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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT

REGIONAL WORKING GROUP OF THE ESCWA STATISTICAL COMMITTEE AT ITS THIRD MEETING BEIRUT, 1-2 FEBRUARY 2010

Summary

The third meeting of the Regional Working Group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) at the United Nations House in Beirut on 1 and 2 February 2010.

The main topics on the agenda included: the activities of the World Statistics Day at the national and regional levels, coordinating the positions of ESCWA member countries during the forty-first session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), discussing the Statistics Division's strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013, and the dissemination of statistics.

The meeting was held at the request of the national statistical offices (NSOs) in the ESCWA region to discuss points on the agenda of the forty-first session 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.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-2	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. RECOMMENDATIONS	3	3
A. Recommendations addressed to member countries		3
B. Recommendations addressed to ESCWA.....		4
II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION	4-7	4
A. Statistics Day at the national and regional levels	4	4
B. Preparation for the forty-first session of the UNSC	5	4
C. ESCWA strategic framework for the 2012-2013 biennium in the field of statistics.....	6	7
D. Dissemination of statistics: coordination and harmonization of agencies' questionnaires	7	7
III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK	8-13	7
A. Date and venue	8	7
B. Opening	9	7
C. Agenda.....	10	7
D. Participants	11	8
E. Documents.....	12	8
F. Evaluation.....	13	8

ANNEXES

I. Preparations for the forty-first session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, New York, 23-26 February 2010	9
II. List of participants.....	17
III. List of documents	19

Introduction

1. The third meeting of the Regional Working Group of the ESCWA 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 about the activities of the World Statistics Day at the national and regional levels, discuss the Statistics Division's strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013, agree on the topics that the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) will be dealing with during its forty-first meeting, and coordinate the positions of the countries of the region at that meeting to take place in New York from 23 to 26 February 2010.

2. The third meeting of the Regional Working Group was held to achieve the following objectives:

(a) To discuss the current situation in ESCWA member countries in connection with the issues on the UNSC's forty-first meeting agenda;

(b) To coordinate the positions of ESCWA member countries at the upcoming meeting with the head of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD);

(c) To determine the positions of the countries of the region as regards the World Statistics Day;

(d) To stress the importance of disseminating statistics.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

A. RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO MEMBER COUNTRIES

(a) To organize national activities deemed appropriate in each country to celebrate the achievements of official statistical systems in view of the World Statistics Day on 20 October 2010;

(b) To organize a regional ceremony within the framework of the World Statistics Day. For this purpose, a sub-committee/working group has been established comprising representatives from statistical agencies, chaired by Lebanon and including the following members: Jordan, Kuwait and Yemen. The sub-committee presents proposals to member countries on the activities that can be organized at the regional level in particular and at the national level in general, within a period not exceeding one month. Proposals are to be distributed to the rest of the member countries once they are approved;

(c) To stress the importance of conducting in-depth discussions to study the statistical work strategy in the ESCWA region through mechanisms agreed to by member countries and ESCWA;

(d) To highlight the importance of translation into Arabic. A mechanism was adopted to ensure the quality of statistical translation into Arabic through a committee of experts chosen among current employees and retired individuals, mandated to revise translations. Member countries were requested to nominate experts for the membership of this committee, provided its first task consists of assisting in the translation of the national accounts system;

(e) To exert further efforts with ESCWA to provide financial and technical support to involve representatives from the countries of the region in international statistical groups concerned with statistical work in the ESCWA region;

(f) To request UNSD to offer its support to ESCWA for the organization of two workshops on international service and good trade statistics.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE ESCWA SECRETARIAT

(a) To hold a meeting for the representatives of statistical bodies in the ESCWA region and Mr. Paul Cheung, head of the UNSD, in order to deliberate on statistics-related issues in the region. ESCWA is requested to cooperate with member countries on the preparation of the meeting agenda, including the request of the United Nations Secretary-General to send a message to all heads of States, urging them to heed national statistical agencies and to supply them with the necessary funding and other resources for the success of national statistics, as well as a draft project to be discussed from the list of the following proposed projects:

- (i) Comprehensive assessment of statistical work in the region and on national levels in order to identify areas that can be improved;
- (ii) 1993 and 2008 national accounts systems;
- (iii) Quality framework (the Canadian experience);
- (iv) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
- (v) Labour force and migration statistics (to be discussed as well with the International Labour Organization (ILO));
- (vi) Integration of geographic information systems in the statistical work.

