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

**Eighth session**

Bangkok and online, 23–25 August 2022

Item 7 (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 seventh session of the Committee on Statistics\*\***

*Summary*

The present report contains an overview of the work carried out by the Bureau since the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics. The Committee may wish to take note of the report.

**I. Introduction**

1. The Committee on Statistics at its seventh session, in August 2020, elected the Bureau to perform its functions over the intersessional period until the eighth session of the Committee. The elected members of the Bureau were: Mr. Gogita Todradze of Georgia (Chair); Mr. Mohd Uzir Mahidin of Malaysia; Mr. Pravin Srivastava of India for the first half and Mrs. Indu Bandara of Sri Lanka for the second half (sharing arrangement); and Mr. Kemueli Naiqama of Fiji (Vice-Chairs); Ms. Bayanchimeg Chilkhaasuren of Mongolia (Member); and Mr. Claire Dennis Mapa of the Philippines (Rapporteur).

2. During its tenure Ms. Maria Musudroka replaced Mr. Kemueli Naiqama as the Vice-Chair representing Fiji; Mr. G P Samantha replaced Mr. Pravin Srivastava as the member representing India; Mr. Anura Kumara replaced Ms. Indu Bandara representing Sri Lanka; and Mr. Batdavaa Batmunk replaced Ms. Bayanchimeg Chilkhaasuren representing Mongolia.

3. The present information document covers the activities of the Bureau during the period of September 2020 to June 2022.

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

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

## II. Method of work

4. During the period under review, the Bureau held eight virtual meetings.

5. At the meeting on 13 November 2020, the Bureau gave feedback on the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics and discussed how to take the decisions from the Committee forward. The Secretariat updated members on plans for the fifty-second session of the United Nations Statistical Commission and the Bureau discussed interventions by delegates on behalf of the Asia-Pacific region for the session.

6. The meeting on 17 February 2021 was held as a side event to the fifty-second session of the Statistical Commission, and the meeting was open to all members of the Committee. The meeting included an update on the work of the Bureau on the decisions made at the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics. The meeting also reviewed the agenda items of the fifty-second session of the Statistical Commission of particular importance to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) members. Members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDG) and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also briefed participants on the work of the groups to facilitate inputs from non-members. The meeting was attended by Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, China, Fiji, Georgia, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, and Vanuatu as well as regional and international organizations.

7. A special meeting of the Bureau was held on 8 April 2021 focusing on the selection of new regional members for the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDG) and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB).

8. The meeting held on 15 June 2021 included discussions on updating the terms of reference for the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics, the draft big data strategy developed by the Secretariat, and the feasibility of suggested amendments by the Committee at its seventh session to the 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 as well as an update on the recruitment of the new Director for the Statistics Division at ESCAP.

9. The meeting held on 29th September 2021 included an update on decisions made by the Bureau at its previous meeting, focusing on the amendments to the terms of reference and functioning of the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics. The Secretariat had also incorporated comments from the Bureau into the draft Big Data Strategy and the 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. Initial brainstorming on the key topics for the agenda of the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics was held and the secretariat updated the Bureau about the progress toward implementing the decisions of the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics.

10. At the meeting held on 20 January 2022, the Bureau was introduced to the new Director of the ESCAP Statistics Division. The group discussed the draft provisional agenda of the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics and held consultations on the upcoming fifty-third session of the Statistical Commission. The Bureau was also informed that the Secretariat had incorporated proposed amendments to the 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. The members were also briefed on the outcomes of the Second Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

11. At the meeting on 17 February 2022, which was held as a side event to the fifty-third session of the Statistical Commission, the Bureau discussed preparations for the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics and reviewed the agenda for the fifty-third session of the Statistical Commission and agenda items of particular importance to ESCAP members. Members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDG) and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB) also briefed participants on the work of the groups. The meeting was open to all members of the Committee on Statistics and was attended by Georgia, Fiji, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Mongolia, India, China, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Samoa, the Russian Federation, Thailand, and Viet Nam as well as regional and international organizations.

