

Concept Note

Regional thematic conferences on “Managing a statistical organization in times of change”

Purpose and background

This series of regional thematic conferences will be organised to further understand and prioritise the emerging needs of statistical organisations to adapt and develop, as stressed in the **Cape Town Global Action Plan (CTGAP)** for Sustainable Development¹ and in the final report of the series of conferences on a Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics.² In particular, the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related regional and national development policies requires national statistical systems to grasp the potential of innovative technologies in a rapidly changing data ecosystem while reinforcing leadership, coordination, communication and dialogue through institutional and organizational reforms, in compliance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, endorsed by the General Assembly in 2014. Modernization, transformation and adaptation are crucial if official statistics are to meet the widening and increasing requirements of policymakers, researchers, the media and civil society for high-quality, timely and disaggregated statistics.

Supporting this process of adaptation and modernization, the Statistical Commission at its 49th session endorsed the proposed outline of the updated Handbook of Statistical Organization, aimed at guiding chief statisticians and senior managers of statistical organizations in developing and maintaining statistical capacity that is fit for purpose. An advisory group³ was established with the task of providing overall guidance to the drafting team at UNSD and of ensuring a link with the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant bodies. The Statistical Commission suggested this approach being complemented with this series of thematic conferences at the regional and sub-regional level, at which senior statisticians may address recent institutional, organizational and technical developments addressing prospective challenges and opportunities for the production of official statistics and indicators.

Objective of the regional thematic conferences

The main objective of regional thematic conferences is to better understand and prioritise the emerging needs of statistical organisations to adapt and develop and exchange experiences and strategies of Member States in such processes. The regional approach will

¹ See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/hlg/cape-town-global-action-plan/> and E/CN.3/2017/3 and E/CN.3/2018/4.

² See E/CN.3/2017/5.

³ Members of the Advisory Group are Brazil, Kenya, Mongolia, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, Suriname, United Kingdom, FAO, ILO, UNCTAD, Asian Development Bank, Eurostat, Open Data Watch, PARIS21, SESRIC, and the five UN Regional Commissions.

put emphasis on aspects of this process that are typical for the selected region and represent common challenges among members of that region.

This will also allow the organizers to collect additional information on practices and challenges that will contribute to an extended knowledge base related to the new **Handbook of Statistical Organisation (the Handbook)**⁴. The Handbook's purpose is to guide chief statisticians and senior managers in developing, adapting and maintaining statistical organisations that are fit for purpose. The Handbook itself will be based on the strategic development areas mentioned in the CTGAP and the outcome of the series of regional conferences on a transformative agenda for official statistics.

It is proposed that the thematic conferences concentrate on four themes, addressing how to:

1. Strengthen the institutional and organisational frameworks of national statistical systems; including the role of national statistical offices as leaders and coordinators of these systems, as well as their partnerships with government, academia, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders; (linked to CTGAP Strategic Area 1)
2. Support the transformation and modernisation of statistical production architecture and technology; and integrating innovative sources of data to produce high-quality statistics disaggregated by all characteristics to ensure no one is left behind (linked to CTGAP Strategic Area 2 and 3)
3. Develop and promote policies, innovative strategies and integrated dissemination platforms to ensure proper communication and use of official statistics and data for sustainable development (linked to CTGAP Strategic Area 4)
4. Ensure the most effective means of mobilising resources, coordinating efforts and developing multi-stakeholder partnerships to support implementation of country-owned strategies and programmes for the development of official statistics and for monitoring of the 2030 sustainable agenda and related regional/national initiatives (linked to CTGAP Strategic Area 5 and 6)

Further details on each theme are provided in the Annex of this document.

⁴ See E/CN.3/2018/5.

