



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
18 December 2013

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Forty-fifth session

4-7 March 2014

Item 3 (n) of the provisional agenda*

Items for discussion and decision:

regional statistical development

Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on statistics and the post-2015 development agenda: perspectives from the Asia-Pacific region

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2013/235, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on statistics and the post-2015 development agenda: perspectives from the Asia-Pacific region, which is submitted to the Statistical Commission for discussion and decision.

* [E/CN.3/2014/1](#).



Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on statistics and the post-2015 development agenda: perspectives from the Asia-Pacific region

Summary

In November 2013 the leaders of national statistical systems in Asia and the Pacific came together to discuss topical issues for statistics development under the theme “Positioning statistics as a development imperative: opportunities in the context of formulating the post-2015 development agenda”, as part of the Eleventh Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific organized by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific.

The present report focuses on the global developments affecting the role and scope of statistics guided by the deliberations at the above-mentioned meeting. The report reflects the headway made among the leaders of national statistical systems during recent years in strengthening regional action to improve statistics in Asia and the Pacific and finding a regional voice through which to influence global developments. It also conveys the view of the statistical community in Asia and the Pacific that the post-2015 development agenda process, while presenting a number of challenges to national statistical systems, offers a unique opportunity to firmly place statistics as a development imperative at the heart of good governance, transparency and accountability.

The report outlines progress made in Asia and the Pacific to strengthen statistics through regional cooperation under the auspices of the Committee on Statistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. It points to challenges and opportunities vis-à-vis statistics requirements implied in the emerging post-2015 development agenda, which will constitute the basis for setting the ambition level for future and accelerated regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.

The report concludes that a revolution is needed in the way the world views statistics. In order for statistical systems to remain relevant and equipped to meet demands, statistics must be positioned as a development objective in its own right. It calls upon the global statistical community to take urgent action to leverage to the maximum the opportunity presented by the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda so as to ensure that statistical systems are equipped to meet future challenges. It is proposed that members of the Statistical Commission agree to take collective action to advocate for the inclusion of achieving effective national statistical systems as a goal in the post-2015 development agenda.

I. Introduction

1. The first report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on regional statistics development in Asia and the Pacific, issued on 16 December 2008,¹ was submitted to the Statistical Commission for consideration at its fortieth session, held in February 2009. That report provided an overview of statistics capacity in countries in Asia and the Pacific, pointing to the need for stronger, more responsive national statistical systems to support the ambitious development agendas of Governments in the region.

2. The Statistical Commission's deliberations led to renewed resolve by the region to support the strengthening of national statistical systems through the formulation of a shared vision for statistics development, to be implemented through regional cooperation. It also led directly to the establishment of Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific,² a network of development partners active in Asia and the Pacific, which have agreed to align the focus of their activities with the strategic direction set out by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics.

3. While the present report provides information on regional statistics development since 2009, its content marks a shift from previous regional reports to the Statistical Commission in its focus and aim. The report presents regional reflections on issues that are of global importance, calling for collective action by the global statistical community, through the Commission.

4. The report presents perspectives and positions of the Asia-Pacific region on the role of statistics in the formulation and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. It argues that the global statistical community's collective action and responsibility are necessary to ensure (a) that national statistical systems are appropriately resourced to meet the demands for statistics that are emerging from the post-2015 development agenda deliberations; and (b) that concepts, methodologies, classifications and standards are developed to shape and influence the "new data revolution" that has been called for by the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.³

5. The report concludes that a revolution is needed in the way the world views statistics. In order for official statistical systems to remain relevant and equipped to meet demands, statistics must be positioned as a development objective in its own right. And for that to happen, global action is needed.

II. A prominent role for statistics in the post-2015 development agenda

6. The prominence of statistics in decision-making by Governments, international development partners and societies at large has increased exponentially over the past decade thanks to two main factors: the adoption and implementation of an

¹ E/CN.3/2009/15. Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc09/2009-15-ESCAP-E.pdf>.

² Further information on the Partnership is available from <http://www.unescap.org/stat/partnership/>.

³ See <http://www.un.org/sg/management/hlppost2015.shtml>. Further information on the Eleventh Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific is available from www.unsiap.or.jp/training/6_Leading_MQS/6_ms11.php.

international development agenda and the growing influence and availability of data from conventional and unconventional sources.

