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

**Second session**

Bangkok, 15-17 December 2010

Item 2(a) of the provisional agenda

**Strategic direction of the Committee on Statistics:**

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

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**Note by the secretariat**

1. The present document presents for the information of the Committee a summary of outcomes of the sixty-sixth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the forty-first session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

**Outcomes of the sixty-sixth session of ESCAP**

2. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held its sixty-sixth session in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 13 to 19 May 2010, with the theme of “Supportive Financial System and Green Growth for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific Region.”<sup>1</sup>

*Appreciation of the role of statistics in development*

3. The Commission, deliberating on a number of issues of pertinence to inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in the region emphasized the importance of statistics development in support of evidence-based policy formulation, development trends analysis and monitoring of progress in achieving development goals.

4. The Commission expressed appreciation to the secretariat for recognizing the fundamental role played by statistics in overall development and noted its support for the secretariat’s work in the area of statistics development, especially in improving measurements of informal employment and the economic contribution of the informal sector, and the

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<sup>1</sup> The complete report of the session (E/ESCAP/66/27) is available at <http://www.unescap.org/EDC/sessions.asp>

collection of data on disability. The Commission expressed an interest in also seeing new areas of work, including statistics on infrastructure and the development of new training curricula. In that regard, it was recalled that the Committee on Poverty Reduction had identified the need for a regional action plan to improve poverty statistics.

5. Reaffirming its important role in supporting the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>2</sup> the Commission requested the secretariat to provide members and associate members with technical assistance to strengthen their capacity for effective implementation and to mainstream a gender perspective in all programmes, including through the development and use of sex-disaggregated data. Responding to concerns about possible duplication of efforts in the broader area of gender statistics, the secretariat noted that work would be carried out in close collaboration with international and regional statistics development partners, taking forward global initiatives by the United Nations Statistical Commission, bearing in mind specific regional realities and country needs.

6. During deliberations on its work at the subregional level, the Commission noted the view expressed that the secretariat should continue its close collaboration in statistical work with subregional statistical entities. Acknowledging the efforts made by the secretariat to strengthen the role of the Pacific island developing countries within the Commission, some delegations highlighted the need for better data to track the progress of Pacific island developing countries towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development and requested the assistance of the secretariat in strengthening national statistical systems.

*SIAP Governing Council elected for the period 2010-2015*

7. On the basis of expressions of interest by several delegations in serving as members, the Commission elected, along with the host country, Japan, the following countries to the SIAP Governing Council for the period 2010-2015: Australia; China; India; Indonesia; Malaysia; Pakistan; Republic of Korea; and Thailand.

*Congratulations to SIAP*

8. The Commission congratulated the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its fortieth anniversary and expressed strong appreciation for the fact that the capabilities of national statisticians had been improved through the training programmes of the Institute. Several delegations expressed continued interest in working closely with SIAP to conduct country-level training, including through the provision of national training facilities for hosting subregional and regional training courses. Some delegations called on all members and associate members to increase their sense of ownership of SIAP; increased financial support to the Institute would allow it to sustain and expand its training activities.

9. The Commission expressed support for the new directions incorporated into the work programme of SIAP for 2010-2014 endorsed by the Governing Council at its fifth session, which emphasized skills-based training and the further development of the e-learning mode for the delivery

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<sup>2</sup> Commission resolution 66/9 on the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its regional and global outcomes in the Asia-Pacific region.

of training. Referring to the report on an evaluation commissioned by ESCAP in 2009 to assess the operations and work programme of SIAP, the Commission encouraged the use of the report, especially by the Governing Council, in further guiding the work of SIAP.

### **Outcomes of the forty-first session of the United Nations Statistical Commission**

10. The United Nations Statistical Commission held its forty-first session at United Nations Headquarters from 23 to 26 February 2010. The Asia-Pacific region was represented in the Bureau of the session through the representatives from Australia and the Russian Federation, who served as Vice-Chairs. The following extract of decisions made by the Commission emphasizes decisions that are of direct relevance to the ongoing work of the Committee or otherwise highlight action at the regional level.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Agricultural statistics*

11. The Commission reviewed a Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics developed by the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics. Appreciating the efforts by Brazil, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank and all members of the Friends of the Chair Group, the Commission endorsed the technical content and the strategic direction of the Global Strategy.

12. The Commission urged the expedited development of an implementation plan aimed at strengthening the national agricultural statistical system, including governance arrangements at the global, regional and national levels.

13. Further to the development of the implementation plan, the Commission recommended that particular attention be paid to the integration of agricultural and rural statistics into the national statistical systems and also recognized that the implementation of the Global Strategy would require mobilization of significant resources. In that regard the Commission welcomed the financial and technical support provided by countries, the donor communities and technical cooperation agencies.

14. The Commission requested the Friends of the Chair group to report back to the Commission at its forty-second session on progress made in the development of the implementation plan.

#### *International Comparison Programme*

15. The Commission reviewed the status of the preparations for the 2011 round of the International Comparison Programme, including institutional and partnership arrangements for its implementation at the regional level and its timetable. It expressed its appreciation to the World Bank for preparing the status report and coordinating and devoting resources towards Programme implementation, and to the regional

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<sup>3</sup> The complete report on the forty-first session of the Statistical Commission is available through <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/commission.htm>

coordinating agencies, including the Asian Development Bank, the Global Office and the Executive Board, for their work.

