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Strategic direction of the Committee on Statistics**Subregional developments in official statistics****Note by the secretariat*****Summary*

ESCAP member States include a broad range of countries in terms of statistical capacity, geographic location, size and level of development. International dialogue on monitoring and accountability for the development agenda beyond 2015 has highlighted the need for a multi-tiered monitoring and review framework that encompasses national, subregional, regional and global monitoring.

The present paper contains an overview of the perspectives on statistical capacity development, including priorities and challenges for official statistics, of two groups of countries, namely: the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States that fall within the North and Central Asia ESCAP subregion; and the countries of the Pacific subregion. The paper also highlights existing subregional monitoring mechanisms for internationally agreed development goals and statistical capacity development initiatives.

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I. Introduction

1. This paper highlights recent statistical developments in the CIS countries, as well as 22 Pacific countries and territories. Part II of this paper is based on a recent review of the *Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy* (2011-2020) and guidance provided by the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSSC) in coordinating TYPPS implementation. Part II of this paper also includes contributions from the PSSC Chair. Part III documents the statistical systems and activities of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States that fall within the North and Central Asia ESCAP subregion.

II. The Pacific

Background

2. In the Pacific, statistical capacity development is guided by the *Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy* which was adopted by the Heads of the Pacific Islands Countries and Territories national and territorial statistical agencies at their triannual Pacific Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) meeting in July 2010. The TYPPS development was initiated by SPC following the call from Pacific Leaders in the original *Pacific Plan* and the recognition by Pacific Forum Economic Ministers at their 2009 Meeting of the need for a regional approach to elevate the level of statistical development in the Pacific region. The TYPPS provides the framework for improving the range, timeliness and quality of official statistics through statistical compilation and analysis, national statistical planning, donor coordination and better resource utilization.

3. The TYPPS identifies a number of sectoral priorities and outline a series of short and long-term programs to contribute to national statistics capacity development and regional coordination and capability. TYPPS implementation was decided to be progressed through phased action planning, Phase-1: 2011-2014; Phase-2: 2015-2017; Phase-3: 2018-2020. A Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSSC) was established to monitor the implementation. The PSSC is currently composed of representatives from national statistical offices, ministries of planning and representatives from development partners.

4. TYPPS Phase-1 focused on building the capacity to achieve six objectives: (a) countries undertake key statistical collections as scheduled; (b) countries produce an agreed core set of statistics across key sectors; (c) countries have the national capacity (or national capacity supplemented with regional capacity) to undertake agreed core and some specialist statistical functions; (d) national and regional statistics are accessible and are being utilised; (e) new and innovative statistical tools and systems are introduced; and (f) national and regional statistics governance is functioning effectively.

5. In 2013, a review of the TYPPS Phase-1 was completed and presented to the Pacific Heads of Planning and Statistics meeting in July 2013. Based on the review and an in-depth consultation process, an independent design team was commissioned to prepare a strategic action plan for Phase-2 (2015-2017), which was endorsed in principle by PSSC in October 2014.

Achievements

6. The development of the TYPSS was a major achievement for statistical development in the Pacific. The same can be said for it being implemented jointly by Pacific island countries and territories and a number of regional partners, including the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC), the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st century (PARIS21), Statistics New Zealand (SNZ), the University of the South Pacific (USP), the World Bank and the United Nations system.

7. The TYPSS Phase-1 review highlighted that since its start in 2011, there had been considerable achievements in the statistical capacity of national statistical systems; the availability of, and better access to, national and regional data through SPC's Prism website and NMDI database; improvements in data quality and timeliness, and access to a broader range of statistics and development indicators, with greater disaggregation by gender and other socio-economic dimensions, as well as at different levels of geography. The progress was achieved through stepped-up efforts to undertake more regular national statistical collections, as well as growing financial support from development partners. A few key achievements include:

a. Of the fifteen Pacific island countries and six territories targeted under TYPSS, every single one completed at least one census during the 2010 round of censuses, and most completed a census report, including a comprehensive demographic analysis. Furthermore, four countries completed a demographic health survey (DHS) and five countries completed a household income and expenditure survey (HIES) between 2011 and 2014.