7. First, the role of the Millennium Development Goals as a structured international development agenda in raising the profile of statistics cannot be overemphasized. Progress towards the achievement of its targets has been monitored globally. It is within the context of this initiative that developing countries and international organizations have mobilized efforts to produce more and better data in order to compile the millennium development indicators, which have become an important part of official statistics in many countries. The initiative has also encouraged and facilitated dialogue among policymakers, civil society and statisticians in the design of national goals and the preparation of regular monitoring reports.

8. Second, over the past decade, the demand for information and the modalities through which and the speed at which we can access it have evolved tremendously, owing to new technologies and the rising influence of social media. There is an ever growing amount of data, albeit of mixed quality and relevance. This mass of information, or big data, is produced in an unorganized manner by a diverse set of often private entities, which usually work much more rapidly and cost-effectively than do official statistical systems. Undoubtedly, through the availability of such information not only has the emphasis been placed on the central role of statistics for decision-making but the current way of doing official statistical business has also been called into question.

9. The lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals process and the fast-evolving conjuncture of non-official and official data production and dissemination are the two pillars that need to be taken into account in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, which concerns developed as much as developing countries. This necessitates the articulation of a “new” image of statistics — not only as a supporting element of policymaking but also as an integral part of development and good governance. While the importance of statistics is highlighted in the post-2015 process, thus far the repositioning of statistics in the post-2015 development agenda has not been addressed.

10. More specifically, the May 2013 report of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda,⁴ entitled “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development” — with its message that “(t)oo often, development efforts have been hampered by a lack of the most basic data about the social and economic circumstances in which people live” and its call for a “new data revolution” — placed statistics at the heart of the development debate. The report also put forward 12 illustrative goals with targets for eradicating extreme poverty through sustainable development (annex I). In doing so, the report set forth an ambitious measurement agenda but due consideration was not given to what needs to change in national statistical systems in order for those systems to be able to carry out this ambitious agenda.

11. Discussed below are the stream of issues arising from the deliberations of the High-level Panel for strategic consideration by and concerted response from the statistical community.

⁴ Available from http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf.

Integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions of development

12. The deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda are influenced by concurrent policy dialogues on sustainable development. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3 to 14 June 1992,⁵ much effort has gone into the development of standards for environment statistics, culminating in the endorsement of the revised Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics by the Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth session in 2013 (see E/2013/24, chap. I.C, decision 44/105, para. (c)),⁶ and the Commission's adoption of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework at its forty-third session in 2012 (see E/2012/24, chap. I.B, decision 43/105, para. (c)).⁷ Meanwhile, a plethora of sustainable development indicators have been developed and applied by numerous actors, within and outside the statistical community.

13. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",⁸ called for the development of broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product (GDP) in order to better inform policy decisions. It thus recognized the central role of measures as a driver for policy formulation and affirmed that, with separate measures, the full integration of all three pillars of sustainable development in policymaking would not be possible. The Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda also recognizes the need for integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of a post-2015 development agenda in order to account for progress towards sustainable development.

14. In the context of statistics, there is uneven emphasis given to the three pillars of sustainable development in many countries. The first step towards monitoring sustainable development is to ensure the availability of "basic data" in each of these statistical domains. The bigger challenge is the design of an integrated conceptual framework wherein statistics on the economy, society and the environment can be coherently reflected. The integration of these three pillars in the quantitative realm necessitates common concepts, classifications, standards and methodologies, and efficient cooperation among data providers. It is of paramount importance that the statistical community play a pivotal role in the elaboration of the conceptual framework and not limit itself to the monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda.

⁵ The text of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, adopted by the Conference on 14 June 1992, is available from <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm>.

⁶ Further information on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics is available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/fdes.htm>.

⁷ Further information on the SEEA is available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/seea.asp>.

⁸ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex. Further information on the Conference is available from <http://www.uncsd2012.org/about.html>.

Governance and accountability

15. The High-level Panel proposes an (illustrative) goal to “ensure good governance and effective institutions” and calls for a transformative shift to “build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all”. Implicitly, a fourth dimension, or pillar, of sustainable development is to be added, namely, governance.

16. The goal includes five indicators that focus on legal identity, right and access to information, public participation, freedom of speech and association, and corruption and accountability of government officials.

