



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Committee on Statistics

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Bangkok

**TERMS OF REFERENCE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE
COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS**

(Item 2 of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

Corrigendum

The dates of the session *should read* as above.

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Committee on Statistics

First session

15-17 December 2008

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(Item 2 of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

In its resolution 64/1 of 30 April 2008 on the restructuring of the conference structure, the Commission established eight Committees, including the Committee on Statistics, as part of the subsidiary structure of the Commission.

The present document contains the terms of reference of the Committee on Statistics, as adopted by the Commission in resolution 64/1. To facilitate the Committee's consideration of modalities for its effective and efficient functioning in the Asian and Pacific region, information is presented on the corresponding arrangements for statistics in other regional commissions. Also discussed are factors that could have a bearing on the functioning of the Committee: the historical antecedents of the Committee; recent regional developments in the field of statistics; and the context of United Nations reform. Background information for the organization of the work of the Committee between its biennial sessions has been provided.

The Committee may wish to decide on the action points proposed in the conclusion of the document.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has periodically reviewed and revised its conference structure in order to address the evolving needs of its member States.
2. Prior to 2003, statistical issues had been considered by the following bodies of the conference structure: the Regional Conference of Statisticians of Asia and the Far East (four sessions during the period from 1951 to 1956); the Conference of Asian Statisticians (12 sessions during the period from 1957 to 1973); and the Committee on Statistics (13 sessions during the period from 1974 to 2002).
3. During the period from 2003 to 2007, statistical matters were considered under the auspices of the Committee on Poverty Reduction, which held four sessions, as well as under the Subcommittee on Statistics, which held one session in 2004, as did the other subcommittees in the conference structure of that period.
4. The Forum for Asia/Pacific Statisticians (APEX), an initiative of a group of member States, was convened twice: first in Bangkok in 2005 and then in Daejeon, Republic of Korea in 2006. The ESCAP secretariat made substantive contributions to both meetings. The 2005 meeting was held at the United Nations Conference Centre; the secretariat provided conference-facilities and meeting services.
5. Most recently, the Commission adopted resolution 64/1 of 30 April 2008 on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission. The previous thematic committees, which covered three broad areas, namely, poverty reduction, managing globalization and emerging social issues, were replaced by eight committees with a sectoral focus, including the Committee on Statistics. All committees shall meet once per biennium. The outcomes of committee sessions as contained in their reports will be submitted to the Commission for its consideration. Recommendations of the Committee would become binding on member States and the secretariat once endorsed by the Commission through a decision or a resolution.
6. In accordance with resolution 64/1, the maximum duration of a Committee session is five days. However, following the practice in recent years, a three-day format has been adopted for the current biennium. This means that there will be two days for deliberations, with the final day for the language processing and printing (morning) and adoption (afternoon) of the draft report.

I. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE

A. Generic terms of reference

7. In resolution 64/1, the Commission harmonized the terms of references of its subsidiary bodies and assigned the eight new committees seven common tasks within their respective areas of purview. Below are the generic terms of reference of the Committee on Statistics with respect to statistical matters under its purview:

- (a) Review and analyse regional trends;
- (b) Identify priorities and emerging issues and consult on regional approaches, taking into consideration subregional aspects;
- (c) Promote regional dialogue, including its subregional synergies, and an exchange of experiences on policies and programmes;
- (d) Consider common regional positions as inputs to global processes and promote regional follow-up to their outcomes;
- (e) Propose issues for consideration by the Commission as possible resolutions;
- (f) Monitor the implementation of Commission resolutions;
- (g) Promote a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges of the region, where appropriate, between Governments and civil society, the private sector and United Nations and other international institutions at the regional and subregional levels.

8. Furthermore, within their respective areas of purview, the committees shall provide the secretariat, including its regional institutions, with guidance in reviewing the proposed strategic framework and programme of work. The following areas shall be mainstreamed into the work of all committees:

- (a) Implementation of the relevant internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;
- (b) Poverty reduction and sustainable development;
- (c) Gender equality;
- (d) Priority needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

B. Specific tasks of the Committee on Statistics

9. Each of the eight committees was given specific issues to be addressed in carrying out the above functions. The specific tasks for the Committee on Statistics are:

- (a) Tracking key socio-economic and environmental trends in the ESCAP region, especially progress towards the Millennium Development Goals;
- (b) Identifying data requirements for economic, social and environmental analysis in accordance with internationally agreed standards and good practices;
- (c) Capacity-building for national statistical offices in the ESCAP region to produce, disseminate and analyse data in accordance with internationally agreed standards and good practices.

