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Statistical capacity-building

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the capacity-building activities of the United Nations Statistics Division in 2011 and 2012 supporting national and regional efforts in building and strengthening statistical capacity. The report describes the implementation of the overall programme of the Division by specific statistical domains, including the Millennium Development Goal indicators. Furthermore, it gives details on progress made in the implementation of the multi-year projects organized and executed by the Division. The Commission may wish to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2013/1.



I. Introduction

1. Over the past several years the Statistical Commission has strongly emphasized the need to build and strengthen the national statistical capacity of developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition to produce reliable and timely statistics and indicators for national policymakers and for other users at the national and international levels. The strong mandates for the capacity-building programme of the United Nations Statistics Division provided by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2006/6 and by the Statistical Commission have recently been reinforced at the highest possible level by the General Assembly in the outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session on the Millennium Development Goals. The global commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and the related monitoring requirements have given further impetus to statistical development efforts. As a result, the capacity development approach by the Division has gradually become more strategic, results-oriented and integrated to maximize its impact.

2. In 2011, the Statistical Commission expressed its appreciation to the Statistics Division for the work done on statistical capacity-building in developing countries and requested the Division to enhance its consultations with Member States to identify their emerging training needs. The Commission further recognized that statistical capacity development involved many national and international partners, encouraged all partners to collaborate in and coordinate these efforts, and noted with appreciation the offers of a growing number of countries to help other countries to strengthen their statistical capacity and encouraged the continuation of this trend.

3. The present report provides an overview of the recent and ongoing capacity-building activities undertaken by the Statistics Division and identifies a number of areas for priority consideration in formulating future programme activities.

II. Capacity-building programme of the Statistics Division

4. The Statistics Division has steadily intensified its statistical capacity-building programme and in that respect has focused on three strategic areas: (a) to provide methodological guidance to countries through the provision of training and professional advice; (b) to facilitate the development of sustainable national statistical systems with appropriate governance structure; and (c) to use state-of-the-art data capture, processing and dissemination technologies to enhance quality and access to policy-relevant statistical information.

5. The capacity-building activities in the period 2011-2012 conformed with the mandated responsibilities of the Division, falling in the following substantive areas: (a) the 2010 round of the World Population and Housing Census Programme, including census data analysis and dissemination; (b) management aspects of national statistical systems, specifically on data management and dissemination, notably of the Millennium Development Goal indicators; (c) gender statistics; (d) basic economic statistics, such as international merchandise trade statistics, international trade in services, tourism, energy and industrial statistics, in relation to the national accounts; (e) environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting, especially for water accounts and in relation to the Central Framework

of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA); and (f) geospatial information management.

6. The mechanisms used by the Division to deliver its capacity-building programme took the form of (a) training and other initiatives to transfer knowledge and develop the capacity of statisticians, such as workshops and fellowships (study visits); (b) advisory services, provided by interregional advisers and short-term experts, both staff members and consultants, as resource persons and trainers; and (c) projects to promote capacity development in a specific region or statistical domain.

A. Capacity-building activities by the Statistical Division in 2011 and 2012

7. In the period 2011-2012, the Statistics Division organized 74 workshops, expert group meetings and seminars at which a total of 3,431 professionals exchanged experience and received training. In addition, there were 85 individual fellowships awarded for the attendance of statisticians from developing countries at 15 regional and international meetings and 20 advisory missions conducted by the three interregional advisers. Reflecting the pattern of activities, training workshops account for the largest share of the capacity-building portfolio of the Division. Table 1 shows the number of events and participants for 2011 and 2012.

