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STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Fifty-first plenary session
(Geneva, 10-12 June 2003)

**PROGRAMMES OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL
WORK IN THE ECE REGION, 2003/2004 AND 2004/2005:
AN INTEGRATED PRESENTATION**

(Post-plenary session version)

**SUMMARY OF THE STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES PLANNED
BY THE OTHER UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL COMMISSIONS**

Note by the ECE secretariat

1. The 2002 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians agreed that an exchange of information and knowledge between Regional Commissions and Committees of Statistics could enhance support for official statistics in the less advantaged regions. In that context, it was suggested that a summary report of the planned future work of other regional Committees of Statistics be prepared as background information for future plenary sessions of the Conference, possibly by presenting it as an annex to the Conference's Integrated Presentation of International Statistical work.

2. The CES Bureau discussed the proposal in October 2002 and asked the ECE secretariat to invite the other Regional Commissions to contribute information on their planned work in statistics, to be presented as an addendum to the Integrated Presentation. In March 2003, the ECE secretariat requested the other Regional Commission to provide the information. Replies were received from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The present note summarises these contributions.

I. Statistical activities of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

3. ECLAC submitted the following list of meetings planned in 2003. The list does not include workshops or meetings that are implemented in the framework of very specific projects or activities.

- Santiago, Chile. 18-20 June 2003. Second meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas. ECLAC, United Nations.
- Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. 1-4 July 2003. Fifth Latin American Meeting on Satellite Accounts of Tourisms, organized jointly by WTO and ECLAC.
- Lima, Peru. July 2003. 11th Regional Workshop of MECOVI (Programme for the Improvement of Household Surveys and the Measurement of Life Conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean.): Dissemination of the information upcoming from the household surveys.
- Place to be defined, second semester 2003. First regional seminar on indicators and environmental statistics.
- Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. September 2003. Meeting of statistics on tourism and the elaboration of the harmonized tourism satellite account for the countries of the Andean Group.
- San Salvador, El Salvador. 8-10 October 2003. Meeting on Tourism Satellite Accounts of the countries incorporated in the *Plan Puebla Panama*.
- Uruguay. End of October 2003. Regional Seminar on the implementation of the SNA 93.
- Buenos Aires, Argentina. November 2003. 12th Regional Workshop of MECOVI (Programme for the Improvement of Household Surveys and the Measurement of Life Conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean): Production and utilization of indicators of work market starting with the household surveys.
- Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. November (tentative). Sixth meeting of the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics.
- Place to be defined. December 2003. Workshop on business surveys.
- Date and place are pending. Classifications Seminar (this seminar would be organized jointly with the UNSD).

II. Statistical activities of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

4. ESCWA submitted the following summary of planned statistical activities for the period June 2003-June 2004.

Recurrent Publication:

- Statistical Abstract No. 23

Social statistics activities

Meetings and/or workshops

- Workshop on gender statistics as a tool for policy formulation and analysis (2003)
- Workshop on Social Indicators with Emphasis on Millennium Development Goals and Indicators (2003)
- Workshop on Census Management, 2003 in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)
- Expert group meeting on disability statistics (2004)

Recurrent publications

- Bulletin on vital statistics in ESCWA member States (2003)
- Compendium of social statistics and indicators, no.6 (2003)

Non-recurrent publications (Pamphlets/Fact sheets)

- Pamphlet on women and men in Education (2003)-Arabic version
- Pamphlet on women and men in Employment (2003)- Arabic version
- Wall chart on Key Indicators of Labor Market (2004)

Technical materials (including databases and related IT activities)

- ESCWA statistical information system in social areas (Population, education, vital and health, labour force, and gender)
- Website on gender statistics

Field projects

- Development of national gender statistics programmes in the Arab countries
- Statistical plan for establishing databases on Palestinian refugees in Syria and Lebanon

International trade statistics activities

Recurrent Publications:

- External Trade Bulletin No.13

Expert Group Meeting:

- EGM on compilation of Trade in Services Statistics

Technical Material:

- Maintenance of the ESCWA Statistical Information System: Trade Module.
- Developed a data file in Trade in Services for ESCWA member countries.

