



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Committee on Statistics

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Bangkok

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS ON ITS FIRST SESSION**

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## **I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION**

### **A. Recommendations**

#### **1. Statistics development in Asia and the Pacific**

1. Noting the importance of tracking statistics development in Asia and the Pacific, the Committee requests that the secretariat prepare a framework for regional assessments on a regular basis, in cooperation with other regional, subregional and national statistical entities, to contribute to statistical information exchange among member States and promote the role of statistics as a key link in economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific.

#### **2. Regional technical cooperation and capacity-building in statistics development**

2. The Committee calls for increased financial support for the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), particularly through higher cash contributions.

3. The Committee recommends that SIAP increase its training on capacity-building, including for research and analysis, and that distance learning be expanded to cover more participants at a lower cost.

4. The Committee requests that countries make constructive proposals on the content and duration of SIAP courses.

5. The Committee recommends that efforts be made to ensure that questionnaires designed to survey training needs are received by the appropriate respondents, namely the national statistical offices, for timely completion and return.

#### **3. Producing population estimates on an annual basis: the central role of vital statistical systems**

6. The Committee recommends that the Bureau, supported by the secretariat, explore modalities for organizing an expert group meeting of health authorities, registrars-general and national statisticians in member countries.

7. The Committee also recommends that, in the interim, the secretariat assist countries with weak civil registration systems in exploring alternative methods of generating vital statistics.

#### **4. Measuring the progress of societies**

8. The Committee recommends that the secretariat examine the possibility of serving as the regional focal point in Asia and the Pacific for the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies, which was led by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) at the global level, and forward its recommendations, through the Bureau, to the Committee for a decision. It could also act as a repository of initiatives being taken by member States in this direction.

#### **5. Programme planning**

9. Recalling its earlier discussions under items 6, 7 and 8 of the provisional agenda, the Committee recommends that any work undertaken with regard to coordination of the implementation of the action plan on economic statistics, vital

statistics or measuring the progress of societies should be reflected, as appropriate, under subprogramme 7 of the programme of work for 2010-2011.

10. The Committee endorses the work programme outputs proposed by the secretariat<sup>1</sup> for 2010-2011, taking into consideration the above recommendation.

## **B. Decisions**

### **1. Terms of reference and functioning of the Committee on Statistics**

#### **Decision 1/1**

#### **Establishment of the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics**

1. The Committee decides to establish a bureau to assist the Committee without prejudice to other committees of ESCAP.

#### **Composition**

2. To assist the Committee in performing its functions over the period between each formal session, a bureau shall be elected at each formal session of the Committee.

3. The elected Chairperson of the Committee on Statistics will serve as the Chairperson of the Bureau. There will be three vice-chairpersons and up to three other members, one of whom will act as the Rapporteur of the Committee during the formal session. The Bureau will be elected at each formal session of the Committee with due consideration to geographic representation. As considered appropriate by the Chairperson, others may be invited to participate in particular activities of the Bureau from time to time. All members of the Bureau are eligible for re-election.

#### **Role**

4. The Bureau will assist the Committee on Statistics in carrying out its functions in the course of the intersessional period, including overseeing the activities of the Statistics Division of the ESCAP secretariat related to the implementation of the decisions of the Committee.

5. The Bureau will represent the Committee, through its Chairperson or such other Bureau member as may be designated by the Chairperson at meetings, workshops or other forums for which invitations might be received and which the Bureau considers of particular relevance and importance to the Committee.

6. The Bureau will consider presentations from the secretariat on the resolutions and decisions of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and of the United Nations Statistical Commission, and will highlight issues of particular importance to the ESCAP region for the consideration of the Committee, making appropriate recommendations.

7. The Bureau will guide the ESCAP secretariat in the development of the provisional agenda, including the scope of documentation, for each Committee session.

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<sup>1</sup> E/ESCAP/CST/9/Rev.1.

8. The Bureau will give recommendations to the Committee to establish working groups, task forces or any other instruments as are deemed necessary for furtherance of the functions of the Committee and implement its decisions through the secretariat.

9. The Bureau will keep the Committee informed of all significant steps taken and proposed by the Bureau and, in the event of objections or differences, resolve matters through electronic communication.