Table 1
Number of events and participants per year

Year	<i>Workshops, expert group meetings and seminars</i>		<i>Study visits</i>		<i>Advisory services</i>
	<i>Number of events</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>	<i>Number of events</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>	<i>Number of missions</i>
2011	46	2 253	7	58	15
2012	28	1 178	8	27	5
Total	74	3 431	15	85	20

8. The breakdown of the events under three broad categories is shown in table 2.

Table 2
Breakdown of number of workshops, expert group meetings and seminars held, by theme

Year	<i>Economic, trade and environmental statistics</i>	<i>Population and housing censuses</i>	<i>Millennium Development Goal indicators, gender statistics and data management and dissemination</i>
	2011	20	16
2012	13	8	7
Total	33	24	17

9. The Statistics Division has a well-established mechanism for follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of its capacity-building programme, consisting of collection of feedback at the conclusion of each event and a follow-up evaluation four months later. The results of both evaluations of the workshops conducted in the period 2011-2012 point to a very high satisfaction rate with the capacity-building efforts of the Division. In the standard follow-up surveys a large majority of participants evaluated the workshops as very important and useful in terms of providing them with substantive knowledge on the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of statistical data. They were particularly important for countries that were in the process of conducting surveys and could immediately take steps for the implementation of new international recommendations adopted by the Statistical Commission.

10. The four-month surveys aim at evaluating the long-term impact of the capacity-building programme and receiving feedback from participants on their return to their offices in respect of the implementation of the workshop conclusions and recommendations. A total of 90 per cent of participants in the workshops in 2011 and 2012 confirmed a real impact on their work, by indicating that the training materials were subsequently used and that the workshops increased their understanding of the specific subjects. The satisfaction rate for the fellowships is also consistently high, at close to 95 per cent.

B. Short-term advisory services

11. Through its regular programme for technical cooperation, the Statistics Division extends to countries the services of its interregional advisers in three areas of high demand: population and housing censuses, environmental-economic accounting and development of national statistical systems. The interregional advisers provide knowledge and professional expertise and facilitate the integration of countries into regional and international networks, which is an important way for the Division to maintain its comparative advantage in an environment where knowledge and practices are evolving rapidly.

12. The interregional adviser on population and housing censuses assisted countries in the implementation of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme. In particular, in the period 2010-2011 the adviser conducted 12 missions to countries, subregional and regional workshops and seminars, providing assistance in developing project documents and developing training materials in the area of population and housing censuses.

13. The interregional adviser on environmental-economic accounting is assisting countries with the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts, and more specifically with the water accounts (System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water) and the International Recommendations for Water Statistics. After the adoption of the two standards by the Statistical Commission, an increasing number of countries are embarking on implementing them, linking the hydrological information with the economic information in a systematic framework in support of decision-making. In the period 2011-2012, the adviser provided services to 11 countries, subregional and regional workshops and seminars.

14. The issues related to statistical management and organization are at the heart of efforts by countries to build national statistical capacity. It is therefore essential

that the Statistics Division supports countries in this area as well. In 2011, the interregional adviser on the development of national statistical systems provided advisory services to six countries and regional and international meetings. Advice was provided to senior decision makers on matters related to statistical organization and management, implementation of the fundamental principles of official statistics and emerging statistical issues such as the green growth economy. The adviser further assisted countries to improve their networking with the global statistical system and prepared reports identifying common experiences that can be exchanged among countries.

15. All advisers contributed to the formulation of technical cooperation projects, helped to mobilize resources and contributed to the expansion of the capacity development portfolio of the Division. While the Division will continue to provide advisory services upon request to countries in the areas of population and housing censuses and environmental-economic accounting, as of October 2012 the responsibilities of one of the adviser positions has been reoriented to respond better to the high demand for capacity-building within the framework of the newly launched initiative on global geospatial information management.

C. Capacity development projects

16. Resources under the regular programme for technical cooperation of the Statistics Division can meet only a limited part of the demand by countries for technical assistance. The activities often provide initial assistance that is subsequently augmented by projects financed from external budgetary resources, trust funds or the development account. Such multiplier effects enhance the coherence and maximize the impact of the capacity-building programme of the Division by making use of synergies and complementarities with projects funded by different sources. Through South-South cooperation, the projects increase the number of beneficiary countries and develop national, regional, subregional and interregional partnerships.

