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**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**  
 Committee on Statistics
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Item 5(b) of the provisional agenda\*

**Coordination for statistics development:  
 partners for Statistical Development in Asia-Pacific**
**Report of the activities of the Partners for Statistics  
 Development in Asia-Pacific**
**Note by the secretariat\*\***
*Summary*

The Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific was established on 14 December 2010 with the intent to strengthen collaboration among development partners operating in Asia and the Pacific. During the third session of the Committee on Statistics, which was held in Bangkok from 12 to 14 December 2012, the Partnership met for the fourth time. Since then, it has met two other times. During those meetings, the partners have provided guidance on regional initiatives taking place in Asia and the Pacific. These initiatives have been endorsed by the Committee on Statistics and cover such areas as securing funding and defining the priorities in carrying out those important initiatives.

Recognizing the important role that statistical training plays in developing national statistical capacity, the partners have extended strong support to the establishment of statistical training coordination bodies.

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\* E/ESCAP/CST(4)/L.1.

\*\* The present document was submitted late due to the need to include the issues raised during the latest discussions on the development agenda beyond 2015; in particular, the recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Statistics and Data for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Secretary General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific (the Partnership) is a regional network of international, regional and subregional organizations and bilateral donors established in response to a recommendation by the Statistical Commission to strengthen collaboration among development partners operating in the Asia-Pacific region. At its fourth meeting, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) were re-elected to serve as co-chairs of the Partnership for the period 2013-2014. The Statistics Division of ESCAP provides secretariat services for the Partnership.

2. The Partnership held its fourth meeting during the third session of the Committee on Statistics, which was held in Bangkok on 12 December 2012. Since then, it met two more times. The fifth and sixth meetings were held in Ankara on 6 September 2013 and in New York on 2 March 2014, respectively. The seventh meeting of the Partnership is scheduled to be held in Bangkok in conjunction with the fourth session of the Committee on Statistics.

## **II. Activities of the Partnership, 2013-2014**

3. The work of the Partnership during the period 2013-2014 is presented below and grouped according to key areas of work.

### **A. Coordination in the development of statistics capacities of members and associate members**

4. The Committee on Statistics at its second session in recommendation 2/1 expressed its full support for the proposed strategic direction of 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.<sup>1</sup> The Partnership has been supporting the realization of this goal.

5. The Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics is comprised of experts from member States and organizations of the Partnership. ADB, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Eurostat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the International Monetary Fund, the International Labour Organization and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) have during different periods been involved in the development and implementation of the programme.

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<sup>1</sup> See E/ESCAP/CST(2)/9.

6. The partners have agreed that they can play an important role in securing funds at the regional and national levels for the implementation of the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics. One activity associated with this is to increase shared efforts to raise awareness of the programme among their respective national counterparts. Partners have indicated that the sharing of existing resources of partner organizations, including through further alignment of existing programmes and projects with the Regional Programme that are built around the core set of economic statistics, will be instrumental to its successful implementation.

7. At the fourth meeting of the Partnership, partners advised the Committee to appeal to development partners to dedicate resources and be more actively involved in that initiative.

8. At its fifth meeting, the Partnership suggested that partners be associated with specific domains of the core set; for example, FAO offered to participate in efforts aimed at strengthening capacities to produce statistics in the natural resources element of the core set. The Partnership suggested that other partners create synergies for achieving the aims of the programme.

9. Over the time frame under discussion, partners were updated on progress made by the technical advisory group tasked with developing the core set of population and social statistics. A number of partners participated in that process. Partners were informed that the technical advisory group would welcome greater partner participation in its future work in order to create synergy with other ongoing activities.

10. Several partners are members of the Technical Advisory Group on Population and Social Statistics and progress on the core set of social statistics is regularly shared with the Partnership to ensure synergy with other ongoing initiatives.

11. Partners were updated on the following activities pertaining to environment statistics:

(a) An expert group meeting on this area was held in Bangkok in December 2013. During the meeting, participants collaborated on improvements in environment statistics in the Asia and Pacific region using the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the System of Environmental Economic Accounting as a framework for this endeavour;

(b) Subregional training for national statistical offices and environment ministries on the System of Environmental Economic Accounting was organized in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and Malaysia in September 2013.

12. Partners noted that a regional strategy on environment statistics should be guided by national priorities built around existing global initiatives to facilitate partner collaboration in strategy development and implementation as well as in fundraising.

13. Partners have been continuously updated on the secretariat's involvement in the global review of gender statistics, which is being conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division. This work has led to the implementation of the Development Account project: "Interregional cooperation to strengthen national capacities to measure progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment". The project is closely linked to the Statistical Commission, which is providing

recommendations to the main implementing partners, namely ESCAP, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic and the Social Commission for Western Asia and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In the Asia-Pacific region, the project is developing a regional framework and an associated set of core gender statistics and indicators to serve as the basis for advocacy and technical assistance to improve availability of gender statistics to a selected number of countries.

14. Partners expressed the view that not only statisticians, but also users and agencies working on gender equality and the empowerment of women should be involved in the development of a regional core set. They recommended that in developing a core set and a regional programme on gender statistics, collaboration with ongoing initiatives, such as the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project, a United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women-United Nations Statistics Division project, should be established.

