

Expert Group Meeting on opportunities and advantages of enhanced collaboration on statistical information management in Asia and the Pacific

20-22 June 2011, Bangkok, Thailand

REPORT

Background

National Statistical Institutions (NSIs) face significant challenges and opportunities in a rapidly evolving information environment. The ease and speed with which information is available are creating new expectations from NSI clients, while new technologies are expanding the opportunities for NSIs to meet those expectations.

It was in this context that, at the second session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, held in December 2010, heads of NSIs committed to two overarching strategic goals towards 2020 for the development of national statistical systems in Asia and the Pacific, including “[C]reating a more adaptive and cost-effective information management environment for NSIs through stronger collaboration.”

At a side event to the Committee, entitled “Modernization of Statistical Information Systems” discussions covered a variety of issues related to statistical information management, the transformation of business processes within national statistical systems and the future role of official statistics. Participants stressed the urgent need for the statistical community to work together to develop common solutions, recognizing that the quality and cost-effectiveness of their respective transformation processes would greatly benefit from joint development of related concepts, standards, tools and capacity development programmes. It was suggested that a regional platform for discussion be established to further explore the issues and develop methods for working collectively.

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM), “Opportunities and advantages of enhanced collaboration on statistical information management in Asia and the Pacific,” was organized by the ESCAP secretariat to further the discussion among member States on defining the way forward for regional cooperation on statistical information management. The EGM, held on 20-22 June 2011 in Bangkok, was the first ever attempt to bring together professionals engaged with managing or supporting the development of statistical information systems in the NSIs of the region. It provided a unique opportunity for national and international experts to share country experiences and perspectives, review relevant on-going regional and international initiatives, reflect on the existing mechanisms for regional cooperation, and define the immediate and concrete actions required for promoting regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.

The draft programme of the EGM is contained in Annex I, and the list of participants in Annex II. A summary of main discussions during the EGM is presented in Annex III.

Conclusions and recommendations

Messages to heads of national statistical systems in the Asia-Pacific region

Participants agreed to send the following messages to Heads of national statistical systems in the Asia-Pacific region:

- We urge the statistical community to engage more proactively as agents of change in developing visions and partnerships with traditional and new partners to ensure that official statistics remains relevant to society and continue to add value to development;
- We recognize that innovation and industrialization of statistical information systems, including breaking away from silos and systematizing flows of information, are essential for meeting present and future needs for official statistics; we consider the modernization of our systems not an end in itself but a strategy for improving development outcomes;
- We acknowledge the strategic value of the emerging use of statistical standards for improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness of transformation efforts; in particular, we recognize the value of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) as a tool for systematically planning and developing long-term strategies for the modernization of statistical information systems;
- We believe that enhanced collaboration, including sharing of information, experience, best practices and lessons learned from the region and beyond, is essential for sustainable and continuous improvements;
- We recognize that the uptake of modernization efforts by national statistical systems requires advocacy at all levels;
- We recognize the need for champions to advocate modernization efforts across national statistical systems and the different professions involved. In this regard, we believe that there is a need to raise the profile of the role IT plays in statistical information systems for transformation processes to succeed;
- We bring to the attention of national decision-makers that the transformation of statistical information systems requires recognition and commitment at the highest levels, and allocation of appropriate resources.

Next steps

In order to enhance and support the continuation of efforts to promote the modernization of statistical information systems in the Asia-Pacific region, participants:

Strengthened national efforts

- Agreed that National Statistical Offices (NSOs) should facilitate the use of standards for statistical information management through incorporation of statistical business and IT strategies into national statistical development strategies;
- Also agreed that NSIs and other relevant stakeholders, in particular development partners should collaborate on strategy development.

Enhanced regional cooperation

- Agreed to the urgent need for setting up a Regional Cooperation Mechanism, which could consist of (1) a high level strategic body championing for and overseeing the regional work (similar to the High-Level Group for Strategic Directions in Business Architecture

in Statistics (HLG-BAS)); (2) technical forum or forums of scope and membership similar to existing cooperation mechanisms on Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS) and Statistical Metadata (METIS) to contribute to further development and use of international standards, including the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) and Metadata eXchange Standard (SDMX), with particular focus on issues specific to countries in the Asia-Pacific region and to support related capacity development efforts;

- Agreed that the Terms of Reference for the Mechanism and technical forum(s) shall be developed and agreed to by the Committee on Statistics as a matter of priority;
- Agreed that the work in the Asia-Pacific region should link to and build on existing global and regional initiatives and forums (METIS, MSIS, HLG-BAS), benefiting from inter-regional cooperation. The Meeting appreciated in that regard the expressed interest of the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to collaborate, including through expanding access to existing electronic platforms to also include experts from the Asia-Pacific region, and the willingness of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to support the possible establishment of a dedicated Asia-Pacific electronic platform.

