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Reports brought to the attention of the Committee:

Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its fifth session

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present document contains the Report of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) on its fifth session, which was held in Phuket, Thailand, on 16 and 17 November 2009.

During the session, the Governing Council endorsed the long-term work plan of SIAP for the academic years 2010-2014 and the two-year work plan for the academic years 2010-2011, with the assumption that funding and partnership requirements would be met fully.

The Council noted that SIAP would celebrate its fortieth anniversary in 2010 and emphasized that the occasion presented a good opportunity to reflect on the increasing demand for the services of the Institute and to ensure that it remained relevant and evolved to meet the persistent and emerging needs of member States in the region.

The Council members expressed the view that it was imperative to raise more support and strengthen the financial basis of the Institute and, thus, the Council envisaged that member States would strengthen financial support on the basis of Commission resolution 65/2 on regional technical cooperation and capacity-building in statistics development in Asia and the Pacific, which would further raise their sense of ownership over the training programme of SIAP.

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I. Organization

A. Opening of the session

1. The fifth session of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) was held in Phuket, Thailand, on 16 and 17 November 2009.
2. The representative of China welcomed all the participants.
3. The opening remarks of the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) were delivered by the Director of the Statistics Division of ESCAP.
4. Ms. Jirawan Boonperm, Director-General of the national statistical office of Thailand, made a statement on behalf of the Government hosting the session.

B. Attendance

5. The session was attended by representatives of all nine members of the Governing Council: China, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Republic of Korea and Thailand.
6. Representatives of the following countries and areas attended the session as observers: Australia; Bangladesh; Cambodia; Fiji; Hong Kong, China; New Zealand; Philippines; and Russian Federation.

7. A representative of the following United Nations body participated as an observer: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Asia Pacific Regional Office.

8. Representatives of the following United Nations specialized agencies participated as observers: International Labour Organization (ILO) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

9. A representatives of the following intergovernmental organization also participated as an observer: Asian Development Bank (ADB).

C. Election of officers

10. The Governing Council elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chair: Mr. Feng Nailin (China)

Vice-Chair: Mr. Makoto Shimizu (Japan)

11. The Chair invited the representative of Japan, which contributed significantly to SIAP, to make a statement. The representative of Japan expressed his gratitude to the members and associate members of ESCAP for their participation in the Governing Council session, paid tribute to the SIAP Director for the efforts that had been made to prepare the session and welcomed the Chair's excellent leadership in managing the session.

D. Agenda

12. The Governing Council adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Matters arising from the fourth session of the Governing Council.
5. Report of the Director of the Institute.
6. Long-term work plan of the Institute for the academic years 2010-2014.
7. Work plan of the Institute for the academic years 2010-2011.
8. Update on the evaluation of the Institute.
9. Review of the draft annual report of the Institute to the Commission.
10. Other matters.
11. Adoption of the report.

II. Matters arising from the fourth session of the Governing Council

13. The Governing Council had before it the document entitled “Matters arising from the fourth session of the Governing Council” (STAT/SIAP/GC(5)/1). The Council noted 14 such matters and the actions that had since been taken by the Institute, including strategies to strengthen arrangements for increasing cash and in kind contributions, enhancing distance training and providing e-training resources, conducting joint training activities with country partner institutions and international organizations, and assessing training needs in the region.

14. The representative of Japan encouraged the members to adhere to the direction provided in Commission resolution 65/2 on regional technical cooperation and capacity-building in statistics development in Asia and the Pacific. He also requested national statistical offices to coordinate with the relevant ministries and assign priority to statistics in the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) training needs survey.

15. The Council members and several representatives from other countries expressed their appreciation for the work done by SIAP. The representatives of India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, and the Philippines pledged strong support to collaborate with the Institute in its outreach programme. India expressed the desire to further increase its cash contributions to SIAP. Indonesia expressed its intention to increase its cash contribution from \$15,000 to \$20,000 in 2011. The Republic of Korea stated that it would increase its cash contribution to the Institute to 50,000 in 2010 as well as increasing in kind contributions.

III. Report of the Director

16. The Council had before it the report of the Director of SIAP (STAT/SIAP/GC(5)/2). The Director highlighted key results achieved, new initiatives implemented, a summary of SIAP activities in the reporting period and institutional matters.