(b) To hold a series of meetings on the sidelines of the forty-first session of the UNSC between the representatives of statistical agencies in the ESCWA region and other international organizations concerned with statistics, such as Ms. Shaida Badiee, director of the Development Data Group at the World Bank, regarding the International Comparison Program (ICP), the ILO and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

A. STATISTICS DAY AT THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

4. At the first session of the meeting, Ms. Ghada Mustafa Abdullah, director general of International Cooperation in the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in Egypt (CAPMAS), presented the African experience for the celebration of Statistics Day held annually on 28 November. Then, Ms. Neda Jaafar, representative of the Statistics Division in ESCWA, made a presentation on the celebration of the World Statistics Day to be held at the regional level on 20 October 2010.

B. PREPARATION FOR THE FORTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE UNSC

5. At the second session of the meeting, 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 (PCBS) submitted a number of proposals to which amendments were made during the meeting (see annex I). Topics discussed by participants based on the items of the forty-first meeting session of the UNSC agenda and points agreed to are as follows:

Item 3 (a) Report of Statistics Canada on national quality assurance frameworks

- (a) Adoption of all points of discussion;

(b) Contributing to building, developing and maintaining a culture of quality in statistical agencies, and the integration of quality procedures at various stages of the statistical project.

Item 3 (b) Report of the Friends of the Chair on agricultural statistics

(a) Adoption of all points of discussion;

(b) Agreement on the Global Strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics, and requesting the Friends of the Chair to provide the evaluation results.

Item 3 (c) Report of the Secretary-General on Statistics of International Trade in Services

(a) Agreeing to adopt the revised compilers manual of international trade in services statistics and encouraging countries to hold regional workshops on the manual in order to standardize the work methodology;

(b) Requesting the implementation of asymmetry studies between different regions, such as the Arab countries and other economic blocs, in such a way to ameliorate the quality of data, ensure comprehensiveness and real monitoring for trade between countries and unification of tools and work mechanisms.

Item 3 (d) Report of the task force on statistics of international trade in services

(a) Adoption of all points of discussion;

(b) Agreement on the adoption of the revised manual for collectors of international trade in services statistics in 2010, encouraging and supporting countries to hold regional workshops in order to standardize the work methodology and the implementation of the revised version of the manual.

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

(a) Adoption of all points of discussion;

(b) Appealing to the World Bank to provide financial and technical support to ESCWA member countries for the implementation of the International Comparison Programme.

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

(a) Adoption of all points of discussion;

(b) Assuring the completion of translation by ESCWA in order to accelerate the translation process to avoid a time gap in the implementation in different countries;

(c) Adoption of the implementation policy tailored to each country/region and preparation of flexible plans according to priorities, intensifying technical help for countries lacking data resources, which would form an obstacle to implementation, including providing the services of an interregional international expert.

Item 3 (g) Report of the Secretary-General on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics

Adoption of all points of discussion.

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

Adoption of all points of discussion.

Item 3 (i) Report of the Secretary-General on the World Statistics Day

(a) Adoption of all points of discussion;

(b) Supporting the countries of the ESCWA region for the World Statistics Day set to take place on 20 October 2010.

Item 3 (j) Report of the National Statistical and Geographical Institute of Brazil: global geographic information management

(a) Reaffirming the importance of integrating geographic information in statistical work;

(b) Agreeing to the recommendation on the necessity of national cooperation between official statistical offices and national institutions concerned with maps and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), in order to develop the capacities of the State in the field of geographic information and activating its appropriate use by decision makers as well as the recommendation urging the United Nations to prepare a study on the standards and bases for a mechanism to manage the geographic information efficiently in such a way to meet the interest of the State; and reaffirming the necessity to form an international forum to deliberate on the various issues related to the use of geographic information in all fields, in particular statistical work;

(c) Providing financial and technical support to member countries to develop geographic information in statistical work and expanding standards and frameworks of spatial data;

(d) Agreeing to the recommendation on holding an annual expert group meeting to discuss the possibility of using spatial and statistical data for enhancing the provision of data and sharing the data nationally and internationally by setting international standards and characteristics that regulate this cooperation in the best interests of decision makers.