17. This goal is a reminder of the need to further develop governance as a statistical domain, including concepts, measurement tools and programmes to meet related information needs. More important, however, in order to attain and monitor the goal of good governance and effective institutions, a well-functioning and capable national statistical system conforming to the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics is crucial. Without access to reliable information and statistics of acceptable quality, it is impossible to reach the targets established under this goal. However, the role of statistics goes beyond its association with achieving the goal of governance and accountability and extends to involvement in the conceptual development and monitoring of all proposed goals in the post-2015 development agenda. Therefore, the establishment and maintenance of “effective national statistical systems” shall be given a more central role in the world, post-2015.

18. The call for additional attention to governance, the positioning of statistics at the core of good governance, and the need for accelerated statistical development is echoed in the report of the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations.⁹ While recognizing the continued need for development of internationally agreed standards and methodologies by the Statistical Commission, the report calls for the establishment of a specialized agency, WorldStat, charged with putting confidence into our statistics for the long term. In pursuit of this aim, it is proposed that WorldStat support the implementation of standards, develop data-processing and analysis capacities, invest in civil registration systems, undertake quality control over global statistics, assess domestic practices, regulate misuse and improve data collection.

19. The statistical community, in developing a strategy for statistics development in the post-2015 context, should reflect on and respond collectively to the recommendations of this report.

A data revolution for sustainable development

20. The Secretary-General’s High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda calls for a “new data revolution” for sustainable development. Recognizing the vast progress in the realm of information availability, accessibility and technology as embodied in the ever expanding phenomenon of big

⁹ See *Now for the Long Term: The Report of the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations* (Oxford, University of Oxford, Oxford Martin School, October 2013). Available from http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/commission/Oxford_Martin_Now_for_the_Long_Term.pdf.

data, the High-level Panel indicates that a shift is needed in order to make data work more effectively for development.

21. Such a shift should empower citizens through their access to quality information which is disaggregated so as to be relevant to their specific concerns. This would enable them to hold Governments and private sector entities accountable for their actions and to make informed decisions as consumers and citizens. Meanwhile, information that integrates economic, social and environment dimensions using internationally agreed frameworks such as the SEEA would enable Governments and businesses to account for their impact on sustainable development in a consistent manner and plan future policies and investments accordingly.

22. Noting that such a shift necessitates involvement by international organizations, Governments, private sector entities, foundations and civil society organizations, the report notes that efforts to make use of the latest technology and new (non-official) data remain disconnected from the traditional statistics community at national and international levels.

23. It therefore calls for a global partnership on development data comprising diverse stakeholders. The partnership would focus on filling critical data gaps, expanding data accessibility and supporting the establishment of a baseline for post-2015 targets.

24. The urgings and recommendations of the High-level Panel on the new data revolution are similar to those of the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generation. They call for a coordinated response and necessitate the formulation of a strategy by the global statistical community.

Lessons learned from monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals

25. Useful lessons have been learned through the efforts to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. The statistical community rose to the challenges presented by the Millennium Development Goals monitoring framework by increasing the availability of the data needed to provide trends analysis for many of the Millennium Development Goals indicators.¹⁰ The focus of national data collection to support Millennium Development Goals monitoring has been mostly on the social indicators. Indicators related to Goal 7 (Ensure environmental sustainability), for example, have been elaborated mostly using sophisticated modelling techniques at the international level.

26. The emphasis on the social indicators has meant that, in the absence of reliable administrative statistics, household surveys have been the main source of data. Many countries rely on international funding and expertise to conduct these special household surveys. Other national sources of Millennium Development Goals monitoring data, such as civil registration systems, have seen no comparable progress. This is of particular concern considering that such administrative sources of data are potentially more sustainable and provide information for local

¹⁰ See the 20 December 2012 report of the Secretary-General on indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (E/CN.3/2013/21). Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc13/2013-21-Indicators-E.pdf>.

development planning, which national surveys are not designed to offer. Moreover, household surveys tend to underrepresent the poorest¹¹ and are therefore particularly ill suited for designing interventions that target vulnerable populations. Furthermore, if recommendations by the High-level Panel are implemented, targets of the post-2015 goals would be considered achieved only if they have been met for all relevant income and social groups. There is a need to localize monitoring information, a task best addressed through enhancing the quality and use of local administrative data.

27. The fact that existing data from national statistical systems have not always been used for monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals¹⁰ has hampered the uptake of the monitoring results by national Governments and has not improved the standing of national statistical systems or the perceived credibility of official national statistics. This lesson points specifically to the importance of integrating the elaboration and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda with sustainable statistics development strategies through strengthened national statistical systems.

