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**Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure
of the Commission, including the work of the regional
institutions: Statistics**

Report of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its eighth session

Summary

At its eighth session, the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) commended the Institute for having achieved the key results set out in its programme of work and for the notable progress that had been made in implementing its current programme of work. The work of SIAP in conducting 16 courses and workshops led to increased knowledge and improved skills for 375 participants from 59 countries. They were able to produce high-quality statistical outputs and increase their use for development planning, policy formulation and the monitoring of progress.

The Council endorsed the work and financial plan of SIAP for academic year 2013, recommending the expansion of delivery of Internet-based e-learning courses, development of an e-learning strategy and improvement of evaluation of the impact of statistical training. The Council also endorsed the creation of a “friends of the chair” group to review implementation of the current strategic plan and start developing the strategic plan for the period 2015-2019.

The Governing Council expressed appreciation for the positive response of some member States to its letter issued in April 2012 recommending that contributions to SIAP be increased and that the Institute be provided with a minimum annual contribution of \$5,000, with increases of at least 5 per cent annually. The Council decided to issue another such letter prior to the sixty-ninth session of the Commission.

The Council also deliberated on proposals taken up by the Committee on Statistics at its third session, including the reporting line. The Council strongly recommended retention of current reporting arrangements, whereby governing councils reported directly to the Commission. The Council welcomed a proposal to strengthen regional coordination of statistical training through, among other things, the establishment of an advisory body, with SIAP as the secretariat, and that SIAP act as coordinator of the training component of the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

* E/ESCAP/69/L.1.

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I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

A. Recommendations and decisions

1. Programme of work and training strategies

1. The Governing Council commends SIAP for achieving the key results set out in its programme of work for academic year (AY) 2011 and the notable progress made in implementing its programme of work for AY 2012, especially in the light of the challenges posed by the decrease in the number of its core professional staff during the period.

2. In noting the strong demand for the current SIAP Internet-based e-learning on the System of National Accounts 2008, the Council recommends that SIAP continue to expand delivery of Internet-based learning in terms of enlarging the scope of topics, increasing the number of course offerings and accepting more participants.

3. The Council also recommends that SIAP develop a long-term strategy on the effective use of Internet-based e-learning in its programme of training courses in collaboration with existing national, regional and global initiatives on the use and development of e-learning courses. To ensure relevance and maximize the utility of e-learning as a mode for delivery of training in the

region, the Council further encourages member States to integrate e-learning courses into their training strategies for official statistics.

4. In noting the significant requirements for expanding the resource base for providing high-quality statistical training in the region, the Governing Council recommends that SIAP propose, for the Council's consideration, a system for certifying trainers and institutions providing statistical training, as well as standardized training materials. Further, the Council supports the idea that SIAP should create and maintain a database on capacity-building initiatives in the region as a means for sharing information on training resources and activities.

5. The Governing Council agrees that there is a need to strengthen evaluation of the impact of statistical training in the region and decides that SIAP should carry out a study to improve measurement of the impact of SIAP training.

2. Financial status and resource mobilization

6. The Governing Council notes with appreciation the positive response of some member States to its letter issued in April 2012 recommending that member States increase their contributions to SIAP and consider providing the Institute with a minimum annual contribution of \$5,000 and increasing annual contributions by at least 5 per cent. In considering the continued financial challenges faced by SIAP, the Council decides to reiterate its recommendations and to issue another such letter to member States prior to the sixty-ninth session of the Commission.

7. To optimize the use of available financial resources, the Governing Council recommended that SIAP continue to pursue a decentralized approach through subregional and in-country courses. By bringing courses closer to intended beneficiaries, such courses not only enable better customization of content but also increased cost-effectiveness as well as in-kind contributions from national and subregional statistical training institutes, statistical offices, international institutions and development partners.

8. In the context of meeting training needs through the efficient mobilization of resources, the Council decides to advocate the establishment and strengthening of training institutions in countries with the support of SIAP.

