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## Statistical Commission

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**Items for information: statistical capacity-building**

## Statistical capacity-building

### Report of the Secretary-General

The present report outlines the current approach of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to statistical capacity-building, highlights the key achievements of its capacity-building programme over the period 2013-2014, according to statistical domain, including the Millennium Development Goals indicators, and discusses the future plans of the Division with respect to further developing its capacity-building strategy and approach in such a way as to support countries in their national efforts to respond to the challenge presented by the post-2015 development agenda.

The Statistical Commission may wish to take note of this report.

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\* [E/CN.3/2015/1](#).



## I. Introduction

1. At its forty-fifth session, held from 4 to 7 March 2014, the Statistical Commission, in its decision 45/103, *inter alia*, reiterated the critical need for adequate statistical capacity, both technical and institutional, and the need for coordinated efforts and investments to fill the data gaps and satisfy the new data requirements. In this regard, the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Big data and the modernization of statistical systems”, submitted to the Commission at that session, recommended, *inter alia*, capacity-building and human-resources training activities to acquire and develop staff with the appropriate skills. It also requested that the need be addressed for the development of new data sources, methods and methodologies resulting from the requirements of the post-2015 development agenda, taking into account the possibilities of new technologies.<sup>1</sup>

2. In its final report, entitled “A world that counts: mobilising the data revolution for sustainable development”, released on 6 November 2014, the Secretary-General’s Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development called for capacity development and technology transfer which should include upgrading the “National Strategies for the Development of Statistics”, and for the establishment of a new funding stream for statistical capacity development mobilizing domestic and external resources and strengthening the role of national statistical offices in their coordination function.

3. The synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda ([A/69/700](#)) further highlighted the need to enhance national and international statistical capacities. The need to support countries, especially in developing regions, in bridging the current data-related gaps subsisting between their need for indicators to be used in monitoring the post-2015 development agenda and their current existing capacities, will grow. Specifically, a multi-year strategy for statistical capacity development will be needed, based on an adequate mix of national commitments and external technical and financial support. The multi-stakeholder discussions on the post-2015 development agenda have further reaffirmed the importance of country ownership in the production of statistical and geospatial information which will be critical for both national and global monitoring and accountability.

4. The present report provides a comprehensive overview of the capacity-building activities undertaken by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the various substantive areas, including the recent and ongoing Development Account and donor-funded projects and highlights a number of areas for priority consideration in developing future programme activities, including plans of the Division to further develop its capacity-building strategy and approach in such a way as to support countries in their national efforts to respond to the challenge presented by the post-2015 development agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> See report of the Statistical Commission on its forty-fifth session ([E/2014/24](#), chap. I.B, decision 45/103, para. (f)); and [E/CN.3/2014/11](#).

## II. Implementation of the capacity-building programme in 2013-2014

5. The strengthening of statistical capacities of Member States has been identified by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as one of its five priority areas for capacity development work.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the Statistics Division aims to base its capacity-building activities on a strategic, integrated and results-oriented approach. The statistical capacity-building efforts of the Division are built around the implementation of international standards adopted by the Statistical Commission, with a delivery strategy based on work with pilot countries and subsequent scaling up of the results, especially through regional and subregional workshops and seminars, in partnership with regional organizations and specialized agencies. Currently three interregional advisers are also available to provide country support upon request and conduct workshops in the areas of census-taking, national and environmental accounting and geospatial information.

6. In the period 2013-2014, the Statistics Division organized 74 workshops, expert group meetings and seminars at which a total of 5,347 professionals exchanged experience and received training. One hundred eighty-five individual fellowships were awarded to statisticians from developing countries to enable them to attend 34 regional and international meetings. The Division's three interregional advisers conducted 24 advisory missions during the two-year period. While the number of organized events compared with that of the period 2011-2012 remained unchanged, the Division was successful in reaching out to a much larger audience of participants. The number of individual fellowships, as well as the events attended by these fellows, doubled during the 2013-2014 period. Table 1 presents the number of events and participants for 2013 and 2014.

Table 1  
Number of events and participants per year

| Year         | Workshops        |                        | Study visits     |                        | Advisory services  |
|--------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
|              | Number of events | Number of participants | Number of events | Number of participants | Number of missions |
| 2013         | 43               | 2 878                  | 19               | 96                     | 11                 |
| 2014         | 31               | 2 469                  | 15               | 89                     | 13                 |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>74</b>        | <b>5 347</b>           | <b>34</b>        | <b>185</b>             | <b>24</b>          |

7. Table 2 presents a breakdown of the events presented into four broad categories, namely, (a) demographic and social statistics, including the Millennium Development Goals indicators; (b) basic economic statistics, such as international trade, economic globalization, tourism, energy and industrial statistics, in relation to the national accounts; (c) environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting; and (d) geospatial information management.

<sup>2</sup> [www.un.org/esa/cdo/documents/CDSstrategy10Nov.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/cdo/documents/CDSstrategy10Nov.pdf).

