New projects proposed at the Follow-up meeting of the 2010 SPECA Economic Forum, Ashgabat, 7-8 June 2011

A follow-up event to the 2010 SPECA Economic Forum was held on 7-8 June 2011 in Ashgabat. The meeting was organized by the Government of Turkmenistan, as the current SPECA Chairmanship, together with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA).

The aim of the meeting in Ashgabat was to discuss concrete projects on economic cooperation between Central Asia and Afghanistan, ranging from infrastructure to technical assistance and focusing on the priorities of the Afghan National Development Strategy: trade, transport, investment, infrastructure and the joint management of natural resources.

The UNECE presented 3 projects in the area of statistics to be considered in the future:

- *Economic Statistics Capacity Building*
- *Strengthening statistics on international migration*
- *Streamlining statistical production*

These projects will be carried out depending on the available funding.

Economic Statistics Capacity Building

The objective of the project is to increase the capacity of SPECA member countries to produce sound economic statistics according to international standards and recommendations.

While over the last decade there have been some improvements there is still a lack of relevant and reliable economic statistics in the region. This is an obstacle for the formation of adequate economic policies, for the development of market economies and the societies as a whole. It also hampers regional and international integration.

With a budget of USD 630,200 the project will include capacity building in economic statistics in Russian and English in terms of:

- Participation in international meetings on economic statistics
- Training on key economic statistics, tailored to the countries in the region
- Bilateral assistance on practical implementation issues

The project will increase the capacity in economic statistics by improving the knowledge of international standards and recommendations and the ability to implement these in practice. As part of the project the statistical offices will be asked to develop concrete plans for implementing good practices. To this end the project also aims to strengthen the intra-regional network for better knowledge sharing and exchange of experiences.

The Statistical Division of UNECE has a long tradition of cooperation with SPECA countries and experience in the particular problems in economic statistics in the region.

Strengthening statistics on international migration

The proposed project aims at increasing the capacity in SPECA countries to produce high quality statistics on international migration and to use them in policy-making.

The project, spanning three years, will include:

- the production of training material and their use in a series of regional workshops for statisticians and policy-makers;
- the establishment and maintenance of a "migration statistics clearinghouse" for the collection, exchange and dissemination of migration statistics for countries in the region;
- the organization of capacity building missions to countries to improve the production of migrations statistics at the national level.

In 2009-2010, UNECE implemented a project on strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. One of the main conclusions arising from this was that tools should be developed to facilitate the collection, sharing and dissemination of migration statistics from countries at the regional level. The new project will address this need and thus support the SPECA countries to meet their demand for improved and more accessible statistics on international migration.

Another expected outcome of the project is the improved dialogue at the national level between producers of statistics on international migration, such as national statistical offices and agencies collecting data on migration, and users of those statistics, policymakers in particular. This will result in better use of migration statistics by policymakers in the phases of policy design, implementation and evaluation.

The UNECE is best placed to carry out such project given its extensive experience in developing methodology and setting standards in the field of migration statistics, including the recent UNECE "Guidelines for exchanging data to improve emigration statistics". In executing the project the UNECE will cooperate with the other international agencies which are members of the Global Migration Group.

Streamlining statistical production

Despite significant improvements in the national capacity to produce official statistics in recent years, timely and reliable data are not always available in the SPECA countries. The current financial crisis has further reduced their capacity to produce high quality statistical information by reducing the resources needed to implement international recommendations and guidelines.

This project aims to increase the capacity of SPECA countries to produce statistics in a timely, efficient and sustainable manner. It will strengthen capacity to use, analyse, disseminate and communicate statistical information for international comparisons and monitoring progress towards the achievement of targets such as the Millennium Development Goals. However, it is important to stress that all types of statistics produced by the national statistical organisations will benefit.

The benefits will be achieved by streamlining the data production processes, improving timeliness, leveraging existing expertise in some countries of the region, sharing national good practices and promoting the development of an active network of experts (statisticians and policy makers) within the SPECA countries.

This project is demand-driven. It addresses needs identified during the UNECE/EFTA/Eurostat Global Assessments of the statistical systems of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. It will span two years and will include:

- a kick-off workshop to present the latest thinking on the most efficient ways of producing statistics and to evaluate country specific needs and actions;
- demand-driven and targeted follow-up actions, such as study visits, financial support to attend relevant international meetings, and targeted consultancies on specific issues identified as national priorities;
- a final workshop to review progress, facilitate the sharing of experiences and identify further actions to be taken after the project has ended.

