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

Second session

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Item 7(a) of the provisional agenda

Reports brought to the attention of the Committee:

Bureau

Report on the activities of the Bureau since the first session of the Committee

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the work carried out by the Bureau in implementing the decisions and recommendations of the Committee at its first session.

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I. Methods of work

1. The Bureau of the Committee on Statistics (the Bureau) met twice during its tenure. The first meeting was held back-to-back with the fortieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in New York on 25 February 2009.¹ The following members of the Bureau attended the meeting: Mr. Rusman Heriawan (Chair), Mr. Du Weiqun (representing Mr. Ma Jiantang), Mr. Brian Pink and Mr S.K. Das (representing Mr. Pronab Sen). Ms. Haishan Fu, Mr. Jan Smit and Mr. Artur Andrysiak of the secretariat assisted the Bureau at the meeting.

2. The second meeting of the Bureau was held back-to-back with the forty-first session of UNSC in New York on 23 February 2010. The following members of the Bureau attended the meeting: Mr. Sunari Sarwono (representing Mr. Rusman Heriawan, Chair), Mr. Ma Jiantang, Mr. Brian Pink, Mr. S.K. Das (representing Mr. Pronab Sen) and Mr Alikhan Smailov. Ms. Haishan Fu, Ms. Davaasuren Chultemjamts and Mr. Jan Smit of the secretariat assisted the Bureau at the meeting.

3. The Bureau also held a teleconference on 3 June 2010, which was attended by Mr. Brian Pink and Mr. Du Weiqun (representing Mr. Ma Jiantang); and communicated periodically through e-mail to exchange views and ideas, and to make joint decisions.

4. Mr. Artur Andrysiak of the secretariat served as the Secretary of the Committee on Statistics and provided direct support to the Bureau throughout its tenure.

II. Follow-up on the decisions and recommendations of the Committee at its first session

A. Procedures for the election of the Bureau

5. In accordance with decision 1/1 of the Committee on the establishment of the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics, the Bureau spent a considerable amount of time preparing the proposal for the principles and procedures concerning the election of the Bureau for future sessions of the Committee. At its first meeting, the Bureau decided that, to assist it in its work, the secretariat would conduct, by the end of May 2009, a review of the relevant practices of other regional statistical committees/commissions and that the Bureau would have its proposal ready to share with all Committee members in early 2010.

6. At its second meeting, the Bureau reviewed the practices of other regional statistical committees/commissions for electing their respective Bureaux and deliberated on a set of possible principles and procedures to guide the election of the Bureau. The Bureau decided that, with support from the secretariat, it would prepare and submit a draft proposal to the Committee members for consultation and approval prior to the second session of the Committee and that the approved procedure would then be followed for the nomination of Bureau members for the second session of the Committee, at which the proposed principles and procedures

¹ Minutes of the meetings and the teleconference of the Bureau are available from www.unescap.org/stat/cst/cst-bureau.asp.

would be formally adopted by the Committee and a new Bureau would be elected accordingly.

7. On 24 May 2010, a letter from Mr. Rusman Heriawan, Chair of the Committee on Statistics and Chief Statistician of Indonesia, was sent to all Committee members, along with the proposed principles and procedures concerning the election of the Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, seeking their feedback on the proposal. In all, 10 Committee members contacted the secretariat via e-mail or fax regarding the proposed principles and procedures. In addition, representatives of the Permanent Mission to ESCAP of one Committee member met informally with the secretariat and discussed the proposed procedures.

8. Following the consultation, the Bureau revised the proposal by taking into consideration all of the feedback received. The final proposal is contained in document E/ESCAP/CST(2)/1 and was followed by the Bureau in initiating the process of nominating members of the Bureau for the second session of the Committee.

9. On 27 August 2010, a letter from Mr. Rusman Heriawan was sent to all Committee members, along with document E/ESCAP/CST(2)/1, seeking their nominations for the next Bureau. The deadline for submission of nominations was 30 September 2010. Following receipt of the nominations, the Chair will prepare a proposal for the next Bureau in appropriate consultation with all Committee members to maximize the chances of it being adopted by consensus.