Item 3 (k) Report of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico: international statistical standards and the harmonization of national statistics

(a) Adoption of all points of discussion;

(b) Proposal for uploading a database on the UNSD website along with the translation of the statistical standards database published on the national institute of Mexico's website into adopted languages or at least into English to facilitate their study (the website is currently available only in Spanish);

(c) Approving the recommendation on the formation of a subcommittee within the UNSC to examine the contents, the quality of experiences and to present a report on its actions to the forty-first session of the Statistical Committee.

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

(a) Adoption of all points of discussion;

(b) Agreeing to working for the integration of statistics in the field of MDGs into national planning based on those goals; national adaptation of goals and indicators based on the new relevant guidelines; and direct adaptation according to the recommendations of the MDGs comprehensive revision to be undertaken by the General Assembly in September 2010;

(c) Agreeing to continue to work to reconcile national and international data, better coordinate the monitoring of MDGs through national statistical offices and United Nations regional organizations, as well as the necessity for all training materials to be provided in all languages, holding workshops for regional and national capacity-building for a better use of those indicators, and improved MDGs monitoring;

(d) Urging the UNSD as well as regional commissions to adopt the data issued by national statistical agencies and to consider such agencies as the main source for managing data related to MDGs.

Item 3 (m) Report of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: development of official statistics in the region

Adoption of the discussion points and presenting a draft project that reflects the needs and challenges in the field of statistical work in the ESCWA region in order to provide support aimed at developing statistical work in the region.

**C. ESCWA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE 2012-2013
BIENNIUM IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICS**

6. At the second session of the meeting, Mr. Juraj Riecan, head of ESCWA statistics division, presented ESCWA strategic framework for the 2012-2013 biennium in the field of statistics for discussion by member countries.

**D. DISSEMINATION OF STATISTICS: COORDINATION AND
HARMONIZATION OF AGENCIES' QUESTIONNAIRES**

7. At the fourth session, Mr. Riecan made a presentation on statistics dissemination within ESCWA and the cooperation with other international organizations. The representative of Egypt made a presentation on the experience of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in the publication of statistics and coordination with international bodies that request data from statistical offices within the ESCWA region. The representative of Palestine made a presentation on the national strategic framework to develop the national statistical system.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE

8. The third meeting of the regional working group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee was held at the United Nations House in Beirut on 1 and 2 February 2010.

B. OPENING

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

C. AGENDA

10. The Regional Working Group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee adopted the agenda of its third meeting held in four sessions in its proposed form as follows:

1. Statistics Day at the national and regional level:

- (a) Presentation by CAPMAS;
- (b) Presentation by ESCWA Statistics Division.

2. Preparation for the forty-first session of the United Nations Statistical Commission: presentation by PCBS.
3. ESCWA strategic framework for the 2012-2013 biennium in the field of statistics.
4. Dissemination of statistics: coordination and harmonization of agencies' questionnaires:
 - (a) Introduction by ESCWA;
 - (b) Presentation by countries.

D. PARTICIPANTS

11. The meeting was attended by participants representing the heads of national statistical offices in ten Arab countries, namely: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, the Sudan and Yemen. The list of participants is contained in annex II to this report.

E. DOCUMENTS

12. The secretariat distributed to participants the meeting documents included in annex III to this report.

F. EVALUATION

13. 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. 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 FORTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
STATISTICAL COMMISSION,
NEW YORK, 23-26 FEBRUARY 2010**

PALESTINIAN CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS

Item 3 (a) Report of Statistics Canada on national quality assurance frameworks

□ Document summary:

The report presents a review of current quality concepts, frameworks and tools; advocates the use by national statistical offices of national quality assurance frameworks and describes its basic elements, benefits and extent; puts forward three illustrative proposals for a generic template for such a framework, which, it suggests, be accompanied by guidelines to assist national statistical offices in the formulation of their individual frameworks, and outlines a process for developing the generic template and guidelines.

