



First Meeting of the Heads of Statistical Organisations of SAARC Member States

Kolkata, India, 26-27 May 2005

SAARC/01HSO/4

SAARC Forum for Cooperation in Statistics - a concept paper by Government of India -

Introduction

“Statistical System” plays a very critical role in understanding the status and need for appropriate “data system” for development planning. This can be better achieved through collective efforts. Thus, there is a strong need for collaborative statistical endeavour for generation of comparable data by the countries of this region. This endeavour may allow monitoring of mutually agreed socio-economic indicators for planning and policy coordination among SAARC countries.

2. International experience shows that there exists a system of cooperation in statistical activities in many regions. Euro Stat for European countries, Asean Stat for South East Asian countries are some examples. It is important that similar cooperation among SAARC Member States is necessary to promote greater harmonization, strengthen capacities, and enable collection, compilation and dissemination of quality statistics within the region. Statistical cooperation is also needed to develop common statistical concepts, definitions, classification and standards, formulation and measurement of socio-economic indicators, capacity development and the production of comparable statistical data keeping in view those existing at international levels.

3. The SAARC Member countries have generally similar socio-economic structure, systems and problems largely related to poverty, poor health conditions, low education level, to mention a few. Although Millennium Development Goals provide some uniform standard indicators for monitoring development, in reality many of those indicators do not fit in to the proper data system of SAARC Countries. In order to assist the planning process of the SAARC Member States there is a need for strong cooperation in Statistical activities.

4. SAARC Member States are to jointly work for the fulfillment of SAARC objectives. In terms of Statistical activities we all in the region have to work to produce reliable and comparable Statistics to assist the process of (a) acceleration of economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation

for a prosperous and peaceful community of SAARC nations, (b) promotion of Statistical fraternity in the region through abiding respect for relationship among countries in the region, (c) establishment of linkage with all National Statistical Offices of the region (d) holding regular exchange of views among Statistical offices in the region, and (e) annual meets of the Heads of the Statistical Organisations to formulate the action programmes of the region taking into account global as well as regional developments, needs and priorities. In view of above, there is need for development of a framework for SAARC Forum for Cooperation in Statistics (SFCS).

Objectives

5. The objectives of the SAARC Forum of Cooperation in Statistics (SFCS) are proposed: (i) to initiate statistical cooperation among National Statistical Offices of SAARC Member States; (ii) to develop and harmonise common definitions, classifications, standards and measurement of statistics to promote the production of comparable statistics and indicators in the region; (iii) to promote human resource development in the field of statistics and the technical and management capabilities of Statisticians of the Member States; (iv) to support Institutions and Organizations of SAARC Member States to enable them to become Centres of Excellence; (v) to support initiatives of Non Government Organisations (NGOs), Private and Corporate sectors in the region for furtherance of statistics; (vi) to advocate greater governmental support and commitment to the priority statistical programmes, projects and activities of the SAARC Member States; (vii) to promote improvements in the official statistics generated by the Member States; (viii) to promote adherence to the basic principles of Official Statistics developed/adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission; and (ix) to coordinate in the development of SAARC position/stand/views on statistical issues in the international fora.

Plan of Action

6. All SAARC Member States should deliberate how to work towards achieving greater cooperation in the area of statistics through programmes and activities. We provide the following ideas for your consideration and decision:

(a) Exchange of Expertise

To hold regular exchange of technical expertise among Statistical Offices and, as and when necessary with other international statistical institutions as well as statistical users concerning regional and international issues.

(b) **Collaboration on Region-Wide Projects and Activities**

To identify and collaborate on the region wide statistical projects and activities under SAARC banner with a view to producing statistics with harmonized/common concepts, definitions, standards and classification.

(c) **Capacity Building and Human Resource Development**

To develop mechanisms for training programmes and statistical skills up gradation projects to focus on all aspects of statistical administration and operations.

(d) **Other Areas of Cooperation**

To explore other areas of cooperation in the field of statistics which fall within the objectives and principles of this Forum.

7. We have to ensure that appropriate activities and projects are developed for an effective implementation of this Framework. The progress of implementation should be reviewed by the SAARC Heads of National Statistical Offices Meeting (SHSOM) at least once a year. Further it is for consideration whether to have a unit designated as SAARC-STAT within the SAARC Secretariat to provide technical and secretarial support for taking action on the decisions.