Economic Statistics activities (for the year 2003)

Recurrent publications:

- National Accounts Studies of the ESCWA Region, No. 23, scheduled for October 2003

- Production Indices in the ESCWA Region, No. 1, scheduled for March 2003 (extended from 2002, since this is a new activity in a new division)
- Production Indices in the ESCWA Region, No. 2, scheduled for November 2003.

Expert group meetings:

- Expert Group Meeting on Index Numbers and GDP Deflators, scheduled for September 2003

Databases:

- Development and Maintenance of ESIS: financial statistics database module (continuous activity)
- Development and Maintenance of ESIS: national accounts database module (continuous activity)

Extra-Budgetary Activities:

- The International Comparison Programme: Preparations for this activity, which were begun in 2002, is still in hand (establishing regional and national governance, budget, fund-raising, web site, etc...). The official launch of this programme in the ESCWA region is scheduled to take place in March 2003.

Environment and Energy statistics activities

Expert group meetings:

- Expert group meeting on Environment and Energy statistics. The meeting is organized in cooperation with United Nations Statistics Division in October 2003.

III. Statistical activities of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

5. ESCAP submitted the following summary of the statistical work planned for 2003-2004.

Scope and modalities

6. The Statistics Division in UNESCAP has a dual function in promoting statistical capacity building in the developing countries of the region and in making comparable statistical information on the region for a wide range of users, including governments, researchers, civil society organizations and the general public. It also provides statistical services to the rest of the secretariat.

7. ESCAP supports statistical development in areas where common standards would be most useful and where statistical capacity is particularly weak. It promotes the use of international standards in the region through technical training, advocacy, awareness creation, expert and institutional networking and sharing of information and good practices. A typical way of achieving the above is to convene government statisticians, other senior managers and statisticians, and key users of statistics when appropriate, for technical seminars and workshops. These group activities are often conducted jointly with development partners. Panels of leading statistical experts are used as a mechanism to identify and study specific

requirements or emerging needs in the region. Meeting documents are posted on the web site, and newsletters and occasional publications are used for disseminating technical information.

8. Advisory missions on the request of governments are another important form of assistance. Currently, the Statistics Division has two regional advisory posts, in poverty statistics and in economic statistics. In other areas of statistics, advisory missions are launched using ad hoc resources.

9. In regional coordination of statistical development, UNESCAP is a recognized and sought-after partner in initiatives ranging from jointly organized capacity-building activities to launching and following up major global statistical programmes. It fosters technical cooperation among countries, and provides the secretariat for key forums where leading Asian and Pacific statisticians gather to articulate their views and provide input to the global statistical agenda.

10. To carry out its work the Statistics Division currently has 10 Professional and 15 Support posts. As the regular budget has very limited funds available for technical assistance, additional resources have to be raised from multilateral and bilateral donors. Recent donors and collaborating partners include the Governments of Japan, Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, UNDP, UNIFEM, UNSD, ADB and OECD.

11. The Tokyo-based Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) is the training arm of UNESCAP for practical statistical methods and operations. SIAP focuses on relatively long-term (up to six months) curriculum-based classroom instruction and demand-driven national courses, but is expected to take on a more comprehensive statistical training function in the region.

Statistics in the new structure of UNESCAP

12. From January 2003 UNESCAP has been operating under new conference, programme and secretariat structures, all aligned with each other. Both the statistics subprogramme and the Statistics Division remain as separate entities in the new structures. The subprogramme continues to reflect the statistical priorities of ESCAP members and associate members, as expressed in international, regional and national statistical forums or through bilateral contacts. What is new is the focus on broader thematic priorities set by member states both at regional and global levels. In line with poverty reduction becoming the number one priority theme of the Commission, this means using more resources for improving poverty measurement. Not in conflict with that focus, it also means responding to the need to strengthen statistical systems with regard to monitoring the achievement of the millennium development goals and other global initiatives undertaken by the United Nations.

