

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

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Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Emerging issues: measuring progress beyond gross domestic product**From gross domestic product to well-being and sustainability****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The Bureau of the Committee on Statistics has identified measuring progress beyond gross domestic product (GDP) as an emerging priority issue for the region. The present document contains information on selected international and national efforts to develop and use progress measures that go beyond GDP.

Recognizing the shortcomings of GDP to capture progress on well-being or sustainability goals, such as those related to climate change, the document contains reflections on the role of national statistical systems in producing complementary statistics and promoting their uptake for evidence-informed policy.

Bearing in mind the linkages between progress measures beyond GDP and data governance, which was also identified by the Bureau as an emerging priority issue, the document contains an outline of opportunities for regional action to increase production and use of complementary progress measures.

The Committee may wish to take note of the document and discuss the role of national statistical offices in the development, production and use of broader progress measures. Members of the Committee may wish to share their country's experience with broader progress measures. The Committee is invited to consider and express its views on each of the opportunities for further regional action outlined in the document, as well as how the Asia-Pacific statistical community may contribute to shaping and implementing related global initiatives.

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

I. Introduction

1. The demand for data and statistics on policy and development priorities continues to grow, spurred by a steadily better informed and educated population, information technology and data developments, and evolving interest and demand from decision-makers and electorates to use evidence to shape policy. Global agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the Convention on Biological Diversity, with their focus on developing monitoring frameworks, have created a complementary pull effect that has further increased the demand for statistics and well-functioning national data coordination and quality assurance.

2. These developments are positive but challenging for national statistical offices and national statistical systems. Statistical services and products are increasingly expected to be of direct use in a policy setting or monitoring context. Development priorities, such as climate change, disaster risk reduction or biodiversity protection, fall beside the traditional domains of economic, social, population and environment statistics.

3. The need for multi-domain statistics and broader measures was recognized in the formulation of the 2030 Agenda, including target 17.19 to build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product (GDP). Several global and regional initiatives and examples of broader progress measures are described in chapter II of the present document.

A. Our Common Agenda

4. Six years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, in the report entitled “Our Common Agenda”, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of target 17.19 and noted a glaring blind spot in how economic prosperity and progress are measured. Measuring GDP provides important information on economic activity and is widely used by policymakers to inform decisions ranging from investment choices to interest rate setting and stimulus planning. While GDP has become widely used for assessing economic output within and among countries, the limitations of GDP have become increasingly apparent over the past several decades. The fact that GDP has its basis in the System of National Accounts provides a consistent approach for tracking economic activity and income flows; however, GDP leaves many things out and does not reflect broader notions of sustainability and well-being.¹

5. Depletion of natural resources is one example. Timber production increases income and therefore GDP; however, unsustainable forest harvesting results in both a decrease in the standing stock of the forest and a loss of habitat that supports biodiversity and other non-timber benefits. This can result in fewer timber and non-timber benefits for future generations, thereby causing challenges for sustainability. A broader measure that accounts for this change in stock and habitat would provide more information than GDP does and would support more informed management of environmental and economic resources that reflects well-being and sustainability concerns. Similarly, while hours worked may lead to higher economic activity (and GDP), the consequences of those hours on individual and family well-being are not tracked in GDP or its related measures.

¹ A/75/982.

6. In his report, the Secretary-General also highlighted distributional concerns as another area where GDP falls short. While GDP effectively describes national economic flows, it does not address how those flows are distributed as income across society. For example, climate change-induced natural disasters are often followed by increased GDP owing to reconstruction efforts that generate economic activity during periods of extreme hardship for affected populations. High average rates of GDP growth and economic output do not necessarily mean that everyone is benefiting equally from that GDP growth. Identifying those populations that are not sharing in the income flows can assist in the design of policies that decrease income inequality within countries. By decreasing income inequality, Governments may be able to address vulnerabilities and advance towards broader well-being and sustainability objectives.