3. Work and financial plan for AY 2013

9. The Council endorses the programme of work and financial plan proposed by SIAP for AY 2013, including the strategy for managing expected funding shortfalls by increasing in-kind contributions and prioritizing activities. The Council recommends that, in identifying training courses to be prioritized for funding, SIAP take into account that countries have varied needs and may have differing priorities and that SIAP should seek the views of member States.

10. In referring to the annual training needs survey of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Council notes that the decreased number of expressions of priorities from member States for group training courses organized by SIAP/JICA for AY 2013 did not reflect the true demand for those courses but underestimated the demand. Thus, the Council calls on member States to ensure that national statistical offices are actively engaged in setting national priorities for training based on the JICA survey.

The Council further recommends that the ESCAP secretariat provide SIAP with support by informing permanent representatives to ESCAP, national statistical offices and other relevant national counterparts when the survey has been sent to JICA national focal points.

4. Strategic planning for the period 2015-2019

11. The Governing Council endorses the proposal of the Institute to review the current strategic plan and to initiate the development of its next five-year plan. The results of the review would be presented at the ninth session of the Council and the proposal for the 2015-2019 strategic plan would be reviewed for adoption at its tenth session. Further, the Council decides to create a “friends of the chair” group to assist SIAP in implementing the tasks to be established in the first quarter of 2013 and requestes that SIAP prepare detailed terms of reference for the Council’s review.

5. Matters relating to the Committee on Statistics

(a) Reporting line of ESCAP regional institutions, including SIAP

12. In considering the ongoing review of the conference structure of the Commission relating to the reporting lines of the governing councils of the regional institutions of ESCAP, the Governing Council strongly recommends retention of the current reporting arrangements, whereby governing councils report directly to the highest level of the conference structure, that is, the Commission.

13. With respect to the proposal tabled at the third session of the Committee on Statistics, that the SIAP Governing Council report to the Committee rather than the current arrangement of reporting directly to the Commission, the Governing Council notes that the relationship between the Council and the Committee is functioning well and thus does not warrant any change. The Council also notes that issues relating to the financial status and sustainability of the regional institutions need to be raised and discussed by member States at the level of the Commission and not with the sectoral committees.

(b) Recommendations regarding regional coordination of statistical training

14. With respect to proposals to strengthen regional coordination of statistical training, the Council recommends that, if the Committee on Statistics decided to create a new advisory body on coordination of statistical training, that new body should be a separate one from the Governing Council, but the Council should be a member of the advisory body. The Council also endorsed the recommendations, subject to financial limitations, that SIAP serve as the secretariat of the advisory body and that SIAP create and maintain databases to facilitate coordination.

(c) SIAP as coordinator of the training component of the regional action plan to improve agricultural and rural statistics

15. With respect to a proposal seeking the endorsement of the Committee of the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, the Council strongly supports the recommendation that SIAP be the coordinator for the training component of the plan.

6. Election of members of the Governing Council for the period 2013-2015

16. The Governing Council notes that a new set of members would be elected at the sixty-ninth session of the Commission in April/May 2013, and recommends that, in nominating and electing members to the Council, member States consider the importance of broadening subregional representation in the Council's composition.

B. Acknowledgements

17. The Governing Council acknowledged the contributions of and expressed its deepest appreciation to the following:

(a) The Government of Japan for its continuing multifaceted support, through cash and in-kind contributions made through its Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications and the Japan International Cooperation Agency;

(b) The contributing members and associate members of ESCAP for their cash contributions to SIAP for 2012;

(c) The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for the ongoing multi-year collaborative partnership under the ESCAP/UNFPA project on "Statistical capacity-building for undertaking the 2010 round of population and housing census integrated with gender concerns";

(d) The Statistical Training Institute of Statistics Korea, the Bank of Korea, the Statistical Research and Training Centre of the Statistical Centre of Iran, the University of Tokushima and the University of the South Pacific for hosting regional and subregional courses on a cost-sharing basis;

(e) The national experts who served as resource persons and guest lecturers for SIAP courses and their respective institutions: the Australian Bureau of Statistics; the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications and other ministries, prefectural governments, educational institutions and private companies in Japan; Statistics Korea; the University of the South Pacific; and the Russian Federation;

(f) The regional and international statistics development partners that collaborated with SIAP in the conduct of its courses: the Asian Development Bank; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the International Labour Organization (ILO); the International Monetary Fund; the International Statistical Institute; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Institute for Statistics; the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat; the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century; and the World Bank.

