identified a minimum set of gender indicators composed of 52 quantitative indicators grouped into 3 tiers and 11 qualitative indicators covering norms and laws on gender equality. The Statistics Division had developed a platform through which the indicators could be disseminated online. As at December 2013, the 35 tier I indicators, consisting mainly of gender indicators on education, employment and health, were disseminated through the platform. During its first year of implementation, the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality

Initiative, executed jointly by the Statistics Division and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), sought to accelerate existing efforts to generate comparable gender indicators on education, employment, entrepreneurship and assets. The Initiative focused on the compilation and online dissemination of international data and metadata on education, employment and health; the development of international definitions and methods for measuring entrepreneurship and asset ownership; and the identification of countries that would pilot the newly developed methods to collect data on entrepreneurship and assets. The Statistics Division produced the online “Gender Statistics Manual: Integrating a Gender Perspective into Statistics”, and finalized and disseminated the “Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women: Statistical Surveys”.

The meeting of the Advisory Group on Emerging Issues of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (New York, 11 September 2013) agreed on how to reconcile the minimum set of gender indicators with the “Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women: Statistical Surveys”; took stock of progress in the implementation of the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality Initiative; and agreed on future priority areas of work. The seventh meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (New York, 12–13 September 2013) discussed the minimum set of gender indicators and the related data compilation and protocols for data exchange between specialized agencies and the Statistics Division; new methodological guidelines and related plans for strengthening capacity on gender statistics; and the results of the global review of national gender statistics programmes at the country level. The Group agreed on its programme of work, which included preparations for the eighth meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert group on Gender Statistics and the fifth Global Forum on Gender Statistics, both of which would be convened from 2 to 5 November in Aguascalientes, Mexico.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the Secretary-General’s report on gender statistics.

International migration statistics

The Statistical Commission had before it a report [E/CN.3/2014/20] of the Secretary-General on migration statistics, which also summarized the activities of the Statistics Division and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and partner organizations to improve the collection and availability of statistics on international migration. Though international migration was at the forefront of the global agenda, the availability of data on the scope of migration and its impacts on development remained deficient. The report discussed

the three main sources of international migration statistics—population censuses, sample surveys and administrative records—and gave an overview of the availability of statistics on the stock of international migrants and on migration flows. It also discussed barriers that prevented migration data from being shared at the international level, noting there was an absence of coordination mechanisms among different national agencies involved in producing migration data, which resulted in a lack of consistency in the definitions used and the comparability of the statistics, as well as in their limited dissemination. To improve the quality of data on international migration and promote the application of common definitions and concepts by countries, the Statistics Division issued publications such as the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2*, and the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs developed the Global Migration Database, which produced estimates of migrant stock disaggregated by age, sex, origin and destination for 232 countries and areas in the world.

The Secretary-General noted that initiatives for the collection, production or analysis of migration-related data and statistics were conducted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Economic Commission for Europe; World Bank; International Labour Organization; United Nations Children’s Fund; and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Global Migration Group, an inter-agency group comprising 15 UN entities and the International Organization for Migration, hosted a working group on data and research to promote cooperation and reduce the duplication of effort. Given the heightened attention of Member States to addressing migration challenges at the national, regional and global levels, the report suggested that the international statistical community establish a capacity-development programme to improve the collection, processing and analysis of migration data for policy planning. Such a programme could address all the preexisting sources of migration data listed in the report.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the Secretary-General’s report.

Cultural statistics

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission the report [E/CN.3/2014/21] of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on selected activities of its cultural statistics programme. The Institute was implementing the new global survey of cultural employment statistics, with the purpose of collecting internationally comparable data on cultural employment and producing the first global database

of cultural employment statistics and indicators to support the work of countries, policymakers and other stakeholders. The survey would likely be administered on a biennial basis and respondents would primarily be national statistical offices. The Institute anticipated launching the first global collection of cultural employment statistics in the third quarter of 2015. The report also discussed the global implementation of the 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics, focusing on two principal capacity-building activities: production of the handbook series and the programme of training workshops. The Institute continued its work on producing two handbooks for publication by 2015: *Measuring the Economic Contribution of Cultural Industries: A Case Study of Serbia* and *Festival Statistics: Key Concepts and Current Practices*. The report noted that seven training workshops attended by 247 people were held from 2007 to 2013, with more being planned, particularly for the regions of Latin America and the Arab States. The objectives of the workshops were to provide training on cultural statistics topics, use and implementation of the UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics and to support the development of professional networks in cultural statistics.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the report.

