

**COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF  
INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES**

**WORKING SESSION ON BEST PRACTICES IN STATISTICS  
SINGAPORE, JANUARY 12-14, 1999**

**REPORT TO THE UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION**

1. At its 29th session in 1997, the United Nations Statistical Commission discussed the need to supplement the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics<sup>1</sup> with a code of good practices, the main purpose of which would be to assist Heads of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in their efforts to discharge their responsibilities.
2. At a meeting held in Prague in March 1998, the consensus was that, while a code of behavior would be too prescriptive given the diversity of circumstances, a collection of country experiences relating to the implementation of the Fundamental Principles was desirable.
3. The work was carried forward during a meeting in Singapore on 12-14 January 1999. The meeting had a broad geographic representation and included representatives from NSOs, central banks, and ministries of finance (see annex).
4. Following a review of the significance and historical context of the Fundamental Principles and of the conclusions reached in Prague, the group decided to focus on the development of two products--a document and a referral system. The purpose of these complementary products would be (i) to improve the understanding of the Fundamental Principles, (ii) to promote the awareness of the Fundamental Principles to a wide range of producers of official statistics, and (iii) to assist in the implementation of the Fundamental Principles.
5. It was agreed that there was a need for a concise document, which should be widely available both through the Internet and in conventional printed format. The document should clarify the Fundamental Principles, explain its objectives, and elaborate on its elements, using examples of country practices that implement the Fundamental Principles. The group

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<sup>1</sup>UN Economic and Social Council, 1994, Report of the Special Session of the Statistical Commission (New York, 11-15, April 1994), E/1994/29.

suggested that particular experts from its ranks, with the help of a panel of friends, could start the process with an initial draft drawing on existing material and the development of a classification system required to link the contents of the document with the proposed referral system. The group emphasized that the number of drafters should be small.

6. It was noted that the document should be addressed to NSOs as well as other providers of official statistics. The group emphasized that consultative procedures should be put in place to develop a document to reflect the needs of different countries and statistical agencies as well as concerns of users. It was stressed that all providers of official statistics--e.g., NSOs, central banks, and relevant ministries--should be brought into the process at an early stage. In this connection, (i) UN regional commissions would play a critical role in insuring that NSO views were obtained, (ii) the IMF Statistics Department, drawing on its wide range of working relations, would play a critical role in insuring that central banks' and finance ministries' views were obtained, and (iii) specialized agencies may be helpful.

7. The group recognized the impediments to the implementation of the Fundamental Principles caused by the inability to have access to all materials in all official languages. It emphasized the need for the document and the referral system to be in all UN official languages.

8. The group recommended that the UNSD develop a framework for a website, including an appropriate search engine, that would feature the document described above and serve as a referral system for relevant country practices. This referral system could function both electronically through hyperlinks to national websites and, conventionally, including bibliographies and references to contact persons.

9. The Group recommended that the Statistical Commission, at its 30th session in March 1999, consider this report and instruct the Secretariat to proceed with its recommendations. The group expressed the hope that the work would proceed so that the document could be adopted at a subsequent session of the Statistical Commission.

ANNEX

WORKING SESSION ON BEST PRACTICES IN STATISTICS  
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Hosted by the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Statistics Division, in association with the Singapore Department of Statistics and the IMF-Singapore Regional Training Institute. Funding was provided, in part, by the Administered Account for Selected Fund Activities-Japan

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