10. For comparison, the terms of reference of the previous Committee on Statistics are contained in annex I.

11. The Committee may wish to recall that the work of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), as a regional institution, is integrated into the statistics subprogramme of the secretariat (see paragraph 10 above), which will be dealt with under item 3 of the provisional agenda¹ (see E/ESCAP/CST/9). SIAP also has its own Governing Council, which is elected by the members of the Commission and which reports directly to the Commission.² The Governing Council, which is scheduled to hold its fourth session on 11 and 12 November 2008, will consider the draft long-term strategic plan for the Institute for 2010-2014. It may be noted that the duration of the long-term strategic plan for SIAP exceeds the period of the strategic framework of the statistics subprogramme (2010-2011). The long-term plan of SIAP is available to the Committee as an information paper (see E/ESCAP/CST/INF/6).

II. CORRESPONDING ARRANGEMENTS IN OTHER REGIONS

12. All five regional commissions of the United Nations have high-level statistical subsidiary bodies (see table 1). The longest uninterrupted practice is in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, where the Conference of European Statisticians has met annually since 1952. In the other four regions, the statistical bodies hold their meetings on a biennial basis.

13. The Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM-Africa) was established in 2008, at the same time as a comprehensive regional architecture for African statistical development was being designed. Facilitating the initiative was the fact that Africa had been made a top priority of the international donor community, which allocated substantial resources for monitoring development and the development of official statistics in the region. The coordination, cooperation and joint programming mechanisms are being substantially strengthened among the regional stakeholders in Africa, including those mentioned in the terms of reference of STATCOM-Africa and, more specifically, the African Statistical Coordination Committee.

14. In all regions the statistical bodies report to their respective highest-level intergovernmental bodies for economic and social development. It should be noted that the Conference of European Statisticians is the only statistical body of a regional commission that steers its work under joint auspices, namely, those of the United Nations Statistical Commission and ECE.

¹ E/ESCAP/CST/L.1.

² The statute of SIAP was adopted by the Commission in its resolution 61/2 of 18 May 2005. The Governing Council consists of a representative designated by the Government of Japan and eight representatives nominated by other members and associate members of ESCAP and elected by the Commission for a period of five years at a time.

Table 1. Statistical bodies in the conference structure of other regional commissions

| Feature | Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) | Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) | Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) | Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Name of body | Statistical Commission for Africa | Conference of European Statisticians | Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC | Statistical Committee |
| Periodicity | Biennial since 2008 | Annual since 1952 | Biennial since 2001 | Biennial since 1995 |
| Reports to | Annual Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development | Annual session of the Commission; meets under the joint auspices of the United Nations Statistical Commission and the Economic Commission for Europe | Biennial session of the Commission | Biennial ministerial session of the Commission |
| Bureau | Bureau with a chairperson, two vice-chairpersons and two rapporteurs; two-year term, renewable once | Bureau composed of up to eight members, at least six of whom are from the ECE region; two-year term, renewable three times; meets twice a year; chief statisticians of Eurostat, OECD, IMF, the World Bank and CIS-Stat participate in the work of the bureau | Executive Committee with a chairperson and six members; two-year term, renewable twice; meets twice between Conference sessions | Bureau with a chairperson, two vice-chairpersons and a rapporteur; two-year term; chairpersonship rotates according to the alphabetical order of member States |
| Other working bodies | Working groups; Friends of the Chair; the African Statistical Coordination Committee | Teams of specialists: steering groups, organizing committee and task forces | Working groups | Regional Working Group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee |

Sources: E/ESCAP/STATCOM/1/15; Economic Commission for Europe, *Rules and Procedures Governing the Work of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES)* (Geneva, ECE); Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/7 of 25 July 2000 on the establishment of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/1 of 2 February 1993 on the establishment of a statistical committee within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; communications with representatives of the respective regional commissions.

Abbreviations: OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
IMF International Monetary Fund
CIS-Stat Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States

15. Regarding intersessional work, the statistical bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ECE, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) each have a bureau. In the case of ECA, ECE and ECLAC, there is a clear stipulation for the number of terms of office the bureau is permitted. Pursuant to a recommendation of the Statistical Committee at its seventh session (E/ESCWA/SCU/2006/IG.1/12), in 2007 ESCWA established the Regional Working Group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee to meet in the years during which the Statistical Committee does not. The Regional Working Group discusses the latest statistical developments and consults the secretariat on its programme of work and related activities; its first meeting was held in Cairo on 3 September 2007.