7. Spurred by the call of the Secretary-General in “Our Common Agenda” to accelerate broader measures of progress and noting that Member States had shown significant interest and support for measures beyond GDP, in late 2021 the High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination initiated efforts to pull together the best thinking within the United Nations system in support of this work.² The initiative includes the following workstreams: the use of GDP (led by the United Nations Development Programme); improvements to GDP (led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs); and complements to GDP (led by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development). The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has been an active participant in this work and prepared a document and organized a side event at the seventy-eighth session of the Commission in May 2022 to support deliberations and showcase work by countries to move beyond GDP and discuss future initiatives.³ Country experiences shared at the event are described in chapter III of the present document.

B. Statistics development in support of multidimensional progress measures

8. On several occasions the Committee on Statistics has pointed to the importance of going beyond or across the traditional statistical domains to produce statistics that integrate different development dimensions. The two current framework agreements pertaining to statistics development in Asia and the Pacific are 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”⁴ and the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind.⁵ In these instruments, the issue is addressed from two perspectives: the first stresses the need for integration of statistical business processes from conceptual and methodological development to data compilation, collection, processing, documentation and dissemination; the second emphasizes a whole-of-government approach and the need to intensify data-policy dialogues to ensure fit-for-use statistics and fit-for-monitoring policies. At its seventh session, in 2020, the Committee highlighted that gender often suffers from a domain-

² See CEB/2021/6/Add.1.

³ ESCAP/78/27.

⁴ E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1.

⁵ ESCAP/75/4/Add.1.

focused approach to statistics production and decided to strengthen the incorporation of gender in its future work.⁶

9. At its meetings in 2021 and 2022, the Bureau of the Committee considered statistics development and challenges vis-a-vis the two framework agreements and identified measuring progress beyond GDP as one of two emerging priority issues. It therefore suggested the topic be discussed by the Committee at its eighth session, in 2022, to share experiences, practices and plans among members of the Committee and consider potential regional action going forward. The present document was prepared to facilitate the discussion. The document contains selected global, regional and national initiatives to measure progress beyond GDP and an outline of opportunities for regional action which may complement, accelerate or otherwise add value to global or national efforts.

II. Global and regional initiatives

10. Multiple international efforts have been completed or are under way to develop or adjust progress measures. The efforts are grouped in three categories: (a) measurement frameworks underpinning globally agreed development agendas; (b) accounting initiatives; and (c) well-being or sustainability measures that have gained some prominence and traction. The summary in the present document is not exhaustive; rather, the initiatives were selected on the basis of their relevance to the collective vision and framework for action and the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind and the development priorities of the region highlighted by the Commission. Several of the selected efforts have yet to be mainstreamed into national statistical systems or decision-making processes.

A. Globally agreed development agendas

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

11. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals capture social, economic, environmental and governance concerns that go beyond GDP. The Goals were introduced through the 2030 Agenda in 2015 and are the follow-on to the Millennium Development Goals. Multiple targets within the Goals incorporate the broader concerns associated with sustainability and well-being, such as ending hunger, ensuring fair and safe employment and protecting natural ecosystems on land and water. A global monitoring framework with more than 200 indicators has been agreed by the Statistical Commission, however Governments set their own national targets. Progress on the Goals has been mixed. As of the latest progress report, for example, the Asia-Pacific region will not achieve any of the 17 Goals by 2030 without significant acceleration of progress.⁷

Paris Agreement

12. As with the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement was endorsed in 2015. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2°C, and preferably to below 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels. To achieve this long-term temperature goal, countries aim to reach the global peak of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible to achieve a climate neutral world by mid-century. While the

⁶ See ESCAP/CST/2020/6.

⁷ *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2022: Widening Disparities Amid COVID-19* (United Nations publication, 2022).

Agreement is not underpinned by a common monitoring framework, each Government is expected to submit a national climate action plan, known as the nationally determined contribution. The plan communicates actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement also established the enhanced transparency framework under which countries will report progress in climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. The information gathered will feed into a global stocktaking of collective progress towards long-term climate goals. The enhanced transparency framework will start in 2024 and the statistical community has taken preparatory action through a wide range of activities.

