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**Regional initiatives: Economic statistics**

**Implementation plan for the Regional Programme for the  
Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific\*\***

**Note by the ESCAP secretariat under the guidance of the Steering  
Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics**

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## Acknowledgements

1. The proposed Implementation Plan was developed by the ESCAP secretariat under the guidance of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics (SGRPES)<sup>1</sup>

2. The SGRPES was established by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics to oversee the implementation of the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which was endorsed by the Committee at its second session in December 2010. The SGRPES functions under the guidance of the Committee on Statistics, chaired by Mr Brian Pink, Australian Statistician.

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<sup>1</sup> The SGRPES report to the third session of the Committee (E/ESCAP/CST(3)/4) summarizes the process and considerations that led to the formulation of the proposed Implementation Plan.

3. Membership of the SGPRES comprises: Mr Michael Smedes, Australian Bureau of Statistics (Co-Chair); Mr Yusif Yusifov, State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan Republic; Mr Ziauddin Ahmed, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics; Mr Sonam Tenzin, National Statistics Bureau of Bhutan; Mr G. C. Manna, Central Statistics Office of India; Mr Sasmito Wibowo, BPS Statistics Indonesia; Ms Bahareh Akhavan, Statistical Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran; Mr Seiji Takata, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan; Ms Estela T. de Guzman, National Statistics Office of the Philippines (Co-Chair), Mr. Raymundo J. Talento, National Statistical Coordination Board of the Philippines; Ms B. Badamtsetseg, National Statistical Office of Mongolia; Mr Jeffrey Cope, Statistics New Zealand; Mr Andrei Tatarinov, Federal State Statistics Service, Russian Federation; Mr Neo Poh Cheem, Singapore Department of Statistics; Mr Ata'ata M. Finau, Government Statistician of Tonga; Ms Chellam Palanyandy, ADB; Mr Agus Sutanto, ASEAN secretariat; Mr James Whitworth and Ms Claudia Junker, Eurostat; Mr Jairo Castano, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, FAO; Mr Tite Habiyakare, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; Mr Kimberly Zieschang, IMF; and Mr Alick Nyasulu, SPC.

4. Secretariat staff and consultants involved in the preparation of the Implementation Plan included Mr Artur Andrysiak, Ms Jillian Campbell, Mr Daniel Clarke, Ms Rattana Duangpruen, Ms Haishan Fu, Ms Rikke Munk Hansen, Ms Nixie Mabanag, and Mr Denis Ward.

## I. Introduction

5. The ESCAP Committee on Statistics at its first session in 2009 recognized that many developing countries in the Asia and Pacific region lack the capacity to produce and disseminate relevant economic statistics for short and long-term economic analysis and decision-making by government and non-governmental agencies and organizations. It also recognized that the recent global financial and economic crises further highlighted the importance of timely, reliable, comparable and methodologically transparent economic statistics for monitoring financial and economic changes.

6. In response to this decision, the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (the Regional Programme) was prepared by the ESCAP secretariat under the guidance of the Technical Advisory Group on the Development of Economic Statistics (TAG).<sup>2</sup>

7. The Regional Programme was endorsed by the Committee at its second session in December 2010.<sup>3</sup> It constitutes a major component of the overall strategy of the Committee to achieve the goal that, by 2020, all countries in the region shall have the capability to provide an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environmental statistics.<sup>4</sup>

8. The Regional Programme adopts a distinct approach to promote the improvement of economic statistics by establishing a Core Set of Economic

<sup>2</sup> For further information see <http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/TAG-econ-stat.asp>

<sup>3</sup> ESCAP/CST(2)/5

<sup>4</sup> ESCAP/CST(2)/2

Statistics (the “Core Set”) as the regional guideline for national capacity development.<sup>5</sup>

9. The Core Set was developed by the TAG through an inclusive and intensive consultation process among senior economic statistics experts from national and international statistical offices during 2009 and 2010.

10. The Core Set is indicative, not prescriptive and sets out what are considered to be the minimum set of statistics needed for effective economic analysis and monitoring. The Core Set has a short-term and longer-term element through the inclusion of short-term and structural economic statistics.

11. Through its endorsement by the ESCAP Commission through Resolution 67/10 (see Annex I), the Core Set has become a regional framework to guide the development and national statistical systems, and to focus regional efforts, coordinate training and mobilize donor support for capacity building.

12. The Regional Programme aims at improving national capacities to produce economic statistics in the Asia-Pacific region. The Core Set facilitates identification of economic statistics that are particularly relevant and of importance to individual countries, and hence on which regional support should focus.

13. The proposed Implementation Plan for the Regional Programme contained in the current document outlines the strategy, approach, and the governance and monitoring arrangements for achieving the goal and expected outcome of the Regional Programme. It contains the work plan for the first implementation phase (2013-2014), and outlines the process for further developing the implementation plan for the subsequent phases leading to the target year, 2020.

## **II. Results framework**

14. The proposed Implementation Plan is designed to achieve the results outlined in the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, as endorsed by the Committee on Statistics.

### **A. Goal and outcome**

15. The goal of the Regional Programme is to improve the soundness of economic analysis and decision-making by governments, the private sector, the research community and the public through increased availability and effective use of timely, reliable and comparable economic statistics.

16. The expected outcome of the Regional Programme, by 2020, is that national statistical systems (NSSs) of ESCAP member States have the capacity to produce and disseminate, in accordance with internationally agreed statistical standards and good practices, the Core Set of Economic Statistics.

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<sup>5</sup> ESCAP/CST(2)/4

## B. Outputs

17. Below, the seven components<sup>6</sup> of the Regional Programme are rephrased and grouped into four main outputs. Each output represents an intermediate result that contributes to achieving the Programme outcome and ultimately, the Programme goal. While each output is formulated as a national-level result, it is to be achieved through a mix of national actions and regional support activities.

18. **Output A (Advocacy):** Increased political support and appreciation of the importance of investing in the improvement of national capacity to produce the Core Set

19. **Output B (Coordination):** Improved coordination of statistics activities, within NSSs and among development partners

(a) Output B.1: Integration of institutional and technical capacity requirements for producing and disseminating the Core Set into the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) or a similar national strategic plan for statistics development

(b) Output B.2: Improved legislative support for coordination and collaboration within NSSs

(c) Output B.3: Improved coordination and synergy of capacity development activities by development partners

(d) Output B.4: Improved sharing of knowledge, experience and technical know-how related to produce the Core Set among NSSs in Asia and the Pacific

20. **Output C (Infrastructure):** Improved national statistical infrastructure for the production and dissemination of the Core Set.

(a) Output C.1: Increased availability of appropriate and properly maintained business registers in NSSs.

(b) Output C.2: Increased use by NSSs of internationally recognized quality assessment frameworks to assess the quality of economic statistics systematically and periodically.

(c) Output C.3: Increased availability of appropriate and properly maintained metadata repositories in NSSs.

(d) Output C.4: Increased use by NSSs of modern statistical data editing techniques for the processing of raw economic census and survey data required for the production of the Core Set.

21. **Output D (Skills):** Improved human resource skills of NSS staff in areas that are essential for the collection of economic data and for the compilation, dissemination and use of the Core Set

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<sup>6</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(2)/5 (Section IV(C))

### **C. Distinguishing institutional and technical constraints**

22. The proposed Implementation Plan, in order to achieve the outputs above, focuses initial activities on addressing priority, underlying “institutional” and “technical” constraints<sup>7</sup> that limit the capacity of NSSs in the region to produce the Core Set, as follows:

#### *Addressing institutional constraints*

23. In pursuit of output A (Advocacy), the need for statistical advocacy and enhanced political support, within and beyond the NSS, is emphasized.

24. In pursuit of output B (Coordination), the lack of clear division of work across different parts of the NSS, and needs for appropriate statistical legislation, are emphasized.

#### *Addressing technical constraints*

25. In pursuit of output C (Infrastructure), the need for further development of key elements of the national statistical infrastructure, in particular, business registers and quality assurance frameworks, is addressed.

26. In pursuit of output D (Skills), the need for improved technical skills related specifically to producing the Core Set, to be acquired through on-the-job training is emphasized.

27. Activities to achieve outputs A and B are in the following referred to as “institutional” interventions; activities contributing to achieving outputs C and D as “technical” interventions. The distinction is important in that institutional interventions could form part of any programme to improve the operations of a national statistical system, while the technical interventions by and large are specific to improving economic statistics.

