



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2014

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Forty-sixth session

3-6 March 2015

Item 4 (h) of the provisional agenda*

Items for information: statistics for economies based on natural resources

Report of the Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies Based on Natural Resources

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2014/219, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies Based on Natural Resources. The report summarizes the second and third meetings of the steering committee of the Ulaanbaatar Group and provides an update on the programme of work of the Group. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2015/1.



Report of the Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies based on Natural Resources

I. Introduction

1. The joint initiative between Mongolia and Australia to establish the Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies Based on Natural Resources was discussed and endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its forty-third session, held in New York from 28 February to 2 March 2012 (see [E/2012/24](#), chap. I.B, decision 43/108).

2. The primary goals of the Ulaanbaatar Group are to develop methodological and practical guidelines on statistical measurements for economies based on natural resources. The Group makes recommendations by establishing best practices in respect of concepts and methods to track mining industry activities and investments in mining; to accurately measure the mining industry's contribution to the economy; and to assess the impacts of mining on other social and economic sectors within the framework of the System of National Accounts. In addition, the Group aims to collaborate with countries that have economies based on natural resources and to develop practical recommendations on measuring the impacts of mining on the environment and on ensuring the comprehensiveness, reliability, accuracy, timeliness and comparability of relevant statistical data.

3. The activities undertaken by the Ulaanbaatar Group in 2013 and 2014, comprising meetings and coordination with other groups, including on governance and key outputs, are summarized in section II of the present report. Information on the future activities of the Ulaanbaatar group is provided in section III.

II. Activities of the Ulaanbaatar Group in 2013 and 2014

4. The main focus of the Ulaanbaatar Group has been to examine methodologies to measure the impact of mining on the economy, society and the environment. The Group has established a standard set of indicators and is working towards practical recommendations and the development of implementation strategies for countries.

A. Meetings of the Ulaanbaatar Group

5. The steering committee of the Ulaanbaatar Group held its second meeting in Moscow on 17 and 18 September 2013 and its third in Vienna from 6 to 8 August 2014. In addition, it organized seven expert group videoconferences during the 2013-2014 period.

1. Meeting held in Moscow

6. The second meeting of the steering committee of the Ulaanbaatar Group was hosted by the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (ROSSTAT) in Moscow on 17 and 18 September 2013. It was attended by a total of 40 representatives from Australia, India, Madagascar, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Viet Nam, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISSTAT), as well as

officials of the Government of the Russian Federation and representatives of Russian academia.

7. At the meeting, the steering committee decided:

(a) To approve workstreams and identify countries to work on each relevant workstream. The following four workstreams were proposed: standard indicators; economic impact of the mining industry; impact of the mining industry on society; and environmental impact of the mining industry;

(b) To hold an expanded meeting of the Ulaanbaatar Group during the forty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission, in 2014;

(c) To organize expert group videoconferences prior to the convening of the third meeting of the steering committee;

(d) To submit the report of the Ulaanbaatar Group to the Statistics Division by November 2014;

(e) To make greater use of information technology, using videoconferences and e-mails for consultations and discussions;

(f) To prepare a manual containing relevant case studies and country practices, and vote on the title of the handbook of the Group;

(g) To commit to informing the chief statisticians and the international cooperation departments of each member country about the progress of the group.

2. Meeting held in Vienna

8. The third meeting of the steering committee of the Ulaanbaatar Group, hosted by UNIDO, was held in Vienna from 6 to 8 August 2014. The meeting focused on the processes needed to produce the handbook and workplan for 2015. The steering committee agreed to organize a pool of experts who would discuss and exchange knowledge and experiences at the meeting. It agreed upon an outline for the handbook and the workplan. It also agreed to prepare an information report for the Commission in 2015.

9. Representatives from Australia, China, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Mongolia, Viet Nam, the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting, the International Monetary Fund and UNIDO participated.

10. At the meeting, the steering committee decided to:

(a) Submit the report of the third meeting of the steering committee to the Statistical Commission;

(b) Finalize the selection of chapters for which member countries would be responsible and elaborate upon the details required for drafting the handbook;

(c) Include a glossary in the handbook, taking into consideration suggestions from members about additional terms that should be contained therein;

(d) Hold the fourth meeting of the steering committee in Australia, in either September or October 2015;

(e) Review and print all documents issued in respect of the meeting held in Vienna;

(f) Approve the 2015 plan of the Group and circulate it among members.

3. Videoconferences

11. A number of videoconferences have been held since 2013, in which most members of the expert group have been able to participate:

