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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda

Activities implemented in the field of statistics**Technical cooperation activities****Summary**

This document sets out the technical cooperation activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in the field of statistics from November 2022 to September 2024, including advisory services, workshops and capacity-building activities, as well as new partnerships for statistical development and advocacy activities to inform member States about technical cooperation opportunities and the various types of services provided by ESCWA.

The Statistical Committee is invited to take note of the document and provide proposals on strengthening technical cooperation services in line with the needs and priorities of member States.

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Introduction

1. This document provides a summary of technical cooperation activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) between November 2022 and September 2024, since the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee, which was held in Beirut on 16 and 17 November 2022. The document also addresses challenges and ways to improve technical cooperation programmes and services.
2. The technical cooperation services provided by ESCWA fall into the following three categories: advisory services to support countries on issues related to formulating, developing and implementing public policies; workshops, training sessions, study tours and fellowships to build capacity; and pilot field projects in ESCWA areas of specialization that are then developed into larger projects with extrabudgetary financing from donors. Within the framework of technical cooperation, ESCWA follows a multidisciplinary approach that focuses on implementation results, meaning that services are provided in an integrated manner based on the diverse experience of ESCWA. ESCWA also provides integrated planning assistance as part of the technical support it delivers to member States, with the aim of improving efficiency, increasing impact, and enhancing transparency and accountability.
3. Technical cooperation activities are financed from the following three main sources: the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation, the United Nations Development Account,¹ and extrabudgetary resources. ESCWA aims to achieve integration between these three sources and its normative research work funded by the regular budget.
4. ESCWA considers technical cooperation activities in statistics to be among its priorities, in addition to data collection, production and dissemination, ensuring coordination, and forging regional partnerships. The technical support provided by ESCWA in the field of statistics is intended to support national and regional statistical systems in producing and disseminating quality statistics to develop evidence-based policies and monitor progress towards inclusive and sustainable development.
5. Most ESCWA technical cooperation activities are carried out in coordination with the regional offices of specialized United Nations organizations, other international organizations, and regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC-Stat), the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS), and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries. ESCWA has also signed new cooperation agreements with national and supranational agencies such as Eurostat, the National Institute for Demographic Studies in France, and the United Nations Power of Data Initiative, to combine efforts and resources on capacity-building in specific areas, especially investing in and making use of data and statistics for policymaking.
6. In line with a recommendation by United Nations Member States on increasing advocacy for technical cooperation activities and informing countries and regional organizations about the services provided by ESCWA in the statistical field, ESCWA participated in several conferences and made presentations on technical cooperation opportunities and services during the period under review. Such advocacy activities included a contribution to the twelfth session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Statistical Commission, held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on 3 and 4 October 2023. ESCWA has also been advocating for more user-producer dialogues and the new data stewardship role of official statistics. In that context, ESCWA collaborated in the organization of the [Doha Data Forum for Inclusive Data Ecosystems and Effective Decision-Making](#), held on 29 and 30 October 2023. ESCWA also collaborated with other regional partners such as the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), contributing on thematic issues in the ninth (9 and 10 November 2022) and tenth meetings (8 and 9 November 2023) of the Steering Committee of the Arab Statistics Initiative

¹ The United Nations Development Account was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1997 to fund capacity development projects in the priority areas of the United Nations Development Agenda that benefit developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

in Abu Dhabi. ESCWA has also been cooperating with the Sharjah Department of Statistics and Community Development to organize the Regional Data and Community Development Forum, which will take place on 9 and 10 October 2024 in Sharjah.

I. Advisory services

7. During the period under review, ESCWA supported member States in developing their institutional statistical architecture, modernizing their statistical systems using new technology tools, producing social, demographic, economic and multi-domain statistics, and monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. Technical cooperation activities also focused on implementing the recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its fifteenth session ([E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/7/Report](#)).