□ The Commission is invited to discuss:

- ✓ The cost-benefit to national statistical offices of having a national quality assurance framework.
- ✓ The benefits of developing a generic national quality assurance framework template and accompanying guidelines as an aid to national statistical offices in developing their individual frameworks.
- ✓ The appropriate mechanism for developing a standard generic national quality assurance framework template and accompanying guidelines for presentation to the Statistical Commission for adoption at its forty-second session in 2011.

□ ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Adopt all the discussion points.
- ✓ Contribute to building, maintaining and developing the culture of quality in statistical offices through raising awareness of all workers and integrating quality measures in the different phases of the statistical project.
- ✓ Make use of the Canadian experience in the field of statistical offices, aimed to establish a national framework for quality assurance and data evaluation.

Item 3 (b) Report of the Friends of the Chair on agricultural statistics

□ Document summary:

The purpose of the report is to describe the progress made in developing the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. It also summarizes the steps taken to receive input from stakeholders, policymakers and statistical institutions on the national and international levels to develop the Global Strategy. The report concludes with recommendations and propositions for the implementation of the Strategy.

□ The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ Comment on and endorse the Global Strategy.
- ✓ Direct FAO under the auspices of the Friends of the Chair (which includes Australia, Brazil, China, Cuba, Ethiopia, Morocco, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Uganda, the United States of America, Eurostat, FAO and the World Bank) to prepare the implementation plan for the Global Strategy and submit it for the approval of the Commission at its forty-second session.

□ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Adopt all the discussion points.

Item 3 (c) Report of the Secretary-General on Statistics of International Trade in Services

□Document summary:

The document summarizes the main activities implemented by the inter-agency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services on the revision of the existing Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services: concepts and definitions, 2010, as well as consultation activities with most countries for their observations on the revised version of the manual.

□The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ Adopt the revised recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics as contained in “International merchandise trade statistics: concepts and definitions, 2010” (IMTS2010).
- ✓ Endorse the IMTS2010 implementation programme, including preparation of the revised Compilers Manual, providing technical assistance to countries and enhancement of the United Nations Comtrade database, so as to ensure efficient data storage and dissemination at the global level.
- ✓ Request that both the Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics and the Inter-agency Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics continue their work with the aim, inter alia, of further developing the analytical potential of international merchandise trade statistics to more effectively address globalization, climate change and environmental concerns.

□ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Adopt all points of the discussion as well as the manual, and encourage countries to hold a regional workshop in this regard in order to unify the work methodology.
- ✓ Propose the implementation of asymmetry studies between different regions, such as Arab countries and other economic blocs, including the European Union, China, Japan and the United States of America, in such a way as to ameliorate the quality of data, ensure comprehensiveness and real monitoring for trade between countries and unification of tools and work mechanism.

Item 3 (d) Report of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services

□Document summary:

In accordance with the mandate conferred by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-second session to update and revise the 2002 Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services, the report briefly describes the revision process carried out by the inter-agency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services, summarizes the organization of the work of the Task Force and presents the new features of the revised manual, its relation to and alignment with other relevant statistical frameworks, the worldwide consultation process and the proposed implementation programme and future work.

□The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ Review and adopt the revised Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services, 2010, including its recommendations; and endorse the implementation programme presented above, including preparation of guidance for compilers and providing technical assistance to States.
- ✓ Support the initiatives of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services with regard to facilitating data compilation by States using recommendations of the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services, 2010.

- ✓ Request the Task Force to continue its work aiming to further develop the analytical potential of international trade in services statistics to more effectively address globalization and related issues.

□ ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Adopt the discussion points and promulgate the revised manual for implementation.
- ✓ Use the revised manual after adoption to interconnect the previous classification (currently in use) and the new version of the manual.

Item 3 (e) Report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Program

□ Document summary:

The report presents an overview of the preparations for the 2011 round of the International Comparison Program, a brief description of the administrative structure of the 2011 round of the program, concerning competencies, responsibilities, legal environment, employees, timetable, summary of the objectives of the 2011 round of the program, and a summary of the implementation timetable.

