



Preparatory work for the first session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Statistics

(for consideration by the SPECA Coordinating Committee Meeting
Baku, Azerbaijan, 7 December 2005)

At the International Conference on Strengthening Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation and the Future Role of SPECA and the SPECA Regional Advisory Committee (Astana, 25-27 May 2005), it was decided to establish a SPECA Project Working Group on Statistics (PWG on Statistics). The objective of this Group is to strengthen the national statistical capacity of the SPECA member countries to monitor demographic, social and economic progress towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

The monitoring of the implementation of goals and targets set out in the Millennium Declaration requires reliable and timely statistical indicators. The availability and reliability of data to compile these indicators are essential to monitor progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Declaration's goals and targets. Over the past decade, the SPECA member countries have faced a particularly difficult set of circumstances. This has impacted their ability to routinely produce the required statistical information. Serious problems exist in terms of data availability, accuracy, and consistency over time. National statisticians have made substantial efforts to overcome this difficulty, with the support of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the UN Regional Commissions, and other international organizations. However, there is still a need for strengthening the statistical capacity.

Building on lessons learned from previous capacity building projects, it appears that the SPECA member countries need now concrete knowledge management tools to implement new methodology and technology in strategic statistical areas. A network of national experts will be created in national statistical offices, working in partnership together and with the CIS Interstate Statistical Committee.

The PWG on Statistics will focus on three statistical areas that are crucial to the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals:

- Population and social conditions
- Health
- Economic development

There is a demand for improvement in these areas in the CIS countries, including Central Asia. The PWG on Statistics will build upon:

- The work carried out by UNECE from 2004 to 2006 on the new UNECE recommendations for the 2010 round of population censuses;

- The new survey conducted in 2005 by UNECE on national practices in measuring the non-observed economy in national accounts; and
- The preparation of guidelines for improving the comparability of health status statistics in the UNECE region by UNECE in cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2004 and 2005.

The project will support the overall objectives of SPECA, i.e., promotion of sub-regional cooperation and integration into world economy. The work of the PWG on Statistics will be supported by the Statistical Divisions of UNECE and UNESCAP in close collaboration with the Statistical Division of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and in cooperation with the CIS Statistical Committee. The project will be also built on the work that UNECE is carrying out with other partners in the region in the areas related to the project, i.e., WHO, UNDP, UNFPA and national statistical offices of more advanced countries.

Activities of the PWG on Statistics will mainly consist of expert group meetings, training workshops for staff of national statistical offices. Advisory services will be also provided by short-term consultants and experts from the Statistical Divisions of UNECE, UNESCAP and UNDESA. Subject to availability of funding, the project will be implemented over the years 2006 to 2009.

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