Table 2  
**Number of workshops, expert group meetings and seminars held, by theme**

| <i>Year</i>  | <i>Demographic and social statistics, including Millennium Development Goals indicators</i> | <i>Basic economic statistics, including international trade, economic globalization, tourism, energy and industrial statistics, in relation to the national accounts</i> | <i>Environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting</i> | <i>Geospatial information management</i> |
|--------------|---|--|---|--|
| 2013         | 9   | 22   | 6   | 6  |
| 2014         | 7   | 14   | 5   | 5  |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>16</b>   | <b>36</b>  | <b>11</b>   | <b>11</b>                                |

8. The feedback received by the Statistics Division on its capacity-building programme over the period 2013-2014 has been consistently positive. A large majority of workshop participants indicated that they had acquired substantive knowledge on how to produce data (87 per cent), analyse data (80 per cent) and disseminate data (79 per cent). In follow-up surveys to measure longer-term impact, more than three quarters of the participants stated that they used the workshop materials and, furthermore, that they had been able to implement the workshops' recommendations in their substantive area of work and train other staff in their offices.

## **A. Demographic and social statistics, including the Millennium Development Goals indicators**

### **1. Population and housing censuses**

9. The Statistics Division has carried out its statistical capacity-building programme in census-taking in response to the request made by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-eighth session for an increase in technical assistance to national statistical offices in order to strengthen national capacity for the implementation of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses (see [E/2007/24](#), chap. I.B, decision 38/102, para. (c)). The major objective of the capacity-building programme is to enhance the capacity of national statistical systems, particularly in countries with weak systems, including countries emerging from conflict, to efficiently conduct population and housing censuses according to agreed international standards, and to analyse and make accessible in a timely manner, good-quality nationally relevant data which are appropriately disaggregated for use in measuring sustainable socioeconomic development and that can thereby contribute to evidence-based formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies.

10. The capacity-building programme has many components including: the development of international census guidelines, handbooks and technical reports; the development of the software package, CensusInfo, to help countries disseminate census data; the development and maintenance of a census resource centre; and the organization of training workshops on international guidelines for population and housing censuses, census management, cartography, data capture, analysis and dissemination of census data, and census evaluation. The programme also provides

direct technical assistance to countries in need by facilitating the visits of advisers or consultants on a specific aspect of census operations and facilitates study visits of census planners for the exchange of national experiences between countries in the same region. The sustainability of the capacity-building activities is ensured through the training of the staff of national statistical offices, the availability of the training materials and other census-related information resources on the website of the World Population and Housing Census Programme, and the promotion of South-South cooperation, which allows countries to establish collaborations that are likely to continue beyond the duration of the Division's intervention and become long-lasting.

11. For the period 2013-2014, the Statistics Division conducted a total of eight workshops, seminars and expert group meetings attended by 282 participants. A comprehensive summary of the Division's activities and products on the population and housing censuses can be found in the report of the Secretary-General on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme and on the preparation for the 2020 Programme ([E/CN.3/2015/6](#)), to be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its forty-sixth session under agenda item 3 (b), entitled "Population and housing censuses".

## 2. Gender statistics

12. The Statistics Division continues its work 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 assigned to it by the Statistical Commission at its forty-second session in 2011 (see [E/2011/24](#), chap. I.B, decision 42/102), the Statistics Division in 2013 and 2014 (a) published new manuals and guidelines on gender statistics; (b) developed and launched the dedicated web portal for the minimum set of gender indicators; (c) organized the fifth Global Forum on Gender Statistics (Aguascalientes, Mexico, 3-5 November 2014), four regional training workshops and two annual meetings of the Expert Group; (d) continued to implement the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality initiative, executed jointly with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); and (e) prepared the sixth issue of the publication *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics*, presenting statistics and analysis on the status of the world's women and men according to the latest available data and highlighting progress since 1995. The publication will be launched in 2015.

13. The manuals entitled *Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women: Statistical Surveys* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XVII.7) and "Gender statistics manual: integrating a gender perspective into statistics" were published online in 2013. In 2013 and 2014, the Statistics Division continued to work on the finalization of the International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics based on: the outcomes of the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on the Revision of the United Nations Trial International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics, convened in New York from 11 to 13 June 2012; the adoption of the resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization by the nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians held in Geneva in October 2013; and comments received from national statistical offices. Once finalized, the International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics will be submitted to the Statistical Commission for adoption.

14. The Statistics Division launched in 2014 a dedicated portal/platform developed in 2013 to disseminate online the annual update of the minimum set of gender indicators (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/default.html>). The set was identified by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics and its use was agreed on by the Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth session as a guide for the national production and international compilation of gender statistics (see E/2013/24, chap. I.C, decision 44/109, para. (e)).

15. The focus of the Fifth Global Forum on Gender Statistics was women's empowerment, which covered topics such as poverty and assets ownership and control; the new International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of work, the gender pay gap, selected forms of discrimination at work and the impact of the economic and financial crisis on women and men; violence against women and men; time-use surveys, unpaid work and satellite accounts for unpaid household production; participation of women in local governments; women and the environment; and women in armed conflicts. In conjunction with the Forum, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics held its eighth meeting to discuss its priority areas of work, including statistics on violence against women and time use.

16. The Statistics Division continued implementing the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality initiative, executed jointly with UN-Women. The initiative is a three-year project which seeks to accelerate existing efforts to generate comparable gender indicators on health, education, employment, entrepreneurship and assets, and builds on the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics. In 2013 and 2014, the initiative focused on (a) the compilation and online dissemination of international data and metadata on education, employment and health; (b) the development of international definitions and methods for measuring entrepreneurship and asset ownership; (c) the identification of countries that will pilot the newly developed methods for collecting data on entrepreneurship and individual-level asset ownership; (d) the designing and implementation of a methodological survey experiment on measuring asset ownership from a gender perspective; and (e) the provision of technical assistance to pilot countries in preparation for their data collection in 2015.

