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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Statistical Committee
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Item 10 of the provisional agenda

**PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM
2010-2011 IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICS**

Summary

The proposed programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011 pertaining to subprogramme 5 on statistics for evidence-based policymaking is submitted for the Committee's review and guidance. Since United Nations Headquarters has yet to issue instructions for the preparation of the programme budget for 2010-2011, the secretariat may have to modify outputs slightly, following the Committee's consideration. In addition, the Committee is invited to discuss how to measure achievement indicators concretely, so as to accurately monitor progress achieved in member countries as a result of delivery of the outputs proposed. The Commission's proposed programme of work for 2010-2011, covering all seven ESCWA subprogrammes, will be submitted to the Technical Committee at its second meeting, which is scheduled to be held in Beirut from 3 to 4 November 2008.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This document presents a set of outputs (products and services) that the secretariat proposes to include in the proposed programme of work for 2010-2011, pertaining to subprogramme 5 on statistics for evidence-based policymaking.

2. According to United Nations rules governing programme planning,¹ these outputs have been proposed within the ESCWA Strategic Framework for 2010-2011, which was endorsed by the Commission at its twenty-fifth session (Sana'a, 26-29 May 2008) and modified by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-eighth session (New York, 9 June – 3 July 2008).² Subprogramme 5 of the Strategic Framework, as amended, is annexed to this document as well as the related mandates. The Committee's attention is drawn to the fact that, prior to the Commission's consideration, the draft ESCWA strategic framework for 2010-2011 was circulated in its entirety³ to the member countries, and written comments on subprogramme 5 were received from five of them.⁴

3. It should be noted that the subprogramme objective, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement and strategy, as contained in the annex, can only be modified by the General Assembly, which opened its sixty-third session on 16 September 2008.

4. The Committee is advised that, in proposing these outputs, the secretariat has given due consideration to the following:

(a) New mandates on the functions of the national statistical systems and ways to enhance their operation and compliance with international standards; gender statistics; and strengthening statistical capacities, issued in three resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-fifth session;⁵

(b) Main problems that have affected Western Asia in recent years, including emerging issues identified in the needs assessment for capacity-building of national statistical offices, which was carried out in 2006, and in monitoring progress achieved in 2008, as per item 6 of the provisional agenda;

(c) The outcome of the Third Arab Statistical Forum in April 2007, organized by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS 21), in cooperation with ESCWA and the League of Arab States, in support of the development and implementation of national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) in the ESCWA region;

(d) The outcome of the third and fourth meetings of the Task Force on Population and Housing Censuses, held in Beirut on 10 November 2006, and in Cairo from 5 to 6 September 2007, respectively;

(e) The recommendations of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions (New York, 27 February – 2 March 2007 and 26-29 February 2008, respectively),⁶ and the regional implications of the document presented under item 8 of the preliminary agenda.

¹ United Nations, *Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation*, (ST/SGB/2000/8), 19 April 2000.

² United Nations, *Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination*, forty-eighth session, 9 June – 3 July 2008, (A/63/16: G.A. Official Records, Supplement No. 16).

³ The ESCWA strategic framework comprises seven subprogrammes, including the subprogramme on statistics for evidence-based policymaking.

⁴ Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

⁵ ESCWA resolutions 283 (XXV) on ESCWA member country compliance with international standards for enhancing national statistical systems, 286 (XXV) on gender statistics for equality and empowerment of women, and 287 (XXV) on strengthening statistical capacities for evidence-based policymaking.

⁶ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, *Statistical Commission: Report on the thirty-eighth session*, 27 February – 2 March 2007, (E/CN.3/2007/30 – E/2007/24); *Report on the thirty-ninth session*, 26-29 February 2008, (E/CN.3/2008/34 – E/2008/24); Official Records, Supplement No. 4, available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/>.

