



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Committee on Statistics

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Item 3 (e) of the provisional agenda*

Regional initiatives: disaster risk reduction statistics

**Outcomes of the first meeting of the Expert Group on
Disaster-related Statistics**

Note by the secretariat**

Summary

Pursuant to Commission resolution 70/2, the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific was established to work towards developing a basic range of disaster-related statistics.

The present report informs the Committee of the progress made by the Expert Group since its establishment, summarizing initial discussions by the Expert Group on the scope of its work and related statistical challenges, as well as the decisions taken accordingly regarding its further work.

The Committee is invited to take note of the progress made by the Expert Group and provide guidance on the continued work of the Expert Group towards developing a basic range of disaster statistics.

* E/ESCAP/CST(4)/L.1.

** The present document was submitted late due to the need to include the issues raised during the latest discussions on the development agenda beyond 2015; in particular, the recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Statistics and Data for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 70/2, the Commission decided to establish an expert group comprising statisticians and disaster risk reduction experts to work towards developing a basic range of disaster-related statistics to be approved by the Commission. It also decided that the expert group shall report on the progress made in developing a basic range of disaster-related statistics to the Committee on Statistics in 2014 and the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015.

2. As the basis for its decision, the Commission stressed the importance of disaggregated data related to disasters in enabling a comprehensive assessment of the socioeconomic effects of disasters and strengthening evidence-based policymaking at all levels for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. It considered the recommendation by the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction at its third session¹ that the secretariat work towards monitoring more effectively the resilience of member States to disasters, including through the development of a core set of disaster-related statistics, in close coordination with the Committee on Statistics.

3. Accordingly, ESCAP established the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific through nominations from member States. The Expert Group comprises statisticians and experts on disaster management from 14 countries in Asia and the Pacific and also other individual experts and representatives from international agencies. It is supported jointly by the Statistics Division and the Information Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division of the ESCAP secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme Regional Centre in Bangkok. The secretariat supports the Expert Group by facilitating online and in-person meetings and by preparing technical materials on existing statistical standards and common practices related to disaster statistics for its consideration.

4. The Expert Group held its first meeting in Sendai, Japan, from 27 to 29 October 2014, during which initial proposals on the scope and statistical challenges related to a basic range of disaster statistics were discussed. Further discussions are needed for the Expert Group to develop complete recommendations in response to the request from the Commission. The following subsections contain the summary report of the first meeting of the Expert Group.

II. Summary report of the first meeting of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

5. The first meeting of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific was organized jointly by the secretariat and Tohoku University with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Its objectives were to: (a) agree on the scope of a basic range of disaster-related statistics; (b) discuss principles and criteria for defining and classifying disaster events and human and socioeconomic impacts related to them; and (c) develop a workplan for the Expert Group.

6. The meeting was attended by members of the Expert Group, experts from regional and international institutions, and researchers from Tohoku

¹ See E/ESCAP/70/14.

University, Japan. The following participants were elected to serve as chair and vice-chairs of the Expert Group:

(a) Chair: Ms. Hae Ryun Kim, Deputy Director, Research Planning Division, Statistical Research Institute, Statistics Korea, Republic of Korea;

(b) Vice-Chair: Mr. Agus Wibowo, Head, Data Division, National Agency for Disaster Management, Indonesia;

(c) Vice-Chair/Rapporteur: Mr. Yuichi Ono, Assistant Director and Professor, International Research Institute of Disaster Science, Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan.

A. Scope of a basic range of disaster-related statistics

7. Regarding the scope of a basic range of disaster-related statistics, the Expert Group:

(a) Confirmed that a basic range of disaster-related statistics, accompanied by agreed definitions and classifications, and guidelines for data collection and dissemination would: (a) help member States improve reporting of and recording disaster occurrences and impacts at local and national levels; (b) facilitate risk communication in and between the different stages of disaster risk management, between national and local governments, and among technical ministries; and (c) inform policies and programmes on disaster risk reduction and management at the national, regional and international levels;

(b) Recognized that local and national government authorities make decisions to address various issues and challenges at different stages pertaining to disaster risk management that require comprehensive information on hazards, vulnerability, and exposure. Further recognized that the lack of agreed statistical definitions and classifications and capacity constraints at the national and local levels pose serious hindrances to many countries in the Asia-Pacific region in collecting, compiling and comparing even the most basic statistics on disaster occurrences and impacts within countries and across national boundaries;

(c) Appreciated the ongoing efforts of UNDP in leading other entities in building strong linkages between disaster risk reduction and other key development issues, including poverty reduction, in deliberations on sustainable development goals, targets and indicators, and recognized the importance of aligning efforts relating to disaster-related statistics with that process;

(d) Acknowledged the process in developing global goals and targets in a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction facilitated by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), and agreed to reflect the outcomes of the third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015, into the development of a basic range of disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific;

(e) Emphasized the importance of contributing to the efforts of UNISDR to implement a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction through the introduction of a basic range of disaster-related statistics for the Asia-Pacific region to support better monitoring of its progress;

(f) Discussed the added value of a basic range of disaster-related statistics in providing member States a reference for establishing a basic range of statistics as the foundation to measure the indicators associated with the above goals and targets in a systematic and consistent manner;

(g) Emphasized that its work should initially be focused on statistics relating to the onset of disasters, with other important disaster-related statistics taken into consideration at a later stage. Also emphasized, to the extent possible, that its work should be aligned to the Warsaw international mechanism for loss and damage associated with climate change impacts;

(h) Agreed that the development of a basic range of disaster-related statistics should be guided by national policy priorities, taking into account regional and international frameworks, in particular, the relevant goals and targets of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, and that the core of the basic range of disaster-related statistics, as a matter of priority, is to comprise (a) disaster occurrences; and (b) direct and immediate impacts of disasters.