## **III. Implementation strategy and approach**

28. To address the key constraints that hinder the capacity of NSSs to provide the Core Set, the Implementation Plan follows a strategy that is anchored around four approaches: (i) combining country implementation with regional support; (ii) aligning with relevant global, regional and sub-regional initiatives and coordinating implementation activities among development partners; (iii) phased approach towards progressive achievement of the expected outcome; and (iv) monitoring actions and progress regularly for sustained efforts and desired results.

Diagram 1 illustrates this implementation strategy.

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<sup>7</sup> As identified by the Steering Group at its first meeting in October 2011. See Section 2.1 and 2.7 of the report of the meeting  
[http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/seminarOct2011/Report\\_Seminar.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/seminarOct2011/Report_Seminar.pdf)

## **A. Combining country implementation with regional support**

29. Guided by the Core Set, the implementation of the Regional Programme follows a two-track strategy, entailing “country-level implementation” and “regional-level implementation”.

### **1. Concerted national action at the center of successful implementation**

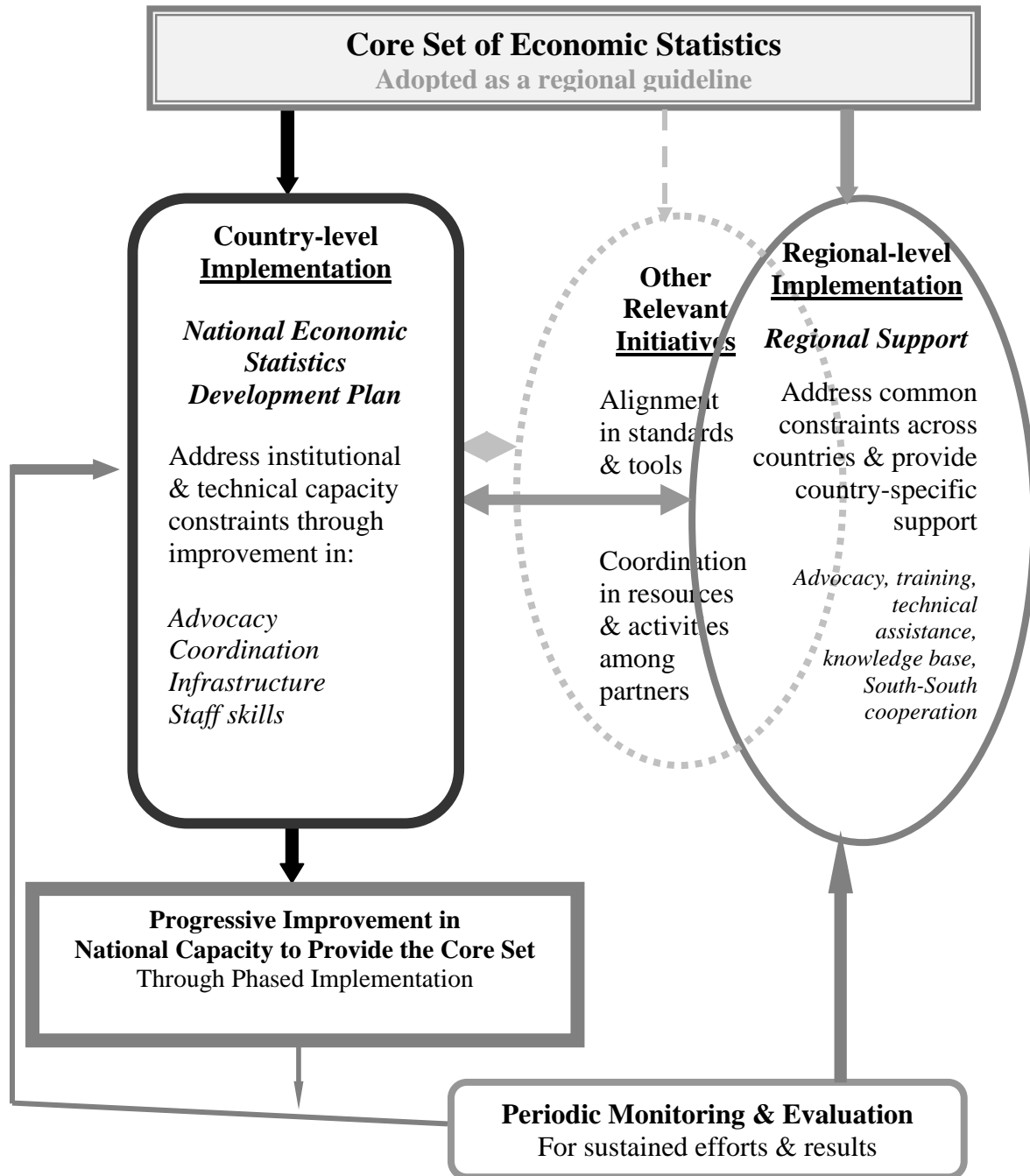
30. The primary focus and responsibility for the implementation of the Regional Programme lies with the national statistical system of each country in the region. At the centre of a successful Implementation plan for the Regional Programme is effective country level implementation, to be pursued through a National Economic Statistics Development Plan (NESDP) designed to address the priority constraints towards achieving the necessary capacity to produce and disseminate the Core Set.

31. Under the proposed Implementation Plan, all countries in the region that are currently facing challenges in providing the Core Set are requested to develop an NESDP within the first phase of Regional Programme implementation (i.e. over the period 2013-2014). To be effective, the NESDP needs to be integrated into the national strategic plan for the development of statistics (NSDS) or other similar national statistical development strategy (such as a Statistical Master Plan). The NESDP forms the basis for fully detailing both country implementation and regional support activities.

### **2. Appropriate regional actions to support country implementation**

32. Regional level support to countries in their endeavours to improve national capacity to produce and disseminate the Core Set will focus on the following areas: advocating for the need to intensify national and regional efforts to improve basic economic statistics; promoting common frameworks for national economic statistics capacity building; providing appropriate technical assistance and statistics training; enhancing knowledge-sharing (giving particular attention to identify the benefits and opportunity for cross-country exchanges); establishing regional network(s) of experts and facilitating South-South and/or triangular cooperation between NSSs in the region.

Diagram 1  
**Implementation strategy for the Regional Programme**





33. Many of the specific regional support actions could only be fully developed in response to the needs for support—either common across countries or specific to a country—identified through the country implementation planning processes. However, some of the important regional-level implementation activities that target issues that are common across many countries can already be planned and pursued on the basis of existing information.

34. Sources of such information include the 2009 ESCAP region-wide assessment of the capacity of national statistical systems in Asia and the Pacific to produce basic economic statistics<sup>8</sup> and the in-depth country assessments, undertaken by the ESCAP secretariat in collaboration with the national statistical offices and other relevant agencies of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Lao PDR in 2011, of the capacity of national statistical systems to produce the core set.<sup>9</sup>

35. Areas where there is an already identified need for regional-level action, involve support to country assessment and planning; establishment of knowledge base; and development and delivery of training. A number of such regional activities are included in the proposed activities for the first phase of Programme Implementation (see Section VI.B and Annex II, containing the work plan for the first phase).

## **B. Aligning with relevant initiatives and coordinating among partners**

36. To provide effective support to countries, the Implementation Plan seeks to align its strategy and approaches with other relevant on-going global, regional and sub-regional initiatives, and to coordinate efforts among development partners who have been actively supporting statistics development in the region.

### **1. Alignment with other relevant global, regional and sub-regional initiatives**

37. To seek synergy and make most effective use of existing expertise and resources, the implementation of the Regional Programme will need to be aligned—at both the national and regional level—with a number of related and on-going capacity-building initiatives. These initiatives include, in particular, the global statistical initiatives such as the global Implementation Programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics,<sup>10</sup> the International Comparison Programme (ICP),<sup>11</sup> including the regional ICP supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB),<sup>12</sup> the various capacity building programmes led by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the context of the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), Special Data Dissemination System (SDDS), and Reports on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSCs),<sup>13</sup> and the

<sup>8</sup> Available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/2/CST2-INF9.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The assessment reports for Bangladesh, Bhutan and Lao PDR are available through <http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/seminar-Oct2011/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/imp.asp>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/data/icp>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.adb.org/data/icp/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/data.htm#sc>

Asia-Pacific Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.<sup>14</sup> Other relevant sub-regional initiatives include the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy 2011-2020<sup>15</sup> and the EU-ASEAN Statistical Capacity Building Programme.<sup>16</sup>

38. Alignment with these initiatives is both necessary and possible, as the Core Set reflects a common scope across these key global and regional initiatives related to economic statistics, and builds on the use of internationally recognized standards and guidelines. Some of these initiatives aim to assist countries to address the same institutional constraints across NSSs as well as infrastructure issues such as registers and frames, quality assurance and methodological transparency, which are the priorities of the Regional Programme. All initiatives are also seeking to assist with human resource development related to the Core Set—an important output of the Regional Programme.