b. The countries in the region have worked collaboratively with SPC to develop a detailed future plan for core data collections over the coming three years.

c. The *Brisbane Accord Group*, a consortium of technical agencies, universities and professional networks, has been highly successful in raising the profile of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) in the region. And its close collaboration with countries and territories in the implementation of the *Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan* (2011-2014) has resulted in both a growing regional commitment to improve CRVS, and in tangible outcomes in several countries.

d. Sharing of skills and resources across the region has been improved, including through South-South technical assistance implemented by SPC. This involves technical support from one NSO to another. Recent examples include Vanuatu statisticians providing expertise to the Cook Islands and Solomon Islands with scanning of their census data; Samoa assisted Tuvalu with management support for census field work, and supported Niue in the compilation of their national accounts; and Fiji assisted several countries with improving their business registers and processing their Household survey data. Plans are in place to expand this initiative in facilitating professional attachments of NSO staff to another NSO – the first one planned for April 2015.

e. National account production across the Pacific has improved in timeliness, quality, methodology and regularity, thanks to stepped-up activities by PFTAC and SPC.

8. The achievements in statistical capacity are partially due to a growing recognition by Pacific island governments of the importance of statistics, with commensurate improvements in resources allocations in some countries. Additionally, a number of national and regional leadership initiatives and technical trainings have resulted in improved national statistical system leadership and management by the senior staff.

9. Progress in statistical capacity has also benefited from improved partner coordination, with the PSSC adding tangible value, and the ability of some partners, including SPC, to provide external support which is flexible and responsive.

10. Despite these many achievements, gains are reversible and possibly not sustainable in all cases. Statistical achievements and success require long-term political support. The countries that have made the most progress are also those where the NSOs have solid budgetary support from their Governments, allowing them to undertake core collections on a regular basis. These are in the minority, with most Pacific island countries and territories struggling to self-finance the HIES or DHS, and some having to also rely on external financial support to a population and housing census, which in all countries is mandated by law.

Priorities and challenges

11. Pacific island Governments, and national statistical offices, have emphasized that a national strategy for statistics (such as a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, *NSDS*) is essential for guiding national statistical capacity development. In this regard, a national strategy must be country owned and driven by national priorities; build on accountable and transparent partnerships; maximize the utilization of resources and efficiency; focus on innovation, common systems and standards, and leverage off change; include a commitment to excellence and quality; and focus on clear and achievable outcomes.

12. Phase-2 of the TYPSS highlights the need to move toward a broader focus from National Statistical Offices (NSO) to National Statistical Systems (NSS). This is in recognition of the fact that integrated and coordinated systems are required for improving both statistical production and the use of statistics. Pacific NSS's need to engage more with data users to foster national level policy analysis and monitoring of interventions and improve coordination between members of the NSS. This is particularly important for the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). SPC and Paris21 have been assisting countries to develop National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). As of early 2015, three countries have completed their NSDS, one is nearly there, two other countries appear on track to complete their design by the end of 2015, with further developments planned in four countries during 2015-2017.

13. The Pacific has experienced a growing demand for statistics, but national resource allocation is not commensurate with the increase in demand. For this reason, improving administrative data and associated management information systems, and pursuing technological advances and innovations for statistics are essential. Additionally, continued dedicated financial support to statistics remains a priority. This has been recognized as necessary by Pacific island countries (as highlighted in last year's SAMOA Pathway statement at the 3rd Conference of Small Island developing States in Samoa), and will become even more critical as the post-2015 development agenda rolls out.

14. The Pacific has seen great achievements in social statistics, but further improvements in economic statistics, food security, environment and climate change statistics and other emerging areas is necessary for providing the information necessary for integrated policy making and monitoring, including monitoring of the SDGs.

15. In the Pacific, development partners have made an important contribution to the progress in statistical development; however, greater coordination is necessary to reduce duplication and ensure that resources are effectively utilized, aligned with national priorities and encourage synergies. The *Brisbane Accord Group* for CRVS provides a model for such coordination.

