



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

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Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

**Review of overall progress with respect to 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”****Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development: progress in implementing
the collective vision and framework for action by the
Asia-Pacific statistical community****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

Official statistics are an indispensable element of the information system of a democratic society and are core to monitoring the progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Demands on national statistical systems are intensifying with urgent calls for reform and capacity development to meet growing demands of Member State priorities and the 2030 Agenda.

In 2016, the Committee on Statistics endorsed a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community. The collective vision and framework for action communicates the commitment of the Asia-Pacific statistical community that “...by 2030, national statistical systems are enabled and empowered to lead development of and to deliver innovative, trusted and timely products and services for urgently needed and evolving statistical requirements of the 2030 Agenda”.

The present document presents an overview of progress made with regard to implementation mechanisms for the collective vision and framework for action. The Committee is invited to consider progress made and ways forward to advance implementation, and to endorse the proposed decisions to further assist the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and its partners in strengthening statistical capacity to support the collective vision and framework for action and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.

* ESCAP/CST/2018/L.1/Rev.1.

I. Introduction

1. Official statistics are an indispensable element of the information system of a democratic society, serving governments, the economy and the public with data about the economic, democratic, social and environmental situation.¹ Official statistics are at the core of indicators monitoring the progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and demands on national statistical systems are intensifying with urgent calls for reform and capacity development to meet growing demands of Member State priorities and the 2030 Agenda.

2. To rise to the challenge, the Committee on Statistics, at its fifth session in 2016, endorsed a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community to advance official statistics for the 2030 Agenda.² The collective vision and framework for action was developed under the guidance of the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics and has since become an integral part of the work of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), including in the development of a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, which was endorsed by the Commission at its seventy-third session.

3. The collective vision and framework for action communicates the commitment of the Asia-Pacific statistical community that “...by 2030, national statistical systems are enabled and empowered to lead development of and to deliver innovative, trusted and timely products and services for urgently needed and evolving statistical requirements of the 2030 Agenda”.

4. While the vision articulates the shared ambition of the Asia-Pacific statistical community to the year 2030, the framework translates the vision into collective action in priority areas including advocacy, investment, user engagement and enabling of the production and use of integrated statistics through methodological work, modernization of business processes and skills strengthening.

II. Mechanisms for implementation

5. Member States agreed, at the fifth session of the Committee on Statistics, that existing regional capacity development initiatives, overseen by member States and international organizations through thematic working groups, should be the starting point for regional implementation of the collective vision and framework for action. These include the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics, the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the Regional Steering Committee for Asia and the Pacific for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific, and the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific.³

¹ Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/21.

² E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1.

³ For implementation progress made by regional groups, see ESCAP/CST/2018/2, ESCAP/CST/2018/3 and ESCAP/CST/2018/4.

6. Member States also agreed that implementation should include consideration of a new mechanism – a regional expert group on integrated statistics and innovation. The group was envisaged to replace the Strategic Advisory Body for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services in Asia and the Pacific (SAB-AP).

7. The third and final proposal agreed by member States was for implementation to involve global and subregional mechanisms; to be done in a manner effectively supporting subregional statistics development strategies; and to support downstream implementation and application of tools and other resources resulting from global work.⁴

8. The present document contains an overview of the implementation of the collective vision and framework for action with a focus on mechanisms for implementation. The Committee is invited to consider implementation progress made and ways forward to advance implementation and to endorse the proposed decisions to further assist ESCAP and its partners in strengthening statistical capacity to support the collective vision and framework for action and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.

A. From collective vision and framework to regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

9. The collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community has, through two important regional events, the support of member State Governments. The collective vision and framework for action has been aligned with the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, which was endorsed by member States in May 2017 and is being monitored at the ESCAP level by member State Governments.

10. Following the endorsement of the collective vision and framework for action by the Committee on Statistics in December 2016, ESCAP, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, organized a regional conference entitled “Asia-Pacific Conference: Taking Collective Action to Accelerate Transformation of Official Statistics” which was held on 27 and 28 March 2017 in Bangkok. The collective vision and framework for action served as a guide at the Conference in identifying priorities for statistical capacity enhancement in the region, regional resources, and mechanisms required for capacity-building at national and regional levels.

11. The outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Conference directly fed into the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development held from 29 to 31 March 2017 where Governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders agreed on the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.⁵ The Asia-Pacific road map identifies data and statistics as one of the priority areas of cooperation and practical means of implementation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

⁴ For implementation progress, see ESCAP/CST/2018/3.

⁵ E/ESCAP/73/31, annex II.

