

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**
Committee on Statistics**Third session**

Bangkok, 12-14 December 2012

Item 2(a) of the provisional agenda*

**Strategic direction and functioning of the Committee
on Statistics: Proposal of the Bureau for future work****Proposed future work of the Committee on Statistics******Note by the Bureau***Summary*

The Bureau proposes that the Committee on Statistics reconfirm its 2020 strategic goals as the guide for its overall work and continue to support the ongoing regional initiatives that have been put in motion in pursuit of those goals. It also proposes that two additional areas of work be pursued by the Committee: (a) supporting global discussions on the development agenda beyond 2015, including the development of a monitoring framework for sustainable development goals; and (b) environment statistics. Taking into account the outcomes of the deliberations at global and subregional intergovernmental forums regarding statistics development (see E/ESCAP/CST(3)/INF/5), the Committee may wish to review and consider the proposal of the Bureau for endorsement.

I. Reaffirming the strategic direction

1. The Committee at its second session set two overarching, strategic goals for statistics development in Asia and the Pacific: (a) ensuring that all countries in the region, by 2020, have the capability to provide an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environment statistics; and (b) creating a more adaptive and cost-effective information management environment for national statistical offices through stronger collaboration.¹

II. Steady progress in achieving the strategic goals

2. The long-term strategic goals were subsequently endorsed by the Commission at its sixty-seventh session,² along with other related decisions and recommendations of the Committee, in three Commission resolutions³ in

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

** Late submission is due to consultation with Bureau members.

¹ See E/ESCAP/CST(2)/9, para. 1.

² See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2011, Supplement No. 19* (E/2011/39-E/ESCAP/67/23), para. 214.

³ See *ibid.*, Commission resolutions 67/10, 67/11 and 67/12.

recognition of the need for high-level and broad-based support to allow national statistical systems and the secretariat to engage multiple stakeholders and other resources for their achievement.

3. In pursuit of its long-term strategic goals, the Committee has established a number of steering and advisory groups to lead the work in different sectors of official statistics and regional coordination of statistical training. Substantial progress has been made in the following areas of work:

(a) *Economic statistics:*⁴ The Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics has guided the development of an implementation plan for the regional programme, which has been submitted to the Committee for endorsement (agenda item 3(a)). The Steering Group has also initiated the implementation of the regional programme with a focus on activities that are aimed at advocacy and securing political support;

(b) *Social statistics:*⁵ The Technical Advisory Group has developed a proposal of a core set of population and social statistics to guide future regional capacity strengthening endeavours. This core set has benefited from the feedback that member States and international organizations have provided through a consultation. The Technical Advisory Group has also formulated a proposal for a strategy to develop a regional programme to improve population and social statistics in the region. Both the proposed core set and the strategy have been submitted to the Committee for its endorsement (agenda item 3(b));

(c) *Civil registration and vital statistics:*⁶ The secretariat has developed the Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, which the Committee is being requested to endorse. At the same time, ESCAP has collaborated very closely with the World Health Organization and a great many partners 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 (agenda item 3(c));

(d) *Agricultural and rural statistics:*⁷ The Steering Group for Agricultural Statistics has guided the development of a regional implementation plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics which the Committee is being requested to adopt (agenda item 4(a));

(e) *Modernization of statistical information systems:*⁸ The secretariat has initiated dialogues among leading experts on modernizing national statistical information systems through stronger collaboration. It has identified a set of region-specific actions and developed a proposal to establish a regional strategic body and a regional network of experts in the area to foster regional collaboration and influence global directions;

⁴ See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/4.

⁵ See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/5.

⁶ See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/6.

⁷ See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/8.

⁸ See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/7.

(f) *Coordination of statistical capacity-building activities:*⁹ The Working Group for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific has proposed a strategy aimed at increasing the efficiency and impact of statistical training in the region through improved coordination. The proposal has been submitted to the Committee for endorsement (agenda item 5(a));

(g) *Regional partnership:*¹⁰ The Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific has joined over 20 international, regional and bilateral member organizations to improve the combined impact of capacity-building activities through enhanced coordination, synergy and complementarity. The Partners have supported the work of the working and steering groups of the Committee. Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), a member of the Partners, has started producing an annual special Partner Report on Support to Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which provides a solid base for information sharing among the partners on planned and ongoing initiatives in the region (agenda item 5(b)).

III. Meeting emerging needs

4. Two issues have received growing attention since the second session of the Committee and are included in the agenda of the current session. They are “monitoring the development agenda beyond 2015” (agenda item 4(c))¹¹ and “environment statistics” (agenda item 4(b)).¹²

5. With the target year—2015—of the Millennium Development Goals approaching, the focus of policy dialogue at the global level has been shifting to the development of a global development agenda beyond 2015. The discussions were crystallized in the outcomes of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (the Rio+20 Conference). Work on the follow-up to the outcomes of Rio+20 is likely to intensify as the global process to develop a monitoring framework of the sustainable development goals unfolds. This process will benefit from national and regional inputs in the context of discussions on the initiative led by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on the measurement of well-being and progress of societies.¹³ An assessment of progress towards achieving the goals will follow, which might give rise to a host of issues that are likely to influence the work programmes of national statistical systems.

⁹ See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/12.

¹⁰ See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/13.

¹¹ See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/10.

¹² See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/9.

¹³ See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/11.

6. One result of the growing political dialogue on the development agenda beyond 2015 is the increased attention to environment statistics, as environmental issues feature prominently in discussions on sustainable development. At the international level, the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session, in 2010, endorsed a work programme to revise the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics, which presents a systematic approach to the organization and development of environment statistics.¹⁴ Linked to the revision, a programme to develop a core set of environment statistics was also endorsed. The Statistical Commission at its forty-third session, in 2012, adopted the Central Framework of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, which contains the internationally agreed standard concepts, definitions, classifications, accounting rules and tables for producing internationally comparable statistics on the environment and its relationship with the economy.¹⁵ Given the important role of environment statistics in the measurement of sustainable development goals, the Committee needs to be in a position to assist its members in addressing the upcoming demands. The Committee may wish to consider giving priority to work in these two related areas, where demand has been intensifying and is likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

IV. Issues for consideration

7. In view of the above, the Committee may wish to:

- (a) Reaffirm the two strategic goals as the guide for its overall work;
- (b) Express its continued support to the ongoing regional initiatives that have been put in motion in pursuit of the two strategic goals;
- (c) Express its support for the follow-up to Rio+20, including providing inputs to global processes, taking measures to strengthen national statistical capacity to meet related information needs, and actively participating in the implementation of global standards and guidelines to improve environment statistics.

8. Members of the Committee may also wish to demonstrate their support to the ongoing regional initiatives of the Committee by continuing their active participation in them.

¹⁴ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 4* (E/2010/24-E/CN.3/2010/34), chap. I, sect. B, decision 41/107.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 4* (E/2012/24-E/CN.3/2012/34), chap. I, sect. B, decision 43/106.