SAB-AP Advocacy Strategy

Background

1. The official statistics industry is part of a more extensive information society. Within this wider information society in all countries in the region, the pace of creation of new information products and new ways of combining and using information is increasing rapidly. It is necessary for these statistical organizations to stay relevant to the modern world. Statistical organizations are confronted with accelerating change in society and the way that data are produced and used within the information industry. As such statistical organizations have to be transformed from traditional data producer, characterized by domain-specific silos, legacy information systems and the production process centred around paper forms and publications, to a modern ‘information service provider’, characterized by internet data capture, expanding data sources and innovative ways of communicating with users. The statistical environment has moved from scarcity of data to data abundance, this means that statistical organizations need to become data quality assurers rather than data collectors.

2. In 2013, the ESCAP Committee on Statistics (CST) formed the Strategic Advisory Body for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services in Asia and the Pacific (SAB-AP) to progress the modernization of the production of official statistics, and the resulting outputs, in the region. At its second meeting, the SAB-AP identified advocacy as the priority area for the future work on modernization in the region. There is a lack of knowledge across the region about modernization and the effort that statistical organisations need to put into this important work. In addition, this advocacy strategy has been developed also to generate interest and create vision among the leaders of statistical organizations for the future development of their organizations.

3. The SAB-AP also acknowledged that there are many initiatives in the area of modernization in other regions and on the global level. The importance of modernizing the production of official statistics, and the resulting outputs, has been a priority for the international statistical community since the creation of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services (HLG) by the Conference of European Statisticians in 2010 organized at the UNECE level. For successful advocacy in Asia-Pacific it will be important to ensure that the SAB-AP can work to leverage that effort for the region, including representing the region’s voice in the various fora.

4. Many countries are developing or reviewing their National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). An advocacy strategy will help to influence the inclusion of modernization priorities in these plans. It will emphasise the importance of modernization, and influence statistical offices in the region to accelerate implementation of standards and frameworks related to modernization. It will help NSOs to influence and coordinate with ministries engaged in the information society.

5. Statistical modernization activities include the development and adoption of agreed standards, architectures and tools. These include the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM); the Common Statistical Production
Architecture (CSPA); the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI); and the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX). The application of these frameworks and adoption of standards requires a concerted effort of several stakeholders in statistical organizations, including the heads, methodologists, human resources and subject-matter area specialists.

Scope

6. There are two directions that drive the work on modernization and this strategy, both of which are equally relevant to the modernization of statistics in our region:
   - **Statistical outputs**: new and better products and services more tuned to the way the world is operating today, and created from an integrated, global perspective. They will help NSOs to stay relevant and be more responsive to policy requirements;
   - **Production methods**: different and better processes and methods tuned to delivering NSO products at minimal cost with greater flexibility, in cooperation between institutions, and improve the quality of statistics. This will help to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

7. This advocacy strategy outlines the proposed approach to the communication of modernization to statistical organisations and other organisations which are part of the national statistical systems (NSSs) in Asia and the Pacific, focusing mainly on the national statistical organization (NSO).

8. In the region, different countries are at different levels of development of their NSSs. Therefore it is important that this strategy should target all levels of development of NSSs, with a particular focus on less developed statistics systems, and in so doing, provide for the different advocacy strategy needs of countries which are at various stages on their modernization journey.

9. There is a large amount of existing material on modernization which is aimed at countries with developed statistical systems and which can be repurposed to assist counties with less developed statistical systems to adopt modernization standards and frameworks.

Key messages

10. The key high level messages for advocacy towards a more modernized NSS are:
   - Engagement in modernization of official statistics with key standards and frameworks can lead to **financial and efficiency benefits** for NSOs. This is particularly important in an era of constrained resources and rapid advances in the production and consumption of data/statistics.
   - Implementation of internationally developed standards and frameworks will further improve the quality of statistics, including through increased international comparability of official statistics and the tools needed to produce and disseminate them.
   - Many components of the work on modernization of statistical production and services, such as the application of GSBPM, other standards, or the use of big data for official statistics, offer the opportunity for **less developed statistical systems to leapfrog more developed**
national statistical systems. They have the chance to avoid a stove-pipe organization from the initial phases.

Objectives

11. The objectives of this advocacy strategy are:
   - Emphasize the importance of modernization to NSOs and the benefits of regional collaboration in this area of work;
   - Create greater awareness of the regional and global modernization activities and achievements, including of standards, frameworks and tools;
   - Influence statistical offices in the region to accelerate implementation of standards and frameworks related to modernization;
   - Generate interest for regional and global work on modernization related topics, in order to increase dedicated human and financial resources, as well as the number of organizations actively involved;
   - Facilitate the exchange of information and best practices among NSO in the region.

