
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Statistics

Third session

Bangkok, 12-14 December 2012

Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

Strategic direction and functioning of the Committee on Statistics

**Documents for the information of the Committee on Statistics
on item 2 of the provisional agenda**

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* E/ESCAP/CST(3)/L.1/Rev.1.

Part I

Outcomes of the most recent sessions of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Statistical Commission

Note by the Bureau

1. The present document presents for the information of the Committee a summary of outcomes of the sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the forty-second and forty-third sessions of the Statistical Commission.

Outcomes of the sixty-seventh session of ESCAP

2. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held its sixty-seventh session in Bangkok, Thailand, from 19 to 25 May 2011, with the theme of “Beyond the crisis: Long-term perspectives on social protection and development in Asia and the Pacific”¹

Adoption of resolutions in the field of statistics

3. The Commission adopted four resolutions related to statistics, namely resolution 67/10 on a core set of economic statistics to guide the improvement of basic economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific, resolution 67/11 on strengthening statistical capacity in Asia and the Pacific, resolution 67/12 on improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and resolution 67/13 on the revision of the statute of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific.

4. Resolution 67/10, A core set of economic statistics to guide the improvement of basic economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific:

(a) Endorses the recommendation of the Committee on Statistics to use the core set of economic statistics as a regional framework to focus regional efforts, coordinate training and mobilize donor support for capacity-building;

(b) 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.

5. Resolution 67/11, Strengthening statistical capacity in Asia and the Pacific:

(a) Endorses the strategic direction of the Committee on Statistics, as proposed by the Committee at its second session, with the two overarching goals of (a) ensuring that all countries in the region have the capability to provide an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environmental statistics by 2020, and (b) creating a more adaptive and cost-effective information management environment for national statistical offices through stronger collaboration;

¹ The complete report of the session (E/2011/39-E/ESCAP/67/23) is available at www.unescap.org/commission/67/.

(b) Calls on members and, as appropriate, associate members to prioritize the strengthening of their national statistical systems and to align resources and institutional arrangements to support the achievement of the two goals described in paragraph 5(a) above for statistics development in Asia and the Pacific by 2020;

(c) Encourages members and, as appropriate, associate members with advanced statistical systems, as well as relevant international organizations and institutions, to share expertise and information on their methodological, technological and managerial practices for the benefit of other countries in the region, taking into particular consideration the constraints faced by countries with special needs;

6. The resolution, furthermore, requests the Executive Secretary:

(a) To assist members and, as appropriate, associate members, upon request, in developing their statistical systems and strengthening their capacity with a view to achieving the two goals for statistics development in Asia and the Pacific referred to in paragraph 5(a) above, by 2020;

(b) To promote the importance of developing the capacity of not only national statistical offices but also, where appropriate, other parts of national statistical systems across the region;

(c) To provide members and, as appropriate, associate members with assistance in strengthening their capacity to monitor the progress made in achieving development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals;

(d) To facilitate the coordination of international capacity-building activities related to the development of official statistics in the region, including cooperation among the national statistical offices of developing countries;

(e) To raise awareness of the significance of enhancing the use of administrative data as a means of increasing the effectiveness of the production of official statistics;

(f) To report on the implementation of the present resolution to the Commission at its seventy-second session.

7. Resolution 67/12, Improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific:

(a) Encourages all members and associate members to review and assess the current functioning of the civil registration systems and the quality of the vital statistics produced internally within each country;

(b) Recommends that the results of country assessments be utilized by members and associate members and stakeholders to develop and implement comprehensive and costed national strategies and plans to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics systems;

(c) Calls upon members and associate members to strengthen the capacities of relevant institutions to improve civil registration and vital statistics in their countries;

(d) Calls upon the organizations of the United Nations system, international financial institutions, other global, regional and subregional development partners and agencies, non-governmental organizations and private sector entities to increase their support to countries for the development and strengthening of civil registration and vital statistics systems.

8. The resolution, furthermore, requests the Executive Secretary:

(a) To convene a high-level regional meeting of decision makers from national statistical organizations, civil registration offices, ministries of health and other relevant stakeholders to raise awareness and foster increased commitment to improving civil registration and vital statistics;

(b) To facilitate the formation of a regional platform aimed at promoting the exchange of experiences and information on strategies and plans to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics systems, which would, through the secretariat, report on its accomplishments, compile lessons learned and foster South-South and peer-to-peer cooperation for improving civil registration and vital statistics;

(c) To take a lead role in the region, in partnership with regional knowledge hubs and technical agencies, including the World Health Organization, the United Nations Statistics Division and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in developing and disseminating standards, evidence, tools and guidelines for civil registration and vital statistics;

(d) To facilitate, in close collaboration with technical partners and United Nations agencies, technical assistance, including training and advisory services, to build national capacity in civil registration and vital statistics;

(e) To mainstream attention to civil registration into the subprogrammes on social development and subregional activities for development of the ESCAP programme of work, as appropriate, and work with relevant stakeholders to support and enhance commitment for civil registration and vital statistics;

(f) To consider collaborating closely with relevant partner agencies, especially the World Health Organization, the Health Metrics Network, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, to coordinate and harmonize support and mobilize global, regional and country resources for civil registration and vital statistics;

(g) To enhance the capabilities and capacity of the secretariat to respond to the requests of members for technical assistance and support in their efforts to improve their civil registration and vital statistics systems;

(h) To support members and associate members in the region, in partnership with countries and drawing on regional resources, in monitoring progress in improving civil registration and vital statistics systems upon countries' requests, if any;

(i) To report to the Commission at its sixty-ninth session on progress in the implementation of the present resolution.

9. Resolution 67/13, Revision of the statute of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) Decides to adopt a revised statute for the Institute to provide for the term of the members of the Governing Council to be changed to a period of three years from the current five years;

(b) Also decides that the revised statute shall be applied to the term of the current members of the Governing Council, which is changed from five years to three years, accordingly, effective as of the date of its adoption by the Commission.

Appreciation of the role of statistics in development and the achievements of the Committee on Statistics, its Bureau, and the Secretariat

10. The Commission recognized the importance of promoting the development of official statistics in support of inclusive and sustainable development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in Asia and the Pacific. In that regard, the Commission expressed appreciation for the unique role of ESCAP in promoting statistics development.