II. Summary of proceedings

A. Matters arising from the seventh session of the Governing Council and its interim session

18. The Governing Council had before it a note by the secretariat on matters arising from the seventh session and interim session of the Governing Council (E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/2). The Council noted with satisfaction the action taken and current status of the matters listed as had been reported by SIAP.

1. Reducing costs, increasing financial support and resource mobilization

19. In discussing the outcomes of the letter to members and associate members issued by the Chair of the Governing Council in April 2012, which recommended that member States increase contributions to SIAP, and consider providing the Institute with a minimum annual contribution of \$5,000 and increasing annual contributions by at least 5 per cent, the Council thanked the five member States that had increased their contributions and the three new contributing members.

20. To increase the number of member States that would respond to the recommendation and commit to ensuring the financial sustainability of the Institute, members agreed that it was necessary to issue another such letter to member States prior to the sixty-ninth session of the Commission.

21. The representative of Malaysia stated that the Government planned to continue to support SIAP with an annual contribution of \$20,000 and to increase its contribution in 2014. The representative of Vanuatu noted that its financial support for SIAP was \$5,000, and the representative of Samoa stated that the contribution of Samoa had increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000. The representative of Kazakhstan informed the Council that the Government's intention was to continue to contribute \$5,000 every year.

2. Governing Council membership

22. The Director informed the Council that election of a new set of Council members would take place at the sixty-ninth session of the Commission, in April/May 2013. Some members emphasized that the membership of the Council was highly important to its success and that of SIAP, and expressed the view that each member State that stood for the next election should be carefully considered. The representatives of Samoa and Vanuatu expressed the opinion that representation on the Governing Council should include a member from the Pacific, as that subregion had not had a representative on the Council for more than 15 years.

23. The Council concurred with the view that subregional representation was important for ensuring that SIAP addressed the range of levels of statistical development and, hence, diversity of training needs in the ESCAP region.

B. Report of the Director of the Institute

24. The Governing Council had before it the report of the Director of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/3). The Director of SIAP provided a summary of the information contained in the report, focusing discussion on results achieved, management of resource utilization and mobilization, and opportunities and challenges facing the Institute.

1. Key results and programme implementation

25. The work of SIAP in conducting 16 courses and workshops led to increased knowledge and improved skills for 375 participants from 59 countries. They were able to produce high-quality statistical outputs and increase the use of those outputs in development planning, policy formulation and monitoring progress in reaching development goals. Based on the evaluation of participants, SIAP was adjudged to have met or exceeded targets for improving their confidence in applying knowledge and skills upon their return to their institutions.

26. About 75 per cent of the 354 ESCAP participants in AY 2012 came from the East and North-East Asian (22 per cent), South-East Asian (29 per cent) and South and South-West Asian (25 per cent) subregions; 16 per cent came from the Pacific; and 8 per cent came from North and Central Asia. Overall, there were slightly fewer female participants (164) than males (190); in terms of subregion, in South and South-West Asia and North and Central Asia, the gender ratios remain low at about 0.60 in AY 2012.

27. The training programmes covered the four main pillars of official statistics (economic, social, population and environment statistics), ranging from fundamentals to advanced and specialized levels and targeting different core skills levels. The four long-running SIAP/JICA group training courses, in which 83 participants from 33 countries had been trained, focused on: the fundamentals of official statistics covering frameworks, standards and classifications; statistical production processes; product development, documentation, dissemination and archiving; and data analysis, communication and use.