Human settlements statistics

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/17] of the United Nations Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) on human settlements statistics, which presented a methodology developed by UN-Habitat and partners to measure security of tenure, especially in urban areas, in a consistent manner across countries and regions. The report discussed progress achieved in the development of the method for monitoring security of tenure at three levels: people, land and policies. The measurement of security of tenure at the level of people could be done through stand-alone household surveys, such as the Urban Inequities Survey, or through existing surveys, such as the Demographic and Health Survey and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. Both of those types of survey were based on a representative sample that allowed a quantitative estimate of tenure security. Security of tenure at the land level could be achieved through community-based surveys, which could be mapped, assessed, evaluated and analysed. Assessments at the land/settlement level should cover specific information on the land's legal history; the land's current jurisdictional situation; the geographical dimension of land tenure; and the harmony between plans and actual land use patterns. To monitor security of tenure at the policy level, UN-Habitat developed the Legal and Institutional Framework Index and two indicators. The Index was meant to produce qualitative results, and the overall score attained at the end of

the process was a subjective assessment that had to be supplemented by household and community surveys. The report concluded that the combination of all the instruments would provide integrated information related to secure tenure, and the use of the methodology by national statistical offices would contribute to better monitoring of the security of tenure in cities.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the report.

Economic statistics

National accounts

The Statistical Commission had before it the report [E/CN.3/2014/5] of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts, which discussed progress on the changeover to the *System of National Accounts 2008* (2008 SNA) [YUN 2008, p. 1380]; guidance on 2008 SNA implementation issues, including from the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts; activities of the Working Group and of the regional commissions; and the reporting of national accounts data. The Working Group discussed its initiation of manuals and handbooks to strengthen statistical capacity for compiling national accounts. Four such publications were completed in 2013 and annexed to the report was a list of publications that were planned or in progress. The translation of the 2008 SNA from English into the five remaining official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish) had been completed and all language versions were available in electronic format on the Working Group's website. The Working Group also reported that despite progress in some countries, many developing countries were still a long way from adjusting their collections of economic statistics with a view to implementing the 2008 SNA with enough scope, detail and quality. Many of those countries needed technical assistance in adopting an integrated statistics programme in support of the implementation and the Working Group expressed the view that the Commission may establish a Friends of the Chair group to formulate a response to the need for scaling up capacity-building at the country level. The Friends of the Chair group could establish the modalities for a statistics programme focused on supporting accelerated SNA implementation by overcoming national issues in producing internationally comparable macroeconomic accounts.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/104)], the Commission endorsed the programme of work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts; appreciated the progress on the manuals, handbooks and guidelines that facilitated implementation of the 2008 SNA; recognized that scaling up the coordination, advocacy and resources for implementation of the

2008 SNA at the national level required an integrated statistics approach; expressed the need for technical assistance to many developing countries in adopting an integrated statistics programme in support of that implementation; recognized that countries should take ownership of actions strengthening the statistical production process, institutional arrangements and a communication strategy with users; and supported the formation of a Friends of the Chair group to work out the modalities for establishing a harmonized integrated statistics programme.

Energy statistics

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission the report [E/CN.3/2014/23] of the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics, which described the Group's activities during the period 2011–2013. With the adoption in February 2011 of the Statistical Commission's international recommendations for energy statistics, the Oslo Group focused on the drafting of the Energy Statistics Compilers Manual, which was intended to provide practical guidance in the implementation of the forthcoming System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Energy (SEEA-Energy). Through country examples, the Manual would illustrate country practices regarding topics such as institutional arrangements, data collection, data compilation, energy indicators and quality assurance. The target audience would be statisticians involved in the process of establishing, developing or improving their energy statistics, and statisticians who regularly collected and compiled energy statistics and were interested in learning about other techniques to compile the information needed. The Group held three meetings and one virtual meeting in the period under review. The Manual was expected to be finalized in the first half of 2014 and would thereafter be subjected to regular updates. Annexed to the report was the workplan for the Group's future activities.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the report.

