11th meeting of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

2-3 November 2021 (Virtual sessions)

Report of the meeting

I. Background


2. Steering Group members from the following countries were represented at the meeting: Afghanistan; Armenia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Hong Kong, China; Islamic Republic of Iran; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Nepal; New Zealand; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Turkey; and Viet Nam. Steering Group members from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Pacific Community (SPC) were represented. Alternate members and other representatives from Bangladesh, China, Malaysia, Maldives, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and the Pacific Community also participated in the meeting. The list of participants is included in Annex 1.

3. The meeting was organized with the following objectives:
   - Share information on economic statistics development in the region
   - Review progress in implementing the SGRPES 2021 work plan and agree on the SGRPES 2022 work plan
   - Discuss potential for collaboration between SGRPES and the Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics to advance integrated statistics (action area A of the Collective Vision and Framework for Action)
   - Discuss SGRPES participation in global statistical community activities

II. Updates on successes, challenges, and key initiatives

4. Under this agenda item, Steering Group members provided updates on developments since the previous Steering Group meeting held in January 2021. Summary highlights were as follows:

11 https://www.unescap.org/events/2021/10th-meeting-steering-group-regional-programme-improvement-economic-statistics-asia-and
Rebasing Exercises
Several members informed of rebasing exercises conducted in their respective countries, rebasing Annual GDP and Consumer Price Indices (CPI). Listed among the upcoming plans and activities are the rebasing of Quantum Index of Industrial Production (QIIP).

Use of big data
Several members spoke of exploring and pivoting to using alternative sources of data to produce economic statistics with many initiatives motivated by the challenges to traditional data collection posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Publishing
Several members published Quarterly National accounts and published wage indices, price indices and unit value indices, as well as revised securities and banking statistics. Additionally, one member spoke of publishing online retail sales statistics considering the increasing popularity of online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Capacity building and experience sharing
Members informed of capacity building exercises and experience sharing through partnerships with development partners, as well as through engagement in regional activities such as the ESCAP Stats Café Series and bilateral exchanges.

Engagement with the global statistical community
Some members informed of participation in consultations on global statistical matters such as the 2008 SNA and BPM6 revisions.

COVID-19 Pandemic
Several members mentioned challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including for data collection and timely release of statistics complicated by remote working arrangements and budget cuts.

5. Update on selected initiatives
   • Updates on the Bhutan Standard Industrial Classification (BSIC) were given. Bhutan shared the strategy used to develop BSIC, and how users and agencies could employ the standard in Bhutan. They also shared briefly on the BSIC launch and implementation and the challenges and lessons gained through the process.
   • Representatives from Malaysia spoke of several initiatives and improvements since the start of the pandemic. These include strengthening the National Statistical System (NSS) and empowering the National Statistical Office through exploring ways of data collection conducive to the social distancing and lockdowns brought on by the pandemic. Additionally, alternative sources of data such as web data are being used to produce price intelligence and sentiment analysis is being used for indicators for social and economic statistics. Mobile Data is being used to assess human commuting patterns for retail and recreation.
Participants from Mongolia outlined a draft methodology for crop statistics using satellite imagery and machine learning. Additionally, the NSO is per request of the Government working to integrate all government databases.

Participants from SPC spoke of alternative data initiatives in the Pacific spurred on by the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants from SIAP informed the group of recent online trainings on economic statistics delivered by the Institute in collaboration with ESCAP, ADB and UNSD and on efforts to make the trainings as interactive as possible. Trainees had listed external debt, special drawing rights and foreign direct investment as priority topics.

III. Integrated Statistics towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Members of the SGRPES participated in a panel discussion with members of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Social Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (RPSS) to discuss integrated statistics and how they can undertake its related activities that support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in line with the collective vision and framework for action.

Panelists shared benefits and challenges of deepened collaboration across the social and economic statistics domains. Benefits include strengthening data support towards completing common and specific goals, sharing resources, expertise and technical knowledge across domains, field operation work and mutual collaboration in task forces and technical working groups. Participants noted that the major challenge remains limited resources that eventually limits innovation and productivity across domains. Only the basic needs of end users can be met, with little time and resources left for more complex or innovative products.

Drawing from the benefits, and discussing the ways to navigate the challenges, members of the Steering Group made recommendations on how the two Steering Groups could collaborate on future activities. These include the following:

- Enlist aid from development partners to build capacity for concrete collaboration on statistical products that are in high demand;
- Map SDGs that cut across domains and collaborate on production of statistical indicators within the work programmes of the two Steering Groups;
- Address demand for multi-domain features in topics such as climate statistics, disaster statistics, ocean accounting and statistics, poverty indices, labour market statistics, housing and rental market, gender mainstreaming and food security, and liaise with key stakeholders to produce high in demand statistical products;
- Incorporate new and alternative types of data towards producing in demand statistical products;
- Collaborate on dissemination of statistical products to ensure users are aware of data and its interlinkages.
• Determine governance structures that are useful for collaboration across domains and apply those structures;
• Make use of existing integration platforms such as the ESCAP Data Integration Community of Practice.²

IV. Decisions

7. The Steering Group made the following decisions:

• The Steering Group agreed on priorities for its work in 2022. The priorities are: statistical business registers, informality, new methods of data collection, production of data series to monitor effects of Covid-19, machine learning, artificial intelligence, business surveys, multi-domain statistics, censuses and production guidance notes on GDP and CPI rebasing in 2022.
• The Steering Group will actively use the recently established economic statistics community of practice to share knowledge and experience in the agreed priority areas;
• The SGRPES and the Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics will consider undertaking joint activities in 2022 to advance integrated statistics in line with the Collective Vision and Framework of Action after a review of high in demand statistical products that cut across domains by the respective groups;
• Members of the Steering Group will engage with the global statistical community in the update of the 2008 SNA and BPM6 and other areas of economic statistics as they emerge.

