

## 2nd Meeting of the Friends of the Chair on Economic Statistics

UNHQ, New York, USA 2-4 December 2019

### 3a. Discussion on Results of Consultation Activities (the 'who')

#### 3b. Findings from regional consultation seminars

This note contains a summary of consultations held in three regions: 1. Asia-Pacific; 2. Europe; 3. Americas. Additional regional consultations are planned over the coming months: Asia-Pacific (December 2019); West Asia (January 2020); Africa (TBD 2020).

#### 1. High Level Seminar on the Future of Economic Statistics, 3-5 June 2019, Shanghai, China

1. **Beyond contemporary economic statistics.** Many countries spoke of the need to move beyond contemporary areas of economic statistics into new areas such as digital economy, sustainable tourism and new economy.
2. **Beyond macro-economic statistics.** Countries also spoke of the need to move beyond macro-economic statistics per se. Countries heard about the Income Wealth Alliance and distributional income national accounts, which potentially put people not households at the heart of a set of national accounts, and by the UN DESA Statistics Division about the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts, which focus on physical as well as monetary measurement. The increasing demand for disaggregated income statistics was acknowledged.
3. **Beyond statistics.** Countries shared experiences about how the National Statistics Office in their countries were being asked to take on new roles (e.g. implementation of legal identity) and discussed a future where statistics were not the only mandate of a National Statistics Office.
4. **Beyond data collection.** Countries recognized conducting surveys and censuses could no longer be the mainstay of their National Statistical Offices. Data collected by both public and private data collectors, such as mobile phone data from telecommunication companies and geospatial data from satellites, were becoming important data sources for official statistics. In the case of public data sources, administrative data sources were moving well beyond taxation and customs data into new areas such as credit rating agency data and health insurance data.
5. **Beyond data compilation.** Countries also recognized the growing importance of non-traditional data techniques such as data blending techniques which combine traditional data sources, such as survey data sources, with non-traditional data sources, such as social media data.
6. **Beyond publications.** There was recognition amongst all countries about the importance of data visualization, story-telling, social media and new products and services. Countries discussed new product offerings, such as satellite accounts, and new service offerings, such as national accounts at the city and regional level, and microdata products, including microdata products combining business, household, personal and environmental data. Increasingly, users are wanting to know economic conditions for geographic regions smaller than the nation-state and for population groups other than the household sector.

The diversity of participants, from advanced statistical systems such as Canada and the USA, to developing nations such as Laos and Cambodia, from big countries such as China and Bangladesh to

small island states such as Fiji, was on display. Several Asian and Pacific countries spoke about **leaving no one behind**.

1. **Resources are not limitless.** Resources are decided upon by policy makers – the future of economic statistics need to be guided by policy priorities, not statistical priorities. New priorities may mean reducing or stopping existing priorities. The Future of Economic Statistics cannot expect a bottomless pit of resources.
2. **Capacities are already stretched**, especially in developing countries and small island states. The global statistical system needs to recognize the issue is often one of diverting existing capacity from one priority (e.g. rebasing) to another (e.g. conducting Population Census or Agricultural Census). For some countries, the size of the entire national statistical office is three!
3. **Many countries are still trying to ‘catch up’** to where others already exist e.g. implementing SNA, establishing a statistical business register, introducing CAPI into the Population Census or geo-tagging in the Agricultural Census. The future of economic statistics doesn’t necessarily have to be about doing more – it could be about letting all countries catch up to a base minimum (e.g. the future of economic statistics may be one where every country has a statistical business register, conducts a labor force survey, and produces a set of annual national accounts using 2008 SNA).

## 2. ECLAC High Level Seminar on the Future of Economic Statistics, 18 November, ECLAC Santiago, Chile

### Policy perspective - shift in analysis to new economics for sustainable development:

1. Broaden the core of the conceptual framework of economic statistics beyond traditional analysis to inform about the nexus between economy, environment and society
2. Move from a domestic view to global view through globalization and digitalization
3. Inform global mega trends – inequality, technological breakthroughs, environment degradation and climate change and environmental degradation, migration and socio-demographic shift and urbanization.
4. Inform trends locally by combining micro and macro perspective
5. Move to more granular analysis to inform heterogeneity between persons, households and firms by combine new data/big data with micro data
6. Timeseries needed to inform the nexus with the environment and society

### Key priority areas - extension of the framework of the system of national accounts in support of broader measures of progress with multidimensional perspective

1. Globalization, international trade and global value chains – role of MNEs
2. Informality and informal sector – role of SMEs
3. Digital economy and impact on consumption, production and employment
4. Inequality in household consumption, disposable income and wealth and regional inequalities
5. Link between the economy and society – through labor accounts and measures of human capital
6. Link between the economy and the environment - natural capital measures
7. Migration and impact on economy and social integration
8. Multi-dimensional poverty measures
9. Subjective well-being measures

### New working procedures

1. Creation of innovation labs and incubators for advancing research program in statistics in NSOs
2. Transformation to broader measures through experimentation and testing of new priority areas
3. Collaboration with partners leveraging the full national statistical system through a multi-disciplinary approach, like CB, MoF, ICT department for informing the digital economy
4. Better use of administrative data, big data and household and enterprise surveys building on the proper legal infrastructure for data sharing and exchange
5. Strengthening and linking registers enterprises, persons/households and buildings/dwelling
6. Micro data linking to provide granularity to economic statistics
7. Harmonization of meta data for basic statistics that are used in SNA, BPS, GFS, etc.
8. Dialogue with CBs to extend the economic accounts and statistics to non-traditional analysis
9. Skill development for the use of big data and new technologies
10. Communication strategy for economic statistics
11. National data governance policy covering data harmonization, interoperability, access and confidentiality and security
12. Development of global infrastructure such as UN Global Platform network, global register of MNEs, global training program

### 13. Use of geospatial tools

#### Pathways

1. Strengthen coordination role of NSO through better legal frameworks
2. Global statistical initiative supported with global program of work with global priorities to initiate research in broader measures
3. Early engagement in experimentation and testing of developing countries to allow extended system of economic statistics to reflect diversity of countries
4. Broad user consultation and dialogue with economists at national level to be consolidated at regional and global level to determine priorities
5. Better sharing of expertise between countries
6. Capacity building; recruiting and retaining talent.

#### Governance of system of economic statistics

1. Improve the effectiveness through global priorities based on dialogue with the users (economists, policy makers and politicians)
2. Increase coordination, accountability and transparency of the governance of the system of economic statistics. Choice to be made between the options: a) status quo, b) light coordination, c) facilitation and coordination and d) strong coordination and oversight with an agreed global work program based on global priorities
3. Explore an agreed global work program for the update of the system of economic statistics based on global priorities.
4. Determine the appropriate regional and international coordination and oversight with shared responsibilities between countries and regional and international agencies.
5. Recognize the global work program could be instrumental in moderating the dialogue with users and in fundraising for implementation of the economic statistics in countries.