

STATISTICAL INSTITUTE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Ninth Management Seminar for the Heads of
National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific
31 August – 2 September 2010, Tokyo, Japan

"Developing Professional Capability for National Statistical Systems"

Discussant

SIAP

First of all, I would like to express my sincerest thanks to Ms. Adelheid Burgi-Schmelz for extremely interesting and comprehensive paper and presentation focusing on challenges which confront heads of national statistical offices, as the guardian of high professional standing of official statistics in a country, as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of enterprise, as a high –ranking government official and a contributor to the global statistical system, and sharing her views in addressing these challenges. The paper provides many inspiring thoughts that would help heads of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to understand the changing environment and priorities of their organizations, be able to look beyond “now” and take more active leadership in paving the way to the future development of official statistics.

I agree with Adelheid that official statistics can play an indispensable role for society’s development by providing reliable data on the economic, including financial, social and environmental situation, their development and inter-relationships for policy formulation, monitoring implementation of approved policy and evaluating its effects. The role of heads of NSOs is critical. The global financial crisis, for instance, have put pressure on statisticians to provide timely, internally consistent, and comparable across countries data to monitor financial stability. There is a strong need to strengthen data that are important to monitor the vulnerability of national economies to financial shocks. Monitoring of financial sector is one of the examples of new directions for official statistics.

Adelheid rightly emphasised the importance of the fundamental principles of official statistics is enabling heads of NSOs to make decisions what should be done to

develop official statistics that responds to users' demand. The principles also help the heads to handle situations, which may arise in developing impartial statistical system in their countries. The fundamental principles makes the role of heads of NSOs more concrete and serve as a reference to check whether their decisions are appropriate.

The presentation also highlighted that there are a large amount of guidelines, recommendations etc .to help countries set up their National Statistical Systems (NSSs) that responds to users' needs, including international comparability.

One important point here is that the development of official statistics is not a matter of statisticians alone; politicians must also play their role in providing reasonable resources and demonstrating trust in statistics.

The heads of NSOs must work to demonstrate politicians how it is in the best interests of the country to produce and use of official statistics.

Training is very essential aspect of statistical development. SIAP has been conducting training at all levels on most of the topics.

In the seventh session of the Governing Council (then Board) in 2001, decided to conduct of management seminars for senior officials of National Statistical Offices.

In 2003, the annual series of Management Seminars for the Heads of NSOs was launched. The Statistics Division of ESCAP and UNSD have been collaborating in organizing the series of management seminars for heads of NSOs. The annual management seminar has become a traditional informal forum of the heads of NSOs to exchange views, learn from each other, benefit from what is being done, around us, and establish and strengthen personal relationships. We learn much through the face to face meeting with colleagues from other NSOs and by sharing problems and experiences with them in an informal manner. I hope that this ninth seminar would contribute in making our vision about the future development of official statistics in our countries.

Let me now share with you SIAP's contribution in developing statistical capability of countries in Asia and the Pacific and beyond. I will refer to the PowerPoint presentation.