8. Table 1 presents a summary of advisory services provided by ESCWA since the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee. Table 2 provides a similar summary of national and regional webinars and workshops. These summaries show that ESCWA played a convening role for sharing experiences and lessons learned in carrying out population and housing censuses. Regarding the update of the 2008 System of National Accounts, the work of ESCWA within the Joint Task Team on Islamic Finance resulted in a guidance note on Islamic finance in national accounts. This guidance note will be piloted in two Arab countries, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and included in the manual on the Global System of National Accounts for 2025. ESCWA also developed the Automatic Price Collection Tool (APCT), an innovative solution in the field of price statistics, and provided assistance to several countries in using the tool in their national offices for price data collection.

9. Finally, ESCWA held several national bilateral technical webinars with national statistical offices to increase the quality and dissemination of national SDG data.

Table 1. Advisory services in the field of statistics since the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee

Beneficiary	Activity
Algeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Two virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (8 December 2022 and 25 January 2024).
Bahrain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Thirteen virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (2 October 2022 – 20 December 2023).
Djibouti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on undertaking the population and housing census digitally and facilitating the transfer of tablets and expertise from Egypt (December 2022 – December 2023).
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Three virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (15 February 2023–8 August 2023).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on reviewing the methodology of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (October 2023).
Iraq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Four virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (27 September 2022–28 December 2023).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bilateral meeting on implementing the standalone survey on people with disabilities, 2023 (February 2023).

Beneficiary	Activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory services on census preparations (meetings in April and June 2024).
Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division on “Data for Now” support in Jordan – indicators 11.3.1 and 11.7.1 (18 January 2024). Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Three virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (13 March 2023–10 June 2023). Technical support on the questionnaire on living conditions of persons with functional difficulties in the Koura district (October–November 2022). Technical support on the 2030 round of census planning for Jordan (October, December 2023, February and May 2024).
Kuwait	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Two virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (9 August 2023 and 24 October 2023). Technical advisory on disability data and alignment with the SDGs (January 2023).
Lebanon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory services on civil registration and vital statistics and administrative data (May–December 2024).
Libya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Two virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (20 February 2023 and 10 August 2023). Technical support on the analysis of disability, gender, and SDG indicators available in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for 2022 (September–October 2022) then feedback on results analysis for the LFS and the Household Income and Expenditure Survey for 2022 (December 2023).
Morocco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Four virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (4 October 2022 – 13 April 2023).
Oman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on subnational purchasing power parity (PPP) calculation (June 2023), and advice on the production of subnational PPPs for 11 governorates (online meeting, September 2023). Technical advice on the design of the Governorate Competitiveness Index, a strategic tool for directing investments and determining development priorities (launched in May 2024 at the Governorates Economics Forum in Muscat, Oman). Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Seven virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (6 September 2022 – 23 October 2023).
State of Palestine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. One virtual meeting was held with the national SDG team (27 September 2022).
Qatar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG

Beneficiary	Activity
	Monitor. Five virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (21 January 2023–30 November 2023).
Saudi Arabia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Five virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (5 September 2022 – 5 October 2023).
Somalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Seven virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (12 September 2022 – 4 December 2023).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical advice on carrying out the 2024 digital population and housing census of Somalia.
Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting the results of the data collection exercise in economic domains (online meeting, 7 April 2024).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical advice on improving quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. One virtual meeting was held with the national SDG team (5 October 2022).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical advice on consumer price index (CPI) data collection and processing, and the estimation of governorate and national price indices for CPI gaps in missing months in 2023 and 2024 (online meeting, 1 February 2024).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical advisory online meeting on exploring and reviewing the recommended methodology for estimating missing price data from several governorates during 2023 and 2024 using specific projections (3 April 2024).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical advisory online meeting for reviewing and discussing the estimation of the national CPI for the missing months in 2023 and 2024 using projections and estimated price data (2 July 2024).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory services on business continuity and statistics in conflict (February 2024).
Tunisia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Two virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (12 September 2023 and 10 January 2024).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-year technical follow-up mission and capacity-strengthening workshop in connection with the 2024 census in Tunisia (15 and 16 July 2023).
United Arab Emirates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Six virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (23 October 2023–27 December 2023).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory meetings on SDG metadata and calculations. Four meetings were held with the SDG team (25 March 2024, 9 May 2024, 14 May 2024 and 25 June 2024).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical support in reviewing the methodology and results of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2024 (ongoing)
Yemen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical advice on improving the quality and availability of national SDG data for enhanced national dissemination, including through the national reporting platform of the Arab SDG Monitor. Two virtual meetings were held with the national SDG team (13 October 2022 and 21 March 2023).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support on questionnaire and sampling methods of the disability survey (December 2022).