□ The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ Review and comment on the objectives of the 2011 round.
- ✓ Review and comment on the new orientations and the envisioned innovations and improvements.
- ✓ Review and comment on the issues related to country participation.
- ✓ Review and comment on the status of preparations so far.
- ✓ Provide further guidance on the work plan and the timetable of the International Comparison Program.

□ ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Adopt the discussion points.
- ✓ Classify the countries of the ESCWA region in categories according to the nature of their economies in terms of wealth and poverty, that is, for example, the Gulf countries in a category and other Arab countries in another category, which facilitates comparisons between countries by overcoming large gaps between them.

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

□ Document summary:

The report provides an update on the finalization of the System of National Accounts, 2008 (2008 SNA); further information on the implementation strategy and supporting statistics in terms of international implementation initiatives, regional commissions plans and activities, Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts plans and activities, and coordination for research and training.

□ The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ Express its views on the publication and translation process of the 2008 SNA.
- ✓ Express support for and provide guidance on the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics.

- ✓ Express support for and provide guidance on the mechanisms proposed by the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts for coordinating training and research on national accounts.
- ✓ Express support for and provide guidance on the data template of high-frequency statistics and indicators.

□ ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Emphasize the allocation of Arabic translation to ESCWA in order to expedite the translation process and bridge the time gap in the implementation between different countries, taking into account avoiding literal translation as was the case in the 1993 national accounts.
- ✓ Integrate the application of SNA in statistical office plans and adopt an implementation policy specific to the situation of each country/region so that plans are flexible in their details and in line with priorities.
- ✓ Intensify technical assistance to countries that suffer from problems in their data sources, which may constitute an obstacle to implementation.

Item 3 (g) Report of the Secretary-General on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics

□ Document summary:

The report includes the conclusions and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics, held in November 2009, in which participants agreed to the mechanism to be adopted for the revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the implementation timetable, as well as the contents of the revised framework, establish a core set of environment statistics to be applied in countries unable to implement the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting, and a revision timetable.

□ The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ Review the conclusions of the Expert Group Meeting on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics.
- ✓ Endorse the guiding principles, contents, modalities and timetable for the revision of the Framework.
- ✓ Review and endorse the plan for the development of a core set of environment statistics in countries unable to implement the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting.

□ ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Support the establishment of a framework for the development of environment statistics, distribute a copy of the draft report and circulate it to member countries for revision.
- ✓ Commit to set schedules and revision methods as to the framework for the development of environment statistics and the set of environmental indicators.
- ✓ In view of the inability to implement the integrated environmental and economic accounting in all countries, to support the plan to establish and develop a core set of environment statistics as mentioned in paragraphs 30 and 36 of the document.

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

□ Document summary:

The report was prepared in accordance with a request by the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session. The Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting was asked to revise and develop the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, as well as to describe the progress made in the formulation of the energy and water Systems of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA).

□ The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ The activities of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting.
- ✓ The progress made on the revision of the SEEA and the future work.
- ✓ International Recommendations for Water Statistics Part I as international recommendations for water statistics and Part II as supplementary guidance.

□ ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Adopt the points of discussion.

Item 3 (i) Report of the Secretary-General on World Statistics Day

□ Document summary:

The report contains a proposal to organize the World Statistics Day on 20 October 2010 as a one-off event in order to celebrate the many achievements of official statistics. The proposed World Statistics Day aims at raising awareness of the many contributions of official statistics premised on the core values of service, integrity and professionalism, and benefiting from the support of decision makers and data sources, knowing that more than 100 countries organize such a day at the national level. Each country implements its specific activities to celebrate this day.

□ The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ Endorse 20 October 2010 as the date of the first World Statistics Day, to be observed by statistical offices.
- ✓ Endorse the theme “Celebrating the Many Achievements of Official Statistics” and the core values of service, integrity and professionalism.
- ✓ Request the UNSD to provide appropriate guidance and coordination to countries on the observance of World Statistics Day and provide publicity to the events being organized.

□ ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Adopt the points of discussion; and point to the existence of an Arabic Statistical Day on 13 November celebrated annually and approved by the Permanent Technical Committee for Statistics in the Arab League.
- ✓ Countries that celebrate this day at the national level provide the UNSC with the organization activities to be circulated to the rest of countries.

