UN Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks
Comments on NQAFs (received in response to the questions in the
13 August 2010 EG launch letter/e-mail):
**UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
(UNESCAP): Arman Bidarbakht Nia, 6 September 2010**

Based on the report by Statistics Canada, Marge and I have designed a new template for NQAF taking into consideration all the quality aspects presented in the proposed templates in the report. We hope that this could help proceeding on discussion. Furthermore, we would like to share some other thoughts with colleagues:

1) Work on national quality assurance frameworks--

1a) ESCAP, through the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, has been conducting an annual regional workshop on statistical quality management and fundamental principles of official statistics since 2005. These workshops are "designed for deputy heads and middle-level managers of national statistical organizations in Asia and the Pacific. who develop departmental/division plans, set goals and deadlines, develop procedures to improve the quality of statistics and statistical services; and who direct their organizations/department's activities with the support/help of senior managers and their staff." Each workshop focuses on a theme (e.g., statistical dissemination) and provides a forum for discussing and sharing best practices on related quality assurance and assessment issues and procedures. Our programme of work has not, however, included development of quality assurance frameworks.

1b) ASEAN statistics development programmes on industrial statistics have also provided forums for discussing quality assurance and assessment, including the application of the IMF DQAF.

2) Some possible problems/obstacles in developing and implementing NQAF-- (based on a generic framework)

2a) Standardisation of terms, definitions: this by itself is important (and challenging) but becomes even more challenging when we are looking at a decentralised NSS and the aim is to have an NQAF that applies to and is acceptable to all institutions in the system
2b) Relating NQAF to existing quality processes. For example, some NSOs (e.g., Islamic Republic of Iran) have already adopted ISO standard which has its own bureaucratic   burden at the initial stages.
2c) Where there are existing quality practices, albeit scattered here and there: the NQAF, might be perceived as a duplication or additional burden
2d) Going back to (2a): in decentralised systems with several major players and coordination is an issue: what is the optimal approach-- agreeing on one unifying framework?

3) Main needs and priorities from country perspective-- let us hear from the countries!

4) Initial comments regarding three templates-- our comments are reflected in the attached document.

With warm regards
Arman Bidarbakht Nia

UN Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks
Comments on NQAFs (received in response to the questions in the
13 August 2010 EG launch letter/e-mail):
**UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
(UNESCAP): Arman Bidarbakht Nia, 6 September 2010**

Template for National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF)
A Proposal
Prepared by ESCAP-SD
September 2010

As already noted, the three templates presented in the report differ only in section 3 (Quality assurance procedures). The present proposal takes the template based on the European Code of Practice, and suggests revisions as indicated below. While this is conceptually not new proposal, we hope that it does trigger and accelerate conclusive discussions.

1. Introduction
- Current circumstances and key issues driving need for quality management
- Benefits of a quality assurance framework
- Relationship to other statistical office policies, strategies and frameworks
- Content of a quality assurance framework (see below)

2. Quality concepts and instruments
- Existing quality policies, models, objectives and procedures
- Role of a quality assurance framework: where it fits into the quality toolkit

3. Quality assurance procedures
- **Improving statistical system**
  - Coordinating statistical system: Protocols and standards
  - Maintaining user and stakeholder relationships
  - Improving statistical infrastructure: standards, registers and policies

- **Managing institutional environment**
  - Assuring statistical confidentiality and security
  - Assuring transparency
  - Assuring impartiality and objectivity
  - Assuring professional independence
  - Assuring ethical standards

- **Managing statistical processes**
  - Assuring methodological soundness
  - Assuring cost efficiency
  - Assuring implementation soundness: Selecting and training interviewers, survey instruments, field supervising
  - Maintaining provider relationships: response burden measurement and reduction, and response rate maintenance

- **Managing statistical outputs (including metadata)**

UN Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks
Comments on NQAFs (received in response to the questions in the
13 August 2010 EG launch letter/e-mail):
**UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
(UNESCAP): Arman Bidarbakht Nia, 6 September 2010**

- o Assuring accuracy and reliability: survey strategy, data processing, compilation, accuracy assessment, quality control and revision policy
- o Assuring relevance: programme review, planning processes and data analysis
- o Assuring timeliness and punctuality: advanced release dates, preliminary and final releases
- o Assuring accessibility: product definition, dissemination practices and search facilities
- o Assuring interpretability/clarity: concepts, sources, methods and informing users of quality
- o Assuring coherence and comparability: standards, harmonized concepts and methods
- o Assuring output quality tradeoffs: especially relevance, accuracy, timeliness and cost efficiency
- o Developing metadata

4. Quality assessment
- Quality indicators: defining, collecting, analysing and synthesizing composite indicators, quality barometer/dashboard
- Quality targets: setting and monitoring
- Quality assessment programme: self-assessment, peer review, quality audit, quality audit and certification
- User satisfaction surveys

5. Quality and performance management and improvement
- Performance management: planning, cost and efficiency, sharing good practices, change management and risk management
- Recruitment and training: resource planning, determining recruitment and training needs and developing and conducting training courses
- Continuous improvement programme: quality culture, ongoing within operating budgets
- Governance structure: for quality and performance trade-offs and re-engineering initiatives, based on results of quality assessments

6. Conclusion
- Summary of benefits
- Reference to guidelines and implementation plans