

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Committee on Statistics, Eighth Session, 23-25 August 2022.

Agenda item 1 Opening of the session.

Opening address Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director, United Nations Statistics Division, DESA, New York.

Your Excellencies, dear statistical colleagues and friends,

I am honoured and very pleased to speak to you today. I may be far, but I am certainly close in spirit as you celebrate our professional statistical community. I have been deeply impressed, how active this community has been, even during the worst days of the pandemic. We stayed connected, we engaged, we innovated, we worked with new information sources and new partners and we gave the world the data it urgently needed. We supported each other with our experiences. This is possible because we speak the same professional language, adhere to the same fundamental principles. We can proudly say that we managed the COVID crisis in professional solidarity around the globe. You, the colleagues from the Asia and Pacific Region often had to connect to global meetings very late in your day – or even in the night. And I want to use this opportunity to say a heartfelt THANK YOU.

Asia Pacific is an important region, which is why we in our global programme are deeply committed to working closely with all of you and, of course, with our dear UN colleagues in the excellent ESCAP Statistics Team. Your experts are making significant contributions to the development of global statistical standards and norms, to ensure that these norms are inspired by your countries' experiences and needs. I see that you have a rich agenda with an excellent mixture of classical statistical programmes (such as economic statistics and civil registration) and new innovative topics, such as data governance and new integrated measures, beyond GDP. Regarding this last topic, I am fully confident that our professional statistical community will rise to the challenge to define broader measures of development, sustainability and wellbeing, that are equally solid as GDP and, yet, go well beyond GDP to address the policy challenges of our times.

My office has important projects and events in your region, such as the World Data Forum 2023, the Regional Hub for Big Data and the new Center of Excellence for Geospatial Information. I invite all of you to actively participate in these endeavors. But most importantly I extend a warm personal invitation to all of you for our next Statistical Commission session in New York in March 2023, where our global statistical family will finally reunite. I am very much looking forward to seeing you there.

Thank you for your attention.