Target audiences

12. The three primary target audiences for modernization in Asia and the Pacific will be the national statistical organizations and other agencies of national statistical system. The advocacy will need to be tailored according to the needs of the following groups within these organizations:
   - **Chief statistician and senior management** - those members of the organization who are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organization and providing strategic leadership (includes chief statistician, deputy statisticians and heads of divisions within the organization).
   - **Middle management** - those members of the organization who are responsible for determining and implementing the work program to meet the strategic objectives of the organization. These people are accountable to the senior management, and provide leadership and management to staff.
   - **Technical staff** - these are the members of the organization who report to the middle management and are responsible for delivering the day to day work of the organization on a technical level.

Activities and outputs

13. There is much global and regional activity taking place at present to progress modernization of official statistics. The following outputs, and associated activities, will be required over the period to December 2016 to support the success of this strategy.

   **Output 1**: Increase level of awareness and generate interest for the modernization work in the statistical community in Asia-Pacific

   **Activities:**
Engage with NSOs not directly participating in the regional work on modernization, including through direct discussions and exchange of information on modernization and the opportunities it presents with their colleagues in the region and globally

Prepare advocacy materials to support the work on modernization of NSOs and other agencies in the NSS

Prepare analytical and research pieces to support the advocacy efforts, such as proof of concepts, use cases, pilot projects, or adapted tools

Encourage more discussion and the flow of information on the importance of modernization within statistical organisations about modernization, for example through senior managers holding information sessions for their staff

**Output 2**: Increase level of awareness and generate interest for the modernization work among the international statistical community and communicate with other groups engaged in similar activities

**Activities:**

- Initiate discussions and exchange of information with international statistical organizations (e.g. SPC, PARIS21, ASEANStats) using established networks, such as the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA)
- Initiate discussions with potential donors and/or international organizations to identify opportunities for financing of the regional work on modernization
- Coordinate activities and use common resources of other initiatives on advocacy, such as HLG or Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics

**Output 3**: Facilitate information flow about modernization for interested parties.

**Activities:**

- Create a single point of entry for all information related to modernization of statistical production and services, including information about groups and projects at the national and international level
- Widely publicize and regularly update such information exchange tools for modernization activities
- Produce a regular newsletter to showcase modernization activities in the region (and globally)
- Identify external stakeholders, assess their information needs, and the most appropriate communication channels

**Output 4**: Create an informal network of modernization champions and an informal network of experts to facilitate the flow of information and assistance

A modernization champion is a senior member of an organisation who is responsible for driving the implementation of modernization in that organisation. The champion may not be an expert in any
particular modernization standard, framework or tool, but is responsible for informing their organisation of modernization and its implementation. However, an expert is a person who has detailed technical skills and knowledge of at least one standard, framework or tool which supports the modernization of statistical production and methods (eg GSBPM, GSIM, DDI, SDMX), and could provide technical support of this standard, framework or tool.

Activities:
- Members of SAB-AP encourage the appointment of a modernization champion within their organisation and others with which they have influence.
- Members of SAB-AP encourage technical level experts to share their expertise with other organizations and acquire more detailed knowledge of related standards, frameworks or tools.
- Maintain a list of champions and experts updated and available for countries in the region to draw on their experiences or expertise. Keep experts engaged and informed of developments in the areas related to modernization.

Means of implementation

14. The overall responsibility for the implementation of this strategy lies with the SAB-AP and its members. The SAB-AP needs to report on their work and the progress made to the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics and/or to the Committee directly.

15. The SAB-AP members can establish or appoint a working group to implement this strategy or parts of the strategy, i.e. separate outputs as identified above. This strategy should also be implemented in cooperation with other similar strategies and other groups working on modernization, such as the project on communication and outreach of HLG activities or the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics (GWG) task team on advocacy and communication.

16. The SAB-AP may choose to work with ADB or other partners to fund projects to implement this strategy.

17. There are, however, various risks which may affect the delivery of the outputs:
- Financial resources - The availability of resources, financial and ‘in kind’, from national and international statistical organisations is crucial to support the strategy. If the necessary resources are not available, either the timetable will need to be extended, or the outputs will need to be re-defined.
- Commitment – This strategy will be jeopardized if sufficient commitment from the members of the SAB-AP, and more broadly, NSOs in Asia and the Pacific is not obtained. UNESCAP can play a coordinating and influencing role, both within the region and through other regional and global forums.