16. In addition to the priorities of the Pacific in terms of statistical capacity, there is also a need to continue to monitor statistical capacity across the region. Many countries lack experienced mathematical statisticians, data analysts, economic statisticians, communications personnel and programmers.

17. Phase-2 of the TYPSS is guided by the vision for: “*A core set of statistics that informs the development of all Pacific island countries and territories, supports regional benefits and is respected and utilized in global reporting.*” To implement this vision, TYPSS Phase-2 is guided by five major objectives:

a. “Pacific island countries and territories have the technical capacity (either in-house capacity or through timely accessible technical support), to manage and implement all core statistical collections, including key administrative databases, as required by national development plans, including national strategies for the development of statistics.

b. Pacific island countries and territories are producing the agreed core set of statistics across key sectors including but not restricted to economics, population, CRVS, education and health, as required by their national plans and agreed-upon regional and international reporting frameworks, with timely analysis and dissemination of results to national users.

c. All countries and territories have in place some form of national statistics strategy or plan in line with their national development strategies.

d. National level statistic stakeholders are advised on an ongoing basis about emerging statistical tools and systems, processes for effective data analysis, communication and quality assurance and Pacific interaction and proposed responses to international statistical standards.

e. National and regional statistics governance is functioning effectively.

- Technical assistant inputs are in line with country and territory priorities, transparent to all stakeholders and are delivered efficiently across the region.
- Pacific leaders receive recommendations about priorities for statistical collections at national and regional level with accompanying data about resource and technology requirements
- TYPSS phase 2 operates in a coordinated and efficient manner with the best use being made of available technical assistance and informed progress assessment being made available to PSSC.”

Conclusions

18. The Pacific has a detailed regional plan for the development of statistics, the TYPSS, and a regional governance mechanism to guide plan implementation. There is a need to build synergies and information exchange between the Pacific sub-region and the wider Asia-Pacific region to further advocate for the need for statistics for evidenced-based policy making, to provide a platform for exchanging information, best practices and innovations in statistics across Asia and the Pacific, and to ensure that Pacific countries have a strong voice in regional and international intergovernmental fora.

19. The demands on NSSs across the Asia-Pacific region are high; and will increase with the post-2015 development agenda. In the Pacific the reality is that national priorities and statistical information needs must take precedence, noting that some countries do not and possibly will never, have the national resources to compile basic statistics not including many of the indicators required for international development reporting.

III. The countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States that fall within the North and Central Asia ESCAP subregion

Priority areas of statistical activities in CIS countries covered by the ESCAP subregion

20. At present, the NSOs of CIS countries, including the countries of the ESCAP sub-region North and Central Asia, are working towards developing and strengthening their statistical systems to respond to the transition to statistical standards and methods used in countries with market economies. This work is facilitated by the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), which was created to coordinate activities of NSOs of the CIS, assist them in strengthening their statistical capacity, develop common methodological recommendations in the field of statistics, and facilitate the exchange of information.

21. In recent years, the NSOs of CIS countries included in the ESCAP sub-region, as well as the NSOs of other CIS countries, have been working actively in the field of economic, social and demographic statistics. There are several important parts of this work, including the implementation of 2008 SNA as a basis for the development of the System of National Accounts, participation in the global round of the International Comparison 2011 on the basis of purchasing power parities, international comparisons in the CIS region based on data for 2014, work within the project for the development of agricultural and rural statistics in the CIS region and the project on labor statistics in the CIS region.

22. Implementation of 2008 SNA is not seen as a goal in its own right, but rather as a mechanism to improve the statistical system as a whole and to ensure international comparability of data. At present, the implementation of the 2008 SNA in CIS countries is in early stages, though some countries have developed strategic plans for its implementation and the relevant activities are being conducted.