B. Principles and criteria for defining and classifying disaster events and their impacts

8. Regarding principles and criteria for defining and classifying disaster events and their impacts, the Expert Group:

(a) Acknowledged the efforts of national-, regional-, and global-level organizations in collecting disaster-related statistics for disaster response, risk reduction and broader development, and recognized different country practices in disaster data collection, management and dissemination. In that regard, it noted the accumulated experience of UNDP in supporting national disaster loss and damage databases in 57 countries and emphasized that efforts to establish a basic range of disaster-related statistics for Asia and the Pacific should build on existing national practices and experiences;

(b) Reviewed existing definitions of disasters, and relevant initiatives and studies as strategic departure points for the development of a regional classification;

(c) Identified key characteristics of disaster occurrences, such as number of deaths, number of affected people and declaration of disasters by government, as practised by national and, as appropriate, local governments for recording disasters to be further examined to establish an appropriate and operational definition as part of a regional basic range of disaster-related statistics;

(d) Decided to complement existing materials with more information on country practices on disaster definitions, classifications and data collection and reporting in order to ensure the accommodation of the broadest possible types of disasters that occur in Asia and the Pacific in a regional basic range of disaster-related statistics;

(e) Reviewed recent developments in the field of disaster damage and losses recording and accounting as institutionalized in countries, and considered those as primary resources for further examination and use to develop standards for statistics on disasters' immediate impacts;

(f) Noted that a table of disasters and their specific characteristics needed to be further developed in order to develop user-friendly measurements;

(g) Noted also that guidance materials for the production of a basic range of disaster statistics, once established, should be sufficiently flexible to enable the application of a broader spectrum of tools linked to formal and non-formal information generation mechanisms;

(h) Decided to examine available resources to assess their suitability to the Asian and Pacific context and to further discuss statistics on direct and immediate impacts of disasters, specifically regarding: (a) impacts to lives or so called “affected population” mortality, injury, missing and displaced populations and their disaggregation by age and sex; and (b) impacts to livelihoods: infrastructure, housing, critical facilities and services, production factors and appropriate valuation methods.

C. Workplan of the Expert Group

9. The Expert Group plans to follow up on the recommendations from its first meeting with an online thematic review and discussion on a draft basic range of disaster-related statistics.

10. The Expert Group noted several events as opportunities for getting inputs and/or publicizing its work.

Table

Opportunities for publicizing the work of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics

Venue and date	Event/activity	Purpose/expected result	Remarks
Bangkok, 9–10 December 2014	Presentation of initial Expert Group results to an expert group meeting on statistics and data for the development agenda beyond 2015	Inputs and guidance to build synergy with work on other domains of statistics	To be presented by the Chair of the Expert Group
Sendai, Japan, 14–18 March 2015	Second meeting of the Expert Group, organized as a side event at the third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction	Recognition among global leaders of the disaster risk reduction effort in the Asia-Pacific region to establish a basic range of disaster-related statistics. Review by the Expert Group of a first draft of a proposed basic range of disaster statistics	Draft proposed basic range of disaster-related statistics will be consulted through an online platform. The Expert Group Meeting will also provide inputs to the multi-stakeholders segment on applying science and technology to disaster risk reduction decision-making
Bangkok, 25–27 March 2015	Report to ESCAP Committee on Statistics	Inputs and guidance by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, focusing on draft basic range of disaster-related statistics	

Venue and date	Event/activity	Purpose/expected result	Remarks
Bangkok, May 2015	Report to the ESCAP Commission at its seventy-first session	Interim recommendations by the Commission on the future work of the Expert Group	Report by the Committee on Statistics
Bangkok, September 2015	Report to ESCAP Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction	Inputs and guidance by the ESCAP Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction on the work of the Expert Group	Expanded presentation to include draft implementing guidelines
Bangkok, May 2016	Report to the ESCAP Commission at its seventy-second session	Endorsement of the basic range of disaster-related statistics by the ESCAP Commission	

11. Below are follow-up actions to be taken prior to the second meeting of the Expert Group, to be held in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015:

- (a) Compilation of the Expert Group's meeting report;
- (b) Presentation of the work of the Expert Group to an expert group meeting on statistics and data for the post-2015 development agenda (December 2014);
- (c) Stocktaking of country practices to complement available information on such topics as the range of statistics, types of statistics, definitions and classifications and data collection and reporting;
- (d) Preparation of a draft basic range of disaster-related statistics for review and discussion by the Expert Group.

III. Issues for Consideration

12. The Committee is invited to take note of the progress made by the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics towards implementation of Commission resolution 70/2 and provide guidance for its further work towards establishing a basic range of disaster-related statistics.