



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL**

Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/SD/2015/IG.1/6(Part III)  
13 January 2015  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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

Statistical Committee  
Eleventh session  
Amman, 4-5 February 2015

Item 7 (c) of the provisional agenda

**ESCWA STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES**

**PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017  
IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICS**

**Summary**

The present document sets out the strategic framework and planned outputs of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of statistics. The overall strategic framework of ESCWA was discussed and approved at the twenty-eighth session of ESCWA.

The Statistical Committee is invited to review the planned outputs and activities, and make comments and suggestions with a view to focusing statistical activities on key priorities of ESCWA member States.

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## I. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICS

### A. OBJECTIVE

1. The objective of subprogramme 5 on statistics for evidence-based policymaking is to strengthen regional and national statistical systems related to the production and dissemination of quality statistics for evidence-based policies aimed at achieving inclusive and sustainable development, regional integration and improved governance.

### B. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INDICATORS OF ACHIEVEMENT

Expected accomplishments	Indicators of achievement
<p>(a) National statistical offices implement methodologies in line with good practices and international standards and recommendations</p> <p><b>Strategic pillar: good governance and resilience</b></p> <p><b>Priority area: institutional development</b></p>	<p>(a) (i) Number of member States that adopt, with the assistance of ESCWA, new or revised international statistical standards, including the System of National Accounts and foundational socioeconomic classifications</p> <p>(ii) Number of assistance/capacity-building activities related to implementing international standards and recommendations provided by ESCWA upon the request of member States</p>
<p>(b) Stakeholders make greater use of quality statistics and methodological studies produced and disseminated by ESCWA</p> <p><b>Strategic pillar: all pillars</b></p>	<p>(b) (i) Number of queries to ESCWA online statistical databases</p> <p>(ii) Number of citations and references to ESCWA statistical databases and publications</p>
<p>(c) Regional and national statistical institutions adopt agreements and guidelines for the harmonization and comparability of official statistics</p> <p><b>Strategic pillar: regional integration</b></p> <p><b>Priority area: agreements and strategies</b></p>	<p>(c) (i) Number of agreements for the harmonization of statistics in the region reached between ESCWA and national statistical offices</p> <p>(ii) Number of agreements and guidelines developed under the auspices of ESCWA and adopted by the Statistical Committee of ESCWA or another statistical authority in the region</p>

### C. STRATEGY

2. The Statistics Division is responsible for the implementation of subprogramme 5. There is a continued need to improve the quality, relevance, availability and comparability of statistics in the region. Those improvements must be made primarily within the national statistical systems of member States.

3. Institutional development for official statistics will remain the first priority to enable member States to produce quality statistics that meet international standards and recommendations. This will include developing the technical capacity and skills needed for the conduct of statistical surveys and censuses, as

well as promoting the exchange of knowledge and good practices between member States, by focusing primarily on national accounts; short-term economic statistics; the 2020 round of population and housing censuses; living conditions, income and poverty; civil registration and vital statistics; environment and energy statistics; statistics on science and technology; as well as gender statistics and mainstreaming a gender perspective in all areas of statistics. ESCWA will also work with regional and global partners, including the League of Arab States, the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics, the United Nations Statistics Division, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

4. ESCWA will support member States in improving their institutional setup and legal framework for official statistics in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. ESCWA will also assist member States in conducting assessments of national statistical systems aimed at defining strategies for the development of statistics.

5. The second priority is the provision of data and analytical services to stakeholders in member States, in partner organizations and within ESCWA. User-needs surveys and satisfaction surveys will be conducted periodically to assess the impact of data disseminated by ESCWA, and adjust the data collection and dissemination programme accordingly. Work under the subprogramme will focus on the collection of national statistical data released by member States.

6. The Statistics Division is primarily responsible for the quality of data collected and released by ESCWA, while other ESCWA divisions continue to collect specific statistical data needed for analysis and studies. Annual data collection plans will be used to coordinate data requests by all ESCWA divisions.

7. The third priority is the regional coordination and harmonization of subject-matter indicators. In cooperation with regional and national statistical institutions, ESCWA will work towards formulating consensus-based agreements and guidelines for the harmonization and comparability of official statistics. Under the auspices of the Statistical Committee, this work will be delegated to advisory groups established under specific priority areas. ESCWA will then work with national statistical systems to implement the new methodologies and guidelines developed through these advisory groups.

8. To enhance coherence among regional and international statistical agencies, ESCWA will play an active role in the cooperation and coordination initiatives taken by the regional and global statistical systems.

9. To accomplish the strategy of the subprogramme, ESCWA will act as a centre of excellence and a forum for the exchange of views on statistical issues; provide training at the national, subregional and regional levels; work on data quality assurance, estimation techniques and the implementation of international classifications and recommendations in cooperation with national statistical offices; respond to requests for technical assistance; and assist in the exchange of expertise between member States.

