



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Meeting of the Expert Group
on International Economic and
Social Classifications
New York, 16-18 April 2007**

ESA/STAT/AC.124/16
16 Feb. 2007

Preamble of the International Family of Economic and Social Classifications

(Reprint)

Preamble¹

International Family of Economic and Social Classifications

1. The international family of economic and social classifications is comprised of those classifications that have been registered into the United Nations Inventory of Classifications, reviewed and approved as guidelines by the United Nations Statistical Commission or other competent intergovernmental board on such matters as economics, demographics, labour, health, education, social welfare, geography, environment and tourism. It also includes those classifications on similar subjects that are registered into the Inventory and are derived or related to the international classifications and are primarily, but not solely, used for regional or national purposes. The following text describes what it means to be a member of the international family of classifications. Types of classifications are explained, and the roles and obligations of agencies responsible for maintenance, updating and revision of classifications are described.

Types of classifications in the family

2. The international family of economic and social classifications are comprised of three major types:

3. **Reference classifications** of the family are those economic and social classifications that are a product of international agreements approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission or another competent intergovernmental board, such as that of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO), or the World Customs Organization (WCO) depending upon the subject matter area. Thus reference classifications have achieved broad acceptance and official agreement and are approved and recommended as guidelines for the preparation of classifications. They may be used as models for the development or revision of other classifications, both with respect to the structure and with respect to the character and definition of the categories.

¹ This statement was reviewed in draft at the Fourth Meeting of the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications, New York, 2-4 November 1998 (Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, ESA/STAT/AC.63/18).

4. **Derived classifications** of the family are based upon reference classifications. Derived classifications may be prepared either by adopting the reference classification structure and categories, and then possibly providing additional detail beyond that provided by the reference classification, or they may be prepared through rearrangement or aggregation of items from one or more reference classification. Derived classifications are often tailored for use at the national or multi-national level.

5. **Related classifications** are those that partially refer to reference classifications, or that are associated with the reference classification at specific levels of the structure only. Procedures for maintaining, updating and revising statistical classifications of the family encourage the resolution of problems of partial correspondence among related classifications, and offer opportunities for increased harmonization.

Roles of agencies

6. Agencies or offices with the responsibility for the maintenance, updating and revision of classifications are called custodians of classifications. Each classification custodian has taken on the responsibility to conduct maintenance, updating and revision activities for its own classification(s). At the same time, the custodian may be knowledgeable about, and may participate in, certain aspects of the maintenance, updating and revision activities of other classifications of the family. Classifications custodians may be designated as follows:

Custodians of Reference Classifications

are those international agencies that are responsible for the maintenance, updating and revision of reference classifications that are international statistical classifications;

Custodians of Derived Statistical Classifications

are agencies or statistical offices that make use of reference classification in their preparation and maintenance of derived classifications;

Custodians of Related Statistical Classifications

are agencies or statistical offices that prepare and maintain classifications that are related to a reference classification.

Collaboration among custodians is needed for harmonization of classifications. When a classification is part of the international family of classifications, the obligations and roles have been made explicit and are described below.

Family obligations

7. Custodians of the international family of economic and social classifications:
 - a. Recognize that they are part of a system that is dynamic, rather than static, between revisions, thus requiring regular information dissemination and cooperation with the other custodians in the system;
 - b. Agree to register their classifications into the United Nations Classifications Inventory to be part of the network to exchange information systematically and efficiently among the responsible agencies;
 - c. Will identify and specify the location of the persons, offices, or committees responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the classification;
 - d. Work to make explicit the formal and structural relationships between reference and derived classifications, which follow from the relevant subject matter interrelationships, in order to keep them consistent;
 - e. Officially recognize their dependence on each other. When the reference classification changes, the other members of the family work to line up with the changes made at the international level. When a derived classification at the national or regional level notes difficulty in following the reference classification, changes to the reference classification may be proposed;
 - f. Seek to improve the relationship between reference and related classifications;
 - g. When setting strategies for making changes to classifications, take note of possibly affected classifications,
 - h. Prepare a plan for editing and updating a classification or group of related classifications;
 - i. Coordinate the timing of updates and revisions with other members of the family;
 - j. Announce timings of hearings, updates, and revision meetings so that valuable opportunities available for direct dialogue are not missed. Publicise classifications time-tables for major work on the classifications in the Classifications Website, thus allowing those interested in the updating and revision process, to contribute to the process at appropriate moments;

- k. Collaborate in the preparation of correspondence tables between reference, derived and related classifications;
- l. Collaborate in the preparation of instructions for data collection, coding and analysis, for those using the classification;
- m. Work together to prepare guidelines for interpretations of classifications at the applied level;
- n. Develop guidance and training materials that make explicit the classification's relationship to the Family, as well as provide guidelines for those wanting to use the classifications as a basis for developing derived or related classifications, e.g., for use at the national level.

International Family of Economic and Social Classifications²

Economic activities

Reference

International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC)

Derived

General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities (NACE)

Related

Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC)

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)

Products

Reference

Central Product Classification (CPC)

Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS)

Derived

Classification of Products by Activity (CPA)

Standard International Trade Classification (SITC)

Related

Trade in Services

Expenditures according to Purpose

Reference

Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG)

Classification of Individual Consumption according to Purpose (COICOP)

Classification of the Purposes of Non-Profit Institutions Serving Households (COPNI)

Classification of Outlays of Producers according to Purpose (COPP)

² See report of the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications (E/CN.3/1997/4). The list of the family will be updated by UNSD in 1999 based upon the completion of first round of registry into the Inventory in 1998.

Employment, Occupation and Education

Reference

International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE)

International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)

Social and Health

Reference

International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD)

International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH)

Country and Area

Reference

Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use (M49)

Other

Geographic

Time use