



Report

Fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee Beirut and online, 16–17 November 2022

Summary

The Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its fifteenth session online and in-person at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 16 and 17 November 2022. The Committee considered the items on the session agenda, including activities implemented under the statistics subprogramme, technical cooperation activities, and the implementation of recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fourteenth session. The Committee also reviewed technical papers on demographic, social and economic statistics; and on improving monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a focus on promoting the use of new methods for data production. The Committee's work also included a joint session with the ESCWA Committee on Technology for Development on the theme "Data management modernization using new technologies".

The present report sets out the recommendations issued by the Statistical Committee at its fifteenth session, and a summary of the discussions under each agenda item.

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Introduction

1. The Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its fifteenth session online and in-person on 16 and 17 November 2022, pursuant to resolution 179 (XVI) of 2 September 1992, endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1993/2 of 2 February 1993, concerning the establishment of a statistical committee at ESCWA, and in accordance with the recommendations issued at the fourteenth session of the Statistical Committee, held virtually on 10 and 11 February 2021.
2. The present report sets out the recommendations issued by the Statistical Committee at its fifteenth session, and a summary of the discussions under each agenda item.

I. Recommendations

3. At its fifteenth session, the Statistical Committee made the following recommendations to member States and to the ESCWA secretariat.

A. Recommendations to ESCWA member States

4. The Statistical Committee issued the following recommendations to ESCWA member States:
 - (a) Welcome activities implemented pursuant to recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fourteenth session, and the activities implemented under the ESCWA programme plan in the field of statistics; and benefit from ESCWA services in implementing technical cooperation activities and planned projects;
 - (b) Take note of the reports of the Technical Advisory Group on Economic Statistics and the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics and of the recommendations contained therein; and welcome the launch of the strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics 2021–2025, prepared in partnership with member States and statistical experts in the region;
 - (c) Emphasize the importance of price statistics, especially purchasing power parities (PPPs), in decision-making and policy formulation; promote their use in economic analyses and comparisons and in calculating national indicators in real terms; and invite countries that have not yet participated in the programme to do so;
 - (d) Strengthen the implementation of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF) at the national level as a key tool for the production of geographically and spatially defined statistical data, so as to meet the requirements of the 2030 Agenda; or develop a national framework aligned with GSGF under appropriate institutional arrangements for coordination between statistical offices and related national agencies;
 - (e) Promote the use of new technologies in the statistical field, and provide official national data to ESCWA as a matter of course, in accordance with approved standards and using modern technologies.

B. Recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat

5. The Statistical Committee made the following recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat:
 - (a) Support member States in formulating their national strategies for the development of statistics at various stages;

(b) Support member States in developing strategies to bridge gaps in data flows for sustainable development indicators, so as to ensure the sustainability and modernization of national reporting platforms, and to exchange statistical data and metadata nationally between components of statistical systems using modern technologies, such as SDMX, to ensure that no one is left behind, stressing that statistical agencies should be the source of national data, and prioritizing the development of administrative records as an alternative data source;

(c) Continue producing PPPs periodically and publishing regional results, and develop innovative tools for price data collection and analysis using modern technologies;

(d) Strengthen technical support to member States based on their needs in using new technologies to collect, process, analyse and disseminate statistical data; in contributing to the development of human and institutional capacities on the integration of statistical and geospatial information; in formulating guidelines for the implementation of GSGF; and in conducting population censuses, especially the 2020 cycle, in accordance with resources available to the ESCWA secretariat;

(e) Enable member States to keep abreast of methodological developments in economic, social, environmental and demographic statistics, in collaboration with regional and international organizations, and in line with the priorities and needs of member States and of ESCWA;

(f) Coordinate efforts to define a common Arab position on the various agenda items of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, while preserving countries' right to intervene on issues that directly concern them;

(g) Continue to support the use of official statistics, and ensure data quality in accordance with international standards;

(h) Support member States' efforts to exchange expertise, successful experiences and good practices among them, and to document them on the ESCWA website to facilitate access to them;

(i) Continue developing the modern ESCWA data ecosystem and provide it with interactive tools to support policymaking, by benefiting from artificial intelligence and geospatial techniques, so as to ensure that it is able to download data from other regional and international organizations and use them to serve member States.