23. CIS-STAT provides substantive support to the national implementation of 2008 SNA. CIS-STAT specialists translated into

Russian the UN Manual “System of National Accounts 2008”. From 2011 to 2012, CISSTAT prepared and circulated recommendations with respect to the implementation of the main provisions of 2008 SNA covering a variety of activities, including the calculation of financial intermediation services indirectly measured (FISIM), the estimation of the output of central banks, the treatment of research and development expenditures, the treatment of insurance services (except for life insurance), the treatment of research and development as capital formation, and the capitalization of expenditures on military weapons systems. Countries actively adopted recommendations developed by CIS-STAT; for instance, Azerbaijan (since 2012) and Kazakhstan (since 2011) calculate the FISIM; and Azerbaijan has adopted the recommendations of the 2008 SNA to adjust GDP for non-observed economy on the basis of main elements of GDP utilization.

24. It should be noted that at present the development of satellite accounts is in its infancy. Individual countries have piloted the compilation of ecological, tourism and health accounts. However, as a rule, the development of these accounts is not carried out by government statistics agencies. It also appears that the comprehensive estimation of housing rent is one of the issues for the further development of GDP in CIS countries.

25. Over the past few years, CIS countries have performed important work in relation to the 2011 round of the international comparisons of GDP programme (ICP) on the basis of purchasing power parities (PPP). The role of the ICP coordinator in the CIS region was carried out by CIS- STAT in partnership with Rosstat. Within this project, efforts were made to improve the methodology of comparisons in the CIS region, discuss and coordinate the basket of goods, and organize the regional collection of average national prices for the baskets of goods of participating countries. The project also involved analyzing the aggregate data, calculating aggregates, and holding meetings amongst national accounts experts from CIS countries. By participating in the global round of comparisons, NSOs of the CIS countries have gained extensive experience and created effective potential for further rounds. Considering the central importance of PPPs for international comparability of GDP data and its main components, the heads of national statistical offices supported the proposal of the CIS Statistical Committee to conduct the international comparison of GDP in the CIS region based on data for 2014. The work began in the same year.

26. Production of PPP for CIS countries is jointly carried out by national statistical offices and the CIS-STAT. This is a large scale and costly initiative that entails preparation and coordination of a basket of goods, the development of the comparison methodology, the collection of price statistics, as well as testing, adjustment, and calculations.

27. From 2015 to 2017, the program will be focused on the following: organizing meetings of experts from CIS NSOs to verify and reconcile data on prices for investment and consumer oriented goods; calculations of purchasing power parities for consumer–orientated and investment goods and sharing them with participating countries for their consideration; organizing a meeting of experts of CIS NSOs on the disaggregation of GDP; compilation of results of comparisons. Monitoring of data collection on prices for consumer and investment goods and its quality will be carried throughout the whole project implementation.

28. Development of agriculture, rural and labor statistics are among the priorities of the CIS NSOs. Problems in the sector of agricultural and rural statistics are relevant not only for the CIS countries, but also for countries

in other regions of the world. In these circumstances, the CIS-STAT represents one of the regions currently engaged in preparatory work, or having already launched the project “Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.” As part of the global strategy, CIS-STAT developed the project “Development of agricultural and rural statistics in the CIS region”, launched in 2014. The main issues to be addressed within this project include the following: a methodology for annual cost calculation; calculation of production account for agricultural production, hunting and forestry; balance sheet for food supplies to determine food consumption per capita; calculation of production services for IPP; development of classifications of crops and live-stock; harmonization with the EU Statistical Classification of products; structural surveys (including censuses) in agriculture; systems of agri-environmental indicators and methodology of their formation in accordance with international standards; data collection in accordance with the core set defined in the “Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics”.

29. Along with the issues to be addressed in the framework of the Global Strategy, there are questions related to agricultural statistics that require attention in some CIS countries. For example, the Agency on Statistics of Tajikistan experiences difficulties with compiling balance sheets for the most important kinds of food products. In Kyrgyzstan, there are significant disparities between the current account and the data obtained from the agricultural census, especially in relation to the calculation of livestock.

30. Another priority area for the NSOs of the CIS is the development of labour statistics. The key component of labour statistics is the labour force survey, the methodology of which is developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO). At present all CIS countries conduct labour force surveys. It should be noted that ILO has provided extensive expert services to CIS countries to carry out surveys.