16. At ECA, ECE and ECLAC, mechanisms (such as forces, working groups and steering groups) are in place to support the bureau.

III. FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS

17. The generic terms of reference as stipulated in Commission resolution 64/1 enable the Committee on Statistics to address a broad range of statistical issues. The Committee may wish to focus its attention on how it could function effectively in regard to matters including (but not limited to) attendance, as well as working methods, such as those for the setting of agendas, the organizing of its intersessional work and the establishment of the role of its chairperson.

A. Attendance

18. The Committee is primarily a forum for delegations headed by the chief statistician or the most senior statistician of each Government of the ESCAP membership. As the head of the delegation, the chief statistician or the most senior statistician has the authority and expertise to present the position of the national statistical system and plays an important role in coordinating the diverse institutions involved in producing official statistics at the national level. His or her participation in the Committee session is essential to ensure that the views and concerns of each ESCAP member State are properly reflected in the deliberations of the Committee.

19. Following participation in a Committee session, it would be the responsibility of the head of the delegation to report back to the appropriate national authorities and to help disseminate at the country level the outcomes of a Committee session to the institutions concerned with statistics. Including high-level data users and technical specialists in delegations may also be encouraged. This would facilitate the strengthening of producer-user linkages and coordination within national statistical systems.

20. As the Committee on Statistics is the highest-level intergovernmental body concerned with statistics in the Asian and Pacific region, it is also appropriate for heads of statistical services of international agencies and senior representatives of other intergovernmental entities engaged in the development and funding of official statistics to inform the Committee about their work and to heed its concerns.

21. The attendance of delegations at Committee sessions and at any other related intersessional meetings is funded by their respective Governments.

B. Landscape affecting official statistics

22. In recent years, there have been major changes affecting the work of the regional commissions on statistics that the Committee may wish to note: the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, leading to greater demand for evidence-based policymaking and United Nations reform towards system-wide coherence (see annex II), as well as the emergence of statistical forums in support of regional integration agreements.

23. Recent changes in the functions of the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations system are relevant to the work of the Committee. In consonance with those changes, the Committee may need to spend more time discussing strategic issues that affect national policy planning, monitoring and evaluation. The uses of statistics may need to be given more attention, while the work on specific statistical topics may have to be undertaken by its working bodies, should the Committee decide to establish such.

24. The Committee has an important role in facilitating the articulation of an Asian and Pacific voice on the agenda of the United Nations Statistical Commission. Similarly, the Committee would also have an important role in providing the Economic and Social Council with strategic inputs on policy issues, including with regard to the new functions of the Council (including, among other things, the biennial Development Cooperation Forum and the annual ministerial review of progress on the internationally agreed development goals.³

25. The reporting line of the Committee to the Commission⁴ and through the Commission to the Economic and Social Council would involve the consideration of agenda items on not only the production of data, but also, increasingly, on the use of data, especially for evidence-based policymaking. At present, there is no formal requirement for the Committee to report to the United Nations Statistical Commission.

26. Under its generic terms of reference as outlined in Commission resolution 64/1, the Committee is required to “promote a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges of the region, where appropriate, between Governments and civil society, the private sector and United Nations and other international institutions at the regional and subregional levels”. In that regard, all entities with major programmes on statistics development in Asia and the Pacific are invited to attend sessions of the Committee in an observer capacity. The deliberations and outcomes of the work of the Committee, as an intergovernmental body, would be an important source of information for both the agencies and the country delegations. At the same time, the Committee could

³ General Assembly resolution 60/1 on the 2005 World Summit Outcome, para. 155 b and c; para. 156.

⁴ To avoid confusion, when the United Nations Statistical Commission is referred to in the present document, the name is spelled out in full. “The Commission” is used when referring to ESCAP.

consider what prospects may exist for encouraging more effective coordination among all entities with major programmes on statistics development in Asia and the Pacific, with a view to facilitating joint programming and clarification of responsibility for diverse areas of work, towards the advancement of statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

27. Some subregional organizations have strengthened their statistical functions in support of their programmes of economic integration. Furthermore, the number of subregional meetings involving the heads of national statistical offices has also increased. Table 2 lists 10 meetings, three of which are organized annually by the secretariats of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Economic Cooperation Organization and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. While the other meetings do not report to legislative bodies, they serve such important purposes as the exchange of information and good practices, and the strengthening of statistics-related professional networks and bilateral and multilateral relations. Indirectly, they influence the development and implementation of statistical standards and contribute to regional statistical capacity-building. Some subregional, regional and international meetings are also attended at a high level; it can be difficult for chief statisticians and other high-level official statisticians, to fit them all in their calendars.

