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**United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**

**Technical Advisory Group on Economic Statistics (TAGES) in the Arab region  
9-10 November 2016, Cairo, Egypt.**

**Concept Note and Terms of Reference<sup>1</sup>**

**A. Background:**

The development of economic statistics in the Arab region is crucial for economic policy making, business development, regional integration, distribution of wealth and social wellbeing, in addition to analytical uses. This development also relies on legal basis, institutional arrangements and adequate infrastructure. The use of international standards, classifications, guidelines, concepts and definitions in compilation and dissemination of such statistics are key issues to ensure relevance, quality, timeliness and consistency in economic statistics disseminated at national, regional and international level.

ESCWA presented two reports on the regional statistical development in Western Asia to the UN-Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its forty seventh session in 2016<sup>2</sup>, and in 2011<sup>3</sup>. The report of 2016 set the priorities for official statistics and the opportunities and achievements; and major challenges facing the statistical development in the region in view of the increase demand for data emanating from the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

To review the identified priorities and address the challenges, ESCWA proposed the establishment of a technical advisory group on economic statistics (TAGES), for the Arab Region<sup>4</sup> to the ESCWA Statistical Committee during its eleventh session in 2015. The committee approved the proposal for forming the group and its terms of reference with the possibility to amend those terms in line with the views of their members, so as to ensure sufficient continuity and flexibility in their work and that they comprise representatives of civil society and of the private sector;

The work of the TAGES will be guided by reports presented to the UN-ESCWA Statistical Committee on the “*Strategic issues related to official statistics in the Western Asia Region*”,<sup>5</sup> the “*Strategy for the implementation of the 2008 SNA*”,<sup>6</sup> and the capacity building strategies for the development of economic statistics in the Arab region and the proposed core set of economic indicators.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This document has been issued with no formal editing

<sup>2</sup> [Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the main achievements of statistical development in the region E/CN.3/2016/17.](#)

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the main achievements of statistical development in the region E/CN.3/2011/ 20

<sup>4</sup> Advisory group on economic statistics in Arab region Terms of reference E/ESCWA/SD/2015/IG.1/CRP.2

<sup>5</sup> Strategic issues related to official statistics in the Western Asia Region . ESCWA/SD/2010/IG.1/4(Part I)

<sup>6</sup> The strategy for the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the ESCWA region. E/ESCWA/SD/2010/IG.1/4(Part II)

<sup>7</sup> [Study on Selected Methodological Issue in Economic Statistics: Short-Term Economic Indicators for The Arab Region](#) E/ESCWA/SD/2013/10

## **B. Objective:**

The objective of the TAGES is to highlight the priority issues to be considered in formulating and implementing the regional programs for economic statistics in coordination with ESCWA secretariat. The TAGES will provide guidance to the Secretariat on methodological and technical issues related to the development and periodic revision of the programs on economic statistics and shall contribute to enhancing the coordination and the collaboration at national, regional and international level with a view to produce and disseminate timely a set of economic indicators needed for planning and monitoring in particular the 2030 development agenda and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The TAGES consists of members with high levels of experience to provide technical papers to guide the work of the committee and support member countries.

## **A. Key Functions:**

The draft terms of reference for the Technical Advisory Group on Economic Statistics (TAGES) are presented below for adoption by the group:

1. Highlight the priority issues in formulating and implementing regional programs for economic statistics in coordination with ESCWA secretariat on the basis of short and long term priorities of ESCWA member countries and periodically reviews the progress of work;
2. Advise on the implementation of international standards and methodologies in compilation and dissemination of economic statistics;
3. Promote knowledge sharing including identifying and collecting national, and regional best practices in economic statistics, and develop related practical guidelines and manuals on best practices;
4. Provide substantive input and working papers for the implementation of the agreed priority activities of the programs on economic statistics
5. In consultation with ESCWA secretariat, identify capacity building areas on economic statistics and coordinate efforts and combine resources at regional and international level;
6. Provide recommendations to the Committee to produce a core set of economic indicators by 2020, taking into consideration the varying national statistical capacities and policy priorities;
7. Invite relevant organizations, academia, research centers and independent experts in economic statistics to participate and contribute to the meetings of the advisory group
8. Support the dialogue of producers and users of economic statistics and contribute to efforts of raising awareness within the Arab region of the importance of economic statistics in guiding policy makers in decision making

## **B. Members of the Advisory Group:**

The proposal from ESCWA on the establishment of the Advisory group that was reviewed by the UN-ESCWA Statistical Committee included a section on the selection of the members of the advisory group, taking into consideration members' qualifications and geographical balance.<sup>8</sup> The membership of the advisory group on the development of economic statistics shall consist of national, regional and international economic statisticians.

1. The group will consist of representatives of National Statistical Offices of ESCWA member countries: three countries of Mashreq, three countries of GCC and three countries of North Africa and two from LDC/conflict stricken countries; United Nations and regional organizations: UNSD, ECA, the Islamic

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<sup>8</sup> See proposed membership in the document submitted to ESCWA Statistical Committee. E/ESCWA/SD/2015/IG.1/CRP.2 <http://css.escwa.org.lb/SD/3570/7b-CRP2-En.pdf>

Development Bank, the regional offices in Lebanon of the IMF, the World Bank and the GCC-Stat. Other representatives from academia, economic research institutes and private sector, civil society, with expertise in specific areas of interest can be invited as observers depending on needs.