17. Development account projects are multi-year projects with a programming period of two bienniums. The Statistics Division has so far been successful in implementing eight development account projects,¹ three of which have been completed in the period 2011-2012. Each new project builds on lessons learned from previous development account projects.

18. The Statistics Division and the African Centre for Statistics jointly managed a project on the African statistical knowledge network in support of progress towards the internationally agreed development goals. The project increased communication and knowledge-sharing among statisticians in African national statistical offices and subregional organizations and the quality, timeliness, availability and regional relevance of statistics produced by them on the internationally agreed development goals. The key accomplishment of the project was the establishment of the African statistical knowledge network as a community of African professional statisticians

¹ The projects implemented by the Statistics Division were in the regions associated with the following organizations: Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Caribbean Community, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Community of West African States, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and Southern African Development Community.

who would interact and engage in formal and informal communication with each other for mutual assistance and support. The website of the network, which is hosted by the Economic Commission for Africa, provides information on data collection protocols, international methodology and definitions, standard classifications, compilation guidance and dissemination practices, as well as on best practices in all these areas from an African perspective. The project also provided an opportunity for the organization of workshops and seminars, facilitated study visits and improved the connectivity to the Internet of the national statistical offices most in need.

19. The project in the region of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation helped eight project countries and relevant regional institutions to strengthen their capacity to produce, on a regular basis, reliable, high quality socioeconomic development indicators that are harmonized with international statistical standards and good practices, are policy-relevant and meet the increasing demands of national, regional and international users. The project contributed to the enhanced availability and improved dissemination of such indicators and fostered networking within the region through interactive sharing and management of knowledge and strengthening the links between producers and users of statistics. A total of 97 participants attended the four workshops and another 67 participants benefited from study tours financed under this project. The four workshops covered both the substantive focus on socioeconomic statistics and the organization of statistical systems and user-producers relations. The study tours provided valuable opportunities for national statisticians within the region to participate in international conferences, be informed of the latest development in the field and learn from other national statistical offices.

20. Another development account project helped to build statistical capacity in five low-income countries of South-East Asia. Through provision of training and transfer of professional knowledge and skills in selected statistical areas, the project contributed to the use of consistent methodologies for collection and compilation of trade and tourism statistics, national accounts, environment statistics and censuses of populations in the project countries. A total of 142 participants attended the six workshops and another 43 participants benefited from the six study tours. The six workshops covered both the specific needs of the low-income countries (economic, trade and tourism statistics) and highlighted recent developments (environment statistics) in the statistical community. The study tours provided valuable opportunities for the statistical officers of the targeted countries to participate in the international community meetings and learn from the experience of other national statistical offices. The effect of training workshops and study visits is expected to have a lasting impact on the professional development of the statisticians of the region and on the establishment of networks among them for continuing exchange of experience over time.

21. All completed projects were successful in strengthening the regional networks of statisticians, in increasing intra-regional statistical cooperation and, overall, in raising the regional profile of statistics. The important lesson that was learned was that through strengthening the regional statistical system and through regional advocacy for statistics the national statistical offices increased their own leverage to get political and financial support. They also provided the regions with an impetus in statistical capacity-building as seen by a number of region-led follow-up projects. Part of the success of the Statistics Division in implementing its development

account projects was the focus on a manageable number of countries, together with the fact that the county-based activities were always conducted in close cooperation with the national statistical offices and regional and subregional organizations in order to ensure long-term impact and sustainability.

22. Three more development account projects are in the process of implementation. The three projects cover the substantive areas of data communication and dissemination, production of statistical indicators on the green economy and green growth, and strengthening the geospatial information management capacities of developing countries. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in June 2012 stressed the need to strengthen the monitoring of sustainable development through improved data collection and the establishment of indicators. To respond rapidly to this identified need, the Division has requested funding for a new project which will support Member States in developing and strengthening environmental statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting for improved monitoring and measurement of progress towards environmental sustainability.

