FIRST-EVER GLOBAL ASSEMBLY ON MEASURING CIVIL SOCIETY AND VOLUNTEERING

UN and Johns Hopkins improving data on the global nonprofit sector

A global assembly of statistical officials and civil society leaders from 34 countries will meet in Bonn, Germany, Tuesday, Sept. 25, through Thursday, Sept. 27, to assess progress being made in measuring the civil society sector, volunteering, and philanthropy through the implementation of the United Nations Handbook on Nonprofit Institutions in the System of National Accounts.

Guidelines in the Handbook call on national statistical offices to prepare regular “satellite accounts” on the nonprofit sector, philanthropy, and volunteering as part of their official economic data-gathering and reporting. Published by the United Nations in 2003, the Handbook was developed in cooperation with the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies and an international team of statistical experts.

Already, 28 countries have committed to implementing these guidelines, including both developed and developing countries. Eight of these countries have already produced the satellite accounts called for in the Handbook.

“This Assembly marks an important milestone on the path to create and institutionalize the capability necessary to generate timely and reliable statistics on the civil society sector for comparable analysis,” noted Paul Cheung, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division.

“The work being done to implement the Handbook will provide the first authoritative picture of the enormous scale and economic contribution of volunteerism, which is a major contributor to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and a significant form of civic engagement,” said Ad de Raad, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV).

A new report from The Johns Hopkins University, which examines initial data from the completed satellite accounts and demonstrates the importance of nonprofit institutions, will be released at the meeting on Sept. 25. “Our analysis reveals that nonprofit institutions account, on average, for a substantial percentage of gross domestic product, which puts them ahead of the utilities industry and on a par with the construction and finance industries in these same countries,” noted Lester Salamon, report author and Director of the Center for Civil Society Studies at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies.

The “Global Assembly on Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering” is being convened by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies in cooperation with the UNV and the United Nations Statistics Division, and will be held at the United Nations offices in Bonn. Speakers at the event will include the President of Germany’s Federal Statistical Office, the Director of the Johns
Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies; the Executive Coordinator of the UNV; the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division; the Director of the Statistics Bureau of the International Labour Organization; the Director of the Statistics Division of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); a senior program officer of Germany’s Bertelsmann Foundation, and senior statisticians from the United Nations Statistics Division and statistical agencies in North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.


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UN Volunteers is the focal point for volunteerism in the UN system. UNV pursues distinctive contributions to effective development by advocating the role and benefits of volunteerism for development, integrating civic engagement into development programmes and mobilizing volunteers. See www.unvolunteers.org. Contact: Scott McQuade, info@unv.org. Tel. +49-228-8152220

The United Nations Statistics Division is committed to the advancement of the global statistical system. It compiles and disseminates global statistical information, develops standards and norms for statistical activities, and supports countries’ efforts to strengthen their national statistical systems. It facilitates the coordination of international statistical activities and supports the functioning of the UN Statistical Commission as the apex entity of the global statistical system. Website: http://unstats.un.org/unsd.

The Center for Civil Society Studies at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies seeks to improve understanding and the effective functioning of not-for-profit, philanthropic, or “civil society” organizations in the United States and throughout the world in order to enhance the contribution these organizations can make to democracy and the quality of human life. Website: www.ccss.jhu.edu.