11. The Commission expressed appreciation for the achievements of the Committee on Statistics, the successful work of the Bureau of the Committee and the contribution of the secretariat.

12. The Commission endorsed the decisions and recommendations as contained in the report of the Committee on Statistics on its second session. Specifically, the Commission endorsed the long-term strategic goals of the Committee, which were aimed at ensuring that all members and associate members of ESCAP would have by 2020 the capability to provide an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environmental statistics, and were also aimed at creating a more adaptive and cost-effective information management system for national statistical offices through stronger regional collaboration.

13. The Commission supported the establishment of a steering group on economic statistics to oversee the implementation of a regional programme on improving the capacity of ESCAP members and associate members to produce a core set of basic economic statistics; the establishment of a technical advisory group on social statistics to develop a regional programme for the improvement of social statistics; and the establishment of a working group on training to develop a strategy for strengthening the coordination, relevance and impact of statistical training. The Commission welcomed the decision of the Committee on Statistics to develop a regional implementation plan for the global strategy for the improvement of agricultural and rural statistics; in that regard, the secretariat was encouraged to work closely with FAO and urgently move forward that process.

Appreciation of the role of SIAP and the Government of Japan

14. The Commission recognized the important contribution of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) in supporting national statistical capacity-building in the region through the provision of training on official statistics during the preceding four decades. The Commission also expressed strong appreciation to the Government of Japan for its contribution to statistical development in the region through its support for SIAP (with both in kind and cash contributions), especially in view of the severe financial constraints

experienced by that Government and the enormous financial burden caused by the recent earthquake and tsunami.

Outcomes of the sixty-eighth session of ESCAP

15. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held its sixty-eighth session in Bangkok from 19 to 25 May 2011, with the theme of “Growing Together: Economic Integration for an Inclusive and Sustainable Asia-Pacific Century”.²

Appreciation of the role of statistics in development and the achievements of the Committee on Statistics, its Bureau, and the secretariat

16. The Commission emphasized the importance of timely and reliable statistics in planning, monitoring and evaluating effective policies for inclusive, sustainable and resilient development. In that regard, the Commission expressed appreciation for the outcomes of the second session of the Committee on Statistics, which provided long-term direction for the development of statistics that would meet the need for evidence-based decision-making in the region.

17. The Commission also expressed appreciation for the roles the Bureau and the secretariat played in leading the implementation of the decisions of the Committee on Statistics at its second session. In particular, the Commission acknowledged the broad country engagement in developing regional plans on economic, agricultural and rural statistics and in developing a strategy for improving the coordination of statistical training. Several delegations stressed their commitment to the work of the Committee on Statistics, specifically by participating in the steering and technical advisory groups that had been established by the Committee.

18. The Commission acknowledged the value of the Committee on Statistics as a regional forum for countries to exchange experiences and good practices. One delegation noted the need to tap into the potential of the Committee to strengthen the engagement and contribution from the region towards the development of international statistical standards through technical and expert discussions.

19. The Commission expressed appreciation for the analytical work that was done by the secretariat, as demonstrated in the regional report on the Millennium Development Goals and the *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2011*, and acknowledged the improved quality of analysis and information in those publications.

Support for SIAP and its Governing Council

20. The Commission endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its seventh session and commended the achievements of SIAP in developing statistical capacity in the region through training. The Commission expressed support for the current work programme of SIAP and pointed to the need for further strengthening training to continue meeting existing and emerging demands.

² The complete report of the session (E/ESCAP/68/24) is available at www.unescap.org/commission/68/.

Outcomes of the forty-second session of the Statistical Commission

21. The Statistical Commission held its forty-second session at United Nations Headquarters from 22 to 25 February 2011. The Asia-Pacific region was represented in the Bureau of the session through representatives from Australia and the Russian Federation, who served as Vice-Chairs. The following extract of decisions made by the Commission emphasizes those that are of direct relevance to the ongoing work of the Committee or otherwise highlight action at the regional level.³

World Statistics Day

22. The Commission expressed satisfaction and appreciation that the observance of World Statistics Day, 20 October 2010, was a global success and had made a positive impact in advocating the importance of official statistics. It took note of the proposals to observe World Statistics Day regularly, with strong preference for either a two- or five-year interval between observances, and requested the United Nations Statistics Division to formulate, in consultation with the Bureau of the Statistical Commission, a proposal regarding the frequency of the observance and its modalities, including the possibility of adopting a resolution by the General Assembly, and to report to the Commission at its forty-third session on this proposal.

Gender statistics

23. The Commission expressed appreciation for the conduct by the Ghana Statistical Service of a programme review on gender statistics.

24. The Commission expressed appreciation for the work on gender statistics carried out by the regional commissions and other entities such as the World Bank and the United Nations Population Fund and requested them to further strengthen their work in this area, and asked the United Nations Statistics Division to take the results into account in efforts to strengthen the global programme.

25. Acknowledging the strategic role of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on gender statistics, the Commission requested the expansion of its scope of work to include: (i) Review of gender statistics with the aim of establishing a minimum set of gender indicators; (ii) Guiding the development of manuals and methodological guidelines for the production and use of gender statistics; (iii) Serving as the coordination mechanism for the global programme on gender statistics.

26. The Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division, the regional commissions, the World Bank and the United Nations Population Fund to work intensively with Member States to develop appropriate in-country support and to assist them in establishing a sound national programme on gender statistics.

27. Recognizing that additional resources will be required for the gender statistics programme proposed, the Commission requested the donor community to devote adequate resources to this important area.

³ The complete report on the forty-second session of the Statistical Commission is available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2011.htm>.

28. The Commission requested that the United Nations Statistics Division and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group report to the Commission at its forty-third session on their proposed workplans and strategies aimed at strengthening the global gender statistics programme.

National accounts

29. The Commission welcomed the report and commended the work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts.

30. The Commission supported the proposed mandate and governance of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, and requested the Working Group to bring issues on the research agenda and the implementation of the 2008 SNA to the Advisory Expert Group, as necessary, according to the updating procedures, for consideration by the Advisory Expert Group, with a view to ensuring wide participation by the global statistical community on these issues, in particular to the treatment of emission permits under cap and trade schemes and financial intermediation services indirectly measured.