## **2. Coordination among development partners**

39. Because of the overlapping nature of many of the components of the above-mentioned initiatives, there is a need for strong coordination among relevant national agencies and development partners in connection with the implementation of activities in the context of each initiative. Such coordination need to occur at multiple levels, i.e. the national level, the regional level, and at the level of the activity.

40. As summarized in Table 1 below, there are a large number of relevant national and international development partners for the implementation of the Regional Programme. Many of these development partners are members of the regional coordination mechanism, Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific (the Partnership), formed in December 2010. Since its inception, the Partnership has committed to align its work with the strategic priorities of the Committee, including supporting the development and implementation of the Regional Programme.<sup>17</sup>

41. Of particular relevance to achieving output D (Skills) of the Regional Programme is the engagement of existing statistical training institutions in Programme implementation to meet the training needs of national statistical systems. Table 2 provides an overview of relevant stakeholders, grouped by institutional statistical training capacity and needs, as compiled by the Working Group on Coordination of Statistical Training.<sup>18</sup>

42. As requested by ESCAP Resolution 67/10 (Annex I), coordination in the implementation of the Regional Programme means that development partners actively supporting economic statistics development in the Asia-Pacific region should utilize the Regional Programme (and the Core Set) as a

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<sup>14</sup> APCAS/12/10; E/ESCAP/CST(3)/8

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.spc.int/sdp/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=75&Itemid=42&lang=en](http://www.spc.int/sdp/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=75&Itemid=42&lang=en)

<sup>16</sup> <http://eascab.asean.org/>

<sup>17</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(3)/13

<sup>18</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(3)/12

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guiding framework to coordinate support, minimize duplication and gaps, and take advantage of opportunities to pool resources and maximize joint impact.

43. Effective coordination requires willingness by development partners to harmonize (and thus, in some cases, modify)—to the extent possible—their programme priorities and activities with the Regional Programme’s implementation requirements. At the same time, the implementation plan for the Regional Programme is designed to facilitate such harmonization (see Section VI.A on the preparatory, or design phase of Programme implementation). Recognizing that harmonization is a critical factor for the success of the Regional Programme and that there are practical issues related to realize the desired level of harmonization by partners, the SGRPES has identified this as a priority issue for further discussion among and within partner agencies.

44. Harmonization will allow development partners to in a coherent and coordinated manner promote harmonization across national statistical systems through engagement with their respective national constituencies or entry points (national statistical offices, central banks, ministries of planning, etc.). This will facilitate effective implementation at the national level, assisting to ensure joint commitment and coordinated efforts by all key national producers of economic statistics in the country-level implementation of the Regional Programme.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> It is desirable that country-level implementation be coordinated with the United Nations Country Teams to avoid duplication and ensure consistency with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

Table 1  
**Key development partners for the Implementation of the Regional Programme**

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<b>Global</b>	European Union/Eurostat
	International Monetary Fund (IMF)
	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century (PARIS 21)
	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
	United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
	United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)
	World Bank
<b>Regional</b>	Asian Development Bank (ADB)
	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
<b>Sub-Regional</b>	Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)
	Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)
	Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT)
	Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC)
	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
	Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC)

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Table 2  
**Statistical training: Key stakeholders**<sup>20</sup>

Stakeholder category	Constituency/Stakeholders
a. Training-deficient NSSs (without a statistical training institution)	Countries and areas without in-country statistical training facilities, such as Armenia, Macao (China), Nepal, Singapore and a number of Pacific island States.
b. Training-deficient NSSs (with a statistical training institution)	Countries and areas with national statistical training institutions that also need external training assistance, such as Azerbaijan, China, Hong Kong (China), India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, the Philippines, Republic of Korea and Thailand.
c. Self-sufficient NSSs	Countries such as Australia, Japan and the Russian Federation with statistical training institutions that mostly do not depend on external sources for meeting their training needs. These countries provide or have the capability of providing training to other countries.
d. Training providers	Statistical training institutions of NSSs belonging to group b and c above.  International / regional / sub-regional providers of funds, training or related capacity development assistance, such as ADB, EUROSTAT, FAO, ILO, IMF, JICA, PARIS21, SESRIC, SIAP, SPC, UNFPA, UNIDO, UNSD and the World Bank.

### C. Phased approach towards progressive achievement

45. To achieve the long-term expected outcome of the Regional Programme, the proposed Implementation Plan adopts a phased approach towards the target date of 2020. It divides the ten-year period (since the adoption of the Regional Programme by the Committee in December 2010) into four distinct stages, each with a broadly defined focus of implementation:

46. Preparatory Phase (2011-2012): Developing regional Implementation Plan, including conducting country assessments; exploring alignment with other initiatives; establishing partnership arrangements and the regional governance structure for Programme implementation.

<sup>20</sup> Adapted from E/ESCAP/CST(3)/12, Table 1.

47. Phase 1 (2013-2014): Developing and initiating the implementation of NESDPs; developing and implementing regional support activities.

48. Phase 2 (2015-2017): Accelerating country-level and regional-level implementation.

49. Phase 3 (2018-2020): Consolidating national and regional efforts to achieve the Programme outcome.

#### **D. Regular monitoring for sustained action and desired results**

50. To ensure that the implementation of the Regional Programme delivers the desired outcome, it is essential to regularly monitor implementation of the required actions—both at the country and the regional level—and the achievement of the programme results in terms of the progressive improvement in national capacity to produce and disseminate Core Set.

51. The members of the Committee and development partners have all committed to respecting the decisions of the Committee and working collaboratively towards the Committee's goals. Regular monitoring and reporting will help ensure that every stakeholder of the Regional Programme, including, the NSSs in the region, the ESCAP secretariat and other key development partners, is aware of progress towards achieving Programme results and of the continued actions required for the effective implementation of the Regional Programme. Periodical assessments of progress towards achieving the Programme results will guide the approaches and actions during subsequent implementation phases.

52. Section V outlines the monitoring and evaluation approach and arrangements in further detail.

### **IV. Governance**

53. The governance for the implementation of the Regional Programme will include both regional- and national-level arrangements.

#### **A. Regional-level oversight and coordination**

##### **1. Committee on Statistics and its Bureau**

54. The Committee on Statistics will have the ultimate ownership of the Regional Programme and its Implementation Plan.

55. The Bureau of the Committee will guide, in between the Committee sessions as necessary, the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics (SGRPES) and the secretariat in coordinating follow-up actions required in accordance with the Committee's decisions and recommendations on the implementation of the Regional Programme.

## 2. Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics

### *Role of the Steering Group*

56. The SGRPES has been established by the Committee as a “long-standing” oversight body—to remain in place for the duration of the Regional Programme till 2020—to ensure continuity and stability in the management of its implementation (see Annex III for the Terms of Reference of SGRPES). The SGRPES will direct the further development of the implementation plan for the Regional Programme, provide both strategic and technical advice to the secretariat for the day-to-day management of the implementation activities, monitor progress and propose any adjustments to the Implementation Plan as the needs arise. The SGRPES will report on the progress of implementation of the Regional Programme to the Committee on Statistics (see Section V on Monitoring and evaluation).

57. The SGRPES will play an important role in ensuring the continued alignment with other relevant initiatives and the effective coordination of Programme activities among development partners. The institutional members of the SGRPES, who are also the member organizations of the regional coordination mechanism, the Partnership, have a specific role in this regard.

58. It will be the joint responsibility of the institutional members of SGRPES, such as the ADB, the ASEAN secretariat, the ESCAP secretariat, ILO, IMF, SPC, and UNSD, as well as other relevant international partners involved to ensure that effective coordination is achieved through continued alignment and harmonization. The SGRPES through the institutional members will work to influence the integration of the Programme results into relevant economic statistics and more general statistics development initiatives.

### *Membership of SGRPES*

59. The current SGRPES is mainly constituted of national experts from NSOs and relevant international and regional organizations.

60. Recognizing the role of other national stakeholders in producing economic statistics and bearing in mind the risks related to the success of country-level implementation of the Regional Programme (see Section VIII on Assumptions and Risks), it is desirable to expand the SGRPES membership to include representation from central banks, ministries of finance or planning of countries in the region.

61. To facilitate strengthening the involvement and ownership among development partners that are key resources for Programme implementation, it is also desirable to include representation of statistical training institutions and potential donors on the SGRPES.

62. It is therefore proposed that the Committee considers revising the Terms of Reference for the SGRPES to allow the according expansion of the membership of the SGRPES.