Building a collective vision for future official statistics: Immediate next steps

The Meeting agreed to the need for the global statistical system to engage 21st century trend-setters, leaders and thinkers in a joint envisioning exercise on the long-term role and contribution of official statistics to development.

In support of this, and to advocate and raise awareness of the need for leaders and development partners to engage in the modernization of statistical information systems, participants agreed to bring the outcomes of the EGM to the attention of heads of national statistical systems and the global statistical community at the following upcoming events:

- The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) Seminar for Heads of NSOs, December 2011;
- The 18th session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA), September 2011;
- The 2nd meeting of Partners for Statistical Development in Asia-Pacific, September 2011.

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ANNEX I: TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Monday 20 June 2011

Opening

8:30-9:00	Registration
9:00-9:05	Official opening and welcome
9:05-9:20	Introduction of participants
9:20-9:40	Keynote speech: Creating a more adaptive and cost effective information management environment for national statistical institutions through stronger collaboration <i>Presenter: Brian Pink, Australian Statistician and Chair, ESCAP Committee on Statistics</i>
9:40-10:20	Discussion
10:20-10:30	Overview of meeting objectives and programme
10:30-10:45	Coffee/Tea break

Session 1 – Country experiences: Identifying common issues and priorities
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Experts from across the Asia-Pacific region will share country perspectives on the major challenges faced by national statistical institutions in managing data and other statistical information to best meet the fast evolving client needs and expectations.

10:45-12:00	Country presentations (Parallel sessions)
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Session 1A

Ms. Sun-Hi, Yi, Deputy Director of Informatics Planning Division,
Statistics Korea (KOSTAT), Republic of Korea

Mr Mazlan Sulong, Deputy Director, Information Management
Division, Department of Statistics, Malaysia

Mr Meng Kimhor, Deputy Director General, National Institute of
Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Cambodia

Mr. S.A.S Bandulasena, Acting Director, ICT Division, Department
of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

Session 1B

Dr. Ravindra Singh, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India

Mr Dossan Zharmukhambetov, Director of Department of classifications and information technologies, Agency on Statistics, Republic of Kazakhstan

Ms Malee Wongsaroje, Director, Information and Communication Technology Center, National Statistical Office, Thailand

Mr Benuel Lenge, Senior Statistician, Vanuatu National Statistical Office, Vanuatu

LUNCH

13:30-14:00

Country presentations

Session 1A

Mr. Ren Quanzhong, Director, Division of Planning and Guidance, Data Management Center, National Bureau of Statistics, China

Session 1B

Mr Michael Beahan, Branch Manager, Data management and Classifications, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia

Mr. Candido, Jr. Astrologo, Director, National Statistical Information Center, National Statistical Coordination Board, Philippines

14:00-16:00

Group discussions

Group discussions will extract issues from the experts' presentations, focusing on:

- **Expectations to national statistical institutions:** Who are the clients and what kind of products and services do they need from the national statistical systems?
- **Challenges:** Considering the identified expectations, what are the major information management challenges faced by national statistical institutions related to:
 - Organizational structure
 - Statistical production processes
- **Addressing the challenges:**
 - At the national level: Role of NSI management teams, statisticians, and of ICT staff
 - At the regional level?

Session 2 – Collective view on common regional priorities

From the outcomes of the group discussions during the previous session, experts will extract common and priority issues and discuss options for addressing these issues through regional cooperation.

16:00-16:30 Reporting by groups

16:30-17:00 Plenary discussion

Tuesday 21 June

Session 3 - Emerging generic business process models and common frameworks and terminology - A basis for practical cooperation?

This session will discuss the potential of generic statistical business process models, including common metadata frameworks and standards, for improving data quality, production efficiency and IT systems to better meet client expectations/needs.

