Applying the Degree of Urbanisation — How to define cities, towns and rural areas for international comparisons

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Abstract:
This presentation will explain the harmonised methodology produced in close collaboration by six organisations (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the International Labour Organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and The World Bank) to facilitate international statistical comparisons and to classify the entire territory of a country along an urban-rural continuum. The so called degree of urbanisation classification, which defines cities, towns and semi-dense areas, and rural areas at the first level.

The first level of the degree of urbanisation classification may be extended in two ways. The first extension, called level 2 of the degree of urbanisation classification, is a more detailed territorial typology: it identifies, cities, towns, suburban or peri-urban areas, villages, dispersed rural areas and mostly uninhabited areas. The second extension, defines functional urban areas (otherwise referred to as metropolitan areas), covering cities and the commuting zones around them. The classification is intended to complement and not to replace the definitions used by national statistical offices and ministries.

The presentation will also highlight main advantages of the methodology, its quality aspects and areas for further work.

The presentation will guide data producers, suppliers and statisticians so that they have the necessary information to implement the methodology and ensure coherency within their data collections. It may also be of interest to users of subnational statistics so they may better understand, interpret and use official subnational statistics for taking informed decisions and policymaking.

Keywords:
cities; rural areas; territorial classification;