### **Functioning**

10. The Bureau shall hold consultations periodically, as needed, during the intersessional period.

11. The functioning of the Bureau will have no budget implications for ESCAP.

12. In order for the Bureau to perform its role effectively, the Committee advises the Bureau to consider pursuing the following in the intersessional period and to report to the Committee at its next session on the progress made:

(a) Engage with, and provide technical support to, the other seven committees of ESCAP on any statistical matters that may arise in the course of their work;

(b) Propose common regional positions to the Committee regarding the formulation, review and extension of international statistical frameworks, classifications and standards, and on the setting of statistical priorities in the work programme of the United Nations Statistical Commission;

(c) Review and analyse progress in the development of statistics in the Asian and Pacific region, with particular attention to the specific tasks set from time to time by the United Nations Statistical Commission, and to the implementation of international statistical frameworks, classifications and standards;

(d) Provide the secretariat with guidance on coordination and collaboration with relevant regional and subregional entities and other members of the United Nations system and other international organizations concerning statistical work in the Asian and Pacific region;

(e) Promote the observance of the fundamental principles of official statistics adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its special session in 1994;<sup>2</sup>

(f) Identify, within the strategic framework and the programme of work, areas for technical assistance, training, education and research in the area of statistics and their application, including the development of information technology applications and information resource management in the Asian and Pacific region;

(g) Give suggestions to the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on the nature of, and priorities in, statistical training for countries of the region, including countries with special needs.

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<sup>2</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 9 (E/1994/29), para. 59.*

## **2. Towards an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region**

### **Decision 1/2**

#### **Action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region**

The Committee decided:

(a) To adopt a coordinating governance structure that would guide the development, implementation and monitoring of an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region, as proposed in E/ESCAP/CST/5, para. 52;

(b) To establish a technical advisory group to provide guidance to its Bureau and the ESCAP secretariat on methodological issues related to the development and periodic revision of a regional programme for the development of economic statistics. The technical advisory group would be expected to formulate a minimum core set of economic statistics that each country in the Asian and Pacific region would be in a position to produce, taking into account the varying needs of countries and work on the development of economic statistics undertaken by specialized bodies and related organizations in the region.

## **II. PROCEEDINGS**

### **A. Terms of reference and functioning of the Committee on Statistics**

11. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Terms of reference and functioning of the Committee on Statistics”, (E/ESCAP/CST/1) containing the terms of reference adopted by the Commission in its resolution 64/1 for all eight committees, which comprise the subsidiary structure of the Commission.<sup>3</sup>

12. All delegations warmly welcomed the opportunity, after seven years, to discuss statistical development in the region at the highest level of official statistics under the auspices of the Committee on Statistics. Several delegations agreed that its future agendas should be highly focused and have a relatively limited number of items that were linked to the work of the United Nations Statistical Commission. A focused and timely agenda would facilitate the Committee’s effective functioning and achievement of tangible results and help ensure that the region’s needs were reflected in key international statistical standards. One delegation was of the view that the work of the other committees of ESCAP should be taken into account in determining the agenda of the Committee on Statistics.

13. One delegation expressed the view that the Committee should have a long-term work plan to guide its future work. It should take into account the work of other organizations working for the improvement of statistics in the region and the political, economic, environmental and cultural diversity of the region.

14. Another delegation expressed the view that the re-establishment of the Committee would strengthen the role of ESCAP as the leading regional entity in statistical development.

15. One delegation and some intergovernmental bodies shared their observations on the experiences of other regional commissions regarding the role and functioning

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<sup>3</sup> For the complete list of documents, see the annex.

of the bureaux of their statistical committees. They informed the Committee that the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians was particularly effective in driving the work of the Conference in between its annual sessions, especially by meeting regularly and undertaking technical and preparatory work for the Conference. The statistical committees of other regional commissions also had separate working groups to undertake technical work.

16. The Committee reviewed the generic and specific terms of reference provided to it in Commission resolution 64/1 and the rules of procedure of the Commission. In view of the rapidly evolving nature of demand for statistics and as the Committee was able to decide on the manner of its functioning, it decided to establish a bureau to assist it without prejudice to other committees of ESCAP.

17. The Committee affirmed that the functioning of the Bureau would have no budget implications for ESCAP.

18. The Committee adopted decision 1/1.

### **B. Statistics development in Asia and the Pacific**

19. The Committee had before it the document entitled "Overview of statistics development in Asia and the Pacific" (E/ESCAP/CST/2) and four related information papers prepared by subregional organizations which provided the respective subregional perspective on statistics development, submitted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/5 and Corr.1), the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/17 and Corr.1), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/19 and Corr.1), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/23).

