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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

**REPORT
OF THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP OF THE ESCWA STATISTICAL
COMMITTEE AT ITS SECOND MEETING
BEIRUT, 10 FEBRUARY 2009**

Summary

The second meeting of the Regional Working Group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) at United Nations House in Beirut on 10 February 2009.

The main topics on the agenda included: coordinating the positions of ESCWA countries for the upcoming session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) by discussing the issues on its agenda; determining the positions of the countries of the region on the *Delhi Group Manual on Surveys of Informal Employment and the Informal Sector*; preparing for the Fourth Forum on Arab Statistical Capacity-Building; and following up on the World Forum on Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies.

The meeting was held at the request of the national statistical offices (NSOs) to discuss points on the agenda of the UNSC so as to reach in the course of the meeting a unified position, and to confer with the ESCWA secretariat on its programme of work and activities.

The meeting concluded with a set of recommendations addressed to both member countries and to ESCWA.

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Introduction

1. The second meeting of the Regional Working Group of the Statistical Committee was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) so that the Group could discuss the latest developments in statistical work, confer with the secretariat about its programme of work, agree on the topics that the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) will be dealing with and coordinate the positions of the countries of the region at the meeting of the Statistical Commission to take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 24 to 27 February 2009.
2. The second meeting of the Regional Working Group was held to achieve the following objectives:
 - (a) Discuss the current situation in the ESCWA countries in connection with the issues on the UNSC agenda;
 - (b) Coordinate the positions the ESCWA countries will take at the upcoming meeting with the Chair of United Nations Statistical Commission;
 - (c) Determine the positions of the countries of the region as regards the *Delhi Group Manual on Surveys of Informal Employment and the Informal Sector*;
 - (d) Strengthen cooperation with partners involved in international and regional initiatives in the field of statistics, including the Fourth Forum on Arab Statistical Capacity-Building and the World Forum on Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The second meeting of the Regional Working Group reached a number of recommendations addressed to both member countries and ESCWA:

A. RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO MEMBER COUNTRIES

- (1) Increase the participation of member countries in UNSC meetings for which they would prepare by coordinating among themselves at the meeting of the Regional Working Group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee with the aim of unifying their positions. In this regard, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics submitted proposals that were discussed and amended at the meeting (see annex I);
- (2) Hold a workshop to train statisticians from the national statistical offices (NSOs) and the different ministries (such as health, energy, environment and labour) in order to coordinate the process of collecting, disseminating and standardizing data.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO ESCWA

- (1) Hold a workshop to discuss the *Delhi Group Manual on Surveys of Informal Employment and the Informal Sector*;
- (2) Assist member countries to join international working groups on statistics;
- (3) Request the United Nations General Secretariat to expedite the translation of statistical guides and booklets into Arabic on a par with their publications in other languages;
- (4) Continue the process of capacity-building for member countries.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

4. The items on the UNSC agenda were submitted for discussion and it was agreed to reach a unified position ahead of the UNSC meeting. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics submitted a number of proposals to which amendments were made during the meeting (see annex I). Following are the points on which participants agreed:

A. ITEM 3 (A): REPORT OF THE AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND OFFICIAL STATISTICS

- (a) Endorse the purpose, recommendations and priorities mentioned in the report, and create mechanisms for their application;
- (b) Call on countries to provide the necessary financial resources;
- (c) Call on international organizations to provide the necessary training;
- (d) Stress the need to identify the intercepts between the work of statistical bodies and that of environmental organizations;
- (e) Endeavour to provide indicators for measuring climate change.

B. ITEM 3 (B): REPORT ON GLOBAL INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL STATISTICS

- (a) Undertake a performance assessment and formulate a strategy for improving agricultural and rural statistics, to include agricultural budget statistics;
- (b) Implement specific activities according to the region in question so that the strategy matches the situation prevailing in the ESCWA countries.

C. ITEM 3 (C): REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL “TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENERGY STATISTICS”

- (a) Endorse all discussion points;
- (b) Prepare guides on energy measurement standardization methods.

D. ITEM 3 (D): REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL- ECONOMIC ACCOUNTING

- (a) Endorse changing the committee’s name to “Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and Environmental Statistics” and agreement on its programme and mission;
- (b) Endorse the proposed framework for managing related projects;
- (c) Endeavour to bring the ESCWA countries into the technical committees on environmental accounting statistics.