Table 2. Major regional and subregional meetings in Asia and the Pacific attended by high-level official statisticians

| Meeting | Organizer | Periodicity | Reporting to |
|---|--|--------------------------|---|
| Committee on Statistics | ESCAP | Biennial | ESCAP |
| Governing Council of SIAP ^a | SIAP | Annual | ESCAP |
| Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific | SIAP, ESCAP | Annual | - |
| Forum for Asia-Pacific Statisticians | Countries of the region | 2005, 2006 | - |
| ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting | ASEAN Secretariat | Annual | ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting, through the ASEAN Senior Economic Officials Meeting |
| Regional Meeting of Heads of Planning and Heads of Statistics | Secretariat of the Pacific Community | Biennial | Conference of the Pacific Community |
| Meeting of the Heads of Statistical Organizations of SAARC Member States | SAARC Secretariat | Annual | SAARC Committee on Economic Cooperation |
| East Asian Statistical Conference (formerly the Meeting of the Heads of National Statistical Offices of East Asian Countries) | Statistics Bureau and Director-General for Policy Planning (Statistical Standards), Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan | Every one to three years | - |
| ECO Heads of National Statistical Offices | ECO secretariat | Annual (2008-) | Regional Planning Council of ECO |

| Meeting | Organizer | Periodicity | Reporting to |
|------------------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------|
| Population Census Conference | East-West Centre and the Association of National Census and Statistics Directors of America, Asia and the Pacific | Every one to two years | - |

Notes: For links to most meetings listed in the table, see the electronic version of the present document at www.unescap.org/stat/cst/1/index.asp.

A hyphen (-) indicates that the item is not applicable

Abbreviations: ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations

ECO Economic Cooperation Organization

ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

SAARC South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SIAP Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific

^a The Governing Council has nine elected members. Other countries may attend as observers.

28. With regard to its functioning, the Committee may wish to discuss its linkages with other major regional meetings on statistics. While those meetings may not be formally linked with the Committee, the Committee could consider requesting the ESCAP secretariat to invite the respective representatives to share information on major meeting outcomes that the Committee should take into consideration, to minimize duplication in discussions on issues of region-wide importance.

C. Working method

29. The Committee is the intergovernmental forum of the chief statisticians of the ESCAP membership of 62 Governments. It is within the purview of the Committee to set its own agenda, as well as to design its format in such a way as to be an inclusive forum that most effectively addresses the statistics development needs of its constituents.

1. Agenda setting

30. In the process followed by the Committee on Statistics that existed from 1974 to 2002 (hereinafter referred to as the pre-2003 Committee), several months prior to a session the elected bureau of the Committee developed a provisional agenda with the support of the ESCAP secretariat. The draft provisional agenda was circulated to national statistics offices for comments, which were taken into consideration in further developing the draft provisional agenda. The regional and international agencies that were regularly invited to Committee sessions were consulted informally in setting the agenda. Whenever the agenda included normative and technical cooperation activities under the purview of the agencies, those agencies were formally invited to contribute documents for circulation to the Committee and, as appropriate, to make presentations. The draft provisional agenda of the Committee was submitted to the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission for review and comments. The Committee did not have a long-term programme of work per se. The agenda of the United Nations

Statistical Commission was a major influence in shaping the agenda of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics and its session documentation, since one of the principal functions of the Committee was to prepare a common Asian and Pacific perspective for articulation at the following session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

31. The Committee may wish to consider the most feasible means for it to ensure that the agendas for its sessions will be focused, with clear expected outcomes, and that its work will be results-oriented in the long term.

32. The secretariat's activities are related to regional support for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. In view of the need to ensure the policy relevance of the work of the Committee, the Committee may wish to consider whether it should focus on the holistic development of official statistical systems rather than on technical issues that benefit mainly the established data collection programmes of individual national statistical offices of individual nations. Specific issues include ensuring that emerging needs for statistics are identified in a timely manner and duly reflected in the Committee agenda; whether criteria should be developed for items to be accepted on the provisional agenda; and the type of topics the Committee might consider better handled by its subsidiary working groups.