## **B. Country-level arrangements**

### **1. National coordination for NESDP**

63. The development and implementation of an effective country implementation plan for the Regional Programme requires an appropriate national coordination mechanism among key producers of economic statistics within a NSS (national statistical offices, central banks, ministries of finance or planning, etc.).

64. The national coordination mechanism will function as the country-level governance arrangement for NESDP development and implementation. The composition and functioning of the national coordination mechanism will likely vary across countries given the specific national circumstances. In some countries, an appropriate mechanism will already be in place.

65. All countries for which a coordination mechanism has yet to be established or, if in place, does not function adequately, are encouraged to pursue its establishment and/or improvement through the country-level Programme implementation process.

### **2. National focal points for managing Regional Programme implementation**

66. To connect country-level implementation with regional-level support, it is proposed that, for each country participating in the Regional Programme, the respective national statistical office is to function as the coordinator across the NSS, and a National Focal Point should be nominated by the head of the NSO to liaise with the ESCAP secretariat on relevant activities.

67. For countries that are members of the SGRPES, the National Focal Point will be the SGRPES representative. For other countries where a functioning national coordination mechanism for economic statistics exists, the National Focal Point could be identified from within the existing mechanism. In cases where the institutional arrangements for producing the Core Set of Economic Statistics are decentralized or currently unclear, the National Focal Point could comprise more than one individual, representing the national agencies that are most involved in producing the Core Set. It is generally expected that the Focal Point should be an official from the national statistical office; however, countries are encouraged to consider including statisticians from other relevant parts of government, for example as Focal Point alternates.

68. Regional programme implementation at the national level will be liaised through the National Focal Points. The National Focal Points will also regularly receive supporting materials to assist with implementation of Regional Programme activities and will have access to the network of such focal points from all member States in order to facilitate exchanges of experiences across countries.

## **C. Role of the ESCAP secretariat**

69. The ESCAP secretariat, through the Statistics Division and SIAP, functions as the secretariat of the following bodies: (i) the Committee on Statistics and its Bureau; (ii) the SGRPES; (iii) the Steering Group for



Agricultural Statistics; (iv) the Working Group for the Coordination of Statistical Training; and (v) the regional coordination mechanism—Partners for Statistics Development in Asia and the Pacific. The secretariat is therefore well-placed to ensure that the Programme is implemented in alignment with national priorities and harmonized with other ongoing regional capacity development efforts.

70. The ESCAP secretariat will serve as the custodian of the Regional Programme. The secretariat will support the functioning of the Bureau of the Committee and the SGRPES to ensure effective planning and implementation of the Regional Programme; act as the “Contact Point” between country-level and regional-level implementation; manage the day-to-day operation of the Regional Programme implementation; conduct regular review and monitoring of the Regional Programme implementation.

71. The secretariat will also play a central role in ensuring that the necessary technical support is made available to NSSs in coordination with the relevant development partners and national statistical offices in Asia and the Pacific.

## **V. Monitoring and Evaluation**

72. Progress in Regional Programme implementation will be monitored at the activity as well as the result level. Activity-level monitoring will be annual while results monitoring, being more resource intensive on the part of member States and the secretariat, will take place only in Programme milestone years, 2014, 2017 and 2020.

73. All monitoring reports will be prepared by the secretariat for review and approval by the SGRPES.

74. In years where the Committee meets, activity monitoring reports, upon approval by the SGRPES, will be submitted to the Committee for guidance. In inter-session years, activity monitoring reports will be shared with the Bureau of the Committee.

75. All results monitoring reports will be shared with the full membership of the Committee for consideration and guidance.

### **A. Annual activity monitoring**

76. The secretariat will monitor the implementation of activities contained in the regional implementation plan, whether they are conducted by national, regional or international Programme partners. Annual activity reports presenting an overview of efforts by all stakeholders will be prepared for review by the SGRPES.

77. The annual activity reports will be produced on the basis of information that has been provided to the secretariat by Programme partners; hence no structured surveys will be administered to ensure the validity or completeness of information.

78. The annual activity reports will contain information on activities, in accordance with the work plans for the implementation phases of the Regional Programme.

## **B. Periodic results monitoring**

79. The annual activity reports will in milestone years be complemented by monitoring of progress towards achieving the results of the Programme (outcome and outputs as outlined in Section II).

80. While the framework and approach of the Programme is regional, improvement of national capacity to produce the Core Set will ultimately happen at the national level and be primarily driven by countries. Progress towards achieving the Programme will be evidenced in the national context. Accordingly, while progress towards achieving the results will be monitored at the regional level, the main source of monitoring information will be the national statistical systems.

81. Upon development of country activity plans, an important source of monitoring information at the regional level will be national-level progress reports on the achievement of results contained in the national activity plans.

82. All member States will be invited to participate in the monitoring exercise in milestone years: 2014, 2017, and 2020. The national focal point for the Regional Programme will be responsible for ensuring timely submission of information, including through collection of relevant information across the NSS. The focal point will also be responsible for follow-up dialogue, as needed. Staff of the ESCAP Statistics Division, led by the Programme coordinator, will administer the monitoring exercises and compile the results on behalf of the SGRPES.

### **1. Programme outcome: Capacity to produce the Core Set**

83. Progress towards achieving the Programme outcome “... national statistical systems (NSSs) of ESCAP member States have the capacity to produce and disseminate, in accordance with internationally agreed statistical standards and good practices, the Core Set of Economic Statistics” will be monitored through a proxy indicator, namely the availability, frequency and adherence to international standards and best practices of the Core Set in member States.

84. Monitoring of the Core Set will be conducted utilizing the signposts described below in Table 3.<sup>21</sup> The signposts are considered indicative targets for progressive development of capacity for producing the Core Set. Signpost 3 indicates full availability of the Core Set.

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<sup>21</sup> The signposts (then referred to as “milestones”) were developed from extensive discussions and studies of the most important constraints faced by the region for achieving the 2020 goals. These included, for example, in-depth assessments conducted in three ESCAP member States in 2011 (Bangladesh, Bhutan and Lao People’s Democratic Republic), and detailed discussions of the SGRPES.

85. Core Set items will be considered available only when current international standards and guidelines are applied and adhered to, as described in the Core Set as adopted by the Committee.<sup>22</sup> Monitoring of Core Set availability is thus fully coherent with the internationally agreed milestones of the Implementation Programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics developed by the Inter-secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA). Core Set availability will be assessed in each Programme milestone year by the total percentage of ESCAP member States that have achieved each signpost.

Table 3  
Core Set signposts for the implementation of the Regional Programme

	Signpost 1	Signpost 2	Signpost 3
<b>Prices and costs</b>			
Consumer price index*	Q	Q	Q
Producer price index*	Q	Q	Q
Commodity price index		Q	M
External merchandise trade price indexes	A	Q	M
Wages / Earnings data	A	Q	Q
Labour costs index / Wage index		Q	Q
Purchasing power parities		Ad hoc	Ad hoc
<b>Demand and output</b>			
GDP (production) nominal and real	A	Q	Q
GDP (expenditure) nominal and real (including implicit price indexes for GDE and components)	A	Q	Q
External trade – merchandise	A	Q	M
External trade – services		A	Q
Short term indicator (STI) – industry output		Q	Q
STI - consumer demand		Q	Q
STI - fixed investment		Q	Q
STI – inventories		Q	Q
Economy structure statistics		5-yearly	5-yearly
Productivity			A
<b>Income &amp; Wealth</b>			
Integrated national accounts for the total economy			A
Institutional sector accounts**			A
Balance of payments	A	Q	Q
International Investment Position (IIP)	A	A	A
External debt	A	A	Q
Income distribution		5 yearly	5 yearly
<b>Money &amp; Banking</b>			
Assets/liabilities of depository corporations	M	M	M
Broad money and credit aggregates		M	M
Interest rate statistics		M	M

<sup>22</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(2)/4 includes complete descriptions of each item in the Core Set, including quality criteria.

	Signpost 1	Signpost 2	Signpost 3
<b>Government</b>			
General government operations		A	Q
General government debt	A	A	Q
<b>Labour Market</b>			
Labour supply and demand	A	A	A / Q
Hours worked		A	Q
<b>Natural Resources and the environment</b>			
Natural resources		A	A

*Notes:*

\* The General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) recommends that CPI and PPI be compiled on a monthly basis. All member States are encouraged to comply with this recommendation where feasible.

\*\* It is recommended that institutional sector accounts be developed progressively, e.g. beginning with the general government sector, followed by production and generation of income accounts for corporations, and so on. Therefore, in practice, and where feasible, monitoring of this item will be based on progressive availability of individual accounts or modules.

