

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Statistics

Seventh session

Bangkok, 26–28 August 2020

Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Reports brought to the attention of the Committee:
report of the Bureau

**Report on the activities of the Bureau since the
sixth session of the Committee on Statistics****

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the work carried out by the Bureau since the sixth session of the Committee.

I. Introduction

1. The Committee on Statistics at its sixth session, in October 2018, elected the Bureau to perform its functions over the intersessional period until the seventh session of the Committee. The elected members of the Bureau were: Mr. Mohd Uzir Bin Mahidin of Malaysia (Chair); Mr. Ning Jizhe of China; Ms. Wah Wah Maung of Myanmar; Mr. Jadav Hosseinzadehneyestani of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Vice-Chairs); Mr. Gogita Todradze of Georgia (Member); and Ms. Aliimuamua Malaefono Taua-T Faasalaina of Samoa (Rapporteur).

2. The present document covers the activities of the Bureau during the period of October 2018 to June 2020.

II. Method of work

3. During the period under review, the Bureau held two in-person and four virtual meetings

4. At the virtual meeting on 11 December 2018, the Bureau reviewed and discussed the deliberations of the 6th Session of the Committee on Statistics in relation to the declaration, Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind and the collective vision and framework for action. The Bureau also discussed timing options for the 7th session of the Committee, a proposed work plan for 2019, and support to the United Nations Statistical Commission Inter-

* ESCAP/CST/2020/L.1.

** The present document is being issued without formal editing.

Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDG).

5. At the face-to-face meeting on 4 March 2019 in New York, the Bureau reviewed the decisions made at the sixth session of the Committee on Statistics, reviewed the agenda for the 50th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission and discussed interventions by delegates on behalf of the Asia-Pacific region for the session. The meeting was open to all members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Committee on Statistics and was attended by China; Georgia; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Japan; Malaysia; Mongolia; Myanmar; Republic of Korea; and Thailand.

6. At the virtual meeting on 22 April 2019, the Bureau provided guidance to the Secretariat on nominations received for the United Nations Statistical Commission Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, preparations for the 75th session of the ESCAP Commission, action items from previous meetings, information about the 62nd International Statistics Institute World Statistics Conference to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a symposium on big data for official statistics and a calendar of ESCAP organised meetings for 2019.

7. At the virtual meeting on 3 September 2019, the Bureau provided guidance on a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Declaration on Navigating Policy to Leave No One Behind and discussed a proposed agenda for the 7th session of the Committee on Statistics.

8. At the meeting on 2 March 2020 in New York, held in conjunction with the 51st session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, the Bureau reviewed the agenda for the 51st session of the Statistical Commission and provided guidance on the provisional agenda for the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics and the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Asia-Pacific collective vision and framework for action and Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind. This meeting was open to all members of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics and was attended by Australia, China, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation and Thailand.

9. At the virtual meeting on 15 May 2020, the Bureau discussed the modality of the 7th session of the Committee on Statistics and received updates on the procedure for new membership of the Bureau, Asia Pacific Statistics Week 2020, the Data Integration Community of Practice and possible postponement of the Second Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific to 2021.

10. Also, in May 2020, the Bureau received drafts of the five official documents for the 7th session of the Committee on Statistics for their review and comments.

11. In addition to these meetings, the Bureau discussed its work programme and provided guidance on the work of the Secretariat through teleconferencing and electronic mail.

III. Follow-up on the decisions and recommendations of the Committee at its sixth session

A. Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind

12. At its first meeting on 11 December 2018 and third meeting on 22 April 2019, the Bureau discussed preparations for endorsement of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind by the 74th session of the ESCAP Commission. The Bureau also was advised the Chair of the Committee on Statistics would be invited to present outcomes from the sixth session of the Committee at the Commission session.

13. Resolution 75/9, Implementation of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, was subsequently adopted at the 74th session of the ESCAP Commission. The resolution was sponsored by Malaysia, Bangladesh, China, Fiji, Japan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Samoa, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam co-sponsored the resolution.

14. The Chair of the Committee on Statistics attended the 74th session of the ESCAP Commission and introduced the resolution to member States.

15. The Bureau, at its fourth meeting on 3 September 2019 and fifth meeting on 2 March 2020, provided guidance on a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is presented to the present session of the Committee on Statistics at agenda item 2(c) for endorsement.

B. Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

16. In late January 2019, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division advised the current mandate for members of United Nations Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would expire on 31st May 2019 after which a few of them are expected to rotate as specified in the Terms of Reference of the two groups.

