

Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Arab States

Please provide comments to UN ESCWA (riecan@un.org)

Regional Coordination Mechanism for Arab States Task Force on Statistical Coordination

Terms of Reference

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Mission statement

1. The Task Force on Statistical Coordination was the key recommendation of the 14th Meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Arab States (RCM) on 10-11 November 2010, being to strengthen statistical coordination by:

- Establishing a taskforce on statistical coordination, directors of statistics functions in national statistical offices, UN organisations and other international organisations to identify key aspects of the capacity-building challenge; and
- The Taskforce will address the priorities of the RCM in identifying data gaps and harmonising collection approaches.¹

2. The RCM is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to facilitate policy coherence and promote strategic coordination for development in the region. The outcome of the RCM consultations contributes to the global debate on development issues. In this context, the RCM has a critical role in maximizing the potential of collective action by the United Nations and strategic regional stakeholders in addressing transboundary and emerging global issues.

3. The Task Force on Statistical Coordination for Arab States is a high level body which promotes a productive dialogue between international organizations² with statistical components, in support of economic and social development in the Arab States. The Task Force facilitates interagency coordination and cooperation on statistical programmes around core social and development priorities in the region, consistency in statistical practices (collection, dissemination and sharing of statistical data) and development of official statistics in Arab States.

¹ E/ESCWA/OES/2010/RCM.14/13 Report of the Fourteenth Meeting of the RCM Arab States, Beirut, 11-12 November 2010 (ESCWA)

² The invitation to the Task Force is open to a wide variety of intergovernmental organizations having a statistical function and active in the Arab Region. Details on membership are provided in Appendix 1, Section A.

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4. As a forum of committed technical statistics experts, the Task Force fosters good practices in the statistical activities of member organizations, in accordance with the Principles Governing International Statistical Activities³, and in adherence to their own governance arrangements and resource envelopes.

5. The members of the Task Force are committed to actively contributing to the development of a coordinated regional statistical system for Arab States, producing and disseminating high-quality statistics, for example, by facilitating the development of well-functioning regional and national statistical systems. This statistical system will be a high quality and credible entity which responds to the identified economic and social development priorities as defined by the broader RCM membership (including those not represented in the Taskforce).

Key activities and functions

6. The key activities and functions of the Task Force are grouped around six core areas:

- **Priorities setting.** Working to identify key data required by economic and social development actors in the region to increase evidenced-based policy making on development activities in the region, and ensuring the credibility and consistency of the resulting data to harmonise the message of various development actors in advocacy to member states and various reporting mechanism
- **Inter-governmental support.** The Task Force promotes coordination of statistical actions required from international organizations by intergovernmental meetings, including the regional and global statistical committees.
- **Efficient functioning of the regional statistical system⁴.** The Task Force promotes good statistical practices and the mutual consistency of disseminated data, minimize duplication and reduce the reporting and meetings burdens on Arab States.
- **Inter-institutional support.** The Task Force provides a forum for its members to share experiences and best practices and provides guidance and suggestions on how to address challenges related to statistical activities, including the availability, quality and interchange of data and organizational aspects.
- **Outreach and advocacy for statistics.** The Task Force shares experiences about ways to promote and gain recognition for the role of statistics within the Arab States, supporting implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The Task Force promotes and contributes to the coordination of the design and delivery of the capacity-development services of Arab States in official statistics.
- **Common standards and platforms.** The Task Force contributes to the coordination of the work on methodological development ensuring the use of internationally agreed standards in the Arab Region.

³ The Principles were adopted by the Coordination Committee on Statistical Activities (CCSA) – a subsidiary of the United Nations Statistical Commission. Most of the RCM members are members of the CCSA and endorsed these principles.

⁴ The regional statistical system comprises national statistical systems of 22 Arab States (represented by their national statistical offices and other national producers of official statistics) and international organizations undertaking statistical activities in the region.

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7. The work of the Task Force is organized under the working modalities established by the Committee, as outlined in appendix 1.

8. The Taskforce will prepare a workplan for 2011-2013 to address the challenges identified by the RCM meeting. The Taskforce will prepare twice-yearly progress reports, and provide updates to the RCM plenary meetings each November.

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Appendix 1

Working modalities of the Task Force on Statistical Coordination for Arab States

Activities

A. Membership and level of representation

1. The members of the Task Force comprise members of the Regional Coordination mechanism for the Arab States, mandate includes the provision of international official statistics and use of statistics for further analysis, as listed in Appendix 2. Non-RCM members may also participate based on their willingness to support the intentions of the RCM members in establishing the Taskforce.
2. Prospective members should apply to the Secretariat⁵, and they are invited to the following meeting of the Task Force. The applications should be finally endorsed at the next meeting by two thirds of the current members. Any such application for membership implies acceptance of the Task Force's mandate and a commitment to contribute to its work.
3. Membership in the Task Force may be terminated for any organization which, in the view of at least two thirds of current members, shows insufficient commitment to the work of the Task Force.
4. Representation in the Task Force should be at the level of Director of an organization's regional statistical service or equivalent⁶.