09:00-09:45 A framework to describe statistical business processes: The Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM)
Presenter: Steven Vale, Chief, Statistical Information and Methodology Unit, Statistical Division, UNECE

09:45-10:30 Metadata standards: Data Documentation Initiative (DDI)
Presenter: François Fonteneau, Project Officer, Accelerated Data Programme/ International Household Survey Network (ADP/IHSN), Paris21

10:30-10:45 Overview of the Microdata Management Toolkit
Presenter: Ms. Gaye Parcon, Regional Coordinator for Asia, ADP/IHSN, Paris21

10:45-11:00 Coffee/Tea break

11:00-11:45 Integrating statistical information systems: The Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange Standard (SDMX)
Presenter: Brian Studman Director, Information Technology (Infrastructure), Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Session 4: Existing cooperation mechanisms

The session will review existing cooperation mechanisms on the management of statistical information systems and on that basis deliberate on options for strengthening cooperation on related matters in the Asia-Pacific region.

13:00-13:45 Existing cooperation mechanisms

- UNECE: MSIS and METIS Meetings
Steven Vale, Chief, Statistical Information and Methodology Unit, Statistical Division, UNECE
- High-Level Group for Strategic Directions in Business Architecture in Statistics (HLG-BAS)
Brian Studman, Director, Information Technology (Infrastructure), Australian Bureau of Statistics

13:45-14:00 ESCAP: Programme of work and governing structure

Session 5 – Scoping a regional cooperation mechanism

The session will also discuss how these emerging concepts and standards might form the basis for practical cooperation among statistical institutions for a better statistical information management.

14:00-16:00* Group discussions:

Group 1: Development of international standards: Could an Asia-Pacific regional mechanism play a role in the further development of emerging international standards? If so, how should such a mechanism be organized? What should such a mechanism aim to achieve in the next two years?

Group 2: Applying international standards: Could an Asia-Pacific mechanism play a role in advancing the implementation/application of emerging international standards at national level? If so, how should such a mechanism be organized? What should such a mechanism aim to achieve in the next two years?

Group 3: Advocating the transformation of NSIs: Could an Asia-Pacific regional mechanism play a role in raising awareness at country level of the need for a transformation of statistical business processes? If so, how should such a mechanism be organized? What should such a mechanism aim to achieve in the next two years?

16:00-17:00 Reporting by groups and plenary discussion

** Including a 15 minutes coffee/tea break*

Wednesday 22 June

Session 6 - Moving forward

Based on common issues and priorities identified the session will further explore how country efforts to modernize statistical information systems can be supported through regional cooperation. The session will discuss the possibility of establishing a mechanism to oversee and coordinate regional work relating to the modernization of statistical information system within statistical organizations.

09:00-10:00 Presentation: Summary of key issues identified from experts' presentations and discussions on challenges and scoping of a regional mechanism (session 2 and 3)

10:00-12:00* Discussion: Proposal for the establishment of a regional cooperation mechanism on the modernization of statistical information systems.

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Session 7 - Recommendations and Conclusions

This final session will conclude with a set of recommendations to be put forward to Heads of national statistical systems in the region.

13:30-15:30 Recommendations to heads of national statistical systems in the Asia-Pacific: Cooperation on the modernization of statistical information systems in the Asia-Pacific region

15:30-15:45 Conclusions

ANNEX II: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Member States

AUSTRALIA

Mr Brian Pink, Australian Statistician, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

Mr Brian Studman, Director, Information Technology (Infrastructure), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

Mr Michael Beahan, Branch Manager, Data Management and Classifications, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

CAMBODIA

Mr Kimhor Meng, Deputy Director General, National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Phnom Penh

CHINA

Mr Quanzhong Ren, Director, Division of Planning and Guidance, Data Management Center, National Bureau of Statistics of China, Beijing

INDIA

Mr Ravendra Singh, Deputy Director General (Training/National Academy of Statistical Administration), Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, New Delhi

KAZAKHSTAN

Mr Dossan Zharmukhambetov, Director, Department of Classification and Information Technology, Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Astana

MALAYSIA

Mr Mazlan Sulong, IT Deputy Director, Department of Statistics, Putrajaya

PHILIPPINES

Mr Candido Astrologo, Jr., Director III, National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), Makati City

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Ms Sunhi Yi, Deputy Director of Information Technology Service Team, Informatics and Service Bureau, Statistics Korea (KOSTAT), Daejeon

SRI LANKA

Mr S.A.S Bandulasena, Acting Director, ICT Division, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo

THAILAND

Ms Malee Wongsaroje, Director, Information and Communication Technology Centre, National Statistical Office, Bangkok

Ms Oosanee Chaiyanont, Director, Statistical Management Bureau, National Statistical Office, Bangkok

Mr Tanes Komolvipart, Director, Government Data Warehouse Group, National Statistical Office, Bangkok

Ms Thanyalak Maneewatthana, Computer Technical Officer, National Statistical Office, Bangkok

VANUATU

Mr Benuel Lenge, Senior Statistician, Statistical Leadership & Coordination Section, Vanuatu National Statistics Office, Port Vila

United Nations Secretariat entities

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Mr Steven Vale, Chief, Statistics Information and methodology Unit Statistical Division, Economic Commission for Europe, Geneva

Specialized agencies

ILO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Mr Gyorgy Sziraczki, Senior Economist, Regional Economic and Social Analysis Unit, Bangkok

UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR STATISTICS

Mr Nyi Thaug, Programme Specialist (Statistical Capacity Building), UNESCO, Bangkok

Intergovernmental organizations

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)

Ms Dalisay S. Maligalig, Principal Statistician, ADB, Mandaluyong City, Philippines

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

Mr François Fonteneau, Programme Coordinator, Accelerated Data Program, International Household Survey Network (ADP/IHSN), PARIS21/OECD, Paris

Ms Gaye Parcon, Regional Coordinator for Asia, ADP/PARIS21/OECD, Manila

SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY (SPC)

Mr James Hemphill, Web Developer / Data Dissemination Specialist, SPC, Noumea Cedex

**STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH AND
TRAINING CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES (SESRIC)**

Ms Zehra Zümür Selçuk, Researcher, SESRIC, Ankara

Observers

Mr Jon F. Kapp, Director, DevInfo Support Group, DevInfo, Bangkok

Secretariat

Ms Haishan Fu	Chief, Statistics Division (SD)
Ms Rikke Munk Hansen	Chief, Statistical Information Services Section (SISS), SD
Ms Margarita Guerrero	Regional Adviser on Statistics, SD
Mr Arman Bidar Bakhtnia	Associate Statistician, SDAS, SD
Mr Habibur Rahman Khan	Associate Statistician, SDAS, SD
Mr Eric Hermouet	Statistical Information Systems Officer, SISS, SD
Mr Artur Andrysiak	Statistician, SISS, SD
Ms Jillian Campbell	Statistician, SISS, SD

ANNEX III: SUMMARY DISCUSSIONS

The Meeting reviewed the changing information environment in which NSIs operate:

1. Information technology, the internet in particular, is broadening the user base of national statistical institutions and is changing users' expectations.
2. The Internet and related technologies are creating new sources of information, which could be used for statistical purposes. Examples of those new data sources include the commercial/private sector (banking, electronic ticketing for transport and other services...) as well as government (administrative data).

What do these changes mean for NSI operations and how can NSIs best respond?

Changing user expectations

The meeting identified a number of commonalities in terms of changing user expectations:

- Users expect that statistical data are made available rapidly after data compilation
- Users request more customized, more complex information solutions to their data needs, in particular in terms of combining data from different subject-matters. Participants had observed an increasing demand for data disaggregated at a low level of geographic and administrative units.
- Users request more detailed information in the form of micro-data sets. A number of participants reported improvements in facilitating the dissemination of micro-data sets, although some indicated that their mandate did not allow them to disseminate such micro-data due to privacy and confidentiality issues.
- Users request more complex indicators, presenting outcome rather than output information; this in turn creates a need for NSIs to communicate statistical information as "stories" to which users can relate.

Changing user expectations has already increased awareness for change by NSIs, including in the following areas:

- The need to develop web tools/interfaces to support the dissemination of complex datasets that match the needs of users. Participants in this regard highlighted the importance of establishing user profiles and classification of users in broad categories depending on their access patterns, such as: users accessing the NSI website only occasionally (general public, the "tourist"); users accessing regularly a particular set of data for their own work (public administrations, private sector, the "harvester"); and users searching for very detailed datasets (academic, the "researcher").
- As users increasingly access NSIs databases directly, there is an emerging and increasing need for NSIs to provide assistance to enhance statistical literacy among their users.
- As the volume of information on the internet is growing, it becomes increasingly important for NSIs to authenticate sources of information in order to maintain a trust relation with data users.