17. Regional Commissions are tasked supporting the nomination process for these global groups.

18. To ensure equitable geographic representation, the nominations have to take into account the United Nations standard regional and geopolitical groupings and membership of Regional Commissions. These have different and sometimes overlapping membership. According to the United Nations regional groupings, the ESCAP Bureau is responsible for nominating the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development members from Central Asia, Eastern Asia, South-Eastern and Southern Asia as well as Oceania. The following ESCAP member countries therefore nominate through other Regional Commissions: Armenia (Economic Commission for Europe - ECE), Azerbaijan (ECE), Georgia (ECE), Turkey (ECE), Australia (ECE),

New Zealand (ECE), the Russian Federation (ECE). While Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are both members of ECE and ESCAP, their potential membership of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are coordinated by ESCAP.

19. On 1 March 2019, the Chair of the Committee sent a letter to Chief Statisticians informing them of the process for election of new members for the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and requested their nominations. Countries can nominate for both groups, but only be members of one group. The Secretariat subsequently received several emails and calls inquiring about the work of the groups as well as the selection process. The call for nominations was also re-iterated at the open Bureau meeting held in New York on 4 March, where previous members of the groups were also requested to give updates on the work of the groups. A reminder was sent on March 22.

20. The Bureau, at its third meeting on 22 April 2019 discussed the nominations received and provided guidance to the secretariat to finalise the Asia-Pacific nominations. The nominations received presented many challenges, particularly in relation to subregional representation and enabling all member States an opportunity to contribute to these two groups. The Bureau followed the guidance for selection of members as outlined in their Terms of References.¹

21. After extensive consultations with the Bureau, member States, subregional organizations in Asia and the Pacific, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division, other Regional Commissions and with the full cooperation of the Governments of Japan and Republic of Korea, the following nominations were put forward by the Bureau to the Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

22. For the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, nine nominations for six positions were received. The recommendations put forward were Fiji (ongoing member); Afghanistan (new member); Japan (new) and Republic of Korea (new) joint-members; Kyrgyzstan (new); Malaysia (new) and Samoa (new). Nominations were also received from India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. ECE received nominations from Russian Federation and Azerbaijan.

23. For the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, seven nominations for five positions were received. The recommendations put forward were Mongolia (ongoing member), China (new member), Nepal (new), Philippines (new) and Tajikistan (new). Nominations were also received from Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Afghanistan. ECE received nominations from Georgia.

¹ [https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators s%20Terms%20of%20Reference_2017.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/Inter-Agency%20and%20Expert%20Group%20on%20Sustainable%20Development%20Goal%20Indicators%20Terms%20of%20Reference_2017.pdf) and <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/AnnexIII.pdf>.

24. Member states may wish to note the Pacific did not put forward a nomination for the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development despite extensive discussions and outreach to Pacific Island Chief Statisticians and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. The lack of nomination from the Pacific allowed for another nomination from the region to be accepted.

25. Members of Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are representatives for their respective region and area encouraged to consult with other countries in their region. Consultation is explicit in the terms of reference for Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and a recommended working method for the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Considering the lack of nomination for the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the Pacific, the extra nomination (Mongolia) was encouraged to consult other National Statistical Offices in the region, especially Pacific Islands.

26. The review process undertaken by the secretariat with the support of the Bureau considered eight factors:

(a) Terms of Reference of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(b) Geographical distribution;

(c) Principles for rotation of members in these groups as given in the Terms of Reference;

(d) Need for ensuring continuity: the co-chairs of the groups and countries leading a recognised task should continue to not have a negative effect on the work;

(e) Benefits of renewal: new representatives can bring new perspectives and new energy to the work of the groups;

(f) Planning so that not all countries rotate during the same year;

(g) Instructions from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division;

(h) Role and contributions of the countries to the work of the two groups.

27. The secretariat will engage with the Bureau to formally document processes and procedures ahead of the 2021 nomination process for both the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building.

C. Communities of practice

28. The Bureau, at its first meeting on 11 December 2018, agreed data integration, particularly integration of traditional sources with non-traditional sources (e.g., big data sources including mobile phone data, remote sensing

data), should be the immediate priority area for establishing an Asia-Pacific community of practice. The Bureau advised to pilot a community of practice with digitally connected and digitally challenged countries. The Bureau also advised continued attention to conceptual integration.

29. The Bureau subsequently at its meeting on 15 May 2020 endorsed Terms of Reference for a trial of a Data Integration Community of Practice. A report on establishment of communities of practice and findings of the trial of the Asia and the Pacific Data Integration Community of Practice is presented in ESCAP/CST/2020/INF/2.

D. Economic statistics

30. The Bureau, at its first meeting on 11 December 2018, noted the establishment of a taskforce to review the core set on economic statistics by the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and requested the review of the core set on economic statistics align with the core set to the Sustainable Development Goal indicators as much as possible.