5. Since United Nations Headquarters has yet to issue instructions for the preparation of the programme budget for 2010-2011, the secretariat may have to modify outputs slightly, following the Committee's consideration. The proposed programme of work for 2010-2011, covering all ESCWA seven subprogrammes, will be submitted to the Technical Committee at its second meeting, to be held in Beirut on 3 and 4 November 2008.

6. This review aims to give member country representatives in the relevant technical field the opportunity to determine whether there is a realistic link between the proposed outputs and the expected accomplishments, one that would contribute to the realization of the expected accomplishments by the end of 2011.

II. ACTIONS REQUIRED BY THE COMMITTEE

7. The Committee is invited to review and provide its guidance to the secretariat on the proposed outputs, based on the following two criteria: (a) the extent to which the proposed outputs respond directly to the needs of intended beneficiaries, namely, national statistical offices in the ESCWA region; and (b) the extent to which those outputs contribute to the realization of the expected accomplishments of subprogramme 5.

8. The Committee is advised of the need to maintain the balance between normative, analytical and operational work. It is also advised of the need to take into account the outcome of deliberations at the current session, especially under item 10 of the provisional agenda, concerning the results of the self-assessment of the *External Trade Bulletin of the ESCWA Region*.

9. In addition to the above, the Committee may wish to discuss how to measure achievement indicators concretely, so as to accurately monitor progress achieved in member countries as a result of delivery of the outputs proposed.

III. PROPOSED OUTPUTS OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2010-2011 PERTAINING TO SUBPROGRAMME 5

10. In order to achieve the two expected accomplishments of the subprogramme, the secretariat proposes to deliver the outputs presented in table 1 to the immediate beneficiaries, namely, national statistical offices in the ESCWA region.

11. It is anticipated that the subprogramme will realize the expected accomplishments provided that: (a) member countries are willing to produce and disseminate their statistical data; (b) there are no significant shortfalls in extrabudgetary resources; and (c) there is a minimum of political stability and a secure working environment in member countries in the region, so as to create a cooperative environment and foster technical cooperation.

TABLE 1. PROPOSED OUTPUTS IN RELATION TO EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INDICATORS OF ACHIEVEMENT

Expected accomplishment (EA)	Indicators of achievement (IA)	Proposed outputs (services and products)
<p>(a) Progress in improving the national institutional framework for official statistics, particularly in conflict-stricken countries and those that are less statistically developed</p>	<p>(a) (i) Increase in the number of good practices of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics followed by the national statistical offices of conflict-stricken countries and those that are less statistically developed, with ESCWA assistance</p>	<p>Parliamentary documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the progress achieved towards strengthening the national capacities in the ESCWA region (2010), (also related to (a) (ii)). <p>Booklets, fact sheets, wall charts, info kits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics Newsletter, annual (2010, 2011).** <p>Technical material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance and update of the e-glossary of statistical terms (2010, 2011), (also related to (b) (i) and (ii)); • Maintenance and update of ESCWA homepage on statistics (including virtual library, best practices, standards and classification, meetings and documentation) (2010, 2011), (also related to (a) (ii)). <p>Field projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity Development in Census and Survey (Iraqi Trust Fund) (2010), (also related to (a) (ii) and (b) (i)-(iii)).* <p>Advisory services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support in areas related to the improvement of national institutional frameworks for official statistics (2010, 2011), (also related to (a) (ii)).
	<p>(a) (ii) Increase in the number of national statistical offices following good dissemination practices in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, with ESCWA assistance</p>	<p>Substantive servicing of meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantive servicing of the ninth session of the Statistical Committee (2010), (also related to (a) (i) and (b) (i)-(iii)); • Substantive servicing of two meetings of the Bureau of the Statistical Committee on formulating a strategy for organizing the Committee's ninth session (2010), (also related to (a) (i) and (b) (i)-(iii)).