New data sources and new suppliers of official statistics

The meeting agreed that:

- Participants recognized the potential of making use of new sources of information for statistical purposes, whether such information is generated and maintained by the commercial sector, by the governmental sector, or other actors.
- The use of new data sources was seen as important, not least due to the high cost related to more traditional data collection tools such as surveys.
- The experts acknowledged the emergence of competing providers of statistics in some countries, who, using information from Internet sources would be able to offer statistics on certain subject-matters: for example, in areas where national statistical systems do not provide information as well as in the form of composite indices developed using data from NSIs. Participants agreed that even if some NSIs enjoyed a monopoly status regarding the provision of official statistics, they need to look forward in order to maintain their relevance in the longer term.

Challenge to National Statistical Institutions

Meeting participants identified the following major information management challenges faced by national statistical institutions in their efforts to meet evolving client needs and expectations, and adapt to changes in information supply:

- The increasing demand for interlinked datasets is highlighting the needs for stronger coordination among statistical institutions. Coordination efforts were seen as particularly important to address issues of differences in statistical concepts used, differences in documentation and metadata standards, differences in data quality frameworks, and differences in information technology solutions.
- Participants noted that in more decentralized national statistical systems, NSOs sometimes lack the official mandate to lead coordination efforts, limiting their ability to institute change processes.
- Participants agreed that NSO coordination role and mandate should include data sources maintained by other government agencies.
- The increased demand for more detailed datasets, including micro-data sets and data sets disaggregated at low level of geographic or administrative units, highlights the need to develop solutions and techniques to protect the confidentiality and privacy of respondents to surveys and other data collection tools.
- User requests for timely and complex datasets is highlighting the need for NSIs to develop more flexible, high capacity databases and other information processing systems.
- The broadening range of users of official statistics underlines the need for NSIs to support the improvement of statistical literacy of users and to convey not only statistical data but also to communicate stories about the data.
- The emergence of new suppliers of national statistical data highlight the need for NSOs to renew efforts in explaining the “value added” of official statistics as well as in becoming fully transparent regarding methodologies used in producing statistics.
- The emergence of new suppliers may bring NSOs to consider a new role in validating statistical data produced outside the official national system, thus maintaining their authoritative role.

Emerging use of models, standards and terminology for improved statistical information management

The meeting discussed the potential of a number of emerging uses of generic business process models, common frameworks and terminology, for improving data quality, production efficiency and IT systems to better meet client expectations/needs. The meeting noted

- GSBPM defines and describes statistical production processes in a coherent way, thus constituting a tool for standardizing statistical process terminology, comparing and benchmarking processes, and identifying synergies within and between statistical institutions. In that context, participants noted the importance of the GSBPM in addressing some of the coordination issues identified earlier.
- GSPM was found applicable to all activities undertaken by producers of official statistics which result in data outputs. It applies to national and to international organizations and it is independent of data sources, making it applicable to censuses and surveys, administrative and register-based statistics, and to mixed sources.
- GSBPM was considered important in assisting NSIs in moving from an essentially topic-based or “silo” information management structure towards a process-oriented or matrix approach.
- It was found that further application of GSBPM could benefit from inputs and involvement in METIS by Asia-Pacific national statistical systems, many of which are highly decentralized.
- The DDI is emerging as a solution to the growing supply of survey data (accumulation of surveys over time) combined with unsatisfied user demand. The DDI, and related software tools such as the International Household Survey Network (IHSN) Toolkit and National Data Archive (NADA), supports improved visibility and accessibility (online catalogue of survey published on the internet, including access policies); reliability and relevance (extensive documentation of methodologies used to design and apply surveys and of their content); comparability and usability (archiving of survey documentation allow an evaluation of the comparability over time).
- The DDI is of interest to data producers (national and international organization involved in data production) and users (researchers, data archives). The DDI is independent of data source and can be applied to documenting surveys and censuses as well as administrative sources or register-based statistics.
- SDMX provides a framework for standard agreed definitions and classifications, standard agreed table structure, standard agreed formats for both data and metadata. SDMX complements the DDI. SDMX focuses on the exchange of aggregated statistics, especially time series, while the DDI focuses on documenting survey data.
- SDMX was considered useful for managing the dissemination of statistical data and related metadata and linking datasets, including metadata, across different IT systems.
- While all standards and concepts, GSBPM, SDMX, and DDI are gradually being implemented within NSIs, further development of these standards and development of new concepts building on the existing ones is already underway (for example, the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM)).

