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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda

**IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STATISTICAL COMMITTEE OF MEETINGS
OF REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES**

REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBAL EVENTS

Summary

This report presents the regional implication of global events, notably the forty-second and forty-third sessions of the United Nations Statistical Commission and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Specific attention is given to the follow-up to the forty-third session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

This document also invites member countries to decide on priorities and regional positions on individual items of the agenda of the forty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission to be held in February 2013.

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I. FORTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION

1. The United Nations Statistical Commission considered, at its forty-second session (New York, 22-25 February 2011)¹ among other items, regional statistical development in Western Asia on the basis of a report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for that purpose, in consultation with member countries. The report highlighted developments and achievements in the field of statistics in the ESCWA region in addition to concerns that member countries wanted to voice at the global level, including data coordination and variation between national and United Nations sources.

2. In addition, member countries organized an exhibition of the statistical outputs of individual national statistical offices. The exhibition attracted a high level of interest among participants and raised awareness of official statistics in the ESCWA region.

3. The outcome of the forty-second session has already been discussed on other occasions. However, certain issues that were raised during that session were also addressed during the forty-third session of the Statistical Commission (New York, 28 February - 2 March 2012) and their regional implications are described below.

II. FORTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION

A. PROGRAMME REVIEW: POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES

4. The Statistical Commission adopted at its forty-third session,² resolution 43/101, which included the following points: (a) concerning the 2010 round of censuses, the majority of countries have moved from data collection to data analysis and dissemination; (b) the need to enhance post-enumeration surveys and data exchange among countries and extend the use of census data; (c) the Statistical Commission asked the United Nations Statistics Division to prepare a timetable for the development of the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme.

5. In collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund, ESCWA organized capacity-development activities focused on census data analysis. However, in order to step up the work, it is recommended to re-establish the former ESCWA Task Force on the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses as a working group on population and housing censuses.

B. NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

6. The Statistical Commission adopted resolution 43/103 in which it commended the work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts. The Commission also encouraged various initiatives aimed at implementing the 2008 System of National Accounts (2008 SNA) and commended the progress made in translating the 2008 SNA into other official languages of the United Nations. The Statistics Division of ESCWA would like to take this opportunity and thank the Central Statistical Office of Kuwait for their great efforts in translating the 2008 SNA into Arabic.

7. Member countries have developed the regional strategy for implementing the 2008 SNA based on the pilot implementation in four countries and its expansion into other countries through a mutual exchange of experience. Several regional capacity-development activities are planned under the work programme for

¹ For the resolutions of the United Nations Statistical Commission at its forty-second session, see document, E/CN.3/2011/37.

² For the resolutions of the Statistical Commission at its forty-third session, which are reviewed in this chapter, see document E/CN.3/2012/34.

2013 which is submitted to the Statistical Committee in document E/ESCWA/SD/2012/IG.1/7 and the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015 in the field of statistics which is also submitted to the committee in document E/ESCWA/SD/2012/IG.1/6.

C. AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

8. In its resolution 43/104, the Statistical Commission recognized the achievement of the Wye Group, which revised and finalized the *Wye Group Handbook: Statistics on Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income*. The Commission also formed an inter-agency and expert group that will replace the Friends of the Chair on agricultural statistics and the Wye Group.

9. Member countries expressed their interest in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. They will participate in the implementation of the Global Strategy with the support of FAO and a proposal for that participation is presented to the committee in document E/ESCWA/SD/2012/IG.1/9.

D. ENVIRONMENTAL-ECONOMIC ACCOUNTING AND ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

10. The Statistical Commission adopted resolution 43/105 after some controversy and a lengthy debate. Member countries recognized the importance of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA), but considered that the draft international standard for environmental-economic accounts was not sufficiently mature at that time. Notably, SEEA assumes the presence of data that are not available in all countries. There is a need for further work to adjust SEEA to the needs of all regions and countries. The resolution, therefore, adopted the 2012 SEEA central framework as the initial version of the international standard for environmental-economic accounts and requested the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting to complete the supporting documents of the central framework.

11. The Statistical Commission further adopted resolution 43/106 calling for the development of a core set of environment statistics. The Expert Group on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics is expected to present the draft for adoption at the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission in February 2013.

12. Member countries may wish to formulate their own recommendations based on the Regional Framework for Environmental-Economic Accounting published in 2009 and hold further consultations of national experts to formulate their proposals.

E. ENERGY STATISTICS AND STATISTICS ON ECONOMIES BASED ON NATURAL RESOURCES

13. The Statistical Commission adopted resolution 43/107 which called for the establishment of a world-wide database on natural gas statistics in close cooperation with the International Energy Agency, and resolution 43/108 which called for the wider involvement of member countries in the work of city groups such as the London Group on Environmental Accounting and the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics.

14. Member countries may consider the optimal mode of their involvement with the above-mentioned city groups.

F. NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORKS

15. In its resolution 43/110, the Statistical Commission encouraged international, regional and subregional entities to work along with the United Nations Statistics Division in assisting countries to implement quality assurance programmes. The Committee may wish to consider the best way to reflect this in the statistical work programme of ESCWA.

G. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

16. In its resolution 43/111, the Statistical Commission asked the Friends of the Chair to finalize a proposal for a revised preamble of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and to provide an assessment of their implementation to the forty-fourth session in 2013. It also encouraged all countries to implement the Fundamental Principles.

