



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Statistics**Eighth session**

Bangkok and online, 23–25 August 2022

Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

**Follow-up on decisions made at the seventh session of the
Committee on Statistics****Report on progress with regard to decisions made at the
seventh session of the Committee on Statistics****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document contains a summary of the progress made in the implementation of the decisions adopted by the Committee on Statistics at its seventh session. The Committee may wish to review the progress made and provide guidance for the effective implementation of past decisions.

I. Introduction

1. At its seventh session, held from 26 to 28 August 2020, the Committee on Statistics adopted the decisions set out below.

**II. Status of implementation of the decisions adopted by the
Committee at its seventh session****A. Decision 1**

2. By its decision 1, the Committee endorsed the draft monitoring and evaluation framework for the document entitled “Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community” and the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, subject to the amendments suggested by member States and final review and approval by the Committee at its seventh session.

3. The Bureau of the Committee, with the support of the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), discussed the amendments proposed by the Committee at its meetings on

* ESCAP/CST/2022/L.1/Rev.1.

13 November 2020 and 15 June 2021. The Bureau recommended accepting all those suggestions arising from the seventh session of the Committee that were aligned with the aim of minimizing the reporting burden on States and that were feasible within the existing resources of the secretariat. Pursuant to the recommendation of the Bureau, the secretariat incorporated the proposed amendments into the draft monitoring and evaluation framework for the collective vision and framework for action and the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind in consultation with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, the custodian of several of the indicators in the framework. As decided by the Bureau at its meeting on 15 June 2021, the secretariat circulated the amended framework to all member States on 5 October 2021. Three members of the Committee provided feedback on the revised framework. The final text of the framework was shared with all members and associate members of the Committee on 4 May 2022 and issued as a conference room paper.¹

B. Decision 2

4. By its decision 2, the Committee decided to advance the mainstreaming of gender in its work. It requested the Bureau to propose, in consultation with the secretariat and development partners, draft recommendations to that end for consideration by the Committee, while bearing in mind the need to stay within existing regular budget resources.

5. At its meeting on 13 November 2020, the Bureau discussed and agreed on the following three actions to be presented to the Committee:

(a) To identify gender-relevant priority action areas across sectors/thematic areas of work of the Committee, especially in respect of statistics on disasters and the environment, statistics on the economy and civil registration and vital statistics;

(b) To identify entry points and take action with a view to mainstreaming gender in statistical activities, including in normative and methodological work, in analytical work, in data collection and compilation activities and in efforts to communicate data;

(c) To ensure that all dialogues led and facilitated by the Statistics Division of ESCAP are gender-responsive, involve gender-relevant actors for the sector concerned, including ministries responsible for women, health, education, social security and human rights, and seek to achieve gender balance among participants.

6. In partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the secretariat has developed a set of e-learning modules on using gender data for analysis, communications and policymaking. The e-learning modules are targeted at national statistical offices, ministries, the media, civil society organizations and national research agencies that either provide or use gender data for research, policy formulation or advocacy. While the development of these modules started prior to the seventh session of the Committee, the modules are relevant from a gender-mainstreaming perspective, in line with decision 2.

7. At the Second Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, held from 16 to 19 November 2021, a session was organized to discuss the implementation of gender-sensitive civil

¹ ESCAP/CST/2020/CRP.1/Rev.1.

registration and vital statistics systems through a life-cycle approach. Participants in the Ministerial Conference acknowledged the importance of implementing gender-sensitive civil registration systems and discussed existing gender gaps in civil registration and vital statistics data and methods for closing those gaps. National civil registration policies and laws should not discriminate on the basis of gender and vital statistics based on civil registration records should be disaggregated by sex in order to better inform and enable policymakers to address gender gaps. Furthermore, participants in the Ministerial Conference noted the importance of prioritizing the development of marriage and divorce registration as part of national civil registration and vital statistics strategies to prevent child marriage.

8. ESCAP has continued to promote gender equality and the human rights of women and girls by enhancing gender mainstreaming efforts and promoting the full implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. To ensure that the projects being implemented by the ESCAP Statistics Division are gender-sensitive and in line with the ESCAP gender equality policy, all project proposals are assigned a gender equality marker, in collaboration with gender specialists at ESCAP. Since January 2021, gender equality markers have been applied to all new projects and deliverables. The Statistics Division aims for an increasing number of projects to be assigned gender equality markers, reflecting that they contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition, in order to strengthen staff skills in this area, the secretariat has organized workshops on how to mainstream gender in statistics work and projects.

9. The secretariat also aims to achieve gender balance among speakers and participants at events. In 2021, 45 per cent of all participants in events organized by the secretariat identified as female. For the Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe sessions in 2021, an equal number of participants identified as male and female.