31. The Commission requested the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts to consider, in consultation with the Advisory Expert Group, guidance on incorporating the contribution of the informal sector for an exhaustive measure of gross domestic product, on household sector issues, including distributional aspects of household income, on issues of well-being as reflected in the findings of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (Stiglitz report) and of other national and international reports on this matter, on the measurement of research and development, on the measurement of financial services, on the preparation of quarterly national accounts, and on the compilation of expenditure components of gross domestic product, and to report on the outcomes to the Commission in due course.

32. The Commission requested the establishment of a dedicated knowledge base of training material for implementation of the 2008 SNA, covering the source data and implementation procedure.

33. The Commission stressed the importance for Member States to establish their national implementation programmes for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics in line with the regional and global implementation programmes.

Environmental-economic accounting

34. The Commission commended the progress achieved in the work carried out by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting.

35. The Commission urged Member States to actively engage in promoting the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting as the statistical framework for assessing linkages between the environment and the economy in international forums, in particular the 2012 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio+20).

36. The Commission requested the Committee to develop, in consultation with Member States and the regional commissions, an implementation plan for the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and to set appropriate priorities for Member States to follow.

Integrated economic statistics

37. The Commission expressed appreciation to the Friends of the Chair for producing practical guidelines on integrated economic statistics to increase the coherence and consistency of economic statistics and for conducting the global consultation on the guidelines through a transparent review mechanism.

38. The Commission requested that the finalized guidelines address further critical areas raised by the Commission such as governance issues, integration of source data (use of administrative sources and survey data), integration of household and enterprise surveys and frames, integration of relevant industries and other domains such as agricultural statistics, and other additional suggested themes. It also requested that the final document incorporate practical guidelines on the implementation framework of integrating economic statistics and that, in order to assist countries in implementing the guidelines, it also incorporate prioritization and sequencing of the areas of integration.

39. The Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division to develop and maintain a web-based knowledge portal even after the finalization of the guidelines in order to provide a single access point to a broad range and diverse set of case studies and information material related to the integration of economic statistics applicable to both developed and developing statistical systems, and encouraged Member States to make available their country experiences and case studies for the finalization of the guidelines and the portal.

Short-term economic indicators

40. The Commission welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on short-term indicators and commended the joint initiative undertaken by the United Nations Statistics Division and Eurostat, in close collaboration with Statistics Canada, Statistics Netherlands and Russian Federal State Statistics Service, to propose a programme on short-term economic statistics based on the recommendations of three international seminars as a coordinated response to the economic and financial crisis.

41. The Commission requested that the requirements of national accounts, the national statistical system and other national governance arrangements be taken into account attention be given to the issue of improvement of source data.

42. The Commission encouraged Member States to establish national central data hubs using Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange standards on a voluntary basis in accordance with the proposed internationally accepted data template to ensure harmonization with international guidelines, while expressing the need for further consultations with Member States and flexibility in the time horizon for the creation of these data hubs.

43. The Commission encouraged Member States to participate in the global assessments on rapid estimates and business cycle composite indicators and to submit their practices of compilation and use of short-term economic indicators to the United Nations Statistics Division for inclusion in the Knowledge Base on Economic Statistics of the Division website.

44. The Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division to report to it, in due course, with a detailed work programme on short-term

economic statistics highlighting the resources required for the programme and the limitations involved in its implementation.

International Comparison Programme

45. The Commission welcomed the report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Programme, noting with satisfaction the progress made thus far, and expressing appreciation to all the partners who have supported the programme, in particular the regional coordinators for providing additional training as well as financial support to the countries.

46. The Commission urged the Executive Board, the Global Office and the regional coordinating units of the International Comparison Programme to continue to undertake active consultations with the Member States on the methodology of the Programme, in particular in the global linking process and on the use of purchasing power parity data and their computation, and also urged the International Comparison Programme to liaise with the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts on issues related to the use of the System of National Accounts.

47. The Statistical Commission urged the Executive Board to consider the release of detailed data to support enhanced data use consistent with a data release policy that respects the statistics laws of countries and to encourage disclosure of relevant metadata to assist in the interpretation and assessment of data quality.

48. Acknowledging that the International Comparison Programme has tremendous implications for countries, in particular in terms of developing their capacity to collect and compute price data and to compile national accounts, the Commission urged the World Bank to take additional steps to assist countries in this respect.

Development indicators

49. The Commission welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, and expressed its appreciation to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group and the United Nations Statistics Division for the effective monitoring of progress on the Millennium Development Goals indicators and for providing training to countries on national and subnational Millennium Development Goals indicator monitoring.

50. The Commission commended the progress made in enhancing the dialogue between countries and international agencies and in resolving inconsistencies in data sources since the issue of discrepancies between national and international Millennium Development Goals data was first considered by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-sixth session.

51. The Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division to establish a group of experts to provide assistance, upon the request of countries, to resolve specific Millennium Development Goals data-related issues, and encouraged the United Nations Statistics Division to continue maintaining the Millennium Development Goals website and database, improve their functionalities and make them available in all official languages.

52. The Commission fully endorsed the way forward for the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, as proposed in paragraph 30 of the report of the Secretary-General, including the provision of further training for national

and subnational monitoring, and requested the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to report on progress achieved to the Commission at its forty-third session.

Statistics of human development

53. The Commission welcomed and discussed the report of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission on statistics of human development and fully agreed with and endorsed its recommendations.

54. The Commission expressed deep regret and strong dissatisfaction that the Human Development Report Office did not respond adequately to the recommendations of the expert group on the Human Development Index with respect to the quality and availability of data for the chosen indicators, the use of non-official source data and the need to hold extensive consultation with the global statistical community prior to the release of the 2010 report.

55. Recognizing that while the choice of the theme and of the indicators for the Human Development Report is the prerogative of the United Nations Development Programme, the Commission expressed that the issue of data quality and adequacy falls within its purview on behalf of the global statistical system and that prior consultation is necessary.

56. The Commission stressed the continuing role of the expert group on the Human Development Index established by the Statistical Commission, and mandated it to continue work in reviewing the issues arising from its first report.

57. The Commission requested the United Nations Development Programme to: (i) Report to the Statistical Commission within three months on the issues raised in its decision; (ii) Establish a calendar for the various preparatory phases for the Human Development Report, and disseminate the calendar to national statistical offices or national coordinating agencies so that they are informed about the sources of statistical data and the methods used in the report and about ways to address potential concerns and facilitate their resolution; (iii) Consult in advance with Member States when reviewing the statistical data required for the indicators to be used for the Human Development Report; (iv) Establish a communication plan with national statistical offices on the use and adequacy of non-official national data, in cases where official national data are not available.

