



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

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

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Statistical Committee
Eleventh session
Amman, 4-5 February 2015

Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda

ESCWA STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES

**IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE STATISTICAL
COMMITTEE AT ITS TENTH SESSION**

Summary

The present report summarizes the progress in implementing recommendations that the Statistical Committee addressed to member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and to the ESCWA secretariat at its tenth session.

The Committee is invited to take note of what has been accomplished in implementing those recommendations. Member State representatives are also invited to comment and make recommendations on the status of implementation.

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I. OVERVIEW

1. The Statistical Committee, at its tenth session (Cairo, 30-31 January 2013), addressed six recommendations to ESCWA member States and 14 recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat. The present report sets out each recommendation followed by the action taken to implement it.
2. Four recommendations addressed to member States are of a long-term nature, and their implementation is ongoing and on track. One recommendation was implemented, and all data are currently being disseminated electronically. However, these services will be further improved. Implementation of one recommendation was delayed because of a lack of experience and resources.
3. Seven of the 14 recommendations addressed to the ESCWA secretariat were implemented. Three of the implemented recommendations could have follow-up activities, as applicable. Six of the recommendations addressed to the secretariat are of a long-term nature and their implementation is ongoing and on track. Implementation of one recommendation was delayed because of a lack of experience and resources.
4. Details of the status of implementation of these recommendations are provided in the following two sections.

II. STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE STATISTICAL COMMITTEE AT ITS TENTH SESSION

A. RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO MEMBER STATES

Recommendation

(a) To adapt global development goals and frameworks to the needs of the region, taking into account the capabilities and needs of countries at both the national and local levels.

Action taken: In progress

The Millennium Development Goals framework had been adapted to the needs of the region and of ESCWA member States. This work should be further expanded to cover the indicators framework for the post-2015 development agenda. However, the post-2015 framework is still under development.

Recommendation

(b) To develop a programme for conducting a voluntary comprehensive assessment of national statistical systems in member States, in collaboration with ESCWA.

Action taken: Pending

This recommendation is related to recommendation (e) below, addressed to the ESCWA secretariat.

Recommendation

(c) To establish a joint working group between member States to assess the impact of the efforts undertaken by ESCWA in developing statistical capacities, and give the working group the authority to set out its own terms of reference.

Action taken: In progress

A study on methodologies for measuring impact, using sources of research and collaborating with academic institutions was undertaken. The work is expected to be launched in 2015.

Recommendation

(d) To ensure that ESCWA makes use of information technology in the provision of services, especially in the dissemination of publications, and to consider the possibility of providing technical advice using modern means of communication.

Action taken: Implemented, to be continued

All ESCWA statistical publications are currently available electronically, with data tables that can be downloaded and reused. The Arab Development Monitor for Societal Progress is available on the ESCWA website in the form of a dashboard.

Further development should increase the interactivity and graphical capabilities (graphs, charts and maps) of ESCWA data products.

Recommendation

(e) To continue efforts to consolidate dialogue between data providers and bodies responsible for administrative records and national statistical offices, and to review statistical concepts in line with technological developments in the field of statistics.

Action taken: In progress

Particular progress was made in accelerating work on civil registration and vital statistics, through collaboration between the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and ESCWA. Further work should be launched soon on business registers. ESCWA undertook bilateral advisory missions related to the use of administrative records for statistical purposes.

Recommendation

(f) To ensure prior coordination with national statistical offices in international statistical projects carried out in the region, since these offices are the authorities responsible for official statistics.

Action taken: In progress

National statistical offices of member States assume their coordinating role at the national level when participating in international statistical activities. The ESCWA secretariat ensures that national statistical offices are informed of activities where ESCWA is involved.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE ESCWA SECRETARIAT

Recommendation

(a) To resubmit at the upcoming ESCWA session the proposal to hold sessions of the Statistical Committee on an annual basis, in accordance with the procedures in force at the United Nations.

Action taken: Implemented

The ESCWA Technical Committee agreed to the request in December 2013, but changes to periodicities of intergovernmental bodies were postponed at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session due to concerns related to the impact on resources.

Recommendation

(b) To strengthen partnerships with other statistical bodies in the region, especially the secretariat of the League of Arab States, the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) and a number of specialized international bodies, such as the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat).

Action taken: Implemented

The ESCWA Statistics Division actively coordinates activities with the League of Arab States, AITRS and other institutions, including Eurostat, the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat), the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting (GOIC), the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

Recommendation

(c) To coordinate strategies and activities among international and regional organizations working in the field of statistics in the region, particularly the working group on statistics emanating from the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) of the United Nations, to avoid duplication in the provision of services and enhance support for member States.