12. The opportunities for cooperation in the regional road map correspond to all action areas in the collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community. The regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific was endorsed by the Commission at its seventy-third session through resolution 73/9.⁶

B. Integrated statistics and innovation: network of expert forums on integrated statistics for integrated analysis

13. The collective vision and framework for action called upon the Asia-Pacific statistical community to create a regional expert group on integrated statistics and innovation to support regional and national efforts in delivering action area C: integrated statistics for integrated analysis. The expert group was envisaged to draw its multidisciplinary membership from countries, global and subregional organizations, including experts from the existing expert groups.

14. In December 2017, the Statistics Division of ESCAP organized an expert seminar entitled “Integrated Statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals”.⁷ The seminar was inspired by the collective vision and framework for action, and aimed to produce recommendations for the Committee on Statistics on how to meet its commitment to create a regional expert group on integrated statistics and innovation.

15. The seminar conceptualization and conclusions generated the following proposals.

16. Proposal 1: Create a network of communities of practice, each community focusing on one of four specific integration themes:

(a) **Process integration** would seek to reduce process duplication through centralization. The approach involves consolidation of common statistical processes. Statistical tools for process integration include the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), the Common Statistical Production Architecture (CSPA), the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX), the Generic Statistical Information Model (GISM), and the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI). The dimension of process integration is disciplinary, since data themselves are not changed.

(b) **Data integration** would aim to explore ways to reduce data duplication and increase data usability and findability. Statistical tools to be used are metadata, inventorying, archiving, modelling, and the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). Example applications include: Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES), compendia, yearbooks, data portals, institutional integrated policy and nexuses. Data integration is multidisciplinary since data may be converted to selected standards in the process.

(c) **Conceptual integration** would focus on aligning multidisciplinary concepts and is therefore interdisciplinary. The approaches to be used would involve exercises that restructure existing data to common concepts, classifications and methods. Existing examples include the System of National Accounts (SNA), the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), and the Social Accounting Matrix (SAM), mentioned in SNA 2008.

⁶ Commission resolution 73/9.

⁷ For the report of the seminar, see www.unescap.org/events/expert-seminar-integrated-statistics-sustainable-development-goals.

(d) **Disciplinary integration** would explore integration that requires convergence among disciplinary concepts. The approach is to synthesize disciplinary concepts. For example, “ecosystem services” has different meanings for ecologists, economists and sociologists. Applying the concept statistically, for ecosystem accounting, requires a comprehensive definition that may not be suitable for any specific contributing discipline. Examples include ecosystem accounting, macro modeling and teaching sustainability.

17. Proposal 2 - The objectives of each of the four communities of practice should be knowledge generation; lessons learned and sharing; and identification of replicable strategies.

18. Considering the four themes and the wide-ranging expertise required to take each of them forward, the seminar considered a dynamic network of communities of practice as a more appropriate mechanism to support regional and national efforts in delivering action area C: integrated statistics for integrated analysis.

19. Such communities of practice could be formed through widely distributed calls for expression of interest and managed electronically, using modern technology and online platforms, to engage experts across the region and beyond. Electronic forums are increasingly the norm within the United Nations statistical community globally and regionally, such as in Europe.

20. The Committee is invited to:

(a) Consider the proposals of the seminar to form four communities of practice, each focusing on one of the four integration dimensions outlined above;

(b) Support the secretariat and the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics to develop terms of reference for the four communities of practice for endorsement at the next session of the Committee;

(c) Support the modality of the communities to be electronic only;

(d) Support the Bureau to pilot development of one of the four proposed communities for practice for further consideration at the next session of the Committee;

(e) Express interest in which of the four proposed communities of practice are of highest priority;

(f) Express interest in participating in one or more of the proposed communities of practice.

C. Regional initiatives initiated since the fifth session of the Committee

21. The collective vision and framework for action, area C: integrated statistics for integrated analysis encourages the Asia-Pacific statistical community to address complex problems systematically. Several regional initiatives were launched in pursuit of action area C since the fifth session of the Committee.

Oceans accounting

22. ESCAP, led by the Statistics Division in collaboration with the Office of the Executive Secretary and the Environment and Development Division, pioneered a partnership-building initiative for the development of oceans

accounts based on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA).

23. The ocean is vital to the global climate and economy, yet it is being degraded by overfishing, pollution and climate change. Policies affecting the ocean are as fragmented as the data. Unified ocean governance needs unified ocean accounts.

24. ESCAP is leveraging its convening role to build partnerships to enhance awareness and understanding of ocean issues and to accelerate action for a healthy ocean. ESCAP is pursuing commitments made to the Ocean Conference in 2017 to enhance partnerships to strengthen governance, data and statistics in the region to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14. To this end, the United Nations Statistical Commission has accepted the offer of ESCAP and the United Nations Environment Programme to lead development of statistical guidance on ocean accounts as part of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA Ecosystem Accounting Revision).⁸

Use of new data sources: SDG Knowledge Hub

25. The ESCAP SDG Knowledge Hub is a pilot research metadata platform developed to consolidate innovative data research and development activities in official statistics. The platform’s distinct value added is the way it integrates research, data sources, and e-learning around thematic projects that ESCAP is involved in.