C. Decision 3

10. By its decision 3, the Committee decided to feature accounting for integrated statistics and analysis in its future work with an emphasis on sharing country research and experiences and facilitating the provision of technical assistance. It requested the Bureau to propose, in consultation with the secretariat, draft recommendations to that end for consideration by the Committee, while bearing in mind the need to stay within existing regular budget resources.

11. At its meeting on 13 November 2020, the Bureau discussed the implementation of decision 3 and recommended that efforts be made to facilitate knowledge-sharing on economic accounting, support training on labour accounts among national statistical offices and provide technical support on environmental-economic and ecosystem accounting.

Economic accounting and labour accounts

12. Regarding economic accounting, the secretariat contributed to the review of guidance notes on the update to the System of National Accounts and the balance of payments by offering suggestions on proposed changes through meetings of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts. To facilitate knowledge-sharing, the secretariat organized various online events on the digital economy, big data for price statistics, input-output tables for policymaking, the update to the System of National Accounts and tourism statistics. This was part of the implementation of the work programme of the

Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, as agreed by the Steering Group for the Regional Programme. In collaboration with the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the secretariat organized training on labour accounts.

Environmental-economic and ecosystem accounting

13. The secretariat developed and supported the application of tools and guidance to implement the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. These included step-by-step instructions on the use of software such as the open-source Quantum Geographic Information System (QGIS) and the statistical software R to produce maps and matrices tracking changes in land cover, to assess the expansion of artificial surfaces and to develop maps to visualize populations' exposure to hazards.

14. The secretariat provided technical assistance for the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, including for waste and water accounts, in Bhutan, Maldives and Mongolia. Training and advice on the integration of geospatial and statistical data for land accounting in Central Asia were provided in the framework of a project funded by the Russian Federation.

15. Technical assistance was also provided to promote progress in the implementation of ocean account pilot projects in Palau and Samoa, and the secretariat supported ocean accounting in several other countries through its continued engagement with the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership. In partnership with the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, and as requested by the Statistical Commission,² the secretariat established a working group on ocean accounting to ensure that lessons learned and experiences gained from pilot activities were fed into global guidance.³ The working group, chaired by Australia, began its work in earnest early in 2022.

Accounting for integrated statistics on disaster risk reduction

16. The secretariat is collaborating with several States to make progress in environmental and economic accounting for integrated statistics on disaster risk reduction. This is done through the technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific, established by the Committee, and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics, established by the Statistical Commission. Within these groups, research findings and knowledge are exchanged on topics such as disaster risk reduction expenditure satellite accounts and the measurement of economic, environmental and ecosystem-related losses resulting from disasters. The focus is on aligning concepts, boundaries and classifications to existing standards such as those of the System of National Accounts, the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. Efforts are being made to develop new global implementation guidance that will also include recommendations on the integration of spatially referenced information on the environment, the economy and the population; the resulting statistics will then be of use for the development of risk-informed policy.

² See Statistical Commission decision 52/108.

³ For more information on the working group, see <https://seea.un.org/events/experimental-ocean-accounts-seea-ocean>.

D. Decision 4

17. By its decision 4, the Committee decided to feature big data for official statistics in its future work with an emphasis on sharing country research, experiences and good practices and facilitating capacity-building. It requested the Bureau to propose, in consultation with the secretariat, draft recommendations to that end for consideration by the Committee, while bearing in mind the need to stay within existing regular budget resources.

18. At its meeting on 13 November 2020, the Bureau expressed great interest in the issue of big data and highlighted the need for States to strengthen their national statistical systems in that area. The Bureau recommended that, in implementing decision 4, the secretariat should take the following actions:

(a) Facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information on experiences of national statistical offices experimenting with and/or using big data for statistics, for example by holding Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe sessions, briefings and international forums and by documenting country experiences;

(b) Support training activities for national statistical offices on the use of new data sources, particularly focusing on the institutional set-up, i.e. on legal frameworks and data-sharing, among other aspects;

(c) Develop tools for the integration of statistical and big data sources, for example through the integration of statistical and geospatial information and satellite data and the development of guidance materials in support of and complementing guidance from the Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics and the associated task teams.

19. In response to the request to share knowledge and information on experiences, the secretariat has published several papers on the use of big data for official statistics within multiple statistical domains, including economic statistics, population and social statistics, environment and agriculture statistics, and for the Sustainable Development Goals.⁴ Several Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe sessions have also showcased national experiences using big data for official statistics.

20. The tourism industry and its supporting sectors have been heavily affected by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic worldwide. In September 2021, the secretariat organized an Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe⁵ session to discuss the interim results of a study by ESCAP that investigated the use of alternative data sources for tourism statistics during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, Maldives and Thailand. The discussions demonstrated the potential of web-scraped data and satellite and geospatial data for producing tourism statistics. Such data show similar trends as the official tourism statistics calculated using traditional data sources (surveys and customs forms). They have the potential to provide rapid estimates of change for immediate use by Governments and others.