58. The Commission urged the United Nations Statistics Division to take a central role to assist Member States in addressing issues of data discrepancies and consistency with international organizations, paying special attention to issues of consistency of data disseminated by United Nations agencies, in this context stressed the need for an authoritative agency in the United Nations system to coordinate statistical activities, asked relevant United Nations authorities to review the situation, and requested the United Nations Statistics Division to report to the Commission on this issue at its forty-third session.

Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

59. The Commission encouraged regional assessments of the implementation of the Fundamental Principles be undertaken, and requested the United Nations Statistics Division, the regional commissions and other relevant organizations to provide support to Member States as they implement the Principles.

60. The Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division to submit the Fundamental Principles, with their appropriately revised preamble, to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for endorsement before 2014 and to further facilitate the recognition and endorsement of the Fundamental Principles at the highest national political level through the appropriate means.

Statistical capacity-building

61. The Commission recognized that statistical capacity development involved many national and international partners, and encouraged all partners to collaborate in and coordinate these efforts.

62. The Commission recognized the important work undertaken by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific and by other national and regional training centres, expressed its appreciation to the respective governments for their support, and encouraged the training centres to further coordinate their activities.

Other decisions and information items

63. In addition to the above, the Commission decided on issues pertaining to energy statistics and regional statistical development in Western Asia.

64. Further, the Commission was informed of developments and initiatives in a number of areas, including population and housing censuses, health statistics, education statistics, agricultural statistics, business registers, tourism statistics, price statistics, environment statistics, coordination and integration of statistical programmes, inventory on global statistical standards, common open standards for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata, follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions, national quality assurance frameworks, global geospatial information management, and measurement of economic performance and social progress.

Outcomes of the forty-third session of the Statistical Commission

65. The Statistical Commission held its forty-second session at United Nations Headquarters from 28 February to 2 March 2012. The Asia-Pacific region was represented in the Bureau of the session through representative from China who served as a Vice-Chair. The following extract of decisions made by the Commission emphasizes those that are of direct relevance to the ongoing work of the Committee or otherwise highlight action at the regional level.⁴

Population and housing censuses

66. The Commission expressed appreciation for the conduct by the United States Census Bureau of a programme review (see E/CN.3/2012/2) on population and housing censuses.

67. The Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division and international and regional organizations to work towards viable methods for estimating both direct and indirect cost of censuses and conduct cost-benefit analyses across countries and regions, taking into account the factors of quality,

⁴ The complete report on the forty-second session of the Statistical Commission is available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2012.htm>.

duration and coverage and also providing a unit of measurement for country comparison.

68. The Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division to establish an Expert Group to begin work to assess the challenges faced in the 2010 round, discuss emerging trends, compile lessons learned and address a number of issues, including the desirable data release timelines, the use of information technology, legal provisions for privacy, confidentiality and contracting for outsourced census operations, and the use of administrative records and registers, where possible, to complement census information and reduce costs.

69. The Commission requested that the 2020 round of census should have three reviews: at the beginning, at the midpoint and at the end, to be able to give appropriate and timely attention to census challenges.

70. The Commission requested countries to do their census reviews after their census.

71. The Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division to prepare by 2015 a draft resolution on the 2020 World Population and Housing Programme for approval by the Statistical Commission and endorsement by the Economic and Social Council.

Crime statistics

72. The Commission welcomed and discussed the report of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) on crime statistics (E/CN.3/2012/3), and expressed appreciation to INEGI for its efforts to undertake this work.

73. The Commission welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime-INEGI Center of Excellence for Statistical Information on Governance, Victimization of Crime, Public Security and Justice.

74. The Commission requested INEGI and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to report back to the Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth session in 2013 on the following topics: (i) A road map of the steps needed to further develop crime statistics, identifying the statistical issues to be addressed, the role of the National Statistical Offices in compiling and disseminating crime statistics, the type of technical assistance required, and related standards and methods; (ii) The feasibility of developing an international classification on crime for statistical purposes, keeping in mind the needs of different players in the criminal justice system, and to ensure international comparability of crime statistics; (iii) The way the United Nations Statistical Commission and the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice could cooperate, with regard to the development of crime statistics.

National accounts

75. The Commission welcomed the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (E/CN.3/2012/4), and expressed its appreciation of its work over the past year.

76. The Commission welcomed the report of the Friends of the Chair on the barriers to the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) (E/CN.3/2012/5), thanked the Australian Bureau of Statistics and countries in the Friends of the Chair group for their contributions and endorsed the detailed recommendations put forward under the three principles of the global implementation programme, namely: the adoption of a strategic national planning framework; coordination, monitoring and reporting; and improving statistical systems.

77. The Commission agreed with the conclusion of the Friends of the Chair group that limited political support and unavailability of requisite basic economic statistics are the main barriers to the implementation of SNA in a range of countries and that the lack of requisite basic statistics could be addressed by considering the national accounts implementation programme in the broader context of the development of economic statistics.

78. The Commission requested the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts to incorporate the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair in the global initiative on the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics.

79. The Commission expressed appreciation for the activities of international organizations, regional commissions and other regional organizations to facilitate the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 2008 (2008 SNA) and noted the interest expressed by all regional commissions to more actively contribute to and participate in the work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts.

80. The Commission commended the progress made in translating the 2008 SNA into languages other than English and noted that draft versions of the 2008 SNA are available in Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Russian; in this context, it expressed its deep appreciation to the institutions and countries involved in the translation process, and requested that the process of finalizing and publishing the translations be expedited to help countries with the implementation of its recommendations.

81. The Commission endorsed the proposed assessment by the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts on Member States' implementation status and needs so as to identify areas where technical assistance and capacity-building are necessary and to support the development of strategic programme management frameworks and detailed national implementation programmes by Member States.

82. The Commission endorsed the programme of work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, including their work on guidance on the measurement of research and development, and on measurement of financial services, the preparation of quarterly national accounts, the compilation of expenditure components of gross domestic product, incorporating the contribution of the informal sector for an exhaustive measure of gross domestic product, household sector issues, including distributional aspects of household income and well-being, and the development of necessary data structure definitions for future data exchange of national accounts data in the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange initiative, and requested the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts to report on the outcomes to the Commission in due course.