Expected accomplishment (EA)	Indicators of achievement (IA)	Proposed outputs (services and products)
		<p>Parliamentary documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the ninth session of the Statistical Committee (2010), (also related to (a) (i) and (b) (i)-(iii)). <p>Booklets, fact sheets, wall charts, info kits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Handbook on Data and Metadata Reporting and Dissemination (2010), (also related to (a) (i)). <p>Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Group Meeting on Data and Metadata Reporting and Dissemination (2010), (also related to (a) (i)); • Working Group of Heads of National Statistical Offices in the ESCWA Region (2011), (also related to (a) (i), (b) (i)-(iii)). <p>Field projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Statistical and Inter-institutional capacities for Monitoring the MDGs and Reducing Indicators Discrepancies between National and International Sources (2010, 2011) (Development Account, 7th Tranche),* (also related to (a) (i), (b) (i)-(iii)); • Accelerated Data Programme in Selected ESCWA Countries (Yemen and Palestine) (XB-World Bank) (2010, 2011),* (also related to (a) (i), (b) (ii) and (iii)).
<p>(b) Enhanced capacity of national statistical offices to produce and disseminate relevant, timely, reliable and comparable economic and social statistics and indicators, including Millennium Development Goal indicators and gender-disaggregated data, in compliance with international standards and recommendations</p>	<p>(b) (i) Increase in the percentage of core statistics and indicators that are disseminated by member countries</p>	<p>Parliamentary documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the Millennium Development Goals and Gender Indicators (2010), (also related to (a) (ii) and (b) (ii)); • Report of the Taskforce on Population and Housing Censuses (2010), (also related to (a) (ii) and (b) (ii)).

Expected accomplishment (EA)	Indicators of achievement (IA)	Proposed outputs (services and products)
		<p>Recurrent publications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulletin on National Accounts Studies of the ESCWA Region (2010, 2011); • External Trade Bulletin of the ESCWA Region (2010, 2011);** • Compendium of Environment Statistics in the ESCWA Region (2011); • Bulletin on Industrial Statistics for the Arab Countries (2011);** • Compendium of Social Statistics and Indicators (2011); • Bulletin of Population and Vital Statistics (2010, 2011); • Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region (2010, 2011). <p>Booklets, fact sheets, wall charts, info kits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCWA Statistics Pocket Book (2010, 2011);** • Booklet on Climate Change Indicators in the ESCWA Region (2010); • Wall Chart on MDGs in the ESCWA Region (2011). <p>Non-recurrent publications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring the MDGs: A Statistical Report (2011); • Gender in Figures in the ESCWA Region (2011). <p>Field projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Comparison Programme (ICP) (2010, 2011) (World Bank, Islamic Development Bank, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development),* (also related to (a) (i), (ii), (b) (ii) and (iii)). <p>Technical material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance and update of ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS) and other United Nations databases (DevInfo) (2010, 2011), (also related to (a) (i) and (ii)).
	(b) (ii) Increase in the number of new and/or revised international statistical standards and recommendations implemented by national statistical offices with ESCWA assistance	<p>Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Group Meeting on National Accounts and Economic Statistics (2010), (also related to (b) (i)); • Expert Group Meeting on Development of Climate Change Indicators in the ESCWA Region (2011), (also related to (b) (i));