II. Topics of discussion

A. Joint session with the ESCWA Committee on Technology for Development on the theme “Data management modernization using new technologies” (Beirut, 15–16 November 2022)

6. On 15 and 16 November 2022, the Statistical Committee held a joint session with the ESCWA Committee on Technology for Development on the theme “Data management modernization using new technologies”. The session tackled ways to benefit from new technologies to develop national data systems, based on ESCWA experience in that field.

7. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat opened the session with a summary of the main strategies that ESCWA relied on to develop a data system, including a digital strategy and strategies related to data and innovation. He also reviewed key online platforms that ESCWA was developing and updating. He noted the structural modifications resulting from developing the data infrastructure at ESCWA, which included facilitating coordination and collaboration with external databases, and encouraging the modernization of data management systems from a policy perspective that focused on data and the right to access information, so as to support national policies and the governance process.

8. He reviewed the updated data system at ESCWA, which provided open data to member States in a way that enhanced their ability to benefit from it; the opportunities for using data and analysis technologies in the production of statistical data, and the conditions related to data quality for national statistical offices, which were the main source of data. He noted the steps that should be adopted in developing a successful data system, the standards that should be followed in building the system, and the necessary components and methodology to find solutions that met the needs and priorities of all stakeholders. He gave practical examples of data system operations that relied on artificial intelligence within a policy framework that began by identifying a particular problem, and that analysed and collected information and sources to obtain a report that could be used in formulating policies.

9. He noted the establishment of a geographic information systems team at ESCWA as a modern model for integrating statistical data with geospatial information, indicating that ESCWA attached great importance to that subject and intended to develop a new tool for member States in the coming year.

B. Follow-up issues

1. Activities implemented in the field of statistics (Agenda item 4)

10. Item 4 included five subitems through which the Committee reviewed the implemented activities and key achievements in the field of statistics since its fourteenth session, which was held online on 10 and 11 February 2021. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat said that the documents related to those subitems and the activities contained therein were all interconnected within an integrated framework that included ESCWA normative work on studies and reports, technical cooperation activities that it provided to member States at their request, meetings of specialized technical committees aimed at building consensus on the challenges faced by statistical agencies and on ways to deal with them, and projects under implementation.

2. Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme plan and of recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fourteenth session to the ESCWA secretariat (Agenda item 4(a))

11. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/3\(Part I\)](#), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat said that at its fourteenth session, the Statistical Committee had made six recommendations to member States and eight recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat. He reviewed the activities conducted by the secretariat between March 2021 and October 2022 in implementation of the recommendations addressed to it at the fourteenth session, and within the framework of its programme plan for that period. Those activities included issuing publications, reports and technical material on economic statistics, national accounts, demographic and social statistics; implementing projects; developing statistical databases; and holding capacity-building trainings.

12. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of member States commended the activities conducted by the ESCWA secretariat in its follow-up to the recommendations issued by the Statistical Committee- at its previous sessions and within the framework of its programme plan.

3. Technical cooperation activities (Agenda item 4(b))

13. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/3\(Part II\)](#), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat reviewed the technical cooperation activities, including advisory services, workshops and capacity-building activities in the field of statistics, implemented by the ESCWA secretariat since the fourteenth session of the Committee. Those activities aimed to improve the quality of statistical data, in accordance with international standards and recommendations.

14. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of member States thanked the ESCWA secretariat for its efforts and collaboration in providing technical support and technical advice to improve and develop statistical work and methodologies. They agreed on the need to continue those efforts, and to maximize the exchange of experiences in the field of population censuses, civil registration, national accounts, and statistics on the Sustainable Development Goals. They also commended the provision of technical support for building national statistical capacity through organizing national workshops, whether in person or online. They stressed the need to continue providing advisory services to countries wishing to implement national statistical programmes, such as population and agricultural censuses, and assistance in providing data for monitoring SDG indicators and for the preparation of national reports on progress made in that field.

15. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat emphasized that countries' suggestions would be taken into account when developing a future ESCWA technical support programme. He encouraged countries to formally submit detailed requests for technical support services to ensure the provision of as much technical support and advice as possible. In that context, he commended the collaboration and coordination with ESCWA partners from international and regional organizations in providing such support.

*4. Implementation of recommendations made by the Statistical Committee
at its fourteenth session to member States
(Agenda item 4(c))*

16. Representatives of member States reviewed the measures taken and the national activities implemented pursuant to recommendations made by the Committee to member States at its fourteenth session, particularly in the field of exchanging experiences and lessons learned from conducting specialized surveys, opinion polls and population censuses; expanding the use of modern technologies in statistical activities; and reviewing and enacting national legislation to enhance collaboration and national partnerships in the field of statistical work to meet the significant challenges faced by national statistical offices in ensuring the confidentiality and protection of individual data, especially in the context of using big data and open data to produce official statistical databases.

17. Country representatives discussed the general lack of national statistical expertise and capacity, and of financial resources and their redirection to other causes given the economic and political instability in some Arab countries, which was the main obstacle facing national statistical offices in their work. They stressed the need to adopt official data sources and a national unified number, and to enhance the use of administrative records in producing official statistics to benefit from them when conducting censuses through record linking. They also emphasized the need to invest in the use of information technology and other modern methods in statistical work and in the production and dissemination of statistical data, and to continue integrating geospatial information to produce official statistics so as to obtain quality and comprehensive data at a lower cost.

18. Representatives of member States also called for formulating recommendations on developing work methodologies for providing statistical data, especially indicators of sustainable development, and for strengthening coordination and collaboration between all statistical agencies in the Arab region. They also stressed the need for the ESCWA secretariat to continue providing support in all statistical fields, according to national contexts and countries' priorities, particularly in preparing and implementing population censuses using new technology, linking records to them, and integrating geographic information systems in them; and continue focusing on issues of disability and early marriage, alternative sources of statistical data, and providing support on economic statistics, especially national accounts. They called on the ESCWA secretariat to adopt, disseminate and promote successful experiences through available means, including the ESCWA website, so as to facilitate access to them, review them and benefit from them. They noted the importance of the secretariat's role in strengthening coordination and collaboration between other international organizations and member States.

19. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat stressed the partnership with all countries to improve and develop statistical work, and that ESCWA supported national efforts in formulating policies, reviewing and enacting legislation, and strengthening institutional building to support and develop statistical work. ESCWA was committed to providing possible and necessary support to member States within Committee recommendations and suggestions. He also noted the importance of conducting censuses as a key pillar of social and economic data. He commended the serious work undertaken by member States and their achievements in implementing statistical activities and programmes, while maintaining data quality and compliance with international statistical standards, especially those that coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and security, political and economic crises in many countries.

5. Activities of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics
(Agenda item 4(d))

20. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/3(Part III), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented the report of the fourth meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics, which was held online from 6 to 9 December 2021. He reviewed the objectives of the Advisory Group, including presenting recommendations to the ESCWA Statistical Committee on work programmes and strategies to develop a regional programme on improving population and social statistics in the Arab region, to build countries' capacity to produce and publish a minimum set of demographic and social indicators for planning purposes, and to monitor relevant sustainable development indicators. He noted the adoption of the strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics 2021–2025, which was developed in consultation with experts and country representatives who participated in consultative meetings on the framework in 2021. He expressed his hope that the framework would be used as a guide to draft national action plans aimed at improving civil registration systems to produce high-quality vital statistics used in preparing development plans. He noted that the Advisory Group had stressed the necessity of promoting the framework and translating its contents into an action plan for the period until 2025.

21. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of member States welcomed the report of the Advisory Group, and focused their discussions and proposals on converting the paper-based ESCWA questionnaire for the collection of demographic and social data into an online platform. They stressed the importance of collaboration with regional organizations to obtain available national statistical data on countries so as to avoid duplication of efforts, and to adopt a national unified number. They suggested beginning the implementation of the proposal with the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat) as a first step. They noted the need to prepare a guide on definitions of urban, rural and informal settlements in line with national contexts and specificities; to strengthen work on measuring migration statistics, population estimates and projections, and labour statistics; and to encourage countries to share their successful experiences in that field.

22. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat reviewed the efforts made by ESCWA to intensify coordination and collaboration with regional organizations, such as GCC-Stat, to ensure coordination of work, and the continuation of ESCWA efforts to enhance national capacity-building in the field of demographic statistical work. He also commended the invitation of countries to share successful national experiences through possible means, such as publishing them on the ESCWA website or holding national and regional workshops and meetings. He said that the issues raised would be taken into account in the future work programme to the extent possible, including measuring migration and slum housing, defining urban and rural areas, and continuing to coordinate with international and regional organizations to calculate population estimates and projections in the event that censuses could not be implemented. He stressed that work would be done to include the strategic framework for civil registration and vital statistics in the ESCWA programme plan for the period 2021–2025.

6. *Activities of the Technical Advisory Group on Economic Statistics*
(Agenda item 4(e))

23. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/3\(Part IV\)](#), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat introduced the report of the fourth meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Economic Statistics, which was held online on 6 and 7 July 2021. She noted the results of an inception webinar for the Arab region towards the 2025 System of National Accounts, which focused on progress made in modernizing the system, reviewed the findings of the sub-working groups, and noted the experimental estimates that would be produced in collaboration with GCC-Stat and the United Nations Statistics Division. She reviewed priority and emerging topics in the field of economic statistics, including taking into account the informal economy in national accounts, digitization, the digital economy, measuring digital trade, big data, modern methods for collecting price data, environmental accounts, and producing economic indicators data related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

24. She said that the report of the Advisory Group set out recommendations that focused on requesting that ESCWA continue building capacity on emerging economic issues, and called on countries to volunteer to participate in experimental estimates in preparation for making the necessary adjustments before issuing the System of National Accounts, which would be updated for 2025. The Committee encouraged the participation of countries in the sub-working groups to set priorities and exchange experiences.

25. In the ensuing discussion, and after welcoming the findings of the Advisory Group, representatives of member States expressed their interest in developing the System of National Accounts and in keeping pace with digitization in the field of economy and trade, and stressed their need for technical support and advanced expertise in the field of economic statistics, especially emerging issues. They also requested that ESCWA coordinate among member States and with international and regional organizations to enhance collaboration, intensify efforts, and facilitate communication with statistical agencies.

26. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat noted ESCWA efforts to benefit from, exchange and promote successful experiences, and work to include the priorities of member States in formulating the programme plan for the period until 2025, so as to build capacity, coordination and national, regional and international networking towards developing the System of National Accounts, tackling emerging issues, and strengthening research into the use of alternative data sources in national priority areas.

**C. Monitoring progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:
reinforcing data with new methods**

1. *Improving monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:
institutional environment, and production and dissemination of data*
(Agenda item 5)

27. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/4](#), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented achievements in terms of providing data and monitoring SDG indicators and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the recommendations of the Statistical Commission at its previous sessions that focused on supporting member States in the production and dissemination of high-quality and timely data, developing tools for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs nationally, developing national platforms for reporting on the SDGs and their indicators, and building capacity to increase the availability and quality of disaggregated data. She reviewed ESCWA efforts to develop national reporting platforms, organize coordination events for national statistical systems, and hold capacity-building activities such as bilateral, regional and international meetings, workshops, and seminars, as part of efforts to increase data provision and disaggregated data, manage data flows, and support the institutional environment of national statistical offices, the national statistical system, and legislative and legal references. She discussed the tools of the Arab SDG Monitor, which were used by the ESCWA secretariat to support

capacity-building in those areas, enhance means of dissemination and reporting on SDG indicators, and highlight existing challenges and proposed recommendations for future action.

28. In the ensuing discussion, representatives of member States commended ESCWA efforts in the statistical field in service of the Arab region, aimed at increasing the availability of data and indicators while maintaining quality and compliance with international standards. Several representatives of countries facing security and political crises requested that technical support and institution building be strengthened to provide sustainable development data, which represented a necessary and urgent need for them. Participants noted the importance of continuing to present an evaluation report on progress made by Arab statistical agencies in reporting and monitoring SDG indicators.