Agricultural statistics

83. The Commission welcomed and discussed the report of the Friends of the Chair on agricultural statistics (E/CN.3/2012/6) and extended its appreciation for the excellent work done to Brazil and the Friends of the Chair, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Bank and all the regional and national stakeholders that contributed to the preparation of the action plan to implement the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

84. The Commission fully endorsed the action plan and its governance arrangements.

85. The Commission asked the Steering Committees to take consideration of varying regional and country circumstances and specific needs, especially of countries in conflict and fragile States.

86. The Commission emphasized the importance of coordination and governance between the global, regional and national levels, local government and development partners.

87. The Commission endorsed the proposal to establish an inter-agency and expert group to bring countries and agencies together to develop and document good practices and guidelines on concepts, methods and statistical standards for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development. The inter-agency and expert group would replace the Friends of the Chair on agricultural statistics and the Wye Group

88. The Commission asked the inter-agency and expert group to report back on its activities when appropriate.

Environmental-economic accounting

89. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the work done by the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and recognized the significant contribution of the Chair, the Bureau, the members of the editorial board and the editor, as well as the countries and agencies, that have participated in the consultation process.

90. The Commission agreed to adopt the 2012 System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) central framework as the initial version of the international standard for environmental-economic accounts, subject to further revision, acknowledging that further improvements on measurement are necessary on specific issues.

91. The Commission requested that the introduction of the SEEA central framework make detailed reference to a comprehensive research agenda and the process for updating the standard, and recognized that the SEEA implementation should be considered as a long-term programme, to be implemented flexibly and incrementally, giving full consideration to national circumstances and requirements.

92. The Commission urged the Committee to continue its work on the development of a detailed strategy for the global and regional implementation programme for SEEA, in particular a road map for countries to follow, and encouraged Member States and regional or international organizations to initiate compilation activities in accordance with the central framework.

93. The Commission requested the Committee to promote that SEEA be recognized as the statistical framework in the assessment of the relationship between the economy and the environment and to publicize this at major international events, in particular at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, for this purpose.

94. The Commission encouraged the Committee to undertake global consultation and consult with the relevant city groups to finalize the draft for adoption by the Statistical Commission in 2013.

Environment statistics

95. The Commission welcomed the report on the revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (E/CN.3/2012/9), and acknowledged the significant progress achieved in the revision process.

96. The Commission approved the general direction as described in the document, and the work done so far on the chapters of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the core set of environment statistics as presented in the background document.

97. The Commission supported the finalization of the process, which is to include further consultations with the Expert Group on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics, other experts, international organizations and specialized agencies followed by a global consultation with Member States.

98. The Commission endorsed the pilot process for the core set of environment statistics, recognizing that some Member States have already expressed their willingness to take part as pilot countries.

99. The Commission requested that the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the core set of environment statistics, together with a plan of implementation, be presented for final adoption by the Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth session in 2013.

Statistics for economies based on natural resources

100. The Commission welcomed the initiative and agreed to the creation of an Ulaanbaatar city group with the goals of activities as specified, and asked that the group consider contributions of the mining sector to the economy, as well as positive and negative impacts on the society and the environment in the scope of its work programme.

101. The Commission requested that the group report back to the Commission at its sessions in 2013, 2015 and 2017 and provide a detailed work programme at the 2013 session.

Information and communication technology statistics

102. The Commission welcomed and discussed the report (E/CN.3/2012/12), and congratulated the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technology for Development on the work carried out in the past years.

103. The Commission agreed with recommendations contained in the report on approaches to enhance ICT statistics.

104. The Commission fully endorsed the revised and extended core list of ICT indicators, and asked for its wide circulation so that countries and other agencies can use it as a reference.

105. The Commission asked that special attention be paid to the provision of metadata, in particular computational procedures, with published ICT data, and the Partnership to continue reviewing the indicators in light of rapid technological advances and widespread use of ICT technology.

106. The Commission agreed to include ICT statistics in its multi-annual work programme and requested the Partnership to report on progress made at the session of the Commission in 2014.

National quality assurance frameworks

107. The Commission welcomed the report on national quality assurance frameworks (E/CN.3/2012/13) and the accompanying background documents and commended the Expert Group on a job well done.

108. The Commission fully endorsed the generic national quality assurance framework template and encouraged countries to use it. In this context, it particularly welcomed the fact that some countries had already started a process of using the template and the supporting materials developed by the Expert Group.

109. The Commission asked the Expert Group to develop an action plan to assist countries in the implementation of their national quality assurance frameworks and supported the plan to pilot the generic national quality assurance framework template in some countries with different types of statistical systems, and to report back to the Statistical Commission in due course on the lessons learned during the piloting process.

110. The Commission encouraged international, regional and subregional entities to work along with the United Nations Statistics Division in assisting countries to implement quality assurance programmes.

111. The Commission asked the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities to take on this topic, in particular the harmonization among different international quality assessment frameworks, as well as rendering assistance to countries in the implementation of their regional or national quality assurance frameworks.

Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

112. The Commission welcomed the report of the Friends of the Chair on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles (E/CN.3/2012/14) and the progress made in redrafting the preamble.

113. The Commission requested the Friends of the Chair to report back to the Commission at its forty-fourth session in 2013 with a finalized proposal of a revised preamble for adoption by the Commission and an assessment of the implementation of the Fundamental Principles.

Coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations

114. The Commission welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2012/15), which addressed concerns raised at the forty-second session

of the Statistical Commission; stressed the importance of effective coordination on statistical programmes within the United Nations system; and agreed that the time was right for a general review and assessment of the existing coordination mechanisms.

115. The Commission agreed with the proposal to form a Friends of the Chair group, which would be tasked to reflect on the current situation and to make proposals for improved mechanisms; a new terms of reference would be prepared taking into account the comments received.

116. The Commission affirmed the need for the active and full participation in the Friends of the Chair group by representatives from relevant United Nations system entities with knowledge of the relevant institutional background, and noted with appreciation the interest from Member States and United Nations entities to participate in this process.

117. The Commission requested the Friends of the Chair group to report back to the Commission at its forty-fourth session in 2013.