28. Focused training on economic statistics emphasized basic and advanced training on the System of National Accounts 2008 (SNA) using both face-to-face training courses and Internet-based guided e-learning courses. The Director pointed out that the SIAP e-learning courses on the basics of SNA, for which 79 participants from 25 countries/areas had been accepted, were the only ones of their kind being offered. Training on SNA through face-to-face short courses, offered on a self-funded basis, had attracted 30 participants from 11 member States/areas.

29. With regard to the ongoing round of population and housing censuses, SIAP had placed high priority on related training needs through the ESCAP/UNFPA project “Statistical capacity-building for undertaking the 2010 round of population and housing census integrated with gender concerns”, which had started in 2009. In 2012, the three regional courses implemented under that project had been aimed at increasing the use of the 2010 round of population and housing census data for development planning and policymaking. The courses had brought together producers and users to facilitate dialogue between the stakeholders on key issues regarding effective dissemination and use of census data. A total of 57 individuals from 19 countries had participated in those courses.

30. In noting that country-requested training courses represented the ideal demand-driven type of training, the Director reported on the success of customized trainings for in-country training courses for statistical offices in Maldives and Mongolia and said that future study visits to SIAP by officials from China, Vanuatu and Viet Nam would be on a self-funded basis.

31. The Governing Council observed that country trainings were the best way to improve the skill level of an entire national statistical office, as such trainings enable many national participants to attend targeted and hands-on training. The Council supported the modality of customized training for country-requested courses and self-financed initiatives by countries.

32. Aside from the technical training in statistical frameworks, standards and methods, SIAP provided forums that facilitated discussions on statistical management trends and issues among leaders and managers of statistical offices. In the Tenth Management Seminar for Heads of National Statistical Offices, 38 participants from 26 countries had engaged in discussions on trends, practices and challenges in modernizing statistical information systems. The Director highlighted that, for the fifth statistical quality

management course, the template for national quality assurance frameworks would be introduced; it had been endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its forty-second session, in support of the recommendation for countries to pilot the template (E/2011/24 and E/CN.3/2011/37).

2. Strengthening partnerships

33. The Director reported that a key factor in the accomplishments of SIAP was the strong support of a wide range of partners. Of the SIAP training courses delivered during the reporting period, 16 had been collaborative undertakings involving 50 partners. Collaboration was in the form of provision of experts, hosting of courses and hosting of field study visits.

34. The hosting of regional courses by national statistical institutes was a partnership strategy that contributed to strengthening South-South cooperation among member States. The Governing Council noted that SIAP had strengthened its collaboration with statistical training institutes, namely the Central Statistical Organization of India, Statistics Korea and the Statistical Centre of Iran, using long-term cost-sharing arrangements for the conduct of regional courses.

35. Apart from receiving support for its training programmes, the SIAP partnership strategy increasingly had included extending support to the training and capacity-building initiatives of regional and international agencies. SIAP maintained ongoing collaboration with a World Bank-funded programme of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, the International Household Survey Network and the Accelerated Data Program that provided training on documentation and archiving. The Director reported that SIAP was exploring opportunities for collaboration in a number of areas: training on labour statistics with ILO; initiatives on leadership and management of statistical offices with the International Statistical Institute; agricultural statistics with FAO; and the areas of agricultural statistics and country support for Myanmar with the Asian Development Bank.

3. Contributing to statistical development

36. The Director reported that the Institute's professional staff had lent their individual and collective experience and expertise to the statistical development initiatives of the international statistical system in the areas of economic statistics and the System of National Accounts, agricultural statistics, Millennium Development Goal indicators, gender statistics, disability statistics and sampling methods. During the reporting period, SIAP staff had participated as resource persons, trainers and discussants in international and regional forums and training activities of development partners.