### **3. Millennium Development Goals indicators**

17. As the target date of 2015 for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals approaches, the Statistics Division has focused its capacity-building activities in this area on promoting the use by countries of the Statistical Data and Metadata Xchange (SDMX) for the Millennium Development Goals and other development indicators. A series of workshops on the implementation of SDMX and metadata compilation were held as part of the project of the Statistics Division and the Department for International Development (United Kingdom) on improving the collation, availability and dissemination of data for monitoring development at the national level, details of which are described below. National experts have regularly been invited to attend the meetings of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators. At the twenty-fourth meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, held in Geneva from 16 to 19 October 2013, national experts contributed to the debate on how to support the intergovernmental discussion on the formulation of the sustainable development goals for the post-2015

development agenda and shared important lessons learned from monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals at country level.

18. From 2010 to 2014, the Statistics Division implemented a project (introduced briefly above), sponsored by the United Kingdom Department for International Development, on improving the collation, availability, and dissemination of national development indicators, including the Millennium Development Goals. The objectives of the project were to work with selected countries on improving the visibility of their national development indicators; improving the coherence among these indicators; and enhancing knowledge and promoting standards across the official national statistical system with the national statistical office as the focal point.

19. The project entailed working with the national statistical offices of Burundi, Cambodia, Ghana, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Morocco, Rwanda, Thailand, Uganda, Viet Nam and the State of Palestine. Memorandums of understanding were agreed with eight of those national statistical offices<sup>3</sup> to enable them to receive assistance in the conduct of activities such as holding workshops with ministries, departments and agencies for harmonizing standards, compiling metadata for development indicators and improving coordination generally. Further support was provided by the staff of the Statistics Division for the holding of metadata training workshops in six of the project countries, which brought together statisticians from across the national statistical system. Further, Statistics Division staff conducted several missions for the purpose of advising on and monitoring project implementation.

20. The Statistics Division assisted the countries in creating or upgrading their online dissemination platforms for development indicators. The Division worked with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Community Systems Foundation in developing data exchange modules for the DevInfo software, which was chosen by 9 out of the 11 countries as their dissemination platform. The remaining two countries were helped in establishing customized data exchange solutions based on their native systems. By 2013, data exchange platforms based on the Statistical Data and Metadata Xchange (SDMX) had been installed and were operating in all 11 project countries. The data exchange mechanism ensures that the countries' development indicators are shared with the Division with a minimum lag. The Division has built a central platform, called CountryData, to bring together all these national development indicators. These data are compared with official Millennium Development Goals indicators obtained from the international data set maintained and managed by the Division; the data and metadata from the two data sets are displayed alongside each other, and any discrepancies between the two are analysed and the necessary explanations are presented to users through the website.

21. In 2013-2014, the Statistics Division conducted four global workshops which were attended by all project national statistical offices (Thailand, March 2013; Ethiopia, July 2013; Kenya, November 2013; and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, April 2014). Statisticians and information technology officers built up knowledge in areas such as data management and experience, both theoretical and practical, with SDMX. This enabled the national statistical offices to set up SDMX

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<sup>3</sup> In one instance, a memorandum of understanding was agreed with the local UNICEF office on working with l'Institut de Statistique et d'Etudes Economiques du Burundi.

data and metadata exchanges with the Division using their chosen software platform. Management of data and metadata exchange is the responsibility of the national statistical office, with the Division providing assistance and support wherever necessary. A workshop on SDMX was conducted jointly with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) (which was separate from the project), involving selected national statistical offices of the ESCWA region; and following the workshop, SDMX data and metadata exchange with the Division was completed by those national statistical offices. In addition, the Division provided training in advanced Extensible Markup Language (XML) technologies to five project countries in Thailand in October 2013.

22. In October 2014, a meeting of country directors was held in New York, which brought together directors of national statistical offices with oversight of the project implementation, representatives of the Statistics Division, and donor and international organizations. The meeting analysed both project implementation and the countries' needs and priorities going forward within the context of the post-2015 development agenda, and considered lessons learned from project implementation. An independent evaluation of the project is currently under way. A final project meeting will be held on 26 February 2015, where preliminary results and recommendations emanating from the evaluation will be presented. The project is due to end on 31 March 2015.

23. Through the project, online data platforms could be set up in all project countries; an automated SDMX-based data exchange was established; the countries received training in SDMX and related advanced technologies as well as metadata compilation; metadata for development indicators was compiled and made publicly available, for the first time in most countries; and coherence of national statistical systems was improved as a result of the meetings and workshops held by the national statistical offices. SDMX modules (most importantly, the mapping tool and registry) were developed for and are now part of the DevInfo software, which enables the database administrator to establish SDMX exchange of development indicators. Finally, a platform was created for bringing together and enabling visualization of national and international development indicators. As the project pioneered many of the concepts and mechanisms called for in the report on the data revolution ("A world that counts"), the project experience is highly relevant for the evolution of the ideas centred around the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

## **B. Basic economic statistics, such as international trade, economic globalization, tourism, energy and industrial statistics, in relation to the national accounts**

### **1. National accounts**

24. The Statistics Division continued its capacity-building activities in the implementation of the *System of National Accounts 2008* (2008 SNA) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.XVII.29) and supporting statistics in close collaboration with the regional commissions and other regional organizations. In 2013-2014, the Division organized six regional seminars on the development of a plan for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, with the objective of strengthening national statistical systems in support of improved

policymaking. Two of these seminars — one held in Jamaica in January 2013 for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries; and the other in Turkey in September 2013 for countries in Central and Western Asia, organized in cooperation with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) — concentrated only on implementation of the 2008 SNA.