A key feature of the project will be the facilitation of better contacts between national statistical organisations, and the creation of a regional network for exchanging experiences and information, which is expected to continue well beyond the life of the project.

The UNECE is best placed to carry out such a project given its extensive experience in developing methodology and setting standards for statistical production, including the recent UNECE "Generic Statistical Business Process Model". The UNECE is already cooperating actively with other organisations such as UNESCAP in this field, and will seek to build on that cooperation within this project.

A full description of the three projects are annexed to this document.

Economic Statistics Capacity Building

Project Title	Economic Statistics Capacity Building	
Outcome	Increased capacity of SPECA member countries to produce economic statistics in strengthened intra-regional cooperation and according to international recommendations	
Indicative Funding Requirements	Total estimated budget:	US$ 630.200
Potential Sources of Funding	[Donor(s)]: [Development Bank(s)]: Other Resources:	$ $
Expected start date	June 2012	
Expected duration	3-5 years	
Implementing Organisation(s)	UNECE Statistical Division	
Country/Countries	SPECA member countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	
Submitted by	UNECE Statistical Division	
Contact information	Name: Carsten Boldsen Tel: +41 22 917 33 70 Fax : +41 22 917 0040 Email: carsten.boldsen@unece.org Mailing address: UNECE Statistical Division, Palais des Nations, 14-18 avenue de la Paix, CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland	

1.   Background

There is a need for good statistical indicators to analyse economic integration, as well as stability and sustainability of development in the SPECA countries. While over the last decade there have been some improvements in official statistics in the region, there is still lack of relevant and reliable economic statistics. This is an obstacle for efficient economic policy, for economic development and trade and for the societies as a whole. It also hampers regional and international comparisons. Good quality statistics would improve the monitoring of areas of interest to the SPECA programme, i.e. the economy, trade, economic integration and sustainable development.

While the SPECA countries have different levels of statistical capacities, there are marked similarities in their statistical systems which call for stronger cooperation within the region. All SPECA countries would benefit from enhanced long-term cooperation between their national experts. Some countries are lagging behind and where national conditions are not favourable participation in activities at the regional and international level is much needed.

UNECE Statistical Division (UNECE-STAT) has a long tradition of regional and bilateral cooperation with the SPECA countries and recognized experience in their particular problems and challenges. For example, the UNECE-STAT conducts global assessments of national statistical systems on request of the countries. Most recently UNECE-STAT participated in the global assessment of Azerbaijan in 2010, was leading the global assessment of Kazakhstan in 2008, and is preparing a global assessment for Kyrgyzstan. The purpose is to help the countries developing their statistics and offer publicly available information about the national statistical systems.

UNECE-STAT carries out capacity building activities in cooperation with national statistical offices and international organisations (e.g. UNSD, IMF, EFTA, Eurostat and CIS-STAT). In 2008, UNECE-STAT initiated assistance to East European, Caucasus and Central Asian countries in improving their economic statistics. In 2010, UNECE-STAT launched a full capacity building project on economic statistics with a specific focus on the SPECA countries. This project, financed by the World Bank, includes a series of regional workshops on key economic indicators, seasonal adjustment, price statistics and national accounts that will take place in 2011-2012. UNECE-STAT will also coordinate work in the region for implementation of the new 2008 System of National Accounts.

2.   Justification

Over the last decade the SPECA member countries have made some progress in producing economic statistics. There remain, however, many challenges in compiling them according to international standards and recommendations. The lack of relevant and comparable economic statistics hampers evidence-based decision making and prevents the development of indicators on vulnerabilities (e.g. income and poverty measurements) and economic sustainability. The recent economic and financial crisis highlighted these problems.

Many international standards for producing economic statistics have changed recently, e.g. the classification of economic activity, ISIC, and the System of National Accounts. The SPECA countries that still experience difficulties implementing the old standards are, therefore, at risk to further lag behind. There is a significant need for capacity building in economic statistics in the SPECA member countries, including the need for training and training materials in both English and Russian. In addition, there are significant differences in the statistical capacities within the region which could be addressed with strengthened intra-regional cooperation.

