

TERMS OF REFERENCE

I. BACKGROUND

1. In May 2011, ESCAP adopted resolution 67/12¹ on the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The resolution emphasized the important role of civil registration for individuals to progressively realize their rights and privileges, and recognized that civil registration systems capable of generating reliable and timely vital statistics enable evidence based planning, increase efficiency in resource allocation, and contribute to improved development outcomes.

2. In December 2012, the High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, called for by ESCAP in resolution 67/12, reached consensus on the Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (henceforth referred to as “the Regional Strategic Plan”) and expressed support for its proposed governance structure, including the establishment of a regional steering and coordination group and a regional support office.²

3. The ESCAP Committee on Statistics at its third session in December 2012 subsequently endorsed the Regional Strategic Plan³ and decided to establish a Regional Steering Group to guide the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan.⁴

4. Subject to the availability of extra budgetary funds, the Committee on Statistics also decided to establish a regional support office to coordinate regional support activities and facilitate the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan. The regional support office would service and report to the Regional Steering Group. In the interim, the ESCAP secretariat shall serve as the secretariat for the Regional Steering Group (and will henceforth be referred to as “the secretariat”).

5. In May 2013, ESCAP endorsed resolution 69/15⁵ on implementing the outcomes of the High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The resolution supported the decisions of the Committee on Statistics and

¹ “The improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP resolution 67/12). Available at: <http://www.unescap.org/stat/crvs/keyresources/Res-67-12.pdf>

² “Outcome of the High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific” (E/ESCAP/69/26). Available at: http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/E69_26E.pdf

³ “Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific” (E/ESCAP/CST(3)/6/Add.1). Available at: <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/3/CST3-6EA1.pdf>

⁴ Decision 3/4 of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics found in the “Report of the Committee on Statistics on its third session” (E/ESCAP/69/13). Available at: http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/E69_13E.pdf

⁵ “Implementing the outcome of the High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific” (ESCAP resolution 69/15). Available at: <http://www.unescap.org/stat/crvs/keyresources/Res-69-15.pdf>

requested the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to convene a ministerial meeting on civil registration and vital statistics in 2014 and to establish the Regional Steering Group.

6. Importantly, the resolution stressed that multisectoral engagement is critical for effective actions to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics, and called for the active involvement of all relevant government entities, explicitly referring to entities responsible for the health, civil registration and statistical sectors.

7. In view of the urgency of initiating the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan and the limitations of ESCAP's existing intergovernmental conference structure, the resolution initially established the Regional Steering Group under the auspices of the Committee on Statistics. The resolution requested that the Regional Steering Group be tasked with considering and proposing a more appropriate governance structure that would fully facilitate the required multisectoral engagement. The proposal would be considered for adoption by the ministerial meeting on civil registration and vital statistics in 2014.

II. KEY FUNCTIONS

8. The Regional Steering Group shall:

- a. Provide strategic guidance and oversight to the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan, including supporting the preparations of the ministerial meeting on civil registration and vital statistics in 2014, as called for by ESCAP resolution 69/15;
- b. Foster coordination and integration of the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan with other civil registration and vital statistics activities in order to maximize synergies, harness complementarities and achieve greater impact at the country and regional levels;
- c. Act as a custodian for the seven guiding principles of the Regional Strategic Plan agreed by countries and development partners, namely:
 - i. Countries take the lead,
 - ii. A stepwise approach,
 - iii. Flexibility and responsiveness,
 - iv. Consistency with international legal principles,
 - v. Building on local expertise and strategies,
 - vi. Partnerships and coordination, and
 - vii. Harmonization and alignment;
- d. Recommend priorities and milestones for achieving the outcomes contained in the Regional Strategic Plan;
- e. Oversee the further elaboration of country-level activities and regional support activities contained in the Regional Strategic Plan;
- f. Make recommendations on the establishment of the regional support office proposed in the Regional Strategic Plan, including on structure, functions, funding requirements, and hosting arrangements; and
- g. As requested by ESCAP resolution 69/15, consider and propose a long-term governance structure for the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan, including for the Regional Steering Group itself.

III. MEMBERSHIP

9. The Regional Steering Group will reflect the multisectoral nature and diverse development perspectives and benefits of civil registration and vital statistics.

10. Members of the Regional Steering Group shall comprise representatives of national governments from ESCAP members and associate members, as well as representatives of development partners whose mandates include the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific, such as international organizations and agencies, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, training and research institutions, and donors.

11. The Committee on Statistics shall, assisted by the secretariat, invite the seats of government of all ESCAP members and associate members and relevant development partners⁶ to nominate appropriate representatives from the civil registration, health, statistical and other relevant sectors to join the Regional Steering Group.

12. The selection of members will be based on the following criteria:

- a. A majority of members will be representatives of national governments, with the remainder being representatives of relevant development partners; and
- b. A balanced membership of national government representatives from the civil registration, health and statistical sectors and of the five sub-regions of ESCAP.

13. In view of the existing activities that are being undertaken to improve civil registration and vital statistics in the Pacific islands under the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan developed by the Brisbane Accord Group, a representative of the Brisbane Accord Group shall be invited to be a member of the Regional Steering Group.

14. The size and composition of the Regional Steering Group shall be decided by the Committee on Statistics, and may be modified as needed to ensure that the Regional Steering Group continues to effectively and efficiently perform its key functions.

15. Regional Steering Group members shall be appointed for a period of two years. All members shall be eligible for re-appointment.

16. If an appointed Regional Steering Group member vacates a position, the remaining members shall recommend the most appropriate replacement to the Committee on Statistics, bearing in mind the need to maintain sub-regional and sectoral balance.

17. The Regional Steering Group may invite the experts for specific tasks or to participate in meetings as observers.

IV. METHODS OF WORK

18. The Regional Steering Group shall report to the Committee on Statistics.

⁶ Using, as a guide, the membership of the organizations represented on the Organizing Committee of the High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

19. Members of the Regional Steering Group shall commit to devote the time necessary for adequate discharge of their duties.

20. The work of the Regional Steering Group shall be conducted predominantly through electronic discussion and exchange of emails

21. The Regional Steering Group shall aim to meet twice a year, either in person or per video or teleconference.

22. The Regional Steering Group shall submit a written report of its activities to the Committee on Statistics at least once a year, or more frequently if requested by the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics.

23. Members of the Regional Steering Group will not be considered staff members of the United Nations and will not be entitled to the privileges and immunities accorded to staff members of the United Nations.

V. CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

24. Members of the Regional Steering Group shall elect from among them a Chair and a Vice Chair.

25. The Chair and Vice Chair will each serve for a period of two years, after which they will be eligible for re-election.

VI. SECRETARIAT

26. Pending the establishment of the regional support office proposed in the Regional Strategic Plan, the Statistics Division of the ESCAP secretariat will serve as the secretariat for the Regional Steering Group.

VII. REVISIONS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

27. Revisions to these terms of reference shall be subject to the approval of the Committee on Statistics.

VIII. SUNSET CLAUSE

28. The Regional Steering Group shall function under the current terms of reference until a long-term governance structure, as requested by ESCAP resolution 69/15, has been considered by the ministerial meeting on civil registration and vital statistics in 2014 and subsequently endorsed by ESCAP at its 71st session in 2015.
