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Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Preamble

The Statistical Commission,

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

- Bearing in mind that the essential trust of the public in official statistical information depends in large extent on respect for the fundamental values and principles which are the basis of any society and on the cooperation between users and producers of statistics in order to meet users' requirements,

- Recalling the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations active in statistical work to raise standards and concepts to allow comparisons among countries,

- Recalling also the International Statistical Institute Declaration of Professional Ethics, adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe on 15 April 1992, is of universal significance,

- Noting that, at its eighth session, held in Bangkok in November 1993, the Working Group of 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 emphasized that those principles were applicable to all nations,

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

Adopts the present principles of official statistics:

Principle 1. Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a society, serving the Government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practicality should be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honor the public's entitlement to public information.

Principle 2. To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to 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 disseminate information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of their work.

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 surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, costs and the burden on respondents.

Principle 6. Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether from 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 should be fair and equitable to the public.

Principle 8. Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve 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 official statistics in all countries.