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Agenda item 13

Adoption of the declaration on navigating policy with data to leave no one behind

Draft declaration on navigating policy with data to leave no one behind

We, the Ministers and representatives of the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, assembled at the sixth session of the Committee on Statistics, held in Bangkok, from 16 to 19 October 2018:

Recognize reliable and timely statistics as indispensable for evidence-based decision-making and of principal value for transparency, accountability and inclusive societies,

Acknowledge official statistics as an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving governments, the economy and the public with data on the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation,¹

Emphasize transformative shifts in the production and use of official statistics as imperative for successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,²

Reaffirm our responsibility to ensure official statistics are available, accessible, and used for impactful analysis and transparent decision-making, consistent with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics,¹

Therefore:

Reaffirming the pledge to leave no one behind through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Recalling the commitment to engage in systematic follow-up to and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

¹ See General Assembly resolution 68/261.

² General Assembly resolution 70/1.

Reaffirming the importance of regular and inclusive reviews by member States of progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national and subnational levels, as country-led and country-driven processes to serve as a basis for regular reviews by the high-level political forum on sustainable development,

Recognizing that the high-level political forum on sustainable development has a central role in overseeing the network of follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global and regional levels,

Recognizing also progress made by the members and associate members of the Commission to strengthen official statistics for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and to actively pursue solutions appropriate to national contexts, including defining national, subregional and regional targets and indicators,

Noting that, despite considerable progress, many members and associate members report significant constraints on administrative structures, human resources and financial issues with regard to national statistical offices and the statistical units of government agencies in their efforts to improve the quality of data, and recognizing that this area requires capacity-building assistance to enable policy to be geared to disadvantaged groups to leave no one behind,

Acknowledging the laudable efforts of the Asia-Pacific statistical community to advance official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the collective vision and framework for action,³

1. *Reiterate* our shared vision that, by 2030, national statistical systems, including national statistical offices, are enabled and empowered to lead the development of and to deliver innovative, trusted and timely statistical products and services for the urgently needed and evolving statistical requirements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

2. *Recognize* the commendable commitment of the Asia-Pacific statistical community to modernize statistical business processes, acquire the requisite skills and develop integrated statistics for integrated analysis to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

3. *Affirm* that the realization of the collective vision and framework for action transcends the capabilities of national statistical systems and requires a whole-of-government approach with adherence to three principles:

Principle 1: Linking policy with data is imperative for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and requires continuous dialogue between both users and producers of official statistics;

Principle 2: Investments in national statistical systems need to correspond to resource requirements for the statistical products and services demanded by users;

Principle 3: To deliver timely, innovative and reliable products and services, national statistical offices and the statistical units at all levels of government need to be empowered to operate as one integrated system,

³ E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1.

upholding standards articulated in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, including confidentiality, transparency and professional independence, and resourced to implement modern statistical methods for producing, aggregating and disseminating statistics, data and microdata;

4. *Commit* to the implementation of the collective vision and framework for action with collaborative and integrated efforts between policymakers and statistics producers through the following action areas at the national level:

(a) Committing to integrate statistics development with national development policies and plans⁴ by setting targets for improvements to the national statistical system and statistical activities to ensure reliable evidence for policymaking and evaluation, recognizing a country's specific local circumstances;

(b) Committing to strengthen and develop, where appropriate, a national monitoring framework, including an indicator set to produce robust evidence for policy development and monitoring and to integrate the framework into planning and budgeting processes;

(c) Committing to establish a high-level advisory body, where appropriate, to the national statistical system to represent the interests and demands of policymakers and other users of statistics, such as the media, the private sector and the general public, to support the development and monitoring of a system-wide statistical programme responding to users' needs;

(d) Committing to specify the roles and responsibilities of the national statistical system, where necessary, to improve coordination and cooperation among statistical units of government agencies at all levels and to transform statistical business processes;

(e) Resolving to empower heads of national statistical offices to assume the lead role in developing and coordinating their respective integrated national statistical systems, avoiding duplicated activities in producing and disseminating official statistics;

(f) Endeavouring to strengthen necessary legislative provisions and institutional mechanisms to enable national statistical systems to take full advantage of new, innovative and frontier technologies, to follow national and, where appropriate, international standards of data exchange and to build partnerships with all stakeholders for data sharing, while respecting the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;

(g) Resolving to improve communication with regard to statistics and to strengthen statistical literacy and culture to facilitate accurate and impactful analysis for evidence-based policymaking and transparent governance in pursuit of achieving the ambition of leaving no one behind;

(h) Committing to advocate for the expanded use of official statistics for evidence-based policymaking and transparent governance, including, where appropriate, regular organization of statistical awareness programmes with governments and decision-makers;

(i) Committing to revisit national policies and strategies, as appropriate, to enable implementation of the above action points;

⁴ Noting that the structure, function and terminology of national development policies and plans vary from country to country and that efforts to integrate statistics development therefore will take a variety of forms and shapes depending on the country context.

5. *Call upon* development partners:⁵

(a) To provide coordinated technical, financial, technological and capacity-building assistance to countries and to ensure countries have full access to data held by development partners in support of the implementation of the collective vision and framework for action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(b) To consult the national statistical office or national statistical system concerned before conducting any statistical study or survey;

(c) To continue to develop and strengthen international statistical standards and to provide technical support for their implementation;

6. *Request* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To support member States in their efforts to implement the collective vision and framework for action in an integrated manner and in light of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific;⁶

(b) To continue engagement with development partners, and other relevant stakeholders, to ensure the ongoing, coordinated and effective implementation of the present Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind and the collective vision and framework for action;

(c) To prepare an overview of progress, including a status update on each of the topics mentioned in paragraphs 4 (a) to 4 (i) and 5 (a) to 5 (c) in implementing the present Declaration, every two years, for review by the Committee on Statistics;

(d) To submit the outcome of the high-level segment of the sixth session of the Committee on Statistics, including the present Declaration, to the Commission at its seventy-fifth session, in 2019;

(e) To organize a midpoint conference in 2024, as appropriate, to gauge the extent of success and to reflect on our commitment.

⁵ Development partners include international, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society.

⁶ E/ESCAP/73/31, annex II.