17. The Director pointed out that the Institute focused on strengthening the capability of participants to provide reliable data to monitor the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and implementing the 1993/2008 System of National Accounts (SNA), as well as using information and communications technology for processing, analysing and disseminating data.

18. The Governing Council noted that, with the strong support of the host Government through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the distance training programme had become a regular training programme in the Institute’s portfolio of training modalities. The Governing Council was also informed of the intention of SIAP to provide e-training materials on “1993/2008 SNA” and “Survey methodology” for self-learning purposes to a wider circle of users by the end of 2009 on a trial basis.

19. The Director reported that collaborations with member States and other partners had played an important role in implementing the annual work plan of the Institute. They had not only provided the opportunity to combine efforts to maximize the use of limited resources, but had also

allowed SIAP to respond more effectively to the diverse capability development needs of member States. During the reporting period, the Institute had collaborated with the National Bureau of Statistics of China, BPS-Statistics of Indonesia, the Statistical Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Statistical Research and Training Centre of the Philippines, and Statistics Korea of the Republic of Korea in organizing regional training courses, workshops and seminars. Several United Nations and international organizations, namely the United Nations Statistics Division, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), ILO, ADB, IMF, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the World Bank had provided resource persons and funds to cover the travel costs of participants and SIAP faculty members for training activities organized by the Institute.

20. With regard to financial matters, the Director informed the Council that, despite substantial cutbacks in overall official development assistance, the cash contribution from the Government of Japan in 2009 had been maintained at close to the same level as the previous year so as to constitute the bulk of the overall cash contributions received by SIAP. The Government of Japan also provided in kind contributions in the form of administrative and infrastructural support to the Institute. The provision of resource persons through the Office of the Director General for Policy Planning (Statistics Standards) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan, as well as of 58 fellowships for the Tokyo Metropolitan Area (TMA)-based training courses through JICA, was acknowledged by the Governing Council.

21. The representative of Japan informed the Council that his country was making efforts to ensure the financial support of SIAP. Due to recent economic crisis, however, the financial authority of the Government of Japan had reduced expenditures for most Government activities. Further, the representative expressed his belief that all countries would strengthen financial support to SIAP on the basis of Commission resolution 65/2 on regional technical cooperation and capacity-building in statistics development in Asia and the Pacific, which would further raise their sense of ownership over the training programme of SIAP.

22. The representative of Japan also emphasized that it was very important to take the opportunity of the fortieth anniversary of SIAP to make its role widely understood, leading to the expansion of support to SIAP. He pledged the support of Japan to make the anniversary celebration a success. Some members shared the view that the event could be used to encourage more countries to make contributions to SIAP. Several members expressed their interest in playing an important role in the fortieth anniversary of SIAP and enquired as to how they could contribute to the event.

23. Council members stressed that countries other than Japan should, where possible, increase cash contributions to SIAP to assist it in carrying out its activities. The Republic of Korea mentioned its desire to increase in kind contributions by conducting subregional courses on the Millennium Development Goals and disability statistics, while the representative of India offered to host regional and subregional courses on SNA and sample survey methodology.

24. On the gender issue, the Institute was asked to take action to increase female participation in its courses, while paying due attention to qualifications and competencies.

25. The representative of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics expressed concern about low participation from the Pacific and Central Asian countries in SIAP training programmes. Responding to the question, the Director of SIAP explained that, in assigning placements for training courses, the Institute had been considering the size of the population of member States as well as the number of staff working in national statistical offices.

26. One member enquired about the possibility of sending the annual training programme and list of invited countries well in advance to enable the countries to consider the funding of their participation in case they were not invited. The Director responded that the calendar of programmed SIAP activities was posted on the website and was updated regularly.

27. Referring to a concern raised by one representative, the Director informed the Council that the Institute had clearly advised participants to refrain from bringing family members along with them to SIAP training courses.

28. The UNFPA representative emphasized the need for SIAP to work closely with the United Nations country teams to identify and address statistical needs more accurately.

29. The Council requested that SIAP organize more training on how to address the statistical data needs of policymakers, such as rapid assessment to evaluate the impact of the recent financial crisis.

30. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed his country's intention to make a voluntary contribution to SIAP and to support workshops and seminars, including on topics relating to the population census and information and communications technology.

