



# **Progress Report of the SPECA Project Working Group on Statistics (2008-2009)**

## **UN SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)**

### **Fourth session of the SPECA Governing Council Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 13 November 2009**

#### **Background**

SPECA activities in 2008 – 2009 continued to be based on the strategy elaborated and approved by the governing bodies (Governing Council and Coordinating Committee) of the Programme. The third session of the SPECA Governing Council (Moscow, 20 October 2008) reviewed the implementation of the 2008-2009 SPECA Work Plan, expressing satisfaction with the increasing number of activities carried out within the framework of the six Project Working Groups and the steady growth of budgetary and extra-budgetary funding available for project implementation. The Governing Council invited the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and ESCAP to undertake joint visits to SPECA capitals to discuss the further strengthening of the Programme, as initiated by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his letter of 5 March 2008 to the Presidents of SPECA member countries. It welcomed the continued progress in establishing regular and substantial coordination with other programmes and organizations supporting regional economic cooperation in Central Asia, in particular the annual inter-agency coordination meetings between SPECA and the CAREC Group, EurAsEC, ECO and SCO, as well as the participation of ESCAP and UNECE representatives in the work of the CAREC Partnership Forum. The third session of the SPECA Economic Forum (Moscow, 20 October 2008) continued to discuss the role of strengthened regional economic cooperation in a positive investment climate. Building on the results of the Almaty and Berlin sessions of the Economic Forum, which focused on trade and investment links between Central Asia on the one hand and Asia and the European Union on the other, the Moscow session of the Economic Forum discussed how improved regional cooperation can facilitate investment by the Russian Federation in such areas as transport, water and energy, as well as investment, which helps the diversification of the economies of the region. Participants of the Economic Forum highlighted the need for developing a regional strategy for dealing with the effects of the

global financial crisis: strengthened regional cooperation should play a key role in such a strategy. All six SPECA Project Working Groups met in 2008-2009, reviewed project implementation and if appropriate, formulated new project proposals. The inaugural session of the new Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (former PWG on ICT for Development) took place in Baku, Azerbaijan on 12 November 2008.

### **SPECA PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON STATISTICS**

The SPECA Project Working Group (PWG) on Statistics held its fourth meeting in Istanbul on the 23-24 March 2009. It was attended by representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkey, as well as representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the European Union (Eurostat).

As the Chairperson of the PWG, the Head of the State Committee on Statistics of the Republic of Tajikistan, who had acted as chair in the years 2006-2008, had expressed his will to rotate the chairmanship of the SPECA PWG Meeting on Statistics, the Head of Statistics Kazakhstan was elected Chair of the SPECA PWG for 2009-2012.

A report on the results of the activities of the UN Development Account funded StatCapCA project (United Nations Development Account project 06/07F) in the period July 2006 - February 2009 was presented. As the project is coming to its end in 2009, an Evaluation Report was presented by Mr Oleg Cara, Deputy Director of the National Statistical Bureau of Moldova, who had kindly agreed to act as external evaluator of the StatCapCA project.

Based on his evaluation work in January-March 2009, his assessment concluded that the project activities were organized very successfully and had been of substantial assistance for the targeted countries. All SPECA member countries had achieved considerable progress in the statistical fields of the project. The translation of all project materials and presentations into Russian and their publication on the relevant UNECE web sites had been very helpful for a large number of experts, managers and other staff members in the National Statistical Agencies of the beneficiary countries, also for staff members that had not directly participated in the training activities of the project.

Mr. Cara, external evaluator of the StatCapCA project, concluded that in all target countries, except Uzbekistan, the Census preparations or already commenced implementation of it are based on the CES recommendations. The observations of non-observed economy are today included in the National Accounts reporting. National Statistical Agencies also have an orientation on additional cooperation with the Ministries of Health and other authorities, aiming at improved measurement of the health status of the population in the respective countries.

More information on the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SPECA PWG on Statistics in Istanbul in March 2009 can be found on the web site <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2009.03.speca.htm>

Another statistical project, additionally to the StatCapCA project referred to above, has in the years 2007-2009 been implemented in the SPECA sub-region –the project on “Engendering Statistical Information”. In the latter the World Bank is the main funding source. In the framework of the Engendering project a handbook on gender statistics is being produced. Numerous multimedia presentations on gender statistics have been produced to serve as training materials both for target groups of gender statistics and trainers of this topic, see [www.unece.org/stats/video](http://www.unece.org/stats/video) . The Engendering project will continue also in 2010. In 2009 new activities on gender statistics are planned for Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. See more on <http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/01.0b.e.htm>

Four new projects were reported to commence in 2009, providing support for capacity building in SPECA member countries. These are

