

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

Sixth session

Bangkok, 16–19 October 2018

Item 5 (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
fifth session of the Committee on Statistics****

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the work carried out by the Bureau since the fifth session of the Committee. The Committee may wish to take note and provide comments on the report.

I. Introduction

1. The Committee on Statistics at its fifth session, in December 2016, elected the Bureau to perform its functions over the intersessional period until the sixth session of the Committee. The elected members of the Bureau were: Ms. Suhariyanto of Indonesia (Chair); Mr. Ning Jizhe of China; Ms Wah Wah Maung of Myanmar; and Mr. Alexander Surinov of the Russian Federation (Vice-Chairs); Mr. Mohammadsadegh Alipour of Iran (Member); and Mr. Simil Johnson of Vanuatu (Rapporteur). During its tenure Mr. Javad Hosseinzadehneyestani replaced Mr. Mohammadsadegh Alipour as the member representing Iran; and Mr. Rara Soro replaced Mr. Simil Johnson as the rapporteur representing Vanuatu.

2. The present document covers the activities of the Bureau during the period of December 2016 to September 2018.

II. Method of work

3. During the period under review, the Bureau held three in-person informal meetings.

4. At the meeting on 16 December 2016, the Bureau reviewed and discussed the deliberations of the 5th Session of the Committee on Statistics in relation to the Collective Vision and Framework for Action and implementation options.

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** This document is being issued without formal editing.

5. At the meeting on 6 March 2017, held in conjunction with the 48th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, the Bureau provided guidance to the Secretariat on development of a concept note and process overview for preparation of a high-level regional conference.

6. At the meeting on 6 March 2018, held in conjunction with the 49th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, the Bureau discussed the agenda of the high-level session of the Committee on Statistics and progress with regional initiatives to bring forward to the 6th Session of the Committee on Statistics.

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

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

Collective Vision and Framework for Action

8. Immediately after the 5th Session of the Committee on Statistics, the Bureau met to deliberate on the outcomes of the 5th Session with a focus on the Collective Vision and Framework for Action to transform national statistical systems in support of 2030 Agenda implementation.

9. The Bureau expressed support for a step-by-step approach to the implementation of the Collective Vision and Framework for Action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community. In the short term, this could involve scoping existing and upcoming initiatives at the country level, possibly starting with countries represented on the Bureau. Such information could aid the formulation of specific objectives to be achieved in the long term. For instance, national level targets could be about establishing and maintaining a unified mechanism for reporting SDG data to international agencies for consistency. They could also include revising or strengthening specific legal and policy frameworks as well as institutional arrangements for national statistical offices to lead the coordination across national statistical systems, with clear mandates and resource support. Once such clear targets are set and agreed through consultation, a high-level conference could then be organized to seal government commitments.

10. The Bureau highlighted regional diversity in institutional arrangements must be taken into consideration when discussing a ministerial conference. For instance, in some countries, the national statistical office is overseen by the minister of planning. In other countries, it is the minister of finance, or interior affairs, or information and communications technology. Yet in some other countries, the national statistical office reports directly to the office of the President or the Prime Minister.

11. The Bureau noted the importance of identifying country initiatives and good practices in progressing the regional Collective Vision and Framework for Action. Such practices together would present a range of possibilities for other countries to learn and replicate. The country case studies can also be introduced at the high-level conference to showcase region's achievements.

High Level Regional Conference

12. At its meeting on 6 March 2017, held in conjunction with the 48th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, the Bureau provided

guidance to the Secretariat on development of a concept note and process overview for preparation of a high-level regional conference.

13. The Bureau expressed support for a high-level segment of the 6th Session of the Committee on Statistics to take the place of a standalone regional conference as proposed earlier. Bringing together senior officials with high level representation provides an opportunity for meaningful engagement between the users and the producers of official statistics for a common purpose, the successful implementation of the Collective Vision and Framework for Action.

High-level segment of the Committee on Statistics “Navigating Policy and Data to Leave No One Behind”

14. At its third meeting, the Bureau were provided an overview of the status of preparations for the 6th Session of the Committee on Statistics which, as agreed at the 5th Session of the Committee, was to be convened at a high decision-making level given the critical importance of high-level government commitment to the successful implementation of the Collective Vision and Framework for Action to secure political, institutions and resource support and to mobilize broad-based partnership.

15. The Bureau had before them a draft concept note; proposed agenda; and first draft outline of an outcome document for the high-level segment, “Navigating Policy and Data to Leave No One Behind”.