23. During the period 2011-2012, the Division also completed the implementation of four approved donor-funded projects in the area of population and housing censuses and gender statistics. Grants from the World Bank and the Government of Italy provided substantive support for the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme through monitoring progress made by countries in planning and conducting their national censuses; guiding national statistical authorities in implementing the revised Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses; and providing technical assistance to countries through training, regional and subregional workshops and seminars. Particular attention in two projects was given to the analysis and dissemination of data derived from the current round of population and housing censuses.

24. The availability and use of gender data at the national and international levels was improved through World Bank grants on improving gender statistics. A venue for exchange of experience was provided through the Global Forum on Gender Statistics and updated methodological standards and best practices were developed. Support for the work of the Division on gender statistics is expected to continue in the future, including in the framework of the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality Initiative (see para. III.C below).

25. The Statistics Division continues implementing the multi-year capacity-building project to improve the collation, availability and dissemination of data for development indicators, including for the Millennium Development Goals in selected countries, funded by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, details on which are included in sections III.A and III.G of the present report.

26. Based on the statistical demand from China and other developing countries in Asia, the Division is implementing a five-year project funded by the Government of China for strengthening statistical capacity, especially in the area of basic statistics. The specific objectives of the project are focused on enhancing the organization of national statistical systems and the use of advanced information and communications technologies in data collection, processing and dissemination. Priority is given to a wide range of subject areas, including statistical classifications, economic statistics and national accounts, trade statistics, energy and environment

statistics and demographic and social statistics. Through the organization of regional workshops, provision of materials on practices in implementing international standards, technical advisory missions, exchange of staff among statistical offices and fellowships to international seminars and conferences, the project provides strong support to the national statistical systems of China and other developing countries in Asia and increases their capacity to produce better quality and more relevant data for policymakers and other users.

III. Implementation of the capacity-building programme of the Statistics Division by statistical domain

A. Millennium Development Goal indicators

27. The Statistics Division has continued to address requests from countries for training on the Millennium Development Goal indicators, with the objective of improving the collation, availability and dissemination of data for monitoring development, especially at the national level. In the period 2011-2012, the Division organized two regional workshops for representatives of national statistical systems and experts from international agencies with the main objective of reconciling differences between national and international data sets on the Millennium Development Goals and filling existing data gaps. The first workshop was held in San José in February 2011 for countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The second workshop was held in Bangkok in July 2012 for Asian and Pacific countries. In July 2011, an additional workshop focusing on the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange was held in Amman for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. The workshop trained national statisticians on the use of the Exchange for data and metadata exchange concerning Millennium Development Goal indicators and discussed best practices to improve coordination among data producers at the national level and mechanisms for data reporting to the international system.

28. In October 2011, the Statistics Division and the National Statistical Coordination Board of the Philippines jointly organized the second International Conference on Millennium Development Goal Statistics in Manila. The Conference brought together representatives from national statistical offices, national government agencies, international agencies and civil society to review the strategies for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals in place and propose recommendations for improved monitoring approaches, particularly for countries lagging behind in terms of progress towards the Goals.

B. Population and housing censuses

29. At its thirty-eighth session (see E/2007/24-E/CN.3/2007/30) the Statistical Commission requested the Statistics Division and international agencies to increase their technical assistance to national statistical offices in order to strengthen national capacity for the implementation of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme. In response to this request, the Division has carried out a number of activities aimed at assisting countries in improving their statistical capacity in census taking. The Division developed international census guidelines, including

handbooks and technical reports; developed the software package, CensusInfo, to help countries disseminate census data; organized training workshops on international guidelines for population and housing censuses, census management, cartography, data capture, analysis and dissemination of census data, and census evaluation; maintained a census resource centre; and published several issues of the web-based 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme Newsletter. For the period 2010-2012 alone, the Division conducted a total of 38 seminars attended by 814 participants. In addition to the funds provided through the regular programme for technical cooperation, the capacity-building efforts of the Division in the area of population and housing censuses were supported by both extrabudgetary and development account funding. A comprehensive summary of the activities and products of the Division on the population and housing censuses can be found in the report of the Secretary-General on demographic statistics before the Commission under agenda item 4 (a), demographic statistics (E/CN.3/2013/15).