- (i) Challenges in Economic Statistics, focusing on Short-term economic statistics, seasonal adjustments and price statistics. The first 5-days training will take place in Astana in 2009. The next is planned to take place in Baku or Istanbul in the first part of 2010 and the third in Bishkek in autumn 2010. Besides SPECA member countries also Mongolia will be invited;
- (ii) Supporting MDG Strategies – a joint project of ESCAP and UNECE. The UNECE part of this project is focusing on statistics, the other parts are focusing on other MDG-related issues. An expert group meeting focusing on disaggregation of MDG indicators will be organized in Astana in October 2009, followed by a training workshop in spring 2010, possibly in Tashkent. SPECA member countries will be the focus in both events;
- (iii) Migration flows and stocks. This is a global project of all five UN Regional Commissions, led by ECLAC. UNECE has selected the Central Asian countries to be targeted in this project aiming at better availability and quality of data on international migration. Another aim is to strengthen evidence-based policy making and research in the field of international migration;
- (iv) Violence against Women. This is also a global project of all five UN Regional Commissions, also led by ECLAC. The project will support the organizing of two meetings of a Task Force, composed of countries in the UNECE region, on supporting improved information access on this important theme and test a module to measure violence against women in statistical population based surveys.

ESCAP has in its work given strong emphasize on the role of the Statistical Institute of Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) in its support to statistical capacity building in the SPECA sub-region. SIAP had a regular two-month training course on collection and analysis of official economic statistics conducted in Russian language for Central Asian and Caucasus Countries. Most technical documents produced by the ESCAP disability measurement project, where Kazakhstan was one of the pilot counties, were available in

Russian. ESCAP will organize regional workshops in late 2009 and in the beginning of 2010 to share findings of its two projects on the measurement of disability and the measurement of the informal sector and informal employment. The Deputy Chair of Statistics Kazakhstan was recently elected to the Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics for 2009-2010.

It can also be notified that the year 2008 was the beginning of jointly organized training activities by UNECE and SIAP. One national training workshop on Migration statistics was organized in Tajikistan in April 2008 and another on New challenges in Economic statistics in Iran in November 2008 for SPECA member countries and Iran. It is planned to organize a joint UNECE/SIAP Training Workshop on Disseminating MDG Indicators in Astana in the latter part of 2009.

Statistics Kazakhstan has established a Training and Research Centre for Statistics in Astana. Its facilities were for the first time used for joint training activities for the SPECA member countries in October 2009, when UNECE organized an Expert Group Meeting on MDG-related Indicators.

The SPECA PWG Meeting on Statistics adopted a revised Terms of Reference for its work in the Istanbul Meeting in March 2009.

ESCAP has continued to implement the UN Development Account project on improving statistics and measurement of disability statistics. This project aims to promote disability data collection through censuses and develop standard survey-based measurement through development and pilot-testing of a set of questions as well as targeted training and advisory services. A number of developing countries and Kazakhstan and Mongolia, representing Economies in Transition have been included in the project. Both mentioned countries have participated as pilot countries for developing and testing a questionnaire on Disability Statistics in the framework of the UN Development Account project mentioned. In autumn 2009 most of the testing results have been analyzed and summarizing recommendations for continued work in the countries can now be supported on an improved basis.

The Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan participated in the 57th Conference of European Statisticians, organized by UNECE, see <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2009.09.ces.htm>.

The countries mentioned participated also in its side meeting “Better Evidence for Better Development Results”, organized jointly by UNECE, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP and OECD. See <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2009.06.mdg.htm> .

Numerous SPECA member countries – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan - participated in the UNSD/UNECE Meeting on Environmental Indicators in Geneva in August-September 2009.

UNECE organized jointly with EFTA and Eurostat in September 2009 a Management Seminar on Global Assessments on National Statistical Systems in Yalta, Ukraine. All

SPECA member countries with the exception of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan participated actively. Additional information on the content of this Management Seminar can be found at <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2009.09.speca.htm> .

After the Management Seminar mentioned both the National Statistical Bureau of the Kyrgyz Republic as well as the State Statistical Committee sent an official request to have a Global Assessment performed on their National Statistical System in the year 2010. A corresponding assessment has already earlier been performed on the National Statistical System of Kazakhstan in 2003 and 2007-2008.

In October 2009 UNECE organized jointly with Eurostat a Workshop on Business Registers and their Role in Business Statistics in the Eastern UNECE region in Luxembourg, <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2009.10.busreg1.htm> .

In Astana an Expert Group Meeting on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Indicators for Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan was organized by the UNECE in cooperation with Statistics Kazakhstan and a number of other international organizations (ILO, UNDP, UNESCO and WHO). Issues of producing, disaggregating, disseminating, reconciling and coordinating activities around indicators related to MDGs were discussed in depth. The development work on a user friendly Regional MDG Database, providing information services of both country produced and internationally produced indicators for monitoring progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, was also discussed and supported by all six participating SPECA member countries in the Expert Group Meeting in Astana. Additional information on this Expert Group Meeting for SPECA member countries can be found at <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2009.10.mdg.htm>.