Report of the Second Meeting of Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific

9 September 2011 – Eurostat, Luxembourg

Chair: Mr. Christophe Lefranc, UNFPA, Co-Chair of the Partnership
Participants: See Annex I

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

Mr. Christophe Lefranc, UNFPA and Co-Chair of the Partnership welcomed the participants to the meeting. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda
2. New initiatives for statistics development in the Asia-Pacific region: Coordination of statistical training
3. Terms of Reference of the Partnership
4. Information sharing mechanism: Outcome of the PRESS assessment
5. Partnership implementation strategy & plan for 2011-2012
6. Other matters/Next meeting

2. New initiatives for statistics development in the Asia-Pacific region: Coordination of statistical training

Mr T. C. A. Anant, Chief Statistician and Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India, and member of the Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, represented the Chairperson of the Committee, who is a member of the Partnership. Mr Anant briefed the meeting on the work of the Working Group on Coordination of Statistical Training, which had been established following a decision at the second session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, held in December 2010. The Working Group is chaired by Mr Anant.

The Working Group had been tasked with developing a strategy for the improved coordination of statistical training in the Asia-Pacific region. The WG was developing a questionnaire for countries and training institutions to clarify training needs and current use of core skills frameworks (such as the framework developed by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP)) or other frameworks for curriculum development and planning of training.

Mr Anant sought the interest of Partners to contribute to the efforts of the WG by sharing information on current programmes in countries and in various areas of
statistics, and through commitment by each organization to coordinate for the improved provision of statistical training. Mr. Anant would circulate, through the secretariat, a short questionnaire on the training programme of each partner as inputs for developing the strategy for the improved coordination of statistical training in the Asia-Pacific region.

Eurostat shared information on ASTRA (Assessment of Statistical Training), a demand side tool for national statistics institutes to measure internal training requirements and for educational and training institutions to measure demand for their statistics training. ASTRA was under finalization.

FAO highlighted the extensive training component of the Global Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Statistics, and noted that the efforts of the WG would be much relevant to the Asia-Pacific regional implementation plan for the Global Strategy, which was under development.

UNIDO shared information on statistical training provided under their country projects, which included the implementation of standards such as ICIS. Current gaps in training included sampling techniques; also more training was needed in a number of countries, including in the Central Asian and South Asian regions.

PARIS21 pointed out that the African region has established a similar working group called AGROST — the African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources — and offered to share their documentation to inform the creation and work of the Asian group.

Decision: The meeting agreed that Partners should engage with the Working Group in the coordination of statistical training at the country and regional level; including through sharing information on their training activities and reviewing the draft strategy developed by the Working Group.

3. Terms of Reference of the Partnership

Decision: The partners confirmed the Terms of Reference for the Partnership, as it had been circulated on 18 January 2011, underlining that the Partnership remains open to all international and bilateral partners. ¹

4. Information sharing mechanism: Outcome of the PRESS assessment

¹ See http://www.unescap.org/stat/partnership/TOR-Partnership.asp
ESCAP provided an overview of the findings of the assessment of suitability of PRESS (the Partner Report on Support to Statistics) as an information sharing tool for the Partnership.

The assessment had concluded that PRESS was suitable for the purpose and recommended a number of improvements, which had been circulated to Partners for review and comments. The recommendations had in general been well-received; reservations were expressed by some Partners to the recommended sharing of tentative information as well as to mandatory reporting of sub-categories.

On the basis of the feedback received, the Co-Chairs had circulated a proposal to Partners for their consideration; the meeting approved the proposal.

PARIS21, the author & custodian of PRESS, agreed to implement a number of the recommendations, and provided an overview of improvements already made. Among others, an Asia-Pacific extract or “spin-off” report would be produced in conjunction with future global PRESS reports. It was proposed to dedicate a section in the spin-off report to training activities. PARIS21 clarified that current arrangements (information collection and dissemination through PRESS) would continue in parallel with the announced improvements. Also, the improvements would apply to all regions. PARIS21 would explain the changes made in the forthcoming PRESS report.

Partners noted the importance of country commitment & PARIS21 remarked that a country-based PRESS, the “CRESS” (Country Report on Support to Statistics) was being developed through pilots in Africa and possibly later in Asia.

In discussing experiences by UNFPA in reporting to PRESS at the global, regional and country level, the need for coordination within reporting institutions to ensure correct and complete information was highlighted; the possible involvement by UNCTs to improve information at country level was mentioned.

Participants finally noted that, although information contained in PRESS is useful, it may however not be sufficient for collaboration to be initiated and succeed, in particular as some donors do not currently report to PRESS.

Decision: The meeting approved the proposal by the Co-chairs; that the two recommendations where reservations had been expressed would not be pursued further; and that a separate section on training would be published by PARIS21 in the annual Asia-Pacific “spin-off” report. Partners also agreed that additional information sharing in specific areas of cooperation will be introduced as necessary.