C. Gender statistics

30. The Statistics Division keeps working on gender statistics under the global gender statistics programme coordinated by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics. In compliance with the mandate received by the Statistical Commission in 2011 (see E/2011/24-E/CN.3/2011/37), the Statistics Division in 2012 (a) developed new manuals and guidelines on gender statistics; (b) organized the fourth Global Forum on Gender Statistics; and (c) launched a new project on evidence and data for gender equality, executed jointly with UN-Women.

31. The manual entitled “Guidelines for producing statistics on violence against women: statistical surveys” has been finalized and will be published in 2013. The Guidelines have been developed to help standardize statistics and provide national statistical offices with guidance for collecting, processing, disseminating and analysing data on violence against women. The Statistics Division is also preparing a new manual on gender statistics, focusing on integrating a gender perspective in national statistics.

32. The fourth Global Forum on Gender Statistics took place in Jordan in March 2012. The focus of the 2012 Global Forum was on women’s empowerment, covering topics such as economic empowerment, autonomy and physical empowerment, as well as empowerment through knowledge and information. In conjunction with the Forum, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics held its sixth meeting to discuss the further development of an international data platform for a minimum set of gender indicators, gender statistics manuals and emerging issues.

33. The Statistics Division is also working on a new project on Evidence and Data for Gender Equality, executed jointly with UN-Women. This is a three-year project that seeks to accelerate existing efforts to generate comparable gender indicators on health, education, employment, entrepreneurship and assets and it builds on the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics. The project is guided by a steering committee that met for the first time in November 2012 to discuss the project expected accomplishments, time frame and implementation plan.

D. Economic statistics and national accounts

34. After the adoption of the International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics in 2010 and the International Recommendations for the Index of Industrial Production in 2011, activities have been carried out to assist countries in the implementation of these recommendations. A workshop on industrial statistics, focusing on data editing and validation procedures, was organized in 2011 for member countries of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

35. Capacity-building activities in the area of statistical classifications continued through the online provision of assistance to a large number of countries through the classifications hotline. The Division also supports activities of the regional commissions in this area. In 2012, a workshop on international classifications was conducted for member countries of ECLAC and the Division continued its support to the work of the ECLAC working group on international classifications. By providing assistance for two workshops on industrial statistics and classifications in Beirut in 2011 and in Qatar in 2012, the Division also supported activities of ESCWA.

36. The Statistics Division, in collaboration with the regional commissions and other regional partners, conducted three seminars in 2011 to facilitate the implementation programme for the 2008 System of National Accounts in line with the global implementation programme adopted by the Statistical Commission. The seminar series was organized for countries in the African region, the Asian and Pacific region and the Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and South East Europe region, and followed the seminars held in the Western Asia region, Caribbean region and Latin American region, organized in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund in 2010. As a follow up to these seminar series, the Division also supported the regional commissions by providing technical assistance during 2011 to the regional national accounts expert groups of the Western Asia and Latin America and Caribbean regions.

37. In 2012, a new series of seminars was initiated for facilitating the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts by supporting countries at the subregional level. This seminar series aimed to initiate the formulation of a national strategy and implementation programme for the 2008 System and supporting socioeconomic statistics with the objective of strengthening the national statistical systems in support of improved policymaking. It is expected that this initiative would lead to a multi-year statistical programme to move countries over to the 2008 System of National Accounts and to establish a minimum common data set of annual and high frequency statistics. The first seminar of this series was held for the Southern African countries in October 2012, in Pretoria.

38. The Division has developed a number of tools to support countries in preparing their implementation programmes. The first of these is a statistical system information fact sheet that brings together a variety of source information, held at the national and international level, on the national statistics system. To help countries to carry out a self assessment of their national statistical system to evaluate the adequacy of the national statistical production process to support national accounts compilation the Division also developed a Diagnostic Framework for National Accounts and Supporting Economic Statistics and an outline for

recording the status of national accounts and supporting economic statistics. The Diagnostic Framework uses taxonomies based on the Conference of European Statisticians Classification of International Statistical Activities. The outline for recording the status of national accounts and supporting economic statistics maps international standards and good practices for each of the components of the Diagnostic Framework.