B. Vital statistics

10. In accordance with recommendation 3 of the Committee on Statistics on producing population estimates on an annual basis: the central role of vital statistical systems, and as proposed in document E/ESCAP/CST/6 and Corr.1, the Bureau discussed at its first meeting the development of a work programme to improve vital statistics and civil registration in the region. The Bureau welcomed the secretariat's efforts in linking this work with the statistical capacity-building component of the tripartite ADB/ESCAP/UNDP regional Millennium Development Goal programme and agreed that a regional forum on vital statistics and civil registration among national statisticians, health experts and civil registrars should be organized in collaboration with other international and regional partners, including the AusAid-funded Health Knowledge Hub at Queensland University, Australia. It was further agreed that Mr. Brian Pink would first discuss the subject with Queensland University prior to a planning meeting with potential partners, to be organized by the secretariat in May 2009.

11. At its second meeting, the Bureau took note of the background document prepared by the secretariat and was briefed by the secretariat on the progress made thus far and the work planned to develop a regional programme for the improvement of vital statistics. The Bureau expressed its support for the work done and planned, and decided to place the vital statistics programme on the agenda for discussion at the second session of the Committee.

C. Economic statistics

12. In accordance with Committee decision 1/2 on an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region, and as proposed in document E/ESCAP/CST/5 and Corr.1, the Bureau discussed at its first meeting the establishment of a technical advisory group (TAG) on the development of economic statistics.

13. In April 2009, the Bureau endorsed the terms of reference of the technical advisory group. On 15 July 2010, a letter was sent by the secretariat inviting nominations of experts from the Committee members and development partners for participation in the technical advisory group.

14. The Bureau subsequently reviewed the nominations received and the Technical Advisory Group on the Development of Economic Statistics was established in August 2009 with economic statistics experts from Afghanistan, Australia, India, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, New Zealand, ADB, the ASEAN Secretariat, the ECO Secretariat, Eurostat, FAO, IMF and SPC.

15. At its second meeting, the Bureau took note of the background document prepared by the secretariat and was briefed by the secretariat on the progress made thus far and the work planned to develop a regional programme for the improvement of economic statistics. The Bureau expressed its support for the work done and planned and decided to place the regional programme on economic statistics on the agenda for discussion at the second session of the Committee.

16. In July 2010, the Bureau endorsed the revised terms of reference of the Technical Advisory Group and its membership. These changes followed the decisions of the Group at its meeting in December 2009. The Group decided to amend its terms of reference to better clarify its role and responsibilities. Furthermore, it revised its membership to strengthen its capacity to provide advice to the Bureau and the ESCAP secretariat. Following these changes, the Technical Advisory Group included experts on economic statistics from Australia, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, New Zealand, ADB, the ASEAN Secretariat, the ECO Secretariat, Eurostat, FAO, IMF and SPC.

17. Under the guidance of the Bureau, and following an extensive consultation process with national and international experts, the Technical Advisory Group prepared the proposed core set of economic statistics, as presented in the document E/ESCAP/CST(2)/4. The proposed core set defines a clear and achievable target for the region by identifying the minimum set of economic statistics that all countries in Asia and the Pacific should have the capacity to produce by 2020, taking into account their varying needs.

18. The Technical Advisory Group has also played a key role in the development of the regional programme for the improvement of economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and the assessment framework for the region-wide assessment of the capacity of national statistical systems in Asia and the Pacific to produce basic economic statistics.

III. Preparations for the second session of the Committee on Statistics

A. Feedback on the first session of the Committee

19. At its first meeting, the Bureau welcomed the idea of receiving a summary of feedback on the first session of the Committee on Statistics and suggestions for future improvements. It was agreed that the secretariat would provide a summary of feedback on the first Committee session for the Bureau's review.

