

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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For information

Item III (e) of the Provisional
Agenda

**TASK FORCE ON MEASURING EXTREME EVENTS AND DISASTERS:
PROGRESS OF WORK**

Prepared by the Task Force

*The document informs the CES Bureau of the progress of work of the Task Force on measuring extreme events and disasters. Taking into consideration the recent developments in international policy frameworks, the Task Force has updated its terms of reference to align with the related international activities and their timing, and is asking the Bureau to extend its working time for two years. **The CES Bureau also reviewed the updated terms of reference, provided in Addendum 1 to this document.***

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) set up the *Task Force on measuring extreme events and disasters* in February 2015, as a follow-up to an in-depth review conducted in October 2014.
2. The main objective of the Task Force is to clarify the role of official statistics in providing data related to extreme events and disasters, and identify practical steps for national statistical offices (NSOs), in coordination with national agencies responsible for disaster management, to support disaster management and risk reduction.
3. The Task Force was foreseen to work for two years, until June 2017.
4. Members of the Task Force represent NSOs of Armenia, Italy (chair), Kazakhstan, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa and Turkey. Furthermore, the following international organizations are members of the Task Force: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC), Eurostat, UN-ECLAC, UN-ESCAP and its Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).
5. From the start, the Task Force has cooperated closely with the Asia-Pacific Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics (UN-ESCAP Expert Group) and UNISDR, and taken into account their work.

6. The UN-ESCAP Expert Group was established in 2014 (ESCAP resolution 70/2 on “Disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific”). Its aim is to improve the availability and use of a core set of statistics to support development of disaster risk reduction policies in the ESCAP region and to monitor progress toward targets set at international level, particularly the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework)¹. One key outcome of the UN-ESCAP Expert Group is a draft Disaster Related Statistics Framework which is currently being pilot tested. The UN-ESCAP Expert group will provide its final report in May 2018 to the UN-ESCAP Commission.

II. INTERNATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO EXTREME EVENTS AND DISASTERS

7. After the setting up of the Task Force, several important international policy developments have taken place that have strongly influenced the work. These include the adoption of the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* in March 2015, the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* in September 2015 and of the SDG indicators in March 2016, as well as the adoption of the Paris Climate Agreement in December 2015.

8. To implement the Sendai framework, the United Nations General Assembly (GA) established on 3 June 2015 the *Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction (OEIWG)*². OEIWG has convened in three formal sessions between September 2015 and November 2016 and agreed on the set of indicators to measure global progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, and the related terminology.

9. The Task Force has followed closely the OEIWG work to identify disaster-related information needs. The Task Force has also contributed in substance to the work on key terms and definitions to improve alignment with statistical concepts enabling wider use of statistical data.

10. OEIWG presented its report (Advance Unedited Version A/71/644) in December 2016. This report recommends 38 global indicators for measurement of the seven global targets of the Sendai Framework, establishes definitions for key terms, suggests a classification of hazards, and makes a proposal for follow-up work to operationalize the indicators.

III. PROGRESS OF WORK OF THE TASK FORCE UNTIL 31 DECEMBER 2016

11. The Task Force held six web conferences between June 2015 and November 2016 and worked using a shared wiki platform. Two face-to face meetings were held with the members of the task force who were present at other related meetings: in Geneva on 9 February 2016 (lunch meeting at the second Session of OEIWG) and on 7 October 2016 (back-to-back with the Expert Forum on Climate Change-related Statistics).

A. Achievements of the Task Force

12. The Task Force reviewed the currently available official statistics and practices adopted by countries in statistics on extreme events and disasters. The results clarify:

¹ A/RES/69/283

² A/RES/69/284

- a) the current role of NSOs in this area;
- b) institutional cooperation;
- c) main data needs of stakeholders;
- d) main challenges;
- e) main data sources and data sharing;
- f) existing key statistics about extreme events and disasters, and
- g) the current use of geospatial information.

13. The main tool for this review was a survey on statistics related to extreme events and disasters which the Task Force conducted in April-May 2016. The survey also helped to identify the potential future role of NSOs in the production of statistics related to extreme events and disasters, and the need for guidelines and recommendations in this area. The survey was sent to NSOs of all CES member countries in April 2016, and 40 countries replied³.

14. The Task Force presented the main results of the survey on statistics related to extreme events and disasters at the Expert Forum on Climate Change-related Statistics (Geneva, 5-7 October 2016) with the following key points:

- a) In most countries NSOs are not the authority responsible for statistics on extreme events and disasters, there is a wide range of other national institutions producing these kind of statistics (ranging from one to seven);
- b) Most NSOs are at an early development stage or do not yet produce statistics for the purposes of analysing extreme events and disasters;
- c) Most NSOs believe they should play a bigger role in producing statistics related to extreme events and disasters, including taking up the coordination role;
- d) In most countries official statistics are used for activities related to extreme events and disasters by other agencies. This includes population statistics, housing statistics, economic statistics and agriculture statistics;
- e) Data needs for quick emergency response cannot always be served by NSOs, due to limited possibilities for spatial disaggregation, data quality issues and lack of communication and coordination;
- f) Statistical confidentiality is a constraint in sharing data;
- g) Guidelines, recommendations, best practices, international standards etc. in this area would be needed primarily for methodology, definitions and the integration of geospatial information;
- h) International organisations can play an important role
 - i. To develop a conceptual framework which allows official statistics to serve different policy frameworks in a coherent and consistent way, such as SDGs, Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change;
 - ii. To develop internationally comparable methodological standards, classifications, recommendations and guidance;
 - iii. To provide platforms for sharing experiences and good practices.

³ Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czechia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Ukraine

B. Contributions to related international work

15. The Task Force has provided substantive contributions to the OEIWG work: the Task Force prepared two substantive comments on disaster-related terminology and the classification of hazards, and contributed to the formulation of follow-up recommendations of the OEIWG final report to the General Assembly (Advance Unedited Version A/71/644, December 2016).

16. On the suggestion of the Task Force, in close cooperation with UN-ESCAP and UNISDR, **OEIWG included in its report to the General Assembly the recommendation to involve the statistical community in the follow-up work to operationalize the indicators of the Sendai Framework.**

17. The Task Force has strengthened the cooperation between the statistical community and the “disaster risk community”. The representatives of JRC, UNISDR and WMO emphasized the importance of continuous involvement of the statistical community in international processes related to disaster risk management in several meetings. As a result, all partners recognize the importance of official statistics as multi-purpose tool for the operationalization of the Sendai Framework Indicators, for the alignment with SDG indicators and future reporting requirements under the Paris Agreement. This is also reflected in the section “Follow-up and operationalization of the indicators” of the OEIWG report.

18. The Task Force has presented its work and discussed planned activities in different international expert groups. This included a webex presentation at the *3rd meeting of the Asia-Pacific Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics* (Bangkok, 29 October 2015), a presentation at the *WMO Disaster Risk Reduction User-Interface Expert Advisory Group on Hazard and Risk Analysis* (Geneva, 15-17 December 2015), an intervention at the *UNISDR Science and Technology Partnership and the Science and Technology Road Map to 2030* (Geneva, 27-29 January 2016), supporting the preparation of, and participating in, the session *Aligning 2015 agreements through multi-purpose disaster-related data and statistics at the UN World Data Forum* (Cape Town, 16 January 2017) and the organisation of specific sessions at the *2015 and 2016 Expert Fora on Climate Change-related statistics*.

IV. PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

19. The Task Force will take into account in the next steps the most recent developments related to the outcomes of OEIWG. The Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) adopted at its meeting in November 2016 the indicators recommended by OEIWG relating to SDGs 1, 11 and 13. The indicators will be presented to the 48th Session of the UN Statistical Commission in March 2017 for approval. This is a good example of ensuring coherence between measurement of SDGs and the Sendai framework, and further underlines the need to develop robust multi-purpose information sources. The future developments related to reporting requirements of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change should be also taken into account in the work of the Task Force.

20. The OEIWG report published recently (December 2016) is an important policy document that defines global indicators and related terminology. Its section “Follow-up and operationalization of the indicators” recommends to involve the statistical community to develop minimum standards and metadata for disaster-related data, statistics and analysis, to provide technical support to member states and to develop technical guidance material. The OEIWG results have a strong influence on the work of the Task Force.

21. The overall goal is to ensure that official statistics would serve the multiple information needs related to disaster-risk management and reporting, consistent with information needs of other policy frameworks such as SDGs and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. To achieve this, the “statistical community” and the “disaster risk community” have to work closely together to develop common methodologies, classifications, and guidance documents.

22. At the session *Aligning 2015 agreements through multi-purpose disaster-related data and statistics at the UN World Data Forum* (Cape Town, 16 January 2016) participants agreed to establish a global partnership on disaster-related statistics. The work of the global partnership will support efforts to improve statistics for monitoring SDGs. The work should build on the progress already made by the UNECE Task Force on Measuring Extreme Events and Disasters and the UN-ESCAP Expert Group.

23. The UN-ESCAP Expert Group is still working on the Disaster Related Statistics Framework, also taking into consideration the recommendations of OEIWG.

24. In view of the above and to take into account the recent developments related to extreme events and disasters, **the Task Force proposes its terms of reference to be extended for two more years to finalise its work.** The proposed next steps are based on the Task Force’s survey on statistics related to extreme events and disasters in April-May 2016, the recommendations of the Expert Forum on Climate Change-related Statistics, the discussions with UN-ESCAP and UNISDR and the OEIWG report. The Task Force will:

- a) Continue the work to clarify the role of NSOs and draft *Recommendations on the measurement of extreme events and disasters*. The work, led by the Task Force will benefit from inputs from the UN-ESCAP Expert Group and UNISDR;
- b) Contribute to the development of a framework for disaster-related statistics, led by the UN-ESCAP Expert Group;
- c) Contribute to the development of methodologies for Sendai Framework Indicators and drafting of guidance documents on national monitoring and data exchange frameworks, led by UNISDR;
- d) Participate in the global partnership on disaster-related statistics.

25. It was also recommended, if possible, to enlarge the geographical representation of the Task Force with countries from other regions.

26. The updated Terms of Reference are presented in document ECE/CES/BUR/2017/FEB/8/Add.1.

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