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**PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2014-2015
IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICS**

Summary

This document presents the proposed programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for the biennium 2014-2015 pertaining to subprogramme 5 on statistics for evidence-based policymaking. The proposed programme of work includes the outputs and activities prepared by the secretariat in order to achieve the expected accomplishments envisaged in the strategic framework.

The representatives of member countries in the Statistical Committee are invited to review the proposed outputs, provide guidance in that regard and discuss ways of monitoring the impact of the proposed outputs in their countries.

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Introduction

1. This document presents a set of activities, products and services as proposed outputs to be delivered by the secretariat pertaining to subprogramme 5 on statistics for evidence-based policymaking, of the revised strategic framework for the biennium 2014-2015. The proposed strategic framework was reviewed by the Working Group of the Statistical Committee at its fifth meeting (Beirut, 14-15 February 2012), prior to its submission to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) which endorsed it at its twenty-seventh session (Beirut, 7-10 May 2012).
2. In preparing the outputs, the secretariat has given due consideration to the continuing mandates pursuant to the Commission resolutions 283 (XXV) concerning ESCWA member country compliance with international standards for enhancing national statistical systems; 286 (XXV) concerning gender statistics for equality and empowerment of women; and 287 (XXV) concerning strengthening statistical capacities for evidence-based policymaking, which were adopted by the Commission at its twenty-fifth session (Sana'a, 26-29 May 2008); and to new mandates pursuant to resolution 297 (XXVI) concerning Arab MDG monitor for societal progress. A complete list of legislative mandates is provided in the annex to this document.
3. The proposed outputs may undergo slight changes during the United Nations proposed budget preparation process. The secretariat will communicate any amendments to member countries and will take into account the comments and suggestions given by the Committee.

I. OVERALL ORIENTATION OF SUBPROGRAMME 5 FOR THE BIENNIUM 2014-2015

4. The strategic framework for the biennium 2014-2015 aims to foster inclusive and sustainable development in the Arab region under the following three pillars: equitable growth and sustainability; regional integration; and good governance and resilience.
5. The work under subprogramme 5 cuts across the three pillars by supporting the development of official statistics capacity in countries of the Arab region, providing data to policy makers and other users, coordinating statistical activities and harmonizing data.
6. Some of the most important aspects of the expected accomplishments will be documented through the indicators of achievement. The programme monitoring capacity of ESCWA and its Statistics Division does not allow for these indicators of achievement to be exhaustive. Therefore, the achievements will be also monitored through other tools, such as review of the implementation by the Bureau of the Committee and bi-annual programme evaluation by external evaluators and others.
7. The responsibility for implementing subprogramme 5 lies with the Statistics Division. The Statistical Committee and its Bureau have a steering role in the implementation of the subprogramme.

II. ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

8. The expected accomplishment (a), which focuses on collection and dissemination of statistical data, will be allocated around 30 per cent of the overall resources of the subprogramme. The expected accomplishment (b), which focuses on the main priority of the subprogramme and consists of improving the capacity of member countries for official statistics, consumes around 60 per cent of the resources. The expected accomplishment (c), which focuses on coordination of statistical activities with regional and global partners, takes approximately 10 per cent of the resources.

III. ACTION REQUIRED OF THE COMMITTEE

9. The Committee is invited to:

(a) To take note of the proposed outputs, activities and services;

(b) To consider the conversion of recurrent publications to e-bulletins with the aim of providing easier and user-friendly access to statistical data and metadata published by ESCWA and in compliance with the United Nations strategy of reducing the number of publications and the amount of related resources;

(c) To provide guidance, when applicable, with regard to individual outputs, such as including specific issues, in order to narrow the scope of the output.

IV. SUBPROGRAMME 5: STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

A. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INDICATORS OF ACHIEVEMENT

Objective: To enhance the regional statistical system through statistical capacity development of member countries, in order to produce comparable, reliable, impartial and relevant national data for evidence-based policymaking and research.

Expected accomplishments	Indicators of achievement
(a) Improved provision of statistical data about member countries through collection and dissemination of official statistics and indicators	(a)(i) Increased number of member countries that provide at least 60 per cent of core socioeconomic indicators
	<i>Performance measures</i>
	2010-2011: 10 member countries
	Estimate for 2012-2013: 12 member countries
	Target for 2014-2015: 14 member countries
	(ii) Increased number of database queries to online ESCWA statistical databases
	<i>Performance measures</i>
	2010-2011: 200 queries
	Estimate for 2012-2013: 300 queries
	Target for 2014-2015: 450 queries
(b) Improved capacity of member countries for official statistics in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics	(b) Increased number of member countries adopting new or revised international statistical standards, including the System of National Accounts and foundational socioeconomic classifications, in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics
	<i>Performance measures</i>
	2010-2011: 10 member countries
	Estimate for 2012-2013: 12 member countries
	Target for 2014-2015: 14 member countries