20. At its second meeting, the Bureau took note of the relevant background document but was not able to discuss in detail the lessons learned from the first Committee session due to time constraints. The Bureau agreed, however, that the

criteria for selecting agenda items and time management in conducting the sessions were issues that required more attention.

B. Timing and duration of the second session

21. The Bureau took note of the dates suggested by the secretariat and decided that the preferred dates of the second session of the Committee were 15-17 December 2010 and that the duration of the session—three days—should remain unchanged.

22. In deciding the dates of the Committee session, the Bureau also took note of the plan to organize, back-to-back with the Committee session, the sixth session of the SIAP Governing Council, the inaugural meeting of the coordination mechanism for statistics development partners, and possibly a third meeting of the Bureau.

C. Agenda

23. At its second meeting, the Bureau suggested that agricultural statistics, the International Comparison Programme and the modernization of statistical information systems should also be considered as potential topics for inclusion in the agenda of the second session of the Committee.

24. The Bureau decided to continue its discussion of the agenda electronically with support from the secretariat. The secretariat stressed the need for the agenda to be finalized before the end of June so that all necessary documentation could be prepared on time.

25. During the teleconference on 3 June 2010, the Bureau reviewed the latest draft of the proposed agenda for the second session. Based on the recommendations made during the teleconference, a revised annotated provisional agenda was prepared by the secretariat (see E/ESCAP/CST(2)/L.1).

D. Side event: Modernizing statistical information systems

26. The Bureau supported the secretariat's proposal to organize a side event on the subject of modernizing statistical information systems (morning, 17 December 2010) and agreed that the event would be co-organized with countries, including Australia, Kazakhstan and possibly New Zealand. Australia also agreed to assign the First Assistant Statistician, Methodology and Data Management Division, ABS, to be the focal point for the organization of the side event.

IV. Other work

A. Coordinating support for statistics development in Asia and the Pacific

27. At its first meeting, the Bureau discussed the issue of improving the coordination of the statistical capacity-building activities of the international agencies that are active in the Asia-Pacific region. The Bureau supported the idea of setting up an informal coordination mechanism among these agencies. The Bureau decided that the secretariat should pursue such an arrangement with the agencies concerned and convene the first meeting in conjunction with the second session of the Committee.

B. Functioning of the Committee and the Bureau

28. At its second meeting, the Bureau discussed the functioning of the Committee and its Bureau, and raised the following issues:

1. Relationship between the Committee on Statistics and the SIAP Governing Council

29. The secretariat drew the Bureau's attention to the relationship between the Committee on Statistics and the SIAP Governing Council, as stipulated by the terms of reference of the Committee on Statistics, as contained in document E/ESCAP/CST/1 and Corr.1. It was noted that the SIAP Governing Council reported to the Commission under the current conference structure of ESCAP and that changes could only be mandated by the Commission.

2. Possible establishment of a conference of Asia-Pacific statisticians

30. The secretariat raised the possibility of establishing a conference of Asia-Pacific statisticians in the future, which could be particularly beneficial in creating synergies between the statistics work programmes of ESCAP and ADB in promoting statistics development in the region. The Bureau decided to defer discussion of the issue until after the second Committee session.

3. Desirability of a multi-year programme for the Committee

31. The Bureau supported the idea of developing a multi-year programme for the Committee and agreed to further discuss the possibility during the preparation of the agenda of the second Committee session.

C. Regional celebration of World Statistics Day

32. During its teleconference, the Bureau supported the secretariat's proposal to organize an exhibition of posters from member States on World Statistics Day as a regional celebration activity. The exhibition would then be shown during the second Committee session. It was agreed that the secretariat would invite all Committee members to contribute posters or other materials that had been prepared by countries for World Statistics Day or national statistics days.

33. It was also agreed that, as part of the regional celebration activity, ESCAP would consider broadcasting in Bangkok the China/United Nations Ceremony at the Shanghai World EXPO, which was held on 20 October at the United Nations Pavilion of the World EXPO Shanghai 2010.