2. The advisory group shall be appointed for the period of four years. The re-appointment or new members shall be discussed and agreed upon within the TAGES and with the Bureau of the UN-ESCWA Statistical Committee.
3. Members of the advisory group shall commit to devote adequate time to perform the assigned duties ;
4. Representative of the advisory group should be at the level of Director of economic statistics department or national accounts or senior advisor on economic statistics or equivalent high technical level to ensure the effectiveness of the advisory group work.
5. ESCWA will cover the participation of experts from medium and low-income member states who meet the membership requirements.

### **C. Functioning**

The advisory group on the development of economic statistics will meet annually, and will have regular virtual meetings during the year to review most issues by means of electronic discussion and exchange of emails. The group will report on a yearly basis to ESCWA statistical committee during its meetings;

1. The Chair will be elected by the group and will serve for a period of two years after which he/she will be eligible for re-appointment.
2. The advisory group shall review the terms of reference in consultation with the UN-ESCWA Statistical Committee every 4 years to ensure the relevancy and efficiency of its functions.

### **D. Management and organization within the group:**

The Chairperson and Deputy will be elected during the first meeting of the advisory group with the details and timetable of voting arrangements to be prepared by ESCWA. The Chair will serve for two years term. The responsibilities of chair and the deputy are to:

1. Develop the draft agenda for each meeting of the Group in consultation with the Secretariat taking into account decisions of the previous meetings as well as requests from member countries;
2. Facilitate the sessions during the meetings of the advisory group, summarize the discussions and prepare the report to the Statistics Committee on the outcomes of each meeting and other issues concerning its work.
3. Request members and non-members to make contributions to the work program of the meeting based on the issues to be presented to the Committee on Statistics on the basis of report prepared by the secretariat
4. A rapporteur will voluntarily serve to take notes and prepare reports of the meeting in coordination with the chair and the secretariat.

Note that before the election of the chair, ESCWA representative and host country representative will co-host the morning session.

### **E. Secretariat:**

The ESCWA Statistics Division (SD) shall serve as the secretariat of the TAGES and will:

1. Provide support in the preparation of the agenda of the meetings of the advisory group and the documentation needed including a progress report on the work in economic statistics in the region

2. Advise on resource mobilization strategy for the programs, taking into account the needs and priorities as set in the work plan;
3. Exchange relevant information, share examples of best practices and consider any matters related to the enhancement and implementation of the program and its various components;
4. Review performance against the intended results;
5. Initiate periodic reviews of the programs upon request of the Statistical Committee.

### **About ESCWA**

The Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) was established on 9 August 1973 pursuant to Economic and Social Council's resolution 1818 (LV). Its purpose was to stimulate economic activity in member countries, strengthen cooperation between them and promote development.

### **Its main objectives are:**

- To support economic and social development in member countries
- To promote interaction and cooperation between member countries
- To encourage the exchange of experience, best practice and lessons learned
- To achieve regional integration and ensure interaction between Western Asia and other regions
- To raise global awareness of the circumstances and needs of member countries

The Statistics Division at ESCWA only acts as a regional focal point for the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), other organizations and member States, and strives to improve the production and dissemination of high quality socioeconomic statistics and indicators in the Arab region. It provides member States with support to strengthen their national statistical systems.

### **CONTACTS for Economic Statistics Team, Statistics Division, UN ESCWA**

<p><i>Ms. Wafa Aboul Hosn</i>  <i>Chief, Economic Statistics Section</i>  <i>Energy and Environment Statistics</i>  <i>Tel: (961 1) 978-353</i>  <i>Email: <a href="mailto:aboulhosn@un.org">aboulhosn@un.org</a></i></p>	<p><i>Mr Omar Hakouz</i>  <i>Regional Advisor</i>  <i>National Accounts</i>  <i>Tel: (961 1) 978-342</i>  <i>Email: <a href="mailto:hakouzo@un.org">hakouzo@un.org</a></i></p>	<p><i>Majed SKAINI</i>  <i>ICP Regional Coordinator for WA</i>  <i>National Accounts and Price</i>  <i>Statistics</i>  <i>Tel: (+961) 1 978362</i>  <i>Email: <a href="mailto:skaini@un.org">skaini@un.org</a></i></p>
<p><i>Fathia Abdel Fadil</i>  <i>Short-term Statistics</i>  <i>Tel: +961 1 978 359</i>  <i>E-mail: <a href="mailto:abdelfadil@un.org">abdelfadil@un.org</a></i></p>	<p><i>Majed Hamoudeh</i>  <i>Trade and Industry Statistics</i>  <i>Tel: +961 1 978 456</i>  <i>E-mail: <a href="mailto:hamoudeh@un.org">hamoudeh@un.org</a></i></p>	<p><i>Wassim Hammoud</i>  <i>Statistics Assistant,</i>  <i>Tel: +961 1 978 349</i>  <i>E-mail: <a href="mailto:hammoudw@un.org">hammoudw@un.org</a></i></p>
<p><i>Roy Doumit</i>  <i>Statistics Assistant,</i>  <i>Tel: +961 1 978 368</i>  <i>E-mail: <a href="mailto:doumitr@un.org">doumitr@un.org</a></i></p>		<p><i>For Logistic: Nadine Al- Hallak</i>  <i>Administrative Assistant,</i>  <i>Tel: (+961-1) 978274</i>  <i>E-mail: <a href="mailto:al-hallak@un.org">al-hallak@un.org</a></i></p>