⁴ ESCAP, “Big data for economic statistics”, Stats Brief, No. 28 (March 2021); ESCAP, “Big data for population and social statistics, Stats Brief, No. 29 (April 2021); Irina Bernal and others, “Big data for environment and agriculture statistics”, Statistics Division Working Paper Series, No. SD/WP/13/April 2021 (Bangkok, ESCAP, 2021); and Gemma Van Halderen and others, “Big data for the SDGs”, Statistics Division Working Paper Series, No. SD/WP/12/January 2021 (Bangkok, ESCAP, 2021).

⁵ See www.unescap.org/events/2021/asia-pacific-stats-cafe-series-alternative-tourism-indicators.

21. Additionally, the secretariat supported the task team on big data and the Sustainable Development Goals in organizing a side event at the fifty-second session of the Statistical Commission to highlight country experiences using big data to make progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

22. The secretariat has engaged with global groups that promote the management of geospatial information and the integration of statistical and geospatial data. The secretariat is represented on the Committee of Experts on Global and Geospatial Information Management and serves the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information. Through its membership in these groups, the secretariat exchanges knowledge and experience on the geospatial work being done.

23. The secretariat has supported training activities for national statistical offices in different formats, including an e-learning course on machine learning for official statistics and Sustainable Development Goal indicators, held in November and December 2021 and organized by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific.

24. An expert group meeting comprising four sessions – two Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe sessions and two three-hour expert discussions – was held in August and September 2021.⁶ The expert group meeting focused on two topics: big data governance and big data partnership models. Under the first topic, participants explored governance issues related to the use of big data for official statistics, including privacy, ethics, legislation and coordination, and how the role of national statistical offices in government-wide digital strategies, national data infrastructure and data-sharing exercises could be leveraged so as to expand the uptake of big data in statistical operations. Under the second topic, participants explored different big data partnership models, discussed cooperation with the private sector and touched upon data privacy issues, necessary legal adjustments to accessing and using big data for official statistics and win-win models for data exchange.

25. The secretariat has collaborated with ESCAP members and provided technical assistance on the use of satellite data for specific country needs. The secretariat has provided technical assistance to Fiji on using satellite data to develop experimental land cover accounts. Technical assistance has also been provided to Palau and Samoa on the development of pilot ocean accounts.

26. The secretariat has developed instructional material to support the use of big data and alternative data sources for official statistics. These guides show how to process satellite data to produce maps and statistical tables, using software programs such as QGIS and R, including RStudio. The guides highlight features of geospatially enabled programs and provide details of different types of open-source data that may be relevant to users' needs. The main objective of the guides is to enable users to develop statistics on topics where geospatial data is useful. To date, the guides have shown how to map land cover changes, assess the expansion of artificial surfaces and visualize populations' exposure to hazards. The techniques shown can be applied to other areas of work. The usefulness of the guides has been highlighted at workshops, seminars and capacity-building events.

⁶ ESCAP, "Report of the expert group meeting on the uses of big data for official statistics: data governance and partnership models" (Bangkok, 2021).

E. Decision 5

27. By its decision 5, the Committee decided that the strengthening of national statistical offices, including the development of training and train-the-trainer programmes to address skill gaps in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, should be among the priorities of the Committee. It requested the Bureau to propose, in consultation with the secretariat and relevant development partners, draft recommendations to that end for consideration by the Committee, while bearing in mind the need to stay within existing regular budget resources.

28. The Bureau, in consultation with the secretariat, recommended that the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific organize management seminars for the heads of national statistical offices in Asia and the Pacific in 2020 and 2021. It also recommended that a programme be developed to train trainers on economic statistics and gender statistics.

29. The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific and the Statistics Division of ESCAP, together with the Statistics Division and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, held the fifteenth Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific on 3 and 4 December 2020 on the theme “National statistical systems: responding to the COVID-19 crisis and building better for the future”. Participants shared their views on approaches and methodologies for building statistical capacity both during crises and as part of the regular production of statistics, including with a view to monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals even in times of crisis.

30. ESCAP held the sixteenth Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific on 30 November and 1 December 2021 on the theme “Transforming institutions is transforming people”. Participants identified good practices of leadership and future steps that should be taken to lead agile, resilient and responsible human resources management.

31. ESCAP organized a training-of-trainers session on economic statistics in October 2020 and a training-of-trainers session, in four parts, on gender statistics for monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with UN-Women, in May and June 2021.

III. Issues for consideration by the Committee

32. The Committee is invited to review the progress made in the implementation of the decisions it adopted at its seventh session and provide guidance for their effective implementation.