13. ESCAP and its predecessor, the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, have been providing a regional forum for government statisticians to coordinate and advocate statistical development in the region since 1951. As ESCAP went through a number of reforms over the years, the name of the forum changed four times but the format and dedication to considering statistical issues remained the same apart from one trial in 1989 when a joint forum was convened for statisticians and development planners. From 2003 onwards, the forum has the position of a subcommittee (Subcommittee on Statistics) that reports to the Committee on Poverty Reduction, which in turn reports to the ESCAP Commission (see Annex 1).

14. The Committee on Poverty Reduction meets biennially, with the first session taking place on 8-10 October 2003. Poverty statistics will figure prominently on its agenda. Among other decisions, the Committee would review the agenda for the first meeting of the Subcommittee on Statistics, which is tentatively scheduled for end-February 2004. It should be noted that the reporting mechanism does not prevent the Subcommittee from considering statistical issues beyond those related to poverty.

Thirteenth session of the Committee on Statistics

15. At its final session in November 2002, the Committee on Statistics encouraged the statisticians of the region to use the new conference structure actively for the purpose of advancing the cause of statistical development in the region. At the same time, they agreed to examine ways to establish a high-level forum for Asian and Pacific statisticians, which can have the necessary status and breadth of agenda to make a meaningful input into the sessions of the Statistical Commission¹.

16. Taking into account regional and international developments, the Committee discussed a broad range of statistical topics, including indicators for monitoring the millennium development goals, poverty statistics, engendering national statistics, national accounts and various other areas of economic statistics. Major recommendations called for:

- Seizing the major opportunity for statistical capacity building created by the MDGs;
- Creation of a viable plan for improving the region's poverty statistics;
- A higher priority and various measures for engendering national statistics, including economic statistics;
- Strengthening of the dialogue between data producers and users for better policy advocacy, design, monitoring and evaluation;
- Organization of a meeting to assess the relevance to developing countries of different techniques of measuring the non-observed economy;
- Countries to take ownership of the International Comparison Programme and integrate it into regular statistical work;
- ESCAP to undertake activities to assist countries in other fields, including disability statistics and standard classifications.

17. The Committee also discussed the measurement of the knowledge-based economy and the importance of maintaining the integrity and legitimacy of national statistical services as an element of institutional capacity. Detailed information about the session can be found in the meeting report at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cos13/>

Planned work activities in statistics in 2003-2004

18. As mentioned above, the re-alignment of statistical work with ESCAP's new priorities and conference structure has meant an increased focus on poverty statistics as well as on improving the capacities to monitor the MDGs. Other current priorities are gender statistics, disability statistics, implementation of the revised 1993 SNA, the non-observed economy and support to the regional implementation of the 2004 ICP round. While planning for activities

¹ The current thinking is that, although outside the UNESCAP conference structure, the forum would be convened under the United Nations auspices and meet in Bangkok at the United Nations Conference Centre. The first meeting could be towards the end of 2004.

continues, their implementation has at the time of writing been seriously disrupted by SARS-related concerns, which have so far resulted in the postponement of six meetings.

Poverty statistics and MDG monitoring

19. In the period 2003-2004, implementation of the "Regional action plan for improving poverty measurement and capacity building in poverty monitoring in the ESCAP region" is expected to constitute the core of the division's work in this area. Currently the plan is being circulated for discussion among member countries and partner organizations. The plan was drafted with specific reference to other poverty work undertaken in the region (notably the Poverty and Data Analysis Initiative (PADI) of the World Bank and the regional programme of the Asian Development Bank) and there are ongoing discussions among the major players regarding the benefit of a joint secretariat for coordinating all the poverty work in the region. All three organizations are fully committed to promoting the MDG goals and their statistical development work in the region on poverty contributes to achieving these goals.

20. The Statistics Division has provided input into the Regional report on "Promoting Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific Region", prepared by ESCAP's Poverty Centre, with funding from UNDP. The data collected for the report have confirmed that there is a need for a country-by-country status taking of MDG indicators, which will ascertain the situation in each country, concerning availability, source, years, definitions etc. of the data used for the indicators. This exercise will be carried out as part of the regional poverty plan later in the year. From this, it will be easier to assess the country-specific training needs for poverty statistics and MDG indicators, which ESCAP's statistical training institute, SIAP, will have to help to carry out. Over the next two years, it is also planned that ESCAP will launch, in collaboration with partner organizations, a series of technical meetings for producers and users, which will cover topics such as household surveys, poverty mapping and small area estimation techniques, measuring the non-observed economy, survey design and data quality. The Regional Adviser on Poverty Statistics will also be providing advice to requesting countries on specific issues in poverty measurement.