E. ITEM 3 (E): REPORT OF THE INTERSECRETARIAT WORKING GROUP ON NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

- (a) Endorse all discussion points;
- (b) Design and implement training programmes for developing countries and offer them technical assistance;

(c) Organize regional meetings to discuss progress in applying the new revisions at the regional commission level;

(d) Expedite the translation into Arabic of the Revised System of Accounts, 1993 and 2008.

F. ITEM 3 (F): REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON SOCIAL STATISTICS

(a) Endorse the recommendations on social statistics, while taking into account the cultural features of different societies;

(b) Stress the need to follow up on the periodic report and express views on it;

(c) Work towards making the ESCWA countries partners in the technical committees on preparing social indicators.

G. ITEM 3 (G): REPORT OF THE INTERSECRETARIAT WORKING GROUP ON HEALTH STATISTICS

(a) Endorse all statements and proposals made in the document;

(b) Give priority to providing developing countries with the support they need to participate in working teams so that the results will be internationally balanced;

(c) Endeavour to partner with other health data producers such as ministries of health.

H. ITEM 3 (H): REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON EDUCATION STATISTICS

(a) Endorse the establishment of an expert group to review the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED);

(b) Complete preparation of the guides to education statistics by the end of 2009;

(c) Agree on the formation of a task force of education agencies in order to improve coordination mechanisms and encourage the creation of international standards;

(d) Ask regional commissions to cooperate with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) regional commissions to form groups concerned with developing coordination mechanisms at the regional level.

I. ITEM 3 (I): REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION ON LABOUR STATISTICS AND ON THE OUTCOME OF THE EIGHTEENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF LABOUR STATISTICIANS

(a) Endorse all discussion points;

(b) Form regional working groups to put in place the mechanisms needed to implement the new international statistical standards on child labour and working hours, study the new definitions and make recommendations on these mechanisms after testing them in the field;

(c) Expedite the translation of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).

J. ITEM 3 (J): REPORT OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CHAIR OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION ON THE INDICATORS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

(a) Express reservations about the two items on intimate partner violence and female genital mutilation covered in the report of the October 2007 expert group meeting on “Indicators to Measure Violence Against Women”, given the limited instance of these phenomena in Arab countries and hence the difficulty of measuring the associated indicators;

(b) Invite statistics departments at the United Nations and within regional commissions to design a programme for sharing national experience and increase the exchange of expertise on data collection, analysis and dissemination among member countries;

(c) Affirm the need to create indicators on family violence (children, men and the elderly).

K. ITEM 3 (K): REPORT OF THE WORLD BANK ON THE INTERNATIONAL
COMPARISON PROGRAMME

Endorse the discussion points.

L. ITEM 3 (L): REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND
THE PACIFIC ON REGIONAL STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Publicize successful experiences in constructing sustainable data-collection programmes and work towards creating similar programmes for member countries.

M. ITEM 3 (M): REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE INDICATORS FOR
MONITORING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

(a) Endorse the need to pursue cooperation on the national and international levels to improve coordination, prepare reports on progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and affirm the need for countries to prepare regular interim reports on the MDG indicators, provided that Government bodies and United Nations agencies contribute to their preparation;

(b) Stress that national data sources are the official sources. In the event of data discrepancies between national and international sources, recourse should be had to the countries to obtain their response to these discrepancies;

(c) Stress that the NSOs are the official data source;

(d) Activate an Arabic interface for the official United Nations website on MDGs, given that this page is available in all official languages except Arabic;

(e) Strengthen training tools available to countries, including the wide distribution of the new MDG Indicators Handbook and the regular provision of training services, in all languages;

(f) Organize training courses on analysis and monitoring at the subnational level, provided that ESCWA plays an effective role in the capacity-building process.

N. ITEM 5: DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK OF UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION
FOR THE BIENNIUM 2010-2011

Adopt the proposed programme, stressing the need to involve Arab groups in several of the 20 specialized expert groups.