Expected accomplishments	Indicators of achievement
(c) Strengthened regional statistical system in support of regional integration, with an active coordination among major players, including regional and international organizations, and a more active participation by member countries	<p>(c)(i) Increased number of joint statistical capacity-building activities that are coordinated with regional partners</p> <p><i>Performance measures</i></p> <p>2010-2011: 5 activities Estimate for 2012-2013: 8 activities Target for 2014-2015: 12 activities</p> <p>(ii) Increased number of tangible outputs of statistical coordination (harmonized databases, joint questionnaires, joint data products) produced in the region</p> <p><i>Performance measures</i></p> <p>2010-2011: 2 outputs Estimate for 2012-2013: 4 outputs Target for 2014-2015: 8 outputs</p>

B. STRATEGY

19.54 The responsibility for implementing subprogramme 5 lies with the Statistics Division. There is a continued need to align the production and dissemination of statistics in the Arab region with emerging social changes caused by the latest developments in the region, by improving the relevance and comparability of statistics at the regional level in social, economic and cross-cutting issues. Addressing those challenges will strengthen the role of statistics in evidence-based policymaking and in monitoring and evaluating the impact of development policies.

19.55 ESCWA will seek partnerships with organizations within and outside the United Nations that are active in statistical work in the region. It will coordinate statistical capacity development so as to achieve higher efficiency and will share data and harmonize questionnaires so as to obtain more consistent data, decrease the reporting burden and better use the resources available for data work in each organization. To this end, ESCWA will primarily use the Regional Coordination Mechanism and, in particular, the Task Force on Statistical Coordination. It will also strengthen its internal coordination mechanism for statistical activities.

19.56 During the biennium 2014-2015, work under the subprogramme will concentrate on three main roles: collection and dissemination of data, statistical capacity development and coordination of statistical activities with regional and international players in official statistics active in the region.

19.57 The priority areas for data collection, processing and dissemination include foundational demographic, social, economic and sectoral statistics that form the basis of official statistics. Data collection will focus on gathering data directly from member countries and on sharing them with other partners active in statistical work in the region. Due attention will be paid to communicating statistics to the media and the public.

19.58 Statistics about the region can be improved only when the methodological and quality issues are tackled at the source: national statistical offices and other national producers of official statistics. As statistical capacity development at the national level is at the core of efforts for better coverage, relevance, timeliness and comparability of data, efforts in this regard will focus on identifying gaps and discrepancies and undertaking capacity-development programmes. Work under the subprogramme will advocate the importance of full adherence to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, especially the

impartiality of official statistics and their availability to the public; the use of appropriate methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data; and the presentation of information on sources and methods according to internationally agreed standards.

19.59 ESCWA will take an active role in ensuring that major players in official statistics coordinate their activities in the region. The quality of statistical data, particularly in terms of consistency, timeliness and international comparability, is of primary concern to all producers and users of statistics. In this regard, it is important to ensure that reporting burdens on member countries are minimized and that data are shared among international organizations to the extent possible. To this end, ESCWA will coordinate statistics among national and international organizations active in the region to achieve those objectives, while respecting the needs and specifics of each organization.

19.60 To accomplish this strategy, efforts under the subprogramme will concentrate on acting as a centre of excellence and a forum to exchange views on statistical issues for member countries; providing training at the national, subregional and regional levels; ensuring close and/or direct cooperation and coordination with professional staff in national statistical offices, on data quality assurance and the implementation of international classifications and recommendations; responding to requests for technical assistance from member countries; assisting in exchange of expertise between member countries; and building trust with national-level counterparts.

C. EXTERNAL FACTORS

Subprogramme 5 will achieve its expected accomplishments provided that: (a) there are no significant shortfalls in regular and extrabudgetary resources for statistical capacity-building; (b) the regional and international organizations active in official statistics in the region willingly cooperate with ESCWA; (c) the ESCWA Statistical Committee maintains its steering role in setting priorities and providing a strategic direction; and (d) there is sufficient political stability and a secure working environment to facilitate cooperation among member countries and enable the effective implementation of the ESCWA technical cooperation programme.

D. OUTPUTS

During the biennium 2014-2015, the following outputs are expected to be delivered under subprogramme 5:

(a) *Servicing intergovernmental and expert bodies*

(i) *Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (twenty-eighth session)*

Parliamentary documentation: Report of the Statistical Committee on its eleventh session (2014, expected accomplishments (a) and (b)).