25. The other four seminars covered the implementation of both the 2008 SNA and the *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting — Central Framework* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.12.XVII.12), with a view to building on the synergies between the two areas; establishing a common understanding among countries of the data requirements and data compilation approaches in the two systems; and developing a national strategy and implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting system-wide socioeconomic statistics. These workshops were held in Samoa (August 2013) for countries in the Pacific region, in cooperation with ESCAP, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; Brazil (September 2013) for countries in Latin America, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Uganda (December 2013) for countries in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) regions; and Saint Lucia (February 2014) for countries in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) region.

26. The Statistics Division has also provided assistance in the development of a regional implementation plan for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. To this end, it organized, in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and ESCAP, a high-level meeting for coordinated implementation of international standards for macroeconomic statistics, held in the Russian Federation in September 2014, and a workshop on the road map and work programme for developing national accounts for the region of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, held in Oman in December 2014. These meetings highlighted the importance of an integrated economic statistics approach to facilitating the coordinated implementation of the international standards for macroeconomic statistics and the strengthening of the statistical production process.

27. As part of its capacity-building activities and based on an integrated economic statistics approach, the Statistics Division is developing training materials on the statistical production process and management structure for economic, environmental, demographic and social statistics, which address issues such as data-collection strategies, data processing, aggregation in sectoral, national accounts and international statistics, and dissemination and communication, as well as how this statistical production process for integrated business statistics fits within a corporate business architecture using a standard statistical information model. The training material will be accompanied by a programme management course for senior managers on introducing and overseeing these innovations in the statistical production process. It is foreseen that the first of these courses will be held during 2015.

## **2. Trade, economic globalization and tourism statistics**

28. At its forty-fourth session in 2013 (decision 44/106), the Statistical Commission recognized that the production process of goods and services had

changed over time, becoming geographically fragmented and thus involving many countries which added some value to the process. These changes had consequences for the interpretation and use of traditional trade statistics. The exports value of goods was no longer a good reflection of the domestic value added. The Commission therefore created a Friends of the Chair group to develop a measurement framework for international trade and economic globalization. The Statistics Division organized two meetings of the Friends of the Chair group, in New York in November 2013 and in Mexico in September 2014, and a conference on trade and economic globalization at which the new measurement issues were specifically addressed. The participants shared their experiences on compilation of international trade and related statistics involving global value chains and, among other things, on multinationals and their foreign affiliates.

29. The capacity-building activities of the Statistics Division in the area of international trade statistics continued in 2013 and 2014 with the organization of three regional workshops (Morocco, April 2013; Ethiopia, May 2014; and India, November 2014). In addition to addressing the basic compilation issues, the workshops in terms of content were geared towards some of the emerging globalization issues pertinent to the compilation of statistics on manufacturing services, on inward and outward processing, on foreign affiliates and on the international trade in computer and health services. The workshops were used to further emphasize the importance of linking trade and business statistics as a means towards better measurement of the share and contribution of trade in the overall economy.

30. Linking trade and business statistics requires the existence of well-maintained statistical business registers. Recognizing their importance, the Statistics Division started a capacity-building programme on business registers for developing countries and conducted a training workshop in this area in September 2013, in conjunction with the meeting of the ECE/Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Eurostat Group of Experts on Business Registers.

31. In the same substantive area, the Statistics Division supported the statistical system of Costa Rica. This project on linking trade and business statistics was supported at the national level by the statistical office of Costa Rica, the Central Bank, the customs administration and the Ministry of Trade. As a result of the project, by the end of 2014, Costa Rica's National Council on Trade Statistics was able to report five years of integrated and interlinked microdata on trade and business statistics.

32. Statistical capacity-building consists not only of transferring knowledge through conducted training workshops but also of providing methodological assistance through the development of compilation manuals and guidelines. The Statistics Division led the development of a compilers guide for statistics of international trade in services and organized an expert group meeting in June 2013 in Geneva to review and finalize the draft prior to its submission to the Statistical Commission at its forty-fifth session in 2014. Given the complexity of the issues and the size of the guide itself, its printed version will be available to countries only in 2015.

33. In the area of travel and tourism statistics, the Statistics Division successfully conducted workshops with its regional partners — in Dominica (May 2013), together with CARICOM, and in Indonesia (October 2013), together with the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The Division works closely with the World Tourism Organization on all tourism-related capacity-building activities, with the objective of ensuring that tourism statistics are compiled according to international standards across countries and territories and of promoting better-informed national policies on the contribution of the tourism industry to economic growth. Going forward, the World Tourism Organization and the Division will pay special attention to developing measures on sustainable tourism, as part of the work on the post-2015 development agenda, and incorporate these measures into capacity-building activities.