20. Some delegations emphasized the need for continuous statistical capacity-building in order to produce and disseminate internationally comparable data.

21. Japan expressed appreciation of the improvement of statistical capacity within the Asian and Pacific region and the capacity-building work undertaken by the secretariat and other international entities. As the host Government of SIAP, Japan pledged further support for the continued improvement of capability-building through the Institute.

22. One delegation informed the Committee of its ongoing work on developing statistical tools and methods suited to the needs of microstates. The delegation emphasized the need for clearer guidelines on how to adapt international statistical standards and frameworks to the context of individual countries, particularly small island developing States. For this, a long-term, collective approach to delivering capacity-building would be preferable over short-term training.

23. One delegation expressed the need for agreement on a set of indicators that could be used for tracking the development of statistics in Asia and the Pacific within a framework that should be as comprehensive as possible in covering the diverse aspects of statistical development. The delegation requested the Committee to discuss the development of such a framework at its next session.

24. One delegation expressed, in the context of statistical capacity-building, concern over a possible shortage of statisticians who would be qualified to work on issues related to official statistics and measurement, as university curricula tended to cover those subjects less than before.

25. Some delegations noted the importance of tracking statistics development in Asia and the Pacific and requested the secretariat to prepare such regional assessments on a regular basis, in cooperation with other regional, subregional and national statistical entities, in order to contribute to statistical information exchange among member States and promote the role of statistics as a key link in economic and social development in the region.

### **C. Regional technical cooperation and capacity-building in statistics development**

26. The Committee had before it the document entitled “ESCAP strategy for technical cooperation in statistics development” (E/ESCAP/CST/3), highlighting the key achievements of ongoing ESCAP projects on statistics and outlining an ESCAP strategy for technical cooperation activities. The Committee also had before it an information paper submitted by SIAP (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/6), which had been reviewed by the Governing Council at its fourth session, held in November 2008.

27. In recognizing the complementary roles of the Statistics Division of ESCAP and SIAP, several delegations thanked the secretariat and SIAP for their contributions to statistical capacity-building in the region. Those delegations stressed that they benefited greatly, including from contributions that improved the production of current statistics and the development of emerging statistics. These views were strongly supported by other countries, as well.

28. The Committee was informed that the Russian Federation planned to provide resource support under its voluntary contribution to fund a project for seminars and trainings to improve the quality, availability and intercountry comparability of population census data by using state-of-the-art information and communications technology.

29. One delegation expressed support of secretariat coordination of the preparation of regional reports on progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the analytical outcomes of the work of task forces in the United Nations system and other regional partners.

30. Several delegations expressed support and gratitude for the practical training that SIAP provided to the staff of statistical organizations in the region. One delegation noted in particular the benefits of SIAP courses for mid-level statisticians. The delegations emphasized that SIAP courses were crucial to the training of their staff, particularly new staff members, in providing practical knowledge. Some delegations stressed the need for continuous SIAP support, particularly given a trend of high staff turnover in small statistical offices.

31. The delegation of Japan stressed that the sustainability of SIAP would require a high level of interest by countries in its training programmes and substantial cash contributions. Furthermore, the delegation of Japan informed the Committee about the process of renewal of Tokyo Metropolitan Area (TMA)-based training courses that were conducted jointly with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and that had been based on JICA surveys of the training needs of target countries. The Committee noted that those survey questionnaires had often been sent to Government ministries or departments that did not forward the questionnaires to the appropriate statistical offices for timely responses, resulting in either no responses or poor-quality information being returned. There was a critical need to ensure that survey questionnaires received by non-statistical focal points at the country level were forwarded in a timely manner to the national statistical offices for completion and return.

32. In 2009, SIAP would conduct an independent survey of training needs in statistical offices prior to the regular bilateral development assistance needs survey conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and JICA. The renewal of TMA-based courses would be based on the results of both of the above-mentioned surveys.

33. As the host Government of SIAP, Japan pledged its continued support for the SIAP training programme so that the statistical development needs of countries in the region would be better met. Japan was also ready to provide more practical knowledge, skills and experiences on the Japanese statistical system to enhance the significance of the location of SIAP in Japan.

34. Recognizing the role of Japan as the host country of SIAP and its substantial financial contribution to SIAP, several delegations thanked the Government of Japan for its continued support of the Institute. Several delegations called for greater support of SIAP, particularly through increased cash contributions. Some delegations noted the difficulty that small developing countries faced in contributing financial resources. Some delegations indicated that they would endeavour to increase their financial contributions to SIAP. The representative of Mongolia confirmed that Mongolia had doubled its contribution to SIAP to \$10,000.

