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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**

Statistical Committee  
Sixth session  
Beirut, 6-8 October 2004

Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda

**REVIEW OF STATISTICAL WORK CARRIED OUT SINCE THE FIFTH SESSION  
OF THE STATISTICAL COMMITTEE****FOLLOW-UP ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTH SESSION  
OF THE STATISTICAL COMMITTEE****Summary**

The fifth session of the Statistical Committee was held in Beirut from 1 to 3 October 2002. The report on that session, which includes a set of recommendations, is contained in E/ESCWA/STAT/2002/3. Those recommendations deal with a number of issues, including databases, cooperation in the field of statistics, the building of statistical capacities, and other procedural and organizational matters. The table set forth below contains the recommendations, the activities that were undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) with a view to their implementation and the progress made in implementation.

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTH SESSION  
OF THE STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**

Recommendation	Follow-up action
(a) The databases developed by ESCWA should be made available on the Internet;	ESCWA has taken action to develop and make available on the Internet a Social Statistics Information System (SSIS). It has also produced special outputs containing social development and Millennium Development Goal indicators; and revised and developed the conceptual model for databases on the System of National Accounts, financial and economic statistics, selected country indicators in the social, economic and sectoral fields, gender-disaggregated statistics and foreign trade indicators. ESCWA has, additionally, developed a database on the foreign trade of the countries in the region with their partners and will make that database available on the Internet in the near future. The Commission considers the follow-up, building, development, maintenance and updating of databases a part of its regular work.
(b) The role of ESCWA in facilitating cooperation between member countries in respect of the exchange of expertise, statistical publications and information systems should be strengthened;	ESCWA has incorporated on its Internet site links to the sites of the national statistical bodies of member countries and related statistical indicators. In cooperation with the United Nations Statistical Division, and as part of the project to strengthen statistical capacities in the ESCWA region, ESCWA held three training workshops on the use of information technology in collecting census data. As a further part of that project, with a view to the exchange of expertise by the national statistical bodies of member countries, ESCWA organized a number of visits intended to train statistical staff in a variety of statistical fields. The meetings and workshops arranged by ESCWA provided member countries with the opportunity to exchange experiences in various statistical applications. An excellent example of that is the meetings of the national coordinators of the International Comparison Programme (ICP), which familiarized member countries with methods and classifications of price statistics and gave statistical staff the opportunity to have direct contact and consult each other on ICP applications.
(c) Cooperation should be increased between ESCWA and regional and international organizations and United Nations organizations;	ESCWA has invited a number of regional and international organizations and United Nations agencies to participate in regional meetings and workshops. It has also coordinated ways to harmonize statistical endeavours and, in particular, with respect to the development of the statistical infrastructure in the ESCWA region, with regional and international organizations, including the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, the Arab Institute for Training, Research and Statistics, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries and the Paris 21 Consortium; and with United Nations specialized agencies, including, inter alia, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and its International Training Centre in Turin, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics. ESCWA also cooperates with the World Bank and other, regional parties, in implementing the current (2004) session of ICP.

Recommendation	Follow-up action
	<p>In cooperation with the United Nations Statistical Division and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, ESCWA organized two workshops on energy statistics and energy reserves/resources classification, to which were invited the statistical bodies and ministries of energy of each member country, providing those parties with the opportunity for the exchange of relevant views and information.</p>
<p>(d) The Commission should continue to assist member countries in developing statistical infrastructure and concentrate on building national capacities;</p>	<p>ESCWA continued, in cooperation with the United Nations Statistical Division, to implement the Strengthening Statistical Capacities in the ESCWA Region project, in addition to the Development of National Gender Statistics Programmes in the Arab Countries project and ICP. ESCWA undertook a number of training activities with a view to building the statistical capacities of member countries, and held workshops on energy statistics, environmental statistics and industrial classifications, in addition to arranging field visits and undertaking consultative duties.</p>
<p>(e) Member countries that were not as yet participating in the International Comparison Programme (ICP) were urged to do so, given the importance of its indicators to issues relating to regional and Arab integration. They were also urged to take part in the training courses that would be held by the ICP regional coordination office for the ESCWA region;</p>	<p>With the exception of Iraq and Palestine, all ESCWA member countries have officially joined ICP and have formed national task forces within their statistical bodies that work with the ESCWA regional task force. Each country has appointed a national Programme coordinator. At the first meeting of the national coordinators, the executive committee for ICP in Western Asia was elected. That committee, together with the ESCWA regional coordinator, will manage and implement the Programme in accordance with the plan and schedule adopted in coordination with the international office of ICP within the World Bank. The regional coordinator and the members of the ESCWA ICP task force have provided member countries with technical assistance, by arranging field visits and holding technical meetings for the national coordinators and training workshops for national staff. In this context, four technical meetings and several training workshops were held. Both Iraq and Palestine are invited to such meetings and workshops regardless of the fact that, to date, neither has joined ICP.</p>
<p>(f) With a view to facilitating regional comparisons, member countries were urged when conducting censuses to consider the issues specified and agreed upon at the workshop on census questionnaire development including disability questions that was held in Cairo from 1-12 June 2002. Those issues include demographic particularities, migration, education, economic activity, fertility and disability;</p>	<p>Several countries, including Oman, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, have adopted this recommendation, and have incorporated or will incorporate the relevant issues into recent and future censuses. ESCWA has provided the relevant technical support necessary to a number of countries that are in the course of preparing forthcoming censuses. It is also working on the preparation of a regional project on disability statistics, with a view to developing the process of collecting, publishing and analysing data on persons with special needs, in order to facilitate the formulation of appropriate policies for their integration into the development process.</p>

Recommendation	Follow-up action
(g) The Commission was urged to coordinate with the members of the Statistical Committee bureau with respect to the issues and recommendations relating to the mandate of that Committee to be submitted to the twenty-second ESCWA session;	At its twenty-second session, held in Beirut from 14 to 17 April 2003, ESCWA adopted the recommendations contained in the report of the Statistical Committee on its fifth session.
(h) The bureau was urged to hold a meeting in coordination with ESCWA in order to consider the duties it should undertake in accordance with normal United Nations practice;	The ESCWA secretariat consulted the members of the bureau as to the provisional agenda of the sixth session of the Statistical Committee, which will be held from 6 to 8 October 2004.
(i) The Commission was urged to furnish the statistical bodies with copies of correspondences in addition to that sent through the official channel;	ESCWA is implementing the recommendations of member countries with respect to the direction of its communications to the focal points identified by each country. At the same time, it is careful to maintain direct communication with the relevant national statistical body.
(j) Countries were urged to send the heads or high-ranking officials of statistical bodies to the sessions of the Statistical Committee.	When inviting member countries to participate in the work of the sixth session of the Statistical Committee, ESCWA hopes that those countries will be represented by the heads or high-ranking officials of statistical bodies.