E. Disaster-related statistics

31. The Bureau, at its first meeting on 11 December 2018, asked the secretariat to undertake outreach activities to communicate the endorsement by the Committee of the statistical contents of the Asia Pacific Disaster-related Statistical Framework. The secretariat's outreach subsequently highlighted support for the application of the Framework to produce harmonized statistics related to disasters and strengthen the evidence base for disaster risk reduction policies, as well as assist in monitoring the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

32. The Bureau further instructed the ESCAP secretariat to draft Terms of Reference for a technical working group on disaster-related statistics for discussion by the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The Terms of Reference were subsequently distributed to all members of the Committee on Statistics via email 1 May 2019 for their review and endorsed.

33. The Bureau provided support for the ESCAP secretariat to convey Recommendations 2 and 3 from the Report of the Committee on Statistics on its sixth session to the ESCAP Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction at its sixth session in August 2019 and to the United Nations Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in March 2019.

F. Every policy is connected: a tool for policy-data integration

34. The Bureau, at its first meeting on 11 December 2018 noted the Committee's endorsement of the use of the policy-data integration tool entitled "Every policy is connected" (EPIC) at the 6th session of the Committee to strengthen user-producer dialogue to ensure effective demand for, and investment in, the development of official statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The ESCAP secretariat agreed to generate demand for the "Every policy is connected" (EPIC) tool by communicating the tool in outreach materials, the United Nations Statistical Commission Report and the ESCAP Website. The Bureau also agreed to the secretariat undertaking outreach to all regional statistical initiatives of the Committee and Commission under signature of the

Chair of the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics, and this was subsequently undertaken to the Steering Committee of the Regional Programme for Population and Social Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

G. Thematic Working Group on Statistics of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism

35. Noting the Committee's decision to abolish the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific in its current form and transfer its responsibilities and functions to the Thematic Working Group on Statistics under the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, the Bureau, at its first meeting on 11 December 2018, requested the ESCAP secretariat to communicate the outcomes and concerns of development partners back to the Bureau following further deliberations of the Thematic Working Group.

H. Deliberations at the United Nations Statistical Commission

36. The Bureau, at its second meeting on 4 March 2019, reviewed the agenda for the 50th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission and highlighted the following key areas for intervention by the Bureau members: Agenda item 3(a) on data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Agenda items 3(b) and 3(c) on Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and open data; Agenda item 3(e) on regional statistical development; Agenda item 3(l) on environmental-economic accounting; Agenda item 3(m) on disaster-related statistics; and Agenda item 3(s) on working methods for the Statistical Commission.

37. The Bureau, at its fifth meeting on 2 March 2020, reviewed the agenda for the 51st Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission and highlighted the following key areas for intervention by the Bureau members: Agenda item 3(a) on the comprehensive review of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework; Agenda item 3(b) on the Friends of the Chair group on the future of economic statistics; Agenda item 3(f) on the international comparison programme.

I. World Statistics Congress

38. The Bureau, at its third meeting on 22 April 2019, noted preparations being undertaken by Malaysia to host the 62nd World Statistics Congress in August 2019 and discussed preparations for a Symposium on Data Science and Official Statistics being held in conjunction with the Congress. The Bureau encouraged the secretariat to continue promoting World Statistics Conference.

J. Preparations for the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics

39. The Bureau, at its fourth meeting on 3 September 2019, fifth meeting on 2 March 2020 and sixth meeting on 15 May 2020, provided guidance to the secretariat on preparations for the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics.

40. The Bureau asked the secretariat to consider the inclusion of special sessions at the 7th session and proposed the following topics: accounts, civil registration and vital statistics, big data, Sustainable Development Goals, agriculture and rural statistics including food security, and human resource planning for statistical leadership and management. After further consideration, the Bureau asked the secretariat to give special attention to three topics: big data, accounts, and human resource management.

41. The Bureau positively supported the introduction of the three topics using seminar sessions and asked the secretariat to prepare session concept notes, identify keynote speakers as undertake country outreach to set expectations for country engagement during the sessions. Draft papers for these sessions were shared with the Bureau for review in May 2020.

42. The Bureau also agreed to discuss a monitoring framework for the declaration, Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, at the 7th session of the Committee. The draft monitoring paper contained in ESCAP/CST/2020/CRP.1 and the baseline analysis in ESCAP/CST/2020/1 were shared with the Bureau for their review in May 2020.

43. Due to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), it was agreed by all Bureau members to move the 7th Committee on Statistics to a virtual meeting for the session 26-28th August. It was also agreed to endorse papers by electronic consultation beforehand and hold a series of webinars prior to the session.

44. The Secretariat acted on advice from Bureau members to include COVID-19 in the panel discussions during the 7th session and/or webinars prior to the 7th session. The Bureau requested to hold webinars on the topics of survey operations and rapid-response COVID-19 assessment surveys, which were held in June 2020.

IV. Meetings of the Bureau since the sixth session of the Committee on Statistics

<i>Date</i>	<i>Venue</i>
11 December 2018	Virtual
4 March 2019	New York City
22 April 2019	Virtual
3 September 2019	Virtual
2 March 2020	New York City
15 May 2020	Virtual