Efforts in developing a plan of action on statistical development

118. The Commission welcomed the report of the World Bank (E/CN.3/2012/16) and expressed appreciation for the efforts of the World Bank and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, as well as other agencies and development partners, to develop the Busan Action Plan for Statistics and facilitated its adoption at the Busan High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness.

119. The Commission fully endorsed the objectives of the Plan and the five steps needed to strengthen national statistical systems in developing countries and to increase the effectiveness of the support provided by development partners.

120. The Commission urged that the plan of implementation be flexible, taking into account country-specific development capacity, existing strategic plans and statistical priorities, and in collaboration with international agencies and development partners.

121. The Commission urged the global community to provide sustained support for the full implementation of the plan through the adoption of a coordinated and consultative approach, and noted that improved accessibility of statistics, gender statistics and the special needs of fragile and small States were particular areas of focus.

122. The Commission welcomed the opportunity to review the progress in implementation at its session in 2014 and requested the World Bank to prepare the necessary report.

Statistics of human development

123. The Commission Welcomed the report of the United Nations Development Programme on statistics of human development (E/CN.3/2012/17), which addressed the concerns expressed by the Commission at its forty-second session in 2011

124. The Commission noted with satisfaction the steps that the Human Development Report Office had undertaken to improve consultation,

communication and transparency in their processes with Member States in the context of the preparation of the 2011 Human Development Report.

125. The Commission urged the Human Development Report Office to continue its constructive engagement with National Statistical Offices in order to address some remaining issues, including, among others (i) the use of non-official or outdated data; (ii) the provision of sufficient lead time to respond to communications from the Human Development Report Office on data used; and (iii) technical issues involved in calculation.

Other decisions and information items

126. In addition to the above, the Commission decided on issues pertaining to energy statistics and regional statistical development in Europe.

127. Further, the Commission was informed of developments and initiatives in a number of areas, including gender statistics, Washington Group on Disability Statistics, international merchandise trade statistics, statistics of international trade in services, finance statistics, International Comparison Programme, Ottawa Group on Price Indices, coordination and integration of statistical programmes, international economic and social classifications, development indicators, follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions, global geospatial information management, and World Statistics Day.

Part II

Recent developments in official statistics in the CIS Region based on the intergovernmental deliberations

By the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States¹

The main tasks of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) are coordination of the activities of national statistical services of the Commonwealth on most important aspects of statistics, promoting the reforming of statistics in the conditions of transition to market economy, development of common recommendations and standards on the problems of methodology and organization of statistics, provision of information and organization of interstate exchange of information, analysis of socio-economic processes in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

In its activity CIS-STAT is subordinate to the Council of Heads of States of the CIS, Council of Heads of Governments of the CIS, Executive Committee of the CIS, Council of Heads of Statistical Services of the CIS. Higher-level bodies attach great significance to the work of CIS-STAT and discuss at their meetings selected questions of the development of statistics in the CIS region and on the basis of outcomes of their deliberations give concrete assignments to CIS-STAT.

Thus, according to the Decision of the Council of Heads of Governments of the CIS of November 25 2005, adopted in pursuance of the November 26 August, 2005 Decision of the Council of Heads of States of the CIS “On the improvement and reforming of the bodies of the Commonwealth of Independent States” CIS-STAT was entrusted with the preparation on a regular basis of analytic and forecast materials about the general economic situation, dynamics and trends in economic cooperation of the CIS countries. In accordance with this decision in CIS-STAT there was created a Division of analysis and forecasts, which during several years has been making forecasts of socio-economic development of the CIS countries. These forecasts are highly appreciated by the heads of states and governments of the CIS.

In November 2010 the Council of Heads of Governments of the CIS discussed the question “On the main target-oriented macro-economic indicators of the development of economy in the CIS countries”. Following the results of the discussion of this question CIS-STAT was entrusted with monitoring on a regular basis of socio-economic situation, level and dynamics of economic development, degree of economic integration of the CIS countries. CIS-STAT started to fulfill this assignment and has prepared a statistical abstract “Main target-oriented macro-economic indicators of the development of economy in the CIS countries in 2011”. This abstract was submitted to the regular meeting of the Council of Heads of Governments of the CIS which was held in Ashgabat in May 2012.

¹ This document was contributed by Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISSTAT). It has been reproduced without formal editing. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

Following the decision of the Council of Heads of States of the CIS “On proclaiming 2011 as a year of furthering food safety in the Commonwealth of Independent States” CIS-STAT has prepared the methodology of calculation and forms of balances of most important kinds of food in the CIS countries jointly with the Institute of System Research in Agro-Industrial Complex of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. This methodology has summarized the experience of statistical services and ministries of agriculture on compilation of source and use tables of main food products for which CIS-STAT collects data in the framework of interstate exchange of information.

In October 2011 the Council of Heads of Governments of the CIS approved the Interstate programme of innovation cooperation of the CIS countries for the period till 2020. For the purpose of providing information for the execution of this programme CIS-STAT has developed questionnaires of the system of indicators on statistics of innovations in the CIS countries and, starting with the data for 2012, will annually collect information on the above mentioned problem and submit it to the Executive Committee of the CIS and all interested users.

Selected perspective directions of the statistical activities of the CIS countries are reflected in the Plan of action on the implementation of the Strategy of economic development of the Commonwealth of Independent States for the period till 2020 (the first stage of the Plan was approved by the Decision of the Council of Heads of Governments of the CIS in November 2008, the second stage – in May 2009).

The important part of the Strategy is a complex of arrangements aimed at the increase of living standards of the population of the Commonwealth. To assess the efficiency of measures undertaken by the governments of the CIS countries in this direction it is envisaged to organize the monitoring of the living standards and quality of life of the population in the CIS countries, which will be carried out by CIS-STAT jointly with national statistical services.

For this purpose the group of experts together with interested ministries and agencies has started the formation of the system of indicators based on international standards and taking into account specific character of the CIS countries. After corresponding reconciliations, this system will be used for monitoring the quality of life.

In the framework of the preparation for a new 2020 round of population censuses the Council of Heads of Statistical Services of the CIS is considering to bring the question on the conduct of the regular round of the censuses to the discussion at the interstate level. The similar approach was adopted by the Council of Heads of States in 2006 before the beginning of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses. At present the lessons of the previous rounds of national population censuses are discussed, as well as the questions which require mutual efforts at the interstate level.