35. Some delegations supported the change in the SIAP structure to a results-based framework. Other delegations requested more information on how the performance of trainees would be measured on their return to their respective offices. It was suggested that that performance indicator should be considered carefully, as there were many factors that affected the performance of trainees on return to their offices.

36. The Committee was informed that the Government of China had agreed to make substantial financial contributions over a period of five years for a South-South cooperation programme of statistical capacity-building including China and other developing countries, focusing on promoting and developing unified statistical standards.

37. The delegation of the Republic of Korea informed the Committee that the Republic of Korea had implemented a number of activities to promote intercountry technical cooperation and had conducted statistical capacity-building projects for Asian and African statisticians. The representative of Malaysia informed the Committee that Malaysia was building a national statistical training institute, which would be operational from early 2011 and for the development of which there would be a need for close cooperation with SIAP and other regional statistical institutions.

38. One delegation suggested that SIAP should provide more training on capacity-building, including for research and analysis. Another delegation suggested that distance learning should be expanded to cover more participants at a lower cost.

39. Countries were requested to make constructive proposals on the content and duration of SIAP courses, including the TMA-based courses.

#### **D. Improving gender statistics: measuring violence against women**

40. The Committee had before it the document entitled "Measuring violence against women: towards better indicators" (E/ESCAP/CST/4 and Corr.1). The Committee also had before it two related information papers, one submitted by the Philippines (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/7) and the other by Cambodia (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/22).



41. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its misgivings concerning the documentation on that item. The delegation requested clarification on the mandates that governed the work of the secretariat on the subject and expressed the view that deliberations on conceptual and substantive issues on human rights were not the mandate of the Committee on Statistics. Furthermore, the delegation recommended that the national statistical offices of member States should define priorities on data collection on violence against women according to their domestic laws and legally binding commitments. The Islamic Republic of Iran requested the Committee to note that some Islamic countries in the region were not parties to all human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.<sup>4</sup>

42. Two member States indicated that work on developing a set of indicators to measure violence against women was relevant for consideration by the Committee on Statistics and that further efforts should be made to streamline the proposed set of indicators and to make them internationally comparable. Those member States encouraged the secretariat to continue its efforts to address the measurement of violence against women and informed the Committee about their respective good practices in collecting and disseminating data on violence against women.

43. The representative of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) informed the Committee about progress that had been made in the area of gender statistics, in particular in the production of training materials in close collaboration with the World Bank Institute. The representative also informed the Committee about the ECE database on gender statistics, which included data on violence against women.

44. The representative of the United Nations Statistics Division clarified that global and regional work on measuring violence against women had been conducted in close collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Commission on the Status of Women. Furthermore, the representative noted that the recommendations from the Friends of the Chair group would be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session for its guidance on further work in the area of gender statistics, particularly the adoption of a set of indicators on violence against women.

45. The secretariat explained that its support for the global initiative on measuring violence against women had been based on General Assembly resolutions 58/147 of 22 December 2003, in which the Assembly had called upon States to collect, update and improve the collection of data on violence against women, and 61/143 of 19 December 2006, in which the Assembly had urged States to ensure the systematic collection and analysis of data on violence against women, including with the involvement of national statistical offices. The secretariat also informed the Committee of the results of the first session of the Committee on Social Development, which had been held in September 2008 (see E/ESCAP/CSD/8).

#### **E. Towards an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region**

46. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Towards an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region” (E/ESCAP/CST/5) and four information papers: “Statistical capacity-building in economic statistics: the role of the Asian Development Bank” (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/8); “Towards an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the region: the perspective of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the

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<sup>4</sup> General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

Pacific” (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/15); “New International Standards and Priorities of Industrial Statistics” (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/16); and “ASEAN regional cooperation on the enhancement of the implementation of SNA 1993” (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/20).

47. The delegation of Japan stressed the importance of the development of economic statistics, including national accounts. It had adopted the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) and would continue to exchange relevant information with, and accept trainees from, other countries.

48. One delegation observed that the issue of the capability of national statistical offices within the region to undertake development of economic statistics and national accounts had been discussed on numerous occasions in various regional forums without having led to region-wide sustainable results.

49. Some delegations stressed that the need to produce basic economic statistics and national accounts varied from country to country. One delegation suggested that typologies of country needs be developed that reflected the respective economic structure and level of development. With respect to countries that were still struggling to implement the 1993 SNA, another delegation emphasized that programmes would need to develop economic statistics at the national level before such countries could participate meaningfully in regional and global programmes on SNA implementation.