13. The Statistical Commission, at its fifty-third session, adopted a global set of climate change statistics and indicators to be used by countries when preparing their own set of related statistics and indicators. The 2022 spring meetings of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century focused entirely on data ecosystems for climate action. The Economic Commission for Europe holds an annual expert forum for producers and users of climate change-related statistics, and it has established a new task force on the role of national statistical offices in achieving national climate objectives that has operated within the Conference of European Statisticians since early 2022. In 2021 and 2022 the European Free Trade Association and the Economic Commission for Europe, in collaboration with ESCAP, organized a series of webinars on climate change-related statistics. ESCAP partnered with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to hold a webinar on embedding climate reporting in national statistics in September 2021, delivered an e-learning course in early 2022 on compiling climate change indicators: an accounting approach, and held a session of the Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe series in June 2022 on using the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for climate change.

14. Several national statistical offices from the Asia-Pacific region contributed to the global and regional events listed above and others participated. This points to a large and growing interest in progress measures of relevance to climate change and to a possible need for a regular forum for knowledge sharing and capacity strengthening on climate change-related statistics.

Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

15. Biodiversity losses have been a key national and international concern given the impacts of economic development on habitats and the climate-related pressures on species and their habitats. The Aichi Biodiversity Targets are a set of 20 targets developed to demonstrate progress by 2020. Several of these targets included specific quantitative environmental objectives for achievement (e.g. halving the rate of loss of natural habitats). Unfortunately, on most of the targets little to no progress was made and on several, trends headed in the wrong direction. The follow-up to the Aichi Targets, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is under negotiation and will be finalized during the second part of the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will be held during the second half of 2022. The draft post-2020 framework includes milestones to be attained by 2030, such as an objective concerning the area, connectivity and integrity of natural systems, and an objective to halve or reverse the extinction rate, that aim to assess the broader environmental sustainability impacts that may be associated with economic development.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

16. The Sendai Framework spans the same time frame as the 2030 Agenda, and its monitoring framework has been developed to be consistent with relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators. Seven global targets spanning disaster mortality, affected people, economic loss, damage and interruption to infrastructure and services, planning, cooperation and access to information are monitored using 38 main indicators.

17. The statistical community works closely with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to improve disaster-related statistics for monitoring the Sendai Framework. For example, the first ever framework for disaster-related statistics was developed by an ESCAP expert group and endorsed by the Committee in 2018, the technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific is contributing to capacity development in several regions, ESCAP has developed and rolled out e-learning modules, and the global Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics has formulated global guidance on disaster-related statistics based on earlier regional efforts, especially those of ESCAP and the Economic Commission for Europe.⁸ Given the close link between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, the advances in disaster-related statistics are currently being leveraged for emerging work on climate change-related statistics.

B. Measurement and accounting initiatives

Global sustainability accounting

18. An ESCAP working paper from May 2022 on measures beyond GDP⁹ contains a description of global sustainability accounting and an introduction to the sustainability accounting ledger – a conceptual framework that encompasses environmental and human development dimensions in an effort to strike a balance between the two. In the terminology of the 2030 Agenda, it attaches equal weight to people and planet. The economy is a human-invented instrument, an intermediary of instrumental rather than intrinsic value. The economy can support human and ecosystem well-being but has no value of its own. The ledger would track human and ecosystem well-being by accounting for ecosystem services and disservices to human well-being, and human services and disservices to ecosystems, over time.

19. While this work is at an early, conceptual stage, it has several attractive features that could generate momentum for the further development and piloting of the sustainability accounting ledger. Balancing human and ecosystem well-being has the potential to spur inclusive rather than divisive debates between anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric views, its conceptual simplicity may lead to a commonly agreed measure which could compete with GDP in popularity and use, and the accountability ledger could function as a typology and illustration of the Sustainable Development Goals and progress towards them.

⁸ See ESCAP/CST/2022/INF/4.

⁹ Michael Bordt and Marc Saner, “Beyond GDP: the idea of global sustainability accounting”, Statistics Division Working Paper Series, No. SD/WP/14/May2022 (Bangkok, ESCAP, 2022).

Environmental-economic accounting

20. Environmental-economic accounting aims to develop consistent accounting tables that link economic statistics and indicators from System of National Accounts with environmental information on status and trends of individual environmental assets and ecosystems. Two standards currently exist within the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting: the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Central Framework has a focus on individual environmental assets (e.g. land, minerals, carbon, energy and water); and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting-Ecosystem Accounting has a focus on spatial ecosystem assets (e.g. coral reefs, mangrove forests and rainforests) and their associated ecosystem services and benefits.¹⁰ The two standards complement each other and form the basis for understanding both trends in the stocks of individual/ecosystem assets and changes in the flows from the environment to the economy during the selected accounting period.