The challenges ahead

28. For a new data revolution to come to fruition in support of the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda, a number of changes and improvements are required:

(a) The availability and quality of basic statistics produced by national statistical systems need to be dramatically improved, which will require significant additional investments;

(b) New measurements need to be developed in the areas of sustainable development, broader measures of progress and governance;

(c) Standards, classifications and methodologies to support meaningful use of new data sources need to be rapidly developed and deployed.

29. The statistical community cannot achieve this task on its own. Increased engagement with the development community and with non-official, new, often private sector data providers, is needed to ensure rapid and broad application of new standards classifications and methodologies, and the relevance of new concepts and related measurements. In this regard:

(a) National statistical systems must be transformed so as to be able to function and operate as collaborative agents and key service providers in support of national development;

(b) The global statistical community needs to become an active, lead partner in a global partnership for development data which welcomes actors from public and private organizations, and governmental as well as non-governmental organizations;

(c) A global partnership for development data should define principles and code of conduct for official as well as non-official data providers and establish as a key aim the development of new measurements and methodologies.

¹¹ See Roy Carr-Hill, "Missing millions and measuring development progress", *World Development*, vol. 46, No. 2 (June 2013), pp. 30-44.

30. The above reflections formed the gist of the discussions at the Eleventh Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific, organized in collaboration by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), the ESCAP Statistics Division and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) in November 2013.¹² The following section provides an overview of the context within which those discussions were held.

III. Collective action to improve statistics in Asia and the Pacific

31. In response to the gaps in statistical capacity and the demands of countries across the region, statistics development activities, coordinated and driven by countries and international organizations, have grown progressively in number and intensity since 2009, when the first report on statistical development in Asia and the Pacific (E/CN.3/2009/15) was submitted to the Statistical Commission.

32. Strengthened regional decision-making and cooperation have provided the impetus for this intensification of efforts. The ESCAP Committee on Statistics, an intergovernmental forum comprising the heads of national statistical offices of all ESCAP member States and the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific, a network of international organizations involved in statistics development in the region, provide the enabling platforms for regional action.

A. Shared goals and joint programmes for statistics development

33. In 2010, the ESCAP Committee on Statistics set two strategic goals for statistics development in Asia and the Pacific: (a) to ensure that, by 2020, all countries in the region have the capacity to produce an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environment statistics; and (b) to create a more adaptive and cost-effective information management environment for national statistical offices through stronger cooperation.¹³

34. The two strategic goals function as an umbrella for regional capacity development programmes in all statistical domains, guided and implemented by a number of advisory, steering and working groups comprising representatives from member States and international development partners. An overview of the regional initiatives with clear regional and/or global mandates is provided below.

Economic statistics

35. In the area of economic statistics, the region has designed and agreed on a Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.¹⁴ The core set of economic statistics, endorsed by the ESCAP

¹² See footnote 3.

¹³ See the report of the Committee on Statistics on its second session (E/ESCAP/CST(2)/9), issued on 23 December 2010. Available from <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/2/CST2-9E-report.pdf>.

¹⁴ See the note by the secretariat of ESCAP on the proposed regional programme for the improvement of economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/CST(2)/5), issued on 25 October 2010. Available from <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/2/CST2-5E.pdf>.

Commission¹⁵ in 2011, functions as a shared reference for cooperation and sets out the ambition level for the Regional Programme; an implementation plan for the regional programme was developed over three years of intense work by countries and development partners.¹⁶ The expected outcome of the Regional Programme is that the national statistical systems in the region will have the capacity to produce and disseminate, in line with international standards, the core set of economic statistics by 2020. While many countries in the region have plans to implement the *System of National Accounts 2008* (2008 SNA),¹⁷ improving supporting economic statistics is the top priority for a large number of countries in Asia and the Pacific. A recent capacity screening based on the core set confirmed these regional priorities. The implementation of the Regional Programme is overseen by the Steering Group on Economic Statistics, comprising heads and senior officials of macroeconomic statistics departments of national statistical offices. The Steering Group is in the process of expanding to include representatives of central banks and ministries of finance for a coordinated approach to production of economic statistics at the national level.

Agricultural and rural statistics

36. The Asia-Pacific region has taken up the challenge of implementing the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The implementation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics is well under way. Work is overseen by the Regional Steering Committee on Agricultural Statistics, with the Asian Development Plan, ESCAP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), respectively, taking the lead in coordinating the research, training and technical assistance components of the Plan.