## 2. Output monitoring: Progress in underlying capacities

86. Progress towards achieving Programme outputs A-D will be monitored through output indicators. Since each output corresponds to a priority, underlying capacity constraint for producing the Core Set, information from output monitoring will tell of progress and lack of same by member States in addressing constraints related to achieving the overall Programme outcome.

87. Information from this part of Programme monitoring will thus be a primary source of knowledge for the SGRPES and the Committee in carrying out their oversight responsibilities, constituting a main tool to assess progress and make adjustments as necessary.

88. The framework for this part of Programme monitoring will be fully developed by the ESCAP secretariat in consultation with the SGPRES during 2013. Monitoring progress towards achieving Programme outputs A-D requires the development of indicators for each output and sub-output, and the establishment of the baseline value for each indicator. Depending on the formulation of the indicators, calculating baseline values may require additional information gathering from NSSs. Subsequently, target values for 2014, 2017 and 2020 for each indicator will be determined.

## C. Evaluation: Achieving the Programme goal

89. The goal of the programme: "... to improve the soundness of economic analysis and decision-making by governments, the private sector, the research community, and the public through increased availability and effective use of timely, reliable and comparable economic statistics" relates to the long-term, positive, impact of the Programme on a variety of stakeholders from within and beyond the national statistical system.

90. Progress towards achieving the goal does not form part of the regular monitoring of the Programme. The value and feasibility of conducting an ex-post evaluation of the overall impact of the Programme on the ultimate beneficiaries will be considered by the SGRPES at the 2017 milestone.

## **VI. Implementation by phase**

91. The present Section outlines priority national and regional activities during each Programme implementation phase.

92. The phased approach to implementation is derived from the identified priority constraints (as outlined in Section II: Results Framework) to developing sustainable capacities for producing and disseminating the Core Set at the national level.

93. Initial implementation, referred to as the “preparatory phase”, focused on developing a solid approach to addressing these constraints in an effective manner through national action and regional support.

94. The first implementation phase, 2013-2014, will establish the national and regional governing and coordination structures for the programme, clarify country-specific and common regional capacity development needs and priorities, and fully develop plans to meet those needs at the national and regional level. At the regional level, efforts will include further galvanization of support from partners and governments through advocacy and other tailored awareness raising activities.

95. The second phase, 2015-2017, will see activities contained in the National Economic Statistics Development Plans (NESDPs) be implemented by national statistical systems, with the collaboration and support of development partners.

96. During the third and final phase, 2018-2020, efforts will be consolidated towards achieving the Programme outcome, ensuring that all countries have the capacity to produce and disseminate the Core Set in a sustained manner.

97. While the three implementation phases indicate a natural sequence of activities (e.g. assessing needs before addressing them and developing plans prior to implementing them), capacity development activities under the Regional Programme will be implemented by countries and partners throughout 2011-2020. For example, countries that already have effective development plans for economic statistics in place could initiate NESDP implementation already during the first implementation phase. Also, it is envisioned that regional support activities during the first implementation phase would include the revision of existing training curricula and modules in response to skills development needs that are shared by a number of countries.

### **A. Preparatory Phase: 2011-2012**

98. During 2011 and 2012, significant progress was made on several key strategic elements of the Programme, which provided the basis for further refining the implementation approach and activities.

#### **1. Endorsement of the Core Set of Economic Statistics**

99. The Commission, geographically and in terms of sector-coverage, the most encompassing intergovernmental body in Asia and the Pacific, endorsed the Core Set in May 2011. The Commission endorsed the use of the Core Set as

a framework to guide and focus regional and national efforts, coordinate training, and mobilize donor support for capacity-building.

100. That the Commission, deliberating and deciding on a wide range of issues related to its overall vision of “inclusive and sustainable development”, chose to make recommendations to its members on a topic as specific and technical as the Core Set, rather than leaving it to its subsidiary body, the Committee on Statistics, is significant. It signaled that (a) governments recognize the importance of good economic statistics for policy-making, (b) government officials from multiple line ministries are aware that this area of statistics is in need of improvement, and (c) governments are willing to support the national statistics systems, including national statistics offices and other agencies that produce or compile economic statistics, such as central banks and ministries of finance.

101. This significant resolve by the Commission got efforts to advocate for the improvement of economic statistics, including the active involvement and participation among all national government producers of economic statistics, off to an ideal start.

## **2. Assessment of capacity to produce the Core Set**

### *In-depth assessments of country capacity*

102. With the support and collaboration of the national statistical offices and other relevant national agencies of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Lao PDR, three in-depth assessments of capacity to produce the Core Set of Economic Statistics were conducted by the secretariat in 2011.<sup>23</sup> The assessments covered all aspects of NSS operations relevant to the production of the Core Set, and provided useful insights into constraints limiting the capacity of NSSs to produce the Core Set.

103. The results of the assessments constituted the major input to the deliberations and decisions on the implementation strategy for the Regional Programme, including its results framework and governance and monitoring arrangements.

### *Development of the Capacity Screening Tool*

104. The Capacity Screening Tool was designed and tested by the SGRPES in 2012 to collect overview information from member States on capacities and constraints related to producing the Core Set of Economic Statistics in each member country.<sup>24</sup>

105. The information collected through the Capacity Screening Tool will be used for the development of NESDPs and will constitute an important reference point for coordination of regional support. The information gathered will map the relative capacity strengths among member States, which will facilitate exchanges of expertise across national statistical systems, including through South-South cooperation, as well as assistance provided by development partners external to the national statistical systems.

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<sup>23</sup> The results of the assessments are available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/seminar-Oct2011/>

<sup>24</sup> The Tool comprises five sections. Sections 1-4 focus on the key areas of basic capacity (such as institutional arrangements and statistical infrastructure), Section 5 concerns the availability and frequency of the Core Set, information that will be relevant for monitoring progress of the Programme.

### 3. Alignment with other capacity development initiatives

#### *Alignment with global implementation of the 2008 SNA*

106. The first meeting of the SGRPES took place during the “Seminar on developing the capacity to produce economic statistics, including national accounts in accordance with the 2008 SNA, in the Asian and Pacific region”, organized jointly by the secretariat and UNSD in October 2011. The joint event reinforced the intrinsic linkages between successful implementation of the Regional Programme and the ability of NSSs to compile national accounts in accordance with the 2008 SNA, which is supported by the global Implementation Programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics.

107. The deliberations at the Seminar provided the basis for full alignment, with the main anchor points being (a) the development of NESDPs as an integral part of NSDSs that include plans for implementing the 2008 SNA; and (b) reporting on progress in Core Set availability and underlying capacities in a manner fully compliant with the diagnostic tool developed for the global Implementation Programme (see Section V Monitoring and evaluation).

108. At its forty-second session in 2011, the Statistical Commission expressed appreciation for the activities of international and regional organizations to facilitate implementation of the 2008 SNA, especially the regional implementation strategies.<sup>25</sup> On the basis of the report on progress by the Inter-secretariat Working Group on National Accounts to the forty-third session of the Statistical Commission, which was prepared with inputs from regional commissions, the Commission re-iterated its appreciation to the regional commissions for facilitating the implementation of the 2008 SNA.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Institutional development of national statistical systems: Alignment with other initiatives*

109. The categorization of Programme results into “institutional” and “technical” highlighted the need to design institutional capacity development activities in a manner that would facilitate strong and effective coordination with other efforts to achieve the goals of the Committee.

110. The SGPRES focused its deliberations on how to ensure such coordination on two other initiatives that had been set in motion by the Committee at its second session in December 2010, namely (a) the development of the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics; and (b) the development of a strategy for coordination of statistical training in Asia and the Pacific.

#### *Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics*

111. The Steering Group for Agricultural Statistics (SGAS), established by the Committee under the SGRPES, during 2011-2012 developed the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. While referring to the SGPRES, the work of the SGAS was also driven by global developments as the Regional Action Plan constitutes one of a number of regional action plans for the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

<sup>25</sup> E/2011/24 and E/CN.3/2011/37

<sup>26</sup> E/2012/24 and E/CN.3/2012/34

112. Due to the global impetus, which attracted positive and confirmed international donor support already in 2012, the development of the Regional Action Plan was accelerated and to a large extent guided by the already established global governance and implementation arrangements. The two Steering Groups therefore focused on ensuring that the resulting implementation plans were complementary and mutually reinforcing. This was done through (a) collaboration within the secretariat, which supported both Steering Groups, (b) joint membership by a number of development partners in the two Steering Groups, and (c) participation by the Co-Chair of the SGPRES in the second meeting of the SGAS.

113. The second pillar of the Global Strategy, which is mirrored in the results framework for the Regional Action Plan, is to ensure that agricultural statistics is integrated into the national statistical system. Outputs A and B of the Regional Programme are thus in full alignment with the Regional Action Plan. In both initiatives, the NSDS is identified as the central tool and framework for integration of activities with broader and long-term efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity of national statistical systems.