50. One delegation requested that the compilation of regional accounts be included in the regional action plan for the development of economic statistics. The delegation further emphasized that the European experience could be relevant. Another delegation referred to the update provided by the ASEAN Secretariat on the results of a strategic planning workshop and the Ninth ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting, which had identified some priorities areas, with the SNA as an integrating framework for economic statistics.

51. Some delegations observed the value of sector-specific economic statistics programmes to support national accounts statistics. One delegation noted the importance of the measurement of services, given the expansion of this sector in many countries, and requested that it be considered in further regional work on economic statistics. Another delegation stressed the need for high-quality source data, particularly manufacturing statistics, for the compilation of national accounts.

52. The representative of the United Nations Statistics Division clarified that the 2008 System of National Accounts had resulted from a lengthy process of dealing with numerous emerging issues that were relevant primarily to mature economies and those closely integrated into the global economy. Not all countries would be able to fully and immediately implement the 2008 SNA. For national accounts to become more relevant, the needs of the business sector, in addition to those of economic planners, had to be better addressed. The representative informed the Committee of the support of the United Nations Statistics Division for a series of workshops in the region on how to move from data to national accounts and indicated the usefulness of a handbook for the Asian and Pacific region on the production of basic economic statistics.

53. The representative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) informed the Committee about its technical assistance activities in the area of macroeconomic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region. In recent years, IMF had provided about six person-years of technical assistance annually to the region, which had represented about 20 per cent of the total assistance provided by the organization worldwide. IMF operated a regional technical assistance centre in Fiji that served Pacific island

developing countries, and was about to establish a similar centre in Central Asia. There were also IMF regional training institutes in China, India and Singapore.

54. The representative of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) stressed the importance of the presentation and communication of economic statistics in economic statistics training programmes. The representative of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) emphasized the importance of the development of business registers as the cornerstone of source data for basic economic statistics.

55. The Committee adopted decision 1/2.

#### **F. Producing population estimates on an annual basis: the central role of vital statistical systems**

56. The Committee had before it the document entitled "Tools and solutions for better data on births, deaths and causes of death" (E/ESCAP/CST/6) and two related information papers, one on a new regional initiative for improving vital statistics in the region (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/14) and one on improving vital statistics in Thailand (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/9).

57. Several delegations emphasized the critical importance of accurate and complete vital statistics as the basis for producing reliable population estimates, which were required for policy planning.

58. Some delegations recognized the slow progress in the development of vital statistics and emphasized the need for collaboration among health authorities, registrars-general, and national statistical offices. One delegation stressed the importance of taking into account country-specific needs in the improvement of vital registration systems.

59. One delegation expressed the view that a comprehensive vital statistics registration system should not be a prerequisite for the production of reliable vital statistics and population estimates since there were a number of interim alternatives, in particular the use of sample registration systems.

60. Another delegation noted that the use of administrative data and telephone interviews had been effective in bridging gaps and complementing vital registration systems, particularly in cause of death statistics.

61. One delegation recognized the need to engage the general public within countries on the importance of the registration of vital events.

#### **G. Measuring the progress of societies**

62. The Committee had before it the document entitled "Measuring the progress of societies: What is the relevance for Asia and the Pacific?" (E/ESCAP/CST/8). The Committee also had before it three information papers, namely, "Measuring the progress of societies: the Australian experience" (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/10); "Gross National Happiness (GHN): Its assumptions and applications in Bhutan" (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/18); and "Gross National Happiness index: towards measuring the progress of societies" (E/ESCAP/CST/INF/21).

63. Some delegations informed the Committee of their involvement in the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies, which was led by OECD at the global level. Those delegations emphasized the need to develop new ways to measure

societal progress that could cover a variety of dimensions, such as sustainable development or social cohesion. Some delegations supported the notion of the secretariat becoming an official partner in the Global Project and one delegation expressed its wish that the possibility of ESCAP becoming a partner be kept open, unless it implied significant resource allocations. It was pointed out that the current session was the first time that the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies was being discussed by an intergovernmental body in the United Nations system in Asia and the Pacific, and, thus, a decision that the secretariat should serve as regional coordinator would have far-reaching implications, including resource implications, for the secretariat and other members of the United Nations system and would require proper prior consideration by member States. The secretariat was of the view that partnership might indeed involve substantial resources and would need to be examined in the light of the availability of resources for that purpose.

