

Draft Conclusions and Recommendations (for discussion)

Arab Conference on a Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Introduction

The first Arab Conference on a Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was held on 5-7 April 2016, on SESRIC premises, in Ankara, Turkey (see the attached concept note for further details).

The Arab Conference is the first regional conference, and part of an annual series of regional conferences on the Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics to be held in the Arab region. It builds on the outcome of the Global Conference organized by UNSD and Eurostat in January 2015 in New York and the recognition by the 46th and 47th Sessions of the UN Statistical Commission of the emerging demands for high quality statistics and the need for transformation and modernization of the national, regional and international global statistical systems.

This first Arab Conference on the transformative agenda held in 2016 is part of similar series of regional conferences held in 2016 for the African, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe and the Caucasus region in order to moderate the regional and national roadmaps for the transformative agenda world-wide. It is expected that all regional conferences on the transformative agenda will be followed up by a number of future series of annual conferences on the topic. The outcomes of these annual series of regional conferences will be reported to the High Level Group on Coordination, Partnership and Capacity Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG), and the United Nations Statistical Commission. It is also expected that the regional conferences will lead to the creation of regional High Level Groups that will report to the regional statistical committees and other regional statistical bodies.

The Arab Conference aimed at taking stock of the various international, (sub) regional and national initiatives for integrating and modernizing statistical systems and formulating national and (sub) regional roadmaps for a Transformative Agenda for the Arab region, while taking into account the diversity of the national statistical development and levels of maturity. It is expected that the national and (sub) regional roadmaps will address the coordination, production, and use of data for sustainable development. This endeavour will include, but not restricted to, global indicators to follow up and review the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), strengthening and expanding household survey programmes, business and other economic survey programmes, population and housing census programmes, civil and vital statistics programmes, and the International Comparison Programme (ICP).

The Conference was organized in four substantive sessions covering the 5 thematic areas of the Transformative Agenda, of which the conclusions and recommendations were as follows:

Thematic area 1: Coordination at and between the global, (sub-) regional and national statistical systems:

At the National Level:

1. The importance is recognized to promote the transformative agenda for official statistics at country level among national governments and stakeholders of the national statistical systems.
2. The governance and coordination of the transformative agenda at the country level will be led by the national statistical offices.
3. High level technical committees are to be established at country level led by the NSOs with a clear TOR to formulate and implement the national roadmaps or action plans for the transformative agenda of the national statistical systems based on high-level consultations with representatives of the government and other stakeholders of the national statistical systems.
4. The role of the national statistical advisory councils should be enhanced to promote and support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and be a supporting body for the high level national technical committee on the transformative agenda for official statistics.
5. The importance national ownership and cooperation between international organizations and regional organizations at country level is recognized, in particular with respect to coordination and streamlining of their activities with a view to avoid duplication of efforts.

At the Regional Level:

1. The Arab regional roadmap or action plan should promote the transformative agenda in the Arab region among the NSOs and formulate an agreed set of priorities with a medium term perspective taking into consideration the five thematic areas of the global transformative agenda.
2. The governance and coordination of the transformative agenda for the Arab Region will be led by the Arab countries and coordinated by a newly established High Level Group under the ESCWA Statistical Committee in cooperation with UNSD, Arab League, SESRIC, Islamic Development Bank, GCC-Stat, AITRS and other international and regional partner organisations. The recommended High Level Group for the Arab region has to be linked to the High Level Group for the transformative agenda of the UN Statistical Commission.
3. The ESCWA Statistical Committee is to take the lead in advancing the transformative agenda in the Arab region by taking immediate action in setting up the High Level Group in 2016, drafting its Terms of Reference (ToR) and circulating the ToR among Arab countries and its main regional bodies for comments and suggestions.
4. A regional advisor for the Statistics Division of ESCWA should be recruited dedicated to the advancement of the transformative agenda in the Arab region.
5. The recommendations of the Arab Conference should be moderated in upcoming high level meetings of regional statistical bodies and conferences such as the Executive Board of GCC Stat to be held in July 2016; the Sixth Session of OIC Statistical Commission to be in December 2016 in Konya, Turkey; and the ESCWA Statistical Committee to be held in January 2017. The upcoming IAOS conference to be held in Abu Dhabi, between 6-8 December 2016, presents a

golden opportunity to promote the Transformative Agenda. Part of its sessions should be dedicated to the outcome of the Arab Conference.

At the Global Level:

6. The High Level Group on Coordination, Partnership and Capacity Building has been established by the UN Statistical Commission with UNSD as its Secretariat to formulate the Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (as a successor of the Busan Action Plan for Statistics from 2011). As per decision of the Statistical Commission, the formulation of the Global Action Plan should build on the outcomes of the regional conferences on the transformative agenda.
7. The Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data should provide a global vision for the transformative agenda for official statistics and determine a set of priorities for which managerial and technical guidance is provided to advance the transformation and modernization of the global, regional and national statistical systems.
8. The Global Action plans and regional roadmaps for the transformative agenda should be supported by a dedicated website that will serve as a central repository of supporting materials and best practices of the countries.