34. The post-2015 development agenda puts special emphasis on the production of more frequent and timely data for monitoring new goals and targets, which is expected to increase the burden placed on countries and would require the use of alternative data sources. To prepare countries to better respond to this challenge, the Statistical Commission at its forty-fifth session established a Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics (see [E/2014/24](#), chap. I.B, decision 45/110). The Statistics Division, together with the National Bureau of Statistics of China, organized an International Conference on Big Data for Official Statistics, held in Beijing from 28 to 30 October 2014, at which countries were able to share experiences regarding the use of new data sources. It is expected that the Division will continue to conduct capacity-building activities on big data for official statistics in the coming years.

35. In 2013 and 2014, the Statistics Division enhanced the knowledge and capacity of about 400 statisticians from 125 countries with regard to the production of statistics on trade, economic globalization and tourism. In addition to leading training workshops and expert group meetings, the Division supported the capacity-building initiatives of its international and regional partner organizations by enabling resource persons to be present at their events. The development of up-to-date compilation guidelines on international merchandise trade statistics, statistics of international trade in services and tourism statistics was a high priority for the Division during the period under review and was implemented through the organization of virtual meetings. Regional workshops have been tentatively scheduled for countries in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa and Asia.

### **3. Energy statistics**

36. Pursuant to the adoption by the Statistical Commission, at its forty-second session in 2011, of the International Recommendations for Energy Statistics (see [E/2011/24](#), chap. I.B, decision 42/104, para. (b)), the Statistics Division has focused its activities on the implementation of those recommendations. Regional workshop on energy statistics were held in Jordan (May 2013), where aspects of environment statistics were also addressed, and Oman (March 2014), where the focus was energy balances. The Division has also provided assistance as regards the improvement of energy statistics in several regions based on its participation in workshops organized through the Joint Organisations Data Initiative, held in the United Arab Emirates (February 2013), Malaysia (October 2013), Azerbaijan (February 2014), the United Arab Emirates (May 2014) and Qatar (November 2014). These workshops addressed the needs of member countries of ESCWA, ESCAP, ECE/ESCAP, ESCWA and, again, ESCWA, respectively.

37. In addition to providing direct technical assistance to countries, the Statistics Division also worked on the preparation of the Energy Statistics Compilers' Manual and the development of a knowledge base on energy statistics. The Compilers Manual has been developed in cooperation with the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics and is currently being finalized for publication. The knowledge base on energy statistics includes country practices covering a wide variety of specific energy statistics issues and is continually updated with the incorporation of new developments.

#### **4. Industrial statistics**

38. After the adoption by the Statistical Commission, in 2008, of part I and the endorsement of part II (see [E/2008/24](#), chap. I.B, decision 39/108, para. (b)) of the *International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics 2008* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.XVII.8) and the adoption by the Commission in 2010 of part I and its endorsement of part II (see [E/2010/24](#)) of the *International Recommendations for the Index of Industrial Production 2010* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.XVII.16), activities have been undertaken to assist countries in the implementation of those recommendations. A workshop on industrial statistics, focusing on changes in the International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics, as well as on survey techniques and data processing for industrial statistics, was organized for ESCAP member countries in July 2013 as part of the Technical Cooperation Trust Fund Project between the United Nations and the Government of China on Statistical Capacity Development in China and Other Developing Countries in Asia. The Statistics Division supported ESCWA member countries in workshops on industrial statistics held in Qatar (September 2013) and Jordan (September 2014), where aspects of classifications work were also considered.

#### **5. International statistical classifications**

39. Capacity-building activities in the area of statistical classifications continued through the online provision of assistance to a large number of countries over the classifications hotline. The Statistics Division also supports activities of the regional commissions in this area. A workshop on international classifications was conducted for ECE member countries in the Republic of Moldova (March 2013). The Division continued to support the ECLAC working group on international classifications by providing technical assistance in Mexico during 2013, in particular related to the implementation of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities and the Central Product Classification, and by conducting a workshop in Colombia (August 2014). Workshops on industrial statistics carried out in 2013 and 2014 for ESCWA member countries also included a strong component on classifications and in this regard assistance was provided to those countries. In addition, during a mission to Jordan (September 2014), the Division provided direct assistance to a member country on classifications issues related to the business register.

## **C. Environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting**

### **1. Environment statistics**

40. During the period 2013-2014, capacity-building activities in environment statistics were focused on selected regions and subregions, with the aim being to provide sustained capacity-building and facilitate the development of synergies with other activities in this area. The Statistics Division organized or supported three regional workshops related to environment statistics where the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) 2013 played a very prominent role. The Framework was endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth session in 2013 as the framework for strengthening environment statistics programmes in countries and was recognized by the Commission as a useful tool for responding adequately to the demand for information in the follow-up to the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals.

41. The workshop on environment and energy statistics for Arab countries held in Jordan in September 2013 was organized in collaboration with the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics and ESCWA. In Santiago from 2 to 5 December 2014, the Statistics Division, in collaboration with ECLAC, organized the first regional workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean under the Development Account project entitled "Supporting developing countries measure progress towards achieving a green economy". A third training workshop, on the implementation of the Framework, for the countries members of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf was held in Abu Dhabi in November 2014. The Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf given its detailed plans for assisting countries in the area of environment statistics, is a Division partner that can make a significant contribution to the implementation of the Framework in the region. The Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics also expressed its support for such efforts and expressed its desire to promote the recommended practices of the Division in this field.