(ii) *Statistical Committee*

- a. Servicing the meetings of the eleventh session of the Statistical Committee (6 meetings) (2014, expected accomplishments (a), (b) and (c));
- b. Servicing the meetings of the Bureau of the Statistical Committee (2 meetings) (2015, expected accomplishments (a) and (b));
- c. Servicing the meetings of the Working Group of Heads of National Statistical Offices in the Arab Region (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (c));
- d. Parliamentary documentation: Report on regional implications of global events (2014, expected accomplishments (a), (b) and (c)).

(iii) *Ad hoc expert groups*

Six expert group meetings:

- a. National accounts and economic statistics (2014, expected accomplishment (b));
- b. Trade statistics for regional integration (2015, expected accomplishment (b));
- c. Price statistics for regional integration (2015, expected accomplishment (b));
- d. Vital statistics and population registers (2015, expected accomplishment (b));
- e. Measuring multi-dimensional poverty using household survey microdata (2014, expected accomplishment (b));
- f. Gender statistics (2014, expected accomplishment (b)).

(iv) *Servicing inter-agency meetings*

- a. Meetings of the Committee on Coordination of Statistical Activities (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (c));
- b. Meetings of the Task Force on Statistical Coordination of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (c)).

(b) *Publications and technical material*(i) *Recurrent publications*

- a. Bulletin of Industrial Statistics for the Arab Region (2014, expected accomplishment (a));
- b. eBulletin on National Accounts of the Arab Region (2015, expected accomplishment (a));
- c. Arab Society: Compendium of Demographic and Social Indicators (2015, expected accomplishment (a));
- d. Statistical Abstract of the Arab Region (2015, expected accomplishment (a));
- e. eBulletin on External Trade Statistics of the Arab Region (2015, expected accomplishment (a));
- f. Gender in Figures in the Arab Region 2013: E-Bulletin (2015, expected accomplishment (a));
- g. Compendium of Environment Statistics in the Arab Region 2014-2015 (2015, expected accomplishment (a)).

(ii) *Technical material*

- a. E-Glossary of statistical terms (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (b));
- b. Annual updates of data and metadata on national accounts, economic statistics, population and vital statistics, social statistics and indicators, energy and environment statistics, gender statistics and societal development for the ESCWA Statistical Information System (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (c));
- c. Methodological issues in economic statistics (2015, expected accomplishment (b));

- d. Methodology of demographic and health statistics (2015, expected accomplishment (b)).

(iii) *Other printed material*

- a. Statistics Newsletter (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (c));
- b. Country statistical profiles (2015, expected accomplishment (c)).

(iv) *Contribution to joint outputs*

- a. Subprogramme 3 publication, Arab Development Outlook (statistical expertise and economic statistics data) (2015, expected accomplishment (c));
- b. Subprogramme 3 publication, Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region (statistical expertise and economic statistics data) (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (c));
- c. Providing publications and activities of other subprogrammes with expertise in social statistics and indicators, energy and environment statistics and sustainable development indicators, and gender statistics and gender-sensitive indicators (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (c)).

(c) *Technical cooperation (extrabudgetary)*

(i) *Advisory services*

Providing support in the following areas: improving the production, analysis and dissemination of social and demographic, economic, and environmental statistics; adopting new or revised international statistical standards (System of National Accounts, etc.) and related foundational classifications; and improving national institutional frameworks for official statistics (2014-2015, expected accomplishment (b)).

(ii) *Field projects*

- a. Strengthening the statistical capacity of ESCWA member countries in short-term economic statistics for evidence-based decision-making (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (a));
- b. Strengthening the statistical capacity of ESCWA member countries in energy statistics and energy balance (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (a));
- c. Promoting the use of statistical information in support of achieving internationally agreed development goals in the Arab region (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (b));
- d. International Comparison Program (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishments (a) and (c));
- e. Improving census taking in the Arab region (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishments (a) and (b));
- f. Implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (2014 and 2015, expected accomplishment (b)).

Annex**LEGISLATIVE MANDATES***General Assembly resolutions*

64/137	Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women
64/139	Violence against women migrant workers
64/217	Women in development
65/170	International migration and development
65/186	Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond
66/127	Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing

Economic and Social Council resolutions

2006/6	Strengthening statistical capacity
2011/5	The role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women
2011/27	Further promotion of equalization of opportunities by, for and with persons with disabilities and mainstreaming disability issues in the development agenda

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia resolutions

276 (XXIV)	Strengthening statistical capacities in the ESCWA region
283 (XXV)	ESCWA member country compliance with international standards for enhancing national statistical systems
287 (XXV)	Strengthening statistical capacities for evidence-based policymaking
295 (XXVI)	Guiding Declaration of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on giving greater attention to Youth Policies: An Opportunity for Development
297 (XXVI)	Arab MDG monitor for societal progress
