

High Level Seminar on the Future of Economic Statistics

Shanghai, People's Republic of China

3 – 5 June 2019

Concept Note

This High-Level Seminar on the Future of Economic Statistics offers an opportunity to interact, exchange and learn from leading economists, statisticians and academics in the fields of economic policy, data and statistics. Bringing together economists and statisticians in debate and discussion, and thus providing the collaboration necessary between the two disciplines should ensure a robust dialogue on economic statistics that are responsive and relevant, particularly in a rapidly changing policy and data landscape. Renewed interest in economic policy and statistics has been initiated by the UN Secretary-General, who recently requested the formation a UN network of economists, led by the UN Chief Economist, to better address the issue of sustainable development.

The Seminar will seek a collaborative Asia and Pacific region response to the need for economic statistics that support evidence-based policy making within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This response may call for a step-change in the conceptual framework of economic statistics combining measures of economic activity on trends in technological breakthroughs, demographic and social change, urbanization, globalization and digitalization trends with broader measures on equitable and sustainable economic performance.

It is expected that changes to the system of economic statistics will inform policy actions that foster economic growth, people's well-being, inclusive societies and sustainable use of the environment as set out by the sustainable development agenda. To debate the broader purpose of economic statistics in the future, we need to assess the users' demands, as well as the capacity and capability of our statistical systems to provide the required data and statistical services.

To achieve this response, national statistical agencies will need an institutional transformation of the system of economic statistics from producer of statistics to steward of data, standards and statistics. Elements of this transformation includes: the use of new data sources and methods (such as big data, administrative data and microdata linking); secure data sharing arrangement between statistical agencies and with data owners in the public and private sector; and the broadening of services to provide access to micro data including longitudinal data.

Recognizing these challenges facing national statistical agencies, the 50th meeting of UN Statistical Commission (held in March 2019) suggested the formation of a Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics, consisting of both economists and statisticians, to consider the effectiveness and responsiveness of economic statistics.

This Seminar will be part of the global consultation for the Friends of the Chair Group and as such provides an opportunity for the Asia-Pacific region to influence and inform the global design of the system of economic statistics.

The Agenda will be organized around the following areas:

1. Policy frameworks and data needs within the context of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development
2. Current statistical initiatives and ongoing work designed to meet the needs of policy makers within the 2030 Agenda
3. Gaps in the current statistical initiatives, the prioritization of this work program and the mechanisms for taking forward the develop work program
4. New technological infrastructure, methods and services required to meet the changing needs of policy makers for more real time and granular data
5. Reflection on the present coordination and governance mechanisms for updating the international statistical standards, and the role of the Asia-Pacific region within these mechanisms