Expected accomplishment (EA)	Indicators of achievement (IA)	Proposed outputs (services and products)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Group Meeting on Measuring Employment and its Social and Economic Implications in ESCWA Member Countries (2011), (also related to (b) (i)); • Expert Group Meeting on Social Statistics: A Tool for Policy Making (2011), (also related to (b) (i)); • Expert Group Meeting on Gender Statistics (2010), (also related to (b) (i)). <p>Non-recurrent publications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study on Economic Statistics in the ESCWA Region: Sources and Methods (2011). <p>Booklets, fact sheets, wall charts, info kits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Handbook on Gender Indicators in the MDGs (2011), (also related to (b) (i)). <p>Field Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Regional Approaches to Measure Societal Progress (2010, 2011) (ESCWA Trust Fund for Regional Activities, RPTC and XB);* • Capacity-Building Programme on Engendering National Statistical Systems in the Western Asia/MENA Region; (XB-World Bank),* (also related to (a) (i), (ii), (b) (i) and (iii)); • Global Implementation and Outreach for the System of National Accounts, 2008 (2010, 2011), (also related to (b) (i) and (iii)).
	(b) (iii) Increase in the percentage of statistical experts who apply the knowledge and skills gained through ESCWA training at the national level	<p>Training courses, workshops and seminars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on Industrial Statistics and Classifications (2010), (also related to (b) (i) and (ii)); • Workshop on Short-Term Economic Statistics and Their Use for Policymaking (2011), (also related to (b) (i) and (ii)); • Workshop on Mainstreaming Gender Statistics in Sectoral Statistics (2010), (also related to (b) (i) and (ii)); • UNDG-ESCWA Joint Training Workshop on DevInfo (2010), (also related to (b) (i) and (ii));

Expected accomplishment (EA)	Indicators of achievement (IA)	Proposed outputs (services and products)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop on Improving Social Indicators and Metadata (2010), (also related to (a) (ii), (b) (i) and (ii)). <p>Field Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing Capacities to Eradicate Violence Against Women (Development Account, 6th Tranche),* (also related to (b) (ii)). <p>Advisory services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support in the main areas of economic statistics, including national accounts, international trade, sectoral and environment statistics and indicators, sampling, classifications and business surveys (2010, 2011), (also related to (b) (i) and (ii)); <li>• Support in population censuses; surveys; classifications; social, demographic and gender statistics and indicators (2010, 2011), (also related to (b) (i) and (ii)).

* Projects submitted pending approval, or projects planned to which no financial resources have been committed yet.

** Recurrent publications with regard to which deliberation of the Statistical Committee is requested.

Annex I

**ESCWA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR 2010-2011, AS ENDORSED
BY THE COMMISSION AT ITS TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION AND
MODIFIED BY THE COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND
COORDINATION AT ITS FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION
SUBPROGRAMME 5, STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING**

Objective: to improve the production and dissemination of quality socio-economic statistics and indicators, including Millennium Development Goals indicators and gender-disaggregated data, in order to facilitate evidence-based policymaking by national and international decision makers and civil society

Expected accomplishments	Indicators of achievement
(a) Progress in improving the national institutional framework for official statistics, particularly in conflict-stricken countries and those that are less statistically developed (b) Enhanced capacity of national statistical offices to produce and disseminate relevant, timely, reliable and comparable economic and social statistics and indicators, including Millennium Development Goals indicators and gender-disaggregated data, in compliance with international standards and recommendations	(a) (i) Increase in the number of good practices of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics followed by the national statistical offices of conflict-stricken countries and those that are less statistically developed, with ESCWA assistance; (ii) Increase in the number of national statistical offices following good dissemination practices in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, with ESCWA assistance. (b) (i) Increase in the percentage of core statistics and indicators that are disseminated by member countries; (ii) Increase in the number of new and/or revised international statistical standards and recommendations implemented by national statistical offices with ESCWA assistance; (iii) Increase in the percentage of statistical experts who apply the knowledge and skills gained through ESCWA training at the national level.

Strategy

Responsibility for implementing the subprogramme lies with the Statistics Division. There is a need to improve the production and dissemination of statistics in the region, bring the national statistical systems in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and develop methodologies for improving data comparability at the regional level in social, economic and cross-cutting issues. Addressing those challenges will strengthen the role of statistics in evidence-based policymaking, monitoring and evaluating the impact of development policy and following up on international conferences and summits, including the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Istanbul Declaration on measuring the progress of societies.

During the biennium, the subprogramme aims to focus on two key areas, namely, (a) adherence to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics; and (b) capacity-building of national statistical offices to

produce, analyse and disseminate quality statistics and indicators to monitor economic and social development, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) indicators.