37. The Director further reported that SIAP had assisted in developing the proposed regional action plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics and had been responsible mainly for preparing the training component of the plan. SIAP had also participated as the technical secretariat to the Working Group on the Regional Coordination of Statistical Training in the formulation of recommendations on a strategy to improve regional coordination of statistical training.

4. Management and administration

(a) Human resources

38. The Director reported professional staff changes in 2012: a new director and deputy director and a new lecturer. With regard to the freezing of two additional professional posts, the Director reported that SIAP would be operating with four professional staff in the coming years. The Director emphasized that SIAP would adopt suitable strategies, including maximizing partnerships, strengthening training networks and expanding e-learning courses, to ensure that the decrease in the number of professional staff would not adversely affect the effectiveness of SIAP as the centre for statistical training in the region.

39. The Governing Council noted that better utilization of information and communications technology (ICT) and other new technology was important for the effective and efficient delivery of training. It expressed full support for extending e-learning to other fundamental areas of statistics, which could serve as a resource base for training new statisticians in the region.

(b) Financial resources

40. The Director summarized the financial status of SIAP as of 30 September 2012, explaining that SIAP had a fund balance of \$3,022,963 — calculated from its total income of \$2,483,469, less expenditure of \$1,949,094 plus fund balance as of 1 January 2012 of \$2,488,588.

41. The Director noted that total cash contributions received from ESCAP member States in 2012, as of 30 September, amounted to \$2,264,887, which was slightly higher compared with the figure for 2011 due to increased contributions by member States. The Director further noted that the cash contribution of \$1,652,000 from the host Government (Japan) continued to constitute the bulk of the overall annual cash contributions but pointed out that the share of cash contributions from other member and associate member States of ESCAP, totalling \$612,887, had increased. She noted the increased contributions of many member States, and stated that, while the budget for 2013 was balanced, budget deficits were expected in 2012 and 2014, mainly due to costs relating to staff service separation.

42. The Director noted that in-kind contributions had absorbed a large share of programme costs and mentioned that available estimates of in-kind contributions from the host Government (Japan), Australia and the Republic of Korea alone totalled \$2,288,811. The Governing Council recognized the importance of in-kind contributions in addition to cash contributions.

43. The Governing Council acknowledged with appreciation the continued strong support and contributions to SIAP, in cash and in kind, of Japan, the host Government, during a difficult financial climate. The Council likewise expressed appreciation for the contributions of member States to SIAP.

5. Opportunities and challenges

44. The Director of SIAP highlighted four areas presenting challenges and opportunities for SIAP: an expanding resource base for statistical training in the region; developing an e-learning strategy; evaluating the impact of statistical training; and strengthening coordination to meet statistical training needs and demands.

45. The Director explained that, with fewer professional staff, reliance on external experts had become even more crucial to delivering the required number and maintaining the quality of SIAP training courses. The Governing Council supported the suggestion that SIAP could further strengthen and expand its network of statistical experts and training specialists through a system of SIAP expert affiliates drawn from recognized statistical services and training institutions to serve as a source of temporary lecturers.

46. The Governing Council noted that statistical capacity development required national commitment towards training, and fully recognized the importance of national centres of excellence in statistical training as a means towards realizing that goal. Members of the Council supported the suggestion by the Director that would have SIAP certifying experts and institutions, and requested that SIAP prepare a proposal for their consideration.

47. The Governing Council recognized the important role of SIAP as a resource base for national statistical training institutes, academic institutions and other training providers. The Council also recognized the importance of South-South exchanges as a modality for training and strengthening training capacity.

48. The representative of Thailand mentioned the commitment made by countries belonging to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to improve economic statistics capacity and give importance to improving the linkages between regional organizations and SIAP in the delivery of training. She mentioned that a number of trainings had already occurred under that commitment and they would continue to be a priority.