Tourism statistics

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/25] of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on tourism statistics. The report described the process of developing and completing the compilation guide for *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008* and outlined the main parts of the guide. It also provided an overview of the work undertaken to implement the recommendations by UNWTO in cooperation with countries and international organizations since its previous report to the Statistical Commission [YUN 2011, p. 1219].

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Statistical Commission took note of the report.

Short-term economic indicators

The Statistical Commission had before it a report [E/CN.3/2014/27] of the Secretary-General on short-term economic statistics. The report described the joint initiatives of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Statistical Office of the European Commission, in collaboration with Statistics Canada, Statistics Italy, Statistics Netherlands and the Russian Federal State Statistics Service for implementation of the international programme of work on short-term economic statistics endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its forty-second (2011) session [YUN 2011, p. 1220]. The international programme was comprised of four themes, namely, business cycle composite indicators, economic tendency surveys, rapid estimates, and data template and analytical indicators. With a view to providing guidance, best practices and harmonized principles to States in compiling and reporting internationally comparable short-term statistics, the preparation of handbooks on those themes was in progress and being carried out by working groups constituted for that purpose. The report discussed the progress of the work and noted that the handbooks were expected to be finalized by the end of 2014.

The Statistical Commission took note of the report on 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)].

Agricultural statistics

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Committee a report [E/CN.3/2014/22] of the Global Steering Committee on the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The report covered four items: governance and resource mobilization; implementation of Global Office activities; implementation of activities at the regional level; and the way forward and priorities for 2014.

At the global governance level, two Global Steering Committee meetings were held in 2013 and decisions were taken on a regional action plan for Asia and the Pacific; the revision of the integrated budget; the no-cost extension of the global action plan up to December 2017; and a proposal for revising the monitoring and evaluation framework. There was also progress in the establishment of the Global Office. At the regional level, the Regional Steering Committee for Africa held its fourth meeting in 2013; the Regional Steering Committee for Asia and the Pacific was constituted and met twice; and the Regional Steering Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean was established and met once. Regarding the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Western Asia regions, a mandate was given to prepare a regional action plan and establish mechanisms of governance. On resource mobilization, the total sums pledged as at the first week of December 2014 amounted to \$51 million, leaving

a funding gap of \$32 million. Additional resource mobilization efforts were needed for the underfunded regions, namely Latin American and the Caribbean, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Western Asia. The Global Trust Fund was operational, with efforts in 2013 to consolidate the partnership programme. Progress was made in the implementation of activities at the Global Office level, particularly on the research component of the Global Strategy; the production of guidelines and training material; and coordination with other initiatives. The implementation of activities at the regional level focused in Africa on the country assessment process, including by follow-up missions and the adaptation to the African context of the questionnaire to assess statistical capacity and needs. In Asia and the Pacific, the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics was endorsed in 2013, and country assessments commenced in four of the eight priority countries identified, namely Bhutan, Indonesia, Samoa and Sri Lanka. In other regions, the draft regional action plan for Latin America and the Caribbean was under review for final submission; country assessment questionnaires were sent out in Western Asia and the results presented at a validation workshop in December 2013 in Jordan; and a draft regional action plan for the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States was prepared and discussed in Sochi, Russian Federation.

The Commission took note of the report on 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 44/116)].

International trade statistics

The Secretary-General submitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/7] of the Friends of the Chair group on the measurement of international trade and economic globalization. The group, established at the forty-fourth (2013) session of the Statistical Commission [YUN 2013, p. 1263], was tasked with preparing a concept paper on the measurement framework for international trade and economic globalization and on the coordination of work in that area. The report set out the main elements of the measurement framework in terms of scope and overview of measurement issues and made a proposal for moving forward.