21. Finally, ESCAP will work together with the UNSD and the Rio Group on the preparation of a Handbook on Poverty Statistics: concepts, methods and practices.

Gender statistics

22. ESCAP has given high priority to gender statistics and indicators for a number of years and, together with SIAP, has offered numerous training opportunities to countries in the region on how to produce gender statistics and publications. More recently the focus of the gender statistics has shifted to time-use, unpaid work and satellite accounts. ESCAP will publish later this year a Handbook on Integrating Unpaid Work into National Policies, which is the outcome of a two-year UNDP-supported project. Under this project a couple of countries were assisted in carrying out time-use surveys and using the data for estimating unpaid work.

23. In collaboration with UNIFEM, ESCAP has recently begun to look at ways to increase the use of gender statistics for policy formulation. Two jointly hosted regional workshops for statisticians, economists and development advocates were held in January and March 2003 on this topic. Several more are planned in the least developed countries in 2003 and 2004.

24. At the same time, ESCAP's work on engendering the national statistical systems has recently turned more towards engendering the collection of economic statistics and

frameworks. In the coming two years, therefore, this will be promoted together with time-use surveys to give a fuller picture of women's and men's work and contribution to well-being in society.

Disability statistics

25. In response to the Regional Framework for Actions Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, improving the collection of disability statistics has become a priority area in ESCAP's statistical development work. Building on the work of UNSD, WHO and the Washington Group, a regional meeting will be hosted by ESCAP in late 2003 to take stock of the situation and prepare a plan for improving the availability, quality and comparability of disability statistics in our member countries.

Economic statistics

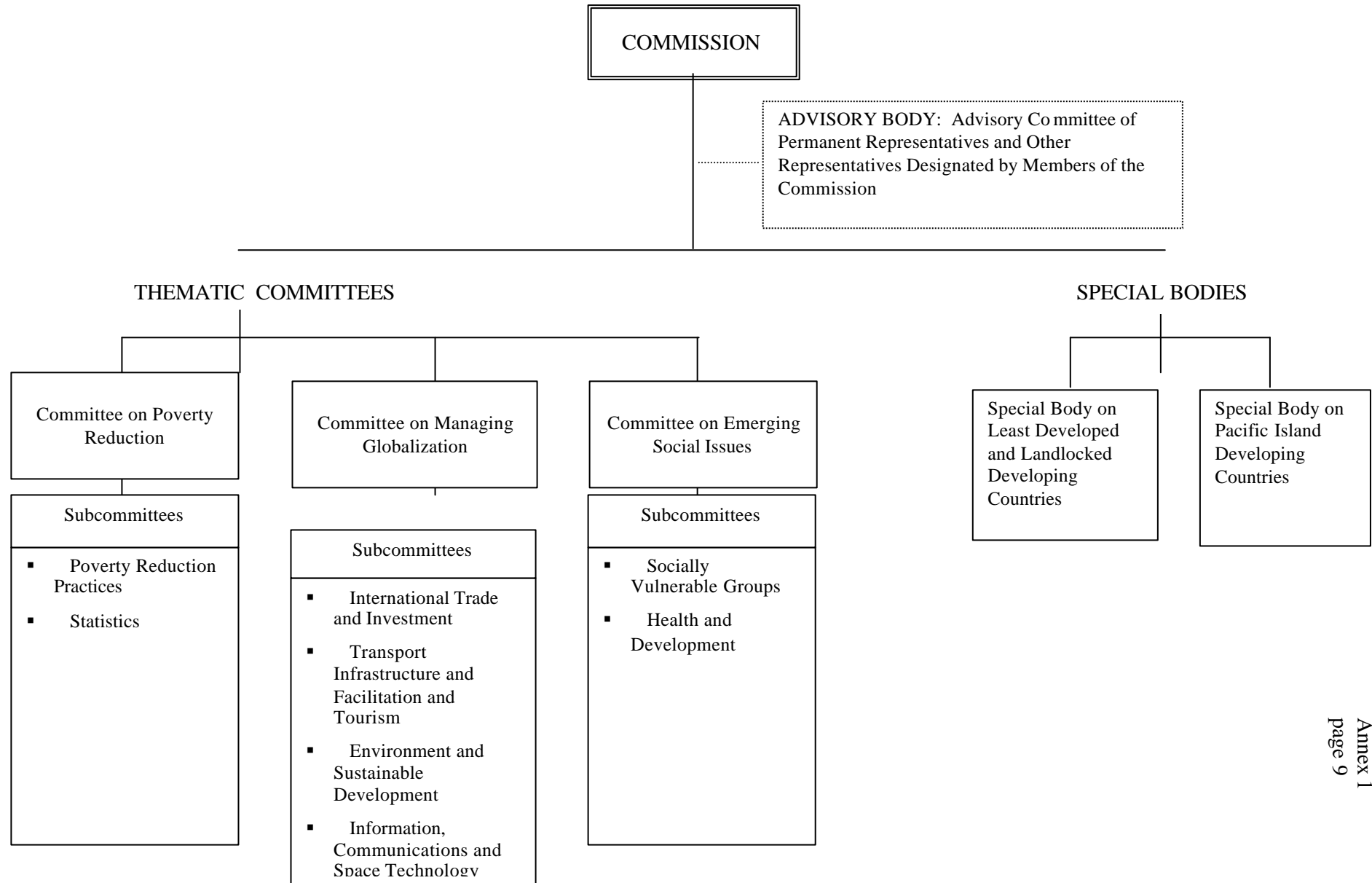
26. UNESCAP is currently actively looking for resources to finance workshops on a number of topics in national accounts and the non-observed economy. Two expert group meetings on classifications are planned in 2003 for ASEAN countries and a third one for the South Asian countries. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that the region's needs are reflected in the revised International Standard Industrial Classification and the Central Product Classification.

