

REPORT OF

The Workshop on Sound Institutional environment, Cooperation, Dialogue and Partnerships for the Production and Utilization of SDG Indicators Tunis, 6-8 February 2018



I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) had jointly organized the Workshop on “Sound institutional environment, cooperation, dialogue and partnerships for the production and utilization of SDG indicators”, held in Tunis, 6-8 February 2018. The workshop was hosted by the National Statistical Institute of Tunisia.

2. The workshop on “Sound institutional environment, cooperation, dialogue and partnerships for the production and utilization of SDG indicators”, is one of the Pillar I: Means of Implementation activities that are being implemented under the umbrella of the UN Development Account 10th tranche on Statistics and Data. The expected accomplishment is: Enhanced capacity of target countries to launch or improve institutional mechanisms and procedures, at national and local level, for the production and utilization of SDG indicators.

II. Attendees

3. The participants were senior managers of national statistical agencies and policy makers from line ministries. The meeting was also attended by representatives of international and regional organizations, multilateral and bilateral partners and other stakeholders.

4. A total of 52 participants attended the meeting. Representatives from 15 countries (38 participants), namely: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. Country female participation was observed at 21 per cent in comparison to 79 per cent of male participation.

5. Moreover, the meeting was attended by 14 representatives from the UNFPA, UNEP, FAO, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, ISTAT, the Statistical Center for the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-STAT), the Statistical Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), the Arab Institute for Training and Research on Statistics (AITRS), UNSD, and ESCWA. Agency female participation was observed at 57 per cent in comparison to 43 per cent of male participation.

III. Organization

6. The Opening statements were delivered by the National Statistical Institute of Tunisia, ESCWA and UNSD. (Annex I: Agenda).

7. The following substantive topics were discussed:

- Setting the stage
- Session 1: Institutional Framework
- Session 2: Governance, programmatic tools and funding mechanisms
- Session 3: Leadership, partnership, communication and dialogue
- Session 4: Quality assurance and quality monitoring
- Moderated discussion and conclusion

8. All documents for the meeting are made available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/workshop-sound-institutional-environment-cooperation-dialogue-and-partnerships-production-and>.

9. 17 Participants from Member States received financial support from the 10th tranche of the United Nations Development Account project.

IV. Objectives

10. The UN Development Account 10th tranche on Statistics and Data (DA10) addresses challenges with regard to increasing and evolving demands of data users as well as monitoring the progress towards goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in compliance with the UN Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics. The DA10 brings together the collective efforts of ten implementing¹ entities into a comprehensive programme aiming at strengthening national statistical systems to measure, monitor and report on the sustainable development goals.

11. The workshop addressed the institutional environment for official statistics in support of monitoring progress towards the SDGs, including governance, leadership, coordination mechanisms and tools as well as dialogue and partnership between producers and users of data and statistics. The workshops helped to achieve a common and improved understanding among the participants about institutional, organisational and managerial arrangements that can best sustain the transformation and modernisation of official statistics in order to address emerging user needs for high-quality and internationally comparable data and statistics including for the follow up and review of progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

12. The workshop report; including summary of discussions and compilation of national practices, serve as the first draft for a regional guideline to attempt to illustrate the impact of institutional, organizational and managerial arrangements on the capacity of national statistical systems to embrace the necessary transformation of official statistics. The compilation of national practices would also contribute to the update of the UN Handbook on Statistical Organizations² with the aim of providing guidance and best practices to achieve a modern, more integrated and coordinated national statistical system.

¹ The 10 implementing entities are UNSD, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UN-ODC and the 5 Regional Commissions – ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA

² <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/hb/>

V. Background

13. Following the General Assembly resolution 70/1 with regard to the Global Indicator Framework, the Cape Town Global Action Plan (GAP) for Sustainable Development³ Data acknowledges the urgent need for National statistical systems (NSS) to adapt and develop in order to meet the widening, increasing and evolving requirements of data users as well as monitoring the progress towards goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in compliance with the UN Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics (FPOS) and other global and regional initiatives. In particular, it stresses the need to build confidence, trust and capacity through coordinated measures, legal reforms, and better funding, as well as through the development of principles and guidelines, so as to support the modernisation and transformation of NSS.