#### D. EXTERNAL FACTORS

10. Subprogramme 5 will achieve its objective and expected accomplishments provided that: (a) member States empower their institutions to request and use the capacity-building and other resources put at their disposal by ESCWA; (b) there is political acceptance of specific international statistical standards; (c) data are made available from national sources for specific countries/indicators; (d) appropriate technological and publishing tools are available; (e) particular statistical subject matter areas are not affected by large gaps between more and less statistically advanced countries; and (f) regional and international partners remain committed to a coordinated approach to statistical capacity-building and to collecting and sharing statistical data.

## II. PROGRAMMED OUTPUTS FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017

11. Over the biennium 2016-2017, the Statistics Division is expected to implement the ESCWA strategic framework in the field of statistics by delivering the following outputs.

(a) *Servicing intergovernmental and expert bodies (regular budget)*

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

Parliamentary documentation: Report of the Statistical Committee on its eleventh session.

(ii) *Statistical Committee*

a. Servicing the meetings of the twelfth session of the Statistical Committee (2016);

Parliamentary documentation:

- Review of the status of implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (2016);
- Glossaries of statistical terms – selected areas agreed through an intergovernmental consultative process (2016-2017);
- Progress reports on statistical activities (2016-2017);
- Annual statistical work programme of ESCWA (2016-2017);

b. Servicing the Regional Committee on Global Geospatial Information Management – GGIM (Arab States) with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)/United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) (2016-2017);

c. Servicing the Meeting of the Bureau of the Statistical Committee (2017).

(iii) *Ad hoc expert group meetings*

- a. Advisory group on social and demographic statistics (2017);
- b. Inter-secretariat and expert group on gender statistics (2017);
- c. Advisory group on environment and energy statistics (2017);
- d. Advisory group on sectoral economic statistics (2016);
- e. Working group on measuring the impact of statistical capacity development (2016);
- f. Advisory group on economic statistics and national accounts (2016);
- g. Advisory group on civil registration and vital statistics (2016);
- h. Advisory group on harmonization of microdata sets (2016-2017).

(iv) *Interagency meetings*

- a. Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities;
- b. Bi-monthly coordination meetings: DESA, UNSD and ESCWA;
- c. Meetings of the United Nations system statistical divisions (on the side of the meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities);
- d. Participation and contribution to other United Nations agency meetings on economic and social statistics;
- e. Convening the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) Task Force on Statistical Coordination.

(b) *Publications and technical material (regular budget)*

(i) *Recurrent publications*

- a. Arab Society – A Compendium of Social Statistics (2017);
- b. Compendium of Environment Statistics in the Arab Region (2017);
- c. Industrial Statistics of the Arab Region (E-bulletin) (2016);
- d. National Accounts Studies of the Arab Region (E-bulletin) (2017);
- e. External Trade Statistics of the Arab Region (E-bulletin) (2017).

(ii) *Other publications*

- a. Online Arab country profiles (2016);
- b. Quarterly Ensaf newsletter on gender statistics (2016 and 2017) (8 issues);
- c. Quarterly Inflation Outlook (2016 and 2017) (8 issues).

(iii) *Technical material*

- a. Study on the methodological issues of demographic and social statistics (2017);
- b. Study on methodological issues of economic statistics (2017);
- c. Online dissemination database;
- d. Analysis and dissemination of foundational data acquired through direct data collection and sharing of data with other organizations;
- e. Data warehouse (data and metadata production tool, including for aggregation and derived series at the regional and subregional levels:
  - National accounts;
  - Sectoral economic statistics (trade and industry);
  - Environment;
  - Energy;
  - Population and vital statistics;
  - Social indicators;
  - Gender statistics;
  - Development indicators;
  - Information and Communications Technology (ICT) indicators;
- f. Public release calendar of ESCWA data (2016 and 2017) (2 issues);
- g. Special interfaces (jointly with the ESCWA Technology for Development Division (TDD)) to services such as:
  - Google public data;
  - mobile applications (mobile device friendly interfaces);
  - downloadable standardized formats – statistical data and metadata exchange (SDMX);
  - Geospatial interface to ESCWA data;
- h. Harmonized set of statistical questionnaires covering areas of data needed for ESCWA studies (2016).

(iv) *Contribution to joint outputs*

- a. Data collection and methodologies;
- b. Data for ESCWA studies (2016 and 2017) (2 contributions).

(v) *Other activities*

- a. Preparations for the 2020 round of population and housing censuses in the Arab region (2016-2017);
- b. Global assessment of selected national statistical systems (with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) and the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat)) (2016-2017) (3 assessments);
- c. Annual data collection plan for statistical data at ESCWA (2016 and 2017).

(c) *Technical cooperation*

*Field projects*

- a. Regional implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (extrabudgetary (XB)));
- b. Improving short-term economic indicators (Development Account (DA));
- c. Improving civil registration systems (RB, the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC), in-kind contributions);
- d. Sustainable development indicators in the context of the post-2015 development agenda (DA);
- e. Harmonization of price statistics and national account activities and production of bi-annual PPP (purchasing power parity) estimates in the Arab region (XB).

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