O. ITEM 6: DRAFT MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR UNITED NATIONS
STATISTICAL COMMISSION, 2009-2012

(a) Adopt the agenda, main topics and subtopics according to the schedule mentioned in the agenda;

(b) As regards coordinating the positions of the ESCWA member countries in the anticipated meeting with the chief of UNSD, have the head of the ESCWA Statistical Committee speak for ESCWA on statistical issues in the region;

(c) In connection with determining the positions of the countries of the region on the *Delhi Group Manual on Surveys of Informal Employment and the Informal Sector*, devote an additional day to discussing the Manual, through a meeting of experts on national accounts, to be held at ESCWA headquarters next May, and also through a workshop on informal sector statistics to be held in the last quarter of this year. For more information on the Delhi Group, see: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/citygroup/delhi.htm>;

(d) Encourage each country to urge decision makers to attend the proceedings of the Fourth Forum on Arab Statistical Capacity-Building in Cairo in May 2009;

(e) There was a discussion about partnering with ESCWA and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics in organizing a workshop on preparing indicators to measure the progress of societies. ESCWA was requested to work on organizing statistical activities related to measuring the progress of societies in the region.

5. Other points raised during the meeting included:

(a) Giving ESCWA a pivotal role as the coordinating body and effective mechanism for statistical capacity-building;

(b) The need for ESCWA's participation in the specialized city groups springing from the United Nations Statistical Commission;

(c) The importance of issuing United Nations publications and guides in Arabic simultaneously with publication in other languages.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE

6. The meeting was held at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut on 10 February 2009.

B. OPENING

7. The meeting was opened by Mr. Juraj Riecan, Chief of the ESCWA Statistics Division.

C. AGENDA

8. The Regional Working Group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee adopted the agenda in its proposed form (see annex II).

D. PARTICIPANTS

9. The meeting was attended by participants from 12 Arab countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates (see annex V). Of these, ten represented heads of NSOs.

H. EVALUATION

10. There was consensus among the members of the Regional Working Group on the relevance of the topics dealt with at the meeting which they said met their needs. It appeared from the completed evaluation forms that the meeting responded to participants' expectations. They stressed the importance of mutual coordination and the involvement of the ESCWA Statistics Division in statistical capacity-building activities.

Annex I

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE FORTIETH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
STATISTICAL COMMISSION, NEW YORK, 24-27 FEBRUARY 2009**

PALESTINIAN CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS

Item 3 (a): Report of the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Climate Change and Official Statistics

Document summary:

The report focuses on user needs and obstacles in the way of meeting them, and notes the effective contribution official statistics can make to analysing the environmental, social and economic effects of climate change.

Requested of the ESCWA Statistical Committee:

- ✓ To consider the aim of working to incorporate climate change in official statistics;
- ✓ To consider the recommendations proposed in the document for strengthening the role of official statistics in policy formation and decision-making on climate change;
- ✓ To consider proposed arrangements for coordinating and managing governance;
- ✓ To consider proposed timing and priorities.

Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To endorse the purpose, recommendations and priorities mentioned in the document, and create a mechanism for their application;
- ✓ To stress the need to invite countries to provide the necessary financial resources;
- ✓ To stress the need for international organizations to provide the necessary training;
- ✓ To stress the need to identify areas where the work of NSOs and that of environmental organizations overlap;
- ✓ To work to make available indicators for measuring climate change.

Item 3 (b): Report of the European Bureau of Statistics on global initiatives to improve agricultural and rural statistics

Document summary:

The report proposes a framework for the strategic plan to improve national and international agricultural and rural statistics. The plan identifies the key issues and challenges for agricultural statistics, affirms the need for a core set of agricultural statistics that are comparable and relevant, offers a framework for agricultural and rural integration, and puts forward a plan for how to support international, regional and national organizations in developing these statistics.

Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To consider the need to formulate strategies for improving agricultural and rural statistics;
- ✓ To consider conducting an assessment of the performance of the international system for agricultural statistics.

Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To approve the conducting of a performance assessment and formulation of a strategy for improving agricultural and rural statistics, to include statistics on the agricultural budget;
- ✓ To approve the undertaking of certain activities according to region, so that the strategy suits the situation prevailing in the ESCWA countries.