Agenda 2030 (A/Res/70/1) mandate for the global indicator framework:

Para 75. *The Goals and targets will be followed up and reviewed using a set of global indicators. These will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels which will be developed by Member States, ... The global indicator framework, to be developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, will be agreed by the Statistical Commission ...*

14. GAP was adopted by General Assembly resolution (A/RES/71/313) taking note of the refinements and comprehensive reviews that will take place; requests United Nations Statistical Commission to coordinate substantive and technical work on international statistical standards; gives mandate to the Global Indicator SDG Database; requests the Secretary General to facilitate collaboration between NSSs and to ensure harmonized and consistent data; promotes adherence to the FPOD; and calls for intensified support for strengthening data collection and statistical capacity building.

Cape Town Global Action Plan

Framework for the design and implementation of country-led statistical capacity building activities necessary to achieve the 2030 Agenda. It consists of key actions under six strategic areas:

- *Coordination and strategic leadership*
- *Innovation and modernization of NSS*
- *Basic statistical activities and programmes*
- *Data dissemination and use*
- *Multi-stakeholder partnerships*
- *Resource mobilization*

³ It was developed by HLG-PCCB and launched at the first UN World Data Forum in Cape Town, South Africa in January 2017.

VI. Summary of Discussions and Conclusions

15. The session on Institutional Framework considered how national statistical legislation may, from an institutional perspective, ensure the production and dissemination of high-quality official statistics and data to address global, regional and national sustainable development agendas, with a focus on regulatory frameworks, ensuring consistency with the FPOS.

16. Realizing the importance of statistical law to safeguard the implementation of principles especially professional independence, authority of Chief Statistician, role of the Statistical Council, delineation of the NSS, mandate for data collection and statistical registers, confidentiality and exchange of data within the NSS, coordination and partnership throughout NSS and other providers and stakeholders, advanced release calendar and equal access, including open

Value of Official Statistics

*Authoritative [decision-making]
Independent, objective and transparent
[trust]
Highest professional standards and ethics
[confidentiality]
Fitness-for-purpose [user-oriented quality]
Universal [equal access]
Flexible and resilient [reliable]
Efficient and effective [coordinated]*

data and access to micro-data for research purposes. The Law generally should not be a “corset” against transformation rather it should enable modernization while safeguarding the Principles; it should therefore be robust to allow for changes made over time. Therefore, it would be necessary to revise statistical legislations to raise the challenges often faced by NSOs and grasp the opportunities especially those currently presented by the SDGs, including the need to enhance the managerial autonomy of the Chief Statistician.

17. UNEP, implementing entity and custodian of the Environment Pillar in the DA10, provided useful information on increasing national coordination for a more integrated production of statistics related to the environment, through building national and regional capacity to produce and use environment statistics for monitoring the SDGs and broader policy monitoring based on national priorities. It stressed on the importance of NSO regulating the flow of national data between sub-national, regional and global stakeholder’s mechanisms, play a leading role in scrutinizing official data before any dissemination take place by line ministries and agencies.

18. Many countries reported that they are in the process of revising their statistical laws. However, some countries raised their concern with regard to prolonged delays and complications often encountered by NSOs during the revision process, adoption of new law and its implementation. Both Tunisia and Palestine provided detailed description of their proposed Statistical Law in alignment with the FPOS. PCBS in Palestine was established in 1993, however the legislative Council adopted the statistics act in 2000, after six years from the Statistical Commission’s adoption of FPOS in 1994. Therefore, the Statistical Law in Palestine lacked some main components of the Principles. Moreover, there was a need to update and modernize

the law to better reflect the leading role of PCBS in coordinating NSS activities as the official source for official statistics and metadata. PCBS also proposed including both public and private sector sources, reflected its professional independence, emphasized partnership with data producers rather than being perceived only as data suppliers. It also tackled issues related to ISO, GSBPM, EFQM, use of modern technologies like tablets and further use of administrative sources, etc.