Ocean accounting

21. The Global Ocean Accounts Partnership was established in 2019 as a global, multi-stakeholder partnership to enable countries and other stakeholders to go beyond GDP to measure and manage progress towards ocean sustainable development.¹¹ Co-chaired by ESCAP and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the partnership brings together Governments, international organizations and research institutions to build a global community of practice for ocean accounting.

22. The support Global Ocean Accounts Partnership provides to countries emphasizes policy relevance and use while ensuring consistency with relevant statistical standards, including the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the System of National Accounts. The partnership is a founding member of a new working group that will draft a methodological document for ocean accounting. The group was established by the Statistical Commission and co-chaired by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

Revision of the System of National Accounts

23. Since the first national accounts standard was released in 1953, the System of National Accounts has been through a series of revisions and updates. Currently, the 2008 version is under review with the aim of a revision being approved in 2025. Although the System of National Accounts is the standard upon which measures of GDP are generated, mention of the revision process is included in the present document because it includes several issues of relevance to well-being and sustainability that arguably enable future inclusion of the System of National Accounts among the initiatives that go beyond GDP. Well-being and sustainability issues covered in the revision process include distribution of household income, consumption, saving and wealth, education and human capital, labour and productivity, health and social conditions, unpaid household activities and environmental-economic accounting (including the valuation and delineation of natural resources, accounting for depletion, losses and accounting for ecosystems).

¹⁰ See <https://seea.un.org/>.

¹¹ See www.oceanaccounts.org/.

Network of Economic Statisticians

24. The Network of Economic Statisticians was established by the Statistical Commission in 2021 with the objective of promoting knowledge sharing to identify and leverage good practices, facilitating global partnerships, and enabling experimentation and testing of inclusive working methods. The Network is co-chaired by Canada and Maldives. From March to May 2022 the Network held six meetings of the so-called “beyond GDP sprint”, covering modern capital (intangible capital, human capital, natural capital); distributional accounts; well-being measures; sociodemographic disaggregation of national accounts; multidimensional dashboards; and capability, wealth, and equivalent income approaches. Presentations and other documentation from the meetings make up a diverse and comprehensive knowledge resource for anyone interested in broader measures of progress.¹²

C. Well-being or sustainability measures

Human development index

25. The human development index developed in the 1990s was an effort to better understand the human elements associated with economic development and to move beyond the usual GDP focus on economic activity as a contributor to economic development. The index aggregates indicators (e.g. life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling and gross national income per capita at purchasing power parity) across three dimensions (namely, long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living) to arrive at a composite index that is used to compare countries. An inequality-adjusted human development index has also been developed, which aims to adjust for inequalities in education, health and income. Inequality, if present, leads to decreases in the human development index score. The human development index is reported regularly by the United Nations Development Programme. In the most recent report, the index features as one of the six indicators to measure human development in the Anthropocene.¹³

Inclusive Wealth Index

26. The Inclusive Wealth Index aims to take a broader view than GDP by focusing on multiple capital stocks: physical, natural and human. In this way, the Index moves beyond the income-focused approach of GDP in assessing national wealth. Index calculations and results are reported by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the *Inclusive Wealth Report*.¹⁴ In the most recent *Report*, from 2018, diverging trends of inclusive wealth and GDP were highlighted: inclusive wealth in most countries (135 of 140 analysed) was higher in 2014 compared to the level in 1990 and the average global growth rate was 1.8 per cent per year. However, during the same period the global GDP growth per year was 3.4 per cent, which is close to twofold the rate of annual growth in inclusive wealth.

¹² Additional information is available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/groups/NetEconStat/>.

¹³ Additional information is available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/dashboard-human-development-anthropocene>.

¹⁴ UNEP, *Inclusive Wealth Report 2018* (Nairobi, 2018).

