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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****FOLLOW-UP TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED  
BY THE COMMISSION AT ITS TWENTY-SECOND SESSION**

*The development of statistical work in the ESCWA region: resolution 247 (XXII)*

**Summary**

At its twenty-second session, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted resolution 247 (XXII) dated 17 April 2003 concerning the development of statistical work in the ESCWA region.

Pursuant to that resolution, the secretariat undertook a variety of activities in support of the capacity of national statistical bodies to produce economic, social and sectoral indicators and statistics that are consistent with international statistical standards. That support took the form of providing consultancy services to member countries; convening a number of expert group meetings and training workshops in various fields; increasing coordination with the United Nations Statistics Division with respect to the standardization, quality control and improved integration of statistics in member countries; providing the technical support necessary to enable those countries to become parties to the Special Data Dissemination Standard applied by the International Monetary Fund; and encouraging the countries of the region to participate in the project for the development of national gender statistics programmes.

This report comprises a brief review of the measures that have been taken by the secretariat with a view to implementing resolution 247 (XXII).

## **I. IMPROVING THE CAPACITY OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO PRODUCE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND SECTORAL INDICATORS AND STATISTICS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL STANDARDS**

1. In cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division, the secretariat continued to implement a statistical capacity-building project in ESCWA member countries. The aim of that project is to build the capacities of national statistical bodies to produce and disseminate statistical data, to assist in creating specialized statistics staff in member countries and to strengthen the exchange of expertise between those countries. One of the most important parts of the project is the management of statistical mechanisms, the management and consistency of population census methods and the use of information technology in such censuses, the development of environmental statistics, the review of international economic and social classifications and the use of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) indicators in achieving those goals. Some of the best methods that can be used include training workshops, programmes for the exchange of expertise, training courses and the provision of consultancy services.
2. The project is considered exemplary with respect to the coordination of efforts and resources between United Nations bodies with the aim of ensuring the optimum use of limited resources and consolidating cooperation in undertakings at the international and regional levels.
3. In the same connection, the secretariat assumed the main role in strengthening the capacities of member countries with respect to monitoring progress towards achieving MDGs, by holding regional training workshops. It also prepared a regional report covering the progress made in the ESCWA region in 2004 towards achieving those goals. In cooperation with United Nations organizations in the region, it is currently preparing a similar report on the Arab region that will be published at the same time as a report by the Secretary-General on the same issue.
4. In the same field, the secretariat has taken on a number of advisory responsibilities that deal with such matters as gender statistics, sample design, the design of population questionnaires and household surveys, and the relationship between statistics and the development process. The countries in which those responsibilities are undertaken include Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The secretariat has also helped to support the capacities of member countries in the field of amassing, disseminating and analysing comprehensive, precise and well-documented data that can be used for comparisons at the regional and international levels, with a view to providing reliable statistical data to follow up the progress made towards achieving MDGs and to formulate social development policies and strategies and monitor their implementation.
5. With respect to the revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities and, specifically, the Central Product Classification, ESCWA held a workshop on international economic and social classifications in Beirut from 19 to 23 July 2004, in the course of which that classification was reviewed.
6. ESCWA also participated in the 2003-2006 round of the International Comparison Programme (ICP), and representatives from all member countries with the exception of Palestine were involved. Several statistical activities were implemented as part of that programme. They are covered in the document that deals with follow-up of the implementation of ESCWA resolution 248 (XXII) concerning the participation of ESCWA member countries in ICP.

## **II. MAKING NATIONAL STATISTICS ON BASIC SOCIAL INDICATORS MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND IMPROVING THEIR QUALITY AND THE WAY IN WHICH THEY ARE USED, PARTICULARLY IN NEW FIELDS**

7. With a view to making national statistics more comprehensive and improving their quality, particularly in respect of new fields, and in view of the importance of such statistics and indicators in the formulation of development policies, the evaluation of their performance and determination of their progress,

ESCWA held five expert group meetings and regional and national workshops on a variety of development statistics issues, including gender statistics, MDG indicators, and disability statistics as a tool for formulating policies aimed at integrating persons with special needs into society.

**III. PROVIDING MEMBER COUNTRIES WITH THE TECHNICAL SUPPORT NECESSARY  
TO ENABLE THEM TO BECOME PARTIES TO THE SPECIAL  
DATA DISSEMINATION STANDARD APPLIED BY  
THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND**

8. Pursuant to this paragraph, ESCWA has exerted tremendous efforts to encourage the countries of the region to become parties to the Special Data Dissemination Standard applied by the International Monetary Fund, which aims to improve the quality and reliability of data, provide a framework in which the need for data improvement may be assessed and priorities in that field established, and advise member countries on how to provide timely, comprehensive and reliable statistics to users in the economic, social and demographic fields.

9. To date, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman and Yemen have become parties to the Standard. In view of its importance, ESCWA urges all other member countries to become a party thereto as soon as possible.

**IV. PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF NATIONAL GENDER STATISTICS PROGRAMMES**

10. As a result of the efforts exerted by ESCWA, Bahrain and Morocco have joined the list of countries undertaking activities included in the project for the development of national gender statistics programmes.

11. In both those countries, the secretariat has implemented project activities, including building national capacities in respect of amassing, disseminating and analysing gender statistics; preparing a national report on women and men, a statistical portrait which provides an analysis of the situation of women compared with that of men in all economic and social spheres; and formulating a national strategy for the development of those statistics with a view to providing an evaluative tool for the formulation of policies aimed at empowering women and achieving gender equality.

12. The secretariat also prepared a project document that is currently being submitted to donors with a view to making Iraq a party to the activities of the project for the development of gender statistics. A similar document has been prepared for Kuwait, which has expressed an interest in becoming a party. Currently, ESCWA is coordinating with the Central Department of Statistics and the United Nations Development Programme in Riyadh with a view to preparing a mechanism for Saudi Arabia to become parties to the aforementioned project.

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