49. The Governing Council supported the proposal of SIAP to embark on the development of a long-term strategy for e-learning. The Council noted that the e-learning courses could provide a way to deliver trainings to entire national statistical systems, not only those in national statistical offices. It also noted the usefulness of the World Bank's Virtual Statistical System and the benefit of forming partnerships to maximize the visibility and availability of e-learning materials.

50. The Governing Council agreed that better evaluation of statistical training was highly important in ensuring that training had a long-lasting impact. The Council fully supported the proposal by SIAP to develop a more outcome-based evaluation method to enable systematic measurement of the impact of statistical training.

C. Consideration of matters relating to the programme of work of the Institute

1. Work and financial plan of the Institute for academic year 2013

51. The Governing Council had before it the document entitled "Work and financial plan of the Institute for the academic year 2013" (E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/4).

52. The Director of the Institute outlined the proposed work and financial plan of SIAP for 2013. The work plan had two components: activities relating to the training programmes and courses for official statistics, and activities relating to training resources development and coordination.

(a) Training programmes and courses for official statistics

53. SIAP planned to implement 23 courses under its seven training programmes: fundamentals of official statistics (1 SIAP/JICA group training course on improving capability in producing official statistics relating to Millennium Development Goal indicators); population and social statistics (3 regional courses and 1 e-learning course under the SIAP/UNFPA project; a second regional workshop on production and use of vital statistics); national accounts and economic statistics (2 regional courses and 2 e-learning courses on the System of National Accounts; 2 subregional courses in support of the regional programme for improving economic statistics); agricultural statistics (4 regional courses under the training component of the regional action plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, namely the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics); environment statistics (1 regional course); modernizing national statistical services (11th management seminar; 6th regional workshop on statistical quality management); and customized training for in-country courses (2 courses under the multipartner statistical capacity development of the Myanmar national statistical service; and 3 courses, on request).

54. The Director informed the Council that a new three-year cycle for JICA-funded courses would start in Japanese fiscal year 2013 and that, in that cycle, there would be only one SIAP/JICA group training course. However, SIAP and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan intended to submit new course proposals through the Ministry for the next three-year cycle of JICA course offerings.

55. Some Council members expressed concern about the loss of training opportunities due to the discontinuance of two of the SIAP/JICA group training courses. The representative of Japan elaborated on the process for determining future offerings of the SIAP/JICA course. He clarified that JICA had applied set criteria—based on a minimum number of countries indicating that a specific course was a priority—for selecting JICA-funded training courses. The required information was collected through an annual JICA training needs survey fielded in countries. Based on the results of the 2012 JICA training needs survey, only the proposed course on improving capability in producing official statistics relating to Millennium Development Goal indicators met the criteria. The representative of Japan urged member States to more actively express interest in SIAP/JICA courses by providing their views to the government focal point for the annual JICA training needs survey.

56. The Governing Council emphasized the need for national statistical offices to familiarize themselves with the process and timetable for the JICA training needs survey. The Council requested the secretariat to assist in disseminating information about the process and timetable.

57. In presenting the proposed work plan for 2013, the Director highlighted the strategy of a continuing series of training on specific topics, such as on the System of National Accounts 2008, vital statistics and statistical quality management. The Director also drew attention to the plan to introduce a blended learning (face-to-face and e-learning) approach to training.

(b) Training resources development and coordination

58. The Director presented three main areas of work under the training resources development and coordination component: developing e-learning courses, consisting of formulating a long-term strategy for e-learning and the development of training modules; enhancing the multiplier effect and

assuring quality involving the development of a certification system for mobilizing expert and institutional affiliates for statistical training, training-of-trainers programme (2 regional courses) and a study on measuring the impact of SIAP training; and improving regional coordination involving the holding of the fifth workshop on forging partnerships in statistical training, creation of a database on statistical training and capacity-building initiatives to serve as a resource for improving coordination.

(c) Financial plan

59. In presenting the financial plan for the proposed programme of work, the Director drew the attention of the Governing Council to the funding gaps for training courses for which there were as yet no identified funding sources. The Director explained that the main funding gaps involved primarily travel costs and daily subsistence allowance for participants.