Population and social statistics

37. A core set of population and social statistics was developed by a technical advisory group comprising member countries and development partners and endorsed by the ESCAP Commission in 2013,¹⁸ which constitutes a global milestone. A capacity development programme is now being developed with guidance provided by the Technical Advisory Group on Social Statistics.

¹⁵ See resolution 67/10 on a core set of economic statistics to guide the improvement of basic economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific, adopted by ESCAP at its sixty-seventh session on 25 May 2011. Available from http://www.unescap.org/EDC/English/AnnualReports/2011-Resolutions-E67_23E.pdf.

¹⁶ See the note by the ESCAP Technical Advisory Group on the Development of Economic Statistics on a proposed core set of economic statistics for Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/CST(2)/4), issued on 7 October 2010. Available from <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/2/CST2-4E.pdf>. See also the note by the ESCAP secretariat under the guidance of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics on the implementation plan for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/CST(3)/CRP.1), issued on 14 November 2012. Available from <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/3/CST3-CRP1E.pdf>.

¹⁷ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.XVII.29.

¹⁸ See resolution 69/16 on a core set of population and social statistics to guide national capacity development in Asia and the Pacific, adopted by ESCAP at its sixty-ninth session on 1 May 2013. Available from http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/2013-Resolutions-E69_27E.pdf.

Civil registration and vital statistics

38. Countries in Asia and the Pacific have indicated that improving their civil registration systems and derived vital statistics (CRVS) is a strong priority. Since 2009, 48 ESCAP member States have completed a rapid self-assessment of their CRVS systems. The findings verify that improvements are needed, with only 13 countries having scored in the category of “satisfactory”.¹⁹

39. Based on the assessment findings and consecutive resolutions of the ESCAP Commission,²⁰ the ESCAP secretariat and a wide range of member States and development partners are collaborating to implement the Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.²¹ One landmark activity in this regard is a ministerial-level conference, which will be held in November 2014 to ensure political support and accountability for sustaining efforts at national and regional levels. The Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, at its inaugural meeting held in December 2013, to prepare for the upcoming ministerial-level conference, recommended that there be a target on universal CRVS in the post-2015 development agenda under a potential goal of good governance, and that this recommendation be brought to the attention of the Statistical Commission.

Modernization of statistical products and services

40. Underpinning efforts in the area of domain-specific statistics are well-functioning statistical management and business processes, put in place to ensure efficiency, quality, timeliness and relevance of the services provided by statistical organizations. The Strategic Advisory Body for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services in Asia and the Pacific (SAB-AP) has been established to galvanize regional action and cooperation on modernization efforts, linking its work closely with the High-level Group for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services (HLG) and related committees serviced by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

Environment statistics

41. Based on the recommendation of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics at its third session, the ESCAP Statistics Division has been working towards the formulation of a regional approach to environment statistics as well as to the other statistical domains. As a first step, the Expert Group Meeting on Strategies for Improving Environment Statistics in Asia and the Pacific was held in Bangkok from

¹⁹ For a summary of the results, see the information paper entitled “Overview of efforts to improve civil registration and vital statistics in the Asia-Pacific region” jointly prepared by the ESCAP secretariat in collaboration with the Health Metrics Network and the University of Queensland, Health Information Systems Knowledge Hub, issued in December 2012. Available from <http://www.unescap.org/stat/crvs/high-level/CRVS-efforts-asia-pacific-information-paper.pdf>.

²⁰ See resolution 67/12 on the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific, adopted by ESCAP at its sixty-seventh session on 25 May 2011. Available from http://www.unescap.org/EDC/English/AnnualReports/2011-Resolutions-E67_23E.pdf. See also resolution 69/15 on implementing the outcome of the high-level meeting on the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific, adopted by ESCAP at its sixty-ninth session on 1 May 2013. Available from http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/2013-Resolutions-E69_27E.pdf.

²¹ See <http://www.unescap.org/stat/crvs/RSP/index.asp>.

2 to 4 December 2013, with the participation of over 20 experts from national and international organizations.²² The Meeting confirmed the need to develop a strategy for improving environment statistics in the region guided by the global methodological developments in this domain and the post-2015 development agenda. The Expert Group outlined an approach engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, including the scientific community, in the process of elaborating a regional programme of environment statistics.

