HAZARDOUS EVENTS AND DISASTERS:
PROGRESS REPORT, UPDATED WORK PLAN AND EXTENSION OF MANDATE

Prepared by the Task Force

The Bureau renewed the terms of reference of the Task Force on Measuring Hazardous Events and Disasters in February 2020 to: (a) provide guidance for the practical implementation of the CES "Recommendations on the role of official statistics in measuring hazardous events and disasters"; (b) support the statistical operationalisation of terms, definitions and classifications used in disaster risk management; (c) develop a set of core statistics and indicators; and (c) support the establishment of a community of practice.

In 2020 the work was strongly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Task Force had to refocus its activities on providing immediate support to guide statistical offices in dealing with the pandemic (e.g. via a wiki platform and webinars). In 2021 the Task Force turned back to the implementation of its tasks according to the originally set priorities.

The need to refocus activities in 2020-2021 due to COVID-19 delayed the work of the Task Force. At the same time this provided an opportunity for a first-hand implementation of some of the Recommendations, and allows to take on board lessons learned.

The Bureau reviewed the progress of work and the updated work plan, and approved an extension of the work of the task force until 2024.

I.   BACKGROUND

1.   At its June 2019 plenary session the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) endorsed the *Recommendations on the role of official statistics in measuring hazardous events and disasters*, prepared by the Task Force on measuring hazardous events and disasters.

2.   In February 2020 the Bureau renewed the mandate of the Task Force to: (a) provide guidance for the practical implementation of the Recommendations; (b) support the statistical operationalisation of terms, definitions and classifications used in disaster risk management; (c) develop a set of core statistics and indicators; and (d) support the establishment of a community of practice.

3.   The Bureau also approved the work plan for the first phase of the work of the Task Force, lasting from March 2020 until June 2022. The main tasks during this period were planned to be:

(a) statistical review of the hazard classification developed by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the International Science Council (ISC); (b) developing an initial set of core indicators and statistics on hazardous events and disasters; (c) preparing implementation guidelines for the CES Recommendations, and (d) organising an expert meeting.

4.   From March 2020 on the work was strongly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic (a biological disaster). Therefore, in 2020 the Task Force had to refocus its activities on providing immediate support to guide statistical offices in dealing with the pandemic (e.g. via a wiki platform and webinars). More detail on this is provided in section II.A.

5.   In 2021 the Task Force turned back to the implementation of the work plan according to the originally set priorities. The first completed activity was organizing the First Global Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics in cooperation with all five UN regional commissions, UNSD and UNDRR in June 2021. The work on reviewing the hazard classification and set of indicators and statistics was restarted. More detail is provided in Section II.B.

6.   Section III presents a plan for the remaining work and a request for extension of mandate of the Task Force.

7.   The Task Force includes members from eight countries (Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, United Kingdom, Turkey) and six international organisations (ECLAC, ESCAP, European Space Agency, OECD, UNDRR and WMO). Angela Ferruzza from the Italian National Statistics Institute (ISTAT) is the Chair of the Task Force.

II.   PROGRESS OF WORK

A.   Focus in 2020: Providing immediate support to guide statistical offices in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic

8.   In February 2020 the CES Bureau renewed the mandate of the Task Force (after the CES 2019 plenary session endorsed the Recommendations prepared by the Task Force). On 11 March 2020 WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

9.   Due to the lockdown situation in many countries statistical work was impacted significantly and an immediate priority for offices was to adjust their work to the conditions of the pandemic. NSOs suddenly had to face a new challenge by informing national and global efforts to manage the pandemic with official statistics, while at the same time reorganizing their own work and transferring to remote working arrangements. In many cases this required a reprioritization of activities, development of capacity, obtaining new knowledge and gaining practical experience.

10.   Therefore, the Task Force focused its activities in 2020 on providing immediate support to guide statistical offices in dealing with the pandemic through webinars and knowledge platforms. This was done in close collaboration with other international organisations who provided similar support, in particular OECD and UNSD.

11.   The first tangible output of the Task Force's related work was the launch of the platform 'COVID-19 and official statistics' on 14 April 2020 (see press release https://unece.org/media/press/1095). In its section "support for managing the crisis" the platform

currently includes 100 practical examples of NSOs (24 countries) and statistical departments of international organisations on providing official statistics for managing the COVID-19 disaster.

12. To facilitate the exchange of experience among countries the Task Force organised a virtual discussion 'How are national statistical offices contributing to managing the COVID-19 disaster' on 10 June 2020. Experts from Austria, Canada, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom shared practical experience on NSO responses to managing the pandemic and discussed lessons learned. About 180 participants from around the globe were connected to the meeting. Agenda, programme, presentations and the webinar recording can be found at the meeting website.