60. The Governing Council requested SIAP to prioritize the training activities for funding, even as it continued to raise resources. The members of the Council emphasized that it would be important for SIAP to consult with member States in the prioritization process in order to ensure that their training needs were considered.

2. Programme of work to formulate the 2015-2019 strategic plan of the Institute

61. The Governing Council had before it the document entitled “Formulation of the 2015-2019 SIAP Strategic Plan” (E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/5).

62. The Director of the Institute outlined the organization of work, activities and timelines for developing the 2015-2019 strategic plan. The Director informed the Council that the programme of work would be aimed at having the 2015-2019 strategic plan of the Institute ready for final review and endorsement by the Governing Council at its tenth session.

63. To guide the process, the Director proposed the creation by the Governing Council of a “friends of the chair” group. Such a group could be established at the latest by the end of the first quarter of 2013. The Director proposed that the group would be responsible for: (a) reviewing the progress in implementation of the 2010-2014 strategic plan, identifying barriers to and success factors in its implementation and suggesting approaches for moving forward; and (b) providing advice in setting goals and identifying strategic priorities for the 2015-2019 strategic plan. The Director also proposed that SIAP would provide the friends of the chair with the necessary secretariat support.

64. The Governing Council expressed support for the idea of developing such a group but sought more concrete information on its composition, role and priorities, and suggested that the terms of reference of the friends of the chair group should be made more specific.

65. The Director mentioned that the friends of the chair would be a technical group, since the development of the strategic plan required more focused work, but the group would consult the Governing Council. The Director further added that the composition of the group would be determined by the Council, based on expressions of interest from member States, and that it should have representation from the different subregions, while also remaining small in size (6-8 members). The Chair suggested that the proposed friends of the chair group should be composed of not only

statisticians but also persons who were experts in human resources development and management and who had experience in developing strategic plans in their countries.

66. The representative of Japan expressed an interest in participating in the activities of the proposed group.

67. The representative of Papua New Guinea suggested that the strategic plans of various statistical offices in the region should be taken into consideration in formulating the strategic plan for the period 2015-2019.

68. The representative of Samoa suggested that the review of the 2010-2014 strategic plan could be done by an independent external reviewer in order to make the process more efficient. The Chair further noted that, if the idea of engaging an external reviewer for the 2010-2014 strategic plan was pursued, it would have budgetary implications.

D. Consideration of matters relating to the Committee on Statistics

1. Regional coordination of statistical training

69. The Governing Council had before it the report of the Working Group on the Coordination of Statistical Training (E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/6).

70. The Director of the Institute briefed the Governing Council that, in order to coordinate statistical training in the Asia-Pacific region, the Working Group had recommended several mechanisms for consideration by the Committee on Statistics, one possibility having been that the Governing Council could serve as an advisory body.

71. The Governing Council expressed the view that the decision regarding the mechanism for coordination of statistical training in the Asia-Pacific region should be taken by the Committee on Statistics. The Council also expressed the view that, in the event that the Committee on Statistics decided to create a new advisory body on coordination of statistical training, such a body should be separate from the Governing Council but there should be representation by at least one member of the Council on that body.

72. The Governing Council supported the recommendation that SIAP serve as the secretariat of the advisory body.

2. Regional implementation plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

73. The Governing Council had before it the report of the Steering Group for Agricultural Statistics (E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/7).

74. The Director of the Institute informed the Council members that the Committee on Statistics at its second session in December 2010 had strongly endorsed the proposal of FAO to develop a regional implementation plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The Director further informed the Council that the proposed plan included a training component and that there was a recommendation for SIAP to coordinate the implementation of that component. The Director emphasized that that would provide an opportunity for SIAP to mobilize resources in an area of work which had been identified as a priority in the region.

75. The Governing Council expressed strong support for the proposal that SIAP should coordinate the training component in that area of work.

