

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

Seventh session

Bangkok, 26–28 August 2020

Item 2 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Soliciting whole-of-government support for official statistics in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: follow-up on decisions made at the sixth session of the Committee on Statistics

Report on progress with regard to decisions made at the sixth session of the Committee on Statistics**

Summary

The present document contains a summary of the progress made in the implementation of the decisions of the sixth session of the Committee on Statistics.

I. Matters calling for action by the Commission

Recommendation 1

1. At its sixth session in October 2018, the Committee recommended the regional declaration, *Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind* (ESCAP/CST/2018/7) be adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).
2. The Commission, at its 75th session in May 2019, adopted the declaration in resolution 75/9¹.
3. In adopting the resolution, the Commission called upon members and associate members to make every effort to fulfil the commitments contained in the declaration, and requested the Executive Secretary of the Commission to:
 - (a) support members and associate members in their efforts to fulfil the commitments contained in the declaration;
 - (b) engage with relevant development partners and other stakeholders to facilitate continuous, coordinated and effective efforts to fulfil the commitments contained in the declaration; and to;

* ESCAP/CST/2020/L.1.

** This present document is being issued without formal editing.

¹ www.unescap.org/commission/75/document/E75_Res9E.pdf.

(c) report to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its eighty-first session, in 2025, on the outcomes of the midpoint review at the ninth session of the Committee on Statistics, in 2024, convened at a higher decision-making level, assessing implementation of the declaration.

Recommendations 2 and 3

4. At its sixth session in October 2018, the Committee endorsed the statistical context of the Disaster-related Statistics Framework and supported the application of it to produce harmonized statistics related to disasters, to strengthen the evidence base for disaster risk reduction policies and to assist in monitoring the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. The Committee also considered the recommendations of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific and:

(a) supported the next phase of work to apply the Disaster-related Statistics Framework to the production and dissemination of statistics and indicators;

(b) supported the development of training materials and technical assistance programmes on the implementation of the Framework; and

(c) generally supported the recommendation to transform the Expert Group into a technical working group, subject to review by the Committee of the draft terms of reference for the technical working group.

6. The Committee also supported conveying these two recommendations to the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction at its sixth session in 2019 and to the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in 2019.

Training and technical assistance programmes

7. The Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific listed the development of training materials on disaster-related statistics as a priority for future regional collaboration to assist with monitoring progress towards national and international disaster risk reduction goals and targets. The Expert group noted such training should address how existing data can be better utilized for reporting progress in implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and national disaster risk reduction policies.

8. The secretariat initiated the development and piloting of e-learning courses and materials on monitoring national and international indicators related to disasters. A pilot training on disaster-related statistics was hosted by Indonesia in December 2019 with participation of seven countries.² Training on the disaster-related statistics framework was also included in a Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific training on Environment Statistics and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) in September 2019 with participation from ten countries from the region.³ Feedback from the pilot and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific training is being used to improve the training materials and their conversion to e-learning.

² Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines and Vanuatu

³ Thailand, Myanmar, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Bhutan, Maldives, Vanuatu, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan

Transforming the Expert Group into a technical working group

9. The Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific has been transformed into a technical working group as per terms of reference approved by the Bureau of the Committee in April 2019. The Terms of Reference were subsequently endorsed following distribution to all members of the Committee on Statistics via email in May 2019 for their review and endorsement. The technical working group will focus on supporting the implementation of the Disaster-related Statistics Framework in the region, in close collaboration with complementary initiatives in other regions. The first meeting of the group is scheduled for September 2020.

Disaster Risk Reduction Committee

10. The Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, at its sixth session in August 2019, noted the results of the work of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, including the Disaster-related Statistics Framework.⁴ The Committee recognized the usefulness of the work of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific in producing comprehensive and comparable disaster-related statistics, and the Disaster-related Statistics Framework aided in monitoring and reporting on progress in implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

11. Noting persistent challenges with terminology and methodology for monitoring the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the Committee agreed on the need for further technical assistance, capacity development and regional exchange of country experiences in the production of disaster-related statistics. In that regard, the Committee appreciated continued close collaboration among relevant international organizations, as exemplified by the partnership between the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and ESCAP on the production of training materials for the implementation of the Disaster-related Statistics Framework.

United Nations Statistical Commission

12. The United Nations Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in March 2019, in decision 50/116⁵,

(a) Welcomed the joint report of the Secretary-General, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction on disaster-related statistics, and commended them on the significant work that they had undertaken in this emerging field;

(b) Recognized the urgency of integrating both disaster risk reduction and the building of resilience into national development policies, plans and programmes at all levels and the need to incorporate social, economic and environment statistics into disaster information, as well as the need for better, disaggregated and comparable data and for statistical measurement to capture the impacts of disasters on people in order to improve the understanding of disaster risk reduction, including strengthening resilience and preparedness;

⁴ See decision 6 of official report at www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CDR2019_3E.pdf.