Part III

Progress report on implementation of Phase 1 (2011–2014) of the *Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy 2011–2020*

By the Secretariat of the Pacific Community ¹

I. Introduction

This report provides an overview of 2012 SDP activities in support of implementing Year 2 of the SDP Strategic Plan 2011–2014, which coincides with Phase 1 (2011–2014) of the *Pacific Statistics Strategy Action Plan*, the first of three distinct phases in the implementation of the *Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy, 2011–2020 (TYPSS)*.

II. Key activities and achievements

A. Statistical collections

2012 provided us with a comprehensive work programme in the area of statistical collections, with half of the programme staff either working in the population census and household survey team in the field at any one time or supervising professional attachments in Noumea, working in collaboration with the rest of the programme staff to produce analytical census and survey reports. At the time of writing:

1. we have just completed hosting four Samoa Bureau of Statistics staff on a three-week attachment, working with our demographer on producing the analytical volume of their 2011 census, which is expected to be released in late October;
2. concurrently with the Samoa team, we hosted the Niue government statistician, working alongside his Samoa colleagues and with the SPC demographer, in finalizing the Niue demographic analysis of their 2011 census;
3. our census and DHS survey technical officer is in Tuvalu, assisting the Tuvalu census commissioner to train census field supervisors and enumerators;
4. one household survey specialist is in Vanuatu on a bi-monthly survey implementation monitoring mission, and the other is assisting Nauru with final preparations for its HIES survey;
5. one of our two data processing specialists is in Tonga, with a consultant, setting up the data entry and processing system for the Tonga Demographic and Health Survey currently in progress.

Mid-year, we organised two successful back-to-back technical workshops in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), with generous supplementary support also provided by Paris21, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century.

¹ Authored by Gerald Haberkorn. The present document has been reproduced without formal editing. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

The joint workshop with UNFPA brought together all Pacific Island recent and current census managers to undertake a critical review of all key census operational stages, with presentations from SPC technical experts and national statistics office (NSO) staff, highlighting demonstrated successes, almost-matches, and failures, with 'lessons learned' documented in a manual for census managers that is currently being edited, prior to peer-review and publication.

The joint workshop with FAO and UNFPA focused on integrating agricultural statistics questions in the 2020 round of censuses, as recommended by the United Nations Statistical Commission. Taking advantage of the presence in Noumea of all census commissioners, additional invitations were extended to agricultural statisticians or economists from the same countries to put in place collaborative arrangements for population census, agricultural census, and agricultural household survey activities under the auspices of FAO's Global Strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics.

SDP household survey specialists, in close collaboration with SDP data processing specialists, economic statisticians and demographers spent considerable time this year developing a new Pacific HIES questionnaire and field methodology, as requested by the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee's HIES technical working group. This questionnaire and methodology are currently being implemented in Solomon Islands and Nauru, with Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) HIES beginning in early 2013.

B. Production of a core set of statistics across key sectors

1. Economic statistics

SDP economic statisticians have had a busy year so far, starting off with co-facilitating a national accounts regional workshop organised by the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre/International Monetary Fund (PFTAC/IMF) early this year, involving 32 participants from 16 countries, with another major regional workshop organised by SPC coming up in late November in Noumea on international merchandise trade statistics.

Country specific technical assistance activities covered:

(a) completion of economic statistics master plans/developments strategies (**Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Tokelau, Palau, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands**)

(b) compilation of national accounts and trade statistics in accordance with national plans, and work towards greater utilisation of south-south technical collaboration in partnership with PFTAC (Tuvalu, Niue, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Palau, FSM)development of price statistics in partnership with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and PFTAC (**Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, FSM, Nauru**)

(c) work towards increased use of administrative records in the compilation of most economic statistics/up-to-date business registers with current international classification standards (**Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, FSM, Marshall Islands**)

2. Vital statistics

It has been a busy year for SDP Vital Statistics/Civil Registration specialist, with technical assistance follow-up visits to five Group 1 countries (**Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu**) following the inaugural technical workshop in Suva in late 2011. Key objectives of all visits are: working with national counterparts in amending national vital statistics improvement plans and reviewing implementation; conducting basic International Classification of Disease coding/ tabulation training; and providing draft assessment reports to countries. SDP subsequently hosted professional attachments in Noumea from this group (**Niue and Tuvalu**).

In partnership with University of Queensland Health Information Systems Knowledge Hub and UNFPA, organized the second of three sub-regional workshops in Guam for the North Pacific countries and territories, involving more than 40 participants. Many countries and FSM states sent additional participants, at their own expense, recognizing the importance of this work and building on relationships established during 2011 country technical assistance missions. The workshop was completed successfully, with all countries having developed draft vital statistics improvement plans at the conclusion of the workshop.

3. Education statistics

There has been a solid work programme of assisting countries to: (i) improve educational statistics and associated management information systems, including collaborative work with AusAID, UNESCO and SPBEA education specialists; (ii) redesign school census questionnaires; (iii) produce statistical digests and yearbooks; and (iv) work with SDP demographer colleagues in revising school-age population projections. Countries assisted: FSM, YAP state, Marshall Islands, Palau, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands.

C. Data dissemination

Also of note have been our efforts throughout the year to ensure that statistical data and information derived from population censuses, household surveys and some administrative databases become more accessible. An integral part of these efforts has been our ongoing technical collaboration with Paris 21 and the International Household Survey Network (IHSN) from the World Bank to improve access to micro-data, and make greater analytical use population and housing censuses and major household surveys. Three sub-regional workshops were held in July, in collaboration with Paris21/IHSN to train PICTS survey statisticians in meta-data documentation of major statistical collections. A tangible outcome of this training was the publication of 31 surveys, and a quality assurance process put in place with IHSN (www.spc.int/prism/reports/data-catalog).

Contribution to regional MDG tracking report. SPC, in close collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and UNDP Pacific Centre, once again updated its regional MDG database in the first half of this year to ensure that the most up-to-date development indicators are available for the compilation of the 2012 *Pacific Regional MDG Tracking Report*.

Further improvement to PRISM. Regular PRISM users will have noticed that the website has a new look and several new features, such as interactive mapping and graphing facilities, that allow users more freedom in how they access, extract and display statistical data and information. Users will also notice

that many of these features are built into national statistics office websites to enhance the user-friendliness and user-relevance of data access. PRISM also includes more regional statistical tables to meet the growing demand for such information by regular users, such as technical and financial partners and fellow regional agencies.