3. Reporting line of the Governing Council

76. The representatives of the Statistics Division of the ESCAP secretariat and the Office of the Executive Secretary informed the Governing Council about the ongoing review of the ESCAP conference structure and the proposal that the Governing Council should report to the Committee on Statistics instead of the Commission, given that the SIAP programme of work was integrated into that of the secretariat's statistics subprogramme. In that way the Committee on Statistics would be able to provide more meaningful technical guidance on statistical issues and avoid duplication.

77. The Governing Council sought more clarification on the objectives of the review of the Council's reporting line. A representative of the Secretary of the Commission provided a briefing on the background and process. In the ensuing discussions, the Governing Council strongly recommended that the current arrangements for reporting to the Commission be retained and that additional layers should not be added. The Governing Council expressed the view that the Council and the Committee on Statistics were already coordinating well, and that a change in the reporting line of the Governing Council could have the adverse effect of lowering the level in Governments to which statistical training priorities were reported. The Council further expressed the view that its role was also to discuss financial and administrative matters of SIAP, which the Committee on Statistics does not do.

E. Other matters

78. No other matters were raised.

F. Adoption of the report of the Governing Council

79. On 7 December 2012, the Governing Council endorsed the matters calling for action or to be brought to the attention of the Commission (see chap. I).

III. Organization of the session

A. Opening of the session

80. The eighth session of the Governing Council of SIAP was held in Bangkok on 6 and 7 December 2012.

81. The Chair of the seventh session of the Governing Council, Mr. Trevor Sutton (Australia), officially opened the eighth session.

82. An opening statement was delivered by the Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP on behalf of the Executive Secretary.

B. Attendance

83. The session was attended by representatives of the host Government (Japan) and six of the eight elected members of the Governing Council: Australia; China; Indonesia; Malaysia; Republic of Korea; and Thailand. India and Pakistan did not send representatives to participate in the session.

84. Representatives of the following member States attended the session as observers: Cambodia; Kazakhstan; Mongolia; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Russian Federation; Samoa; Sri Lanka; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam.

85. Representatives of the following organizations attended the session as observers: United Nations Human Settlements Programme; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Environment Programme; International Labour Office; and International Telecommunication Union.

C. Election of officers

86. The Governing Council elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chair: Mr. Trevor Sutton (Australia);

Vice-Chair: Mr. Takao Itou (Japan).

D. Adoption of the agenda

87. The Governing Council added agenda item 5(c) to the annotated provisional agenda (E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/1/Rev.1) and adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session:
 - (a) Opening statements;
 - (b) Election of officers;
 - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
2. Matters arising from the seventh session of the Governing Council and its interim session.
3. Report of the Director of the Institute.
4. Consideration of matters relating to the programme of work of the Institute:
 - (a) Work and financial plan of the Institute for academic year 2013;
 - (b) Programme of work to formulate the 2015-2019 strategic plan of the Institute.
5. Consideration of matters relating to the Committee on Statistics:
 - (a) Report of the Working Group on the Coordination of Statistical Training;
 - (b) Report of the Steering Group for Agricultural Statistics;
 - (c) Reporting line of the Governing Council.
6. Other matters.
7. Adoption of the report of the Governing Council.

Annex**List of documents**

Document symbol	Title	Agenda item
E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/1/Rev.1	Annotated provisional agenda	1c
E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/2	Matters arising from the seventh session and interim session of the Governing Council	2
E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/3	Report of the Director of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific	3
E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/4	Work and financial plan of the Institute for the academic year 2013	4a
E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/5	Formulation of the 2015-2019 SIAP strategic plan	4b
E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/6	Report of the Working Group on Coordination of Statistical Training	5a
E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/7	Report of the Steering Group for Agricultural Statistics	5b
E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/INF/1	Information for participants	
E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/INF/2	Provisional list of participants	1b
E/ESCAP/SIAP/GC(8)/INF/3/Rev.1	Provisional schedule of the meeting	1a