16. The Commission approved the objectives of the 2011 round of the Programme, which included broadening the geographical scope of the programme from 146 to about 170 participating countries, better addressing users' needs, enhancing the economic relevance of the programme and the ICP-related statistical capacity building activities, and increasing data quality and reliability, making ICP a transparent process. It noted that the successful implementation of the Programme hinges significantly on regional consultation and therefore urged the regional coordinating agencies to actively engage their member countries to participate in the Programme and take the necessary preparatory steps.

17. Approving the expansion of the Programme, the Commission urged the Global Office and the regional coordinating agencies to speed up resource mobilization efforts so that a maximum number of countries could participate in the 2011 round. The Commission also reiterated that the Programme requires the concerted efforts of regional, bilateral and national institutions and urged all partners to provide support to countries with lower statistical capacity.

#### *National accounts*

18. The Commission reviewed and expressed its appreciation to the Inter-secretariat Working Group on National Accounts for its work in steering the development of the System of National Accounts, 2008 (2008 SNA).

19. It supported the request made by the Working Group for countries to formulate appropriate strategies and programmes in building statistical and institutional capacity to implement the 2008 SNA and to improve the scope, detail and quality of national accounts and supporting economic statistics.

20. It also expressed support and appreciation to the Working Group for continuously engaging the regional commissions and other regional agencies in the implementation of the 2008 SNA and welcomed initiatives by the regional groups to lead the early formulation of regional strategies and programmes for such implementation.

21. The Commission stressed the importance of sustained training of national accountants and called on regional and subregional training organizations to work with the Working Group to coordinate and scale up training efforts, to support a knowledge base on training material on national accounts and supporting statistics, and to seek the early harmonization of training material based on agreed best practices.

22. In reference to inter alia, the Stiglitz report and the communication by the European Union entitled "GDP and beyond: measuring progress in a changing world", the Commission requested the Working Group to reassess the research agenda of the 2008 SNA and provide the Commission with a list of actions and themes for future research work at its forty-second session.

23. In developing the implementation programme of the 2008 SNA, the Commission recommended that attention be paid to availability of basic and sectoral statistics as well as adjustments based on national circumstances,

and that the reasons for the slow progress and factors that hampered the implementation of the 1993 SNA be studied with a view to formulating appropriate recommendations.

#### *Development indicators*

24. The Commission expressed appreciation for the work done by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals indicators and by the United Nations Statistical Division to improve the transparency of methodologies for estimates and the coordination of national monitoring, addressing the discrepancies between national and international data and using new technologies, such as Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange for Millennium Development Goals indicators. The use of such indicators was welcomed as an important tool for improving and reporting on the Goals.

25. The Commission recognized the increased use of country data in the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals, and supported further increases. Endorsing the work done to solve discrepancies between national and international sources, it recognized that countries should ultimately have full ownership of monitoring data.

26. The Commission expressed concern that full consultation was lacking between countries and international agencies in the case of the expansion of the Human Development Index. It particularly regretted the lacking consultation with the Statistical Commission and would, if recommended by the Bureau of the Commission after consultations with the Human Development Report Office, assess the methodological soundness of the proposed Human Development Index, the appropriateness of the data used and the conclusions drawn therefrom, at its forty-second session.

#### *National quality assurance frameworks*

27. The Commission emphasized the importance of national quality assurance frameworks and supported the development of a template that would focus on national statistical systems and be sufficiently flexible to take into account national circumstances.

28. Recognizing that a template would be only the first step towards a full quality management programme, the Commission supported the establishment of an expert group on quality assurance with proper regional representation and stressed the importance of engaging users in consultation processes.

#### *Statistics of international trade in services*

29. The Commission adopted the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010 (MSITS2010) and endorsed the associated implementation programme, proposed by the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services.

30. The Commission urged that the national implementation programme be carried out as a coordinated effort of national statistical offices, central banks and other relevant Government offices, and encouraged all relevant international agencies and the United Nations regional commissions to contribute to the implementation of MSITS2010.

*Inventory on Global Statistical Standards*

31. The offer of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico to provide the inventory of global statistical standards to the international community, in order to transform it into a globally managed database, was warmly welcomed by the Commission. It was agreed that the inventory would be posted on the website of the United Nations Statistical Division as a common reference tool.

32. The Commission welcomed the proposal by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities to create a mechanism for the further development and maintenance of the inventory, and requested the Committee to propose a proper classification of global statistical standards and report on progress to the Commission at its forty-second session.

*World Statistics Day*

33. The Commission endorsed 20 October 2010 as the date for the first World Statistics Day with the theme of “Celebrating the many achievements of official statistics” and the core values of service, integrity and professionalism.

34. The Commission urged all Member States to observe the Day and to organize related activities with institutes of their national statistical systems, researchers, academia, media and other users of statistics. It also appreciated the initiatives that had been planned at the regional and international levels in observance of the World Statistics Day.

*Other decisions and information items*

35. In addition to the above, the Commission decided on issues pertaining to international merchandise trade statistics, environment statistics, environmental accounting, global geographic information management and regional statistical development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

36. Further, the Commission was informed of developments and initiatives in a number of areas, including population and housing censuses, the Washington Group on Disability Measurement, the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, integrated economic statistics, statistics capacity-building and coordination and integration of statistical programmes.