42. Through its activities under the Development Account project described in paragraph 42, the Statistics Division is providing additional support to countries in the ECLAC and ESCAP regions on matters of environment statistics. The focus areas of this assistance are being determined in direct consultation with the countries involved in the project and work in those areas will contribute directly to the implementation of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics.

43. The Statistics Division has continued to assist ECOWAS and the Caribbean Community Secretariat in the implementation of their regional programmes on environment statistics, the latter through participation of a resource person at a regional workshop on environment statistics held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in April 2014. Similar work has been carried out for the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia group of countries in collaboration with ECE; in this regard, the Division participated through a resource person in two workshops held in Geneva (in November 2013 and May 2014). The Division also participated through a resource person in the first workshop of the technical committee for the project on the development and strengthening of environmental statistics through the creation of a regional framework in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized

by ECLAC and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico, and held in that country in April 2014.

44. Furthermore, the Statistics Division participated in several national-level workshops and initiatives (e.g., for Colombia, Ecuador and the Philippines) geared towards implementing the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics 2013 and establishing or strengthening environment statistics programmes in countries in different regions, and provided assistance remotely to countries through the review of draft national environment statistics compendiums.

45. The Expert Group on Environment Statistics, established in 2014 pursuant to the endorsement of its establishment by the Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth session (see [E/2013/24](#), chap. I.C, decision 44/105, para. (d)), has been working on the development of a set of methodological tools to facilitate the implementation of the Framework 2013 in countries.

## **2. Environmental-economic accounting**

46. The Statistics Division continues to work on advancing the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) under the auspices of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEAA). In 2013 and 2014, the focus of the Division's activities entailed: (a) organizing an International Conference on Global Implementation for the SEEA (17-19 June 2013), an Expert Group Meeting on Modelling Approaches and Tools for the Testing of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (18-20 November 2013) and two annual meetings of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting; (b) developing materials in support of the implementation in countries of the SEEA; (c) organizing seven regional/subregional workshops on the *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting — Central Framework* and the *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water* (SEEA-Water) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.XVII.12); (d) organizing a training-of-trainers course; (e) providing in-country assistance in nine countries; and (f) implementing the project on advancing the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Experimental Ecosystem Accounting project in pilot countries, executed by the Division in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

47. The SEEA implementation guide has been developed to provide guidance to countries wishing to initiate implementation of the SEEA and supporting statistics through a step-by-step approach to setting up the implementation process, which would lead to the development of a programme of work with timelines and deliverables and appropriate coordination mechanisms. Technical notes on selected SEEA accounts and modules which provide guidance to countries on the steps required to begin implementation of the SEEA have been drafted. Guidelines on the compilation of water accounts and statistics have also been developed to serve as a tool for assisting in the collection and compilation of water statistics, their integration into the accounting framework, and the derivation of indicators, as part of the development of a monitoring system for water policies.

48. A pilot training of trainers programme for the worldwide implementation of the SEEA, which consists of mandatory online training, an in-person seminar and a follow-up phase, has been organized. The SEEA training course is ongoing for

English-speaking countries in Africa; plans exist to replicate the course in the ECLAC and ESCAP regions in 2015.

49. Technical assistance missions were undertaken in Samoa and Malaysia by regional partners with assistance from the Statistics Division. Both missions developed assessment reports for those countries and a preliminary programme of work.

50. In order to assist countries in the testing of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, the Statistics Division (as noted above), under the auspices of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, is delivering the project on advancing the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting in pilot countries, executed in collaboration with UNEP and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The following outputs are envisaged during the period of 2014-2015: (a) preparation of national assessments and a programme of work to test the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting for each of the seven pilot countries, namely, Bhutan, Chile, Indonesia, Mauritius, Mexico, South Africa and Viet Nam; (b) preparation of a global strategy towards advancing the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting; (c) development of draft guidelines on the compilation of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem accounts; (d) development of introductory training material; (e) development of a communication strategy; (f) organization of a forum of experts on ecosystem accounting, and; (g) organization of two regional workshops.

#### **D. Global geospatial information management**

51. Over the period 2013-2014, the Statistics Division organized 11 capacity-building activities in the area of geospatial information management for over 100 Member States. These activities were in line with the mandate of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management to (a) provide a forum for coordination and dialogue among Member States, and between Member States and relevant international organizations, including the United Nations regional cartographic conferences and their permanent committees on spatial data infrastructures, on enhanced cooperation in the field of global geospatial information; and (b) build and strengthen national capacity regarding geospatial information, especially in developing countries, and, in this regard, to assist interested countries in developing the full potential of geospatial information and the underlying technology. Capacity-building activities centred on technical forums, workshops and expert group meetings, with funding provided through the Division's regular programme for technical cooperation, the Development Account project and the China trust fund project on geospatial information management. As attested by the capacity-building activities described in the present section, over the past two years, the work of the Division in the area of geospatial information management has made an impact across the globe. This has been reflected in increased levels of participation on work items, the feedback and interventions derived from discussions with representatives of Member States, and the comments received on the meetings' evaluation. Participants gained substantial knowledge in this new area, in particular on the building of national geographic information systems, core data sets and global geodetic network development.