33. The Committee may also wish to consider the feasibility of preparing a long-term strategic work plan. In this regard, it may wish to refer to the Statistical Conference of the Americas, which, at its fourth meeting, in 2007, approved priorities and a framework for its work for 2005-2015 (LC/L.2715/Rev.1).⁵ The newly created STATCOM-Africa serves as another example of a regional body whose terms of reference not only cover a multi-year programme, but also mention the various regional meetings and bodies that are to be consulted in setting the agenda:

“Prior to each session of the Commission, the Secretariat shall prepare an agenda, which may be based on requests of the Commission at previous sessions, or based on requests by member States or other bodies such as the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, the United Nations Statistical Commission, the ASS Committees, ABSA, ASSD, and FASDEV. In any case, it shall reflect the multi-year programme of work that the Commission shall develop. During each session, the Commission may decide to add additional items to the agenda, based on documentation and discussion at the session, and priorities or problems that may emerge. On the basis of this list, the Commission shall propose a provisional agenda for the next subject to further review by the Commission's Bureau.” (See E/ECA/STATCOM/1/15, para.12)

⁵ Available at www.eclac.cl/deype/publicaciones/xml/4/29614/LCL2715Rev1i.pdf/.

2. Intersessional work of the Committee

34. In accordance with Rule 13 of the rules of procedure of the Commission,⁶ the Commission shall, at its first meeting of each year, elect from among its representatives a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen, designated as First and Second Vice-Chairmen, who shall hold office until their successors are elected. They shall be eligible for re-election. The rules of procedure for the Commission are applicable at the subsidiary (Committee) level, with the difference that those meetings are held biennially. The bureau of the pre-2003 Committee on Statistics had six elected members, representing different subregions of the Commission. The terms of reference for that Committee and its bureau are included in annex I.

35. The Committee may consider whether it wishes to have a bureau continue its work between sessions. If so, the Committee may wish to decide on the role of the bureau and whether to stipulate specific terms of reference for such a bureau. If the Committee wishes to promote the advancement of specific matters, whether related to the coordination of statistical capacity-building initiatives, development and implementation of statistical standards, institutional and managerial development, or other issues, it may consider setting up, or authorizing its bureau to convene, working groups or task forces to undertake specific time-bound work, similar to those in other regions, as indicated in table 2 above. The Committee may also wish to authorize the bureau to establish task forces as may be required for urgent ad hoc work that could emerge between sessions.

36. In considering the coordination and communication required, the Committee may wish to bear in mind the availability of modern communication technologies and collaborative tools, such as blogs, discussion forums and interactive web-based forums (wikis). This would address some financial implications of the work of a bureau, although expenses would still be incurred and these means would not replace the benefits of face-to-face interaction, especially among members of a small group working on critical issues.

37. In the case of the pre-2003 Committee on Statistics, in each biennium, an ad hoc working group of statistical experts met in the year that the Committee did not and reported to it. The agenda of the working group was more technical and less strategic than that of the Committee, as the Former did not have the authority to review programme matters.

38. Other considerations that the Committee may wish to take into account in discussing its functioning are the number of opportunities that exist for informal high-level exchange in the course of other international statistical meetings in the region. It may wish to investigate whether, in alternate years to the biennial sessions of the Committee on Statistics, members States would be prepared to host informal forums such as APEX. If so, the Committee may wish to suggest ways in which the

⁶ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 19 (E/2008/39-E/ESCAP/64/39), annex VI (available at [www.unescap.org/EDC/English/AnnualReports/2008\(64\).pdf](http://www.unescap.org/EDC/English/AnnualReports/2008(64).pdf)).*

secretariat could work with the member State concerned hosting an APEX session to ensure that its outcome would be reported to the Committee.

3. Chairperson of the Committee

39. The duties of a chairperson elected by the Committee are similar to those of the chairperson elected by the Commission.⁷ The Committee may wish to clarify the role of the chairperson with regard to its intersessional work and the setting of the agenda for its next session. In this respect, the Committee may wish to authorize its chairperson to represent it in conveying the outcome of its work in its biennial session, and the views of the Asian and Pacific statistical community to the United Nations Statistical Commission on its annual session, as well as to report back to the Committee on the outcome of such work.