The proposed project can build upon and carry forward the results of the previous project on capacity building in economic statistics that is planned to end in mid-2012. The capacity building project supports improvement of basic economic statistics and feeds into other UNECE-STAT activities on initiating new sustainable development indicators and indicators for monitoring the progress towards the Goals of the Millennium Declaration.

The results of this project proposal will include improved skills and indicators for monitoring economic progress and established intra-regional networks. The results could serve the information needs of the related programmes and projects, i.e. trade facilitation and cross-border

activities, promoting regional integration, improving information flows and measuring sustainable development.

3.   Expected Output(s)

The proposed project activities are expected to lead to the following outputs:

- Increased capacity in production and dissemination of good quality economic statistics for the needs of economic policy making.
- Increased skills in producing key economic indicators, long time series and seasonal adjustment for better identification of changes in the economy.
- Development of concrete plans for implementation of the 2008 SNA in order to improve global comparability of core economic statistics
- Creation of intra-regional networks of experts in support of further integration of the region.

Training material and recommendations will follow internationally agreed statistical standards and recommendations. They aim to support the development of regionally and internationally comparable statistics and streamlining of the publication of statistics. The creation of an intra-regional network of experts in economic statistics and the increased participation in international meetings aims at sustainability of results and further integration in the region. As the specific problem in the region, is the lack of guidelines and material in Russian, all training and the related material will be offered in two languages, English and Russian. Essential guidelines will be translated into both languages.

4.   Proposed Approach & Strategy, including Capacity Development Response

Increased knowledge and gradual implementation of internationally agreed standards and methods on key economic statistics will enhance the capability of the national statistical offices to produce and disseminate sound and comparable statistics. This, in turn, leads to more relevant information for decision-making and allows regional and international comparisons.

The project will build on the existing activities of the UNECE-STAT in support of development of economic statistics in the region. Experts from the statistical offices of the SPECA member countries will be involved in the detailed planning of training and sharing of experiences, as will be the experts from the statistically well developed countries and other international organisations (e.g. IMF, EFTA, Eurostat).

The project will work on three levels: international, regional and national. First, it will enable participation of all the SPECA member countries in topical international meetings in statistics. Second, it will offer tailored regional activities to match the specific needs of the region. And third, bilateral missions to support implementation and achievement of sustained results will follow the regional and international activities. These missions aim particularly to support the less advanced countries in the region.

5. Annual Work Plan

PLANNED ACTIVITIES *List activity results and associated actions*	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Amount
1. Activity: Regional workshops with participants from the SPECA countries, 2012			X		US$ 56.000
2. Activity: Regional workshop 2013			X		US$ 56.000
3. Activity: Regional workshop 2014			X		US$ 56.000
4. Activity: Regional workshop 2015			X		US$ 56.000
5. Activity: Regional workshop 2016			X		US$ 56.000
6. Activity: Technical assistance missions to countries					US$ 84.000
7. Activity: Participation in the Conference of European Statisticians annual plenary		X			US$ 84.000
8. Activity: Participation in international expert meetings organised by UNECE					US$ 100.000
Programme support and administrative costs **15% UNECE administration fee**					US$ 82.200
TOTAL					US$ 630,200

The TIMEFRAME header spans columns Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4. The PLANNED BUDGET header spans the Amount column.

Strengthening statistics on international migration

Project Title	Strengthening statistics on international migration	
Outcome	Increased capacity in SPECA countries to produce high quality statistics on international migration and to use them in policymaking	
Indicative Funding Requirements	Total estimated budget:	US$ 991,000
Potential Sources of Funding	[Donor(s)]: [Development Bank(s)]: Other Resources:	The United Nations Population Fund may support some of the proposed activities
Expected start date	September 2011	
Expected Duration	3 years	
Implementing Organisation(s)	UNECE	
Country/Countries	SPECA countries	
Submitted by	UNECE Statistical Division	
Contact information	Andres Vikat tel +41 22 917 2764 Email: andres.vikat@unece.org UNECE Statistical Division Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland	

1.   Background

The project is intended as a follow-up in Central Asia and Afghanistan to the United Nations Development Account Project "Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration: maximizing development benefits and minimizing negative impacts", implemented in the region in 2009-2010 by UNECE, in cooperation with UNFPA and other partners of the Global Migration Group. The workshops of the project assessed discrepancies between the internationally agreed standards and the available data and discussed ways of overcoming them. The participants who represented both statistical and policy agencies expressed the need for practical tools and guidelines to improve the production, quality and comparability of migration statistics in the region. A data clearinghouse was proposed as one such practical tool, to implement the "Guidelines for exchanging data to improve emigration statistics" developed by UNECE.