19. On effectiveness and use of statistical law in SDG processes, for example the Qatar Statistics Law provided significant support for statistical operations in several aspects: Statistical data were collected in line with technical statistical standards, NSO consent was required to implement surveys by other data users, mechanism for data and information exchange between NSO and other agencies; confidentiality of data and legal measures against offenders of the Law.

20. In order to assist countries in the process of revising their Statistical Laws ESCWA initiated the translation of the Generic Law published by the Economic Commission for Europe⁴. Countries requested ESCWA to lead the process for adapting the Generic Law to the regional context. The Generic Law would serve as a prototype and guide countries to making their own revisions. In addition, ESCWA was requested to facilitate the development of a blue print for the code of practice in the Arab region similar to the African Charter on Statistics and European Statistics Code of Practice.

21. Some countries shared good examples of in-depth assessments of their code of practice; Jordan assessment results, for example, recommended the need to revise and modernize the Statistical Law, expand the scope of the Training Center to include other producers of official statistics in the NSS, extend the user satisfaction survey to on-line users, establish a standing committee for confidentiality protection under the chairmanship of Chief, document the guidelines used for compilation and dissemination, and make them public on the website, in Arabic and in English, provide access to press releases on the NSO website, encourage other producers of official statistics to progressively make public their release calendars on NSO and their own websites, establish a complete archiving system including all statistical operations, accelerate ongoing process of transforming the current metadata into SMDX format, catalogue of data sources should be expanded to eventually cover all sectors.

22. SESRIC implemented the Tendency Survey of SDG Priorities of OIC Member Countries and the results so far reveal that most countries had their priorities set on four main goals in order of importance, namely: SDG3 Good Health and Well-being, followed by SDG2 Zero hunger, then SDG1 No poverty, and SDG4 Quality of education. Three goals Decent work and economic growth (SDG8), Industry innovation and infrastructure (SDG9), and Gender equality (SDG5) all follow. However, it was interesting to note that all environmentally related goals (13,15, 6,

⁴ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2016/ECECESSTAT20163_E.pdf

7,14,12) were listed at the end of the countries' priority list. Most cited limitations by the countries were shortage of financial resources, inadequate capacity of human resources and lack of political support. Only 17 per cent of NSOs are leading the SDG coordination, however over 80 per cent of the countries have a monitoring agency set up, and around three quarter of them reported that their development plans are compatible with the SDGs.

23. Discussions revolved also around means to enhance the status and professional independence of producers of official statistics and securing confidentiality and trust in official statistics.

24. Session 2 on **Governance, programmatic tools and funding mechanisms** discussed the importance of having sound governance mechanisms and tools such as the annual or multi strategic programmes or the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), to support coordination mechanisms and tools of all NSS, to ensure efficient and effective delivery of coherent and comparable statistical outputs and services, to align programmes and measures for the enhancement of national statistical capacity for the production and utilisation of SDG indicators, and to strengthen the availability of sustainable funding for NSS. Therefore, NSDS or other strategic programmes can incorporate in flexible and modular ways any recommendations provided in various assessment exercises such as reviews of national statistical systems or gap assessments while securing adequate human, financial and technical resources necessary for development of statistical capacities

25. The important elements of a NSDS or any strategic programme are: (i) the Council and/or the NSS Coordination Committee to be involved, consulted, and on board from the onset. (ii) Development of the SDGs indicator need to be included in the programme; (iii) identify official indicators vis-à-vis sources and partners and establish working agreements, like a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to regulate data flow, periodicity, metadata, level of disaggregation and training needs of the statistical units in the agencies. NSDS facilitates developing and enhancing the capacities of the NSS to produce timely and quality statistics and data to assess the implementation of the goals and targets of the sustainable development agenda.

26. It is evident that a NSDS is vital for the development of statistics and meeting the SDGs needs. Since few Arab countries have updated NSDS, most countries are encouraged to step up their efforts to complete their strategic programmes. Libya for example reported on their NSDS for 2018 – 2023, developed with the assistance of PARIS21 and UNFPA, and in joint collaboration with Bureau of Statistics and Census, Ministries of Education, Health, Social Affairs, Agriculture, Central Bank, Academia, etc. It includes seven Goals and 30 Strategies and makes provision for SDG data. The 1963 Statistical Law and the updated draft in 2014 include legislation that governs the work of the NSS agencies. The NSDS includes provisions needed for capacity building of NSS. NSDS as well as the SDG indicator framework are the responsibility of all NSS agencies. In order therefore to have an effective strategy, it is vital for all NSS to collaborate and coordinate in the implementation process.