IV. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

40. Bearing in mind the need for the Committee to function effectively within the context of the diversities of the Asian and Pacific region, including contributing to global discussion and standard setting, to be genuinely owned by the Asian and Pacific statistical community, and to achieve tangible outcomes and follow-up on those outcomes, the Committee may wish to consider and decide the following:

- (a) Who will compose the delegations attending the Committee session (see paras. 20-21 above)?
- (b) What linkages could be established between the Committee and other major meetings for statistics development in Asia and the Pacific (para. 30)?
- (c) How may the Committee ensure that the agendas for its sessions will be focused, with clear expected outcomes (para. 33)?
- (d) How would the Committee ensure that emerging needs for statistics are identified in a timely manner and duly reflected in its agenda? Should the Committee develop criteria for items to be accepted on its provisional agenda? What type of topics might it consider better handled by its subsidiary working groups? (para. 34)
- (e) Should the Committee prepare a long-term strategic work plan, and should that plan be linked to the plans of other entities with major statistical programmes in Asia and the Pacific in terms of joint programming and delineation of responsibilities (para. 35)?
- (f) Should the Committee establish a bureau to guide its work and the secretariat's work between sessions, and if so, would the Committee wish to have specific terms of reference developed for it (para. 37)?

⁷ Ibid., Rules 24 through 36.

(g) Should working groups or task forces be set up to undertake time-bound technical work on specific issues (para. 37)? The Committee's deliberations under other agenda items during the session might affect the decision on this point;

(h) In alternate years to the biennial sessions of the Committee on Statistics, would member States be prepared to host informal forums, such as APEX? If so, how might the Committee on Statistics work with the concerned member State hosting such a session to ensure that its outcome would be reported to the Committee on Statistics? (para. 40)

(i) What should be the role of the Chairperson of the Committee with regard to the intersessional work and the setting of the agenda for its next session? Should the Chairperson of the Committee for its biennial session represent it in the annual session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (para. 41)?

ANNEX I

The terms of reference of the pre-2003 Committee on Statistics and its bureau

The 1997 terms of reference of the pre-2003 Committee on Statistics^a

The Committee on Statistics, in acting as the focus of regional statistical development, shall perform the following functions:

1. Review and analyse progress in the development of statistics in the region.
2. Assist in the strengthening of the statistical infrastructure in the countries of the region, promote the improvement of the quality of statistics, the international comparability of data and the appropriate application of new techniques, provide guidance in meeting emerging data requirements, and arrange for the exchange of information on and experiences in statistical work and methods among the countries.
3. Promote observance of the fundamental principles of official statistics adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its special session in 1994.
4. Participate actively in the initiation, development, revision, testing and implementation of international statistical standards, promote and monitor their application, and promote their adaptation, as appropriate, to the conditions and needs of the countries of the region.
5. Play the focal role in promoting close coordination of all aspects of the statistical activities of specialized agencies, relevant United Nations bodies and other international organizations in regard to their work in the Asian and Pacific region, inter alia so as to achieve greater uniformity in concepts and definitions, reduce to a minimum the response burden on national statistical offices, and maximize the effectiveness of technical cooperation activities.
6. Promote the generation and analysis of statistical data and encourage, with due regard to relevant international work, efforts to develop a set of standardized statistical indicators for the region relevant to the programme of work of the Commission.
7. Recommend programmes of technical assistance, training, education and research in the various fields of statistics and their application.
8. Review and analyse progress in the development of information technology applications and information resource management in the region, especially in the public sector, and make recommendations on issues concerning policies and strategies, as well as on programmes of technical assistance, training and research in this field.
9. Review and evaluate the activities of the secretariat and the implementation and effectiveness of the programme of work in the areas of statistics and computerized information processing, provide guidance on the work of the secretariat, and make recommendations to the Commission about the future programme of work, paying due regard to the recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission and other relevant bodies.