Item 3 (c): Report of the Secretary-General on Making International Recommendations for Energy Statistics

Document summary:

The document summarizes the activities undertaken by the United Nations Statistics Division in 2007-2008 to coordinate the decisions of the Statistical Commission and ensure the preparation of revised and updated international recommendations on energy statistics.

Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To consider adopting the Statistics Division's strategy for preparing international recommendations on energy statistics;
- ✓ To consider recommendations calling for the establishment of an appropriate conceptual framework for official energy statistics, including data collection and dissemination;
- ✓ To consider, in consultation with NSOs and national energy agencies, the revision of the recommendations that has been adopted;
- ✓ To consider the recommendation on gathering together technical details and good practice in a "Guide to collecting and disseminating energy statistics", in order to help countries implement the revised recommendations;
- ✓ To consider presenting final, revised recommendations of the United Nations Expert Group on Energy Statistics for evaluation purposes.

Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To adopt all the discussion points;
- ✓ To prepare guides on methods for standardizing units of measure for energy.

Item 3 (d): Report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting

Document summary:

The document was prepared at the request of UNSC at its thirty-ninth session where the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting was asked to consider and improve the System of Integrated Environmental Accounting (SEEA) and formulate implementation strategies for the System of Integrated Environmental Economic Accounting for Water Resources (SEEAW).

Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To consider changing the name of the Committee of Experts on Economic-Environmental Accounting by adding the words "and Environmental Statistics" and consider its mission and programme of work;

- ✓ To consider, in the context of managing related projects, the revised SEEA and sources for the required funding;
- ✓ To consider the interim report on the work of the Committee of Experts on Economic-Environmental Accounting.

❑ Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To approve changing the committee's name to "Committee of Experts on Economic-Environmental Accounting and Environmental Statistics" and endorse its programme and mission;
- ✓ To agree on the proposed framework for managing related projects.

Item 3 (e): Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts

Document summary:

The document focuses on the process and stages involved in revising the *National System of Accounts, 1993* (1993 SNA), working mechanisms and schedules, and the role played by countries and international organizations. The document also deals with mechanisms for applying the updated system and ways of cooperating to formulate a strategy for this process.

❑ Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To adopt Volume 2 of the 2008 updates to SNA;
- ✓ To consider encouraging countries to apply 2008 SNA as an integrated system for preparing national reports on the economy;
- ✓ To consider the proposed strategy for implementing 2008 SNA and offer related instructions;
- ✓ To consider the outcomes of the November 2008 meeting on future directions for improving SNA.

❑ Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To adopt all discussion points;
- ✓ To design and implement a training programme for developing countries and offer them technical assistance;
- ✓ To organize regional meetings to discuss progress in applying the new revisions at the level of the regional committees;
- ✓ To expedite the translation of 1993 and 2008 SNA into Arabic.

Item 3 (f): Report of the Secretary-General on Social Statistics

Document summary:

The document covers the activities undertaken by UNSD in identifying the scope and substance of social statistics, in order to identify areas whose treatment requires an international action plan and to determine what activities are needed to create such a plan as the basis for the work.

Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To review and adopt the recommendations of the expert group on the scope and substance of social statistics in general and the proposed recommendations on the international action plan in particular;
- ✓ To request the Statistics Division to present a regular report on the implementation of the recommendations and on the whole question of social statistics.

Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ Recommendations on social statistics, while taking the particular characteristics and culture of societies into account;
- ✓ To follow-up on and give consider to the regularly-published report;
- ✓ To work towards having ESCWA countries represented on the technical committees on preparing the social indicators.

Item 3 (g): Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics

Document summary:

The proposed framework for health statistics aims to remedy the lack of content in health statistics and to allow countries to use them for comparison purposes and to coordinate cooperation between health agencies and ministries. With regard to the framework, create a mechanism to allow donor institutions to direct their support towards data collection, analysis, and dissemination and towards improving data quality.

Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To consider methodological trends in health statistics;
- ✓ To consider encouraging countries and international organizations to participate in the work of the health statistics team, and approve its activities;
- ✓ To consider convening the proposed expert group meeting with the aim of presenting and evaluating the framework.

Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To endorse all statements and proposals made in the document;
- ✓ To endorse provision of the necessary support for the participation of developing countries in the working groups, so that outcomes will be internationally balanced;
- ✓ To work towards bringing other bodies concerned with producing health data, such as health ministries, into partnership.