#### *Coordination of statistical training*

114. The Committee in 2010 established the Working Group on the Coordination of Statistical Training (WGCST) and tasked it with developing a strategy for the coordination of statistics training in Asia and the Pacific.

115. Pending the finalization of the strategy, which will be considered for endorsement by the Committee in December 2012, the initial work of the WGCST prompted discussions by the SGPRES on the importance of conducting regular and standardized assessments of statistics training needs and training capacities, and how to support coordinated delivery of training at the regional and national levels to achieve the results of the Regional Programme.

116. The deliberations resulted in a decision to focus regional supporting training activities in the first phase of Programme implementation on catering to training needs that are (a) related to the production and dissemination of the Core Set, (b) common to a number of NSSs, and (c) already identified.

117. On the basis of this decision, training activities under the Programme were derived from the results of the 2009 SIAP training needs survey,<sup>27</sup> information collected through the 2009 ESCAP assessment of the capacity to produce economic statistics in NSSs of the Asia-Pacific region, supplemented in 2011, and the 2011 in-depth country assessments from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Lao PDR.

## **B. First Phase: 2013-2014**

118. Programme activities during the first implementation phase are directed towards the formulation by national statistical systems of an effective national statistics strategy for developing capacity to produce and disseminate the Core Set, referred to as National Economic Statistics Development Plans (NESDPs), and the coordination and galvanization of support from development partners towards this aim.

119. Effective coordination requires the full development of the Programme governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements at the national and regional

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<sup>27</sup> Refer <http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/egm2009/agenda-4-SIAP.pdf>



levels. This is therefore an urgent priority for the first phase of Programme implementation.

120. In parallel with the main focus on NESDP development, regional support activities will also be devoted to making information on relevant international standards, guidelines, manuals and experts easily accessible and to identifying and sharing of related good practices.

121. Commitment and collaboration among development partners will be pursued to address shared, priority skills' constraints related to the production and dissemination of the Core Set. Skills development modalities will include alignment of existing economic statistics training modules or curricula with the Core Set and creating opportunities for NSS staff to participate in related trainings or country-country study visits.

122. A work plan for the first Phase, containing Programme implementation activities structured by outputs A-D as well as Programme management activities, is included in Annex II.

## 1. Capacity screening

123. In order to attract and coordinate regional support activities, a capacity screening will be conducted in the beginning of 2013.

124. The Capacity Screening Tool (a short questionnaire) developed for this purpose is designed to gather summary information from each member State on key aspects of the institutional setting and technical skills and infrastructure that impact the sustained capacity of NSSs to produce and disseminate economic statistics of good quality. The Capacity Screening Tool will also seek expression of interest from each member State in participating in Regional Programme implementation, as a provider or receiver (or both) of capacity development assistance.

125. The Capacity Screening Tool is deliberately designed as a "lean" questionnaire in recognition of the limitations of quantitative information for full understanding of the multi-faceted capacity constraints that prevent the full production of the Core Set. The capacity screening will therefore not replace, nor duplicate, existing assessment operations, such as the SNA Implementation Diagnostic Framework<sup>28</sup> and the SIAP Core Skills Framework,<sup>29</sup> which are aimed at collecting much more detailed information on specific aspects of the statistical system.

126. All member States will be invited to participate in capacity screening. The secretariat will administer the exercise, including pre-filling the questionnaires with relevant information available from existing sources. Assistance from other international partners will be required. For example, the secretariat will depend on the assistance of the secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC) to complete the capacity screening for Pacific Island States.

127. The capacity screening questionnaire will be disseminated in early 2013.

## 2. Development of National Economic Statistics Development Plans

128. In order to be effective, an NESDP must be embedded into the overall national strategy for the development of statistics (referred to as NSDSs),

<sup>28</sup> Refer [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/docs/WG4\\_20DiagnosticTool.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/docs/WG4_20DiagnosticTool.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Refer [http://www.unsiap.or.jp/about\\_siap/coreskill.php](http://www.unsiap.or.jp/about_siap/coreskill.php)

developed with the involvement of statistics producer agencies across the national statistics system, and in consultation with users.

129. Central banks and departments of finance are, depending on the specific set-up in each member State, key stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of the NESDP. It is important that these stakeholders are involved at the national level in Programme implementation and that their capacity development activities and operations are aligned with the standards reflected in the Core Set.

130. The NSDS Essentials Checklist,<sup>30</sup> developed by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (Paris21), will be used as the main guiding tool for the development of NESDPs. Availability of an effective strategic plan built on the key aspects of the NSDS Essentials Checklist will be considered a prerequisite towards further capacity-development activities under the Regional Programme.

131. The NESDP should directly address the institutional, resource and technical constraints identified in the capacity screening. The NESDP should specify activities as explicitly as possible, and indicate which constraints should be addressed through national resources, and which would require external support.

132. In order to establish the necessary level of detail, further and more in-depth assessments of particular data sources, compilations or statistical processes in relation to producing the Core Set may be required.

133. Existing strategic planning documents and training needs assessments would be useful information to include in the exercise. Other inputs may include recent IMF Reports on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSCs) and in-depth country information collected under the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

134. For countries where an effective, comprehensive and current strategic plan for statistics is already available, the NESDP would be an extract of the existing strategic plan, or an added sector plan in case the level of detail on economic statistics development in the NSDS is insufficient.

135. The first target date for the completion of NESDPs is October 2013. At this point, the secretariat will take stock of the progress and produce a synthesis of finalized NESDPs for review by the SGRPES. Recognizing the vast differences in the region, it is envisioned that a number of countries will be in the process of developing NESDPs and a second target date is therefore set to September 2014, in time for all NESDPs to feed into the first Programme results assessment.

### **3. Regional support**

136. The secretariat will through consultation with development partners focus efforts during the first phase of the Programme to ensure that regional

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<sup>30</sup> Key elements of the Checklist includes coordination across the NSS; consultation across the NSS with producers and users of statistics; government support (and the need for advocacy); adequacy of existing legislation; detailed action plans (including specific activities, responsibilities, timelines), and monitoring and review process. The Checklist is available at <http://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/2567.pdf>

support can be provided to the development of the NESDP, if and when requested by a participating country.

137. External support could be leveraged from other existing sub-regional, regional or global programmes such as the 10 Year Pacific Statistics Strategy, the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan for the Improvement of Agricultural and Rural Statistics, and the global Implementation Programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics.

138. An overview of needs and capacities for NESDP development assistance will be established through follow-up with respondents to the screening questionnaire. Further in-depth studies or consultations, as required, will take place between March and October of 2013.

### **C. Planning for subsequent implementation phases**

139. The NESDPs constitute the anchor for the Regional Programme implementation during 2014-2020.

140. To facilitate and guide the coordination of support by development partners for NESDP implementation, a regional synthesis will be prepared by the secretariat by December 2013. The synthesis will contain information on capacity constraints and needs for external support as included in NESDPs. The synthesis will also include information on the status of NESDP development in the region. The synthesis will thus establish the basis for coordinating and leveraging development assistance from national and international resources towards effective implementation of the Regional Programme.

141. The synthesis report will be distributed to member States as well as members of the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific. Partners will be encouraged to utilize the results of the capacity screening to coordinate the efficient use of international development resources to support statistical capacity-building in countries.

142. The SGRPES at its third meeting, tentatively scheduled for December 2013, will review the synthesis and the first activity monitoring report, and on this basis make recommendations for priority advocacy and capacity development activities for 2014 and beyond at the regional and national levels.

## **VII. Resource Requirements**

143. Implementation of the Regional Programme will require substantial efforts and investment across a range of development actors. Resource mobilization at the national and regional level is necessary.

144. Important parts of country-level and regional-level implementation is (a) an analysis of the resources required and the resources available; (b) a system for maximizing the impact of resources through coordination and synergy; and (c) cooperation and coordination between all stakeholders (across NSSs; between NSOs; between international organizations; between NSOs and international organizations; etc.).

### **A. Resource requirement for country-level implementation**

145. While the resource requirements for country-level implementation are to be fully determined through the proposed national planning process, it is foreseeable that significant improvement in financial and human resources is

essential for many countries to achieve the objective of the Regional Programme.<sup>31</sup>

146. Political support and financial commitment by national governments are therefore essential for achieving sustainable development of the national capacity to provide the Core Set.