Other developments

27. Another undertaking during 2003-2004 will be a review of ESCAP's statistical information services with a view to making them more focused and user-friendly, internally and externally. That is likely to affect what kind of data and information will be collected and how they will be published.

28. ESCAP has a ready-to-launch project on building capacity for assessing and monitoring the role of information and communication technologies in developing countries. However, its funding from external sources is yet to be confirmed.

Annex 1 ESCAP's new conference Structure



MINISTERIAL CONFERENCES : Ministerial conferences on specific issues may be organized on an ad hoc basis.

Annex 2. List of known statistics-related UNESCAP meetings*

2003	
8- 10 Jan	<u>UNIFEM/ESCAP Introductory meeting on an Integrated Approach to Gender Statistics</u>
12-14 Feb	<u>SIAP/UNESCAP Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific</u>
24-26 Feb	<u>OECD/ESCAP Workshop on Composite Leading Indicators and Business Tendency Surveys</u>
17-26 Mar	<u>UNESCAP/UNIFEM Workshop on Using Statistics for Gender-Responsive Policy Analysis and Advocacy</u>
25-28 Mar	<u>UNSD/ESCAP Workshop on Trade Statistics for LDCs and SIDCs</u>
Jun	<u>ADB/UNESCAP Concluding Workshop on Social and Gender Statistics</u>
Jun	<u>Asia Pacific ICP Programme: Meetings of the Regional Governing Board and the Heads of Statistical Agencies</u>
Jul	<u>ASEAN/UNESCAP Task Force workshop on statistical classifications</u>
Jul/Aug	<u>ADB/UNESCAP Inception Workshop on ICP</u>
Sep/Oct	Workshop on disability measures for improved policies in the ESCAP region
6-10 Oct	<u>Committee on Poverty Reduction and NGO meeting</u>
2004	
Jan	<u>SIAP/UNESCAP Management Seminar</u>
Feb	<u>Subcommittee on Statistics</u>
Nov	<u>High-level conference of Asia-Pacific statisticians</u>

* Reported as of 12 May 2003 for coordination purposes only. The list is incomplete and events, dates and venues may change. For updates, please see <http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/techmeet.htm>