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Background document
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Items for discussion and decision: Handbook of Statistical Organization

**Inter-agency action plan of the MoU Group on the statistical activities of the
multilateral development banks, the International Monetary Fund and
the United Nations for 2017 and 2018 ¹**

Prepared by the MoU Group on the statistical activities of the multilateral
development banks, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations

¹ The same document was presented to the Commission in 2017 under agenda item 3(b).

Inter-agency action plan of the MoU Group on the statistical activities of the multilateral development banks, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations for 2017 and 2018

Introduction

1. A memorandum of understanding on cooperation in statistical activities was signed on 6 April 2013 by the heads of the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the World Bank and the United Nations – in short the MoU Group. The objective of this Group is to enhance collaboration so as to support the strengthening of statistical capacity in Member States and facilitate the sharing of data, tools, standards and analysis to improve statistics for the monitoring of development outcomes, including those of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. While it is recognized that each signatory institution plays an important role in providing support to the national, regional and global statistical system to improve the scope and quality of basic data and statistics, collectively, they are a unique force with the capacity to mobilize support for statistical programmes and encourage coherent action by other partners and donors.

3. Following the establishment of the MoU Group, three potential strategic areas of collaboration and their corresponding actions were identified to maximize the Group's effectiveness. These strategic areas are: (a) strengthening partnerships and advancing strategies to improve the role and use of data; (b) addressing data gaps in statistical production and data accessibility; and (c) supporting innovative approaches to statistical production and data sharing.

4. At a meeting, held at the World Bank headquarters on 16 November 2016, the MoU Group undertook a comprehensive review of its collaboration on inter-agency knowledge-sharing, with a view to support the global action plan for sustainable development data and the regional action plans in support of the 2030 Agenda. For each of the strategic areas, existing actions in inter-agency collaboration were identified for further expansion, while potential new actions were also identified taking into consideration the respective mandates of each agency. This background document presents the inter-agency action plan of the MoU

Group organised by its strategic areas for 2017 and 2018 for the consideration of the Statistical Commission.

Strengthening partnerships and advancing strategies to improve the role and use of data

5. This strategic area could support data for sustainable development of both the global action plan and the regional transformative agendas. In particular, this strategic area calls for the strengthening of the coordination among national statistical systems and regional and international organizations active in the production of data and statistics for sustainable development. Moreover, this area is linked to the strategic area of capacity building and resource mobilization of the global action plan and the regional transformative agenda, because the strategic considerations of leadership and coordination in data collection, sharing and communication require strategic assessment of the capacity needs. A more common understanding of the required technical and managerial skills and the infrastructural and technological needs will facilitate coordination of programs for capacity building at country level supported by the regional and international programs. With the appropriate alignment of the programs, it is expected that these programs will be supported by adequate funding programs through traditional and innovative domestic and external funding mechanisms and through new partnerships with private sector partners in providing for the required infrastructure, data, services, applications and training.

6. In a deliberate process aimed at aligning actions in this area of inter-agency collaboration, the members of the MoU Group propose to support regional conferences on the organisation and management of national statistical institutes with the aim to contribute to the update of the Handbook of Statistical Organization¹ and to provide strategic guidance to achieve a modern, more integrated and coordinated national statistical system. It is expected that these leadership dialogues will contribute to the deepening of the needs assessments and the subsequent strategies and work programs for statistical capacity building and coordination.

¹ Handbook of Statistical Organization, Third Edition: The Operation and Organization of a Statistical Agency, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/88, 2003

7. These regional conferences should be appreciated as the continuation of the leadership dialogues initiated through the regional transformative agenda conferences held in 2016. In this context, the members of the MoU Group will consider the following thematic areas for the agenda of the regional conferences, which are aligned with the topics covered by the third edition of the Handbook: (a) quality in official statistics; (b) communication and partnerships in official statistics; (c) statistical architecture for an integrated production system in official statistics; (d) information technology infrastructure in official statistics; and (e) capacity-building and resource mobilization in official statistics. In determining the agenda for the regional conferences, the members of the MoU Group will support the main player in developing and hosting the national and regional statistical agencies, mobilize resources and leverage partnerships and capacity development.

Addressing data gaps in statistical production and data accessibility

8. This strategic area is related to the strategic area of the global action plan on the strengthening of basic statistical activities and programs and the area of integrated statistical systems for data collection, processing and dissemination of the regional transformative agendas.