147. While financial support for country level implementation of the Regional Programme will come primarily from domestic resources, donor support is crucial. Both the national governments and development partners need to be guided by a credible NESDP, integrated into an effective NSDS or other forms of national statistical development strategy.<sup>32</sup>

## **B. Resource requirement for regional-level implementation**

### **1. Resources for regional support activities**

148. As a guiding principle, the resource mobilizing strategy for regional-level implementation should first focus on improving the effective use of resources available to various development partners through proper alignment and harmonization of existing programmes and activities.

149. Additional resource requirements need to be assessed based on the full scope of support activities required for Regional Programme implementation, to be directed by the needs identified through the development of country implementation plans.

### **2. Resources for the functioning of SGRPES and the secretariat**

150. An important component of the resource requirements for the implementation of the Regional Programme is support for Programme governance and management carried out by the SGPRES and the secretariat. Their effective functioning is indispensable for successful and sustainable Programme implementation.

151. Financial and administrative support is required for the annual meetings of the SGPRES and other forms of communication and decision-making by the group.

152. The day-to-day management of the Regional Programme will include the coordination with relevant partners in the development and implementation of regional support activities in the Implementation Plan. Resources will also be required to liaise with national focal points to arrange for country participation in regional activities and provide direct technical assistance to countries when requested. Monitoring and reporting on the progress of the Regional Programme implementation is required to make adjustments as necessary and gather information to support Programme advocacy. In addition, the secretariat will also support resource mobilization and the subsequent management of those funds.

153. To provide sufficient and effective support to the implementation of the Regional Programme, the ESCAP secretariat's capacity needs to be

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<sup>31</sup> See report of the ESCAP region-wide assessment of country capacity to produce basic economic statistics, available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/2/CST2-INF9.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> See "Statistics for Transparency, Accountability and Results: A Busan Action Plan for Statistics," available at [http://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/Busanactionplan\\_nov2011.pdf](http://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/Busanactionplan_nov2011.pdf)

strengthened, including through raising funds to secure an additional full time staff.

### **C. Developing a resource mobilization strategy**

154. Subject to the endorsement by the Committee of the proposed Implementation Plan, the ESCAP secretariat will work with the SGRPES to develop, during the initial period of Phase 1, a resource mobilization strategy for the consideration by the Committee and potential donors.

## **VIII. Assumptions and Risks**

155. Due to the ambitious goal of the Regional Programme, its large geographical scope and the numerous stakeholders at both the national and international level who need to be involved, successful implementation is not a given.

156. A number of assumptions are inherent in the results framework for the Programme.

157. First, it is assumed that given sufficient capacity of national statistical systems to produce and disseminate the core set (the Programme outcome), soundness of economic analysis and decision-making by governments, the private sector, the research community, and the public, will be improved (the Programme goal). While it seems less safe to make this assumption given the often vast distance and limited collaboration between statistics producers and users, this assumption will not be investigated here, as the Programme goal reaches beyond the Committee's 2020 goal.

158. Second, it is assumed that achieving Programme outputs A-D will be sufficient for national statistical systems to have sustained capacity to produce and disseminate the core set. And third, but not least, it is assumed that the implementation of the Regional Programme will result in achieving outputs A-D in member States. In the following, the risks considered major to realizing these assumptions are outlined together with associated mitigation measures, as they have been incorporated in the proposed Implementation Plan.

### **A. Regional diversity**

159. As each output will be achieved in a national context, the large number and diversity of countries in the region is a risk for the successful implementation of the Programme.

160. The implementation approach is for this reason focused on national action, with effective national strategic planning at its centre. Regional activities are supporting and defined on the basis of NESDPs.

### **B. Commitment at national level**

161. The results of the Programme are ambitious, and their achievement is not possible without substantial and sustained commitment from national governments.

162. A shared regional aspiration, towards which progress is monitored and published, can be a powerful motivator and advocate at the national level; this effect is considered a primary justification for the approach taken by the Committee in establishing regional 2020 goals.

163. Advocacy has been identified as a priority for Programme implementation, as has the integration of Programme activities into the

National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). NSDS formulation is a starting point for advocating and consulting with national stakeholders, and the finalized NSDS provides the framework for justifying resource requirements and monitoring their effective utilization. Through this approach, and the system of national focal points, the implementation plan for the Regional Programme is designed to extend beyond national statistical offices, involving all of the producers of core economic statistics. Realizing that institutional barriers to such approach are manifold, the Programme includes a dedicated output to address coordination and collaboration within NSSs.

164. In addition, Programme implementation highlights the need to make achievements of the Regional Programme visible so that stakeholders maintain commitments to the programme and so that the parts of government that provide resources for programme activities appreciate the benefits. The monitoring framework for the Programme has been designed to produce such information, covering institutional as well as technical achievements of the Programme.

### **C. Regional support**

165. Regional supporting activities, to be successful, will need to be tailored to the requirements of countries and provided at the right time through appropriate modalities.

166. The implementation plan seeks to ensure this through the phased approach, where support will be provided during the initial and first phase to address capacity constraints that are well-known to be relevant to a number of countries in the region. During subsequent phases, regional support activities will be tailored to meet the more specific needs identified in NESDPs. To ensure that country needs are brought to the attention of relevant development partners in a coordinated manner, the implementation plan highlights the need for dedicated staff for Programme management. Further, it proposes a cooperative approach to raising and utilizing resources for implementing the Regional Programme, coordinated through the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific, who have agreed to work together to pursue the goals of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics.

167. Grouping the Programme outputs as “institutional” and “technical”, respectively, provides the basis for development partners that do not have dedicated programmes or resources for economic statistics to also contribute to Programme implementation.

### **D. Sustainability of results**

168. An important risk to the long-term achievement of the Regional Programme is the possibility of a lack of sustainability of capacity improvements. Lack of sustainability can for example arise from high staff turn-over, from establishing statistical infrastructure without appropriate maintenance arrangements, or from support modalities that do not place sufficient emphasis on knowledge transfer to national staff.

169. In order to ensure sustained capacity improvements for national statistical systems, the Regional Programme emphasizes institutional rather than individual capacity building. This includes modalities such as training-of-trainers and south-south cooperation for on-the-job training, as well as the central emphasis on addressing institutional capacity constraints related to coordination, strategic planning, political commitment and legislation.

## Annex I

### ESCAP Resolution 67/10

#### Resolution 67/10

#### **A core set of economic statistics to guide the improvement of basic economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific**

*The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,*

*Stressing* the importance of and need for timely, reliable and comparable official economic statistics for monitoring financial and economic trends, and evaluating related economic policies and their impact,

*Recalling* that, in response to the recognition by member States of a need to improve economic statistics in developing economies of the Asia-Pacific region, the Commission's Committee on Statistics at its first session, held in Bangkok from 4 to 6 February 2009, decided, among other things, the following:

- (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;
- (b) To establish a technical advisory group to advise its Bureau...and 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,<sup>a</sup>

*Having considered and taken note of* the report of the Committee on Statistics on its second session,<sup>b</sup>

1. *Endorses* the recommendation of the Committee on Statistics to use the core set of economic statistics<sup>c</sup> as a regional framework to focus regional efforts, coordinate training and mobilize donor support for capacity-building;<sup>d</sup>
2. *Recommends* that members and associate members use, as appropriate, the core set of economic statistics as a framework and guide in the development of their national statistical systems.

<sup>a</sup> See E/ESCAP/65/13, chap. I, decision 1/2.

<sup>b</sup> E/ESCAP/67/12.

<sup>c</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(2)/4.

<sup>d</sup> See E/ESCAP/67/12, chap. I.