31. The Governing Council recognized the tremendous efforts made by the Institute in addressing the statistical capacity-building needs of member States despite the challenges it faced, in particular resource constraints.

32. The Governing Council urged the Institute to increase effectiveness and efficiency by expanding e-learning training activities.

33. The Governing Council noted that several member States had increased their cash contributions to the Institute in spite of a difficult financial situation.

34. The Governing Council expressed its deep appreciation of the contributions of the following:

(a) The host Government, the Government of Japan, for its continuous and generous support, both in cash and in kind, and for the provision of JICA fellowships for TMA-based courses;

(b) The contributing members and associate members in the region, for their continuing cash contributions, through which they demonstrated their support for the work of the Institute;

(c) The governments of China, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Tonga and Macao, China for increased contributions in cash and in kind made in hosting regional and subregional courses;

(d) The Government of Turkey for resuming its cash contributions;

(e) United Nations agencies and international organizations, particularly ADB, ESCAP, ILO, IMF, ECE, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UNIDO, the United Nations Statistics Division and the World Bank for collaborating with SIAP in the implementation of its training programme.

IV. Long-term plan of the Institute for the academic years 2010-2014

35. The Governing Council had before it the document entitled "Long-term plan of the Institute for the academic years 2010-2014" (STAT/SIAP/GC(5)/3).

36. It was reported that the proposed long-term work plan of the Institute had been prepared on the basis of the strategic plan of SIAP for the academic years 2010-2014, which had been endorsed by the Governing Council at its fourth session, in November 2008. The Council was informed that the long-term plan had also been harmonized with ESCAP subprogramme 7, Statistics, for the biennium 2010-2011.

37. It was mentioned that, to develop the long-term work plan, the Institute had conducted a training needs survey using a comprehensive core skills framework structure to identify the different training needs of officials working at all levels in national statistical offices and the national statistical system as a whole. A report on the survey results was presented to the Governing Council.

38. The Council was informed that the Institute was preparing a course curriculum and training design for TMA-based courses using the core skills framework in 2010.

39. Different types of training components were presented and explained under the categories of TMA, outreach and distance training. A new series of TMA-based short-term courses was presented to the Governing Council, along with new e-learning methods using the Wideband InterNetworking engineering test and Demonstration Satellite (WINDS) being negotiated with the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) for future courses. A newly structured research-based programme was also presented to the members of the Governing Council.

40. The Governing Council noted that the Institute would achieve objectives/outcomes by: (a) strengthening partnership cooperation with other organizations at the regional, subregional and country levels; (b) providing distance training and e-learning, which would complement the ongoing face-to-face training; and (c) training of trainers.

41. The Governing Council was provided with a rough outline of the financial resources required for implementation of the long-term work plan.
42. Representatives were of the view that the core skills framework was practical and could capture more specific training needs. It was observed that the core skills framework could be used for the proper selection of specific people for specific trainings and the maximization of scarce resources. It was suggested that the core skills framework be used on a pilot basis.
43. The representative of the Philippines offered to assist in piloting the use of the skills-based training approach.
44. The representative of Thailand stated that SIAP trainings were demand-driven and fulfilled the needs of many countries. She expressed concern, however, about the staff shortage at SIAP and other constraints. While acknowledging the training needs assessment survey by SIAP, she enquired about the possibility of incorporating issues of management of the statistical system into training curricula, thus enabling the development of a more comprehensive training programme for the national statistical offices.
45. The representative of the Republic of Korea spoke about the difficulties faced in managing the research-based training courses that the Republic of Korea had hosted and requested that SIAP select the best possible candidates to obtain the best results.
46. One member expressed the view that training of trainers was necessary and that SIAP should arrange more trainings to include issues on management and coordination aspects.
47. One representative supported the direction SIAP had taken towards e-learning and stated the advantages of using an e-library to facilitate distance and e-learning.
48. The representative of ADB expressed the view that countries and areas in the Asian and Pacific region were still lagging behind in the implementation of the 1993 SNA. She suggested that short three- to five-day courses could be organized to address difficult areas, such as the estimation of the value of the services provided by banks and other financial intermediaries, the estimation of the imputed rent of owner-occupied dwellings and specific issues on implementation of the 1993 SNA.
49. The representative of IMF, supporting the ADB proposal to develop short courses, expressed the intention of IMF to continue cooperating with SIAP, by, among other things, providing assistance in designing a training programme in integrated economic statistics.
50. The representative of ILO mentioned that ILO could work closely with SIAP and that areas of cooperation could include labour force surveys with child labour components in Cambodia, a labour force survey in Afghanistan in 2010 and the informal economy. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that his country could also help ILO in training Afghanistan on different surveys.