## **1. Integration of statistical and geospatial information**

52. The Statistics Division convened three events in the area of integration of statistical and geospatial information: the first meeting of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information in New York (30 October-1 November 2013); the International Workshop on Integrating Geospatial and Statistical Information (Beijing, 9-12 June 2014), in collaboration with the National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geo-information of China; and the first Global Forum on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information (New York, 4 and 5 August 2014). The meetings were successful in building coordination and collaboration and responded to the need for integration of statistical and geospatial information, including knowledge-sharing, building capacity and expertise, and establishment of common terminology.

## **2. Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management**

53. Capacity-building in the area of geospatial information management and the establishment of new, or the strengthening of existing, regional coordination mechanisms are two of the key components of the mandate of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management. Such mechanisms were created in the Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Asia and Africa regions. The third and the fourth sessions of the Committee were held in Cambridge, United Kingdom (24-26 July 2013) and in New York (August 2014), respectively. The discussions at and the outcomes emanating from the Committee's work reflected further recognition of the critical role of geospatial information management and the need for strengthened collaboration and joint initiatives aimed at advancing the development and use of geospatial data and tools to support sustainable development and related global agendas.

54. The tenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas, held in New York from 19 to 23 August 2014, provided a regional forum where government officials, planners, scientists and experts addressed their common needs, problems and experiences in the field of surveying and mapping, cartography, hydrography, remote sensing, and land and geospatial information systems. Eight resolutions were adopted (see [E/CONF.103/46](#), sect. VI). In resolution 7, the Conference welcomed and endorsed the decision of the Permanent Committee for Geospatial Data Infrastructure of the Americas to, inter alia, initiate a name change to the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for the Americas.

55. The meeting of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management for the Arab States, held in Jordan on 5 and 6 February 2014, was a follow-up to the first meeting, organized in Qatar in February 2013. National experts shared experiences on the use of geospatial information and the building of national geospatial infrastructures. Most importantly, the meeting facilitated discussions regarding the process of the establishment of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management for the Arab States, and the preparation of the mission and functions of the Regional Committee of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management.

56. The Statistics Division, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), convened the first Session of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa in Tunis from 10 to 12 December 2014, in conjunction with the Statistical Commission for Africa, under the theme

“Improving Africa for Africans by the power of geospatial information”. The meeting discussed, adopted and endorsed a regional body charter to coordinate United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management activities in Africa and a draft action plan. It also served to strengthen the capacity of African countries to leverage the enabling capabilities of geospatial information technology for, inter alia, various socioeconomic sectors, environment monitoring and disaster management.

### **3. High-level Forums on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management**

57. The Statistics Division successfully convened the Second and Third High-level Forums on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management in Doha, (4-6 February 2013) and Beijing (22-24 October 2014), respectively. The Forums affirmed the importance of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management in providing global leadership on geospatial information management, and participants committed to supporting the projects and programmes through the adoption of the Doha and Beijing declarations. The Forums further aimed at achieving the sharing of experiences and methodologies in the production, management, analysis, modelling and dissemination of geospatial information and addressed its role in the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development-related matters such as managing and mitigating climate change and disasters, sustainable cities and human settlements, science, technology and innovation to measure and monitor progress.

### **4. Geographical names**

58. The Statistics Division continues to provide toponymic training to developing countries, as funding is secured mainly through the Division’s Development Account project on strengthening the geospatial information management capacities of developing countries for better policymaking at the national, regional and international levels. The international training of trainers on toponymy held in Madagascar (June 2013) was supported by the provision of four trainers and the awarding of fellowships to selected African countries. Fellowships were also provided for the twenty-eighth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, which was held in New York from 28 April to 2 May 2014.

## **E. Capacity development projects**

59. The Statistics Division continued the implementation of four Development Account and six donor-funded projects in 2013-2014 as part of its capacity-building programme.

### **1. Development Account projects**

60. The Development Account projects managed by the Statistics Division cover different substantive areas and are currently at various stages of implementation. For example, the project in the area of data dissemination on enhancing key statistics and indicators to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals ran from 2010 to 2013 and was successfully completed in 2014. The project improved (a) the knowledge and skills of trained national statisticians to enable them to better disseminate data and (b) connectivity

and data exchange within countries and between national and international data platforms, through enhanced content and functionality of the UNdata portal as the key vehicle for facilitating effective international data flow. The major output of the project was the data dissemination and communication knowledge base, which is now operational.

61. Strengthening the geospatial information management capacities of developing countries for better policymaking at national, regional and international levels is another Development Account project which has been implemented by the Statistics Division since 2012. The core activities of the project consist of organization of workshops and provision of fellowships, studies of best practices in building spatial data infrastructure capacities, and development of guidelines and training materials. The project promotes the integration of geospatial information with socioeconomic statistical information. The Division's Interregional Adviser on Global Geospatial Information Management provides guidance on and assistance in the implementation of this Development Account project whose completion is expected at the end of 2015.

62. Two Development Account projects in the area of environment are in the process of implementation. The first aims at helping developing countries measure progress towards achieving a green economy and, in particular, assisting countries in producing data for a regionally adapted set of indicators, while emphasizing the basic industrial, energy, environment and agricultural statistics needed to compile and sustain green economy indicators that are suitable and statistically feasible for the eight pilot countries in two regions, namely, Bhutan, Malaysia, Mongolia and Viet Nam in Asia, and Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru in Latin America. A number of elements of work on the project have already been carried out, including a regional workshop for Latin American countries in Chile (December 2014), which will be followed in January 2015 by a similar workshop for Asian countries. This project is expected to conclude at the end of 2015.