B.   Re-starting implementation of the work plan in 2021: Organisation of a global expert forum, work on core statistics and indicators and review of hazard classification

13. By beginning of 2021 the Task Force decided to fade out the immediate COVID-19 response and to review its original work plan. Task Force members could again dedicate more time to the Task Force's activities.

14. Given the reduced time and resources available, the Task Force decided to focus in 2021 on the development of a set of core statistics and indicators, organization of an expert meeting and to start with the statistical review of the UNDRR-ISC "Hazard definition and classification" and its hazard information profiles (HIPs). It was furthermore decided to postpone the activity "practical guidance for implementation of the CES Recommendations" as this work can benefit from the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

15. The following three task teams were set up in January 2021 to allow for parallel work:

    a.   Organisation of an expert meeting in spring 2021 (lead: Angela Ferruzza, ISTAT)

    b.   Development of a set of core statistics and indicators (lead: Giovanna Tagliacozzo, ISTAT)

    c.   Statistical review of the hazard classification and definition (lead: Daniel Clarke, OECD)

1. First Global Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics (7, 8 and 10 June 2021)

16. The organizing committee of the Expert Forum was composed of members of the Task Force (task team a) and members of the global Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on Disaster-related Statistics (set up by the UN Statistical Commission in 2019[1]). IAEG is a formal mechanism under the UN Statistical Commission to advance a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics involving a network across the expert communities to sustain cooperation, coordination and fundraising for enhancing statistics related to hazardous events and disasters.

17. Given that the task of establishing a community of practice was in the terms of reference of both the Task Force and IAEG, it was decided to join forces in organizing annual expert meetings, hosted in turns by the five UN Regional Commissions. It was furthermore decided to aim to bring together practitioners and decision makers from around the globe to exchange

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[1] Report of the 50th session, Decision 50/116

knowledge and experience on disaster-related statistics, and to identify important emerging areas of work, following the successful example of the annual UNECE Expert Fora for Producers and Users of Climate Change-related Statistics.

18.   The First Global Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics[2] was organized by the Task Force and hosted by UNECE as an online meeting on 7, 8 and 10 June 2021. Four main topics were discussed:

- Session 1: Disaster risk reduction - the role of official statistics
- Session 2: Managing health and climate change-related hazards with official statistics
- Session 3: The geospatial dimension
- Session 4: Informing disaster risk reduction policy with official statistics: need for action

19.   To accommodate the different time zones the same topics were discussed each day in the morning (Geneva time, with English-Russian interpretation) and in the afternoon (Geneva time, English only). However, different countries and organizations presented in the morning and afternoon sessions.

20.   More than 300 participants from various expert communities (statistics, disaster-risk management, research, NGOs, international organisations, etc.) attended the Expert Forum.

21.   The Forum identified a list of important areas of work which will now be taken up by IAEG in its research agenda. This includes for example improving quality of key statistics (demographic, social, business etc.), developing methods to fill data gaps, and reviewing of existing statistical classifications.

22.   ESCWA offered to host the 2022 Expert Forum in Beirut (Lebanon).

2.   Development of a set of core statistics and indicators

23.   The task team started its work in February 2021 with a discussion of the purpose and scope of the set.

24.   The purpose of the set is currently defined as follows:

a.   Become a recommended set to all NSSs in CES member countries for regular production and dissemination;

b.   Provide the big picture of disaster risk in an internationally comparable way, i.e. help to understand the disaster risk situation in a given area (ideally all dimensions of risk);

c.   Help to strengthen the existing statistics to have regular statistics on disaster risk, i.e. long time series;

d.   Support monitoring and reporting of the international policy agreements (SDGs, Sendai, Paris, etc.);

e.   Include a ready-to use set of statistics which can be helpful in emergency situations ("emergency data kit").

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[2] https://unece.org/statistics/events/first-expert-forum-producers-and-users-disaster-related-statistics-online

    f.   Be complementary with the CES Set of Core Climate Change-related Statistics and Indicators.

25.   The scope has been defined relatively widely to include all phases of disaster-risk management. However, the number of statistics and indicators recommended for implementation by all NSOs will be narrowed by the Task Force by distinguishing "core statistics and indicators" from other statistics and indicators (similar to the approach chosen for the CES Set of Core Climate Change-related Statistics and Indicators). Selection criteria are relevance and feasibility of production in terms of methodological soundness and data availability.

26.   The core indicators will be organised as an indicator framework, using the ESCAP Disaster-related Statistics Framework (DRSF) as a starting point.

