

**The first meeting of the Technical Committee of the Arab Statistical
Initiative “ARABSTAT”**

Memorandum and Recommendations

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

11 September 2013

Memorandum
of the first meeting of the technical committee
on the Arab statistical initiative

In its capacity as the secretariat of the technical committee of the Arab Statistical Initiative: ARABSTAT, The Arab Monetary Fund organized the first meeting of the committee on 11 September 2013 in Abu Dhabi with the participation of delegations of 14 Arab country as follows: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Oman, Kuwait, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania and Yemen. A total of 24 participant representing Arab statistical offices, Ministries of Finance, Central Banks and monetary institutions took part in the meeting. the Arab and International Monetary Funds, the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics and the Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Participated as observers in the meeting.

The meeting commenced with the director of the economic and technical division at the Arab Monetary Fund, Dr. Mustapha Karra's opening speech in which he reviewed the most important elements and objectives envisaged by the Arab Statistical Initiative ARABSTAT and identified the meeting's objectives which are: discussing the draft of procedures and the draft programme of action of the first technical committee of the initiative.

During the discussion of the meeting's agenda, the discussion focused on electing a president of the technical committee among the representatives of the participant Arab countries, whereas under the committee's rules of procedures, the rotating presidency of the committee shall be among Arab countries in alphabetical order and this rule will be discussed prior to its adoption.

The members agreed on Director General of the general statistics' service in Saudi Arabia, Mr. Abdul-karim Mhana as president of the meeting.

The meeting started with the discussion of the technical Committee's rule of procedure draft where the participants exchanged opinion on the first article and on definitions. The definition of the president has been amended from "president of the committee elected of its members" to "the rotating president of the committee" because determining the election modality is mentioned in another Article of the rule of procedure. Concerning the second Article, there was a suggestion to add a clause identifying Central Statistical organization in each country as a coordinator representing its country in issues related to the initiative. It was also suggested that heads of boards and statistical offices will not be identified as members of the committee, but rather identify representatives of these boards as members of the technical committee. At the end, it was agreed not to modify or add anything to that article.

In what concerns the Third Article of the rules of procedure covering the powers and responsibilities of the Committee, members discussed clause of this article. It was proposed to add a clause concerning the estimated budget required for the implementation of the Annual plan of the initiative; however, this proposal was not approved because the Arab Monetary Fund in collaboration with other relevant institutions will cover this cost. The people assembled agreed to replace this article's clause : " identifying statistical fields in which a preparation of indicators is required with another providing for " prioritizing statistical fields that will be proposed to be developed in the Arab countries." It was also agreed to add another clause stipulating that the committee submits periodic reports on its activities to the Council of Arab Ministers of Finance. "

As far as Article Four is concerned, after the exchange of opinions among the members of the Technical Committee, the chair of the Committee decided to amend the First Clause of the Article to read as follows: "The chairmanship of the Commission will rotate between the Member countries in Alphabetical order.

With respect to Article Five of the Rules of Procedure: the Committee's meetings', it was agreed to modify the first clause stipulating that, "The Committee shall hold an annual rotating meeting, it can hold extraordinary meetings if considered necessary after consultation among the president, secretariat and members". Moreover, it was agreed to add a clause stating that "decisions shall be taken by a simple majority vote of the members participating in the meetings". As for the Sixth Article, "Secretariat of the Committee", it was agreed to repeal the clause on the management of ARABSTAT website containing Arabic statistical databases. Instead, two Clauses were added as

follows: “submitting an annual report on the activities of the initiative to the committee” and “the secretariat shall make use of the available data for ARABSTAT’s purposes.

In the Seventh Article of the Rules of Procedure, titled ‘ the observers’ , it was agreed to add the Statistical Center of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Gulfstat , the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries and SESRIC as observers in the Committee.

At the end of the discussion, the draft Rules of Procedure were approved according to the agreed upon amendments and recommendations were provided in this regard. After this, the meeting discussed "preliminary work project during the end of 2013 -2014" and then they moved to discuss the second clause of the program "Strengthening Institutional statistical capacity." In this context, and despite suggesting not to prepare a questionnaire that assesses the statistical situation in the Arab countries because many have done the same process before, there was an unanimous agreement about the importance of the preparation of this questionnaire, and shift its aim to become selecting the "priorities in the field of statistical work that needs to be provided to support the initiative of these countries."

As for the second part of this clause which concerns sending missions to the Arab countries, some participants suggested to determine the beneficiary countries. However, it was resolved that the Technical Committee shall determine the general framework of the program and its activities without determining its details, including the selection of beneficiary countries which can be decided according to the requests of the Arab countries as well as their needs of technical advice.

At the level of the third clause of the program, which is about areas of training, there has been a consensus about the importance of coordinating with the Arab Institute for Training and Statistical Research when deciding the subjects of the training programs, mainly due to the existence of a comprehensive strategy for training at the Institute. In what concerns the fifth clause of the program, the section on "adopting special strategies on data and indexes and preparing special evidence for data compilation and dissemination” was canceled.

The discussion resumed that the initial draft program of action to agree on the recommendation of approving the initiative of the action program during the period September 2013 December - 2014, according to the agreed upon amendments.

And on the selection of the Chairman of the Technical Committee of Member States for the first year, there has been an agreement on assigning the general director of the department of statistics

and information in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mr. Muhanna Abdul Karim Al-Muhanna, as the Chairman of the committee until the next annual meeting of the technical committee.

Recommendation N 1

Committee recommends the adoption of the rules of procedure for the initiative of Arab Statistics "Arbstadt" after the introduction of Amendments agreed upon by the members of the Technical Committee

Recommendation N 2

The initiative's Programme of Action

Committee recommends the adoption of initiative "Arbstadt"'s Programme of Action " for the period between September 2013 and December --2,014 after inclusion of the amendments that have been agreed upon by the members of the technical Committee.

Recommendation N 3

Date and venue of the next meeting

The Committee recommends that the next annual meeting will be held in the second half of the month of October2014 in Abu Dhabi. The secretariat of the Commission shall consult Members in this regard.

At the end of the meeting, the president of the Committee expressed his thanks and appreciation to the United Arab Emirates, and the efforts made by the Arab Monetary Fund, in its capacity as the Committee's secretariat, in preparing the meeting, and thanked the representatives of the Arab countries and observers for their attendance .