

Informal Meeting of the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians

6 November 2023, Online

Conclusions

The meeting was organized to provide an opportunity for Network members to continue the fruitful discussion that had started at the Network quarterly meeting on 26 September 2023 on the topic of utilizing alternative data sources (administrative data, scanner data, big data, etc.) for statistical purposes. Additionally, the participants addressed the challenges related to data integration in support of evidence-based policymaking and other user demands. The Network secretariat also provided an overview of the Network's report to the 55th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

The members of the Network:

1. Appreciated the initiative of the Network's Bureau to organize the follow up discussion and recommended that the Network's Bureau could consider organizing similar informal meetings in future.

Use of alternative data sources

2. Noted the various challenges highlighted by members from national statistical organizations in accessing private and even public alternative data sources such as administrative data, including (a) assuring data providers on the confidentiality of the data they provide will be maintained, (b) the need to harmonize and standardize the data before they can be used for statistical purposes, and (c) the need for statistical legislation to properly define their access to such data.

3. Observed that these challenges can be addressed by developing appropriate data strategies encompassing elements such as the proper taxonomies to describe the various types of alternative data sources and recommended that the Network's Bureau could consider organizing some events that would allow national statistical offices to share their ideas on successful data strategies.

4. Noted the synergies between recommendations 13 (access to private and administration data) and 14 (data sharing) of phase three of the G20 data gaps initiative and the discussion on alternative data sources, and the launch of a related survey inquiry, and suggested that the Network's Bureau coordinate with the IMF and the task teams for these two recommendations on how to leverage these synergies and survey findings, and extend the consultations with the interested countries in the Global South.

5. Suggested that the Network's Bureau consider organizing follow-up discussions on use cases on using alternative data sources which could include the use of technologies like satellite imagery and electricity consumption to help better track macroeconomic developments.

Overview of Network's report to 55th session of United Nations Statistical Commission

6. Appreciated the update on the report and suggested that the Network's Bureau assess the feasibility of including in the report the impact of the various activities of the Network.