B. Coordination for effective and accelerated progress

Subregional initiatives to accelerate the achievement of the Committee's strategic goals

42. Stronger cooperation and strengthened institutions at the subregional level have provided political support for improved statistical integration in some of the five subregions in Asia and the Pacific. In 2011, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) elevated the status of statistics cooperation in preparation for an ASEAN community statistical system by transforming the annual ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting into the ASEAN Community Statistical System Committee, and by increasing the statistical capacities of the ASEAN secretariat with the support of the European Union. In the Pacific, the important role of the secretariat of the Pacific Community in supporting statistics development in Pacific island countries and territories has been reinforced by the elevation of its Statistics for Development Programme to Division status. Other subregional institutions continue to play active roles in promoting statistical capacity-building in their respective subregions, including the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Economic Cooperation Organization, and the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Coordination of statistical training

43. Cognizant of the importance of statistical training to capacity development, the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, in 2012, endorsed the formation of a group to coordinate statistical training in Asia and the Pacific, with the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) serving as the secretariat. The key role of this group, called the network for coordination of statistical training in Asia and the Pacific, is to facilitate information sharing and coordination among statistical training institutions in the region, including through supporting the implementation of training elements of regional capacity development programmes, as identified by the Committee on Statistics.

Coordination among development partners for increased collective impact

44. Directly responding to recommendations stemming from the Commission's deliberations in 2009 on regional statistics development in Asia and the Pacific,²³ more than 20 international, regional and bilateral partners established the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific in 2010 to improve the combined impact

²² For further information on the Expert Group Meeting on Strategies for Improving Environment Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, see <http://www.unescap.org/stat/envstat/EGM/index.asp>.

²³ See footnote 1.

of capacity-building initiatives through enhanced coordination, synergy and complementarity among partners.²⁴

45. The Partnership agreed to align its efforts in support of achieving the strategic goals set by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics. Towards that end, the following strategic objectives were formulated: (a) advocating for the need to invest in statistics development; (b) strengthening the role of national statistical offices as the leaders of national statistical systems; (c) modernizing countries' statistical information systems; (d) coordination in the development of core sets of development indicators; (e) promoting the improvement and use of administrative data records for statistical purposes; and (f) coordination of statistical training in the region.

46. At their most recent meeting, in September 2013, partners took stock of achievements, and highlighted, as success stories, partner cooperation on civil registration and vital statistics, social and population statistics, agricultural and rural statistics, and the development of the first National Sustainable Development Strategy for Myanmar. It was put forward that one or more of the following factors had been determinants for successful cooperation in those cases: (a) the importance of the area for the achievement by each participating partner on its development mandates; (b) partners' willingness to adjust or reinterpret mandates to facilitate alignment of partner efforts; (c) existence of a platform (a jointly developed plan or framework for cooperation) allowing each partner to identify its role and contribution; (d) strong global leadership; (e) interest of and involvement by donors; and (f) linkage between development programmes in different domains of statistics.

IV. Issues for consideration by the Statistical Commission: global envisioning beyond 2015

47. The acceleration of capacity-building activities encompasses preparing national statistical systems in the Asia-Pacific region to meet future demands of diverse users. However, the calls from the development community for improved data and statistics to strengthen accountability for development results send a message that current efforts are not sufficient or are not yielding results fast enough. Lessons from the Millennium Development Goals process also point to the need to advocate for an agenda that supports and directs investments towards strengthening national statistical systems in a focused way.

48. The ambitious measurement and monitoring agenda that has been elaborated by the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons cannot be fully implemented without transforming the structures and processes that currently govern statistics production. Considering the need for engagement beyond the traditional statistical community and for increased investments, as outlined in section II above, this will not happen without transforming the world's perception of statistics. Statistics need to be endorsed as the natural resources of development, and a well-functioning statistical system as a fundament of good governance. One powerful way of facilitating such a transformation is to firmly place statistics development as a goal within the post-2015 development agenda.

²⁴ Please see the report of the first meeting of the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific, held in Bangkok on 14 December 2010. Available from <http://www.unescap.org/stat/partnership/1st-stat-dev/Report-of-1st-meeting.pdf>.