27. In 2015 Egypt with the support of Paris21, AfDB, UNECA and ESCWA implemented an assessment of its statistical system. In 2016 the results of the assessment and future plans were presented and discussed in a meeting attended by stakeholder from both producers and users. Nine priority sectors were selected to be included in the NSDS. The NSDS objective is to enhance the developmental role of the NSS and will follow a new approach in providing sustainable development data.

28. UNFPA recommended necessary steps for SDG national follow up such as: review statistical laws, align SDGs with National Development Plans, establish availability of indicator and metadata; identify stakeholders and implement synchronization and coordination mechanisms, conduct analysis for data gaps and put future plans to compile, use multiple data sources (census, CRVS, and surveys), monitor and report on indicators and data availability.

29. With regard to funding, it's important to link the statistical programme with resources and identify external funding resources in each specialized domain of a sector and set priorities and timeline. UNEP provided a list of potential donors and forwarded the template for the proposal for environment readiness project to the participants. ESCWA will be following up with other agencies and organize similar meetings and sessions with other custodian/funding agencies to support countries in funding

30. However, many countries raised their concern with regard to availability of limited resources and difficulty of having access to funding agencies. Morocco, for example, reported that receiving assistance in public funding remains very important but insufficient to meet sustainable development objectives. Innovative funding will have to be sought through partnerships (partnership with civil society and public-private partnership), while ensuring accountability and responsibility in development actors; and a different style of results-based financing will have to be developed as part of an integrated approach (government, private sector, civil society, donors, bilateral and multilateral partnerships). .

31. The meeting discussed **leadership, partnership, communication and dialogue of data community in session 3**. The meeting argued that the Statistical Council comprising of policymakers, civil society, business group and professional societies, academia and researchers, etc.. would be a good body to improve partnership and dialogue. *However, it is important to go beyond legal provisions that enforce such interactions, removing barriers and instead look for strategic alliances and behaviours that could strengthen partnerships of national and international statistical systems with stakeholders involved in the production and use of data for sustainable development. Countries are encouraged to build multi-stakeholder partnerships and increase public-private cooperation and produce guidelines on use of new/innovative data sources.*

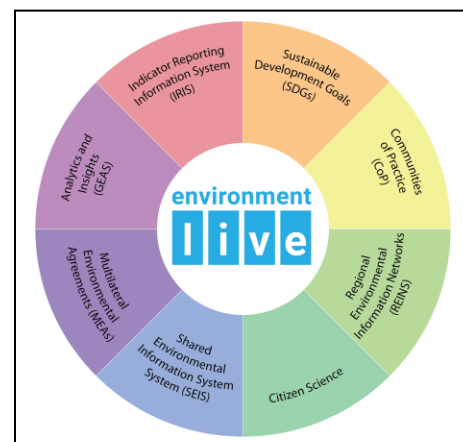
32. Morocco shared a good national example that went beyond consultation and dialogue of the Statistical Council to include the results of assessment of public opinion at large. In 2014 Morocco implemented an analytical survey on public opinion and expectations

with regard to the relationship between culture and sustainable development. The results of the assessment contributed to identifying priorities at the country level and were integrated in the SDG plan in 2015. The consultation and dialogue process included mainstreaming and localizing SDGs in the sectoral strategies.