⁵ See decision 50/116 of official report at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/50th-session/documents/Report-on-the-50th-session-of-the-statistical-commission-E.pdf>.

(c) Noted the growing relevance of and greater focus on statistics related to both hazardous events and disasters, acknowledged the already considerable coordination and cooperation in that regard, and emphasized the need for further capacity-building and training on this important topic;

(d) Expressed appreciation for the leading role of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in advancing the initial methodological development of this work through the disaster-related statistics framework, which contains technical guidelines that serve as a good starting point for a universally applicable tool with global relevance, building upon the principles and priorities of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030;

(e) Supported the continuing work under the leadership of the international and regional organizations, towards progressing a common statistical framework and a network of experts for disaster-related statistics among the multiple disciplines and areas of expertise involved, in particular statisticians, disaster risk reduction experts and geospatial information experts, in order to meet the emerging needs of the statistical community;

(f) Requested the Statistics Division, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, in consultation with members of the existing regional expert groups and task forces, to consider options and modalities for the establishment and coordination of a formal mechanism under the purview of the Statistical Commission to advance a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics and a network across the expert communities to sustain cooperation, coordination and fundraising for enhancing statistics related to hazardous events and disasters, and requested that they report back to the Commission at a suitable time; and

(g) Urged the international statistical community to expand its capacity building efforts in statistics relating to hazardous events and disasters to assist countries in strengthening capacities for disaster management agencies, national statistical offices and other related contributors of official data to meet reporting requirements for evidence-based approaches to achieving national development policies, plans and programmes, and the goals and targets in the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

13. With respect to (f), the terms of reference for a formal mechanism under the purview of the Statistical Commission have been developed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. The mechanism will advance a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics and a network across the expert communities to sustain cooperation, coordination and fundraising for enhancing statistics related to hazardous events and disasters disaster-related statistics. The mechanism expects to report to the Commission at its 52nd session in March 2021.

II. Matters brought to the attention of the Commission

Decision 1

14. The Committee, at its sixth session in October 2018, decided to establish communities of practice covering the dimensions of process, data, conceptual and disciplinary integration and requested the Bureau of the Committee, with support from the secretariat, to develop terms of reference for the communities of practice, with the modality of the communities being electronic only.

15. The Bureau of the Committee, with the support of the secretariat, discussed the Committee decision at its meeting of December 2018. The Bureau noted funding to implement the Committee's decision had been sought by the secretariat, and agreed data integration, particularly integration of traditional sources (e.g. population estimates) with non-traditional sources (e.g. big data sources including mobile phone data, remote sensing data), should be the immediate priority area for establishing a community of practice.

16. The Bureau advised to pilot the community of practice with digitally connected and digitally challenged countries i.e. those who can connect digitally and those with poorer digital connectivity. The Bureau also advised continued attention to conceptual integration.

17. With the advice from the Bureau, the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics, at its 2nd meeting in July 2019, deliberated on the Committee's decision to establish communities of practice.⁶ The Regional Steering Group strongly supported a trial in order to enhance the functionality and efficiency of the Regional Steering Group. In this regard, the Regional Steering Group:

- (a) decided on creating four Communities of Practice, as follows:
 - (i) Community of Practice-A: Enable policy environment and maintain demand and support;
 - (ii) Community of Practice-B: Improve availability and quality of disaggregated statistics;
 - (iii) Community of Practice-C: Enhance data accessibility, analysis, interpretation and use; and
 - (iv) Community of Practice-D: Population Census and Civil Registration and Vital Statistics innovations.
- (b) agreed upon the initial focus of the Community of Practice-A and B to be application of policy-data integration tool (EPIC) and data integration, respectively.
- (c) agreed upon the purpose of the Community of Practice to be learning, sharing of knowledge and experience, and technical collaboration and not a forum for decision making and/or financial collaboration.
- (d) agreed upon the objective of the Community of Practice to be identify and share good practices, as well as identify challenges and lessons learned in addressing challenges.
- (e) acknowledged the need for specific contribution from one or more moderator(s) per Community of Practice who:
 - (i) should be a member of the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics and to the extent possible, be a country not a development partner;
 - (ii) should champion the Community of Practice among all Asia-Pacific countries and development partners, who will in turn encourage, recognize and support their staff to participate and contribute to the Community of Practice;
 - (iii) provide strategic direction and identify opportunities (e.g. speakers, projects) for the Community of Practice;
 - (iv) support members to promote the Community of Practice to other

⁶ www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/RSG-PSS%20meeting%20report.pdf.

interested parties through electronic communication channels;

(v) participate in the Community of Practice activities, as appropriate.

(f) agreed that membership of the Community of Practice should be voluntary and open to all Asia-Pacific countries, development partners, and non-governmental organizations.

(g) agreed at country level, the national statistical office is the focal point and is responsible for intra-country coordination; and

(h) agreed upon operating arrangements of the Community of Practice to include:

(i) interactive feature (e.g. feedback), repository feature, and easy access;

(ii) formal online meetings every six months in addition to regular interactions;

(iii) use of existing platforms and tools (e.g. WIKI, and SLACK).

