



Drug Statistics – Practices and challenges in relation to data quality and the national capacity to produce drug statistics

*Joint Event by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the United Nations Statistical Commission
at the occasion of the reconvened 60th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs
7 December 2017*

Introduction

At the occasion of the reconvened 60th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, on 7 December 2017, a special event was organized by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the United Nations Statistical Commission, to discuss drugs statistics, in particular practices and challenges in relation to data quality and the national capacity to produce drug statistics. This special event was organized as part of a series of joint meetings between the sister and brother ECOSOC functional commissions, initiated by the Chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to enhance the horizontal cooperation on cross-cutting issues.

H.E. Ambassador Bente Angell-Hansen, Chair of the 60th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, hosted this joint event. Ms. Angela Me, Chief of the Research and Analysis Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, introduced the topic, followed by presentations by the panellists Ms. Aija Zigure, President of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, and Member of the Bureau of the United Nations Statistical Commission, and Mr. Mario Palma, Vice-president of the Board of Governors of the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).

Ambassador Angell-Hansen, in her opening remarks, highlighted that the availability of high-quality data on drugs was key to understanding the drug situation at the national, regional and global levels and represented a cornerstone of evidence-based policymaking and monitoring. Ambassador Angell-Hansen expressed her appreciation for the panellists for taking the time to come to Vienna, and stressed that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs was looking forward to further strengthening the collaboration between the two sister functional commissions of the ECOSOC.

The Chair recalled that the commitment to improving the availability and quality of statistics was not only reiterated in the UNGASS 2016 outcome document, but also in [CND resolution 60/1](#) entitled “Preparations for the sixty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2019”, with a view to strengthening the capacity to develop reporting mechanisms and exploring possibilities to strengthen existing data collection and analysis tools. In that regard, she underlined that the UNODC expert consultation organized by UNODC from 29-31 January 2018, would be an important first step to improve the annual report questionnaire (ARQ) and to discuss activities to support countries in the production of drug relevant statistics. Ambassador Angell-Hansen further briefly touched upon the [report on improving the quality and availability of drug statistics](#) prepared by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), considered at the 48th session of the Statistical Commission, and recommended for the consideration of the CND.

Ms. Angela Me, Chief of the Research and Analysis Branch of UNODC, responsible for the organization of the expert consultation early 2018 and involved in the work on the joint road map developed by INEGI and UNODC, focused in her introductory remarks, on the principles governing international statistical activities, representing a set of principles to guide the work of statistical activities on the international level. The principles that focus inter alia on the importance of high quality international statistics, accessible for all, as a fundamental element of global information systems, have been endorsed by a wide range of organizations within the United Nations system, including UNODC.

Ms. Aija Zīgure, President of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, represented the Bureau of the UN Statistical Commission and provided an overview of the structure and core activities of the UN Statistical Commission, which brings together Chief Statisticians from Member States from all around the world. In her capacity as President of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, and in line with the focus of the special event, Ms. Zīgure further spoke about the role national statistical offices can play in the field of drug statistics and how their involvement could be further enhanced, with drugs affecting a wide range of social and economic aspects that can be measured statistically. She highlighted that while national statistical offices were already well-involved in the production of drug statistics, they could in most cases play an even bigger role, bearing in mind a number of challenges they need to overcome given that drugs statistics are inevitably complicated by the clandestine nature of the activities related to drug supply and demand.

Linking the drugs statistics to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Ms. Zīgure highlighted that drug statistics can also play an important role contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as the drug problem was linked to the overall level of public health, covered by Goal 3, “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”.

Mr. Palma, Vice-president of the Board of Governors of the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) joined the special as panellist speaking from the perspective of a national statistical Office, in the case of INEGI an autonomous agency serving as producer of official statistics and coordinator of the National System of Information in Mexico. Mr. Palma, who was closely involved in the substantive preparatory work leading up to the 48th session of the Statistical Commission and the development of the joint UNODC INEGI report, highlighted that the joint roadmap, recommended for consideration by the CND, aimed to respond to the call made by Member States to enhance statistical information on drugs through a series of integrated objectives and activities.

In his presentation, Mr. Palma reported on national and international efforts to improve drug statistics, and in particular provided an insight into the efforts made and challenges faced by the Mexican National Institute in producing high-quality drugs-statistics, including the application of different tools to allow for a better understanding of the drug phenomena.

After the interventions by the panellists, the floor was opened for questions.