II. Workshops

10. Table 2 lists the technical cooperation workshops held to build capacity in the field of statistics since the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee.

Table 2. Workshops in the field of statistics since the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee

Beneficiary	Topic and objectives	Venue	Date
Bahrain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the Monitoring Application for Reporting on the SDGs (MARS) in Bahrain. 	Online	16 November 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity-building workshop on the implementation of technology in the development of price indices. The workshop was aimed at building capacity in developing new and innovative tools for price data collection, allowing for improved price indices and real-time insights. 	Manama, Bahrain	27–30 November 2022
Djibouti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study tour to Egypt to learn from the experience of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in implementing a digital population and housing census. 	Cairo, Egypt	12–16 March 2023
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study tour to Saudi Arabia to learn from the experience of the General Authority for Statistics in the whole cycle of census implementation, from planning to quality assurance procedures, use of various data collection methods, especially administrative records data, and use of technology and geospatial information in completing the census. 	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	28–30 April 2024
Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop on the living conditions of persons with functional difficulties in the Koura district. The workshop introduced participants to the concept of functional difficulties, data collection through the Washington Group Extended Set on Functioning, and the development of questions about the living conditions of persons with functional difficulties. It also included training in calculating indicators and analysing data. 	Amman, Jordan	14–15 December 2022
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultative meeting on modernizing national statistical legislation. 	Amman, Jordan	7 August 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National workshop on modernizing price statistics using the ESCWA Automatic Price Collection Tool (APCT). The workshop was aimed at building capacity in developing and using new and innovative tools for price data collection, allowing for improved price indices and real-time insights, specifically the APCT. 	Istanbul, Türkiye	18–22 December 2023
Kuwait	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National workshop on modernizing price statistics using the APCT. The workshop was aimed at building capacity in developing new and innovative tools for price data collection, allowing for improved price indices and real-time insights, specifically the APCT. 	Kuwait City, Kuwait	28 April–2 May 2024
Lebanon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training on the use of earth observations for SDG indicators 11.3.1 and 9.1.1 to the Central 	Beirut, Lebanon	13–15 May 2024

Beneficiary	Topic and objectives	Venue	Date
	Administration of Statistics and the Ministry of Interior – Planning Department.		
State of Palestine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National workshop on modernizing price statistics using the APCT. The workshop was aimed at building capacity in developing and using new and innovative tools for price data collection, allowing for improved price indices and real-time insights, specifically APCT. 	Amman, Jordan	24–28 June 2024
Qatar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National workshop on modernizing price statistics using the APCT. The workshop was aimed at building capacity in developing and using new and innovative tools for price data collection, allowing for improved price indices and real-time insights, specifically the APCT. 	Doha, Qatar	4–8 February 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the Monitoring Application for Reporting on the SDGs (MARS) in Qatar. 	Online	28 February 2023
Somalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange training for Somalia. 	Online	11 March 2024
Tunisia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National workshop on advancing the implementation of the harmonized consumer price index (HCPI) and classification of individual consumption by purpose (COICOP) in the Arab region. The workshop developed expertise in economic classification and inflation measurement, focusing on revising the COICOP and HCPI methodologies. It provided in-depth instructions on the HCPI template developed by ESCWA and the transition from COICOP 1999 to 2018, and introduced a new data-entry tool to streamline and improve the accuracy of price collection. 	Tunis, Tunisia	14–17 May 2024
Yemen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First national Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange training workshop. 	Online	28–30 August 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National workshop for the inclusion of Yemen in the ESCWA project for sustainable temporal and spatial price indices: building capacity in price statistics and national accounts. 	Amman, Jordan	12–16 February 2024
Subregional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution to the thirteenth working group meeting on labour statistics in Gulf Cooperation Council and a webinar with GCC-Stat on ESCWA Skills Monitor. 	Online	14 December 2023 and 24 July 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy statistics workshop with the Medstat programme. 	Online	31 January and 1 February 2024
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with the Sharjah Department of Statistics and Community Development to organize the Regional Data and Community Development Forum. 	Sharjah, United Arab Emirates	9 and 10 October 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional workshop on statistical business registers for Arab countries, in partnership with the United Nations Statistics Division and AITRS. 	Amman, Jordan	25–27 June 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-organizing an Arab Monetary Fund-World Trade Organization workshop on measuring digital trade. 	Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates	20–23 November 2023