In respect of the first area, the subprogramme will advocate the importance of full adherence to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and build the capacity of national statistical offices to implement them, especially those which address the following issues:

- (a) The importance of the impartiality of official statistics and their availability to the public;
- (b) The use of appropriate methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data;
- (c) The presentation of information on sources and methods according to internationally agreed standards.

The subprogramme will facilitate opportunities for conflict-stricken countries and those that are less statistically developed to learn from good practices identified at the international level and in other member countries in the region through South-South cooperation.

In respect of the second area, the subprogramme will continue upgrading the knowledge and skills of the national statistical offices in increasing the availability, frequency and timeliness of core socio-economic statistics, and in adopting new and revised economic and social international classifications and standards. The subprogramme will contribute to the production of accurate, relevant and timely trade in goods and services statistics and sectoral statistics, and the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts and its revision, with a special focus on the informal sector and the system of quarterly national accounts. The subprogramme will also pursue the development of gender-disaggregated data in follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and provide technical support to ensure the effective participation of member countries in the 2010 round of population and housing censuses. Furthermore, it will initiate the development of climate change indicators for the region and the identification of regional approaches to measure societal progress that complement the traditional MDG monitoring framework.

In order to achieve the expected accomplishments, the subprogramme will carry out analytical work, provide regional forums to facilitate knowledge-sharing and implement technical cooperation activities, including field projects, training workshops and advisory services on priority issues.

The subprogramme will pursue its objectives in accordance with the United Nations Principles Governing International Statistical Activities and will implement its work in partnership with the United Nations Statistics Division in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, other regional commissions, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and such regional organizations as the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization, the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the League of Arab States, with a view to harmonizing and coordinating statistics in the region in accordance with international standards and recommendations.

Annex II

LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

All subprogrammes

General Assembly resolutions

55/2	United Nations Millennium Declaration
57/270 A and B	Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields
60/1	2005 World Summit Outcome
60/2	Policies and programmes involving youth (subprogrammes 2, 3 and 5 only)
60/265	Follow-up to the development outcome of the 2005 World Summit, including the Millennium Development Goals and the other internationally agreed development goals
61/1	Declaration of the high-level meeting of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010
61/14	Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States
61/16	Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council
61/49	Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference
61/157	Human rights and extreme poverty
61/213	Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)
61/266	Multilingualism
62/161	The right to development
62/199	Role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence
62/203	Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries
62/208	Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
62/209	South-South cooperation
62/211	Towards global partnerships

Economic and Social Council resolutions

1818 (LV)	Establishment of an economic commission for Western Asia
1985/69	Amendment of the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Western Asia: change of name of the Commission
1998/46	Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

- 2005/50 The Damascus Declaration and the role of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration
- 2006/14 Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 59/250 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
- 2007/29 Role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, in light of relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/16
- 2007/31 Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010
- 2007/33 Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia resolutions

- 258 (XXIII) Strengthening technical cooperation in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
- 260 (XXIII) Development and regional cooperation under unstable conditions
- 261 (XXIII) Strengthening the cooperation between ESCWA and the League of Arab States in the field of economic and social development
- 263 (XXIII) Promoting partnership and resource mobilization
- 268 (XXIII) Adoption of the final reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
- 269 (XXIV) The role of ESCWA in the light of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document and the subsequent change process
- 272 (XXIV) Youth employment in ESCWA member countries

Subprogramme 5

Statistics for evidence-based policymaking

General Assembly resolutions

- 61/143 Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women
- 62/127 Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities
- 62/130 Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing
- 62/132 Violence against women migrant workers
- 62/206 Women in development

Economic and Social Council resolutions

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| 2004/11 | Agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality |
| 2005/13 | 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme |
| 2006/6 | Strengthening statistical capacity |

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia resolutions

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 262 (XXIII) | Support for the capacities of member countries in the field of statistics and the International Comparison Programme |
| 276 (XXIV) | Strengthening statistical capacities in the ESCWA region |