## **B. Promoting improvements in civil registration and vital statistics systems**

15. A number of partners have been involved in the regional efforts to improve civil registration and vital statistics. At the fourth meeting of the Partnership, SPC and UNFPA shared how the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems in the Pacific was facilitated by the Brisbane Accord Group, a partnership comprising of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Fiji National University, the Pacific Health Information Network, SPC, UNFPA, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the University of New South Wales and the University of Queensland Health Information Systems Knowledge Hub, and by the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy. Partners noted that the right combination of expertise and resources possessed by the Partnership, and the strategy of closely working with the stakeholders, including health and civil registration authorities at the country level, had led to the success of the Pacific initiative. Building on that experience, and as a follow-up to the High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which was held in Bangkok on 10 and 11 December 2012, a working group of partners was set up to prepare for the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The members of the working group were ADB, ESCAP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Plan International, the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, UNFPA and World Health Organization.

## **C. Coordination of statistics training**

16. Recognizing the important role that statistics training plays in developing national statistical capacity, the Partnership, at its fourth meeting, supported a recommendation made by the Working Group on the Regional Coordination of Statistical Training to establish an advisory body to coordinate statistical training in the Asia-Pacific region.

17. During the meeting, Partners also expressed a preference for focusing on coordinating statistical training activities aimed at building the long-term capacity of statistical staff, rather than undertaking ad hoc training activities in relation to specific projects. To ensure that, the Partnership agreed that a comprehensive regional assessment of training needs was essential.

18. In a follow-up to the Partners' comments, the Committee on Statistics at its third session endorsed the formation of an advisory group for the

coordination of statistical training, which was later named the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific by the Bureau at its sixth meeting, which was held in September 2013. The Network held its first organizational meeting in Chiba, Japan, from 22 to 24 April 2014. At the sixth meeting of the Partnership, the partners were encouraged to enlist as partners in the Network, given the important role training plays in regional and country programmes implemented by international organizations in the region.

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

19. The Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics was presented to the Partnership at its fourth meeting. The plan, which was developed by countries and partner organizations, is recognized as a good example of fruitful collaboration among partners. ADB, ESCAP and FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific established a regional partnership to coordinate the development and implementation of the plan and the United Kingdom Department for International Development agreed to fund the implementation of the plan, which has moved forward through the signing of a memorandum of understanding between FAO and other participating agencies.

20. During the meeting, partners noted that relevant partner organizations needed to be involved in the implementation of the plan, as key features of it were the establishment of regional centres of excellence in technical areas and a network of training providers. They also noted that there was a gap between the required and available budget, and that efforts to close it would benefit from activities undertaken by partners.

#### **E. Platform for discussions on the development agenda beyond 2015**

21. The development agenda beyond 2015 was a key discussion point during the fifth and sixth meetings of the partnership. The United Nations Statistics Division informed the partners of work being carried out by the Statistical Commission Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress. The Group was established in response to the request of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2013, to launch a programme of work to develop broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decisions.<sup>2</sup>

#### **F. Partner Reporting on Support to Statistics**

22. The Partnership was informed of the findings of the Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS)<sup>3</sup> 2012 and 2013 reports, which provide data on technical and financial support to statistical development worldwide.

23. The partners noted that according to the 2012 report, support to statistical development was increasing globally, but decreasing in Asia and the Pacific. They also pointed out that the report indicated that support to the Asia-Pacific region was too concentrated on a limited number of countries.

<sup>2</sup> See General Assembly resolution 66/288.

<sup>3</sup> The Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS) is a flagship publication of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century. It presents data on technical and financial support to statistical development worldwide and is thus a valuable tool for collaboration.

24. The partners noted that the 2013 report indicated that the donor landscape had continued to lack diversity with the top five providers of assistance amounting to about 90 per cent of total commitments globally. Although, in that regard, the Asia-Pacific region had fared much better in terms of support, due mostly to the launching of a large project in Bangladesh.

25. At the sixth meeting of the Partnership, partners underlined the need for each agency/organization to provide well-consolidated inputs to the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) to ensure that the information published in the Partner Report on Support to Statistics is comprehensive and informative.

### **III. Areas of work for future collaboration**

26. At the fifth meeting of the partnership, the following factors were cited as determinants of successful collaborations in the past:

(a) The area is of importance for each participating partner to achieve its development objectives;

(b) Partners' willingness to adjust or re-interpret their mandates to facilitate alignment of joint efforts;

(c) Existence of a platform (a jointly developed plan or framework for collaboration) that allows each partner to identify its role and contribution;

(d) Strong global leadership;

(e) Interest and involvement by donors;

(f) Linkage between development programmes in different domains of statistics.

27. At the sixth meeting, it was highlighted that the coordination of activities facilitated jointly by the Committee and the Partnership increased the power of regional initiatives to push global action starting from the national level. Using the example of civil registration and vital statistics, it was highlighted how actions taken by governments and agencies in Asia and the Pacific and in Africa over the past five years were having a ripple effect on the global scene, resulting in loud calls for improved alignment of mandates and programmes among relevant agencies.

28. The secretariat has developed the Asia-Pacific Statistics Newsletter to facilitate knowledge-sharing on activities of partners. All members of the Partnership are invited to submit inputs to the quarterly newsletter.

### **IV. Conclusions**

29. The Committee may wish to discuss the work of the Partnership, with a focus on the approach taken by partners to support countries in capacity-building activities. The Committee may also wish to provide guidance on the future work of the Partnership; in particular, how the Partnership can best continue to support the Committee in carrying out its regional initiatives, bearing in mind the emerging development agenda beyond 2015.