A draft concept paper had been prepared and submitted to the Friends of the Chair group at its meeting in November 2013, but it still needed to be completed around a detailed schematic framework. With consideration of the required next steps, the group concluded that one more year would be needed to finalize a comprehensive concept paper. It agreed to organize a conference in the third quarter of 2014, at which the draft could be presented again and working groups could present their outcomes. The group proposed that a conceptual framework, prioritized programme of work and corresponding coordination mechanism be presented to the Commission at its forty-sixth (2015) session.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/106)], the Statistical Commission reiterated the importance of obtaining more clarity in the complex measurement issues of cross-border economic relations and requested the Friends of the Chair group to pay special attention to issues such as discrepancies in mirror statistics; institutional arrangements among data-compiling agencies; the legal aspects of sharing microdata; the complexities of obtaining information on the activities of multinational enterprises; the informal cross-border trade; the role of small and medium-sized enterprises; the data sources for global input-output tables; and the importance and peculiarities of measuring intraregional trade and the relation of this work to the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Assistance for Least Developed Countries. It further requested that the proposed conceptual framework be consistent with the existing framework of the System of National Accounts; and that the group do a cost-benefit analysis of any recommendation requiring additional data sources, especially additional surveys, and thus creating an additional burden to respondents. The Commission agreed with the group's proposal regarding the overall scope of the conceptual framework and the schematic framework as an instrument for classifying the measurement issues; and agreed with the group's proposal to continue its preparation of the concept paper on the measurement of international trade and economic globalization and to submit a report, including the conceptual framework, programme of work and coordination mechanism, to the Commission's forty-sixth (2015) session.

International Comparison Programme

The Secretary-General transmitted a report [E/CN.3/2014/9] of the World Bank on behalf of the Executive Board of the International Comparison Programme (ICP), which updated the Statistical Commission on the status of implementation of the 2011 round of ICP. The report covered governance activities; the computation process of the 2011 estimates; the schedule of publication of the 2011 results; knowledge material for the 2011 round; the communication strategy and outreach activities; and the policy for revision of purchasing power parity (PPP) statistics. The Commission was requested to establish an ICP friends of the Chair group to carry out the evaluation of the 2011 round.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/108)], the Statistical Commission appreciated the Executive Board's agreement that the ICP 2011 results were ready for publication and supported the two-staged approach for releasing summary results along with key documentation by 30 April 2014, followed by a report that would include the full set of results and more comprehensive documentation in the summer of 2014. It also agreed to establish the Friends of the Chair group to carry out

the evaluation of the 2011 round and prepare an initial report for review at the Commission's forty-sixth (2015) session; and recognized the need to develop a new methodology and shorten the interval between ICP rounds in the future.

Statistics of international trade in services

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/24] that highlighted the development of the Compilers Guide for the *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010* and presented the Guide's main parts. The report also described the work of the United Nations Expert Group on the Compilation of Statistics of International Trade in Service and the accomplishments of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services. The Expert Group had agreed that the draft Compilers Guide was of sufficient quality to be made available as an electronic document for use by compilers and submitted to the Commission at its forty-fifth (2014) session, with the understanding that the draft version would then be finalized and prepared for issuance in print within a reasonable time frame.

The Commission took note of the report on 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)].

Price indices

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/26] of the Ottawa Group on Price Indices. Since its last report in 2012 [YUN 2012, p. 1247], the Group held one meeting (Copenhagen, Denmark, 1–3 May 2013), where it continued to focus on fundamental problems of price measurement and various concepts, methods and compilation procedures for price indices. Discussion topics included residential and commercial property price indices, measuring services prices, new developments in calculation and weighting methodologies, developments in the use of transactions (scanner) data, developments of seasonal adjustment and other analytical price measures, and international comparability of price indices and other international comparisons.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the report.