16. The Bureau discussed the vast variation amongst countries on appropriate attendance at a high-level segment and requested the Secretariat to facilitate consultations with high-level officials to secure appropriate representation from member States, including through organizing an informal briefing for the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives to ESCAP.

17. Several participants expressed concerns about the dates of the session, 16–19 October 2018, as many had planned for the month of December (the normal timing of sessions of the Committee) and international events requiring the attendance of Chief Statisticians or high-level Government representatives are taking place during the weeks before and after the week of 15–19 October. The secretariat was requested to explore options for organizing the session in December and consult with Bureau members to reach a final decision as soon as possible.

18. The secretariat was requested to map the Asia-Pacific 2030 collective vision with the global plan to develop statistics capacity for Agenda 2030 (the Cape Town Action Plan) as an issues paper for the Committee session.

19. The secretariat were asked to organize an informal session of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives to ESCAP to brief them on the high-level session and seek their support in facilitating high-level participation from member States to the Committee on Statistics “Navigating Policy and Data to Leave No One Behind”.

IV. Preparation for the sixth Session of the Committee on Statistics

20. Bureau members came together in Bangkok on 12 June 2018 for a preparatory meeting of an Expert Group Meeting “Navigating Policy and Data to Leave No One Behind”. The focus of the preparatory meeting was to prepare and advise the Secretariat on matters related to the 6th Session of the

Committee and ensure effective management of an Expert Group Meeting discussion taking place in the following days. Chairs and vice-chairs of the regional steering and expert groups on thematic areas, operating under the purview of Statistics also joined the Bureau in this meeting.

21. The group discussed preparations for both senior-level and high-level segments of the 6th Session of Committee on Statistics taking place on October 16-19, 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Senior-level segment

22. Bureau members and participants spent time on preparations related to the senior-level segment, subsequently renamed senior-officials segment. Members and participants were divided into four groups to discuss alignment of regional programmes with the Collective Vision and Framework for Action, possible common areas of cooperation with other regional programmes under the purview of the Committee on Statistics and suggest recommendations to be placed forward to the Committee on Statistics at its 6th Session to allow programmes to better respond to the demands of the Collective Vision and Framework of Action.

Regional Programme for Economic Statistics (RPES)

23. The Bureau heard since the 5th Session of the Committee, technical assistance had been provided to Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, and Viet Nam on a variety of priority topics, with financial support from the Department for International Development of the Government of the United Kingdom. Also, studies on the improvement of the quality of economic statistics in Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan were completed with the financial support of the Russian Federation.¹

24. The Bureau were advised a standard curriculum was under development by the Secretariat to enable national statistical offices to provide training on economic statistics to staff of their national statistical systems. In this regard, the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific² established, in December 2017, a sub-group on economic statistics. The subgroup will provide inputs and advice on the curriculum, training materials and their roll-out.

25. Under the purview of a subgroup of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for Economic Statistics, the second round of capacity screening was undertaken in 2017 and the results will be available and presented at the 6th Session of the Committee.

26. The main challenges identified in production of economic statistics were the following:

- Access to resources and financial support to deliver the adequate infrastructure to support production of statistics for monitoring SDGs.
- Mechanisms such as legal provisions to access data. The participants found necessary to request governments to issue administrative instructions or any other adequate legal provision

¹ <http://communities.unescap.org/asia-pacific-economic-statistics/assessments-and-reviews-related-economic-statistics>.

² ESCAP/CST/2018/4 provides an overview of activities of the Network.

to allow NSOs to access administrative data from data providers. Data sharing protocol is being overlooked.

- Coordination issues – a mechanism to coordinate data gathering is missing.

Recommendations from the Regional Programme for Economic Statistics:

27. The Bureau and participants recommended the secretariat focus discussion during the senior-official segment at the 6th Session of the Committee on the highlighted challenges and advised requesting the Committee to increase their efforts in securing administrative data and required infrastructure for data sharing, noting investment in statistics should be congruent of demands placed by the 2030 Agenda.

28. The Bureau and participants agreed with the Secretariat's recommendation to seek agreement of the Committee to revise the core set of economic statistics to align with priorities of the 2030 Agenda. The secretariat also suggested considering the capacity-screening tool as a model to be explored in monitoring the Collective Vision and Framework for Action.