63. The second project will strengthen environment statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting for improved monitoring of sustainable development in developing countries. Monitoring and measurement of progress towards environmental sustainability are weak owing to the insufficient production of environment statistics, environmental indicators and environmental-economic accounts. The project therefore aims to address the technical and institutional barriers to the establishment of routinely produced environment statistics and environmental-economic accounts at the national level. The structure of the project, which will be operational to the end of 2017, comprises two modules. Module A aims at strengthening national capacities to produce environment statistics in the five participating countries of the East African Community subregion (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania) and will be based on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics 2013 and its tools. Module B aims at effecting the implementation of the SEEA 2012 accounts in four selected countries in two regions, Kenya and Uganda (Africa) and Malaysia and Viet Nam (Asia).

64. The Statistics Division is involved with two approved Development Account projects which will support developing countries in implementing the post-2015 development agenda. One will become operational in 2015, the other in 2016. The latter project is the result of a new, more programmatic approach to managing the

Development Account, where all Development Account-implementing entities will work closely together on the planning and execution of the programme on statistics, as opposed to the old practice of maintaining multiple projects on statistics. It is expected that the new approach will achieve a stronger impact, especially in cross-cutting areas such as the strengthening of national coordination mechanisms and the modernization of the statistical systems of project countries.

## **2. Donor-funded projects**

65. The Statistics Division continues the implementation of the multi-year capacity-building project funded by the Government of China which is designed to strengthen the statistical capacity in that country and other developing countries in Asia, especially in the area of basic statistics. During the period 2013-2014, the Division, in collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics of China, organized seven international workshops and meetings, resulting in the training of over 600 statisticians, from 34 national statistical authorities, primarily in the Asia-Pacific region. In response to the needs for strategic professional development of national statisticians, the project carried out technical advisory missions, sponsored the short-term work of national statisticians in international organizations and awarded 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 strengthens organization of national statistical systems and increases their capacity to disseminate data to policymakers and other users. The second phase of the project is expected to start in 2015 over an additional five-year period.

66. In consideration of the geospatial information management demand from China and other developing countries, the Statistics Division is implementing a five-year project funded by the Government of China aimed at strengthening production, management and dissemination capacity in respect of geospatial information. The specific objectives of the project focus on the enhancement of the institutional and organizational framework of national geospatial information management systems and improvement of dissemination of geospatial data to policymakers and other users. The activities undertaken within the framework of this project closely align with the global implementation and outreach programme of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management. In October 2014, the Third High-level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management was held in Beijing, under the theme “Sustainable development with geospatial information”. The conference brought together close to 300 participants from 44 countries. Through the organization of regional workshops, provision of materials on practices in implementation of the international standards, technical advisory missions, exchange of staff among national geospatial information authorities and fellowships awarded for international seminars and conferences, the project provides strong support to national geospatial information management systems and increases their capacity to produce better-quality and more relevant geospatial data for policymakers and other users.

67. The other approved donor-funded projects being implemented by the Statistics Division include a project on the improvement of gender statistics, funded by the World Bank and the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality project, both described in section II.A.2 above; a project of the United Kingdom Department for International Development, described in section II.A.3; and the SEEA project described in section II.C.2.

### III. Conclusions and future strategic orientation

68. The synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (A/69/700) highlighted the need to enhance national and international statistical capacities. This being the case, the need to support countries, especially in developing regions, in bridging the current gaps between their need for indicators through which to monitor the post-2015 development agenda and their current existing capacities will grow. Given the broad scope of the post-2015 development agenda, it is to be expected that no country will be in a position to report on all the indicators and targets. A multi-year strategy for statistical capacity development will be needed, based on an adequate mix of national commitments and external technical and financial support. The multi-stakeholder discussions on the post-2015 development agenda have further reaffirmed the importance of country ownership in the production of statistical and geospatial information, which will be critical for both national and global monitoring and accountability.

69. A number of processes are currently under way to help identify and prioritize areas that will require the commitment of national resources and of international financial and technical support in the context of a concerted effort to strengthen national statistical capacities in all countries. Along with the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and the data revolution, and in preparation for the expected adoption of a new set of sustainable development goals in 2015, the Statistics Division is considering an expansion of its capacity-building programme. The Division is prepared to play a leading role in the formulation of a global statistical capacity development strategy and road map to support the post-2015 development agenda, focusing in particular on strategically uniting multiple stakeholder efforts under the guidance of the Statistical Commission.

70. The Statistics Division will continue to focus its statistical capacity-building efforts in three strategic areas, namely:

(a) Methodological guidance through training and professional advice on the implementation of international standards, including a number of particular thematic demands arising from the post-2015 development agenda;

(b) Development of appropriate institutional arrangements within national statistical systems and assistance to countries in the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;

(c) Adoption of modern technologies and systems for data collection, processing and dissemination.

71. The Statistical Commission may wish to take note of the work carried out over the period 2013-2014 and the future plans of the Statistics Division with regard to statistical capacity-building.

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