Existing cooperation mechanism on issues related to statistical information systems & management

The meeting discussed the MSIS, METIS and HLG-BAS, existing cooperation mechanism on issues related to statistical information systems & management, and noted:

- The MSIS mechanism exists since the early 1980'ies under different names. Supported by UNECE, Eurostat and OECD, it provides, through regular meetings and other means such as the MSIS Wiki, a forum for exchange of experiences and good practices among information systems managers from national and international statistical organisations. It also contributes to the coordination of activities of different national and international organizations in the area of statistical information systems and facilitates and encourages the implementation of international standards and recommendations in the field of statistical computing among national and international statistical organisations.
- The MSIS mechanism organizes annual meetings of senior IT experts from national and international organizations and is open to all United Nations member countries.
- The Sharing Advisory Board (SAB) has an overlapping membership with MSIS. It promotes sharing of statistical software, presenting work progress at MSIS meetings and on the MSIS Wiki. It currently works on tools and templates for sharing, on developing guidelines for multilingual software as well as on collaboration models for software sharing.
- METIS mechanism provides a forum for discussing metadata issues, complementing other international initiatives that deal with the data collection needs of international statistical agencies. Supported by UNECE, Eurostat and OECD, it holds work sessions every 2-3 years open to all United Nations member countries and international organizations.
- METIS supports the development of a common metadata framework. Part A of the framework "statistical metadata in a corporate context – a guide for managers" is available in print and electronically while other parts are available only electronically on the METIS Wiki.
- The HLG-BAS mission is to "Oversee and guide discussions on developments in the business architecture of the statistical production process, including methodological and information technology aspects."
- HLG-BAS is a high-level forum (director general or directors) that provides strategic oversight and coordination of developments. In that capacity it oversees the work and guides discussions of MSIS, METIS and SAB groups.

Options for strengthening cooperation on statistical information systems in the Asia-Pacific region

The meeting discussed how the above emerging use of concepts and standards might form the basis for practical cooperation among statistical institutions in the Asia-Pacific region on statistical information management. Detailed discussions in smaller groups resulted in the following recommendations:

- Issues related to the modernization of statistical information systems, including emerging use of standards, are relatively new to a number of countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In that context, most participants agreed that a primary objective of regional cooperation mechanism (RCM) should be advocacy for the modernization of statistical information systems.
- In particular, a RCM should support NSOs in advocating the importance of the issues within their respective governments. In that regard, a RCM could play an important role in coordinating with various development partners in advocating on the issue to governments through their respective national partners (line ministries and others)
- Advocacy initiatives by a RCM should target as a priority group the higher levels of management in national statistical institutions.
- While the meeting recognized that many high level managers have opportunities to be exposed to concepts and standards underlying the modernization of statistical

information systems, a more practical approach, notably cases studies demonstrating benefits, should be supported by a RCM as part of the advocacy efforts.

- Advocacy efforts should also involve users of official statistics.
- A RCM could facilitate exchange of information through documenting and sharing experiences and practices.
- A RCM could address barriers to the adoption of standards, notably the language barriers through the translation of software, guidelines and manuals into national languages.
- A RCM could support coordination effort at the national level in order to facilitate the implementation of standard across national statistical systems.
- A RCM could also support the development of expertise on standards within national statistical institutions. In that regard, a RCM could support linking and knowledge sharing among IT staff and methodologists through an electronic knowledge and information sharing centre similar to the MSIS Wiki, or as a part of the global MSIS Wiki.
- A Regional Wiki on the issue (or regional chapter under the global MSIS Wiki) should develop a catalogue of regional initiatives to facilitate knowledge sharing.
- A RCM could include a regional technical working group to ensure that region-specific context and priorities are taken into account in the further developments of standards, for example through representation in global standard-setting bodies (MSIS, METIS, Statistical Commission ...) and through analytical work to identify regional specificities and their potential implications for the further development of standards.
- A RCM should maintain strong link between its work and the work of the MSIS group, learning from the existing MSIS work and avoiding duplication of efforts.
- Recognizing that countries are at different stages in their respective modernization process, a RCM should not pursue a single mode of implementation but take into account the various stages at which each country is. In that regards assessments of country situations (gaps, capacities, resources ...) was seen as an important initial step.

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