Item 3 (h): Report of the Task Force on Education Statistics

Document summary:

The document reviews the main measuring frameworks currently used in the education field for data collection at the international and regional levels. The document deals with mechanisms for coordinating among the specialized agencies and includes proposals for improving the process of coordinating, collecting,

preparing and disseminating data. It also addresses the review of International Standard Classification of Education, 1997 (ISCED 1997), in coordination with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Union, with the aim of examining the definitions, standards and classifications.

Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To consider setting up an expert group to implement ISCED;
- ✓ To consider setting up a joint intersecretariat working group on education, with the aim of improving coordination mechanisms, easing the job of regional communication and encouraging the creation of international standards.

Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To provide funds for the formation of an expert group to review ISCED and prepare a guide to classifying specializations;
- ✓ To complete the preparation of the guides for education statistics before the end of 2009;
- ✓ To endorse the formation of a working group made up of various bodies working in the education field in order to improve coordination mechanisms and encourage the creation of international standards;
- ✓ To charge regional committees with forming groups to improve coordination mechanisms at the regional level, in cooperation with UNESCO regional committees.

Item 3 (i): Report of the International Labour Organization on employment statistics and on the results of the eighteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians

Document summary:

The report welcomes both the favourable response and commitment of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UNSC recommendations, which call for the development of a roadmap that could serve as a mechanism for action and for the formulation of guidelines to the recommendations of the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. The report also deals with providing support for the NSOs with a view to producing good labour statistics.

Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To review the recommendations in the report, especially those related to labour statistics in the future;
- ✓ To review of the status of the Paris team on employment and compensation;
- ✓ To consider encouraging national and international statistical bodies to lead working teams as an alternative to the Paris team;
- ✓ To stress support for the efforts made by ILO and its development partners to secure technical assistance for the programme on conducting manpower surveys, especially in Africa;
- ✓ To review the decisions on child labour and working hours adopted by the eighteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians;
- ✓ To include the recommendations of the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians on the date, duration and frequency of the conference, namely, once every three years.

❑ Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To adopt all discussion points;
- ✓ To form regional working groups to create mechanisms for implementing the new international statistical standards on child labour and working hours, by studying the new definitions, and institute the recommendations on these mechanisms after testing them in the field;
- ✓ To expedite the translation of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).

Item 3 (j): Report of the Friends of the Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission on Indicators on Violence Against Women

Document summary:

With regard to intensifying efforts to eliminate violence against women, the General Assembly requested UNSC to consult with the Committee on the Status of Women about violence against women, the reasons and penalties for it, and to create a set of indicators on violence against women, with a view to helping assess the extent of violence against women, its spread and the frequency of its occurrence. To this end, UNSC established at its thirty-ninth session the group “Friends of the Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission”.

❑ Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To express reservations with regard to the indicators for intimate partner violence and female genital mutilation discussed in the report of the November 2007 EGM. The number of these cases is limited in the Arab countries, which makes it difficult to measure the related indicators;
- ✓ To call on sections concerned with statistics at the United Nations and within regional committees to design a programme aimed at making available national experiences and strengthening the exchange of expertise between the member countries on collecting, analysing and publishing data;
- ✓ To endorse the need to create indicators on family violence (children, men and the elderly).

Item 3 (k): Report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Programme

Document summary:

The report takes an overall look at preparations for the 2011 session of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) and notes the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair of the Statistical Commission in its regard, the administrative structure proposed for it, in particular reforms and responsibilities, the legal environment, staffing and duration.

❑ Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To discuss and consider the administrative structure proposed for ICP for the 2011 session, and the programme of work for 2009;
- ✓ To discuss and consider the liaising activities aimed at reaching data users and stakeholders;
- ✓ To discuss and consider progress made in preparing for the 2011 session and make any other observations.

Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To agree on all discussion points.

Item 3 (l): Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on improving statistics in the region

Document summary:

The document relates to the progress achieved in improving statistics in Asia and the Pacific region, including major trends in institutional and technical capabilities in developing national statistics. The report identifies the main challenges facing the countries of Asia and the Pacific, and the opportunities for statistical capacity-building. It also highlights the important role of multilateral development statistics and the impact of the aid offered by the developed countries to the less developed countries in reaching an integrated global statistical system.

Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To consider the efforts exerted to improve statistics in the countries of Asia and the Pacific, especially their main achievements and local challenges;
- ✓ To consider the role of the recently-established ESCAP Statistical Committee in enhancing the process of developing statistics in the region;
- ✓ To consider the regional initiative proposed for creating an informal coordination mechanism among the partners in order to improve statistics in the Asia and Pacific region;
- ✓ To consider offering consultation on the need to strengthen the links between UNSD and the statistical bodies within the regional commissions, in order to improve the support offered at the regional level and formulate a programme for improving statistics;
- ✓ To offer guidance on the technical cooperation strategy proposed by the ESCAP secretariat with a view to enhancing statistical capacity-building in the region.

Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To publicize some of these successful experiences in constructing a sustainable data collection programme and work towards providing a similar programme in the ESCWA countries.

Item 3 (m): Report of the Secretary-General on the indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals

Document summary:

The report deals with the issue of expanding the areas covered by the indicators contained in the MDG database and improving their transparency and related reports. It also addresses: implementing recommendations for enhancing capacity-building; coordinating the data-collection process globally; preparing the yearly analyses and reports on progress towards achieving of the MDGs; and enhancing the role of the NSOs in providing MDG data.

Requested of the Committee:

- ✓ To consider continuing with cooperation at the national and international level and focus on formulating recommendations and guiding principles that countries could benefit from to improve their national coordination and notification systems;

- ✓ To recognize the need to enhance the training tools available to countries, including distributing the new *MDG Indicators Handbook* on a wide scale, and to offer regular training services;
- ✓ To recognize the need to make available special MDG analysis and monitoring training at the subnational level in order to enable the countries to give a local stamp to the MDGs.

❑ Requested of ESCWA:

- ✓ To agree to pursuing cooperation at the national and international levels with a view to improving coordination, prepare reports to monitor progress on the MDGs, and stress the need for countries to prepare regular interim reports on progress on the MDG indicators, provided that the responsibility for preparing them is shared between Government bodies and United Nations agencies in the country concerned;
- ✓ To stress that the national data source is the official source. In the event of data discrepancies between national and international sources, recourse should be had to the countries to obtain their response to these discrepancies;
- ✓ To stress that the NSOs are the proper source for data;
- ✓ To activate the Arab portal of the United Nations website on the MDGs, currently available in all United Nations languages except Arabic; make training tools available to all countries; ensure the distribution of the new *MDG Indicators Handbook*, and provide training materials in all languages;
- ✓ To stress the provision of analysis and monitoring training at the subnational level, provided that ESCWA plays an effective role in the capacity-building processes.

Item 5: Draft programme of work of the United Nations Statistics Division for the biennium 2010-2011

Document summary:

The document reviews the proposed programme of work of UNSD for the biennium 2010-2011.

Proposed recommendations:

Adopt the proposed programme, stressing the need for the Arab group to be represented on some of the 20 specialized expert groups.

Item 6: Draft multi-year programme of work for the Statistical Commission for the biennium 2009-2012

Document summary:

The document presents the proposed programme of work of UNSC for the period 2009-2012 according to the agenda.

Proposed recommendations:

Adopt the agenda, topics and subtopics according to the schedule mentioned in the agenda.

Annex II

PROPOSED AGENDA

- Item 1. The current situation in the ESCWA member countries with regard to the issues on the agenda of the United Nations Statistical Commission.
- Item 2. Coordinating the positions of the ESCWA member countries ahead of the upcoming meeting with the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division.
- Item 3. Determining the positions of the ESCWA member countries on the *Delhi Group Manual on Surveys of Informal Employment and the Informal Sector*.
- Item 4. Discussion of a number of regional activities in the field of statistics:
 - ✓ The Fourth Forum on Arab Statistical Capacity-Building
 - ✓ Preparations for the Global Forum on the Progress of Societies
 - ✓ Follow-up to the resolutions adopted by the Inter-Ministerial Statistics Commission
- Item 5. Concluding remarks.

