

## **Fifth meeting of Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific**

6 September 2013 – Ankara

### **REPORT**

Chair: Mr Eduard Jongstra, UNFPA

#### **1. Welcome**

In welcome the participants, the Chair recalled that the Partnership had been established following a recommendation by the UNSC to strengthen collaboration among development partners operating in Asia and the Pacific for greater, combined impact.

The agenda, which included discussion on achievements by the Partnership to date as well as areas for further collaboration, was adopted.

The ESCAP secretariat updated the Partnership of decisions taken by the Committee on Statistics at its third session in December 2012 and the actions taken by member States, partners and the secretariat to implement those decisions.

#### **2. Achievements<sup>1</sup>**

The UNFPA, FAO, and the secretariat provided an overview of achievements through partner collaboration in the areas of civil registration and vital statistics, agricultural and rural statistics and the development of an NSDS in Myanmar (see Annex 2 for details).

It was put forward that one or more of the following factors had been determinants for successful collaboration:

- The area is of importance for each participating partner to achieve its development objectives;
- Partners' willingness to adjust or re-interpret their mandates to facilitate alignment of joint efforts;
- Existence of a platform (a jointly developed plan or framework for collaboration) that allows each partner to identify their role and contribution;
- Strong global leadership;
- Interest and involvement by donors;
- Linkage between development programmes in different domains of statistics.

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<sup>1</sup> Discussion on agenda item 2 did not cover population and social statistics due to lack of participation of relevant agencies.

### **3. Moving forward: Strategic opportunities for stronger collaboration**

#### **a. Economic Statistics**

The secretariat presented the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics under which a capacity screening of economic statistics in 48 Asia-Pacific countries had recently been carried out. The results of the capacity screening, together with the overwhelming interest expressed by countries in the region to participate as members of the Steering Group for the Programme and identify national focal points, showed the need and opportunity for multiple partners to contribute to the implementation of the Programme.

In reference to the Core Set of Economic Statistics, which underpins the Programme, it was put forward that the Programme was very comprehensive and ambitious. Successful implementation would require combined and scaled-up efforts by countries and development partners.

It was suggested that partners could be identified by elements of the Core Set; for example FAO offered its participation in strengthening capacities to produce statistics in the natural resources element of the Core Set.

Noting that the Chair of the Regional Steering Committee for the Global Strategy to Improve Rural and Agricultural Statistics is a member of the Steering Group for the Programme on Economic Statistics, opportunities to integrate the implementation of the related parts of the Core Set, as they pertain to data originating from ministries of agriculture, were highlighted.

Noting that the Core Set is fully aligned with the Global Programme to Implement SNA2008, it was suggested to clarify this link, and seek further synergy with the work of the IAWGSNA.

It was noted that some elements of the Core Set call for non-UN partners and non-government entities to be involved, such as the IMF and central banks. The G-20 Data Gaps Initiative, managed by IMF, was mentioned as one ongoing programme that could possibly contribute to the implementation of the Programme.

It was suggested that the ICP could be used to strengthen capacities in some parts of the Core Set. In addition to the already ongoing collaboration between ESCAP and ADB in the context of the ICP, the World Bank offered its support directly from its Global Office.

Partners recommended that advocacy materials about the Programme - such as the brochure and country sheets distributed at the meeting<sup>2</sup> - better clarify the strategy for implementation, outlining sequencing, priorities and domains, and indicating implementation focus at national, subregional and regional levels. One approach could be to outline what countries consider the most important elements of the Core Set for the SNA and use this to prioritize or sequence implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> Available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/index.asp>

The ECB shared their very positive experience in using harmonized reporting templates as the basis for improvement effort to get to the necessary level of technical detail.

#### **b. Environment Statistics**

The ESCAP secretariat informed partners of an upcoming expert group meeting on environment statistics, which would be held in Bangkok during 1-3 December 2013. The meeting would, on the basis of presentations and discussions on assessments of a variety of domains of environment statistics in selected countries, initiate collaboration for improvement of environment statistics in the Asia-Pacific region, using the FDES and the SEEA as frameworks for collaboration.

The secretariat also informed partners of a scheduled SIAP/ESCAP sub-regional training for NSOs and environment ministries on the SEEA, organized in collaboration with UNSD and Malaysia, 23-27 September 2013.

It was put forward that environment statistics is produced by a multitude of government agencies and that the topic thus lends itself to collaboration at national and international level. Different development partners could make use of their respective government constituencies to forge the necessary collaboration across government entities, beyond the NSOs, and lend their technical expertise on elements of the FDES to effective collaborative support to countries.

