

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS*

The General Assembly

Recalling recent resolutions¹ 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 1994² and reaffirmed in 2013, and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2013/21 of 24 July 2013:

Principle 1: Relevance, Impartiality, and Equal Access

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.

* General Assembly Resolution 68/261 adopted on 29 January 2014. The "titles" of the Principles are not part of the original text. ¹ These include General Assembly resolution 64/267 on World Statistics Day and Economic and Social Council resolutions 2005/13 on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, 2006/6 on strengthening statistical capacity and 2013/21 on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. ² For the original preamble used on the occasion of the initial adoption of the Fundamental Principles in 1994, see chapter V of the report of the Statistical Commission on its special session (Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 9 (E/1994/29)). More information on the Fundamental Principles and their history is available from the website of the Statistics Division.

Principle 2: Professional Standards, Scientific Principles, and Professional Ethics

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: Accountability and Transparency

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: Prevention of Misuse

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

Principle 5: Sources of Official Statistics

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: Confidentiality

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: Legislation

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

Principle 8: National Coordination

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

Principle 9: Use of International Standards

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: International Cooperation

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