Regional Programme for Population and Social Statistics

29. Bureau members were informed the regional strategy for population and social statistics was developed and aligned with the Collective Vision and Framework for Action from its design stage.

30. The Bureau were advised the main achievement of the programme to date was the a generic, principles-based tool for policy and data integration, or Every Policy is Connected (EPIC for short). Application of EPIC leads practitioners to engage with users, reinforce communication with other data producers, and identify data gaps and possible ways of integrating statistics where possible to close those gaps. As a result, data producers have space to discuss necessary modernization of business processes and the need for requisite skills.

31. The Bureau were informed of the importance placed by the Regional Steering Group for Population and Social Statistics of providing member States in Asia and the Pacific with the generic tool EPIC to ensure activities of the Implementation Plan³ of the Regional Strategy to Improve Population and Social Statistics in Asia and the Pacific are undertaken. The tool enables national statistical offices to engage policy makers and enhance understanding and prioritization of statistical information needs, including disaggregated statistics, in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

32. The Bureau were advised of pilot studies initiated to assess feasibility of developing the principle-based generic tool for policy-data integration process. The first draft of the generic tool was developed through a series of national and (sub)regional workshops across the region. The tool was finalized after being tested on several sectors and through its application across fourteen sector plans, using a whole-of-government approach, in Samoa.

33. Further, the Bureau were informed of a Gender Policy-Data Integration Initiative being led by the Secretariat on strengthening data and statistics for evidence-based policies and programmes to achieve gender equality and

³ [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/E.ESCAP_.CST\(5\).3.Implementation_plan.English.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/E.ESCAP_.CST(5).3.Implementation_plan.English.pdf).

women's empowerment in the region. The Initiative was formulated along the lines of the approach adopted by the Regional Steering Group for Population and Social Statistics and focuses mainly on women's economic empowerment to advance Goal 1 and Goal 3 of the Implementation Plan, which in turn contribute to the Collective Vision and Framework for Action as described earlier.

Recommendations of the Regional Steering Group for Population and Social Statistics:

34. The Bureau and participants recommended requesting the Committee to endorse EPIC, extend application of the tool to other regional programmes under the purview of the Committee, and support the implementation of the tool in all Asia and the Pacific countries.

Regional Programme for civil registration and vital statistics

35. The Bureau were informed work of the regional programme on civil registration and vital statistics is aligned with the Collective Vision and Framework of Action in so far as it includes engagement with users, integration of processes and coordination. It also promotes innovation and modernization of processes and required skills to deliver an integrated system for production of civil registration and vital statistics.

36. The Bureau were advised the concerted efforts in the implementation of the Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific and the broader strengthening of national CRVS systems demonstrated the effectiveness of regional coordination for national action. Thirty-eight Asia-Pacific countries have submitted national targets and baseline reports as part of the requirements of the Regional Action Framework; at least 30 countries have set up national CRVS coordination mechanisms; and at least 15 countries have developed national CRVS strategies with 14 more countries currently in the process of developing strategies. Five countries have published their national vital statistics report based on registration records for the first time with several more countries finalizing their reports and receiving support.

37. However, significant challenges remain. Integration of registration data and delivery of cohesive systems and operations require larger investments in infrastructure and human resources. Confidentiality of data is also critical to enforce and strengthen the advocacy surrounding the importance of CRVS for monitoring progress of the 2030 Agenda.

Recommendations of the Regional Steering Group for CRVS:

38. The Bureau and participants recommended requesting the Committee to support coordination among relevant producers of CRVS, data sharing and integration of systems.

Regional Programme on disaster-related statistics

39. The Bureau heard the Regional Programme on Disaster-related statistics is well aligned with the Collective Vision and Framework of Action as understanding disaster risks involves an integration of statistics on social, environmental and economic conditions of particularly defined geographic areas and related demographic landscape. Therefore, this programme has a significant potential and scope for alignment with the work of regional programmes on population and social statistics, CRVS and economic statistics.

40. The Bureau were advised one of the key functions of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific is to bring together knowledge, expertise and leadership from national statistics offices, disaster management agencies and other relevant users of data for disaster risk reduction. The Disaster-related Statistics Framework (DRSF), the main result of its work, was at the outset designed collaboratively by statistics users and producers, making it an example of implementing the principle of user engagement of the collective vision. The DRSF includes organized descriptions of the uses of the standard products of statistics offices, such as censuses and surveys, for evidence-based disaster risk reduction policy.