Information and communications technology statistics

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/8] that gave an overview of work on information and communications technology (ICT) statistics by the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technology for Development. That included new work on measuring gender and ICT, electronic waste and trade in ICT services and ICT-enabled services; the final assessment

of progress on the targets of the World Summit on the Information Society; the revised *Manual for Measuring ICT Access and Use by Households and Individuals*; and revisions to the core list of ICT indicators. On the latter, the report concluded that it was critical to review and update the core list of ICT indicators on a regular basis and to develop new indicators where necessary. The report also highlighted the challenges faced by statistical offices in enhancing the quality and availability of ICT statistics, including the increasing number of data producers and the variety of ICT data sources, and provided suggestions on strengthening national coordination in that matter. In particular, it recommended the establishment of coordination mechanisms between relevant institutions at the national level, such as statistical offices, telecommunication regulatory authorities and ministries responsible for ICT policies.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/107)], the Commission agreed with the recommendations in the report on approaches to improve the availability and quality of ICT statistics and encouraged countries to increase national coordination in that area; endorsed the revised core list of ICT indicators and asked for its wide circulation; and asked the Partnership to continue reviewing the indicators in light of rapid technological advances and widespread use of ICT.

Natural resources and environment statistics

Environment statistics

The Secretary-General reported [E/CN.3/2014/28] on progress in the implementation of the Framework for the Development of Environmental Statistics since its endorsement by the Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth (2013) session [YUN 2013, p. 1265], and the plans for 2014–2015. The report covered the main areas in the plan of action for implementing the Framework, including the establishment of the Expert Group on Environmental Statistics and its work programme; the development of methodological and training material; training and capacity-building; and advocacy and networking.

The Commission took note of the report on 7 March (E/2014/24 [dec. 45/116]).

Environmental-economic accounting

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/6] of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, which described the Committee's progress on the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA); progress on the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework; efforts to promote and advance the research agenda of the Central Framework; and the testing and advancement

of the research agenda of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/105)], the Commission agreed to establish a technical committee on the SEEA Central Framework responsible for advancing its research agenda; stressed the importance of linking the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework with that of the *System of National Accounts 2008* (see p. 000), agreed to establish a technical committee on the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting to advance its research and testing agenda; and requested that the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting and the SEEA Applications and Extensions be issued and translated it into the UN official languages.

Other activities

Indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals

The Statistical Commission had before it a report [E/CN.3/2014/29] of the Secretary-General on the work of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal Indicators and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2013 in the following areas: lessons learned from monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); improving the methodology for monitoring progress towards achievement of the MDGs; and strengthening statistical capacity-building for national monitoring. The report also gave an assessment of the availability of data to monitor progress towards achievement of the MDGs and described the preparation of the yearly progress reports.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of Secretary-General's report.

Measurement of economic performance and social progress

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/4] of the Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress, which took stock of current national, regional and international practices in that area and considered how to achieve a technically solid and globally agreed set of measures of progress. The group also discussed the issue of measuring and monitoring the goals of the post-2015 development agenda by reviewing existing proposals, elaborating on the need for an integrated and robust measurement approach and identifying critical elements for the implementation of a new monitoring framework. A separate section contained key messages for policymakers; proposals for the further involvement of official statisticians in the ongoing debate and processes towards a post-2015 development agenda; and proposals for continuing the work programme on broader measures of progress.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/103)], the Commission requested the Friends of the Chair to continue to provide statistical support for the post-2015 development agenda in order to ensure that statistical considerations were appropriately taken into account; to engage in the debate on the data revolution; to address the need for the development of new data sources and methodologies resulting from the requirements of the post-2015 development agenda; suggested that the Friends of the Chair group include in its future work the issue of household surveys and their critical role in providing data for the post-2015 development agenda; endorsed the work programme of the group, including the development of an implementation framework for monitoring and measurement, in partnership with countries, regional and international organizations, and other stakeholders and donors; and requested the group to report to the Commission at its forty-sixth (2015) session.

Big data and modernization of statistical systems

The Statistical Commission had before it a report [E/CN.3/2014/11] of the Secretary-General that assessed the current use of big data for official statistics, providing an overview of recent activities of the official statistical community and the results of the global assessment on the use of big data for official statistics conducted by the Statistics Division in 2013. The report explored the creation of a working group at the global level that would build on regional initiatives for sharing methodological developments, best practices for strategic issues and training opportunities. The working group would also facilitate international partnership for the use of big data in the transfer of technology to developing countries and in support of the post-2015 development agenda.