39. During 2012, the Division conducted a training workshop on the 2008 System of National Accounts and its implementation jointly with the Economic Cooperation Organization in Tehran in October 2012; provided a resource person for an advanced training course on the 2008 System of National Accounts organized by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in September 2012; and, in collaboration with the Bank of Korea and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, an international seminar on the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts in the Asia and Pacific region and its challenges, hosted by the Bank of Korea in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in September 2012.

E. Trade statistics

40. The Division recently completed the manual for compilers for the implementation of the recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics. This manual provides practical guidance for data compilers and is one of the main training tools in the regional workshops for developing countries organized by the Division about twice a year. The focus of the workshops is not only to improve the production of internationally comparable, high quality merchandise trade statistics, but also to increase the relevance of trade statistics as an important data source for the analysis of globalization.

41. In February 2011, the Statistics Division together with international agencies, organized the Global Forum on Trade Statistics at the premises of the World Trade Organization in Geneva. The event brought together almost 200 policymakers, researchers and trade statisticians from over 70 countries. The Global Forum made explicit demands to improve the relevance of international trade statistics by providing more detailed statistics of international trade in services, by connecting and integrating trade with other economic statistics and by developing measures for the geographical fragmentation of the production processes (see http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/s_geneva2011/outcome.htm). It further urged closer cooperation among the national agencies involved in the compilation and dissemination of international trade statistics to realize those improvements.

42. As a follow-up to the Global Forum, the Statistics Division organized regional seminars in Vilnius in September 2011, in Beijing in October 2011, in Pretoria in June 2012 and in San José in October 2012, involving participation of a total of almost 250 statisticians from 60 countries or areas in Eastern Europe, Asia, Southern Africa and Latin America. The Division also supported a workshop on international merchandise trade statistics in Nouméa, New Caledonia, in November 2012, with participation of about 40 statisticians from 23 member States of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. These seminars discussed the new recommendations and their implementation, but also reserved sufficient time to discuss the issues raised at

the Global Forum, especially linking trade and other economic statistics. In Beijing and San José, special attention was given also to the topic of trade in value added.

43. In a similar sense, the Statistics Division invests a great deal of effort to improve the compilation of statistics of international trade in services. The Division is leading the development of a guide for compilers for such statistics, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2013, while continuing its regional training workshops. In 2011, the data compilation of statistics of international trade in services was discussed at the Global Forum in Geneva, in February, and the seminar in Beijing, in October, with participation of statisticians from national statistical offices, central banks and ministries. In 2012, the Division conducted training workshops in Amman in June, and Bogota in December, at which about 80 statisticians from 35 countries in the Middle East and Latin America actively participated.

44. The agendas of the workshops in Amman and Bogota covered topics such as the general framework of the 2010 revision of the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services, the main data collection and data processing issues with special attention to enterprise surveys and the use of an international transaction reporting system, the compilation issues relating to measuring travel services and tourism-related international trade in services, the compilation of foreign affiliates statistics and some cross-cutting issues such as quality management, metadata and the use of information technology. The Division also supported a workshop organized by the World Trade Organization and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in Bridgetown in March 2012, with the participation of 17 CARICOM member States. This workshop covered the compilation of statistics of international trade in services with special attention given to traded services by the creative industries.

45. In 2011 and 2012, the Statistics Division directly assisted about 400 statisticians of 125 countries in building capacity for the production of international trade statistics. Besides conducting training workshops, the Division also organized expert group meetings to develop compilation guidance for international merchandise trade statistics and statistics of international trade in services. One such meeting on compilation issues of international merchandise trade statistics was organized in December 2011 in Mexico City, hosted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico, with participation of experts from about 20 developed and developing countries. In addition, the Division organized a number of virtual meetings in 2011 and 2012 to work on the manuals for compilers for international merchandise trade statistics and statistics of international trade in services. The Division will continue this important capacity development work in 2013 with training seminars tentatively scheduled in Morocco for French-speaking African countries, in Dominica for the Caribbean countries and in Asia for merchandise trade and for trade in services statistics, as well as an expert group meeting on the compilers guide for statistics of international trade in services in June in Geneva.