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Title
E/CN.3/2009/L.1	Report of the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Climate Change and Official Statistics, United Nations Statistical Commission, 16 December 2008
E/CN.3/2009/4	Towards international recommendations for energy statistics: report of the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/2009/7	Report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting: note by the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/2009/8	Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts: note by the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/2009/9	Social statistics: report of the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/2009/10	Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics: note by the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/2009/11	Task Force on Education Statistics: note by the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/2009/12	Report of the International Labour Organization on labour statistics and on the outcomes of the eighteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians: note by the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/2009/13	Friends of the Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission on the indicators on violence against women: note by the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/2009/14	Report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Programme: note by the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/2009/15	Regional statistics development in Asia and the Pacific: note by the Secretary-General
E/CN.3/2009/16	Report of the Secretary-General on the indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals
E/CN.3/2009/27	Draft programme of work of the United Nations Statistics Division for the biennium 2010-2011: note by the Secretariat

Annex IV

CITY GROUPS

[The following is taken from the website: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/citygroup>]

In recent years, representatives from national statistical agencies have started to meet informally to address selected problems in statistical methods. Some of these groups have become formally known as "city groups". This page provides background information on the genesis and the workings of the city groups.

Background information

The list below shows which groups are presently active and the topics under discussion. The names of these group are on the web site. Clicking on a group name brings up a brief report on the purpose of each group, the year of its creation, recent meetings, documentation, future plans and points of contact. Where available, links to a group's website are provided.

The first of these groups was the group that is now known as the Voorburg group. Its name derives from the city in the Netherlands where it first met. The experience with the Voorburg group in particular and with other city groups has shown that the international community can benefit greatly from such a process. It is important to note also that technical expertise and certainly practical experience resides mainly with national statistical offices. It was, therefore, recognized that these informal consultation groups are an innovative way to use country resources to improve and speed up the international standards development process. This view was also expressed by the Expert Group on Critical Problems in Economic Statistics in its report to the Statistical Commission (contained in document E/CN.3/1997/2).

The challenge, however, was to create a balance between two seemingly conflicting forces. On the one hand these relatively small groups need to be able to work as effectively as possible, free from unnecessary bureaucratic interference. On the other hand, since much of the work of these groups could result in proposed international standards, it was necessary that the viewpoints of those countries who often lack the resources to directly participate in the city groups be recognized and considered.

The mechanism to accomplish this was to allow city groups to set their own working agendas while requiring precise terms of reference approved by the Statistical Commission. For that reason, the Statistical Commission since its twenty-ninth session in February 1997 reviews the accomplishments of existing groups and examines the terms of reference for proposed new groups. Based on this it encourages the existing groups to continue their work and identifies a number of critical problems around which new city groups might be formed.

In order to preserve maximum flexibility city groups as a matter of principle determine their own individual mechanism of work. Still, there exist some common characteristics.

City groups are informal groups of experts primarily from national statistical agencies. Participation by representatives is voluntary as is the existence of the group itself. If there is insufficient interest in the group then it either is not created or soon ceases to exist. Each representative is expected to fund his or her participation in the group. While each group sets its own working procedures generally a key criterion for participation is the ability of each member to contribute a substantive paper to each meeting of the group. It is usually the responsibility of the host to prepare a volume of proceedings after each meeting. The host country may change after each meeting.

If your office possesses the necessary expertise or an interest in one of these fields, you are strongly encouraged to contact the convener and to participate to the extent possible in the working of the respective

group. Resources permitting, the Statistics Division and other international organizations will try to speak for those unable to participate. Furthermore, the Statistics Division will assist where possible in making the findings of these groups more widely available.

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List of City groups on statistical methods

Canberra Group/Household Statistics (Completed)

Capital Stocks/Canberra I (Completed)

Measurement of Non-financial Assets/Canberra II (Completed)

Delhi Group/Informal Sector Statistics

London Group/Environmental Accounting

Ottawa Group/Price Statistics

Paris Group/Labour and Compensation (Completed)

Rio Group/Poverty Statistics (Completed)

Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers (formerly Roundtable on Business Survey Frames)

Siena Group/Social Statistics (Completed)

Voorburg Group/Service Statistics

Washington Group/Disability Statistics

Oslo Group/Energy Statistics

Wye Group/Statistics on Rural Development & Agriculture Household Income

Annex V*

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