



DISASTER-RELATED STATISTICS: THE CURRENT SITUATION AND GROWING RELEVANCE

1:15 – 2:30 pm, Monday 4 March 2019

Conference Room B, UNHQ, New York

Organized by United Nations Statistics Division

Supported by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Background

Disasters disrupt national economies and affect lives, with significant direct and indirect effects on and costs to people, communities and countries. They remain one of the most important global development challenges facing humanity. While many disasters often occur with little or no warning, their impact is immediate, cross-cutting, complex, often dynamic, non-selective and, in our present world, more frequent and intense. Sudden, or rapid onset, events, such as extreme weather, earthquakes, flooding and wildfires, tend to be more localized but are destructive for people, buildings and infrastructure. They can very quickly overwhelm preparedness, resilience and social well-being within and beyond the affected communities. Slower onset disasters, such as sea-level rise, increasing temperatures, forest degradation, biodiversity loss and desertification, often span wide geographic areas and long time periods. They are therefore difficult to measure, quantify and adapt to. The impact of disasters, particularly those relating to extreme weather events, are also a growing concern owing to the compounding effects of climate change.

Because of their immediate destructive nature and the commensurate dependency on adequate community preparedness and resilience, disasters can quickly erode hard-won progress in developing countries, where resilience, resources and available capital are much lower. Developed countries are better prepared to handle the impact of disasters and their aftermath. In developing nations, disasters continue to disproportionately affect the poorest people because they do not have the resources to rebuild their homes and meet other basic needs, making them less able to recover.

Member States have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens, communities and cities from the social, economic and environmental impact of disasters. Led by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the global development Agendas (e.g., the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the New Urban Agenda) place an emphasis on the social, economic and environmental impact of disasters and their negative effects on people, economies and countries, in particular developing countries and vulnerable sectors of society. The Sendai Framework provides mechanisms for countries to address disaster risk reduction and the building of resilience to disasters

with a renewed sense of urgency in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and to integrate, as appropriate, both disaster risk reduction and the building of resilience into national, regional and local policies, plans and programmes. The 2030 Agenda contains specific calls for all countries to substantially increase their ability to adopt and implement integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework, holistic disaster risk reduction and management at all levels.

Disaster-Related Statistics

As one of its fundamental principles, the statistical community is obliged to provide relevant data concerning the economic, demographic, social and environmental situations of their countries to honor citizens' entitlement to public information. Improved understanding of disaster risk reduction, including strengthening resilience and preparedness and the need for better data and statistical measurement to understand and assess current and future risks, is now required. To meet this obligation, official statistics need to be used to explore the use of new data sources and technologies to fulfil the expectation of society for enhanced products and more efficient ways of working. This obligation has become more apparent in the context of the 2030 Agenda, in which the statistical community was explicitly requested to meet the new data demands for monitoring and reporting on progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, their targets and subsequent global indicators.

Therefore, at its 49th session, the Statistical Commission, in its decision 49/113, welcomed a greater focus on disaster-related statistics given the importance of the Sendai Framework, and decided to include in the agenda for this 50th session a separate item on this topic, building on existing work in this emerging area. This side event will introduce this new topic to delegates, discuss the status of disaster-related statistics, and highlight the growing relevance and greater focus of statistics related to both hazardous events and disasters.

Supported by the main international and regional organizations active in statistics related to hazardous events and disasters (UNSD, UNESCAP, UNECE, UNECLAC and UN Office for DRR), the side event will take stock of the current situation of activities around the world, and demonstrate that there is already considerable complementarity, coordination and cooperation taking place on this topic under the purview of the Commission. Several Member States will then demonstrate their activities and experiences in disaster-related statistics. Finally, the side event will provide an opportunity to discuss ways to continue to build and strengthen a common statistical framework and a network of experts among the multiple disciplines and areas of expertise and consider options and modalities for the establishment of a formal mechanism for sustaining cooperation and coordination of statistics related to hazardous events and disasters across the expert communities, organisations and regions of the statistical community.

Provisional Agenda

Chair: Mr. Greg Scott, UNSD (Introduction of 10 minutes)

Panel Discussion (40 minutes)

- Activities within the international and regional organizations:
 - Ms. Rikke Munk Hansen, UNESCAP
- Country experiences and practices:
 - Mr. Francisco Manuel Costa Aponte, President, INEI, Peru
 - TBA, Philippines

Moderated Discussion (25 minutes)