17. Member countries may also consider supporting the request made at the forty-second session of the Statistical Commission, that the United Nations Statistics Division submit the Fundamental Principles, with their appropriately revised preamble, to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for endorsement before 2014. Endorsement at that level would result in increased political support for official statistics and would enhance the political will of Governments to implement the Fundamental Principles.

H. COORDINATION OF STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED NATIONS

18. In its resolution 43/112, the Statistical Commission stressed the importance of effective coordination on statistical programmes, and agreed with the proposal to form a Friends of the Chair group to make proposals for improved mechanisms. Palestine and the Statistics Division of ESCWA are members of the group.

19. Member countries may wish to express their support to proposals for better coordination. These include a centralized United Nations statistical system led by the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division with a clear division of responsibilities. Another proposal called for a well defined and non-redundant flow of data from national statistical offices through regional commissions to the United Nations Statistics Division and other specialized departments, agencies, funds and programmes.

I. STATISTICS ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

20. Statistical Commission resolution 43/114 called upon the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme to continue constructive engagement with national statistical offices to resolve issues including the following: the use of non-official or outdated data; the provision of sufficient lead time to respond to communications from the Human Development Report Office on data used; and technical issues involved in calculation.

21. Member countries have already stepped forward and taken the initiative to invite the Human Development Report Office to engage in a constructive dialogue. They may consider avenues for continuing this dialogue to achieve the desired data quality for the Human Development Report.

J. AGENDA OF THE FORTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION

22. The agenda for the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, which will be held in February 2013, comprises the following substantive items. Member countries may wish to identify which agenda items are of greatest interest and formulate a common position thereon.

1. *Items for discussion and decision*

- Developing a statistical-spatial framework in national statistical systems (programme review – Australia);
- Crime statistics (Mexico and UNODC);
- Gender statistics (UNSD);
- Health statistics and disability statistics (WHO and Washington Group);

- National accounts (Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts);
- International Comparison Program (World Bank);
- Agricultural statistics (Global Steering Committee);
- Regional statistical development (UN-ECA);
- Environment statistics (UNSD);
- Environmental accounting (UNSD);
- Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (Friends of the Chair Group);
- Coordination of statistical activities (Friends of the Chair Group/Mexico);
- Working methods of the Statistical Commission (Bureau and UNSD);
- Trade statistics (UNSD).

2. *Items for information*

- Demographic statistics (UNSD);
- Education statistics (UNESCO);
- Employment statistics (ILO);
- Business registers (Wiesbaden Group);
- Services statistics (Voorburg Group);
- Natural resources based economies (Ulaanbataar Group);
- Development indicators (UNSD);
- Science and technology (UNESCO);
- Informal sector (Delhi Group);
- Statistical capacity-building (2 reports by UNSD and PARIS21);
- Price statistics (Intersecretariat Working Group on Price statistics/Eurostat);
- Integrated Economic Statistics (Friends of the Chair Group);
- Committee on Coordination of Statistical Activities (UNSD);
- Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (IMF);
- Follow-up to General Assembly and Economic and Social Council decisions (UNSD).

III. STATISTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RIO+20 CONFERENCE

23. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), *The Future We Want*, requested the United Nations Statistical Commission to build on existing initiatives to launch a programme of work on broad measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decisions.³ The outcome document encouraged each country to consider the implementation of green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication to drive sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and job creation, especially for women, youth and the poor. It requested relevant United Nations agencies to support the efforts of countries to improve knowledge and statistical capacity on job trends, developments and constraints. The outcome document further recognized the importance of evaluating the range of social, environmental and economic factors and encouraged countries to integrate them into decision-making.⁴

³ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, para. 38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, paras. 62-63.

24. *The Future We Want* underscored the resolve to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development, and highlighted the need for evidence-based and transparent scientific assessments as well as access to reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development. The outcome document also called for the voluntary sharing information (including statistical information), knowledge and experience.⁵

25. The outcome document noted that sustainable urban planning benefits from the full use of information and sex-disaggregated data including on demographic trends, income distribution and informal settlements.⁶ The document stressed the commitment to systematically consider population trends and projections in national, rural and urban development strategies and policies.⁷

26. In general, the statistical data requirements set forth in the Rio+20 outcome document comprise a wide range of issues including environment, water, desertification, economic development, social indicators, labour markets, quality of work, social protection, education and culture, gender-sensitive indicators, and population groups of special interest. The document also noted the importance of geospatial information and data, and stressed that statistical data used to monitor progress should take into account national circumstances and characteristics.

IV. ACTION REQUIRED OF THE STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

27. The Committee is invited:

(a) To take note of the statistical implications of global events presented in this document and make recommendations for the follow-up to global events, particularly in the following areas discussed at the forty-third session of the United Nations Statistical Commission:

- Population and housing censuses;
- National accounts;
- Agricultural statistics;
- Environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics;
- Energy statistics and statistics on economies based on natural resources;
- National quality assurance frameworks;
- Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;
- Coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations;
- Statistics on human development;
- Agenda of the forty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission;

(b) To provide specific guidance to representatives of ESCWA in the Friends of the Chair Group on Coordination of Statistical Activities in the United Nations;

(c) To consider whether member countries cover all city groups and the possibility of enhancing the participation of member countries. The Committee is also invited to consider how to exchange or disseminate information about developments within individual city groups.

⁵ Ibid., paras. 76, 76(f) and 76(g).

⁶ Ibid., para. 136.

⁷ Ibid., para. 144.