64. One delegation expressed appreciation of the agenda item and the new and interesting presentations on the topic, including those by Bhutan and the Philippines as well as OECD. It was felt that there was need to compile and share the initiatives taken by member States in that area.

#### **H. Programme planning**

65. The Committee had before it the document entitled "Strategic framework and proposed outputs for the proposed programme of work for 2010-2011" (E/ESCAP/CST/9/Rev.1).

66. The secretariat provided an overview of the proposed outputs and the process towards the finalization and endorsement by member States of the programme of work of the secretariat for the biennium 2010-2011, and requested that the Committee review and provide guidance on the proposed outputs in terms of their linkages to the strategic framework. It noted that member States would have the opportunity to review the proposed programme of work in its totality during the sixty-fifth session of the Commission in April 2009.

67. In response to a query by one delegation, the secretariat informed the Committee that, in accordance with the terms of reference of the Committee, it would be requested to review and provide guidance on the proposed strategic framework and the programme of work in the area of statistics for subsequent bienniums, bearing in mind that the Committee met on a biennial basis.

#### **I. Consideration of possible draft resolutions and decisions for submission to the Commission at its sixty-fifth session**

68. The Committee was informed that one of the tasks assigned to the eight committees as part of the generic terms of reference listed in Commission resolution 64/1 was to propose issues for consideration by the Commission as possible resolutions. That had come as a result of earlier calls by member States for more inclusive consultations among the Governments of member States in the preparation of draft resolutions to be submitted to the Commission for its consideration. An agenda item had therefore been included to provide a forum for discussion and review of ideas to be considered for incorporation in draft resolutions for further review by the Commission. No proposals were made.

#### **J. Other matters**

69. In raising a point of order, the delegation of India indicated that the decision of the Committee on the constitution of the Bureau for the intersessional period had

been taken by the Committee only on the previous day. The constitution of the Bureau only provided for the continuation of the Chairperson of the Committee as the Chairperson of the Bureau, while the three vice-chairpersons and other members needed to be formally elected. The delegation of India thus proposed that the three vice-chairpersons that had been already elected be ratified by the Committee for continuation in the intersessional Bureau and that the Rapporteur be confirmed as one of the three possible members of the Bureau. The delegation of India noted that it was not necessary to elect more members at the current stage since the constitution of the Bureau did not provide for a lower limit on the number of members. The Committee agreed to those proposals.

70. Appreciation was expressed of the exhibition on “Statistical Achievements of Asia-Pacific”, held in conjunction with the first session of the Committee, which highlighted the contributions of 31 regional ESCAP members and associate members. It was noted that the exhibition would also be held in New York in conjunction with the fortieth session of the Statistical Commission (24-27 February 2009).

### **K. Adoption of the report**

71. The Committee adopted the report on its first session on 6 February 2009.

## **III. ORGANIZATION**

### **A. Opening, duration and organization of the session**

72. The Committee on Statistics held its first session in Bangkok from 4 to 6 February 2009. The Minister of Information and Communication Technology of Thailand opened the session.

73. In his welcome statement, the Deputy Executive Secretary and Officer-in-Charge a.i. of ESCAP gave a brief history of the Commission’s work in statistics. He noted that statisticians faced challenges in capturing in statistics the current rapid social and economic development, as well as in measuring development outcomes. He stressed the important role that the Asian and Pacific region played in the world and the need for the Committee on Statistics to articulate the voice of that region in shaping the agenda of the United Nations Statistical Commission and providing statistical inputs to the Economic and Social Council.

74. The Deputy Executive Secretary and Officer-in-Charge a.i. of ESCAP reminded participants that the Committee was not only a forum for discussing priorities for statistics development in the region, but also a platform for sharing good practices. Under its terms of reference, the Committee was required to promote a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges of the region. In addition to the generic terms of reference prescribed by the Commission in its resolution 64/1 of 30 April 2008, the Committee was also charged with: (a) tracking key socio-economic and environmental trends; (b) identifying data requirements; and (c) capacity-building for national statistical offices in the ESCAP region.

75. The Director of the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, noted that, with the revitalization of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, all five United Nations regions currently had distinct high-level bodies dealing with regional statistics development. One of the challenges that the new Committee faced was to address the need to strengthen the global statistical system and improve its response to user demand, to better deal with the globalization of demand for statistics. The cornerstone of that statistical system was a strong sense of community, based on professional ethics and common methodology.