Time and venue

A series of **eight (8)** thematic conferences are expected to be held between May 2019 and December 2020. The suggested regions to cover are as follows:

1. Africa region
 - **Two** conferences
 - 28 Anglophone and Lusophone countries⁵ + 26 Francophone countries⁶
 - Financing shared with ECA and host countries
 - Date/venue: Pretoria, South Africa – 7-9 October 2019 (for English-speaking countries); Morocco, date tbd (for French-speaking countries)
2. Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) region
 - **One** conference, 12 countries⁷
 - Financing shared with Eurostat
 - Date/venue: Chisinau, Moldova – 22-24 April 2020
3. Arab-speaking region
 - **One** conference, 14 countries⁸
 - Potential date: June 2020
4. Asia region (excluding EECCA and Arab-speaking region)
 - **Two** conferences
 - 24 Asian countries + 20 Pacific Island countries
 - Financing shared with Asian Development Bank
 - Date/venue: Bangkok, Thailand – 12-14 February 2020 (for Asian countries); tbd for Pacific Island countries
5. Americas region
 - **Two** conferences
 - 16 Caribbean + 17 South/Central American countries
 - Financing shared with Inter-American Development Bank and Caribbean Development Bank
 - Date/venue: Bridgetown, Barbados – 25-27 November 2019 (for Caribbean); tbd (for South/Central American countries)

Participants

The regional thematic conferences are targeted at Heads of national, regional and international statistical agencies. The participation of Heads/Chief Statisticians of national statistical agencies of less developed countries may be financed by the organisers.

⁵ Angola, Botswana, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

⁶ Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia.

⁷ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

⁸ Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Multilateral and bilateral donors active in the respective regions should also have the opportunity to participate and contribute.

The plan is to invite 2 delegates from each Member State, namely the Head of the Statistical Office and a second senior representative of the national statistical system.

To facilitate discussion, the number of participants at each conference should be limited, which requires conducting two conferences in some regions.

Organisation of sessions and expected outcome

The thematic conferences will be held over 2 to 3 days and will provide an opportunity to discuss issues relevant to specific regions with the main stakeholders (Chief Statisticians, other organisations of the national statistical system, partners and regional organisations).

The conferences will include breakout sessions for which participants will be split into smaller groups to discuss concrete outputs and recommendations under the four themes. The outcome of the breakout sessions will then be shared and discussed in plenary with the invention of selected panellists.

It is essential that during the 2 to 3 days of each Regional Conference, all participants from regional and global statistical agencies as well as from multilateral and bilateral donors actively participate.

Budget and resources

The financial contribution for the organization of the cycle of Regional Thematic Conferences on “Managing a statistical organisation in times of change” depends on the number of regional/sub-regional conferences held and on the extent they will be organised back-to-back with other statistical events and meetings. It is therefore expected that the costs for each of the conferences could be between USD 30,000 and 70,000, including funding of selected member countries, consultants and travel cost of UNSD officials. These amounts do not include contributions in-kind such as meeting facilities and interpretation from UN regional commissions and other hosting organisations that would also be in charge, under the guidance of the co-organisers, of the logistics and proceedings of the Conferences.

ANNEX

1. Strengthen the institutional and organisational frameworks of national statistical systems; including the role of national statistical offices as leaders and coordinators of these systems, as well as their partnerships with government, academia, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders; (linked to CTGAP Strategic Area 1)

- Engage in communication and advocacy activities at the policy-making level to raise awareness and understanding of institutional and organisational arrangements supporting the collection, sharing, and communication of sustainable development data and statistics.
- Conduct reviews and create frequent and periodic opportunities to consult with all stakeholders on the effectiveness of the governance and coordination mechanisms for collecting, sharing, and communicating sustainable development data and statistics within national statistical systems.
- Streamline the integration of findings and recommendations from national reviews and multi-stakeholder consultations into i) national strategies for the development of statistics; ii) sector development plans and priorities; and iii) work programmes of national statistical systems.
- Develop the institutional arrangements, including the revision of statistical regulatory frameworks, that are needed for public-private cooperation and partnerships, including the use of data from non-traditional sources, in accordance with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.
- Encourage national statistical offices to embrace the open data initiative, clarify and support the role of the national statistical systems in this initiative and ensure stakeholders outside the national statistical system to be actively involved in the process.
- Develop learning material, update guidelines and handbooks such as the Handbook of Statistical Organization with the aim to provide guidance and best practices to achieve a modern, more integrated and coordinated national statistical system.