Partners noted that a regional strategy should be guided by national priorities. Building the regional strategy around existing global initiatives would facilitate partner collaboration in strategy development and implementation as well as fundraising. The Climate Change Adaptation Fund was mentioned in this regard.

#### **c. Post 2015 development agenda and Rio+20 follow-up**

UNSD, in referring to the multiple discussions on the post 2015 development agenda which had taken place during the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the CCSA, briefly introduced the agenda item. UNSD referred to the work being done by the Statistical Commission Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress (FOC) which was established as response to the request of the Rio+20 conference to look into complementing GDP in order to better inform policy decisions.

Partners took note of the upcoming SIAP Management Seminar, which would be held during 21-22 November 2013 under the theme: "Positioning statistics as a development imperative: Opportunities in the context of formulating the post-2015 development agenda". The Seminar would be a unique opportunity for the statistical community of the region to influence the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda.

#### **d. Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia-Pacific**

The secretariat informed partners of the formation of a regional advisory group for the coordination of statistical training in Asia and the Pacific, which had been decided by

the Committee on Statistics at its third session in 2012. Outlining the plan to form a small advisory group and a larger network to implement decisions by the advisory group, partners were asked to advise on how best to ensure presentation and involvement of development partners.

It was noted that training is a major component of regional and country programmes implemented by international organizations in the region. Given that a number of development partners have multiple offices in the Asia and the Pacific region, and that the definition of “region” varies from organization to organization, one challenge would be to find appropriate measures to coordinate among country, subregional and regional offices of partners.

#### **e. Gender Statistics**

The secretariat informed partners of ESCAP’s work on gender statistics in the region, which included the newly initiated Development Account project: “Interregional Cooperation to Strengthen National Capacities to Measure Progress in Achieving Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” involving ESCAP, ECE and ESCWA and a steering group chaired by UNSD. In the Asia-Pacific region, the project will develop a regional framework and associated set of core gender statistics and indicators that would serve as the basis for advocacy and technical assistance to improve availability of gender statistics to a selected number of countries. Partners were invited to participate in the implementation of the project.

#### **4. Other matters**

It was decided that the report to the UNSC at its 45<sup>th</sup> session in 2014 should include a summary of achievements by the Partnership during its 4 years of operation. The secretariat would prepare a draft for circulation and comments by partners.

It was also decided that the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Partnership would take place in conjunction with the 45<sup>th</sup> session of the UNSC.

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## **Annex 1**

Fifth meeting of Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific  
6 September 2013 – Ankara, Turkey

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

#### **UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT**

*Department of Economic and Social Affairs*

Mr Stefan Sweinfest, Acting Director, United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD),  
New York

Ms Sabine Warschburger, Statistician, UNSD, New York

#### **UNITED NATIONS BODY**

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#### **SPECIALIZED AGENCIES**

*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*

Mr Pietro Gennari, Director, Statistics Division, FAO, Rome

*The World Bank*

Mr Olivier Dupriez, Lead Statistician, Washington DC

*United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)*

Mr Valentin Todorov, Information Management Officer, Vienna

#### **INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

*European Central Bank (ECB)*

Mr Werner Bier, Deputy Director-General Statistics, Frankfurt

*Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States  
(CISSTAT)*

Ms Liubov Kazina, Moscow

*Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)*

Ms Margo Cointreau, Programme Coordinator, PARIS21, Paris

*Statistical, Economic and Social Research Training Centre for Islamic Countries  
(SESRIC)*

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*United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*  
Ms Margurita Guerrero, Chief, ESCAP Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific  
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## **Annex 2**

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### **Achievements of the partnership during 2010-2013**

#### *Information note*

#### **Civil registration and vital statistics**

##### High-level Meeting on Strengthening CRVS in Asia and the Pacific, December 2012

- Over 230 senior officials from the civil registration, health and statistics sectors of 46 countries attended the High-level Meeting to reach consensus on a Regional Strategic Plan and steps moving forward.
- Successfully arranged by an Organizing Committee of 20 partners.
- The High-level Meeting directly led to the passing in 2013 of ESCAP resolution 69/15 on strengthening CRVS, sponsored by the Philippines and co-sponsored by Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Japan and Turkey.
- The resolution calls for a Regional Ministerial Meeting on CRVS in 2014 to foster further regional cooperation and commitment in this area. 17-21 November 2014 has been set as the tentative date for the Ministerial Meeting.
- An Asia-Pacific Regional Steering Group for CRVS is under establishment, as called for by the resolution.