Action taken: Implemented, to be continued

The ESCWA Statistics Division fulfils its role in international statistical coordination. The RCM Task Force continues its work. A work plan for 2015 initiates activities on sharing statistical data and coordinating data collection among participating international organizations.

Recommendation

(d) To request the representative of the ESCWA secretariat at the Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress to coordinate statistical activities; highlight the importance of improving and strengthening coordination in statistical work; and seek to facilitate the preparation of reports by member States.

Action taken: Implemented

The Friends of the Chair Group has delivered its recommendations and the United Nations statistical system currently implements an improved coordination mechanism, based on recommendations by the Group.

Recommendation

(e) To assist countries wishing to conduct a pilot assessment of their national statistical systems (Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, the Sudan and Yemen).

Action taken: Pending

Due to a lack of experience and resource constraints, the ESCWA Statistics Division plans to engage in this activity in the course of 2015, later than originally expected.

Recommendation

(f) To expand the scope of data collection and dissemination so as to include all Arab countries; and re-emphasize the need to adopt national sources of statistics, most notably those provided by national statistical offices, with a special focus on providing quality data and meeting the needs of users.

Action taken: In progress

The ESCWA Statistics Division reached an agreement with the African Statistics Centre of the Economic Commission for Africa on coordinating data-related activities with respect to all Arab countries. Data on all Arab countries are currently being collected in the areas of development indicators, industrial statistics and gender statistics. In other areas, the geographical coverage concerns the 17 ESCWA member countries and will be gradually expanded.

Recommendation

(g) To implement the system of national accounts based on a conceptual and institutional framework.

Action taken: In progress

The implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts continues according to plan.

Recommendation

(h) To facilitate technical cooperation and the exchange of expertise among Arab countries in the areas of adopted methodologies; the content of censuses; used technologies; data use, assessment, analysis, and use in policy formulation; and in areas related to regional planning.

Action taken: In progress

The ESCWA Statistics Division organized and co-organized (with AITRS, the League of Arab States, GCC-Stat and other partners) workshops in the area of national accounts, statistical classifications and trade statistics.

Recommendation

(i) To provide technical support in the areas of economic statistics; national accounts; statistics on trade in services, environment, energy and environmental-economic accounting; social account matrices; improving the quality of data and administrative records; and developing an indicator to measure labour productivity.

Action taken: In progress

The ESCWA Statistics Division responds to requests sent to the secretariat by member States and their national statistical offices in all areas listed.

Recommendation

(j) To revive the regional team concerned with population censuses and benefit from its efficiency and effectiveness in building national capacities for carrying out successful cost-effective censuses; to request the ESCWA secretariat to prepare a preliminary report on the activities of the team and distribute it to the members of the Committee, while States wishing to finance it should notify the secretariat within one month of receipt of the report; and to build a communication network between census experts in the Arab region for consultation on emerging issues.

Action taken: In progress

The ESCWA Statistics Division has contacted countries that may lead the working group. It also used the opportunity provided by the AITRS workshop (in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and ESCWA) to progress towards a functional working group. The main reason behind the slow progress is limited resources.

Recommendation

(k) To request ESCWA and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to devise an action plan for implementing the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the region, and present it at the next meeting of the Committee.

Action taken: In progress

An outline of the regional action plan was prepared in December 2013. It is currently being finalized along with a plan for fundraising efforts.

Recommendation

(l) To prepare a paper reflecting the positions of the region with regard to the main topics of the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations, based on proposals submitted by member States to the secretariat. The paper should include the proposal by Kuwait on the item entitled “Report of the Friends of the Chair on the Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics”.

Action taken: Implemented

The document, in the form of a conference room paper, was tabled at the forty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, with the agreement of the United Nations Statistics Division.

Recommendation

(m) To request the secretariat to follow up on progress made on the “ArabStat” project.

Action taken: Implemented, to be continued

The ESCWA Statistics Division was granted observer status on the Arab Stat Steering Committee. Further action pending by the Arab Monetary Fund.

Recommendation

(n) To adopt the conceptual framework on the effective use of statistics in evidence-based policymaking, and to develop it through activities aimed at building the capacities of ESCWA member States in the effective use of statistics for developing, monitoring and assessing social, demographic, economic and environmental policies, depending on the availability of financial resources.

Action taken: Implemented, to be continued

The conceptual framework was completed and its implementation promoted through the Development Account project implemented by the ESCWA Statistics Division.

III. ACTION REQUIRED OF THE STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

5. The Committee is invited:

(a) To take note of the status of implementation of recommendations made at its tenth session;

(b) To request the secretariat to report on the implementation of long-term recommendations at the twelfth session of the Committee.
