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## **FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS, ENDORSED RECENTLY AT GLOBAL POLITICAL LEVEL**

**The UN Economic and Social Council endorsed on July 24, 2013 the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics**, with the recommendation that this autumn to be presented to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

It is significant that for the first time, the **Principles** - under which all official statistics should be produced, were approved at political level.

**The Statistical Principles** to be effective, have to be enshrined in the institutional frameworks that govern official statistical systems and be respected at all political levels and by all stakeholders in national statistical systems.

Through the Principles the fundamental importance of official statistics is highlighted for the national and global development agenda.

**The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics** are presented below as found on the website of the Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations:

- **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.

- **Professional standards and 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.

- **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.

- **Prevention of misuse**

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

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- **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.

- **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.

- **Legislation**

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

- **National coordination**

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

- **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.

- **International cooperation**

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

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**The Fundamental Principles** were developed under the Conference of European Statisticians and adopted at political level by the Economic Commission for Europe in 1992. In 1994, the Principles were adopted as a global standard by the UN Statistical Commission. Over the last two years, a Friends of the Chair Group at the UN Statistical Commission revised the preamble that accompagnes the principles and concluded that the principles remain as valid today as they were 20 years ago.

**There was a need to recognize the Principles at political level**, bearing in mind the critical role of high quality official statistical information in analysis and decision-making at political level in support of sustainable development, peace and security in world, as well as for mutual knowledge among the States and peoples of an increasingly connected world, demanding openness and transparency. The necessity of recognizing at political level went from the fact that essential trust of the public opinion in the integrity of official statistical systems and confidence in statistics depends to a large

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extent on respect for the fundamental values and principles that are the basis of any society that seeks to understand itself and respect the rights of its members.

In this context, the professional independence and the accountability of national statistical institutes are crucial.

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