Beneficiary	Topic and objectives	Venue	Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sixth regional workshop on the use of Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) for reporting on SDGs, in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and AITRIS. 	Amman, Jordan	5–8 June 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seventh regional workshop on the use of SDMX for reporting on SDGs, in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and AITRIS. 	Cairo, Egypt	3–5 June 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESCWA and Institut National de la Statistique training on advancing SDG indicators 16.6.2, 16.7.2 and 16.b.1. 	Online	13 December 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESCWA and International Labour Organization training on advancing SDG indicator 8.5.1. 	Online	11 December 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESCWA and Central Administration of Statistics training on advancing SDG indicators 5.5.2, 8.3.1, 8.5.2 and 8.6.1. 	Online	21 November 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional consultative meeting on modernizing national statistical legislation. 	Amman, Jordan	5 and 6 August 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arab thematic conference on agile and resilient national statistical systems. 	Amman, Jordan	13–15 June 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third regional workshop on improving disability statistics in the Arab countries. 	Muscat, Oman	16–18 September 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring SDG 1.4.2 through administrative records in the Arab region, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat). 	Online	4 July 2024
Interregional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interregional expert meeting on the measurement of South-South cooperation, organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), ESCWA and other United Nations regional commissions, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, the United Nations Statistics Division, and the Islamic Development Bank, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar. 	Doha, Qatar	4–6 June 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International webinar on monitoring economic disparities 	Online	4 April 2023

III. Projects funded by the United Nations Development Account and from extrabudgetary resources

A. Quantifying South-South cooperation to mobilize funds for the Sustainable Development Goals

11. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Statistics Division and four United Nations regional commissions, including ESCWA, jointly with other partners including the Islamic Development Bank, are implementing a United Nations Development Account project to support eight developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America in measuring the financial and non-financial modalities of South-South cooperation. A measuring framework and manual were developed to standardize measurement with a view to informing and targeting policy action for managing and mobilizing resources in connection with South-South cooperation. Pilot countries will collate data on South-South

cooperation, add it to the framework, prepare initial estimates of South-South cooperation and test the methodology for SDG indicator 17.3.1. Results will be compared to existing data on South-South cooperation or official development assistance, where available. This will give a clearer picture of the type and size of South-South cooperation in each country.

12. In the context of the project, together with UNCTAD and other implementing partners, ESCWA co-organized an interregional expert meeting on the measurement of South-South cooperation. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar and attended by more than 150 participants from more than 50 countries. It consisted of a preparatory expert meeting to carry out advance methodological and data collection work, a high-level meeting to discuss the importance of South-South cooperation for accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the role of data in related research, development, and policy agendas, and a two-day capacity-development workshop to guide pilot countries on applying the framework to enable the reporting of country-owned data to the SDG indicator on development support.

13. Under the same project, ESCWA also contributed to an online event entitled “[StatsTalk-Africa: Quantifying South-South cooperation with data of the South](#)” on 19 December 2023 and a webinar on measuring South-South cooperation and SDG indicator 17.3.1 on 21 March 2024.

B. Development account project on statistics and data – Resilient and agile national statistical systems to meet post-COVID-19 data needs to recover better

14. The United Nations Statistics Division, ESCWA and AITRS held the “[Arab Thematic Conference on Agile and Resilient National Statistical Systems](#)” in Amman, Jordan, from 13 to 15 June 2023. The conference focused on the priorities and emerging needs of statistical organizations, and was intended to help them to adapt and develop in times of crisis. Participants shared good practices and lessons learned on institutional and organizational frameworks supporting efficient and effective governance and coordination mechanisms of national statistical systems. They also discussed ways of increasing technical capacity to continue operating effectively and taking advantage of rapidly evolving data ecosystems and digital infrastructure.