27.   For the selection of core statistics the task team has started to review the DRSF "basic range of disaster related statistics". Selection criteria are priority for implementation and feasibility of data production for administrative areas and disaster-prone areas. A survey for selecting core statistics and indicators has been carried out.

28.   A draft list of core statistics and indicators will be prepared by the task team in October 2021 and consulted with all members of the Task Force.

3. Statistical review of the hazard classification

29.   In May 2019, UNDRR and ISC established a technical working group to identify the full scope of hazards relevant to the Sendai Framework as a basis for countries to review and strengthen their risk reduction policies and operational risk management practices. The report of the technical working group Hazard definition and classification review presents the first results of this international collaborative effort.

30.   Key elements of the report are the 302 "Hazard Information Profiles" (HIPs) which describe each hazard with a brief primary definition, a scientific definition, metrics, numerical limits or defined guidelines, and essential annotations. These HIPs have not been published yet, but according to ISC should be available in the next few weeks.

31.   The reviewed hazard classification and its HIPs now provide a common set of hazard definitions for monitoring and reviewing implementation of the Sendai Framework, Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It is recommended to governments and their NSOs to use the classification for monitoring and reporting on DRR, and to gradually implement in databases and reporting systems.

32.   Therefore, it is of outmost importance to review the new hazard classification by experts of National Statistical Systems to:

    a.   Provide input for regular review and update;

    b.   Identify possible gaps and shortcomings;

    c.   Allow development of implementation guidance;

    d.   Support communication between classification owners and users within the statistical community.

33.   The task team, in close collaboration with UNDRR and ISC, has prepared an outline describing the steps for the statistical review, including identification of pilot countries and guiding questions for reviewers. The results will be used by UNDRR and ISC in the regular review and update, and for preparing practical implementation guidance.

34.   As the HIPs are still not finalized the piloting of a few of them will start in October. At the June 2021 Expert Forum 18 countries expressed their interest to participate in the pilot, and 20 more countries are considering it.

III.   PLAN FOR THE REMAINING WORK

35.   The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly delayed the work of the Task Force due to lack of resources in countries and refocusing its activities in 2020-2021. At the same time this provides an opportunity to consider the NSOs' lessons learned during this challenging period in the work of the Task Force.

36.   Therefore, the Task Force is **asking for an extension of its mandate for two years** (until June 2024) which will allow for the following:

   a.   Pilot testing and refining the draft set of core statistics and indicators in 2022;

   b.   Refinement of the set of core statistics and indicators, and wider consultation in 2022 and 2023;

   c.   A thorough statistical review of the Hazard Information Profiles prepared by UNDRR and ISC in 2021 and 2022;

   d.   Drafting of practical implementation guidelines in 2023, taking into account:

      i.   NSOs experiences in supporting the management of the COVID-19 pandemic (collection and analysis of case studies);

      ii.   Experiences from pilot testing the set of core statistics and indicators for measuring hazardous events and disasters;

      iii. Current international developments, such as the reviewed hazard classification, but also international work on measuring climate change adaptation and mitigation.

   e.   Contributing to the organization of upcoming annual Expert Fora for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics with regional inputs in 2022 and 2023;

   f.   Additional ad-hoc contributions of the Task Force to other international initiatives to improve the statistical operationalization of Sendai Framework terminology and indicator methodologies.

IV.   REVISED TIMETABLE

37.   The revised timetable for the remaining work is presented below.

Sep – Dec 2021	Development of a draft set of core statistics and indicators
Oct 2021 – May 2022	Statistical review of Hazard Information Profiles (302)

Jan – Jun 2022	Supporting the organisation of the 2nd Global Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics
Mar – Dec 2022	Collection of national case studies on implementation of CES Recommendations
May – Aug 2022	Pilot testing of draft set of core statistics and indicators, and consultation with different stakeholders
Aug – Dec 2022	Refinement of set of core statistics and indicators
Feb 2023	Discussion of draft set of core statistics and indicators at February CES Bureau meeting
Apr – Jun 2023	Electronic consultation of the set of core statistics and indicators with CES members, submission to the CES plenary session for endorsement
Apr – Dec 2023	Drafting of implementation guidelines
Jan – Feb 2024	Submission of implementation guidelines to CES Bureau and discussion at its February 2024 meeting
Apr – Jun 2024	Electronic consultation of the implementation guidelines with CES members, submission to the CES plenary session for endorsement

V.   REQUEST TO THE BUREAU

38.   **The Bureau is invited to:**

   (a) **Comment on the updated work plan and timetable (Sections III and IV);**

   (b) **Extend the mandate of the Task Force by two years (until 2024).**

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