F. Environment and energy statistics

46. During the past two years, capacity-building in environment statistics focused on selected regions and subregions with a view to providing sustained capacity-

building and developing synergies with other activities in this area. The Division organized two regional workshops on environment statistics, one in Viet Nam for five countries in the South-East Asia region, and the other in Cameroon for the Central African francophone countries. The respective regional commissions as well as regional United Nations Environment Programme offices also participated in these workshops. In addition, the Division has continued to assist the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the implementation of its regional programme on environment statistics, through participation in a workshop, as well as through the development of methodology sheets and data collection tables for the core set of environmental indicators adopted for the ECOWAS region.

47. Similar work has been carried out for the Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian countries in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Europe and for the CARICOM secretariat and its member States. The Division also provided support to the Working Group on Environmental Statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC. Furthermore, the Division participated in several national level workshops and initiatives to establish environmental statistics programmes in countries in various regions, and provided assistance remotely to countries through the review of draft national compendiums of environmental statistics.

48. The Division is currently finalizing the revised Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the core set of environment statistics which are being presented to the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission for adoption. The revision was carried out by the Division in collaboration with an expert group and is based on new developments in environmental science and policy. It also took into account the results of a pilot exercise of the core set of environment statistics conducted by 25 countries, as well as the results of a global consultation on the revised Framework. The adoption of the Framework and the core set of environment statistics, along with a blueprint for implementing the revised Framework, will further strengthen national capacities in environmental statistics.

49. An International Seminar on Green Economy and Official Statistics was held in 2011 in Seoul covering a wide array of issues in the fields of environment and sectoral statistics as well as statistical classifications related to data requirements for monitoring progress towards a green economy.

50. In the area of environmental accounting, the Division has continued its support to countries for the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water and the International Recommendations for Water Statistics. In the period 2011-2012, the Division organized seven regional workshops on water accounts and statistics with a view to strengthening the statistical capacity of countries in compiling water accounts and statistics for the design of evidence-based policies. An international seminar on linking ecosystems and ecosystem services to economic and human activity was organized in November 2012 in New York, to discuss the emerging field of ecosystem accounting. It is expected that pursuant to the adoption of the Central Framework for the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts by the Statistical Commission at its forty-third session, in 2012, more capacity-building activities for its implementation will be undertaken in 2013.

51. With the adoption of the International Recommendations for Energy Statistics by the Statistical Commission in 2011, the Statistics Division has focused its activities on the implementation of the recommendations. In particular, the Division

worked on the following three areas: (a) the organization of regional workshops to familiarize countries with the new International Recommendations for Energy Statistics; (b) the preparation of the Energy Statistics Compilers Manual; and (c) the development of a knowledge base on energy statistics that can be consulted by countries and other users of energy statistics.

52. Two international workshops on energy statistics have been organized to strengthen capacity in developing countries: for the Commonwealth of Independent States member countries, in Azerbaijan in September 2011, and for Asian countries, in China in September 2012. In addition, the Division collaborated with ESCWA on the “Regional project for strengthening capacity for the ESCWA countries in energy statistics and energy balances” and participated in a training workshop in Lebanon, in April 2012.

53. The Energy Statistics Compilers Manual is being prepared in cooperation with the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics. Its purpose is to provide practical guidance for the implementation of the International Recommendations and it is expected to be finalized in 2013.

54. The Division has developed a website containing country practices in the collection and compilation of energy statistics. Currently about 50 countries have submitted a description of their country practices in different areas of energy statistics. The website is being further developed to include additional countries and additional documents.

