



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.: LIMITED

ECA/DISD/STAT/IQAS/98/5
9 December 1998

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Regional Workshop on improving the quality of
African statistics for English-speaking countries

Addis Ababa
14 - 18 December 1998

Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Extracted from the report on the special session of the
United Nations Statistical Commission, held in New York
From 11 to 15 April 1994

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

The Commission considered item 6 of its agenda at its 473rd meeting, on 14 April 1994. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its sixteenth session (E/CN.3/1994/2);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the fundamental principles of official statistics (E/CN.3/1994/15).

In considering the report of the Working Group on the question (E/CN.3/1993/2), the Commission was informed of the outcome of the Round Table on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the Countries in Transition, held at Jachranka, Poland, from 26 to 29 September 1993.

Action taken by the Commission

The Commission adopted the fundamental principles of official statistics as set out in ECE decision C (47), but incorporating a revised preamble. The preamble and principles, as adopted, are set out below:

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

The Statistical Commission,

Bearing in mind that official statistical information is an essential basis for development in the economic, demographic, social and environmental fields and for mutual knowledge and trade among the States and peoples of the world,

Bearing in mind that the essential trust of the public in official statistical information depends to a large extent on respect for the fundamental value and principles which are the basis of any society which seeks to understand itself and to respect the rights of its members,

Bearing in mind that the quality of official statistics, and thus the quality of the information available to the Government, the economy and the public depends largely on the cooperation of citizens, enterprises, and other respondents in providing appropriate and reliable data needed for necessary statistical compilations and on the cooperation between users and producers of statistics in order to meet user's needs,

Recalling the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations active in statistics to establish standards and concepts to allow comparisons among countries.

Recalling also the International Statistical Institute Declaration of Professional Ethics,

Having expressed the opinion that resolution C (47), adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe on 15 April 1992, is of universal significance,

Noting that, at its eight session, held at Bangkok in November 1993, the Working Group of Statistical Experts, assigned by the Committee on Statistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to examine the Fundamental Principles, had agreed in principle to the ECE version and had emphasized that those principles were applicable to all nations,

Noting also that, at its eight session, held at Addis Ababa in March 1994, the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers, considered that the Fundamental Principles of Official statistics are of universal significance,

Adopts the present principles of official statistics:

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.

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 collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.

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.

4 The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.

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, cost and the burden on respondents.

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.

7 The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.

8 Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.

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.

10 Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.