18. A consultant was engaged to develop a design and implementation framework for a dynamic network of communities of practice; to facilitate the establishment of one pilot community of practice; draft the terms of reference for the pilot community of practice, prepare an evaluation report on the pilot community of practice; incorporate lessons learned into the design and implementation framework; and provide a formal report to the ESCAP Secretariat and Bureau of the Committee on Statistics in preparation for the 7th Session of the Committee on Statistics in August 2020.

19. The work included reviewing existing Communities of Practice in place in ESCAP and wider United Nations statistical community (e.g. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division and Economic Commission for Europe) including modalities, terms of reference and lessons learned; developing a design and implementation framework for a dynamic network of communities of practice under the auspices of the Committee on Statistics; establishing and trialing a pilot community of practice; evaluating the performance of the pilot community of practice in the context of the proposed design and implementation framework; and preparing an evaluation report with recommendations for the consideration of the ESCAP Secretariat and Bureau of the Committee on Statistics.

20. The Bureau of the Committee on Statistics with the support of the secretariat discussed and endorsed the terms of the reference of the pilot community of practice at its meeting of May 2020 following electronic consultation during April 2020.

21. For more details, see ESCAP/CST/2020/2 Report of the secretariat on the establishment of communities of practice.

Decision 2

22. The Committee, at its sixth session in October 2018, endorsed the suggestions of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific on future implementation of the Programme, including those pertaining to a review of the Core Set of Economic Statistics and the extension of the Regional Programme to 2030 to strengthen alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Collective Vision and Framework for Action of the Committee.

23. The 8th meeting of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific discussed the implementation of the decisions by the Committee and decided to:

(a) Develop a Programme matrix to guide Programme implementation during 2021–2030;

(b) Maintain the Core Set of Economic Statistics as the scope of statistics covered by the Regional Programme, but let the ambition level of the Programme henceforth be determined by the objectives of the Collective Vision and Framework for Action;

(c) Include the policy-data integration tool (EPIC) as a feature of future Programme implementation;

(d) Maintain the Task Forces on the Asia Pacific Economic Statistics Week and Capacity Screening.

24. The Steering Group at its 9th meeting held in June 2020 further elaborated on activities and modalities of work for the extended Programme period, 2021-2030. The Group also on revised draft terms of reference for the Group, for consideration by the Bureau of the Committee.

25. The full reports of the 8th and 9th meetings of the Steering Group are contained in information document ESCAP/CST/2020/INF/4. Summary information is also included in ESCAP/CST/2020/2.

Decision 3

26. The Committee, at its sixth session in October 2018, endorsed the use of the policy-data integration tool entitled “Every policy is connected” to strengthen user-producer dialogue to ensure effective demand for, and investment in, the development of official statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The Committee recommended the regional statistical initiatives of the Committee and the Commission apply the tool.

27. The Bureau, at its meeting in December 2018, noted advice from the secretariat of communication activities with respect to the Committee’s endorsement of the use of the policy-data integration tool entitled “Every policy is connected” including outreach materials, a report by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for the fiftieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, the active use of the ESCAP website, communication with the Steering Committee of the Regional Programme for Population and Social Statistics in Asia and the Pacific; and regional statistical initiatives of the Committee and Commission by the ESCAP Secretariat under signature of the Chair of the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics. The Bureau requested the ESCAP Secretariat to share successful stories with the use of policy-data integration tool (EPIC).

28. The Bureau were also advised on enhancements to the policy-data integration tool (EPIC) including the development of a user manual and IT application, subsequently tested by Samoa in May 2019.

29. Several knowledge products on policy-data integration tool (EPIC) were released by the ESCAP Secretariat including a blog in August 2018⁷ and a working series paper in September 2018⁸.

Decision 4

30. The Committee, at its sixth session in October 2018, decided to abolish the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific in its current form and transfer its responsibilities and functions to the Thematic Working Group on Statistics of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism.

31. In line with the decision of the Committee, the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific has been abolished. Members of the Partners were invited to join the Thematic Working Group on Statistics of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism and an invitation was extended to the 10th meeting of the Thematic Working Group in May 2019.

32. The Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific previously reported on a biannual basis to the Committee on Statistics as the Partners group was established by the Committee. To ensure full transparency, the Thematic Working Group on Statistics of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism agreed to submit a biennial report, for information, to the Committee, noting the Thematic Working Group formally reports to the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ms. Amina Mohammad, and comprising United Nations regional partners. The first report of the Thematic Working Group is presented at agenda item 6 (c) in ESCAP/CST/2020/INF/13.

⁷ www.unescap.org/blog/connecting-policymakers-and-data-producers.

⁸ www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SD_Working_Paper_no.9_Sep2019_EPIC_tool.pdf.