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Items for information: informal sector statistics

Report of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics to the Statistical Commission. The report provides an update on recent activities and meetings of the Delhi Group and outlines its future workplan. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2018/1.



Report of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics

I. Background

1. The Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, commonly known as the “Delhi Group”, was set up in 1997 as one of the city groups of the Statistical Commission to address various methodological issues involved in the treatment of the informal sector. The Chief Statistician of India and Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, is the Chair of the Delhi Group. Since its inception in 1997, the Delhi Group has provided an international forum for the exchange of country experiences in the estimation of informal sector employment; for measuring the contribution of the informal sector to gross domestic product; for addressing the statistical standards being used in different countries; and for working towards improvement, refinement and harmonization of the related statistical standards for facilitating international comparability.

II. Future workplan of the Delhi Group

2. The Delhi Group has had 12 meetings to date. The twelfth meeting was organized and hosted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 2 and 3 October 2017 in Geneva. At the meeting, a host of emerging issues relating to the informal sector and informal employment were discussed in follow-up to the publication, in 2013, of the manual *Measuring informality: a statistical manual on the informal sector and informal employment*. The Delhi Group discussed in detail issues relating to improving the coverage, quality and dissemination of informal economy data; indicators and monitoring informal employment in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and ILO recommendation R204; the implications of the resolution of the nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians and the revision of the International Classification of Status in Employment on defining and measuring informal employment, especially in the agricultural sector; and the application of the concept of the informal economy in developed countries.

3. The meeting was attended by 21 experts from 14 countries and experts from ILO, the World Bank and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing. A total of 14 technical presentations were made by the experts on various themes of the meeting. At the conceptual level, many relevant issues were discussed that require the continued attention of the Delhi Group. One of the contemporary issues requiring priority attention is the harmonization of the country-specific criteria used to define the informal sector and informal employment in accordance with the international definition, which would thereby assist countries in conducting a baseline measurement of Sustainable Development Goal tier-II indicator 8.3.1 and increase the coverage of countries measuring and disseminating harmonized data relating to that indicator. At present, only 44 countries have provided the data to ILO. In view of the changed concept of work and employment following the endorsement of the resolution of the nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians concerning work, employment and labour underutilization, the conceptual framework of the informal sector and informal employment will need to be realigned and refined. It was therefore suggested that the Delhi Group should play a continuing role in aligning and harmonizing the conceptual framework of informality, as defined in the resolution of the fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians and the guidelines of the seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, with the resolution of the nineteenth Conference and its introduction of the five different forms of work and redefinition of employment.

4. It was acknowledged that, while the Delhi Group has performed substantial work relating to the measurement of informality in the non-agricultural segment, similar work needs to be carried out to improve the measurement of informality in the agricultural segment (including self-employed persons). It was also decided to develop a suitable methodology to expand the measurement of informality to include migrant workers, refugees and internally displaced persons in fragile economies and non-standard forms of work in developed countries. The consensus decision was to encourage more and more countries to improve data collection and reporting systems in a harmonized manner and that the Delhi Group and ILO may continue to provide technical assistance to countries in data collection, sample designs, benchmark adjustments and processing, tabulation and dissemination practices to enable the full implementation of the recommendations contained in the manual.

5. The need for a revision of the statistical framework of informality to align it with the latest developments will be addressed at the twentieth International Conference of Labour Statisticians in October 2018, with a view to seeking guidance on how best to progress in that regard. A way forward could be to establish a technical working group that would carry out work in specific areas and report to the Delhi Group. Given that the mandate of the Delhi Group has evolved and grown significantly over time and that it works on the entire conceptual framework of informality, it was proposed to rename the Group from the “Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics” to the “Delhi Group on Informal Economy Statistics”.

6. The Delhi Group requests the Statistical Commission to take note of the future workplan of the Group.