33. It is very good to try to advance and bring message of official statistics in all these coordination mechanisms that have been put in place for the SDGs such as the Statistical Coordination Committee of data producers. Countries were encouraged to use every opportunity such as statistical days, major press conferences *to develop common understanding, trust and mutual objectives and advocates for statistics and identify champions.*

34. Participants also support access to and use of non-traditional data sources for the production of official statistics and data and means to improve transparency and public access to official statistics. It is therefore *important to know how to interact with each data community provider outside the NSS, how to communicate (advocacy) the comparative advantages (value) of official statistics for monitoring progress towards the national development plans, SDGs and eventually secure, if not increase, resources allocated to official statistics.* Those data communities, providers of data from outside the traditional national statistical system have an important role to play so it's important to map those agencies to NSO needs. *Securing such interactions would enable NSO to have access to innovative data sources, to acquire the human financial and technical resources for statistical activities, and eventually deliver products and services that are fit-for-purpose.*

35. UNEP Indicator Reporting Information System (IRIS) helps government ministries responsible for reporting to collect, analyze and publish quality assured environmental information in a timely manner, enabling evidence-based, timely decision-making. IRIS is a national tool that can be deployed on local servers and used for data sharing. IRIS is a component in the UNEP Environment Live platform. The Platform, is an open access, on-line knowledge, management and data platform. The portal has a wide range of analytical, mapping, search, visualization and web intelligence tools; and serves as a hub for communities of practice to share ideas, knowledge, data.



36. The meeting acknowledged effort made by countries towards developing reporting platforms, to share national SDG reports, activities and practices with users / producers at the national, regional global level. *Morocco summarized key features of their national SDG information system, it includes: Technical capability and ability to measure targets and indicators, international comparability, participation and intervention of various partners, and logical mapping of indicators, targets with*

national objectives. Qatar and Bahrain, for example, reported that they were also in the process of developing a national information system for SDGs.

37. The UN is developing guidelines on national reporting platforms to help countries to share their data using commonly agreed principles. Countries are encouraged to establish SDG portals on their official pages. In addition, countries should make every effort to tailor communication and dissemination tools to suite different user's communities and adapt the statistical deliverables to their specific needs.

38. Participants stressed on the importance of establishing a coordination mechanism between NSOs and international organizations in implementing project/programmes with other national stakeholders. Countries are encouraged to initiate contact with custodian agencies and make agreements towards establishing NSO's authority over official statistics at the country level.

39. Session 4 focused on quality assurance frameworks and quality monitoring in terms of institutional environment, data sources, methodology, statistical processes and output. Quality assurance framework is based on five main pillars: (i) institutional setup; (ii) data sources; (iii) data processes; (iv) statistical outputs (relevance, accuracy and reliability, timeliness and punctuality, coherence and comparability, accessibility and clarity, and (v) dissemination. Participants acknowledged the importance of having a specialized organizational unit dealing with quality assurance on all implementation processes to monitor quality across all statistical domains.

Quality Assurance Framework: Statistical Outputs

- Users are regularly consulted (content, format, timing of releases)
- Users have equal and simultaneous access to official statistics
- Official Statistics are disseminated in a user-friendly way
- Statistics are disseminated with metadata
- Advance release calendar with clear updating procedures are publicly available
- No political statement in statistical publications
- Errors are corrected, and users informed accordingly
- Direct and indirect Confidential data are not
- Right for NSS to comments on misinterpretation of statistics

40. It is therefore important that the organizational set up for quality assurance should include a policy that is made publicly available with clear principles and objectives, put in place an organizational structure to deal with quality management (cross-cutting), procedures are in place and implemented to assess, plan, monitor and report on quality of input, processes and outputs; and a quality report is submitted to the Statistical Council and made publicly available. Many countries reported that they follow a similar framework, however, few countries have made their policies public and lesser number yet who actually submit reports on quality assurance.

41. Countries agreed that the definition of quality is strongly focused on users' needs, with a main objective to develop, maintain and enhance trust in the production of statistics and data. Trust takes time to build and could be easily destroyed. It is therefore important that quality assurance and all implementing measures should be communicated transparently to all users by the NSOs as the custodian of quality of all official statistics in the overall NSSs. Quality assurance of data should be given priority and vetted by the NSO before being disseminated, whether the NSS is centralized or decentralized.

Quality Assurance Framework: Data processes

- Sound methodology is used throughout the production process
- Adequate tools, procedures and expertise are deployed to support the production of statistics (business architecture)
- Production processes are mapped (GSBPM) and documented
- Production processes are efficient, effective and statistical confidentiality secured; including when data are stored
- Before launching a statistical survey an assessment of existing data sources is conducted (quality vs. costs)

42. It is important therefore that NSOs take lead and communicate quickly to users erroneously published data, informing users about the source of mistakes and what measures were taken to remedy the situation.