31. In 2012, the ILO Statistics Department presented to CIS-STAT a draft Development Strategy of Labor Statistics in the CIS region. The strategy was comprehensive and encompassed methodological improvements, pilot surveys of labor migration and employment in the informal sector, training activities, and international exchange of information. This strategy formed the basis for the CIS-STAT project “Development of Labor Statistics in the CIS region”, launched in 2014.

32. The main objectives of the project are to support the CIS countries in strengthening their national systems of labor statistics, to enable collection of reliable data, and to facilitate international exchange of information. The project will result in better availability of methodological materials on topics most relevant for countries. These materials will be based on international standards, with consideration of the best practices of foreign countries and national peculiarities of the CIS states.

33. The main methodological developments within the project include: recommendations for use of methodological guidelines on measuring labor activity, employment and underemployment; recommendations for improving the wage statistics and labor cost statistics and time use statistics in line with international practice; overview of international experience in measuring labor migration on the basis of sample surveys; recommendations for improving measurement of employment in the informal sector.

34. Based on the fact that the data used to compile Labor Statistics in the CIS are formed using a variety of statistical surveys, among which the census and sample surveys of the population are placed at the center, one of the priorities of the CIS NSOs is to embark on preparations for the population and housing census in 2020. Since independence, the CIS countries have already held two rounds of national population censuses that resulted in collection of a variety of economic characteristics of the population disaggregated by different characteristics, along with the population data to design samples for labor market surveys.

35. At the same time, the international statistical community is extremely concerned about the fact that Uzbekistan is the only country in the Commonwealth that has not carried out a population census, either for the 2000 or 2010 rounds.

Strengthening statistical capacities of CIS countries covered by the ESCAP sub-region

36. **Azerbaijan.** The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan carries out its work in accordance with the State Programme on improvement of the Official Statistics 2013-2017 approved by the President. The main directions of the Programme are: improvement of the System of National Accounts, further development of socio-economic statistics, reduction of the response burden and improvement of its work with users of statistical data, creation of a unified statistical information system, high-quality statistical management by government statistical agencies and strengthening their material and technical base, and enhancement of international cooperation. Previous programs aimed at reforming statistics to address the realities of the market economy have been successfully implemented. The economic reforms over the past 20 years have strengthened international relations and significantly facilitated the quality enhancement of statistics in Azerbaijan and its transition towards methods and standards applied in countries with market economies.

37. **Armenia.** At present, the statistical activities of Armenia are conducted in accordance with the Law on State Statistics and the Work Programme for the Development of Statistics for 2013-2015, developed on the basis of recommendations from the assessment of the national statistical system, undertaken by Eurostat, UNECE and EFTA in 2009. The work program provides for the strengthening of statistical methodology in the areas of system of national accounts, price statistics, business statistics, energy, transport, agriculture, environment, labor market and household surveys. In addition, it envisages modernization of data collection and processing, modernization of information and communication technologies, strengthening the central and regional statistical infrastructure and building capacities of statisticians.

38. **Kyrgyzstan.** Statistical activities of Kyrgyzstan are based on the Strategy for the Development of Statistics for the period of 2013-2017. This strategy is designed with a view to building an effective information management system for the National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic covering the same period and has been approved by the President. The Strategy builds upon recommendations of the global assessment of the national statistical system in Kyrgyzstan, conducted in 2012 by international experts from UNECE and EFTA. The Strategy envisages the following: improving the legal framework of statistical production; developing information and communication technologies;

modernizing the production of statistical data; enhancing statistical intellectual capacity; strengthening international cooperation; and monitoring of the Strategy implementation. Within these, the following activities are planned for implementation: improving production of the national accounts; upgrading the existing systems of data collection and processing; designing software to create a database of reports submitted electronically or on paper; using of primary administrative data for statistical purposes; introduction of advanced methods of dissemination of official statistical information; development of software for statistical information using modern technologies; introduction of the electronic library; development of methodological accounting guidelines on volume turnover in the informal sector of trade and services; development of a unified system of health statistics indicators; creation of a single unified electronic system of statistical monitoring of the activities of educational institutions.