2. Support the transformation and modernisation of statistical production architecture and technology; and integrating innovative sources of data and information to produce high-quality data by all characteristics to ensure no one is left behind (linked to CTGAP Strategic Area 2 and 3)

- Encourage statistical organizations to apply generic standards and models of statistical production to allow the development and use of common innovative technologies for data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis for sustainable development at global, regional, national and sub-national levels.
- Modernize statistical infrastructure and standards such as SDMX to facilitate data integration and automation of data and metadata exchange across various stages of the statistical production process and at all levels (global, regional, national and sub-national).
- Strengthen and expand household survey programmes, integrated survey systems, business and other economic survey programmes, population and housing census programmes, civil registration and vital statistics programmes and the International Comparison Programme considering the needs posed by the 2030 Agenda.
- Improve the quality of national statistical registers and expand the use of administrative records integrating them with data from surveys and other new data sources, for the compilation of integrated social, economic and environmental statistics and indicators in relation to the 2030 Agenda.
- Promote and mainstream the integration of modern geospatial information management systems within statistical production programmes and encourage the use and adoption of technologies that promote integration of geospatial and statistical information.
- Support the work of the UN Global Expert Group on Big Data for Official Statistics in investigating the benefits and challenges of Big Data based on best practices of public and private initiatives, and eventually propose a common technology infrastructure and a Global Platform for Data, Services and Applications to be shared by official statisticians, data scientists and domain experts from the public and private sector for the monitoring and reporting on the sustainable development goals.
- Develop guidelines and training material on the use of new and innovative data generated outside the official statistical system, into official statistics for the monitoring and reporting on the sustainable development goals.

3. Develop and promote policies, innovative strategies and integrated dissemination platforms to ensure proper communication and use of official statistics, and data for sustainable development (linked to CTGAP Strategic Area 4)

- Encourage the development of effective communication and data dissemination strategies and guidelines for public and private dialogue oriented to policy-makers, legislators, the media, the general public, the economy, etc.
- Promote the development of integrated database systems to support the efficient and effective dissemination and utilization of data and statistics for the review and follow up of the implementation process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building, where possible, on existing dissemination platforms.
- Promote the adoption of policies and technical solutions for micro-data archiving allowing a wide access and use of this data for sustainable development monitoring and research purposes.
- Develop and implement educational programmes to increase data literacy and data misuse recognition and empower institutions and individuals to use statistics effectively in their own decisions.
- Leverage the use of e-learning platforms to share knowledge between producers and users of statistics.

4. Ensure the most effective means of mobilising resources, coordinating efforts and developing multi-stakeholder partnerships to support implementation of country-owned strategies and programmes for the development of official statistics; in particular, for monitoring of the 2030 sustainable agenda and related regional/national initiatives (linked to CTGAP Strategic Area 5 and 6)

- Support countries in the implementation of the SDG indicator framework through an integrated National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and engage in communication and advocacy activities at the policy-making level to raise awareness and understanding of implementation aspects of the indicator framework.
- Provide an overview at country level of financial, technical and human capacity needs for the implementation of the NSDS and consider appropriate matches between types of support and types of needs.
- Coordinate the mobilization of own national resources for the implementation of the NSDS and eventually identify resource gaps and mobilize donor support towards the priorities agreed in the national and regional statistical strategies, including through south-south and triangular cooperation programmes.
- Promote nationally and/or regionally-owned coordination mechanisms of capacity building initiatives and create opportunities for participation of non-state actors in funding statistical activities through innovative financing mechanisms using means consistent with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.
- Promote the sharing of relevant implementation experiences between countries at regional and global levels.