41. The DRSF is also a tool for developing an integrating platform for statistics at the national level. Much of the data utilized in producing statistics or indicators for disaster risk reduction monitoring via the Sendai Framework indicators and in disaster risk reduction policy-making are derived from disparate data sources across government. Understanding disaster risk involves integration of statistics on the social, environmental and economic conditions of defined geographic areas.

42. Implementation of DRSF will enable (a) the improvement of production of statistics from existing databases; and (b) bridge the representations of the realm of disasters and risk reduction on the one hand, with the current standard practices of socio-economic statistics on the other. The bridge between the two domains of statistical information is essential for producing indicators. This bridge requires strong partnerships between disaster management agencies, national statistical offices, and other holders of relevant data.

Recommendations of the Regional Programme on disaster-related statistics:

43. The Bureau and participants recommended requesting the Committee to review the DRSF, support the implementation phase of the framework in all Asia and the Pacific countries. The group also suggested exploring possibilities of bringing DSRF at the global platform (UN Statistics Commission), and other relevant committees at global and regional levels, such as those on population and social affairs.

High-level segment

44. In the afternoon session of the preparatory meeting, the Bureau and participants discussed the content of a draft declaration “Navigating policy and data to leave no one behind” for presentation and adoption at the high-level segment of the Committee.

45. The group suggested several modifications. The changes were mostly related to the language of the declaration. The group made proposed edits to reflect the diversity of national statistical systems in Asia and the Pacific region and ensure all countries could relate to requests made to the high-level officials in the draft declaration. The group also advised on how to ensure the expert group meeting (scheduled for the following days 13-14 June) was managed in an effective manner to ensure substantive discussion and feedback on the declaration.

Decisions and way forward

46. The Bureau and participants recommended taking forward the consultation process on the draft declaration in the following manner:

- Following the recommendations by the expert group meeting (13-14 June), the secretariat would be advised to incorporate comments and suggestions;
- Circulate the draft declaration for national consultations through the Committee members (Chief Statisticians) and request them to coordinate national response.
- Copy ESCAP Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives in the request for national consultation and keep them informed of the progress, if necessary.

V. Meetings of the Bureau since the fifth session of the Committee on Statistics

Date	Venue
16 December 2016	Bangkok
6 March 2017	New York City
24 May 2017	Teleconference
6 March 2018	New York City
12 June 2018	Preparatory meeting for Expert Group Meeting “Navigating Policy and Data to Leave No One Behind”.

Annex I

Meeting Programme: Expert Group meeting “Navigating Policy and Data to Leave No One Behind”, 13-14 June 2018, Bangkok

Day 1: 13 June, 2018	
08:30– 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:30	<p>Welcome and introduction by the Secretariat</p> <p>Ms. Rikke Munk Hansen - Officer in Charge, a.i., Statistics Division, ESCAP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose and expected outcome of the EGM, 13-14 June 2018 • Introduction of the participants <p>Sharing of expectations</p>
09:30 – 10:15	<p>Session 1: Setting the stage</p> <p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <p><i>Establish a common understanding among participants on the purpose and objectives of the high-level 6th session of the Committee on Statistics</i></p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Dr. Wah Wah Maung, Bureau Vice Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The regional follow-up and review to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Rikke Munk Hansen and Katinka Weinberger, ESCAP • The policy-data link and the need for whole-of-government support – Arman Bidarbakht Nia, ESCAP • Plenary discussion, Q&A
10:15-10:35	Group photo and Break
10:35-12:00	<p>Session 2: Declaration “Navigating Policy and Data to Leave No One Behind”</p> <p><i>Objective:</i></p> <p><i>Draft declaration “Navigating Policy and Data to Leave No one behind” is reviewed, issues for improvement are identified and addressed</i></p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Ms. Josie B. Perez, Co-Chair of Expert Group on Disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the draft declaration – presentation by Bureau member, tbc • Introduction to the group work – by the Secretariat • Group discussions <p>Background information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Declaration “Navigating Policy and Data to Leave No one Behind”
12:00-13:00	Lunch Break
13:00-15:00	<p>Session 2 (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussions

15:00-15:15	Break
15:15-17:00	Session 2 (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussions • Plenary summary, conclusions and recommendations
Day 2: 14 June 2018	
9:00-10:15	Session 3 Towards a successful high-level debate at the sixth session of the Committee on Statistics <i>Objectives:</i> <i>Recap from the EGM work, conclusions and recommendations</i> <i>To Identify key steps and actions for the process leading to the high-level session of the Committee on Statistics, including to</i> Chair: Rikke Munk Hansen, ESCAP <i>Communication strategy to ensure appropriate participation to the high-level segment of the Committee</i> Plenary, led by the Secretariat
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-12:00	Session 3 (continued) Wrap-up and closing