### ANNEX 2: Priorities for 2022

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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1 Statistical Business Registers</td>
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<td>2 Informality</td>
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<td>3 New Methods of Data collection</td>
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<td>4 Data series to monitor Covid-19</td>
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<td>5 Machine learning</td>
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<td>7 Gross Domestic Product</td>
<td>Guidance notes on rebasing</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Consumer Price Indices</td>
<td>Guidance notes on rebasing</td>
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<td>9 Censuses and Surveys</td>
<td>To be undertaken in collaboration with the PSS Steering Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Multi-domain statistics</td>
<td>To be undertaken in collaboration with the PSS Steering Group</td>
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ANNEX 2: List of participants

*Steering Group members are indicated in bold*

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Mr. Hasibullah Mowahed**, Deputy Director General of Statistical Affairs, National Statistics and Information Authority

**ARMENIA**

Ms. Karine Kuyumjyan, Head of Population Census and Demography Division, Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia

**BANGLADESH**

Mr. Ziauddin Ahmed, Director of National Accounting Wing, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

**BHUTAN**

Mr. Chhime Tshering, Director, National Statistics Bureau

**Mr. Ugyen Norbu**, Chief Statistical Officer, Economic and Environmental Statistics Division, National Statistics Bureau

**CAMBODIA**

**Mr. Chettra Keo**, Director of National Account Statistics, National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning

**CHINA**

**Mr. HE Ping**, Deputy director, The National Bureau of Statistics

Ms. Chengzhi Jiang, Senior Staff Member, The National Bureau of Statistics

**HONG KONG, CHINA**

**Ms. Rebecca Wai Fun Siu**, Assistant Commissioner, Census and Statistics Department, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
Mr. Farshad Roshan Sangachin, Head of Quarterly Accounts Group, Statistical Center of Iran

MALAYSIA
Mr. Mohd Yazid Kasim, Senior Director, Change Management Office, Department of Statistics Malaysia, Putrajaya
Mr. Herzie Mohamed Nordin, Deputy Director National Account Statistics Division, Department of statistics Malaysia, Putrajaya
Mr. Siti Hajar, Department of Statistics Malaysia, Putrajaya

MALDIVES
Ms. Aishath Shahuda, Chief Statistician, National Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of National Planning and Infrastructure (MNPI)

MONGOLIA
Ms. Erdenesan Eldev-Ochir, Director of Economic Statistics Department, National Statistics Office of Mongolia

NEW ZEALAND
Mr. Hamish Grant, Principal Analyst, National Accounts, Statistics New Zealand

PAKISTAN
Mr. Attiq ur Rehman, Director of National Accounts, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
Mr. Wasim Abbas, Director (Statistics), Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

PHILIPPINES
Mr. Benjamin Arsenio Navarro, Director, International Cooperation Unit, Philippines Statistical Authority
Mr. Joseph Cajita, Chief Statistical Specialist, Philippine Statistics Authority
Mr. Ivan Harris Tanyag, Researcher, National Defense College of the Philippines

PORTUGAL
Mr. Ricardo Jorge Assuncao Monteiro, Specialty College(s) Political Economy

SAMOA
Ms. Lilianetelani Hennemann, ACEO-Economics Statistics, Samoa Bureau of Statistics

SINGAPORE
Ms. Wai Yee Yen, Deputy Director, Singapore Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry

SRI LANKA
Mrs. Udaya Mheshwaran, Director, Department of Census and Statistics
Ms. Shyamalie Kodikira, Additional Director General (Statistics), Department of Census and Statistics

TURKEY
Mr. Ahmet Tayyar Firat, Director of Monetary and Financial Data Division, Central Bank of Turkey
Mr. Cihat Erce İŞBAŞAR, Head of National Accounts, Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat)
Mr. Ahmet Kursad Dosdoğru, Vice President, Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat)
Ms. Aycan Sultan Ozek, Head Expert, Statistics Division, Central Bank of Turkey
Ms. Tülay Korkmaz, Vice President, Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat)

VIET NAM
Mr. Trung Tien Nguyen, Deputy Director General, General Statistics Office of Viet Nam, Ministry of Planning and Investment

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Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)

Mr. Mahinthan J. Mariasingham, Senior Statistician, Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department

SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY (SPC)

Ms. Nilima Lal, Economic Statistics Advisor, Noumea, New Caledonia

Ms. Elizabeth Ragimana, Statistics Adviser- Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Analysis, Noumea, New Caledonia

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ESCAP SECRETARIAT

STATISTICS DIVISION (SD)

Ms. Rachael Joanne Beaven, Director

Ms. Rikke Munk Hansen, Chief, Economic and Environment Statistics Section

Ms. Petra Nahmias, Chief, Population and Social Statistics Section

Mr. Anthony Dvarskas, Regional Adviser, Environment Statistics

Ms. Afsaneh Yazdani, Statistician

Mr. Alick Nyasulu, Statistician and Secretary of the Steering Group for RPES

Mr. David Rausis, Associate Statistician

Ms. Ayodele Marshall, Associate Statistician

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