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**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**  
Committee on Statistics

**Fourth session**

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Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda\*

**Regional initiatives: civil registration and vital statistics**

**Draft revised terms of reference for the Regional Steering  
Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia  
and the Pacific**

**Note by the secretariat\*\***

*Summary*

The present document contains draft revised terms of reference for the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific to oversee the implementation of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which was endorsed at the recent Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The draft revised terms of reference respond to the request made in Commission resolution 69/15 for the Regional Steering Group to consider and propose a more appropriate governance structure that would fully facilitate the required multisectoral engagement.

The present draft was approved by the current Regional Steering Group and supported by the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

The Committee is invited to consider the draft revised terms of reference, and to recommend their submission to the Commission for possible endorsement at its seventy-first session in May 2015.

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\* E/ESCAP/CST(4)/L.1.

\*\* The present document was submitted late due to the need to include the issues raised during the latest discussions on the development agenda beyond 2015; in particular, the recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Statistics and Data for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.

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### **I. Background**

1. In May 2011, the Commission adopted resolution 67/12 on improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The resolution emphasized the important role of civil registration for recognizing the rights and privileges of individuals, while acknowledging that civil registration systems capable of generating reliable and timely vital statistics contribute significantly to improved evidence-based planning and development outcomes, and increased efficiency in resource allocation.

2. In December 2012, the High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific — which was called for in resolution 67/12 — reached consensus<sup>1</sup> on the Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>2</sup>

3. In May 2013, the Commission adopted 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. The resolution requested the Executive Secretary to convene a ministerial meeting on civil registration and vital statistics in 2014 and to establish the Regional Steering Group. In the resolution, the Commission stressed that multisectoral engagement is critical in effective action to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics, and called for the active involvement of all relevant government entities, explicitly referring to ministries and offices responsible for civil registration, health and statistics. While taking into account the confines of the existing conference structure of the Commission, the Regional Steering Group was established under the auspices of the Committee on Statistics. However, the Regional Steering Group was tasked with identifying and proposing a long-term governance structure for itself.

4. The Regional Steering Group was established in September 2013 and held its first meeting in Bangkok in December 2013. Between December 2013 and July 2014, the Regional Steering Group oversaw the development of the draft regional action framework on civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific,<sup>3</sup> which builds on, and offers a practical means for implementing, the Regional Strategic Plan.

<sup>1</sup> See “Outcome of the High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific” (E/ESCAP/69/26).

<sup>2</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(3)/6/Add.1.

<sup>3</sup> E/ESCAP/MCCRVS/1.

5. On 28 November 2014, the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific adopted the Ministerial Declaration to “Get every one in the picture” in Asia and the Pacific and endorsed the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. In addition, the Conference proclaimed the years from 2015 to 2024 as the “Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade”. The Regional Steering Group will be entrusted with the responsibility of providing regional oversight and guidance for the implementation of the Regional Action Framework, including promotion of the Decade.

## II. Key functions

6. The Regional Steering Group shall:

(a) Provide regional oversight and strategic guidance for the implementation of the Regional Action Framework, including, among other things, by providing support for carrying out regional reviews and requests for status reports from Governments;

(b) Advise Governments on implementation of the Regional Action Framework, including, among other things, developing and making available relevant definitions and guidelines for the collection and processing of monitoring information;

(c) Foster coordination and integration of the implementation of the Regional Action Framework with other global, regional and subregional civil registration and vital statistics initiatives, in order to maximize synergies, share the benefits of the momentum generated and facilitate consistent expert advice for greater impact at national and regional levels;

(d) Ensure adherence to the six key principles of the Regional Action Framework, as agreed by countries and development partners, namely:

- (i) Countries take the lead;
- (ii) A stepwise approach;
- (iii) Flexibility and responsiveness;
- (iv) Building on local expertise;
- (v) Consistency with international human rights and legal principles, and national law;
- (vi) Coordination and alignment;

(e) As appropriate, make recommendations on establishing a regional support office for civil registration and vital statistics, including on its structure, functions, funding requirements and hosting arrangements.

## III. Membership

7. The Regional Steering Group shall reflect the multifaceted nature and diverse development perspectives and beneficiaries of civil registration and vital statistics, with representation from civil registration, health, statistics and other relevant sectors.

8. The Regional Steering Group shall be composed of representatives of ESCAP members and associate members, as well as representatives of development partners, the mandates of which shall include the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific, such as

international organizations and agencies, non-governmental and civil society organizations, training and research institutes, and donors.

9. The tenure of a Regional Steering Group member shall be five years, with the possibility of an extension for another five years.

10. Representatives of any ESCAP member or associate member shall be eligible to serve on the Regional Steering Group.

11. In view of the existing activities that are being undertaken to improve civil registration and vital statistics in the Pacific islands under the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan, which was developed by the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG), a representative of BAG shall be invited to be a member of the Regional Steering Group.

12. The selection of members shall be based on the following criteria:

(a) A majority of members shall be representatives of national Governments, with the remainder being representatives of relevant development partners;

(b) There should be a geographically balanced membership of government representatives from the various sectors involved in civil registration and vital statistics, such as planning, civil registration, health and statistics;

(c) The Regional Steering Group shall be composed of a maximum of 30 members.

13. The secretariat shall invite expressions of interest from ESCAP members and associate members, as well as development partners, to nominate suitably qualified individuals to serve as members of the Regional Steering Group.

14. Based on the interest expressed, the Committee on Statistics, at its fourth session in March 2015, shall consider the composition of the Regional Steering Group, and submit its recommendation to the Commission at its seventy-first session in 2015. At its seventy-first session, the Commission shall decide on the composition of the Regional Steering Group for the period between 2015 and 2019.

#### **IV. Methods of work**

15. The work of the Regional Steering Group shall be conducted, in the main, remotely.

16. The Regional Steering Group shall endeavor to meet annually.

17. The results of the work of the Regional Steering Group shall be reported regularly to the Commission, following the schedule for the regional reviews outlined in the Regional Action Framework.

18. The Regional Steering Group shall continue to coordinate its work with committees that are subsidiary to the Commission, including but not limited to the Committee on Statistics and the Committee on Social Development.

19. The Regional Steering Group may adopt its own more detailed rules of procedure.

**V. Secretariat**

20. The ESCAP secretariat shall serve as the secretariat of the Regional Steering Group.

**VI. Sunset clause**

21. The Regional Steering Group shall function under the current terms of reference until it delivers the report on the final regional review of the regional action framework in 2025, following the conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, 2015-2024.

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