9. For purposes of better aligning the interagency coordination in this area, various objectives are to be met. The first objective is to strengthen and expand household survey programs, business and other economic survey program, the population and housing census programs, the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) programs and the International Comparison Program (ICP). In terms of the household survey programs, it is to harmonize and increase country ownership of the internationally sponsored program. In terms of the economic survey programme, it is to explore the creation of an Economic Survey Network and to develop an economic statistical capacity program focussing on improving and strengthening economic statistics with a view to rebasing GDP, CPI and other economic indicators. The interagency coordination also extends to the support the implementation of the 2020 Population Census Round and CRVS programs. It also covers the conduct of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) based on rolling surveys with the aim to integrate ICP activities with regular production of price statistics and national accounts to ensure that the ICP becomes a sustainable statistical programme. With the advent of new and Big Data sources, this area will also cover the alignment of the interagency collaboration for

the use of data analytics and the integration of data from different sources in the regular production of statistics: surveys, administrative data and new (big data) sources.

10. The second objective of this area is the alignment of the interagency collaboration in the improvement of the quality of national statistical registers, the expansion of the use of administrative records and their integration with data from surveys and other new data sources. This interagency collaboration should advance the integrated production of social, economic and environmental statistics at country level. Actions in this area will cover the strengthening of the statistical infrastructure and the coverage of registers of persons, property and businesses for statistical purposes. Building and maintaining such as a statistical infrastructure may also extend to other areas such as aligning guidance on the transformation of the institutional setting related to legal statistical framework for access to administrative data, harmonizing technical guidance on building and maintaining statistical registers and the use of administrative data, sharing and harmonizing related software applications and their meta data structures, and strengthening of technical expertise in linking administrative records with statistical registers. This interagency collaboration in this area also extends to exploring common partnerships at global and regional level with globally operating proprietary data and technology providers in the private sector.

11. The third objective of this area is the interagency collaboration in the strengthening and expansion of the scope and quality of the implementation of the System of National Accounts and the System of Environmental Economic Accounting. In this area, interagency collaboration may extend to the harmonization of guidance material, the sharing of best practices in e-learning programs and software applications for the various stages of storage, compilation and dissemination of the national accounts and environmental-economic accounting statistics and indicators.

Supporting innovative approaches to statistical production and data sharing

12. This area of interagency collaboration covers the strategic area of the global action plan and the regional transformative agendas on innovation and modernization of national statistical systems, including the open data initiatives. The objective of the interagency collaboration is to contribute to the transformation and modernization of the governance and institutional arrangements of the national, regional and global statistical systems to provide

improved access to data and statistics while matching access with the diverse demands of users and concerns regarding privacy, security and confidentiality. This collaboration also extends to the development and application of SDMX compliant and related interoperable standards, particularly those aimed to facilitate data integration and automation of data exchange across different stages of the statistical production process. The collaboration may also contribute to the application of new technologies and new data sources into mainstream statistical activities.

13. Many of the actions in this area, such as those for the other strategic areas, will be undertaken in close partnership with various initiatives by the official statistical community and their partners. For instance, the members of the MoU Group through their interagency collaboration could contribute to making the business case and explore the specification of a cloud based technology platform for data storage and analysis while matching international standards of data security and protection, interoperable and open source software applications and capacity building services to allow the strategic use of new and emerging technologies for official data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis. In support of this action, the MoU Group could further contribute to the development of policy framework for data security, protection and privacy and information management that countries can use to remove barriers to the use of new data sources, including registries and administrative data and other data from new and innovative sources, into mainstream statistical programs. The interagency collaboration will also extend to the development of methodological guidelines on the use of big data and innovative data generated outside the official statistical system into official statistics, the open source software applications and related capacity building programs. Progressive the interagency collaboration should extend on the development of integrated database systems for economic, environment and social statistics at various levels of disaggregation in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Conclusion

14. With the scaling up of the interagency collaboration of the signatory agencies of the MoU Group, it is expected that the agencies collectively can mobilize support for a broad set of statistical programmes and encourage coherent action by other partners and donors in the various strategic areas of the global action plan and the regional transformative agenda. The MoU Group stands ready to update the Statistical Commission on a recurrent basis to

appraise it of its actions and their outcome in support of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.