Annex II

List of participants of the Expert Group meeting “Navigating Policy and Data to Leave No One Behind”, 13-14 June 2018, Bangkok

Members

Bangladesh

Mr Anir Chowdhury, Policy Advisor, Access to Information (a2i) Programme, Prime Minister's Office, Dhaka

Mr Md Anwar Hossain, Deputy Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Dhaka

Bhutan

Mr Kuenzang Dorji, Desk Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thimphu

Mr Tashi Peljor, Deputy Permanent Representative to ESCAP, Royal Bhutanese Embassy, Bangkok

Mr Tashi Namgay, Senior Statistical Officer, National Statistics Bureau, Thimphu

China

Ms Yuhuan AN, Deputy Director-General, Department of International Cooperation, National Bureau of Statistics of China, Beijing

Ms Yu Miao, Assistant to the Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok

Ms Yunhong Ba, Division Director, Department of Statistical Design and Management, National Bureau of Statistics of China, Beijing

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Ms Sharareh Rakhshan, Expert of Office of Deputy Head for Economy and National Accounts, Statistical Centre of Iran, Tehran

Malaysia

Mr Mohd Yazid Bin Kasim, Senior Deputy Director, National Accounts Statistics Division, Department of Statistics Malaysia, Putrajaya

Myanmar

Dr Wah Wah Maung, Director General, Central Statistical Organization, Ministry of Planning and Finance, Nay Pyi Taw

Philippines

Ms Josie B. Perez, Assistant Secretary and Deputy National Statistician, Censuses and Technical Coordination Office, Philippine Statistics Authority, Manila

Ms Myrna Clara Asuncion, Director III, National Economic and Development Authority, Manila

Russian Federation

Mr Dmitry Kulikov, Third Secretary and Assistant Permanent Representative, Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Thailand, Bangkok

Ms Irina Burova, Attaché and Assistant Permanent Representative to ESCAP, Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Thailand, Bangkok

Thailand

Ms Hataichanok Puckcharern, Director, Statistical System Management Division, National Statistical Office, Bangkok

Mr Peerat Metta, Plan and Policy Analyst, National Statistical Office, Bangkok

Ms Sanonoi Buracharoen, Chief, Statistical Information and Data Dissemination Service Group, National Statistical Office, Bangkok

Vanuatu

Mr Simil Johnson Youse, Government Statistician, National Statistics Office, Port Vila

Viet Nam

Ms Vo Bang Nga, Official, Department of Science, Education, Natural Resources and Environment (DSENRE), Ministry of Planning and Investment, Hanoi

Ms Nguyen Thi Huong, Deputy Director General, General Statistic Office, Hanoi

Mr Tran Tuan Hung, Director, Statistical Methodology and IT Department, General Statistic Office, Hanoi

United Nations body

UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office

Mr Christophe Lefranc, Technical Adviser on Population and Development (Data and Census), UNFPA, Bangkok

Specialized Agency

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Ms Sangita Dubey, Regional Statistician, Bangkok

ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Mr Tite Habiyakare, Regional Labour Statistician, ILO, Bangkok

Ms Kuangjie Zhong, Junior Professional Officer, ILO, Bangkok

Intergovernmental organization

IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Ms Mariko Tomiyama, Senior Regional Policy and Liaison Officer, Bangkok

Secretariat

Ms Rikke Munk Hansen	Officer-in-Charge, a.i., Statistics Division (SD)
Mr Arman Bidarbakht Nia	Statistician, Statistical Data Management (SDMU), SD
Mr Daniel Clarke	Statistician, Economic and Environment Statistics Section (EES), SD
Mr Alick Mjuma Nyasulu	Statistician, EES, SD
Mr Michael Biddington	Statistician, EES, SD
Ms Sharita Serrao	Statistician, Population and Social Statistics Section (PSS), SD
Ms Ivana Brnovic	Statistician, Office of the Chief, SD
Ms Farzana Sharmin	Associate Statistician, ESS, SD
Mr Christopher Sean Lovell	Associate Statistician, PSS, SD
Mr Hong Pum Chung	Associate Statistician, PSS, SD