Better Life Index

27. The Better Life Index, developed and supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) compares countries (mainly OECD members) on the basis of a set of indicators grouped in 11 categories. These categories are housing, income, jobs, community, education, environment, civic engagement, health, life satisfaction, safety and work-life balance. The most recent report of the Index was published in 2020.¹⁵ Indicators within the categories include air pollution and water quality, voter turnout, labour market insecurity and housing expenditure. The Better Life Index interface allows users to create their own version of country comparisons by assigning priorities across the 11 categories.

III. National initiatives

28. Several ESCAP member States are moving beyond GDP, aiming for a comprehensive understanding of well-being and sustainability to underpin policy development. In most cases, efforts are driven by the national planning ministry, with national statistical offices often taking a lead role as measurement developer and data coordinator. The journey is not without challenges and common constraints include the following: the integration and use of well-being and sustainability measures in policy development; implementation and monitoring; conceptually integrating subjective elements of well-being; and strengthening the involvement of the public in defining and using the measures. Nevertheless, the momentum to continue the journey is strong, fuelled by demands from the public and a common understanding that moving beyond GDP is not anti-GDP but rather the intention is to capture economics done well by adding dimensions of well-being and sustainability. Finally, measures of progress need to address policy priorities to be used and sustained; for national statistical offices this translates into the necessity of ensuring measurement development efforts are driven and directed by user demands.

29. The information in the present section is sourced from available literature and from presentations and discussions at the side event entitled “From GDP to well-being and sustainability: means and measures”, held in May 2022 during the seventy-eighth session of the Commission.¹⁶ The information is not exhaustive; additional efforts may be under consideration or development in the following countries and in other countries.

Australia

30. In Australia, several initiatives have aimed to broaden development progress measures. One such effort by the Australian Bureau of Statistics was the “Measures of Australia’s Progress” programme which sought to capture progress in four categories (society, economy, environment and governance). The measure included close relationships, jobs, healthy natural environments, and civic participation. The most recent programme dashboard was published

¹⁵ OECD, *How’s Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being* (Paris, 2020). The Better Life Index, available at www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/11111511111 (accessed on 12 June 2022).

¹⁶ Additional information is available at www.unescap.org/events/2022/side-event-78th-session-commission-gdp-well-being-and-sustainability-means-and-measures.

in 2014.¹⁷ The programme was discontinued; however a 2017 report on Australian regions used the same categories with additional indicators.¹⁸ Non-governmental organizations are also active in this space, including the Australian National Development Index,¹⁹ a not-for-profit, community-based, public interest corporation seeking to measure the country's well-being to inform government and community planning. The corporation is advised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and its index measures 12 categories (subjective well-being and life satisfaction; child and youth well-being; community and regional life; culture, recreation and leisure; governance and democracy; economic life and prosperity; education, knowledge and creativity; environment and sustainability; justice, fairness and human rights; health, indigenous well-being; and work and work-life balance). Community engagement is the chosen approach for determining the structure and contents of the index.

Bhutan

31. Through the gross national happiness index, Bhutan is recognized globally as an early mover and trailblazer in moving beyond GDP. The Fourth King of Bhutan is credited with having coined the term gross national happiness as far back as 1979. The current gross national happiness index comprises nine categories (living standards, education, health, environment, community vitality, time use, psychological well-being, good governance, and cultural resilience and promotion), 33 indicators and 124 variables.

32. The index forms the quantitative bedrock of national policy development, implementation and monitoring. Government five-year development plans are linked with the nine domains of the index through key result areas and performance indicators.²⁰ Each new policy must be screened against all variables of the index to ensure alignment and contribution to the results outlined in the plan. The Sustainable Development Goals have been integrated in the index and the accompanying policy development and monitoring process. The successful efforts of Bhutan do not prevent challenges from being discussed continuously, including how to best balance short-term and long-term gains, how to deepen the understanding of the gross national happiness concept among policymakers and how to best manage the subjective measures included in the index.

China

33. Although national measures of well-being and sustainability have yet to be adopted in China, local pilot initiatives such as the gross ecosystem product approach are continuously being explored. In 2021, authorities in Shenzhen, China, announced that they had developed a gross ecosystem

¹⁷ Australia, Bureau of Statistics, "Measures of Australia's Progress, 2013", Measures of Australia's Progress Dashboard, No. 1370.0. Available at www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/1370.0 (accessed on 12 June 2022).