55. A new area of work for the Division is the improvement and strengthening of data collection for natural gas statistics. The Division is preparing a manual for the collection of monthly gas statistics in cooperation with other international organizations.

G. Data management and dissemination

56. During the period 2011-2012, the Division continued the implementation of its project with the United Kingdom Department for International Development, involving working with selected developing countries to promote the visibility of national development indicators and increase their accessibility. The project brings together national and international estimates to identify, highlight and explain data discrepancies, improve data quality by use of standards, especially for metadata, and make use of the latest technology for automated data exchange. The project is implemented using a combination of technical support and training on software for data exchange and dissemination, study tours, workshops and direct support to the countries to conduct national level meetings to discuss data and metadata and promote data dissemination. During 2012 the Division conducted missions to nine project countries. An in-depth workshop on metadata was held in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic; a training on automation of production of statistical yearbooks was conducted at the Division for experts from the statistical office of Morocco, and study tours were organized for experts from other project countries. In addition, the Division launched CountryData, a platform parallel to UNdata, but dedicated to disseminating data from national sources. CountryData is built on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange technology which enables automated and standardized data exchange. CountryData presents national and international

estimates for key indicators alongside each other and highlights and explains any data discrepancies.

57. The Statistics Division continued to implement the development account project for the strengthening of statistical capacity in developing countries to enable them to effectively disseminate and communicate their data. The project is meant to enhance the capacity, tools and infrastructure of national statistical systems, which in turn will improve accessibility by the users, especially policy decision makers and researchers, to timely and reliable statistics that are policy-relevant and meet the increasing demand for high-quality information at the national, regional and international levels. A workshop was held in the Asia-Pacific region on emerging trends in data dissemination, strategies for web-based data dissemination, data exchange and data hubbing, integrating statistical and geospatial information, challenges in promoting data and data dissemination policies, and user needs and requirements.

H. Geospatial information

58. The Statistics Division has continued to provide funding for toponymic training of developing countries. Focusing on e-learning, the Division supported the update and finalization of online training courses on toponymy (available at <http://toponymycourses.geog.uu.nl/ICAcourses/index.html>). In addition, the Division as the secretariat of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, regularly provides fellowships to support the participation of experts from developing countries at the sessions of the Group and the meetings of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Recently, the secretariat also supported outreach activities, such as preparation and printing of a 12-page illustrated press kit, 3 postcards and a poster.

59. The Statistics Division is also increasingly providing capacity-building support to Member States in the area of geospatial information. In addition, the Division has supported the activities of the Permanent Committee on GIS Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific, the Permanent Committee for Geospatial Data Infrastructure of the Americas, and the Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology, providing fellowships to their representatives to attend and participate in the nineteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok in October 2012.

60. The Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, endorsed by the Statistical Commission in 2010 and established by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2011/24, has a strong capacity-building component. The terms of reference of the Committee, which are contained in the annex to the resolution, include explicit tasks to compile best practices of national, regional and international bodies dealing with legal instruments, management models and technical standards for the building of spatial data information, to facilitate the dissemination of those practices and to provide a platform for the development of effective strategies on how to build and strengthen national capacity concerning geospatial information, especially in developing countries, and in that regard to assist interested countries in developing the full potential of geospatial information and the underlying technology. The Division funded through its regular programme for technical cooperation and additional trust fund arrangements the

participation of a number of developing countries in the inaugural session of the United Nations Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management in Seoul in October 2011, and the second session of the United Nations Forum, held in New York in August 2012.

IV. Conclusions

61. The Statistics Division will continue to improve and expand its support to countries in their efforts to build and strengthen their statistical capacity. Broadening its capacity-building programme both in terms of statistical domains and mechanisms for its delivery, the Division has already adopted a strategic shift towards a more pragmatic and comprehensive approach that integrates various funding sources, including the regular programme for technical cooperation, the development account and extrabudgetary sources. This approach improves the formulation and implementation of technical cooperation activities, enhances their coherence and maximizes their impact. The Commission may wish to take note of the present report.