51. In response, the Director of SIAP said that other international agencies could also share the burden by sharing administrative costs while arranging courses.

52. Many Council members expressed support for the proposed long-term work plan of the skills-based training and emphasized the need to pay attention to issues relating to the effective use of existing limited resources and collaborations with other agencies in carrying out its activities.

53. The Council endorsed the long-term plan, with the above-mentioned recommendations and suggestions to be incorporated.

V. Programme of work for the academic year 2010-2011

54. The Governing Council had before the document entitled "Programme of work of the Institute for the academic year 2010" (STAT/SIAP/GC(5)/3).

55. The Director informed the Council that the TMA-based courses and the regional/subregional courses in the proposed work programme were part of the long-term work plan proposed for the five-year period 2010-2014.

56. The Council was also informed that the SIAP-JICA TMA-based courses were to be finalized on the basis of the relevant and applicable laws and regulations of the Government of Japan and in accordance with the Institute's annual budgetary appropriations for the Japanese fiscal year 2010. Similarly, TMA-based short-term courses, the outreach programme and the distance training courses would be finalized in accordance with the annual budgetary appropriations of SIAP and collaborating organizations for the fiscal year 2010/11.

57. Referring to the cost-effective measures adopted by SIAP, one Council member mentioned that they were in accordance with the strategic plan as endorsed at the fourth session of the Governing Council.

58. The Council recommended that SIAP prioritize activities for the academic years 2010 and 2011 if the Institute faced a situation of insufficient resources, including financial, and that it provide the Council with rough estimates of required financial resources.

59. The Council requested a more detailed 2010 work programme to be shared among the members.

60. India and the Philippines recommended endorsing the two-year work plan. UNFPA enquired about the possibility of obtaining financial assistance from other donors and cautioned that sufficient flexibility should be allowed to reflect the emerging interests of countries.

61. The Council endorsed the two-year work plan on the assumption that funding and partnership requirements would be met fully.

VI. Update on the evaluation of the Institute

62. The Director informed the Council that the evaluation of SIAP had been delayed due to the time taken to identify and recruit the most suitably qualified candidate. She reported that Ms. Denise Lievesley had been

contracted and the evaluation was currently under way. The final evaluation report was expected by the end of January 2010 and would be submitted to the Commission at its sixty-sixth session. At its sixth session, the Governing Council would consider the evaluation report, the response of SIAP management and the actions undertaken by SIAP to follow up on the recommendations, as well as views expressed or decisions taken at the sixty-sixth session of the Commission. The Council was informed of the process of the evaluation, including the role of the reference group, the methodology and the timeline.

63. The Director clarified that the findings and recommendations of the evaluation would feed into revisions of the strategic and implementation plans.

VII. Review of the draft annual report of the Institute to the Commission

64. The meeting had before it the draft annual report of SIAP to the Commission (STAT/SIAP/GC(5)/5). The members were informed that the reporting period covered calendar year 2009.

65. The Council requested that a revised draft with updated information, incorporating the decisions and recommendations made at its fifth session, be prepared and circulated to Council members for comment prior to submission to the Commission.

VIII. Other matters

66. It was mentioned that the fortieth anniversary of SIAP would be celebrated in Tokyo in August/September 2010, with the support of the host Government.

67. The ESCAP secretariat informed the Council that the next session of the Commission would be held in the Republic of Korea in May 2010. As it had been proposed that all regional institutions would set up booths at the venue of the Commission session, it was recommended that SIAP take that opportunity to broadcast its role in order to raise more support and understanding of the importance of the Institute and to give due publicity to the fortieth anniversary of SIAP.

68. The Governing Council agreed to hold the sixth session of the Governing Council back to back with the session of the Committee on Statistics that was scheduled to be held in Bangkok in December 2010.

IX. Adoption of the Report

69. On 17 November 2009, the Governing Council adopted the report on its fifth session.