^a *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 18 (E/1997/38-E/ESCAP/1080), annex VII (also available at [www.unescap.org/unis/library/ucl/1996-97\(53\).pdf](http://www.unescap.org/unis/library/ucl/1996-97(53).pdf)).*

10. Make recommendations to the Governing Board of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on the nature of and priorities in statistical training for the countries of the region.
11. Inform the United Nations Statistical Commission and, where appropriate, the statistical authorities of the specialized agencies and other relevant bodies, of its work, so that due attention may be given to the wider aspects of the issues considered by the Committee.
12. Work closely with other subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, coordinate activities with them, and ensure that cross-sectoral issues such as the special concerns of the least developed, landlocked, Pacific island developing countries and economies in transition, the environment, human resources development, and women in development are adequately addressed.
13. Carry out such other activities as the Commission may direct from time to time in matters relating to statistics.
14. Within the context of the above terms of reference, the Committee shall identify the tasks to be undertaken during a specified period. The Committee should indicate the outcomes expected from each task, set a time-frame for the achievement of each task and monitor its implementation and effectiveness.
15. The Committee shall meet once every two years and shall report to the Commission.

* * *

The 1996 terms of reference of the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics^b

1. To assist the Committee in overseeing the activities of the secretariat during the inter-sessional period in implementing the objectives and decisions of the Committee.
2. To review presentations from the secretariat of the decisions and resolutions of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and of the Statistical Commission, and to highlight issues of particular importance to the ESCAP region for the consideration of the Committee, together with appropriate recommendations.
3. To review the provisional agenda for the meetings of the Committee as prepared by the secretariat and provide guidance to the secretariat regarding the scope of the documentation for the meetings of the Committee.
4. To guide the secretariat, as necessary, in the coordination of statistical activities in the region through such means as the integrated presentation of programmes of work to the Committee.
5. To represent the Committee, through its Chairperson or such other Bureau member as may be designated in the event of the Chairperson's inability to attend, at meetings for which invitations might be received and which the Bureau considers of relevance and importance to the Committee, in particular the United Nations Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination.
6. To take up any other matter as may be assigned by the Committee.

^b Commission resolution 53/1, annex VII of 30 April 1997 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission.

ANNEX II

The context of United Nations reform

1. In considering its functioning, the Committee on Statistics may take into consideration the context of the system-wide reform of the United Nations. The United Nations Secretariat, including ESCAP, other United Nations agencies and funds, development banks and other agencies have undergone significant changes in their management culture in recent years. The emphasis has been placed on achieving results and working in coordination with development partners. As a result of this emphasis, monitoring and evaluation have become a priority in United Nations programmes and projects, including with regard to work on the Millennium Development Goals and development strategies based on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

2. In its resolution 60/1, the General Assembly outlined ways in which the Economic and Social Council could increase its effectiveness in, among other things, promoting integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences. An annual ministerial review has been added to pursue in depth a chosen cross-cutting theme common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields (see A/63/83, para. 4). The regional commissions, along with their subsidiary bodies, and the United Nations Statistical Commission, as well as other agencies and entities reporting to the Council are encouraged to review their priorities and programmes, taking into account the multi-year programme of work of the annual ministerial review.^a

3. The high-level panel report entitled "Delivering as one" (A/61/583) was aimed at improving, primarily at the country level, the coherence of the United Nations system agencies in delivering results. This has resulted in stronger efforts towards improving programmatic and operational coherence, system-wide participation, in particular by non-resident agencies that do not have country offices, and strengthening accountability. In October 2007, the regional commissions and the United Nations Development Programme signed a Cooperation Framework whereby they agreed to collaborate and complement each other in assisting countries in implementing and achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, sharing knowledge on policy development issues to support national development strategies, and in addressing issues that are transboundary in nature and other issues benefiting from regional or multi-country involvement.

^a In 2008, the review will assess the implementation of internationally agreed goals and commitments related to sustainable development. In 2009, the focus will be on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health.

4. In the management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, several policy directions were outlined. Among other things, the regional commissions were to further develop their analytical capacities to support country-level development initiatives and more intensive inter-agency collaboration at the regional and subregional levels. Regional commissions and other United Nations regional offices were also to strengthen their cooperation through regional coordination mechanisms and increase cooperation with non-United Nations organizations and regional development banks through joint activities and/or co-financing (see E/2008/49, annex).

5. In a response to the high-level panel report “Delivering as one” (A/61/583), the Executive Secretary of ESCAP has revitalized the Regional Coordination Mechanism. The Mechanism has 16 regional offices with country programmes in Thailand, 11 Bangkok-based regional offices without dedicated country programmes in Thailand and eight non-resident members. The Regional Coordination Mechanism is convened and chaired by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, who is mandated to reports on regional coordination of the United Nations programmes in Asia and the Pacific.^b The mechanism involves executive-level (Regional Coordination Mechanism) and operational-level (thematic working groups) meetings.

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^b Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998 on further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.