On March 7 [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/110)], the Commission supported the proposal to create a global working group on the use of big data for official statistics and requested that the terms of reference and mandate of the working group be based on strategic considerations, that the working group's programme of work avoid duplication of the work carried out by the regional commissions and to pay special attention to the circumstances of developing countries. The Commission requested that the working group make an inventory of ongoing activities and concrete examples of the use of big data for official statistics at the regional, sub-regional and national levels; address the concerns of methodology, standards and norms, human resources, research, training, quality, volatility and, with priority, confidentiality, access to data and legislation related to big data; develop guidelines to classify the various types of big data sources and approaches; develop methodological guidelines for big data; and report to the Commission at its forty-sixth (2015) session.

Publications of the Statistical Division

The Statistical Commission had before it a report [E/CN.3/2014/12] of the Secretary-General that provided an overview of the publications programme of the Statistics Division. The report discussed the challenges faced by the Division in continuing to deliver publications, in the most efficient and cost-effective manner, to national and international statistical agency stakeholders in the formats and languages they needed and preferred. Annexed to the report was a list of Statistics Division publications planned for 2014–2015.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/111)], the Commission supported the idea of a comprehensive review of the Division's publication and dissemination strategy with a view to reorienting it towards electronic modes of publication with a reduction of print publications to a minimum for countries with special needs and those who request them. It also insisted that high-quality translations of methodological publications into all official UN languages were critical for the implementation of global statistical norms and standards and for national capacity-building, and requested that such translations were made available and disseminated in print, when requested by countries.

Regional statistical development

The Statistical Commission had before it a report [E/CN.3/2014/15] of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on statistics and the post-2015 development agenda. The report outlined the progress made in recent years to strengthen statistics through regional cooperation under the auspices of the Committee on Statistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. It conveyed the view of the statistical community in Asia and the Pacific that the post-2015 development agenda process, while presenting challenges to national statistical systems, offered an opportunity to place statistics as a development imperative at the centre of good governance, transparency and accountability.

On 7 March [E/CN.3/2014/15 (dec. 45/114)], the Commission noted the differences in the statistical capacities of the countries in the region, and stressed the importance of developing the statistical systems in countries with very limited capacities to meet at least the minimum requirements of the post-2015 development agenda; stressed the importance of high-quality statistics as a tool for accountability and good governance; and called for the development of better measures of statistical development, in cooperation with subregional statistical forums such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Group on Statistics.

Implementation of Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/2] of the Friends of the Chair group on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, adopted in 1994 [YUN 1994, p. 1265]. The report described the group's work leading to the Economic and Social Council's adoption of a resolution that both endorsed the Fundamental Principles and recommended them to the General Assembly for endorsement [YUN 2013, p. 1266]. The report discussed consultations conducted by the group on the formulation of guidelines on how to strengthen implementation of the Principles; and provided eight recommendations on which the Commission was invited to comment. Draft guidelines developed by the group were presented to the Commission as a background document.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/101)], the Statistical Commission supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Friends of the Chair group; welcomed the first draft of the implementation guidelines and asked the group to continue its work on that document; requested the UN Statistics Division to make the completed implementation guidelines available on an improved website dedicated to the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics; stressed the importance of national legislation to anchor the Fundamental Principles in countries; agreed with the need of continued monitoring of the implementation of the Principles at the national, regional and global levels; and underlined that the endorsement by the General Assembly (see below) provided a positive impetus to increase the visibility and enhance the understanding and awareness of the Fundamental Principles by bringing them to the attention of politicians, other data providers and the private sector.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 29 January [meeting 73], the General Assembly adopted **resolution 68/261** [A/68/L.36 & Add.1] without vote [agenda item 9].

Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

The General Assembly,

Recalling recent resolutions 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 1994 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 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.

Coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations

The Commission had before it a report [E/CN.3/2014/13] of the Friends of the Chair on the coordination of statistical activities in the UN system, which described the activities and discussions of the group, elaborated various aspects of coordination and provided recommendations for improved coordination within the UN system. Two related background documents provided a description of the statistical units of the UN system and their respective work programmes, and a long-term vision for effective global data collection, data sharing and dissemination, respectively.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/112)], the Commission stressed the importance of effective coordination among the agencies of the UN system and the national statistical offices, especially in the area of data-sharing; supported the long-term vision for an effective global data-collection mechanism; and endorsed the proposal that the UN chief statisticians hold regular meetings, follow up on the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair and report back to the Commission.