Thematic area 2: Communication and advocacy

1. In support of the transformative agenda for official statistics, regional and related national strategies for the transformation and modernization of the national statistical system should be formulated, including the development of advocacy toolkits. The strategies should set out the branding and the value proposition of official statistics for evidence based decision making for mobilizing resources for official statistics.

Thematic area 3: Integrated Statistical Systems: Data collection, processing and dissemination of integrated statistics

1. Further awareness raising and sensitization for the transformation of the national statistical systems for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be moderated through various platforms based in the Arab region (ESCWA, Arab League, GCC Stat and AITRS), in addition to regional agencies active in the Arab region (SESRIC, IDB). Moreover, the concept of the transformative agenda has to be clarified for the Arab region since transformation in the region will also include the rebuilding of national statistical offices and statistical systems, particularly in fragile states. Through the various consultative processes moderated by the collaborating agencies, a selected set of priorities for the transformative agenda should be formulated for the Arab region. Initial considerations should be given to:
 - a. The implementation of integrated statistical systems: to undertake a common national assessment leading to the formulation of national road maps and implementation plans

for the establishment of integrated statistical systems based on common statistical production architecture.

- b. The mainstreaming and harmonization of the compilation of data for sustainable development and for SDG indicators into the regular work programmes of national statistical systems, and into existing national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) and national and sectoral development plans and priorities
- c. The modernization of the national statistical system should be guided by the adoption of the General Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) for mapping of the national statistical production processes and the progressive creation of corporate statistical services units by the NSOs.
- d. The improvement of the quality of national statistical registers of persons, businesses and properties for statistical purposes and expansion of 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
- e. Maximizing the use of administrative data, Big data, and geospatial data in the statistical production processes by establishing the necessary institutional and physical infrastructure, and building the skills of staff members.
- f. The establishment of sound partnerships with new stakeholders of the data communities such as the public and private data providers (for access and use of Big Data and geospatial data management information system in statistical production), data users and civil society to promote data access and open data initiatives.
- g. The design and development of a metadata driven statistical production process and metadata catalogue of variables.

Thematic area 4: Innovation and modernization through standard-based statistical business architecture

1. The Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM v.5.0) can serve as a solid basis for planning and structuring the statistical data processing from inception of the surveys, through data collection, various processing stages to dissemination of results and evaluation, as well as it can serve for modeling the ICT systems in support of the statistical processes.
2. An regional ICT strategy for NSOs should be developed that addresses the need for sharing innovative ICT tools, the advancement of service orientated information systems architecture based on GSBPM, multi-source and multi-mode data collection strategies and the introduction of SDMX based national integrated database systems and modern dissemination and visualization methods.
3. The regional strategy should identify specifications for interoperable, open source technologies to incorporate the flexibility in information systems needed to allow the strategic use of new and emerging technologies for official data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis.

4. The regional strategy should advance the implementation of standardized structures for the exchange and integration of data and metadata on the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development and at all levels (global, regional, national and sub-national), following the SDMX and related standards and promote interoperability of these systems to facilitate such integration.
5. The development at regional level mechanisms for pooling and sharing IT infrastructure and devices for data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis, including technical support.
6. The transfer of knowledge, expertise and technologies in developing IT enterprise architecture in support of integrated statistical production processes.
7. ESCWA should conduct an inventory of innovative IT tools of statistics developed at national level that could be shared with other countries in the region.

Thematic area 5: Capacity building and training

1. The transformative agenda for official statistics should be supported by a dedicated Arab capacity-building and training programme that is based on an assessment of capacity needs, appropriate matches between types of support and types of needs and the identification and coordination of existing resources to strategically address these needs, and identify resource gaps.
2. The Arab training and capacity-building programme should consist of a combination of degree courses at BA and Msc level, national and regional training workshops based on face-to-face class room and/or e-learning modalities, trainee and staff exchange programs and in country technical assistance.
3. Arab and regional training and capacity-building agencies such as ESCWA, UNFPA Regional Office, Eurostat, SESRIC, GCC Stat, AIRTS and other international and regional partner organisations, should develop dedicated training and capacity building programme and regional capacity building infrastructure for the transformative agenda for official statistics.
4. The training and capacity building programme should cover a multifaceted human resources development in statistical and IT skills, leadership, and management skills, including project and change management.
5. A dedicated capacity-building and training programme for the transformative agenda for official statistics should be developed for Arab fragile states to rebuild their national statistical programmes.
6. The Islamic Development Bank will provide the necessary funding for the capacity-building and training programme for the transformative agenda for official statistics, including for fragile states.