- **First video conference, held on 20 June 2013.** The purpose of the videoconference was to discuss a draft set of statistical indicators to be used for measuring the impact of the mining industry on the economy, society and the environment; the agenda for the second meeting of the steering committee, to be held in Moscow; the draft report structure; and the allocation of tasks to be undertaken.
- **Second videoconference, held on 13 December 2013.** The purpose of the videoconference was to elaborate upon the indicators and the allocation of tasks for the work programme, and to share experiences related to natural resources statistics. Discussions were held on defining natural resources, the measurement of subsoil assets, the indicator work and the establishment of priorities for the indicators.
- **Third videoconference, held on 4 February 2014.** During the videoconference, discussions highlighted the work accomplished by the agencies from Mongolia and Mexico. Future work was also discussed, with a focus on which indicators should be estimated. Participants proposed that a case study approach to analysing the impact of mining be included in the handbook. There was also a short discussion on which indicators were not being estimated and the possible associated issues that should be addressed. The issue of measuring jobs versus employees and specific classifications were also raised.
- **Fourth videoconference, held on 3 April 2014.** The New York side event was discussed at the videoconference. A paper on natural resources was presented, with a view to obtaining agreement on the adoption by the Ulaanbaatar Group of the definitions and classifications under the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. Mining statistics in Mexico were discussed and suggestions were made regarding the need for some of that work to be incorporated into the Group's handbook.
- **Fifth videoconference, held on 20 May 2014.** The purpose of the videoconference was to discuss progress made by countries and the structure of the third steering committee meeting, to be held in Vienna. A number of presentations were made by Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Mexico. One of the main outcomes was to propose an agenda for the Vienna meeting.
- **Sixth videoconference, held on 1 July 2014.** The purpose of the videoconference was to finalize the Vienna agenda. In addition, the issue of having the Ulaanbaatar Group contact other United Nations city groups, in particular the London and Oslo groups, was raised.
- **Seventh videoconference, held on 9 September 2014.** The purpose of the videoconference was to discuss the outcomes of the Vienna meeting and to identify the chapters to be included in the handbook. Participants raised concerns about the fact that there appeared to be a significant amount of work undertaken in the area of natural resources statistics within the wider community of which the Ulaanbaatar Group was unaware. Discussions also

therefore addressed the need for the Group to attempt to raise its profile through appropriate outreach.

4. Expanded meeting

12. The first expanded meeting of the Ulaanbaatar Group, held at United Nations Headquarters on 25 February 2013, was organized as a side event of the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission. The purpose of the event was to present the goals, workstreams, structure and composition of the Group to national statistical offices and international organizations. The Group's workplan for 2013 was also discussed, and feedback was sought from the participants in this regard.

13. The second expanded meeting of the Group, held at United Nations Headquarters on 3 March 2014, was organized as a side event of the forty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission. The purpose of the event was to discuss the activities carried out in 2013 and the workplan for 2014.

B. Governance of the Ulaanbaatar Group

14. The Co-Chair of the Ulaanbaatar Group, Ganbaatar Gerelt-Od passed away in May 2014. Mr. Gerelt-Od was an influential member of the Group and was involved in its establishment. The Group is very grateful for his significant contribution to its work, which ensured its ongoing success.

15. At the meeting held in Vienna in 2014, Senior Vice-Chair of the National Statistical Office of Mongolia, Badamtsetseg Batjargal, was elected Co-Chair of the Ulaanbaatar Group, along with First Assistant Statistician, Business, Industry and Environment Statistics Division of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Bruce Hockman, whose appointment was extended. The Director of the National Accounts Branch of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Paul Roberts, also remained as Chair of the expert group of the Ulaanbaatar Group.

16. Another issue for the Ulaanbaatar Group to report on was that Azerbaijan and Brazil have not attended any meetings since the first meeting held in Ulaanbaatar in 2012. It is assumed that they are no longer participating in the work of the Group. On a positive note, the Group has new participants, from ESCAP and the International Monetary Fund. In addition, the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting will participate as an observer in the meetings of the Group.

C. Key outputs

17. The Ulaanbaatar Group had a number of key outputs, including a series of presentations given at its various meetings. Many of the presentations highlighted the various methodological challenges that the Group will face in producing the handbook. Other the presentations, featuring the large body of work undertaken by the various members of the Group, will be incorporated into the final handbook.

18. The Group also prepared formal minutes as a means of documenting the discussions held at the various meetings. The minutes will also serve as useful input for the preparation of the handbook.

19. In addition, the process of drafting the handbook was initiated, with the Group having reached agreement on the structure of the handbook and individual members having selected the chapters for which they would be responsible.

III. Future activities of the Ulaanbaatar Group

A. Handbook

20. Members of the Group will continue to draft chapters, based on their country experiences, for submission to the management team of the Group.

21. The management team will integrate all the drafted chapters sent by the member countries and will prepare the final draft. The draft will then be circulated among the members for initial comments thereon.

22. The draft handbook will also be sent to the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations for initial comment. Wider circulation among other countries for comments will also be sought.

B. Programme of work

23. The Ulaanbaatar Group established the following four broad workstreams:

(a) To develop a harmonized system of standard indicators for data collection;

(b) To assess the impact of the mining industry on economies and develop methodological and practical recommendations on how to demonstrate the impact through official statistics;

(c) To develop methodologies and indicators for assessing the impact of the mining industry on the social sector;

(d) To develop practical recommendations for measuring the impact of the mining industry on the environment.

C. Workplan for 2015

24. The workplan for 2015 includes:

(a) Organizing videoconferences on specific issues each month and circulating, among member countries, the minutes taken at the meetings, including on decisions and actions to be taken;

(b) Finalizing a style template and the contributions for the handbook.

(c) Preparing the chapters (including case studies and methodologies) submitted by individual members;

(d) Circulating the draft handbook among the members of the Group.