12. On 27 June 2022, the Bureau discussed the programme for the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics and arrangements during the week of the Committee. The Bureau also discussed a possible review of the groups reporting to the Committee on Statistics and received an update from the secretariat on upcoming statistical events, including the conference on big data for official statistics to be held in Indonesia in November 2022 and the World Data Forum in China in 2023.

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

### **III. Discussions and decisions by the Bureau since the seventh session of the Committee**

#### **A. Selection of members for 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**

14. Decision 1 of the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission endorsed the formation of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDG) and supported the formation of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB). For both groups, members are selected by the regional mechanisms to serve for a two-year period. In this connection, the Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics was tasked to submit nominations for new members by May 2021.

15. 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), Türkiye (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.

16. On 11 February 2021, the Chair of the Committee on Statistics 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.

17. For the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, 13 nominations for six positions were received. The recommendations put forward were India (new); Kazakhstan (new); Malaysia (Ongoing); Mongolia (new); Nauru (new); and Tonga (new). Nominations were also received from Afghanistan; Cambodia; Fiji; Kyrgyzstan; Sri Lanka; Timor-Leste; and Viet Nam.

18. For the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, nine nominations for five positions were received. The recommendations put forward were China (Ongoing member); Kyrgyzstan (new); Pakistan (new); Philippines (Ongoing) and Samoa (new). Nominations were also received from Mongolia; Tonga; Fiji; and Malaysia.

19. The Bureau, at its meeting on 8 April 2021 discussed the nominations received and provided guidance to the chair to finalize the Asia-Pacific nominations. The Bureau followed the guidance for selection of members as outlined in their Terms of References.<sup>1</sup>

20. On 15 May the Chair of the Committee on Statistics sent a letter to Mr Kawasaki Chege, Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission on Selection of members for the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDG) and the High-level Group for

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<sup>1</sup> [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>.

Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB).

## **B. Evaluation and feedback on the Committee on Statistics at its seventh session**

21. The Bureau reviewed the feedback from the evaluation of the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics provided by the Secretariat. The evaluation highlighted the large number of participants to the session from 39 countries. Participants rated the Committee's relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency highly and greatly appreciated the discussions of topics of central interest to Asia-Pacific. Participants also highlighted collaboration and cooperation of both United Nations organizations as well as national statistical offices and United Nations agencies at the country level has improved. The evaluation described a desire to include more time for country presentations and improvements to connectivity and platforms for future virtual meetings.

22. Members discussed how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and coronavirus disease can provide an opportunity to change the way we work and that additional consultation on how national statistical offices can work in the new normal would be useful. The Asia-Pacific Stats Café series organized by ESCAP were highlighted as an excellent platform for such deliberations.

## **C. Taking forward the decisions made during the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics**

23. The Bureau, at its meeting on 13 November 2022, discussed how to take the decisions made during the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics forward.

24. Regarding Decision 1 on the 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 to advance official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Bureau requested the Secretariat to amend the draft framework to reflect the discussions during the seventh session and present the refined framework for final review and approval by the Bureau by December 2021.

25. On Decision 2: Gender Mainstreaming, the Bureau discussed and agreed the following three actions to be presented to the Committee on Statistics:

(a) Identify gender-relevant priority action areas across sectors/thematic areas of work of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, especially disaster and environment statistics, economic statistics and civil registration and vital statistics;

(b) Identify and implement entry points for mainstreaming gender in statistical activities including normative and methodological work, analytical work, data collection/ compilation activities as well as data communications;

(c) Ensure all dialogues led/facilitated by ESCAP Statistics Division are gender-responsive and involve gender-relevant actors for the sector concerned e.g. Ministries of Women, Health, Education, Social Security and Human Rights etc. and have a gender balance in participation.