29. Representatives of member States presented some challenges in providing data for SDG indicators, especially regarding the multiplicity of national agencies concerned with providing data. They stressed the need to coordinate cooperation between national stakeholders parties to the national statistical system, and the necessity of accrediting national statistical agencies and offices as official parties at the national level responsible for collecting, scrutinizing and verifying data on SDG indicators, before reporting and publishing them in accordance with adopted mechanisms. International and regional organizations should deal with those mechanisms in a practical way. They said that building a national observatory for the Arab SDG Monitor in each country, managed by statistical offices, was a key tool to achieve that, and would facilitate ESCWA support in the field of improving and developing infrastructure and institutions, and linking them to administrative records to extract data for statistical purposes.

30. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat expressed the commitment of ESCWA to supporting and building national capacity and strengthening the role of statistical agencies as an official source of statistical data. She indicated the need for additional efforts to enhance networking and coordination between the components of the national statistical system, led by statistical agencies and offices, which were the main partner in establishing national platforms for monitoring and reporting progress in providing data for SDG indicators.

*2. Evolving use of purchasing power parities in economic assessments
and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals
(Agenda item 6)*

31. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/5](#), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat gave an overview of efforts to promote the diverse use of PPPs in economic and social assessments, especially as their use had increased in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. He reviewed the activities implemented in the field of building long time series data from PPP estimates, including current years, increasing their data, and linking them to the dollar; estimating data for countries that were not available for the reference year; improving the consumer price index; strengthening national accounts data; and monitoring progress towards achieving the SDGs, including specific indicators for which PPPs were used.

32. In the ensuing discussion, representatives of member States commended ESCWA efforts to strengthen the capacity of member States in providing PPPs. They discussed the importance of the issue, especially in view of the fluctuations experienced by the region and the world in relation to prices and purchasing power. They called for providing a unified list of purchasing power, establishing a unified consumer price index, adopting a regional basket for calculating indicators, and continuing efforts to exchange experiences between countries.

33. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat said that ESCWA was still working to reach a unified methodology for the Arab region, in addition to ensuring that the consumer price index was calculated annually, so as to determine a unified regional consumption basket. He noted ESCWA collaboration and coordination with the World Bank and the African Development Bank to produce those indicators.

3. *Geospatial information supporting statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*
(Agenda item 7)

34. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/6](#), the representative of the secretariat presented ESCWA efforts in supporting the production of geographical statistics for the Arab region by presenting models for applied methodologies that helped integrate social, economic and environmental statistics with geospatial information, which contributed to reporting the occurrence of events and providing services and resources to ensure that no one was left behind, pursuant to an Economic and Social Council resolution and in line with GSGF. He said that, despite what had been achieved in the Arab region in that field, many Arab countries still faced challenges in establishing geospatial infrastructure to support statistical activities, and that they needed to set guidelines for implementation or to build capacity and institutions. He noted international models and experiences that had made strides in the field of integrating statistics with spatial information. He encouraged the initiation of institution building and the implementation of the GSGF guidelines, explaining the importance of establishing a geospatial information unit within national statistical offices as a main source for linking information, in coordination with the concerned national authorities and stakeholders.

35. In the ensuing discussion, participants indicated the challenges faced by some Arab countries in catching up with developed countries in that field owing to poor infrastructure, and the difficulty of establishing a geographical database and producing data in different forms; for example, disaggregated by urban and rural areas and city centres. They noted the necessity of using updated and disaggregated digital geographical maps in conducting population, housing and facility censuses, and of updating sampling frameworks for household and economic surveys. They called on ESCWA to develop a project that responded to such requirements, according to countries' priorities and infrastructure capacity.

36. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat said that work was underway to produce use case models for calculating selected geographically defined SDG indicators, and studying how they could be applied to member States. He noted the possibility of providing solutions to the significant disparities between countries by taking into account exceptions and respecting country specificities. He encouraged member States to join the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, and urged them to exchange expertise and share experiences. He expressed the readiness of ESCWA to provide technical support according to country needs.