¹⁸ Australia, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, *Yearbook 2017: Progress in Australian Regions* (Canberra, 2017).

¹⁹ Additional information is available at www.andi.org.au/.

²⁰ The baselines and targets associated with the indicators are reported by the Gross National Happiness Commission on an annual basis. For the latest report, see Bhutan, Gross National Happiness Commission, *Annual Report 2020–2021* (Thimphu, 2021).

product,²¹ which sums up the economic values of the benefits from ecosystems within the municipality.

India

34. The Government of India is exploring the use of the gross domestic knowledge product, a concept developed at the University of Southern California, as a complementary progress measure. The gross domestic knowledge product includes four pillars (knowledge items, knowledge-producing matrix, knowledge use matrix and cost of learning). While it has not been adopted by governmental institutions at present, the approach is aimed at providing an assessment of the country's growth in the digital economy and an evaluation of education.²²

Netherlands

35. Spurred by debates in the parliament on the need for defining and measuring well-being in broader terms than GDP, Statistics Netherlands was commissioned in 2016 to compile a system to monitor well-being. The system was intended to be politically independent, with a measurement framework encompassing material and immaterial well-being and present and future well-being. Since May 2018, the well-being monitor has been used as a popular instrument for policy formulation. Its popularity may hinge on the following characteristics: the measurement framework integrates the Sustainable Development Goals, meaning that it translates Goal indicators from the global level to the national and subnational levels; the included measures distinguish between well-being here and now, later and elsewhere, thus introducing clarity on a complex concept; and the well-being monitor was commissioned by the parliament and hence represents a user-driven and user-owned initiative. Notwithstanding this, Statistics Netherlands has identified challenges for increased uptake by policymakers of progress measures beyond GDP, including involving citizens more broadly, lack of quantitative policy goals and the short-term perspective which often prevails in the policy sphere.

New Zealand

36. In New Zealand, the Government has focused on well-being since 2017 and Statistics New Zealand and the Treasury have partnered on the development and implementation of measures, indicators, analysis and advice to support government decision-making. Statistics New Zealand has compiled 109 well-being indicators through its Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand programme.²³ They are grouped into current well-being, future well-being, transboundary impacts and contextual indicators, and they form the basis for reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals. They also feed into the Living Standards Framework, coordinated by the Treasury. The Living Standards Framework encompasses individual and collective well-being; institutions and governance; and the “wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand”,

²¹ Shenzhen Government Online, “City unveils GEP system for sustained development”, *Shenzhen Daily*, 24 March 2021.

²² Center for the Digital Future, “GDGP – India: a new national economic measure for the digital age” (accessed on 12 June 2022).

²³ Additional information is available at <https://statisticsnz.shinyapps.io/wellbeingindicators/>.

capturing the natural environment, culture, human capacity, financial and physical capital, and social cohesion.²⁴

37. Challenges to address going forward include the following: the integration of concepts and analysis in policy tools such as regulatory design and business case processes; subjectivity elements such as diverse understandings of well-being among different population groups and individuals; and continued efforts to broaden and deepen participatory approaches to defining and using measures that go beyond GDP.

Philippines

38. Efforts in the Philippines to develop and use a quality-of-life index are motivated by the recognized limitations of GDP, especially its inability to capture residents' income from production in other countries, care work and services from the environment and the complex relationship between GDP and well-being (for example, a natural disaster decreases well-being for affected people yet it may increase overall GDP). Complementary progress measures were introduced to capture long-term aspirations of Filipinos, presented in the Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022 as a strongly rooted, comfortable and secure life for all. The quality-of-life index is multidimensional and encompasses material and non-material aspects of well-being such as culture, family and friends. As in Bhutan, the index in the Philippines includes objective as well as subjective indicators.

39. Going forward, plans include a nationwide survey to assess well-being in the Philippines considering the new normal post-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the institutionalization of natural capital and wealth accounting.