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5. Partnership implementation strategy & plan for 2011-2012

The meeting considered a draft implementation strategy, prepared by the Partnership Co-Chairs and ESCAP.  

The Partners supported the suggested approach which was phased and built around the development of core sets of statistics or indicators in different domains (economic statistics, agricultural statistics, social statistics, etc.). Ongoing efforts to develop indicator frameworks for “post-MDGs” and measurement of well-being could inform & influence the composition of core sets. It was stressed that work on economic statistics should be integrated with efforts to build capacities for implementing the SNA2008 (System of National Accounts, 2008), and the need for further activities on business registers & agricultural statistics was highlighted. 

The meeting confirmed their support to the strategic objectives identified at the first meeting of partners, including the coordination of statistical training, which would entail a permanent system for documenting and sharing information on statistical training (see also agenda item 2), and advocacy (see paragraphs 9 & 10 in the draft implementation strategy), which was considered an opportunity for “quick wins”. The Partners noted that a high-level, regional advocacy event on civil registration and vital statistics was planned to be organized by ESCAP, WHO and other collaborators in November 2012. They also noted that the Virtual Statistical System, developed by the World Bank, could be a useful training resource and that advocacy on the role of the NSO as the leader of national statistical systems would be central to successful implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. 

The meeting stressed the importance of NSDSs (National Strategies for the Development of Statistics) as a tool for strategizing & coordinating interventions and ensuring country ownership, coherence and initiative, relevant to all strategic objectives set out by the Partners. 

It was noted that the Partnership, rather than identifying its own activities, would function as a network to share information and galvanize collaboration among partners, and would support ongoing or future initiatives undertaken by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics. 

Summary: The meeting supported in general the proposed implementation strategy; recognized the importance of developing core sets of statistics; considered the coordination of statistical training a top priority; supported the regional programmes to improve economic, agricultural and rural statistics; expressed interest in engaging with ESCAP in the development of a core set of social statistics; supported continued focus on  

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statistical advocacy, including support for the planned event on civil registration and vital statistics.

6. Other matters/Next meeting

Partners noted December 2011 (Japan) or February 2012 (New York) as possible dates & venues for their next meeting.

Decisions: It was agreed that a proposal for the next meeting would be circulated together with the present draft minutes, for consideration by Partners. It was agreed to continue to circulate all material from the secretariat and the Co-Chairs to organizations that fit the criteria for membership of the Partnership, in the spirit of the informal, networking status of the Partnership.

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Annex I

Second Meeting of the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia and the Pacific

9 September 2011
Eurostat, Luxembourg

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

MEMBERS

INDIA

Mr T. C. A. Anant, Chief Statistician and Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, New Delhi

UNITED NATIONS BODY

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND (UNICEF)

Mr Claes Johansson, Senior Adviser, Data Dissemination and Global Administrator, DevInfo, Statistics and Monitoring, UNICEF, New York

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)

Mr Christophe Lefranc, Technical Adviser, Population and Development (Data & Census), UNFPA, Bangkok

Mr Ralph Hakkert, Technical Advisor Population and Development Branch, New York

SPECIALIZED AGENCY

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)

Mr Pietro Gennari, Director, Statistics Division (ESS), FAO, Rome

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF)

Mr Andrew Kitili, Assistant to the Director, IMF, Washington D.C.
23 November 2011

UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (UNIDO)

Mr Shyam Upadhyaya, Chief Statistician, Statistics Section, Strategic Research and Economics Branch, UNIDO, Vienna

WORLD BANK GROUP

Mr Grant Cameron, Manager, International Statistical Programs, Washington DC

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

PARIS21, OECD

Mr Eric Bensel, Administrator, OECD, Paris

STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (EUROSTAT)

Mr James Whitworth, Head of Unit D2 "International Statistical Cooperation", Eurostat, Luxembourg

Mr Ernesto Azorín Mínguez, Head of Section "Asia and Latin America", Unit D2, Eurostat, Luxembourg

Mr Marco Ginestro, Desk Officer, ALA section, Unit D2, Eurostat, Luxembourg

Ms Martina Bogdeva, Statistical Officer, ALA team, Unit D2, Eurostat, Luxembourg

Ms Morag Ottens, Statistical Assistant, Cooperation with Higher Income Countries: Russia, Canada, Chile and Mexico, Advisory Group for the co-ordination of EU technical co-operation, Unit D2, Eurostat, Luxembourg

OTHER ENTITIES

STATISTICAL ECONOMIC SOCIAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES (SESRIC)

Ms Munevver Nilgun Egemen, Senior Researcher, Statistics and Information Department, SESRIC, Ankara
UK DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID)
Ms Frances Harper, Senior Statistics Adviser, Glasgow

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SECRETARIAT (ESCAP)

Ms Haishan Fu, Chief, Statistics Division (SD)
Ms Rikke Munk Hansen, Chief, Statistical Information Services Section (SISS), SD

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