43. Participants agreed that it was important to treat users as clients by understanding their needs and diversity to gain their trust at the same time make effort to improve their statistical capacity and awareness. If users were not coming to data, then it's the responsibility of the NSO to bring the data to the users using modern dissemination tools and communication technology.

44. Many countries shared national practices and discussed future development in adapting quality standards to a rapidly changing data eco-system and to the use of innovative technologies for the production of statistics and indicators. In this regard it was emphasized that special attention should also be awarded to confidentiality of official statistics to respondents and holders of non-traditional data; such as administrative data records and geospatial information. It was noted that those unconventional sources would contain important, detailed and sometimes sensitive information that warrants higher measures of confidentiality at a lower cost than surveys and censuses.

45. It was also noted by many countries that when developing the institutional set up and quality assurance of official statistics it is important to identify quick wins to be implemented swiftly and at a relatively low cost. To that end it is therefore important to set priorities and medium set of objectives. Therefore, despite having a full-fledged statistical law countries could resort to other mechanisms that could be implemented and operationalized to setup a proper functional environment to ensure the execution of quality assurance frameworks and quality monitoring.

46. Countries are encouraged to take a sectoral process in dealing with SDG framework and to build on existing partnerships. It is important to advocate and show successful stories to be replicated and piloted in other sectors.

47. Oman presented its country practice in administrating SDG4 on Education. The first step they analyzed the current situation identified their strength and weakness, the challenges and opportunities. Education partners and sources of data were identified, and a ministerial decree was issued to establish the technical committee to follow up on SDG4 framework. The activities included mapping the SDG4 to the ninth national development plan (5 year) on education, and the sectoral education plan 2040. A capacity building was placed and a monitoring and reporting mechanism was instituted for SDG4. Similarly, Egypt presented its national practice in administrating SDG on solid waste in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment.

48. As data are the source and input of the statistical production chain, the use of administrative data, geospatial information and other data sources to complement traditional statistical surveys and censuses (mix-mode) would necessarily impact the way to assess and communicate the quality of statistical products. It was interesting to witness how statistical agencies could engage with various data communities outside the national statistical systems in order to gradually improve accessibility, accuracy and coverage of alternative data sources.

49. Therefore, it is important for international and regional entities should strengthen their data and metadata sharing to reduce reporting burden of countries. Data for a particular indicator should be collected by one international agency. Data and metadata should be disseminated in a transparent manner at the national and international levels. Moreover, quality assurance procedures at national and international levels should be followed. Every effort should be made to reconcile data provided at the global level with the data published by national statistical authorities, and any discrepancies should be reconciled, when possible, or carefully explained.

50. Iraq shared its national practice on implementing Geospatial Information System to produce statistical data on damaged buildings and houses in seven governorates that were affected by war and terrorist acts. Using shape files Iraq was able to determine the damage in affected areas by mapping earlier photographs with those recently provided by UN HABITAT. The process enabled the Central Statistical Office of Iraq to assist government institutions, international partners and decision makers in following up the implementation of projects. The information is stored on a platform that provides a spatial database to facilitate decision-making, planning and latest information on the status. Easy access to the spatial database on the Internet facilitates reporting at the sectoral and governorate levels in addition to implementing statistical analysis.

51. National reports on the SDGs are key elements of the national review process. Reports can identify gaps in implementation, including in data and strategies, as well as policy challenges, trade-offs, and emerging global, regional and national issues. Reports should not just describe trends in indicators; they should analyse underlying causes behind the trends and offer policy suggestions to overcome obstacles and deal with emerging challenges. The structure of the report will include an introduction, tracking

progress, assess means of implementation, analyse thematic issues, evaluate policies and strategies, conclude with recommendations and include a statistical annex. The SDG reports are expected to: provide an analysis of implementation gaps and challenges, in terms of policy in particular when it comes to: integrate social, economic and environmental dimensions, policy inclusiveness... 'leaving no one behind', as well as in light of emerging regional and global issues; probe into key cross-cutting issues (e.g inequality, water-energy-food and other nexuses, climate change, data...), review/analyze means of implementation; be based on participatory/inclusive processes starting from report conceptualization to the validation of findings and recommendations. To this end ESCWA shared the links of three UN reports related to preparation of national SDG reports and national voluntary reports⁵.