39. **Russian Federation.** The goal of the Federal State Statistics Service is to provide relevant and reliable statistical information to the President of the Russian Federation, as well as to its authorities, organizations and citizens, and to international organizations. This information is used by authorities to inform management decisions pertinent to the economic and social development of the country.

40. The Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation carries out its activities in accordance with the Federal Law titled “On Official Statistical Accounting and State Statistics System in the Russian Federation,” as well as the Federal statistical work plan. In 2014, based on data from more than 250 federal statistical surveys, the Federal State Statistics Service completed 640 works on production of official statistical information related to social, economic, demographic, environmental and other social processes in the Russian Federation. With regards to large-scale activities, in 2014 the Federal State Statistics Service has been working on preparation for the sample statistical survey “Socio-demographic survey (micro census) 2015”. In addition, the Federal State Statistics Service carried out preparatory activities for the all-Russia Agricultural Census 2016. An annual monitoring of economic losses resulting from mortality, morbidity and disability along with a number of federal statistical surveys on socio-demographic trends, characterizing the living conditions of the population were undertaken. Aside from that, steps have been taken to organize and conduct sample household surveys on economic activity, employment and unemployment. In October 2014, the federal statistical survey “Census in the Federal District of Crimea” was organized and covered 100 per cent of the population; its preliminary results were reported in November 2014.

41. **Tajikistan.** The work of the Agency on Statistics of Tajikistan is guided by the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2012 - 2016 approved by the Government of Tajikistan.

42. The project TAJSTAT-2 has been developed and is being implemented on the basis of the Strategy while focusing on the improvement of statistical activities in the country. The project comprises the following areas of statistical development: strengthening the institutional capacity of the Agency on Statistics and the National Statistical System; modernization of statistical production; enhancement of the dialogue between data producers and users; strengthening the material and technical base of statistical agencies; and improving information and communication technology and the automation of data procession.

43. In 2014, the Agency on Statistics completed the first phase of processing agricultural census data and the preparation of analytical materials on its results. In accordance with the request of the President of the Republic, the Agency continued activities aimed at improving the methodology of ICP calculation in line with the international standards; monthly statistics on food prices were provided to the Government. In cooperation with international organizations, the Agency developed a methodology for poverty assessment based on international standards. The relevant databases were developed in order to improve the quality of vital statistics. In collaboration with UNFPA, the Agency organized a training workshop for young professionals on the coding of causes of death according to the International Classification of Diseases. In cooperation with the World Bank, the Agency organized a training workshop on household surveys and a workshop on the household budget survey and relevant software. The presentation of the results of child labor survey was carried out in cooperation with ILO.

44. **Turkmenistan.** Activities of Statistical Service of Turkmenistan are carried out in accordance with the Program of development of the economic, financial and banking system of Turkmenistan for the period of 2012-2016, approved by the President of the country in 2012. The program provides for: the coordination of activities between state statistics authorities and other agencies; quality enhancement of statistical data; introduction of internationally agreed principles, indicators and methods; development of internationally comparable statistical indicators that fully reflect the development of society; continued integration into statistical production of modern technologies of data collection, procession and dissemination.

45. During 2012-2014, the Statistical Service of Turkmenistan had been working towards strengthening the methodological foundation of statistical development; improvement of existing and development of new forms of reporting and statistical tools. Integrated measures were undertaken to implement 2008 SNA. For this purpose, methodological recommendations for compilation of “input-output” tables were prepared; and methodology for calculating the volume of gross output, value added and intermediate consumption in agriculture was improved. With participation of the World Bank experts, the Statistical Service prepared a methodology for conducting sampling statistical surveys to inform the development of “input-output” tables; developed a methodology for calculating FISIM, as well as guidelines on measuring the non-observed economy in the regions (based on a sample survey of paid public services). Within the World Bank-supported project on strengthening the statistical capacity of Turkmenistan to participate in the next round of the ICP, the State Committee on Statistics of Turkmenistan has reached an agreement with the Turkish Statistical Institute on ICP cooperation. Currently, with the support of United Nations Development Programme, the Statistical Service is implementing the project to assess the capacity of national statistical system of Turkmenistan.

46. Information from **Kazakhstan** and **Uzbekistan** is pending.