26. For Decision 3: Accounts, the Bureau agreed to recommend a focus on:

(a) Facilitating knowledge and experience sharing to strengthen particular areas of economic statistics, most likely to be tourism satellite accounts and distributional accounts, pending final advice from the 6th meeting of the Regional Steering Group on Improvement of Economic Statistics in January 2021;

(b) Support training activities for national statistical offices on labour accounts;

(c) Responding to technical advisory service requests from countries on environmental-economic accounts and ecosystem accounts.

27. Regarding Decision 4: Big Data, the Bureau expressed great interest in this topic and highlighted the need for countries to strengthen national statistical systems in this area. The Bureau recommended implementation of the decision should include the following actions:

(a) Facilitate knowledge and experience sharing of national statistical offices experimenting with and/or using big data for statistics e.g. through Stats Café sessions, information briefs, international fora and documenting country experiences;

(b) Support training activities for national statistical offices on the use of new data sources, particularly focusing on the institutional setup e.g. legal frameworks, data sharing;

(c) Develop tools for the integration of statistical and big data sources e.g. integration of statistical and geospatial information and satellite data and guidance materials in support of and complementing guidance from the Global Working Group on big data and the associated task teams.<sup>2</sup>

28. On Decision 5: Strengthening of national statistical offices, including the development of training programmes, the Bureau in consultation with the Secretariat recommended for the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific to organize management seminars for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific in 2020 and 2021. In addition, a programme of training of trainers on economic statistics and gender statistics was recommended.

#### **D. Deliberations at the Statistical Commission**

29. The Bureau, at its meeting on 13 November 2020, reviewed the agenda for the fifty-second session of the Statistical Commission and highlighted the following key areas for intervention by delegates, possibly on behalf of the region: Agenda item 3(a) on data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Agenda items 3(c) Economic Statistics 3(f) on environmental-economic accounting; Agenda item 3(m) on disaster-related statistics; and Agenda item and 3(j) on Big Data.

30. In order to have a shared voice from Asia-Pacific, the Bureau agreed to request the Secretariat to prepare draft talking points on specific agenda items. These should be approved by the Bureau and a member of the Bureau should make the statement to the Commission on behalf of the region. This will not

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<sup>2</sup> This group has now been renamed to Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics.

exclude individual members from making additional statements on behalf of their country.

31. In preparations for the fifty-third session of the Statistical Commission, during its meeting on 20 January 2022, the Bureau agreed to put forward regional statements. The Chair requested the Secretariat to support the Bureau by drafting regional statements on selected agenda items. These drafts were then distributed to all members of the Committee on Statistics and discussed during the Bureau meeting held on 17 February 2022.

32. The Bureau agreed on following key areas for regional interventions at the fifty-third session of the Statistical Commission: Agenda item 3(a) on data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Agenda item 3(b) on data stewardship; Agenda item 3(f) on civil registration, vital statistics and statelessness statistics; Agenda item 3(h) on gender statistics; Agenda item 3(l) on Environmental-Economic Accounting; Agenda item 3(m) on climate change statistics; Agenda item 3(u) on Big Data; Agenda item 3(w) on Open Data and Agenda item 3(x) on integration of statistical and geospatial information.

## **E. Draft Big Data Strategy**

33. The Bureau at its meeting on 15 June 2021, was informed that in response to decision by the Committee at its seventh session, the secretariat had prepared a strategy for supporting national statistical systems in Asia and the Pacific in their production of official statistics using big and other non-traditional data sources and methods, including administrative and citizen-generated data.

34. The strategy covers a two-year period of 2021-2022 until the eighth session of the Committee, and outlines four action areas, as below, that would guide ESCAP Statistics Division's support in the context of ongoing big data developments at the regional level.

- Action Area 1: Knowledge and experience sharing
- Action Area 2: Outreach
- Action Area 3: Development of technical expertise
- Action Area 4: Advocacy

35. The Bureau supported the big data strategy and suggested a few minor amendments. The Bureau advised the secretariat to incorporate comments from Bureau members into the draft Big Data Strategy, finalize and share it with the Committee members.