The impetus for this work was provided by the 2006 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, organized by the United Nations General Assembly. Ensuing from the High-level Dialogue, the annual Global Forums on Migration and Development (GFMD) have identified the strengthening of migration data and research among its priorities. In 2013, the General Assembly will hold a second High-level Dialogue on International Migration and

Development that will take stock of the achievements of the Global Forum process, including advances in migration data.

2.   Justification

International migration, particularly labour migration, represents a major challenge in countries of Central Asia and in Afghanistan because of the direct implications for the development of economies and societies, social cohesion, security, and international relations. Being a relatively new phenomenon in that region, it requires coherent policy responses and efficient measures on both national and regional levels. National governments are confronted with a number of difficulties while developing adequate policies to manage migration flows, facilitate economic and social insertion of international migrants and ensure that the rights and freedoms of their citizens abroad are protected. One of such difficulties is obtaining a realistic picture of the on-going migration processes and objectively assessing the real numbers of stocks and flows of international migrants.

Migration statistics can assist policy-makers to develop and implement relevant policies by supplying useful information on issues such as size of migrants' stocks and flows, sex, age, origin, reason and duration of stay of migrants. However, statistical information on international migration is poorly developed in most Central Asian countries as well as in Afghanistan, where basic data are lacking and indicators are not clearly defined. There are often problems in the communication and exchange of information between various departments and agencies responsible for collecting, processing and disseminating migration statistics at the national level. Moreover, even when some data are available, capacity is not yet developed to translate statistical evidence into descriptions, research, and analyses for policy formulation and monitoring.

3.   Expected Output(s)

a. Data clearinghouse on international migration in the SPECA region
b. A set of training materials on the production, communication and use of statistics on international migration adapted to the circumstances of SPECA countries.
c. Network of users and producers of migration statistics to facilitate and sustain exchange of experience and data among SPECA countries.
d. Published migration statistics in SPECA countries that are better documented and streamlined with international standards and recommendations.

4.   Proposed Approach & Strategy, including Capacity Development Response

The clearinghouse will function as a database that facilitates the collection, dissemination and sharing of data on international migration. It will follow the UNECE guidelines for exchanging data to improve emigration statistics and the respond to the interest in such exchange expressed by countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia at two UNECE capacity development workshops on migration statistics in 2010. Sharing the data through such common platform would help identify inconsistencies and discrepancies from internationally agreed standards and recommendations.

The training and the accompanying materials will demonstrate how the existing production of migration statistics can be aligned internationally agreed standards and recommendations. Training will also cover the communication of statistics. To policymakers and other users of migration statistics, the training will provide a better understanding of migration data and its use for policymaking. Two training workshops will address both policymakers and statisticians; one will address specific issues of statistics and will target statisticians only.

Creation of a regional network for exchanging experiences in migration statistics and the participation in the UNECE work session on migration statistics aims to ensure the sustainability of the exchange of experience and data among SPECA countries.

5. Annual Work Plan

PLANNED ACTIVITIES *List activity results and associated actions*	TIMEFRAME				PLANNED BUDGET
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Amount
1. Data clearinghouse: establishment and initial data collection, 2011			X	X	[1]
2. Data clearinghouse: maintenance, data collection and processing, 2012-2014					[1]
3. Production of training material, 2011-2012	X			X	US$ 20,000
4. Regional workshop for statisticians and policymakers, 2012		X			US$ 68,000
5. Regional workshop for statisticians, 2013		X			US$ 51,000
6. Regional workshop for statisticians and policymakers, 2014		X			US$ 68,000
7. Technical assistance missions to countries, 2012-2014					US$ 73,000
8. Participation in the UNECE work session on migration statistics, 2012 and 2014		X			US$ 38,000
9. Temporary assistance (one expert at the P3 level for 36 months who works on all project activities)					US$ 545,000
10. Programme support cost at UNECE (15%)					US$ 129,000
TOTAL					US$ 991,000

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[1] The cost of this activity is entirely included in the item 10 *temporary assistance*.