B. Management and organization

Chair

5. As the convenor of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Arab States, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), and serves as the Secretariat to the RCM. convenes the Following this arrangement and responsibility, the Director of the UN-ESCWA Statistics Division chairs the Task Force.
6. The role of the Chair is to facilitate, with the help of the RCM Secretariat, the work of the task force, and motivate a productive dialogue and a mutual respect to the needs of statistical programmes of

⁵ The Secretariat of UN-ESCWA assumes the functions of the Secretariat of the Task Force.

⁶ The organisations are preferably represented by their directors of statistical functions at their regional offices for Arab States. The organizations may also decide to be represented by their directors of statistical functions at the headquarters. In any case each participating organisation should ensure a coordination between their regional office and headquarters and present a clear view of the organisations on each topic discussed by the Task Force.

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all participating organisations. The Chair represents the Task Force at meetings of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, following decisions of the Taskforce.

7. The functions of the Chair are:
 - (a) Propose the draft agenda items for meetings of the Task Force, and finalise the agenda based on the feedback from received from members of the Task Force (in case of urgency items may be included on the agenda in consultation with the elected Vice-Chairs);
 - (b) Chair Task Force meetings, including summarising the discussion of each agenda item as a basis for preparing the report of the session;
 - (c) Propose draft minutes of the meetings, as prepared by the Secretariat, to be approved by written procedure by all the members who attended the meeting;
 - (d) Represent the Task Force whenever its members consider it necessary;
 - (e) Report progress made on the Taskforce workplan to the RCM meetings; and
 - (f) Invite, following proposals from one or more of the members, observers to participate in the work of Task Force.

Vice Chairs

8. The Task Force elects two Vice-Chairs for a period of two years⁷. The role of the Vice-Chairs is to participate in the collective leadership of the Task Force, alternate the functions with the Chair and represent the Task Force when necessary.

9. The functions of the Vice-Chairs are:
 - (a) Participate with the Chair in developing draft agendas for meetings of the Task Force;
 - (b) Actively participate in drafting and reviewing documents (recommendations, reports, presentations, etc.) emanating from conclusions reached by the Task Force or as drafts for considerations at meetings of the task Force.
 - (c) Review draft minutes of the meetings, as prepared by the Secretariat, prior to their submission for approval by written procedure by all the members who attended the meeting;
 - (d) Represent the Task Force whenever its members consider it necessary.

Secretariat

10. The Secretariat of the Task Force resides at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. The responsibilities are shared by the Statistics Division and the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division.

11. In direct collaboration with the Chair and Vice-Chairs, and following consultation with members of the Task Force, the Secretariat prepares the draft agenda for the meetings of the Committee. The secretariat ensures that all documentation, along with all other necessary information, is made available to members of the Task Force prior to each meeting. The Secretariat is also responsible for organising meetings of the Task Force and other logistics support.

⁷ It is suggested that one of the Vice-Chairs is a representative of an agency from the UN System, while the other Vice-Chair represents a non-UN member organisation of the Task Force

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12. Between sessions, the Secretariat liaises with members, especially those responsible for specific tasks, of their commitments to produce outputs and reports, as agreed at the Task Force meetings.

13. The Secretariat is also responsible for preparing the draft report of each meeting (physical or virtual). The secretariat keeps the Task Force website up-to-date. The website is a part of the Regional Coordination Mechanism website and hosted by the UN-ESCWA.

12. The secretariat prepares the draft twice-yearly progress reports to the Regional Coordination Mechanism based on the inputs of all members.

C. Meetings

14. The Task Force holds an official meeting at least once a year. The exact timing and length of the meetings are dictated by substance and needs. In principle, it is expected that there will be one annual meeting of two days' duration in October, and this meeting requires a physical presence of representatives of member organizations. Additional meeting are organised as deemed necessary by the needs of statistical coordination, and may have a form of virtual meetings using the means of telecommunication technologies.

15. Topics on the agenda are distinguished as "decision" and "information" items. Decision items are presented and discussed, while discussion on information items is optional.

16. Coordination of activities between meetings, for example, through electronic mail and follow-up to decisions taken at meetings, is an important and integral part of the work of the Task Force.

17. Documents for meetings should be made available to members at least two weeks prior to meetings.

D. Ways of operating

18. The Task Force takes decisions by consensus. Consensus during sessions is determined by presiding officers (Chair and Vice-Chairs) and reported in the draft report of the meeting, and subject to a final endorsement by all members participating at the meeting. A brief summary of decisions and actions is prepared for adoption at the end of each meeting⁸ of the Task Force.

20. An annual report is also made available to the Regional Coordination Mechanism for communicating important decisions and key issues and for ensuring recognition of its work and decisions. Decisions requiring an urgent follow-up may be brought to the attention of the RCM separately.

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⁸ This is necessary for all physical meetings. However, it may not be practical in case of virtual meetings – in such case the summary conclusion announced by the Chair at each of discussion each individual issue can be considered as equivalent to the meeting summary.

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Appendix 2

Membership of the Task Force on Statistical Coordination for Arab States Activities

as at 1 June 2011

TO BE COMPLETED

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