36. The Bureau at its meeting on 29 September 2021 was informed that the secretariat had incorporated comments from the Bureau into the draft Big Data Strategy and shared the final document with all Committee members for information. The Bureau was also briefed about the ongoing activities related to the big data strategy and how the decision on big data had been intensively pursued due to the immense interest around the region.

**F. 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**

37. The Bureau at its meeting on 15 June 2021, was updated about the suggested amendments to the 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. Since several suggested amendments could be resource and time intensive, the Bureau advised on incorporating the amendments that minimized the reporting load on countries and were feasible within existing resources of the secretariat.

38. The Bureau advised the Secretariat to amend the 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 as proposed and circulate to Committee members by September 2021, for finalization by December 2021.

39. The Bureau at its meeting on 29 September 2021 was updated that the secretariat had incorporated the proposed amendments to the draft Monitoring Framework for the Collective Vision and Framework for Action and the Declaration to Navigate Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind in consultation with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) which is the custodian of several of the indicators in the framework. The Bureau was also informed that the document would be circulated to Committee members shortly for finalization by December 2021.

40. At the meeting on 20 January 2022, the Bureau was informed about the finalization of the Monitoring Framework for the Collective Vision and Framework for Action and the Declaration to Navigate Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind. The Secretariat had incorporated proposed amendments to the Monitoring Framework. The amended version had been circulated to all Committee members in October 2021 and received one comment from Japan, which was addressed with a further explanation from the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific.

**G. Updating the terms of reference for the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics**

41. The Committee at its first session in 2009, endorsed the terms of reference and functioning of the Bureau, which have remained unchanged ever since. The introduction of hybrid (online and face-to-face) modalities for the seventh session of the Committee, as well as the need to clarify the Committee's decision-making procedures during inter-sessional periods, prompted the Bureau to review its terms of reference.

42. During its meeting on 15 June 2021, the Bureau advised the secretariat of amendments to the terms of reference and instructed that new terms of reference be circulated to Committee members for their feedback, under the signature of the Bureau's chair. The Bureau recommended that after incorporating comments from Committee members, the terms of reference be presented to the Committee at its eighth session for adoption.

43. The Bureau, at the meeting on 29 September 2021, was informed that the secretariat had circulated amended terms of reference and function of the Bureau to Committee members on 7 September 2021. Further details are



presented to the Committee in ESCAP/CST/2022/7 Terms of reference of the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics.

## H. Preparations for the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics

44. The Bureau, at its fifth meeting on 29 September 2021, sixth meeting on 20 January 2022, seventh meeting on 17 February 2022 and eight meeting on 27 June 2022, provided guidance to the secretariat on preparations for the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics.

45. During the meeting held on 29 September 2021, the Bureau asked the secretariat to consider the inclusion of sessions on emerging issues at the eighth session. The Bureau advised keeping big data on the agenda of the upcoming Committee session while delving deeper into some issues such as human resources, national information and communications technology policies, legal framework, partnering up with different types of institutions, etc. The Bureau also advised further investigation and sharing of experiences on certain types of big data, such as web scraping and satellite images and the use of administrative data. Aligned with the commitments of the Declaration of the Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, the Bureau stressed the importance of raising awareness and communication of statistics to enhance the use of statistics for policymaking. The Bureau also pointed out the importance of an overall government data policy and the role of national statistical offices in the context of data stewardship. The Bureau also suggested the inclusion of outcomes of some major regional and global events on the agenda for the next session of the Committee.

46. The Bureau reviewed the draft agenda and the draft provisional annotated agenda of the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics and provided inputs on the focus of agenda items and documents for the session.

47. At its meeting on 27 June 2022, the Bureau recommended a review of the various groups and communities of practices currently reporting the Committee with the aim of streamlining and consolidating the work of these groups.

## IV. Meetings of the Bureau since the seventh session of the Committee on Statistics

<i>Date</i>
13 November 2020
17 February 2021
8 April 2021
15 June 2021
29 September 2021
20 January 2022
17 February 2022
27 June 2022