C. The International Comparison Programme

15. ESCWA, as the regional executive agency for the International Comparison Programme (ICP), has invested in the knowledge and experience gained from ICP implementation to develop a number of innovative activities which have made the Arab region a pioneer in the field. ESCWA calculates PPPs annually, surpassing global ICP cycles. Since November 2022, it has held a number of regional meetings, training courses and national capacity-building activities, in addition to issuing publications, reports and technical material.

16. ESCWA has also received additional funding for an ESCWA-led project supporting the implementation of the ICP under the United Nations Development Account.

1. Meetings and capacity-building activities

17. Activities mentioned in the above table and related to the ICP include:

(a) International webinar on monitoring economic disparities: 4 April 2023. This international webinar, organized by ESCWA and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, with participation from the United Nations Statistics Division and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, focused on minimizing economic disparities by improving the comparability of price indices and developing new outputs and indicators crucial for global economic performance assessment;

(b) Webinar on price statistics: Innovation and integration of ICP within the regular price statistics work of national statistical offices in the Arab region, 5 April 2023;

(c) Regional meeting on comprehensive data manipulation and integration for the purpose of enhancing purchasing power parity computation, 2–4 May 2023, Beirut, Lebanon. This meeting focused on improving the accuracy of price data for household and non-household consumption surveys to improve the calculation of PPPs;

(d) Regional meeting on ICP and price statistics: 6–7 December 2023, Amman, Jordan. The meeting shed light on the preliminary ICP results and highlighted the role of PPPs in understanding economic disparities and addressing the impacts of price changes on poverty and food accessibility;

(e) National training workshop for Yemen on ICP activities: 12–16 February 2024, Amman, Jordan. National capacity-building workshop for Yemen on the implementation of ICP price surveys and national accounts for the production of PPPs;

(f) Two online training courses: Introducing a new ICP PPP production software with the data entry and validation tool, 23 May 2024 and 4 June 2024.

2. *Construction of a harmonized consumer price index for the Arab region*

18. National CPIs measure inflation in a single country, reflecting country-specific consumption patterns for use in domestic policymaking. The harmonized consumer price index (HCPI), on the other hand, measures inflation across the ESCWA member States. It uses a standardized methodology and a uniform basket of goods and services, facilitating cross-country inflation comparisons and informing policy decisions that affect the whole Arab region. The HCPI plays a pivotal role not only in ensuring consistency and aiding in the assessment of economic convergence among member States, but also in providing regional and subregional inflation measures. ESCWA has conducted extensive research and work in using price statistics to construct an HCPI for the Arab region by developing a standardized basket of goods and services, establishing a uniform calculation methodology, harmonizing national practices, training national staff, and performing two-step calculation: national calculation and regional aggregation.

19. The project was initially piloted in a number of member countries. The methodology has been progressively finetuned. Templates were created for the national and regional calculations, and national capacity-building was provided. National HCPI is now being calculated for 10 Arab countries, and a regional HCPI with corresponding inflation rate is being constructed for a time series starting from 2011 for the Arab region and two subregions. Work is in progress to include additional countries.

IV. Way forward

20. New challenges constantly arise in the provision of data and statistics. It is therefore necessary to review the priorities of statistical work while maintaining the role of national statistical offices as data stewards in the national context. National statistical offices in the Arab region are using innovative methods for compiling and disseminating quality data, including establishing data centres, creating data ecosystems and developing online platforms and dashboards. This has created an increased need for statistical capacity development, and for modern statistical tools and platforms to facilitate statistical work at national, regional and international level.

21. To better support member States in tackling those challenges, ESCWA has increased the scope of its partnerships with global, regional and national statistical entities, as mentioned in paragraph 5 of this document. ESCWA has also invited those entities to participate in the sessions of its Statistical Committee as a platform for dialogue on regional priorities in the field of statistics and increased coordination of technical cooperation activities.

22. The Statistical Committee is invited to provide proposals on the way forward in technical cooperation and partnerships activities.