Redevelopment of SPC PopGIS. Redevelopment has progressed substantially: an internal software developer has been providing assistance with the coding, and test installer has been compiled and tested in Noumea and Fiji; a host of new functionalities has been developed.

National Minimum Development Indicator (NMDI) database. Developing this database and a coordinated system for measuring, monitoring and reporting progress against development indicators, including but not restricted to MDGs, is a tangible response to Pacific Plan objective 12.4, reflecting Pacific Leaders' call for 'upgrading and extension of national and regional information systems and databases across all sectors'. It also features strongly in SPC's strategic development policy paper *Statistics2020*, developed in mid-2008 and takes into account recommendations by external reviews (e.g. the 2009 Regional Statistical Benchmarking Study), which urge greater harmonisation of standards, including systems of collection and outputs. The importance of the latter, allowing not only for greater economies of scale in terms of technical support but equally for ensuring greater comparability in statistical outputs among PICTs, has also been highlighted by the recent *Pacific Region Statistics Implementation Plan, better known as the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (2011–2020)*.

The system is configured in such a way that the first entry in a thematic folder, such as Education, provides the user with a snapshot of all key indicators in this folder across all fifteen PICs, with reference to year and data source, and a colour scheme that visualizes data gaps and how recent (or old) the information is. This is a most useful function for data users, as they receive an immediate evaluation of whether the information is useful for their purpose: describing current development scenarios, for example, with data that are older than three years, defeats the purpose of real-time monitoring of development progress, and perhaps might stimulate national and international stakeholders to take more concerted action to rectify the situation. Analogously, in sectors where data gaps pertaining to specific indicators persist, obvious questions need to be asked about the value of considering these indicators essential and maintaining them in the database, when most countries do not collect the underlying statistics. With the database on-line at www.spc.int/prism/nmdi, we believe regular use and feedback from users, both national and international stakeholders, will help ensure ongoing validation.

III. Challenges with TYPPS Implementation

Cutting across all our work is the ongoing challenge of effective coordination and communication between implementing partners of TYPPS. While progress is being made, it is 'work in progress', as we are not experiencing anything different from others working in the reality of multi-agency and multi-agenda dynamics.

A second ongoing challenge for us is to improve the management of Pacific development statistics and indicators to (i) avoid the perennial circulation of multiple values for the same indicator, (ii) promote the use of/reference to one set of official regional development statistics and indicators, and (iii) when it

comes to national, regional and international development reporting, use PICT official statistics and indicators where they exist and where data quality can be assured, rather than rely on international agency estimates as a matter of routine.

Regarding the delivery of specific TYPPS outputs that are directly attributable to the Pacific Plan, an ongoing challenge for us is working towards achieving greater harmonization of statistical concepts, classifications and systems. While we have experienced some very tangible recent successes, such as reaching agreement on introducing a common Pacific HIES questionnaire and methodology, we still struggle to get Pacific-wide buy-in in adopting standard statistical classifications and best practice census and survey planning and implementation in order to ensure greater comparability between countries of key socio-economic statistics and indicators, such as labour force participation, employment, poverty lines, and expenditure and income patterns (and distributions). An unfortunate downside of ignoring best practice advice is short-cutting essential planning and technical preparation time lines, including those for census and survey pilot-testing and training, thus undermining data quality and jeopardizing sizeable domestic and development partner investments.

A general challenge, but outside our programme's control, is witnessing many NSOs' continued struggle with securing more than mere survival budgets from their governments in order to do a competent job delivering good quality statistics across an ever-growing range of sectoral priorities. While we are not ignorant of the financial and budget constraints facing us all, many Pacific island national statistical agencies are required to undertake similar workloads of agencies in larger countries with more than 20 staff. The result is an ongoing and worsening vicious circle — unable to deliver against growing user demands on shoe-string budgets decreases official faith in their ability to deliver, further cuts follow or, at best, no improvements — without a tangible solution in sight. With most Pacific Island NSOs under the administrative authority of ministries of finance, this concern was raised by SDP earlier this year at the Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting, with a recommendation inviting ministers to *'acknowledge the critical role of their national statistical offices in producing quality and timely statistics for evidence-based planning, policy development, the monitoring of policy performance and the tracking of development progress, and to agree to appropriately resource national statistical offices'*.

IV. Opportunities ahead

While obvious opportunities arise out of all four challenges highlighted, our main operational attention over the coming years will target two key areas that we, as a technical programme can influence, via our ongoing commitment to assist NSOs with key statistical collections (censuses, household surveys) and other NSS players in improving their administrative databases and information management systems.

1. *Improve management of Pacific development statistics and indicators.*

To build on the productive collaboration with PIFS and the UNDP Pacific Centre in this year's update of our Pacific MDG database, and to help improve the working of the regional MDG technical working group, two sectoral specialists joined our programme in late 2011 and two more will join in December this year, giving us sectoral statistics strengths in education and vital statistics, which will keep us in good stead to markedly improve coverage of MDG indicators pertaining to Goals 2, 4, 5 and 6. With all population-based

MDG indicators integrated in the National Minimum Development Indicator Database, ongoing monitoring is more manageable, as are ongoing updates, which will avoid the annual February to April mad rush. The MDG database is readily identifiable on PRISM, integrated in the National Minimum Development Indicator (NMDI) folder and easily identifiable by the eight well-known icons (www.spc.int/prism).

2. *Consolidate the National Minimum Development Indicator Database.*

SDP will target an increase on NMDI coverage for the agriculture, forestry, energy and transport sectors to well above 50 per cent. Agriculture and forestry are the highest priority, with work having started in November last year. These two sectors, which support the livelihoods of the majority of Pacific Island people, have the largest information/data gaps, and it is crucial to establish a meaningful baseline of statistics and development indicators in both sectors.

Last but not least, we will maintain our commitment to statistical advocacy and partnership with Paris21/Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in promoting a more widespread adoption of *National Strategies for the Development of Statistics* by countries, given the recent success experienced in Samoa, with Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Tonga and Solomon Islands following closely behind and Fiji having indicated renewed interest recently, and even smaller island states like the Cook Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia not wishing to be left behind.
