



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 December 2020

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Fifty-second session

2 - 5 March 2021

Item 4(d) of the provisional agenda*

Items for information: Disaster-related statistics

Report of the Core Group of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2020/211 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Core Group of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related statistics, representing the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia, and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The report informs the Commission of the establishment and terms of reference of the IAEG. The IAEG was progressed in response to Commission decision 50/116, which requested consideration of a formal mechanism under the purview of the Commission to advance a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics involving a network across the expert communities to sustain cooperation, coordination and fundraising for enhancing statistics related to hazardous events and disasters. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2021/1.

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-ninth 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 an agenda topic on disaster-related statistics for its fiftieth session. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNSD), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) prepared a report on disaster-related statistics for the fiftieth session of the Commission. This report elaborated on the growing data demands and needs for this area of work and took stock of the current situation of activities around the world, with an emphasis on the constraints that developing countries face. It contained a summary of the work of the main international and regional organizations that are active in statistics relating to hazardous events and disasters.

2. At its fiftieth session, the Commission, in its decision 50/116, requested the abovementioned organizations (UNSD, UNESCAP, UNECE, UNECLAC and UNDRR) to work together in consultation with members of the existing regional expert groups and task forces to consider options and modalities for the establishment and coordination of: (a) a formal mechanism under the purview of the Commission to progress a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics; (b) a network across the expert communities to sustain cooperation, coordination and fundraising for enhancing statistics related to hazardous events and disasters; and (c) report back to the Commission at a suitable time.

II. Establishment of the IAEG on Disaster-related Statistics

3. In response to requests (a) and (b), the said organizations formed a Core Group of partners which additionally included the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia. As a first step, this Core Group sought to establish an Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on Disaster-related Statistics. Towards this end, the Group undertook an extensive review of similar existing mechanisms and developed a proposed set of Terms of Reference for the IAEG with the primary objective of developing a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics.

4. The proposed Terms of Reference were submitted to the Bureau of the Statistical Commission for its consideration and final approval. In October 2020, following a thorough review process, the Bureau approved the Terms of Reference of the IAEG, which included modalities for its composition, for circulation among all Member States. Based on this, an invitation to nominate members for the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on Disaster-related Statistics was prepared. This was in the form of a joint letter signed by the Directors of UNSD, UNESCAP and UNDRR, and sent to the Chief Statisticians of all National Statistical Organizations with copy to the Focal Points for implementation of the Sendai Framework and their respective Permanent Missions. The letter, sent in November 2020, solicited the nomination of two representatives from each country to the IAEG, i.e. one from the National Statistical Office and one from the relevant disaster risk management institution of the Government.

5. At the time of writing this present report, nominations for representatives of the IAEG were being collated and considered. Once the IAEG is constituted, anticipated to be by January 2021, the following activities are planned:

- (a) Organising several virtual meetings of the IAEG in 2021; and
- (b) Convening an Expert Forum on Disaster-related Statistics in April 2021.

III. Highlights of the Terms of Reference of the IAEG

6. The key aspects of the Terms of Reference of the IAEG are as follows:

A. Membership and Composition of the IAEG

7. The IAEG shall include the following:

(a) Representatives of Member States from national statistical offices and disaster risk reduction related organizations.

(b) Institutions designated by the leadership of existing regional groups working on disaster-related statistics and the global Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters under the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) (Note: One designation per group will be accepted, see section “Methods of Work” for a list of relevant regional groups).

(c) Core Group comprising of UNSD, UNESCAP, UNECE, UNECLAC, UNESCWA, UNECA and UNDRR.

(d) Representatives of other relevant international and regional organizations.

8. For the expert forum, a broader range of subject matter experts from Member States, other United Nations System entities, Multi-lateral Development Banks and other relevant international organizations could be invited. The Group will also invite experts, as appropriate, from academic, civil society, and the private sector to contribute their expertise and experiences on disaster-related statistics.

B. Methods of Work of the IAEG

9. The IAEG shall work through electronic exchanges and regular meetings. It shall operate with the help of a webspace to facilitate collaboration, knowledge management and information sharing.

10. The IAEG shall organize a regular expert forum on disaster related statistics subject to availability of resources. Where feasible, the meetings shall be conducted in conjunction with the events of the statistics and disaster risk reduction communities. Other meetings shall be convened on the basis of need and with specific tasks to be accomplished.

11. The IAEG shall liaise as required with other international groups closely linked to disaster-related statistics that include the following:

(a) UNESCAP Technical Working Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific;

(b) UNECE Steering Group on Climate Change-related Statistics and Task Force on Measuring Hazardous Events and Disasters;

(c) UNSC Expert Group on Environment Statistics;

(d) UN-GGIM Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters; and

(e) Working Group on Disaster-related Indicators under the ECLAC Statistical Conference of the Americas.

C. Co-Chairs and Core Group of the IAEG

12. Initially, until December 2021, the IAEG shall have UNESCAP and UNDRR as Co-Chairs. From 2022 onwards, the leadership of the IAEG shall comprise one Member State representative and one Core Group representative. Co-Chairs shall be elected by the IAEG for a two-year term.

13. The Co-Chairs shall provide leadership and coordination to the full functioning of the IAEG. After the expiry of their term, former Co-Chairs shall provide support to the newly appointed Co-Chairs to facilitate continuity.

IV. Criteria for selection of members to the IAEG

14. The letter also included a set of criteria for the selection of the country nominees to the IAEG, which were as follows:

- (a) Balanced representation from all five geographic regions and to the extent possible, sub-regional representation (e.g. from the Pacific);
- (b) Institutions designated by the leadership of existing regional groups working on disaster-related statistics and the global Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters under the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (Note: One designation per group will be accepted);
- (c) Institutions actively contributing to existing regional groups;
- (d) Institutions regularly reporting to the Sendai Framework monitoring process;
- (e) Experience and expertise of the nominee; and
- (f) Manageable size (a maximum of 50 members nominated by Governments) of the IAEG.