Thailand

40. In Thailand, a series of progress measures have been developed and evolved to capture priorities in the country's five-year development plans, coordinated by the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council since the 1960s. A well-being index was introduced in the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997–2001) to capture health, living standards, intellectual capacity and income distribution. Following the Asian economic crisis in the late 1990s, an economic strength index was added with emphasis on economic self-reliance, stability and equity. Following the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, a sustainable development index was introduced to include the impact of development on the environment and natural resources. The index was included in the national development plan, and human and societal elements were included into the green index and happiness index. The human achievement index was introduced in the Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012–2016) to assess progress at the provincial level in health, education, employment, income and the environment. Throughout, the indices have been used extensively for monitoring the implementation of the five-year plans and to inform the public of development gains and challenges.

²⁴ New Zealand, Treasury, Living Standards Framework Dashboard. Available at <https://lsfdashboard.treasury.govt.nz/wellbeing/> (accessed on 12 June 2022).

IV. Opportunities for regional action

A. Sharing experiences to learn from each other and shape global guidance

41. A wealth of experience and knowledge exist in the Asia-Pacific region on the development, implementation and use of well-being and sustainability measures for evidence-based decision-making. National statistical offices are involved in many, but not all, initiatives taken by Governments. Nevertheless, some global initiatives are taken and driven by the statistical community with limited or no involvement by prospective policy users.

42. Recent initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region, such as the Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe series and the communities of practice on disaster-related statistics and data integration, demonstrate a cost- and time-efficient way of sharing national experiences. The high number of participants in events pertaining to broader progress measurements organized through these mechanisms signals interest in further regional sharing in this space. Furthermore, the popularity of recent events and e-learning courses on climate change-related and disaster-related statistics signals broad interest in sharing and learning on measures pertaining to climate change adaptation and mitigation in the region.

43. Further sharing in the region could help strengthen the data-policy link if due attention is paid to the involvement of current or prospective users of broader progress measures. Several good practices exist on a whole-of-government approach to developing and using well-being and sustainability measures as an integral part of government planning and monitoring; the countries mentioned above could champion such sharing with the support of the secretariat. Events that bring statisticians and policy planners together could help to surface broad principles or common success criteria, and these could feed into some of the international initiatives captured in chapter II and support national efforts elsewhere.

B. Developing regional principles and approaches

44. Progress measures must first and foremost meet national demands. However, many diverse well-being and sustainability measures attract less attention than the prominent and globally agreed GDP measure. The diversity of sustainability and well-being measures, therefore, at times hampers efforts to fully mainstream them into the development discourse and policy. Regional guidance, best practices or recommendations may partly address this issue.

45. From the perspective of national statistical offices and systems, engagement with policy developers must be proactive and continuous for broader measures of progress to be utilized and sustained. In this manner, guidance on the development and use of broader progress measures is closely linked to the evolving role of national statistical offices and to data governance, which was the second issue identified as an emerging priority by the Bureau of the Committee. Improved data governance is part of the solution towards shifting attention, resources and the use of statistics from GDP to well-being and sustainability.

46. From the perspective of the regional and global statistical communities, part of the solution may also be found in the development of common principles or approaches to engaging, communicating and consulting users. Such principles or best practice approaches could be distilled from regional

dialogues and experience sharing involving producers and users of progress measures. Properly documented, they could feed into global guidance.

V. Issues for consideration by the Committee

47. The Committee may wish to consider how members and associate members can share experiences to learn lessons and to shape global guidance.

48. The Committee may also wish to express its views on how regional collaboration on well-being and sustainability measures may best support and strengthen national efforts and how broader progress measures may feature in its future work. The Committee may further wish to consider whether such regional collaboration could include the creation of common regional principles or approaches to user engagement in the development and implementation of well-being and sustainability measures for evidence-based decision-making.

49. The Committee may wish to note the link between measures of well-being and progress, which often transcend statistical domains, and discussions under agenda item 4 (a), including the review of the groups and communities of practices supporting the work of the Committee, and provide recommendations to streamline, consolidate and improve them to ensure that they continue to be fit-for-purpose. This could include moving towards less formal collaboration mechanisms that may be better suited to the complex world in which national statistical offices now operate. The Committee may also wish to recommend that such a review pay particular attention to arrangements and mechanisms to support national statistical offices to meet the growing demand for progress measures beyond GDP such as climate change-related statistics.