## Annex II

### Implementation of the Regional Programme: Work Plan for the First Phase (2013-14)

#### A. Programme implementation activities

Activities grouped by output	Tentative timeline
<b>Output A (Advocacy)</b>	
Increased political support and appreciation of the importance of investing in the improvement of national capacity to produce the Core Set	
<i>National level activities</i>	
(i) Focal points contact the relevant partners in national statistical systems to inform and build support towards the objectives and activities of the Regional Programme	January-March 2013
(ii) Focal points proactively identify and participate in international and national forums and other opportunities to advocate for the development and resourcing of statistics towards the Regional Programme goal	January 2013-December 2014
<i>Regional level activities</i>	
(i) Official communications to national statistical systems and sharing of Regional Programme advocacy materials	January-February 2013
(ii) Assistance to focal points, by request, with communication with relevant partners in national statistical systems towards common understanding and ambition for achieving Regional Programme goal	January-March 2013
(iii) Assistance, by request, with participation of focal points in international and national forums and other opportunities to advocate for the development and resource of statistics towards the Regional Programme goal	January 2013-December 2014
<b>Output B (Coordination)</b>	
Improved coordination of statistics activities, within NSSs and among development partners	
<i>National level activities</i>	
(i) Capacity screening	January-March 2013
(ii) Establish national coordination mechanism for the development of NESDP	January-March 2013



Activities grouped by output	Tentative timeline
(iii) Development of NESDPs within the framework of NSDS or other national strategic plan (where available)	March-October 2013/ September 2014
(iv) Integration of capacity improvement requirement and activities for producing and disseminating the Core Set of Economic Statistics into existing NSDS or other national strategic plans (where relevant)	March-October 2013/ September 2014
(v) Organization of national users meetings, as needed	January 2013-December 2014
<b><i>Regional level activities</i></b>	
(i) Processing of Capacity Screening Questionnaire responses and production and dissemination of synthesis report	April-May 2013
(ii) Regional synthesis of NESDPs shared with the SGRPES and the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific in order to coordinate the efficient use of international development resources	December 2013
<b>Output C (Infrastructure)</b>	
Improved national statistical infrastructure for the production and dissemination of the Core Set.	
<b><i>National level activities</i></b>	
(i) Documentation of practices related to the institutional setting for producing economic statistics prepared and submitted for inclusion in UNSD economic statistics knowledgebase	January-December 2014
(ii) Implementation of activities identified in NESDPs for improvement in the use of priority infrastructure elements (business registers, quality assurance frameworks, metadata repositories, and data editing)	October 2013-December 2014
<b><i>Regional level activities</i></b>	
(i) Identification and compilation of relevant international standards, guidelines, and manuals on priority statistical infrastructure elements for easy reference by national statistical systems.	January-December 2014
(ii) Identification of national best practices on priority statistical infrastructure elements, sharing of practices across network of focal points	January-December 2014
(iii) Assistance, by request, with documentation and dissemination of current practices related to the institutional setting for producing economic statistics	January-December 2014

Activities grouped by output	Tentative timeline
(iv) Prepare, maintain and make available a list of regional experts for priority infrastructure elements (business registers, quality assurance frameworks, metadata repositories, and data editing)	January-December 2014
<b>Output D (Skills)</b>	
Improved human resource skills of NSS staff in areas that are essential for the collection of economic data and for the compilation, dissemination and use of the Core Set.	
<i>National activities</i>	
(i) Organize study visits with other national statistical systems (country-country exchanges) on business registers and other priority technical infrastructure elements, as needed	January 2013-December 2014
(ii) Implementation of other training activities identified in NESDPs	January 2013-December 2014
<i>Regional activities</i>	
(i) Assistance and support, by request, with study visits between national statistical systems (country-country exchanges) on business registers and other priority technical infrastructure elements, as needed, and with participation of officials in training opportunities provided by SIAP and other institutions in accordance with priorities identified in NESDPs	January 2013-December 2014
(ii) Collaboration with SIAP and other training providers to ensure that curriculums incorporate materials on the technical skills constraints identified through the Capacity Screening and the NESDPs, as they become available	May 2013-December 2014

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**B. Programme management activities**


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**Tentative timeline**


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**Governance**
*National level activities*

- |                                   |                    |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| (i) Identify national focal point | January-March 2013 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|

*Regional level activities*

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| (i) Confirm/expand SGPRES membership   | January-February 2013 |
| (ii) Compilation and sharing of complete list of Programme focal points (contacts and information relevant for best practices exchanges) | March 2013            |
| (iii) Organization of the third meeting of the SGRPES  | December 2013         |
| (iv) Organization of the fourth meeting of the SGPRES  | December 2014         |

**Resource mobilization**

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| (i) Development of a resource mobilization strategy | January-December 2013 |
|---|-----------------------|

**Monitoring and reporting**
*National level activities*

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| (i) Compile Programme baseline information                       | January-March 2013  |
| (ii) Compile information for the first results monitoring report | August-October 2014 |

*Regional level activities*

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| (i) Develop monitoring framework (indicators)  | January 2013            |
| (ii) Establish baseline for Programme monitoring   | January-March 2013      |
| (iii) Decemberide on target values for monitoring indicators for Programme milestone years | April 2013              |
| (iv) First activity monitoring report  | December 2013           |
| (v) Second activity and first results monitoring report                                    | September-December 2014 |
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## **Annex III**

### **Terms of Reference of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics**

#### **I. Background**

1. The ESCAP Committee on Statistics at its second session in December 2010 considered and endorsed the “Proposed regional programme for the improvement of economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific”<sup>a</sup> (henceforth referred to as “the Regional Programme”).

2. Considering the ambition, scale, complexity and timeframe of the Regional Programme, the Committee decided<sup>b</sup> to transform the Technical Advisory Group on the Development of Economic Statistics (TAG) into a Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics (henceforth referred to as the “Steering Group”) to directly oversee the implementation of the Regional Programme. The decision means that the TAG ceases to exist upon the establishment of the Steering Group.

#### **II. Key functions**

3. The Steering Group shall:

(a) Direct the development of the implementation plan for the Regional Programme;

(b) In consultation with the secretariat, identify the short-term and long-term priorities and establish milestones for the implementation of the Regional Programme;

(c) Provide strategic and technical advice to the secretariat on its day-to-day management, monitor progress in its implementation and propose adjustments as required; and

(d) Provide guidance, as relevant, to the Subgroup on Agricultural Statistics, which the Committee decided to establish to support the integration of a regional implementation plan for the global strategy for the improvement of the agricultural and rural statistics into the Regional Programme.

#### **III. Composition**

4. The Steering Group shall comprise national and international economic<sup>c</sup> statisticians.

5. The national statisticians shall represent ESCAP members and associate members, taking into account the need for balanced representation, geographically and in terms of level of statistical development.

6. The international statisticians shall represent organizations (global, regional, sub-regional, or bilateral) whose mandate includes supporting the

development, improvement and dissemination of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region.

7. The size of the Steering Group shall be determined by the Bureau and may be changed as needed to ensure that the group continues to effectively and efficiently perform its functions. One member shall act as Chair. For specific tasks, the Steering Group may invite the participation of other experts.

#### **IV. Selection of members**

8. The Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics shall, with support from the ESCAP secretariat, determine on the composition of the Steering Group on the basis of the qualifications of nominees, the need for balanced representation and the need to ensure efficient and effective functioning of the Steering Group.

9. The Bureau shall, assisted by the secretariat issue invitations to all ESCAP regional members and associate members and to relevant development partners<sup>d</sup> inviting the participation of leading economic statisticians to join the Steering Group.

10. The Steering Group members shall be appointed for a period of two years. All members shall be eligible for re-appointment.

11. If an appointed Steering Group member vacates a position, the remaining Steering Group members shall recommend the most appropriate replacement to the Bureau.

12. Members of the Steering Group shall commit to devote the time necessary for adequate discharge of their duties. Members of the Steering Group will not be considered staff members of United Nations; hence, will not be entitled to the privileges and immunities accorded to staff members of the United Nations.

#### **V. Function**

13. It is envisaged that the Steering Group shall review most issues by means of electronic discussion and exchange of emails. The Steering Group shall aim to meet twice a year, either in person or per video- or teleconference. Other experts may participate as observers in the meetings of the Steering Group.

#### **VI. Reporting**

14. The Steering Group shall report on regular basis to the Bureau through the ESCAP secretariat.

15. The Steering Group shall submit a written and, if requested, oral report for the information of the Committee on Statistics at each of its formal sessions on progress in the implementation of the Regional Programme.

## **VII. Chair**

16. The Steering Group shall be guided by a Chair. The Chair will serve for a period of two years after which he/she will be eligible for re-appointment.

## **VIII. Secretariat**

17. The Statistics Division of ESCAP will serve as the secretariat of the Steering Group.

18. The secretariat will support the Steering Group in carrying out its functions as described above.

## **IX. Review of the terms of reference**

19. The Steering Group shall, in consultation with the secretariat, review its Terms of Reference every two years to ensure that it has the necessary mandate to effectively and efficiently perform its functions. The revisions shall be subject to the approval of the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics.

## **X. Sunset clause**

20. The Steering Group shall be in place for the duration of the Regional Programme to ensure continuity in its programme management.

21. Unless the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics Decemderides otherwise, the Steering Group shall expire by the end of 2020.

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- <sup>a</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(2)/5 “Proposed regional programme for the improvement of economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific”, available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/2/CST2-5E.pdf>.
- <sup>b</sup> Decemderisions of the Committee are contained in the report of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics on its second session, which is available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/2/index.asp>.
- <sup>c</sup> Agricultural statistics is in the context of the present TOR understood as a subset of economic statistics.
- <sup>d</sup> The initial membership of the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia and the Pacific, established in December 2010, will guide the selection process.