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Items for information: disaster-related statistics

Report of the core group of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2020/211 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the core group of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics, comprising representatives of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

In the report, the core group informs the Commission of the establishment and terms of reference of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group. The Group was established in response to Commission decision 50/116, in which the Commission requested consideration of a formal mechanism under its purview to advance a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics and a network across the expert communities to sustain cooperation, coordination and fundraising for enhancing statistics related to hazardous events and disasters.

The Commission is invited to take note of the present report.

* E/CN.3/2021/1.



Report of the core group of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-ninth session, the Statistical Commission, in its decision 49/113, welcomed a greater focus on disaster-related statistics, given the importance of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and decided to include the topic of disaster-related statistics as an agenda item for its fiftieth session. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction prepared a report on disaster-related statistics for the Commission at that session ([E/CN.3/2019/16](#)). They elaborated on the growing data demands and needs for that area of work and took stock of the current situation of activities around the world, with an emphasis on the constraints that developing countries faced. The report contained a summary of the work of the main international and regional organizations active in statistics relating to hazardous events and disasters.

2. At its fiftieth session, the Commission, in its decision 50/116, requested the Division, ESCAP, ECE, ECLAC and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to work together, in consultation with members of the existing regional expert groups and task forces, to consider options and modalities for the establishment and coordination of a formal mechanism under the purview of the Commission to advance a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics and a network across the expert communities to sustain cooperation, coordination and fundraising for enhancing statistics related to hazardous events and disasters. They were also requested to report back to the Commission at a suitable time.

II. Establishment of the Expert Group

3. In response to the request for a formal mechanism and a network, the aforementioned organizations formed a core group of partners, which also included the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA). As a first step, the core group sought to establish an inter-agency and expert group on disaster-related statistics. To that end, the core group undertook an extensive review of similar existing mechanisms and developed a proposed set of terms of reference, with the primary objective of developing a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics.

4. The proposed terms of reference were submitted to the Bureau of the Commission for its consideration and approval. In October 2020, following a thorough review process, the Bureau approved the terms of reference of the Expert Group, which included modalities for its composition, for circulation among all Member States. On that basis, an invitation to nominate members for the Expert Group was prepared. The invitation was in the form of a joint letter signed by the Directors of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the ESCAP Statistics Division and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and was sent to the chief statisticians of all national statistical organizations, with a copy to the focal points for implementation of the Sendai Framework and their respective permanent missions to the United Nations. The letter, sent in November 2020, solicited the nomination of two representatives from each

country for the Expert Group, that is, one from the national statistical office and one from the relevant disaster-risk management institution of the Government.

5. At the time of writing, nominations were being collated and considered. Once the Expert Group has been constituted, which is anticipated to be by January 2021, the following activities are planned:

- (a) The organization of several virtual meetings of the Expert Group, in 2021;
- (b) The convening of an expert forum on disaster-related statistics, in April 2021.

III. Highlights of the terms of reference of the Expert Group

A. Membership and composition of the Expert Group

6. The Expert Group shall include the following:

- (a) Representatives of Member States from national statistical offices and disaster risk reduction-related organizations;
- (b) Institutions designated by the leadership of existing regional groups working on disaster-related statistics and the working group on geospatial information and services for disasters of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (one designation by each group will be accepted; see section III.B below for a list of relevant regional groups);
- (c) A core group comprising representatives of the Division, ESCAP, ECE, ECLAC, ESCWA, ECA and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction;
- (d) Representatives of other relevant international and regional organizations.

7. For the expert forum, a broader range of subject matter experts from Member States, other United Nations system entities, multilateral development banks and other relevant international organizations could be invited. The Group will also invite experts, as appropriate, from academia, civil society and the private sector to contribute their expertise and experiences with regard to disaster-related statistics.

B. Methods of work of the Expert Group

8. The Expert Group shall work through electronic exchanges and regular meetings. It shall operate with the help of a webspace to facilitate collaboration, knowledge management and information-sharing.

9. The Expert Group shall organize a regular expert forum on disaster-related statistics, subject to the availability of resources. Where feasible, the meetings shall be conducted in conjunction with the events of the statistics and disaster risk reduction communities. Other meetings shall be convened on the basis of need and with specific tasks to be accomplished.

10. The Expert Group shall liaise as required with other international groups that are closely linked to disaster-related statistics, including the following:

- (a) ESCAP Technical Working Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific;
- (b) ECE Steering Group on Climate Change-related Statistics and Task Force on Measuring Hazardous Events and Disasters;
- (c) Expert Group on Environment Statistics;

(d) Working group on geospatial information and services for disasters of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management;

(e) Working Group on Disaster-related Indicators of the ECLAC Statistical Conference of the Americas.

C. Co-Chairs and core group of the Expert Group

11. Initially, until December 2021, the Expert Group shall have ESCAP and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction as Co-Chairs. From 2022, the leadership of the Expert Group shall comprise one Member State representative and one core group representative. Co-Chairs shall be elected by the Expert Group for a two-year term.

12. The Co-Chairs shall provide leadership and coordination to ensure the full functioning of the Expert Group. After the expiry of their term, former Co-Chairs shall provide support to the newly appointed Co-Chairs to facilitate continuity.

IV. Criteria for selection of members of the Expert Group

13. The letter sent in November 2020 also included a set of criteria for the selection of the country nominees for the Expert Group, which were as follows:

(a) Balanced representation from all five geographical regions and, to the extent possible, subregional representation (for example, from the Pacific);

(b) Institutions designated by the leadership of existing regional groups working on disaster-related statistics and the working group on geospatial information and services for disasters of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (one designation by each group will be accepted);

(c) Institutions actively contributing to existing regional groups;

(d) Institutions regularly reporting under the Sendai Framework monitoring process;

(e) Experience and expertise of the nominee;

(f) Manageable size (a maximum of 50 members nominated by Governments) of the Expert Group.

V. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

14. **The Commission is invited to take note of the present report.**