##### Regional Strategic Plan to Improve CRVS in Asia and the Pacific

- The Regional Strategic Plan, developed by a sub-group of the Organizing Committee, was endorsed by the Committee on Statistics in December 2012; that endorsement was subsequently broadened to government beyond the national statistics systems through ESCAP resolution 69/15.

##### Country progress

- 48 countries have conducted a rapid assessment of their CRVS system.
- 26 countries are at various stages of a comprehensive assessment. 5 have been completed (Indonesia, Maldives, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste).

#### **Agricultural and rural statistics**

- ADB, ESCAP and FAO collaborated to support the Steering Group for Agricultural Statistics (SGAS) in developing the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (the RAP). The plan is crafted based on assessment of capacities and constraints of the agricultural statistics systems in the Asian and Pacific countries. It maps out activities to integrate agricultural statistics systems of countries into the national statistics systems.
- The RAP has been endorsed by the Committee on Statistics, the Asia-Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics, and the Global Steering Committee. Donors have committed to supporting the implementation of the RAP. A total of

13.8 million USD was allocated to its implementation over 2013-2017. DFID is the main donor supporting the RAP as of now.

- The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) has been established to oversee the implementation of the RAP. The RSC have had their first meeting in April 2013 in which they approved the work plan and budget for 2013 and selected Bhutan, Indonesia, Samoa and Sri Lanka as priority countries for implementation in 2013.
- FAO RAP, ESCAP (SIAP) and ADB are coordinating the implementation of the Technical assistance, Training and Research components of the RAP respectively. The first activity under the training component – a workshop on the core set of agricultural and rural statistics organized by SIAP – took place in August 2013 in the Republic of Korea.

### **Population and social statistics**

- In December 2012, the Committee on Statistics endorsed a core set of population and social statistics to guide efforts in improving national statistical capacity, noting the core set was “an important global milestone in the area of social statistics development”. The Commission then recommended in resolution 69\16 that the core set of population and social statistics be used by member and associate member States as a guide in the development of their national statistical systems.
- The Partnership has provided vital inputs to the above process. ADB, ILO, SPC, UNESCO and UNODC are members of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) that was established by the Committee to provide recommendations on the strategic direction and guidelines of national and regional efforts in the area of population and social statistics. The TAG developed the core set comprising 11 domains of population and social statistics and consulted with the wider Partnership on its relevance over a wide range of policy and line ministry interests. The feedback from the consultation was the basis of the core set proposed by the TAG to the Committee for its consideration and endorsement, and subsequent Commission resolution.
- The TAG continues to build on its successes and is finalizing a capacity framework which specifies the aspects of a well functioning National Statistics System required for the production of high quality population and social statistics. This framework will serve as the basis for national and regional capacity building activity.

### **Development of NSDS in Myanmar**

- A group of partners, collaborating since 2012, facilitated by ESCAP, have committed to support statistical development in Myanmar through the provision of financial and technical assistance in the development of the first NSDS (National Strategy for the Development of Statistics) for Myanmar and other statistical capacity building needs.

- The group of development partners seeks to be guided by the Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Cooperation in working together to provide coordinated support to the Government of Myanmar on statistical development. The group currently includes the following: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), European union (EU), Eurostat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Italian National Institute of Statistics (iStat), the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (PARIS21), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Statistics Korea, Statistics Sweden, United Nations Country Team in Myanmar (UNCT), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and World Bank (WB).
- As a framework for cooperation, joint proposals have been formulated by the group of partners on (i) steps to design and implement the NSDS in Myanmar, and (ii) responding to other data and capacity-building needs for the Myanmar statistical system, and were submitted to the Minister for National Planning and Economic Development for consideration and feedback. The feedback received on the proposals was positive.
- As part of the collaborative support from partners, the World Bank has mobilized funding under the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB) to support the core components of the NSDS process. Similarly, ADB has begun implementation of a Technical Assistance project for statistical capacity building under an ADB administered Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction funded by the Government of Japan. Other partners are considering possibilities to provide technical and financial support in various stages of the NSDS process as well as to address other statistical capacity building needs identified by the Myanmar Government Ministries.
- Partners have provided the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, under which the Central Statistical Office is placed, with support in the development of the terms of reference for the establishment of a national oversight body for the NSDS. Recently a National Level Body for Statistics has been formed under the chairmanship of the Minister for National Planning and Economic Development.
- Partners are waiting to initiate the relevant processes for the NSDS at the earliest convenience of the Government of Myanmar.

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