76. The Director of the United Nations Statistics Division highlighted the important role that regional Committees and Conferences played in the effective work of the United Nations Statistical Commission. He outlined the important challenges that the statistical community of Asia and the Pacific needed to address in order for the Committee to become the authoritative and leading body for statistics development in the region. Those challenges included, among others, ensuring: (a) country-level commitment to regional cooperation; and (b) international- and regional-level recognition that the Committee was an appropriate forum to discuss and coordinate all matters related to statistics development in the region.

77. The Minister of Information and Communication Technology of Thailand outlined the history of the country's National Statistical Office and the key role that it played in Thailand. She recognized the importance of statistics for the economic and social development of Thailand, and their crucial role in planning, monitoring and evaluating Government policies.

78. The Minister informed the Committee of measures taken by the National Statistical Office of Thailand to ensure the confidentiality of respondent details, including the setting up of the National Information Centre to manage data from all levels of government. The Minister also mentioned that an e-Government project, aimed at using information and communications technology to provide effective and efficient government services, had been launched. The project would support the provision of timely and accurate data for the country's administration and management. The Minister recognized the important need for the National Statistical Office of Thailand to share knowledge and experience with partners in the region.

## **B. Attendance**

79. The session was attended by representatives of the following members of ESCAP: Afghanistan; Australia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Fiji; Georgia; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; New Zealand; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Vanuatu; Viet Nam. The session was also attended by representatives of the following associate members of ESCAP: Hong Kong, China; Macao, China.

80. In addition, a representative of the following country attended: South Africa.

81. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies attended: Economic Commission for Africa; Economic Commission for Europe

82. Representatives of the following Secretariat units attended: United Nations Statistics Division; Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

83. Representatives of the following specialized agencies and related organizations attended: United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Population Fund; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Labour Organization; International Monetary Fund; International Telecommunication Union; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Industrial Development Organization and World Health Organization.

84. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: Asian Development Bank; Association of Southeast Asian Nations; European Commission (Eurostat) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

85. The following academic and research entities participated as observers: Health Metrics Network; School of Population Health, University of Queensland, Australia; Hitachi Research Institute, EAMS Secretariat, Tokyo; and Oxford Policy Management Ltd., United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

### **C. Election of officers**

86. The following officers were elected:

Chairperson:	Mr. Rusman Heriawan (Indonesia)
Vice-chairpersons:	Mr. Ma Jiantang (China) Mr. Birlik Mendybayev (Kazakhstan) Mr. Brian Pink (Australia)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Pronab Sen (India)

### **D. Agenda**

87. Regarding item 4 of the provisional agenda, “Regional technical cooperation in statistics development”, one delegation requested an amendment to permit the inclusion of the words “and capacity-building” so that the amended item would read “Regional technical cooperation and capacity-building in statistics development”. The Committee agreed to that amendment.

88. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its misgivings on the inclusion of “Improving gender statistics: measuring violence against women” in the provisional agenda of the Committee. In its view, gender issues should not be covered by the present Committee, as doing so would duplicate the work of the Committee on Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and other United Nations agencies, especially when there were other important issues, such as capacity development for national statistical offices, to be addressed by the Committee on Statistics. The delegation expressed its view that, according to annex II of Commission resolution 64/1, gender issues were within the scope of issues to be addressed by the Committee on Social Development and not by the Committee on Statistics. The delegation further suggested that item 5 of the provisional agenda should be deleted, or discussion on that subject should be deferred to the Commission session, where authorities responsible for the issue from all member States would be present.

89. The representative of the United Nations Statistics Division informed the Committee that the General Assembly had requested the Statistical Commission to develop and propose, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, a set of possible indicators on violence against women.<sup>5</sup> That work was related to technical aspects of indicators of violence against women that were pursued by the Friends of the Chair group on indicators of violence against women, which had been established at a joint dialogue between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission in February 2008.<sup>6</sup> As such, it was appropriate for the Committee to consider the Asian and Pacific dimensions of that

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<sup>5</sup> See General Assembly resolution 61/143, para. 18.

<sup>6</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 4 (E/2008/24)*, chap. I, decision 39/116, para. (b).

work prior to global consideration of the issues by the Statistical Commission, in consonance with General Assembly resolutions 58/147 of 22 December 2003 and 61/143 of 19 December 2006.

90. One delegation underscored the need for the Committee on Statistics to deliberate on the measurement aspects of the work of other committees in the subsidiary structure of the Commission, as statistics was a cross-cutting field of work.