Item 3 (j) Report of the National Statistical and Geographical Institute of Brazil: global geographic information management

□ Document summary:

The report prepared by the National Statistical and Geographical Institute of Brazil describes ongoing initiatives to improve global coordination in the area of geographic and statistical information. The report argues for the need for a global spatial data infrastructure that includes satellite imagery, aerial photography,

the Global Positioning System (GPS) and others, and for the better integration of statistical and geographical information at the global level, in order for geographic information to be used in all phases of statistical work, in particular in censuses. This would strengthen the analytical potential of such information and its usefulness for policy- and decision-making.

□The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ Recognize the importance of the integration of geographic and statistical information.
- ✓ Call on national statistics offices to actively participate, in partnership with other national authorities, in the development of national capacities, in the context of geographic information.
- ✓ Call upon the Secretary-General to prepare a report on a global vision for geographic information management, including the possibility of creating a global forum.
- ✓ Request the UNSD to convene, within a year, an international expert group meeting to address the use of spatial and statistical data to enhance data-sharing and support decision-making through international standards and specifications, as well as to study all other issues related to the use of integrated geographic and statistical information.

□ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Stress the importance of using geographical data and geographical tools (maps, aerial photos, GPS, and others) in statistical work, especially in all phases of censuses.
- ✓ Agree with the recommendation related to the necessity of cooperation between official statistical offices and national institutions specialized in maps and geographical information systems for the development of the State capacity in the field of geographical information and activate their appropriate use by decision makers.
- ✓ Agree with the recommendation concerning the necessity for the United Nations to prepare a study on norms and standards which would clearly reflect the geographic information management mechanism to serve the interests of the State, and emphasize the need to form an international forum that would deliberate on all issues related to the use of geographical information in all fields and in particular in statistical work.
- ✓ Agree with the recommendation to convene an annual expert group meeting to address the use of spatial and statistical data to enhance data-sharing and support decision-making through international standards and specifications.

Item 3 (k) Report of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico: international statistical standards and the harmonization of national statistics

□Document summary:

The report describes a website developed by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) containing an inventory of global statistical standards. It discusses the importance of including those international standards in a database after examination, revision and updating to be published later on the UNSC website. This database is important since it allows and facilitates comparisons between local, regional and international data and indicators. The report refers to main obstacles to the establishment of such a database and proposes a definite methodology to overcome them.

□The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ Discuss the merits of such a global inventory of statistical standards.
- ✓ Endorse the proposal that the database be posted on the website of the Statistics Division.
- ✓ Request the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities to review the database and make proposals for its further development and maintenance.

□ ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Adopt the points of the discussion.
- ✓ Translate the statistical indicators database published on the website of the Mexico Institute into the adopted languages, or at least into English, to facilitate its study (the website is currently in Spanish only).
- ✓ Approve the proposal contained in the report regarding the formation of a subcommittee within the UNSC to study the contents as well as the experience and to report on its work to the forty-second session of the Commission.

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

□ Document summary:

The report elaborates on the work conducted by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDGs Indicators in the following fields: improve metadata and methodologies related to the MDGs indicators; bridge gaps between international and national data; further develop data and identify strategies to increase efforts in the field of capacity-building; define strategies to help countries improve the coordination of data reporting and MDGs monitoring; and prepare analyses and annual reports on progress made towards achieving these goals.

□ The Commission is invited to comment on the proposed next steps:

- ✓ Continuing the work to reconcile the national and international data and to improve coordination of MDGs monitoring in countries.
- ✓ Improving training tools available to countries, including the use of extensive distribution of the new MDGs handbook and the provision of training on methodological issues in the production of MDGs indicators.
- ✓ Continuing to provide training to countries on the production of data and indicators of MDGs at the subnational level.
- ✓ Providing technical assistance and training to countries that wish to adopt the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) standards on MDGs indicators for exchanging data and metadata among national statistical offices and ministries and with international agencies.

□ ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Reaffirm the necessity to activate the Arabic interface of the official United Nations website on the MDGs, as this page is available in all official languages of the United Nations except the Arabic language, noting that this recommendation has already been raised at the fortieth session of the Statistical Commission and has not yet been implemented.
- ✓ Agree to continue to work toward reconciling national and international data, to better coordinate the monitoring of the MDGs through statistical offices and regional United Nations organizations, while reaffirming that the national source (the national statistical office) of MDGs data is considered to be the official source of such data. In case of contradiction between national and international sources, the UNSD should review the matter with the country to elucidate it.
- ✓ Improve training tools available to all countries, ensure the distribution of the new MDGs indicators manual, ensure all training materials are available in all languages, and hold regional workshops to introduce the manual in preparation for national workshops aimed to introduce the manual and its use mechanisms.
- ✓ Reaffirm the continual work on providing training for countries on the subnational level by holding workshops for training the trainers on the regional level. Those trainers would thereafter

be able to hold workshops in this field at the national level. The UNSD as well as the United Nations regional commissions would follow up the matter to ensure the usefulness of training.

- ✓ Provide technical assistance and training to countries that wish to adopt SDMX standards on the MDGs indicators for the exchange of data and metadata between national statistical offices, ministries and international agencies.
- ✓ Make use of the SDMX framework in its current form which documents the metadata on the macro level rather than on the micro level for data exchange between partners knowing that the benefit remains limited in case of the use of such framework as an infrastructure for the statistical system.
- ✓ Take into account the tendency of many countries to build a metadata system for their statistical system, and such a system would reflect in most cases metadata at the disaggregated level.
- ✓ Encourage the development of the SDMX system to document data at the disaggregated level so that one output would be comprehensive data according to the needs of partners.

Recommendation addressed to ESCWA member countries:

To develop a metadata framework that would take into account international recommendations and good practice, meet primarily the needs of ESCWA member countries, and be in conformity with SDMX criteria.

Item 3 (m) Report of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: development of official statistics in the region

□ Document summary:

The report offers a description of the main trends in the development of official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean and the principal challenges in that regard. It provides an analysis of the state of development of statistics production in the region, based on statistical information for 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries and 8 specific areas, namely: population censuses, household surveys, national accounts and economic statistics, gender statistics, vital statistics, education statistics, environmental statistics, and statistics on information and communications technologies.

□ The Commission is invited to:

- ✓ Comment on the measures being adopted by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to further develop statistics, particularly their key achievements and most urgent issues.
- ✓ Comment on the role of the Statistical Conference of the Americas and on the 2005-2015 strategic plan.
- ✓ Make suggestions concerning the operation of the working groups.
- ✓ Advise on the challenge, for statistical offices, of raising the visibility and priority of official statistics in the public agendas of policymakers.
- ✓ Provide guidance on the strategy to promote and strengthen cooperation between the international agencies and organizations developing statistical programmes in the region.

□ ESCWA is invited to:

- ✓ Work to implement similar programmes in ESCWA member countries, since the focus was on Africa during the thirty-ninth session of the UNSC, and on the experience of Asia and the Pacific during its fortieth session.

Annex II*

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Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

The list of documents distributed to participants includes documents related to item 3 of the UNSC forty-first session agenda (New York, 23-26 February 2010) and is as follows:

Title	Symbol
Report of Statistics Canada on National Quality Assurance	E/CN.3/2010/2
Report of the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics	E/CN.3/2010/3
Report of the Secretary-General on International Merchandise Trade Statistics	E/CN.3/2010/5
Report of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services	E/CN.3/2010/6
Report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Programme	E/CN.3/2010/7
Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts	E/CN.3/2010/8
Report of the Secretary-General on the Framework for Environmental Statistics	E/CN.3/2010/9
Report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting	E/CN.3/2010/11
Report of the Secretary-General on the World Statistics Day	E/CN.3/2010/12
Report of National Statistical and Geographical Institute of Brazil on Global Geographic Information Management	E/CN.3/2010/13
Report of National Institution of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) on Inventory on Global Statistical Standards	E/CN.3/2010/14
Report of the Secretary-General on the indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals	E/CN.3/2010/15
Report of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on regional statistical development in Latin America and the Caribbean	E/CN.3/2010/16
