

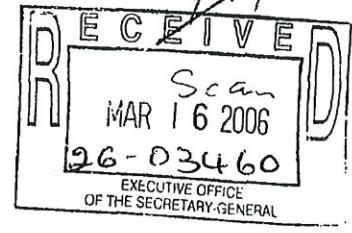
Mar. 16

ECOSOC

Note to the Secretary-General

UN1990

Y.M.



Subject: 37th session of the Statistical Commission


The Statistical Commission concluded its 37th session on 10 March, adopting by consensus its report and a draft resolution for action by ECOSOC. The draft resolution, on "**Strengthening Statistical Capacity**", draws attention to the serious lack of country data for meaningful monitoring of national and international development goals. It calls for intensified efforts to enhance national statistical capacity and seeks to further strengthen the coordination mandate of DESA's Statistics Division. The text has strong support within the professional community. Mission representatives were involved in the negotiations on some of the language, but mostly deferred to country experts. The resolution is expected to be adopted by ECOSOC in July.

The Commission also engaged in a lively debate on **development indicators** to monitor internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs. The Heads of National Statistical Offices who represent their countries in the Commission, expressed again their concern about the overburdening of Member States resulting from multiple, sometimes overlapping, data requests from international organizations. I undertook to pursue the matter within the CEB system. The Commission also called on international agencies to avoid imputations of country data, unless transparent methods are used and the concerned countries are duly consulted.

The Commission warmly welcomed the elaboration within the UN system of an explicit set of **professional principles and best practices** for the statistical activities of international agencies. Covering such issues as data quality, transparency of methods, confidentiality and equal access, they are in line with the principles adopted by Commission for national statistical offices 12 years ago, and will strengthen Member States' capacity to hold international agencies accountable. The Commission expressed satisfaction at DESA's lead role in developing these principles and in successfully soliciting the professional commitments of key agencies.

In line with its mandate as the apex body for the management of the global statistical system and for setting standards to ensure international comparability of nationally produced statistical data, the Commission adopted two new classification systems for industrial activities and products. The Commission also agreed to continue its technical work in the areas of basic economic statistics, census taking, environment and social statistics, which should lead to the development of new norms in these fields.

On the whole, it was a supportive, lively and productive session.


José Antonio Ocampo
16 March 2006