Streamlining statistical production

Project Title	Streamlining statistical production	
Outcome	Raised awareness of new ideas and techniques to improve the efficiency and sustainability of statistical production processes	
Indicative Funding Requirements	Total estimated budget:	US$ 760,000
Potential Sources of Funding	[Donor(s)]: [Development Bank(s)]: Other Resources:	
Expected start date	September 2011	
Expected Duration	2 years	
Implementing Organisation(s)	UNECE	
Country/Countries	SPECA Countries	
Submitted by	UNECE Statistical Division	
Contact information	Steven Vale tel +41 22 917 3285 Email: steven.vale@unece.org UNECE Statistical Division Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland	

1.   Background

Despite significant improvements in the national capacity to produce official statistics in recent years, timely and reliable data are not always available in the SPECA countries. The current financial crisis has further reduced their capacity to produce high quality statistical information by reducing the resources needed to implement international recommendations and guidelines.

The proposed project will focus on streamlining the data production processes, improving timeliness, leveraging existing expertise in some countries of the region, sharing national good practices and promoting an active network of experts (statisticians and policy makers) within the SPECA countries.

2.   Justification

The objective of the project is to introduce and discuss recent ideas and approaches for modernising and streamlining statistical processes, to improve the efficiency of statistical production in participating countries. This project is demand-driven as it addresses needs identified during the UNECE / EFTA / Eurostat Global Assessments of the statistical systems of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Traditionally, the statistical production process from survey design, through data collection and processing to dissemination is rather resource intensive, and takes place independently for each statistical domain. Each domain has its own data suppliers, processing systems, methodologies and user groups. This approach has worked in the past, but it is now challenged by a rapidly changing environment. The development of new approaches to statistical production is driven by the need to respond to new requirements for statistics e.g. on complex and cross-cutting issues such as globalisation, ageing societies or climate change. It is also triggered by the need to reduce the burden on respondents and the costs for producing statistics. At the same time technological advances create new possibilities for collecting, storing and integrating data from various sources.

This project will promote various current global and regional initiatives. Some specific topics such as standardisation, the use and integration of new data sources, and the implementation of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (a recent UNECE international standard) will be more closely examined. Experts from statistical organisations that are closely involved in these developments, and are implementing new production methods, both within and outside the region, will share their experiences. The possibilities for streamlining statistical production in the participating countries will be evaluated, and conclusions will be drawn on how best to proceed.

3.   Expected Output(s)

a. Increased capacity of countries of the region to produce statistics in a timely, efficient and sustainable manner
b. Strengthened capacities to use, analyse, disseminate and communicate statistical information for international comparisons and monitoring progress towards the achievement of targets such as the Millennium Development Goals.

4.   Proposed Approach & Strategy, including Capacity Development Response

The project will start with a kick-off workshop to present the latest thinking about the most efficient ways of producing statistics. This workshop will also be used to evaluate country specific needs and actions.

As a result, various follow-up actions are envisaged, such as study visits, financial support to attend relevant international meetings, and targeted consultancies on specific issues. As these follow-up actions will be demand-driven, targeted to address different national priorities, it is difficult to precisely define them at present. Where possible, these activities will draw on existing experiences and good practices amongst the participating countries.

A final workshop will review the progress made in the project, facilitate the sharing of experiences, and identify further actions to be taken after the project has ended.

A key feature of the project will be the facilitation of better contacts between national statistical organisations, and the creation of a regional network for exchanging experiences and information, which is expected to continue well beyond the life of the project.

5.   Annual Work Plan

PLANNED ACTIVITIES *List activity results and associated actions*	TIMEFRAME			PLANNED BUDGET
	Q1	Q2-Q7	Q8	Amount
1. Kick-off workshop	X			US$ 60,000
2. Study visits		X		US$ 70,000
3. Participation in relevant international expert meetings		X		US$ 70,000
4. Targeted consultancy activities		X		US$ 30,000
5. Final workshop			X	US$ 60,000
6. Translation of relevant international standards	X	X	X	US$ 10,000
7. Temporary assistance (one expert at the P3 level for 24 months who works on all project activities)	X	X	X	US$ 365,000
8. Programme support cost at UNECE (15%)				US$ 100,000
TOTAL				US$ 765,000