Coordination and integration of statistical programmes

The Statistical Commission had before it a report [E/CN.3/2014/32] of the Secretary-General on the work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, which summarized the conclusions of the Committee's twenty-first (New York, 25 February 2013) and twenty-second (Ankara, Turkey, 4–6 September 2013) sessions. Subjects discussed included the post-2015 development agenda and statistical capacity-building; principles governing international statistical activities; national quality assurance frameworks; health statistics; recommended practices on the use of non-official sources in international statistics; and new approaches for data collection, analyses and dissemination.

The Commission took note of the report on 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)].

World Statistics Day

The Statistical Commission had before it a report [E/CN.3/2014/14] of the Secretary-General with a proposal to organize World Statistics Day on 20 October 2015 under the theme "Statistics for better decision-making—statistics for better development". The report noted that as a result of the success of the celebration of the first World Statistics Day in 2010 [YUN 2010, p. 1269], the Commission, at its forty-third (2012) session, had confirmed the recommendation of its Bureau that World Statistics Day be celebrated

every five years, with the next observance occurring in 2015 [YUN 2012, p. 1250].

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/113)], the Commission proposed to celebrate the next World Statistics Day on 20 October 2015; agreed with the general theme for the next World Statistics Day: “Statistics for better decision-making—statistics for better development/life”, but requested the Bureau to finalize the wording of the exact slogan in consultation with communications experts; requested the Bureau to initiate and support the submission of a draft resolution to the General Assembly on World Statistics Day 2015; and requested the UN Statistics Division to provide support to countries, regional and supranational organizations and thematic-oriented institutions in observance of World Statistics Day 2015.

Follow-up to General Assembly and Economic and Social Council policy decisions

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/33] on policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council adopted in 2013 and earlier that were relevant to the work of the Commission. The policy decisions concerned follow-up to the MDGs; response to the Rio+20 mandate for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product; global geospatial information management; follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions on strengthening national capacity in statistics and on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme; improving the collection, reporting and analysis of data on migration and people with disabilities; the multi-year programme of work for the annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council; and strengthening the Economic and Social Council. The report also indicated actions taken and proposed by the Commission and the Statistics Division in response to requests by the Council and the Assembly.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the report.

Global geospatial information management

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a report [E/CN.3/2014/31 & Corr.1] of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, which provided information on the establishment of the Expert Group and summarized the issues discussed at its first meeting (New York, 30 October–1 November 2013). It outlined the main outcomes and recommendations from that meeting, including the proposal to organize an international conference on the integration of statistical and geospatial information in New York in August

2014, in conjunction with the fourth (2014) session of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the report.

Efforts in developing a plan of action on statistical development

The Secretary-General transmitted to the Statistical Commission a progress report [E/CN.3/2014/30] of the World Bank and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century on the development of a plan of action on statistical development, as agreed at the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Busan, Republic of Korea, 29 November–1 December 2011). The plan aimed to fully integrate statistics in decision-making; promote open access to statistics; and increase resources for statistical systems. To achieve its objectives, the Busan Action Plan for Statistics outlined the following five steps to strengthen national statistical systems in developing countries and increase the effectiveness of support provided by development partners: strengthen and refocus national and regional statistical strategies; implement standards for data preservation, documentation and dissemination; develop programmes to increase knowledge and skills to use statistics for planning, analysis, monitoring and evaluation; build and maintain results-monitoring instruments to track the outcomes of global summits and high-level forums; and ensure robust financing for statistical information and that funding instruments and approaches reflect the new modalities and actors in development finance.

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/116)], the Commission took note of the report.

Programme questions

On 7 March [E/2014/24 (dec. 45/115)], the Statistical Commission took note of the oral report by the Acting Director of the United Nations Statistics Division concerning the Division’s activities, plans and priorities, particularly the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2016–2017, which had been circulated in a background paper. On the same date, the Commission approved its draft 2014–2018 multi-year programme of work [E/CN.3/2014/34], and the provisional agenda and documentation for its forty-sixth session, to be held in New York from 3 to 6 March 2015.