49. With this in mind, members of the Statistical Commission are invited to consider the following elements as a basis for collective action on statistics development in the context of the post-2015 development agenda:

(a) Opportunities and approaches for members of the Statistical Commission in respect of advocating jointly at the national and international levels for positioning statistics development as an objective in its own right;

(b) Approaches to developing measurement and methodologies, establishing the baseline and monitoring progress towards achieving effective national statistical systems;

(c) Opportunities for the Statistical Commission to take a lead role in a new global partnership on development data, reaching out to users and providers of statistics from public and private organizations, with a view to developing principles and a code of conduct for official and non-official data providers — or a new set of fundamental principles of development data.

Annex

Statistics development activities in Asia and the Pacific

The following table provides an overview of statistical development activities in Asia and the Pacific that are related to the implementation of programmes designed to facilitate pursuit of the strategic goals of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics.

<i>Area</i>	<i>Framework for regional activities</i>	<i>Governance</i>	<i>Recent milestone activities</i>
Agricultural and rural statistics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Global strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics 2. Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, endorsed by the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics in October 2012 and by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics in December 2012 in its decision 3/6 	Global and regional executive boards and steering committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Second meeting of the Regional Steering Committee in November 2013 – Commencement of regional training on agricultural and rural statistics by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific in 2013
Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, endorsed at the third session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics in December 2012 in its decision 3/4 and by ESCAP in its resolution 69/15 2. Pacific Vital Statistics Action, endorsed by the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations of the secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in November 2010 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional Steering Group, comprising 19 government (from the statistical, health and civil registration sectors) and 7 development partner representatives 2. Pacific Statistics Steering Committee, comprising six government and four development partner representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High-level meeting on the improvement of CRVS in Asia and the Pacific in December 2012 – Establishment of the Regional Steering Group in October 2013 – First meeting of the Regional Steering Group in December 2013 – Intergovernmental ministerial meeting on CRVS, to be convened in November 2014, to consider endorsing a regional action framework through which to make the Regional Strategic Plan operational

<i>Area</i>	<i>Framework for regional activities</i>	<i>Governance</i>	<i>Recent milestone activities</i>
Economic statistics	<p>1. Core set of economic statistics to serve as a framework and guide in the development of national statistics systems, endorsed by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics in December 2010 in its decision 2/5 and by ESCAP in its resolution 67/10</p> <p>2. Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, endorsed by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics in December 2010 in its decision 2/6</p>	Steering Group, comprising 23 government and 3 development partner representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reconstitution of the Steering Group in August 2013 – Third meeting of the Steering Group in October 2013
Environment statistics	<p>The mandate in this domain comes from ESCAP Committee on Statistics decision 3/7 (December 2012)</p> <p>The Committee noted that the core set contained in the revised United Nations Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics could be used for the development of an Asia-Pacific regional strategy for the improvement of environment statistics</p>	Currently under the Committee on Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expert group meeting on environment statistics in December 2013

<i>Area</i>	<i>Framework for regional activities</i>	<i>Governance</i>	<i>Recent milestone activities</i>
Gender statistics	Framework and core set of gender statistics and indicators constitute a work in progress. Regional programme on gender statistics to be developed in due course	No formal governance structure. Ongoing consultation with countries, development partners and experts through meetings and workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pre-workshop consultative session on developing a framework and core set of gender statistics and indicators in Asia and the Pacific in October 2013 with the Working Group on Gender Statistics under the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism – Regional consultative workshop to develop a framework and core set of gender statistics and indicators in Asia and the Pacific in November 2013
Modernization of statistical systems	The mandate in this domain comes from ESCAP Committee on Statistics decision 3/5 (December 2012), in which the Committee established: (a) a high-level strategic body and (b) a network of experts to raise awareness and build capacity, particularly related to concepts, methods and standards, to support national modernization efforts	Strategic Advisory Body for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services in Asia and the Pacific, comprising seven members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS 2013), expert group meeting, Bangkok and Paris, 23-25 April 2013 – First meeting of the Strategic Advisory Body in November 2013 – Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS 2014), expert group meeting, Dublin, April 2014 – Commencement in December 2013 of the work of the working group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) to promote the use of SDMX among national statistical systems in the region and build regional capacities in applying it
Population and social statistics	Core set of population and social statistics to serve as a framework and guide in the development of national statistics systems, endorsed at the third session of the Committee on Statistics in December 2012 and by ESCAP in its resolution 69/16	Technical advisory group comprising 11 government and 5 development partner representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fourth Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group in November 2013 to establish a regional programme for the development of population and social statistics – National reviews to assess capacity assets and needs, initiated in November 2013