52. The meeting noted the importance of on-line dissemination of official statistics and data analysis is critical to facilitate the engagement of stakeholders (CSOs, private sector, academia and citizens at large) in the public debate on the performance of countries on SDGs and strengthen ownership of the Agenda. Advocating evidence-based change, and providing a platform fostering informed, evidence-based policy-making for sustainable development.

53. In the last session UNSD presented the outline and progress of work made on the **UN Handbook** on Statistical Organisations. The primary objective of the Handbook is to “to guide chief statisticians and senior managers of statistical organizations in developing and maintaining statistical capacity that is fit for purpose”. The Handbook was first published in 1952 and the most recent (third) edition dates from 2003.

54. The UN Statistical Commission (48th Session) requested a revision of the current Handbook. The new revision of the Handbook will take into consideration the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and related regional and national development policies, involve new data needs and challenges including the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (CT-GAP) and the Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics stress the need for statistical organisations to adapt and develop. It will focus on potential of innovative technologies in a rapidly changing data environment and reinforce leadership, coordination, communication, and dialogue through institutional and organizational reforms.

⁵ <https://undg.org/document/guidelines-to-support-country-reporting-on-the-sustainable-development-goals/>
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>
<http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/dam/rbap/docs/meetTheSDGs/Overview%20report%20to%20guide%20the%20preparation%20of%20a%20VNR%20and%20SDGR.pdf>

55. Presently the Handbook outline for the next (fourth) edition is being developed by a Handbook Revision Team. The outline includes recommendations on which chapters of the revised version should be given priority. Consultation rounds conducted in the framework of the DA10 Statistics and Data programme has been taking place. The outline and recommendations to be brought to the UN Statistical

Commission for discussion in March 2018 (E/CN.3/2018/5). The Handbook is a living document on the Web and it will be revised every two years.

Proposed chapters of the updated Handbook	
I. Introduction	XI. Common statistical infrastructure
II. Overview	XII. Human resources management and development
III. Basis of official statistics	XIII. Data, information and knowledge management
IV. National statistical system	XIV. Information technology management
V. National statistical office	XV. Management of finance, buildings and physical space
VI. Users and their needs	XVI. International activities and collaboration
VII. Quality management	XVII. Annexes
VIII. Data sources, collection and processing	
IX. Analysis and analytical frameworks	
X. Dissemination and user communication	

56. The proposed structure of the updated Handbook will mirror the Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organisations (GAMSO). GAMSO describes and defines the activities that take place within a statistical organization. GAMSO is an extension of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) adding activities needed to support statistical production.

57. A copy of the Handbook was shared during the meeting in the Arabic language⁶. Participants of the meeting were invited to review the outline and make suggestions to add new items and make proposals and identify priority areas for the ESCWA region. The participants were also asked what mechanisms in the region could ensure regular consultation of ESCWA, national statistical systems and other stakeholders, and whether any of the member countries of ESCWA is willing to be a member of the Advisory Group for the Handbook.

58. Participants also were invited to identify good national practices, opportunities and challenges in enhancing institutional capacities at national, regional and global levels for the production and utilization of SDG indicators. Moreover, countries were also invited to propose ways to embrace opportunities and address institutional challenges including through specific programmes and actions supported by multilateral and bilateral donors.

59. UNESCWA took note of the issues reported by the countries and will consider them in the planning future meeting on statistics for SDGs.

⁶ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/49th-session/documents/2018-5-Handbook-A.pdf>

VII. Evaluation

60. 31 participants completed the evaluation form for the meeting. The participants rated the meeting as good and excellent as follows:

- a. 97 per cent for the overall quality;
- b. 97 per cent for being successful in reaching its intended objectives;
- c. 93.5 per cent for the inputs provided by the presenters in reaching the intended outcome of the workshop
- d. 100 per cent for the overall organization and logistics of the workshop.