26. The goal of the hub is to record and benchmark innovative research projects by recording key details about data sources, methodology, and specific research contributions. From the project level, it provides a macro perspective on the types of innovative research being undertaken in the ESCAP region, and, at the dataset level, it is designed to facilitate scientific reproducibility, by giving a micro perspective on specific contributions, information about the data used for the research, formal methodological papers, code repositories, and other important information types.

27. ESCAP recognizes that in order to build capacity to measure progress towards the 2030 Agenda through knowledge and skills, open sharing of relevant data and results of the Sustainable Development Goal research and methodology is required. Making these things readily available will make it easier to close capacity and data gaps, especially for developing countries who have more constrained resources.

28. National statistical offices can contribute to this initiative by partnering with ESCAP to pilot innovative approaches, possibly contributing research data sets, and proposing new methodologies and coding algorithms for trial, use and possible adoption by other member States. The emphasis on reproducibility means national statistical offices will be able to use the data hub as a resource when looking to emulate successes elsewhere and learn from the experience of peers in South-South or North-South cooperation.

29. Innovative research where ESCAP is a substantial partner can be demonstrated within the SDG Knowledge Hub platform, as can results which

⁸ See www.unescap.org/resources/assessment-capacity-development-needs-countries-asia-and-pacific-implementation.

meet standards of reproducibility and demonstrate an advancement of the region's state of the art capabilities.

30. As it is a pilot project, the future of the data hub is uncertain, but the steps underway to secure hosting resources, staffing support and enthusiasm from member States can certainly help ensure that it has a future.

31. The Committee is invited to:

(a) Consider the two regional initiatives launched since the fifth session of the Committee;

(b) Express interest in participating in the development of ocean account methodologies for consideration by the Statistical Commission as part of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Experimental Ecosystem Accounting Revision;

(c) Express interest in contributing to the ESCAP SDG Knowledge Hub.

D. Advancing gender in statistics in the region

32. The 2030 Agenda calls on the world to leave no one behind. The importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is not only articulated in a stand-alone goal (Sustainable Development Goal 5) but gender equality is an integral component of many of the other Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, there are 54 gender-specific indicators in the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework with an explicit call for disaggregation by sex and/or with gender equality and women's empowerment as an underlying principle.⁹

33. Given this renewed commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women in the 2030 Agenda, there have been several efforts to respond to the call to improve gender-sensitive data and statistics.

34. Regionally, ESCAP has launched a Gender Policy-Data Integration Initiative (April 2018 – March 2019), which replicates the policy-data integration approach adopted by the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics. The Gender Policy-Data Integration Initiative focuses on promoting structured engagement between data producers and users to establish demand for gender-sensitive data and to enhance the dissemination, analysis and use of such data at the national level, with a focus on women's economic empowerment (see details in ESCAP/CST/2018/INF/2).

35. Globally, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has established a flagship programme: "Making Every Women and Girl Count". The initiative is focused on enhancing the availability, quality and use of gender statistics in coordination with national statistical offices, other national agencies and regional partners, including the Statistics Division of ESCAP.¹⁰

36. The secretariat has been approached by UN-Women with a proposal to establish an intergovernmental group on gender statistics for Asia and the Pacific similar to the global Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender

⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (New York, 2018).

¹⁰ See ESCAP/CST/2018/INF/2.

Statistics and regional equivalents existing in other regions to carry out work to improve gender sensitive data and statistics in the region. The Committee secretariat is proposing, as a starting position, for UN-Women to become a member and contributor to the regional initiative groups of the Committee.¹¹ Based on this experience, UN-Women may at a later point propose, for consideration by the Committee, the establishment of an intergovernmental group for Asia and the Pacific dedicated to gender statistics.

37. The Committee is invited to consider the secretariat's proposal.

III. Monitoring framework of the collective vision and framework for action

38. In the collective vision and framework for action, it was proposed that the secretariat of the Committee work closely with the Bureau to design a monitoring framework to oversee the implementation of the collective vision (E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1, para. 85). Internal managerial and administrative changes have impacted the ability of the secretariat to produce a proposed framework as well as recommendations for review and endorsement by the Bureau in time for the present session of the Committee.

39. The secretariat commits to accelerating the development of the monitoring framework through discussions with the new Bureau of the Committee in 2019, noting the links between the collective vision and framework for action and the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific endorsed and monitored by member State Governments, and that streamlined reporting is highly desirable.

¹¹ See ESCAP/CST/2018/2, ESCAP/CST/2018/3 and ESCAP/CST/2018/4.