D. Programmatic issues

1. *Preparations for the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission*
(Agenda item 8)

37. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat briefed participants on preparations for the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, to be held in New York from 28 February to 3 March 2023. He reviewed the items on the session's provisional agenda, and discussed regional preparations for that global event. He encouraged member States to formulate a unified Arab position that represented the region under the various agenda items that required collective decisions, in line with the general interest of statistical work; and to strengthen the role and presence of Arab statistical agencies. To achieve that, he urged member States to review the session documents and to share national positions, so as to formulate a unified position on common issues. He said that ESCWA, in its capacity as a regional commission, welcomed the coordinating role that member States might request.

38. In the ensuing discussion, representatives of member States welcomed the proposal to develop a unified Arab position on common statistical issues, adding that national positions should be exchanged and discussed at a meeting preceding the Statistical Commission session. They stressed the importance of defining the tasks required of each country within the framework of their representative role, according to the distribution of the session's agenda items. They also welcomed the coordinating role of the ESCWA secretariat, stressing the importance of preparing well for the session and of providing the session documents in a timely manner.

39. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat confirmed its readiness to communicate with member States, and to call for a coordination meeting in January or February of 2023 to prepare a unified position on items that required collective decisions, while preserving the right of member States to maintain their national positions in case they differed from the collective position. He said that the coordination meeting would be held after ensuring that member States were acquainted with the agenda items of the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

2. Results of evaluations of previous sessions of the Statistical Committee
(Agenda item 9)

40. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented the results of the evaluations of the previous six sessions of the Statistical Committee, namely the ninth to fourteenth sessions during the period 2010-2021, including the meeting of the Committee at its fourteenth session in 2021, which was held online owing to the pandemic. He said that the evaluations covered the key aspects of the sessions in terms of the number of participating member States, the assessments of State representatives on improvement in the Committee's work, technical preparation in terms of dealing with agenda items, and administrative and logistical issues. He said that the analytical reading of the main results was based on a simplified evaluation questionnaire that acted as a tool for evaluating the aforementioned aspects. He requested that participants complete the questionnaire that had been distributed to evaluate the current session, so as to strengthen performance, develop work, and improve logistical and administrative preparations.

41. Participants thanked ESCWA for its efforts and for the logistical and administrative preparations to facilitate the arrival of delegations and representatives of member States to the session, and to improve the level of participation in the work of the Statistical Committee.

E. Date and venue of the sixteenth session of the Statistical Committee
(Agenda item 10)

42. The Statistical Committee decided to hold its sixteenth session at the United Nations House in Beirut in November 2024.

F. Other matters
(Agenda item 11)

43. No issues were raised under this item.

III. Organization of work

A. Date and venue

44. The Statistical Committee held its fifteenth session online and in person at the United Nations House in Beirut on 16 and 17 November 2022.

B. Opening

45. The session was opened by Ms. Merlene Bakhos, Acting Director-General of the Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics, who chaired the fourteenth session of the Statistical Committee. She welcomed participants and thanked ESCWA for organizing the session, which was considered an important platform for making and formulating policies through statistical work. She noted the role of statistical agencies in producing, providing and updating necessary and reliable statistical data, using advanced technologies and modern methodologies. She also stressed the importance of promoting and transferring national and regional expertise and experience, especially with regard to population censuses and civil records. She emphasized the

need to build the capacity and competence of workers in the statistical field, and to strengthen partnerships and collaboration between all stakeholders.

46. Mr. Haidar Fraihat, Director of the ESCWA Statistics, Information Society and Technology Cluster, delivered a speech on behalf of the ESCWA secretariat. He welcomed participants, praising the permanent collaboration between national statistical offices of member States and ESCWA. He noted national efforts and ESCWA efforts to produce, provide and disseminate statistical data and indicators, and to face the challenges resulting from increasing demand for data, especially in times of crises and given the rapid advancement of technologies. He also stressed the need to adhere to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, methodologies and official international standards, and noted the constant readiness of ESCWA to provide support to member States. He expressed his hope that the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee would be a success, and that it would result in recommendations that served member States and the Arab region.

47. Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, delivered a speech in which he highlighted the close collaboration between ESCWA and the Statistics Division for several decades in support of statistical work in the region. He reaffirmed the need for data integration, provided that it was of high quality, timely, disaggregated, and comparable between countries, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and international standards. He added that the Statistics Division relied on national official data issued by national statistical agencies. He praised the efforts and work of national agencies in producing high-quality statistical data, especially in view of the challenges and crises that the region and the world were experiencing. He encouraged the representatives of the national agencies to participate in the session of the United Nations Statistical Commission to discuss all issues related to statistical work, especially in the light of rapid changes and emerging challenges. He concluded by emphasizing the need to build the capacity of countries in statistical work.

C. Participants

48. The session was attended by representatives of 19 ESCWA member States and of nine regional and Arab organizations involved in statistics. The list of participants is set out in annex I to the present report.

D. Election of officers

49. Rule 18 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of ESCWA states: “Member States shall chair the sessions of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations”. In accordance with this rule, the representative of Libya, Mr. Abdullah Zaidan Alaq, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Department of Statistics and Census, chaired the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee. Participants elected as vice-chairs the representative of Lebanon, Ms. Merlene Bakhos, in her capacity as Chair of the fourteenth session of the Committee; and the representative of Egypt, Mr. Yasser Mohamed Fathi Mohamed Ahmed Rizk. The representative of Morocco, Mr. Moulay Abdallah Sougrati, was elected as rapporteur.

E. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

50. At its first meeting, the Statistical Committee adopted the provisional agenda of its fifteenth session, as set out in document [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/L.1](#). At the same meeting, the Committee approved the organization of work of the session as set out in document [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/L.2](#).

F. Documents

51. A list of the documents presented at the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee is set out in annex II to the present report.

Annex I

List of participants

A. Member States of ESCWA

Algeria

Mr. Hamid Zidouni
Assistant General Manager
National Office of Statistics

Bahrain

Mr. Mohammed al-Qaed
Chief Executive Officer of the Information and
E-Government Authority

Ms. Wafaa al-Jaber
Information and E-Government Authority

Egypt

Mr. Yasser Mohamed Fathi Mohamed Ahmed Rizk
Head of the Information Technology Sector
Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics

Iraq

Mr. Daa Awad Kazem
Head of the Central Statistical Organization
Ministry of Planning

Jordan

Mr. Ali Muhammad Mahmoud al-Shibli
Assistant General Manager for Operations
Department of Statistics

Kuwait

Mr. Adel Khadada
Director of the Central Statistical Bureau

Ms. Maryam al-Sabeeh
General Supervisor of the Sustainable Development team
Central Statistical Bureau

Lebanon

Ms. Merlene Bakhos
Acting General-Manager
Central Administration of Statistics

Mr. Amer Siyagha
Information Projects Manager
Office of the Minister of State for Administrative
Reform

Mr. Ziad Abdullah
Acting Head of the Automation Department
Central Administration of Statistics

Ms. Haifa Mudaqah al-Husseini
Specialist in Economic Sciences

Libya

Mr. Abdullah Zidan Alaq
Chairman of the Board of Directors
Department of Statistics and Census
Ministry of Planning

Mauritania

Mr. Mohamed Ali Sidi Mahmoud
Coordination, Programming and Cooperation
Director
National Agency for Statistics and Demographic
and Economic Analysis

Morocco

Mr. Moulay Abdallah Sougrati
Regional Directorates Coordinator
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National Center for Statistics and Information

Mr. Nasser bin Abdullah bin Nasser al-Hilali
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National Center for Statistics and Information

Qatar

Mr. Mohammed Saeed Ali al-Mohannadi
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Saudi Arabia

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President of the General Authority for Statistics

Ms. Fatima bint Ali al Waif
Vice President
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Mr. Saad bin Mohammed al-Askar
General Manager of International Relations
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Somalia

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State of Palestine

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Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
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Syrian Arab Republic

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B. Regional and international organizations

Arab Institute for Statistics

Mr. Hadi Saidi
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International Labour Organization

Ms. Grace Eid
Statistician, Labour Statistics

International Monetary Fund - Middle East Regional Technical Assistance Center (METAC)

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Office of the United Nations Resident
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Mr. Singh Sehan
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Mr. Nabil Dabour
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Mr. Atilla Karman
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Annex II

List of documents

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