

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Statistical Committee  
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Beirut, 29-30 January 2019

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

**Proposed programme plan for 2020 in the field of statistics****Summary**

The present document contains the proposed programme plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for 2020 in the field of statistics. Statistical activities are implemented under subprogramme 5 of ESCWA on statistics for evidence-based policymaking. The proposed ESCWA programme plan for 2020 was endorsed by the Executive Committee of ESCWA at its fifth meeting held in Beirut, on 18 and 19 December 2018. It will be presented to the United Nations Secretariat for adoption in 2019.

The present document features the global orientation of the work of ESCWA in the field of statistics and the list of deliverables for 2020 as endorsed by the Executive Committee. The Statistical Committee is invited to take note of its content.

## SUBPROGRAMME 5: STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

**Objective:** To support member States in strengthening their capacity to produce evidence-based policies, based on relevant, reliable, timely and comparable national and regional data and statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to ensure consistency with international statistical standards, methods and concepts.

1. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will strengthen the institutional framework for official statistics in the Arab region. It will build the capacities of national statistical offices to improve the production, dissemination and communication of national data. Focus will also be placed on restoring statistical operations in countries transitioning out of conflict.

*Institutional framework for official statistics*  
(SDG 17)

2. The ESCWA secretariat facilitates intergovernmental and inter-agency processes aimed at developing the institutional framework for official statistics and adapting it to the policy requirements of the 2030 Agenda. To that end, it services the ESCWA Statistical Committee and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Data Task Force of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for Arab States, ensuring that their work is synchronized.

3. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will promote the adoption of regional statistical standards, including an Arabic/English glossary of statistical terms in 13 subject-matter areas. Through its technical advisory and technical cooperation activities, the secretariat will also support member States in developing strategies for official statistics to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It will endeavour to reconcile diverse statistical agendas, contributing to priority setting among international organizations working in the region and improving regional coordination in capacity development and provision of data. Additionally, the ESCWA secretariat will leverage partnerships to minimize the burden on national statistical systems and increase the impact of joint efforts.

*Building capacity in official statistics*  
(SDG 17)

4. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will dedicate more than half of its resources in the statistics field to the capacity development of national statistical systems. It will take into account the varying levels of statistical development among member States and their specific needs in terms of policy, and help them to produce high-quality and timely statistics. The ESCWA secretariat will hold expert and advisory group meetings to discuss methodologies for economic, environmental, social and demographic data collection. It will also provide targeted technical assistance to address specific technical issues and will leverage extrabudgetary resources to develop capacity in identified priority areas, such as price statistics. It will notably assist countries experiencing instability to produce detailed, quality data at the needed frequencies.

*Production, dissemination and communication of national data*  
(SDG 17)

5. The formulation of evidence-based policies requires greater temporal, spatial and contextual granularity of available data. National statistical offices of member States receive a large number of uncoordinated requests for data from regional and international organizations. Since 2018, the ESCWA secretariat has been assisting those offices by making data on many areas available in English and Arabic through a new online statistical information system. The system comprises a data warehouse module and a data management module. Its analytical, transformation and reporting tools allow gradual addition of modules for data dissemination through websites and mobile devices, and of purpose-built applications. This online statistical

information system is a unique regional platform for Arab countries to share statistical data, increase consistency of disseminated statistical data and decrease their reporting burden.

6. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will expand its data and statistics dissemination and communication using new technologies. The online system will allow machine-to-machine data exchange with international and regional partners, using standards compatible with the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) Initiative. The secretariat will also convert printed statistical publications and make them available electronically, including live data systems.

*New technologies and data sources in official statistics*  
(SDG 17)

7. If stored, tagged and analysed properly, new data sources known as big data offer a huge volume of information for policymakers and the public. The rise of open data initiatives offers opportunities for official statistical agencies to improve the relevance and efficiency of data production, and enables them to respond to more data requests.

8. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will promote the adoption of new technologies and data sources in official statistics and further explore the effective use of big data analytics. It will cooperate with national geospatial agencies and producers of official statistics to integrate geospatial and statistical analysis. It will strengthen links with global initiatives, such as the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management and the United Nations Global Working Group on Big Data.

*Restoring statistical operations in conflict-affected countries*  
(SDG 17)

9. Political instability, conflicts and crises have an adverse impact on the production of national statistics, destroying statistical infrastructure and draining statistical capacity. The ESCWA secretariat is leveraging South-South cooperation and encouraging knowledge transfer to address those problems. It is also providing capacity-building services to national statistical systems in conflict-stricken countries.

10. In 2020, the ESCWA secretariat will provide technical assistance to member States recovering from conflict to re-launch statistical surveys and introduce specific surveys to assess the impact of war and conflict on households, the environment and the economy. States that were unable to undertake a population census in the last round of censuses, such as Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, will be assisted in the re-establishment of a regular census cycle, the update of sampling frames and the production of statistical estimates of new realities, such as human loss, massive population displacement and destruction, all of which need to be reflected in official statistics to enable evidence-based policymaking.

## **PROPOSED LIST OF DELIVERABLES FOR THE YEAR 2020**

### A. FACILITATION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESS AND EXPERT BODIES

#### *Parliamentary documentation*

1. Substantive parliamentary documents to the thirty-first ESCWA ministerial session.
2. Substantive parliamentary documents for the fourteenth session of the Statistical Committee (6).

#### *Substantive services for meetings*

3. Substantive servicing of the fourteenth session of the Statistical Committee.
4. Substantive servicing of the intergovernmental meeting of the Bureau of the Statistical Committee.

5. Technical Advisory Group on Economic Statistics.
6. Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics.
7. Expert group meeting on cross-cutting issues related to statistics.

*Conference and secretariat services for meetings*

8. Secretariat and substantive support to the meetings of the Regional Committee of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for the Arab States (UNGGIM – Arab States).

B. GENERATION AND TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE

*Publications*

9. Arab society – social statistics and indicators.
10. Statistical report on the Sustainable Development Goals.

*Technical material*

11. E-bulletin on trade statistics.
12. E-bulletin on industry statistics.
13. E-bulletin on gender in figures.
14. E-bulletin on National Accounts in the Arab region.

C. SUBSTANTIVE DELIVERABLES

*Consultation, advice and advocacy*

15. Co-chairing and providing secretariat services to the Task Force on SDG Data of the RMC for the Arab States.

*Databases and substantive digital materials*

16. ESCWA Online Statistical Information System (EOSIS).

D. COMMUNICATION DELIVERABLES

*Outreach programmes, special events and information materials (including booklets and pamphlets)*

17. Promotional material on big data for policy analysis.
18. Semi-annual newsletter on price statistics.
19. Semi-annual newsletter on gender statistics.
20. Annual statistics newsletter.

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