91. Taking into consideration the views expressed and with the support of the Committee, the Chairperson decided to retain item 5, "Improving gender statistics: measuring violence against women" in the agenda of the Committee.

92. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session:
  - (a) Opening addresses;
  - (b) Election of officers;
  - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
2. Terms of reference and functioning of the Committee on Statistics.
3. Statistics development in Asia and the Pacific.
4. Regional technical cooperation and capacity-building in statistics development.
5. Improving gender statistics: measuring violence against women.
6. Towards an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region.
7. Producing population estimates on an annual basis: the central role of vital statistical systems.
8. Measuring the progress of societies.
9. Programme planning.
10. Consideration of possible draft resolutions and decisions for submission to the Commission at its sixty-fifth session.
11. Other matters.
12. Adoption of the report of the Committee on Statistics on its first session.

#### **E. Side event**

93. A side event on Coordinating support for statistics development in Asia and the Pacific was held on the morning of 6 February. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) provided an overview of statistical capacity-building in the Asian and Pacific region, while ECA and Eurostat shared their experiences in coordinating statistical capacity-building activities in Africa and Europe, respectively. International agencies engaged in technical cooperation in the area of official statistics and national statistical offices shared experiences through panel and plenary discussions and explored specific mechanisms for improving coordination and cooperation for supporting statistical capacity-building in the Asian and Pacific region.



*Annex*

**LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>Document title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
E/ESCAP/CST/1 and Corr.1	Terms of reference and functioning of the Committee on Statistics	2
E/ESCAP/CST/2 and Corr.1	Overview of statistics development in Asia and the Pacific	3
E/ESCAP/CST/3 and Corr.1	ESCAP strategy for technical cooperation in statistics development	4
E/ESCAP/CST/4 and Corr.1	Measuring violence against women: towards better indicators	5
E/ESCAP/CST/5 and Corr.1	Towards an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region	6
E/ESCAP/CST/6 and Corr.1 and 2	Tools and solutions for better data on births, deaths and causes of death	7
E/ESCAP/CST/8	Measuring the progress of societies: What is the relevance for Asia and the Pacific?	8
E/ESCAP/CST/9/Rev.1	Strategic framework and proposed outputs for the proposed programme of work for 2010-2011	9
<i>Limited series</i>		
E/ESCAP/CST/L.1/Rev.1	Revised provisional agenda	1(c)
E/ESCAP/CST/L.2/Rev.2	Annotated provisional agenda	1(c)
E/ESCAP/CST/L.3	Draft report	
E/ESCAP/CST/L.3/Add.1	Draft recommendations of the Committee	
<i>Information Series</i>		
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/1/Rev.1 (English only)	Tentative programme	1(a)
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/2 (English only)	Provisional list of participants	1(b)
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/3 and Corr.1 (English only)	Information note for participants	
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/4 and Corr.1	Rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	2

<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>Document title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/5/Corr.1 (English only)	Statistics development in the Pacific	3
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/6 (English only)	The role of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific in strengthening statistical capacity in the region	4
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/7 (English only)	Efforts of the Philippine Statistical System on the compilation of gender statistics	5
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/8 and Corr.1 (English only)	Statistical capacity-building in economic statistics: the role of the Asian Development Bank	6
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/9 and Corr.1 (English only)	Improving vital statistics and cause of death statistics: the experience of Thailand	7
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/10 and Corr.1 (English only)	Measuring the progress of societies: the Australian experience	8
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/14 and Corr.1 (English only)	Towards improving vital statistics: new regional initiative funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)	7
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/15 and Corr.1 (English only)	Towards an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the region: the perspective of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific	6
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/16 and Corr.1 (English only)	New International Standards and Priorities of Industrial Statistics	6
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/17 and Corr.1 (English only)	Activities of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States	3
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/18 and Corr.1 (English only)	Gross National Happiness (GNH): Its assumptions and applications in Bhutan	8
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/19 and Corr.1 (English only)	Main achievements and challenges in ASEAN regional cooperation in statistics	3
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/20 and Corr.1 (English only)	ASEAN regional cooperation on the enhancement of the implementation of SNA 1993	6
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/21 (English only)	Gross National Happiness index: towards measuring the progress of societies	8
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/22 (English only)	The experience of Cambodia in measuring violence against women	5

<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>Document title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
E/ESCAP/CST/INF/23 (English only)	Cooperation among members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the field of statistics	3

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