

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES ¹

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 Chief Statisticians or coordinators of statistical activities of United Nations agencies and international and supranational organizations assembled in the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, 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

Good practices include:

- Having regular consultations with key users both inside and outside the organisation to ascertain that their needs are met
- Periodic review of statistical programmes to ensure their relevance
- Defining a strategy and data quality policy for the use of Open Data¹ and Big Data² - as it applies to international statistics
- Providing equal access to detailed statistics for all users; in particular, ensuring that new statistical releases are made accessible to all users at the same time while pre-release access to specific users should be limited, controlled and made transparent Ensuring free and open public access to key statistics
- Using a variety of communication channels and ICT tools to publicise data products, make users aware of them and reach different audiences (e.g. press releases, articles, social media, apps stores, alert messaging and notification or traditional communication channels like new publications etc.)
- Developing different modalities for data access and data dissemination, including various formats for data and metadata downloads

¹ "Open data" is understood to mean data that are made available to the public free of charge, without registration or restrictive licenses, for any purpose whatsoever (including commercial purposes), in electronic, machine-readable formats that are easy to find, download and use.

² Big Data is understood to be data sources with a high volume, velocity and variety of data.

2) To maintain the trust in international statistics, their production is to be impartial and strictly based on the highest professional standards

Good practices include:

- Adopting, advocating, publicly committing to and applying professional codes of conduct, such as the ISI Declaration on Professional Ethics
- Using strictly professional considerations for decisions on methodology, terminology, data dissemination and presentation
- Using the best national data sources in compiling International Statistics, be they official or non-official sources, following the Recommended Practices on the Use of Non-Official Sources in International Statistics
- Making a clear distinction, in statistical publications, between statistical and analytical comments on the one hand and policy-prescriptive and advocacy comments on the other
- Ensuring that all statistics published by the organisation are endorsed by the established internal statistics governance mechanism
- Having a published policy ensuring that statistical functions must be impartial, based on professional standards, and independent from political influence

3) The public has a right to be informed about the mandates for the statistical work of the organisations

Good practices include:

- Making decisions about statistical work programmes publicly available through various media channels
- Making documents for and reports of statistical meetings, statistical capacity building initiatives, and technical assistance projects publicly available through various media channels
- Making publicly available the statistical work plan and budget reviewed and formally endorsed by the organisation's governing bodies

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

Good practices include:

- Adopting a quality assurance framework for the organisation
- Striving continuously to improve the quality and transparency of statistics by introducing methodological and systems innovations
- Enhancing the professional competency of staff by encouraging them to attend training courses, to publish scientific papers and to participate in seminars and conferences
- Documenting and publishing concepts, definitions, classifications and metadata used by the organisation
- Documenting how data are collected, processed and disseminated by the organisation (including information about editing mechanisms applied to country data³ and aggregation methods to calculate regional and global estimates)
- Giving credit, in the dissemination of international statistics, to the original source and using agreed quotation standards when reusing statistics originally collected by others

³ "Country data" refer to data collected from countries, territories or any other relevant area and the term "country" is used as short form.

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

Good practices include:

- Facilitating the provision of data from traditional and emerging sources by countries/constituencies by offering different data collection modalities
- Working systematically towards minimising the time lag between the reference period and the publication date of international statistics
- Reviewing periodically statistical procedures in order to minimise the burden on data providers
- Sharing collected data with other organisations and collecting data jointly where appropriate
- Publishing data collection plans, questionnaires, data release calendars and a list of organisational focal points for each data domain
- Having mechanisms in place to consult countries to address discrepancies between national and international statistics
- Having mechanisms in place to promote the use of the most suitable methods and sources by national statistical offices and other national organisations

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

Good practices include:

- Putting measures in place to prevent the direct or indirect disclosure of data on persons, households, businesses and other individual respondents
- Developing and implementing a framework describing methods and procedures to provide sets of anonymous micro-data and associated data documentation for further analysis by bona fide researchers, maintaining the requirements of confidentiality

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

Good practices include:

- Responding appropriately to perceived erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics
- Enhancing the appropriate use of statistics by increasing statistical literacy for important user groups where needed, e.g. through the development of educational material
- Establishing various communication channels (help desk function, user forum, social media, etc.) to report misuse and answer user requests for clarification

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

Good practices include:

- Systematically involving national statistical organisations, departments and other official statisticians in the development of international statistical standards, including good practices and guidelines for implementation
- Ensuring that decisions on such standards are free from conflicts of interest and from political influence
- Advising countries/constituencies on good practices in the implementation of international standards
- Monitoring the implementation of agreed standards

9) Coordination of international statistical programmes is essential to strengthen the quality, coherence and governance

Good practices include:

- Designating clear responsibilities within the organisation to coordinate and implement statistical programmes, and represent the organisation in international statistical meetings
- Participating in international statistical meetings and bilateral and multilateral consultations whenever necessary
- Working systematically towards achieving international agreements about common concepts, classifications, standards and methods
- Working systematically towards achieving international agreements about which sources should be considered as authoritative for each important set of statistics
- Coordinating technical cooperation and capacity building activities with national and international partners to avoid duplication of effort and to encourage complementarities and synergies
- Establishing internal coordination mechanisms, which facilitate the discussion of responsibilities, methodologies, concepts, and common standards

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

Good practices include:

- Cooperating and sharing knowledge among international organisations and with countries and regions to further develop national and regional statistical systems
- Ensuring that technical cooperation projects are demand-driven based on user requirements and encourage full participation of the main stakeholders
- Ensuring that technical cooperation projects take into consideration local circumstances and the stage of national statistical development
- Empowering national statistical systems and governments institutional capacity development
- Advocating the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in countries/constituencies and promoting a review of progress over time
- Involving relevant national statistical institutions when undertaking new surveys

¹ Text of the preamble as amended at the 23rd Session on 3 March 2014. Text of the "good practices" as amended at the 27th session on 7 March 2016. Previous text can be found: [here](#)