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

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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Progress made since the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics: report of the bureau

Activities of the bureau since the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics

Note by the secretariat

Summary

In the present report, the secretariat provides a summary of the activities of the bureau since the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics. The Committee may wish to take note of the report and provide feedback to the bureau on its activities.

I. Introduction

1. At its eighth session, held in August 2022, the Committee on Statistics elected the bureau to perform its functions over the intersessional period until the ninth session of the Committee. The Committee elected the following members of the bureau:

Chair:	Mr. Batdavaa Batmunkh (Mongolia)
Vice-Chairs:	Ms. Maria Musudroka (Fiji) Mr. Gobinda Prasad Samanta (India) Mr. Bakhodir Begalov (Uzbekistan)
Member:	Ms. Piyanuch Wuttisorn (Thailand)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Eng Chuan Koh (Singapore)

2. During the bureau's tenure, Mr. Kemueli Naiqama replaced Ms. Musudroka as the Vice-Chair representing Fiji, and Mr. Saurabh Garg replaced Mr. Prasad Samanta as the Vice-Chair representing India.

3. The present report contains a summary of the activities of the bureau during the period from August 2022 to July 2024.

* ESCAP/CST(9)/1.

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II. Method of work

4. The existing bureau has operated under the terms of reference[1] endorsed by the Committee at its eighth session in its decision 6.

5. During the period under review, the bureau held four physical meetings:

(a) On 26 August 2022, immediately following the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics;

(b) On 27 February 2023, as an open side event to the fifty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission;

(c) On 7 September 2023, on the margins of an expert group meeting on data governance in the Asia-Pacific region;

(d) On 26 February 2024, as an open side event to the fifty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission.

6. The bureau also held five online meetings on the following dates: 18 January 2023; 8 May 2023; 12 January 2024; 28 May 2024; and 16 September 2024.

7. In addition to these meetings, the bureau discussed its workplan and provided guidance on the work of the secretariat by email.

III. Discussion held and decisions made by the bureau since the eighth session of the Committee

A. Selection of 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

8. In its decision 46/101, the Statistical Commission endorsed the formation of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and supported the formation of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For both groups, members are selected by the regional mechanisms to serve for a two-year period. In that regard, the bureau of the Committee on Statistics was tasked with submitting nominations for new members by May 2023.

9. To ensure equitable geographic representation, nominations are made in accordance with the United Nations standard geographical regions,[2] which are not fully aligned with the membership and geographical coverage of the regional commissions. Referring to the standard, the bureau is responsible for nominating members from the following subregions: Central Asia, East Asia, Oceania, South Asia and South-East Asia. The following States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific do not belong to any of these subregions and instead nominate through the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE): Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, New Zealand, Russian Federation and Türkiye. On the other hand, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which are also dual

[1] ESCAP/CST/2022/7, annex.

[2] See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/.

members of ECE and the Commission, belong to the standard subregion of Central Asia. Therefore, their potential membership in 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 is coordinated by the Commission.

10. The Chair of the Committee on Statistics wrote to the relevant Chief Statisticians on 24 February 2023, informing them of the process for electing 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 they can only be members of one group. The secretariat subsequently received several emails and calls inquiring about the work of the groups and the selection process.

11. For the six positions of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators coordinated by the Commission, seven nominations were received, from China, India, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, the Philippines and Tonga. For the five positions of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development coordinated by the Commission, five nominations were received, from Mongolia, Pakistan, Singapore, Uzbekistan and Vanuatu.

12. At its meeting on 8 May 2023, the bureau discussed the nominations received and provided guidance to the Chair for the selection of members in accordance with the respective terms of reference.[3] As a result, five recommendations were put forward for the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators: India (existing member), Japan (new member), Kyrgyzstan (new member), Philippines (new member) and Tonga (existing member). In addition, five recommendations were made for the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Mongolia (new member), Pakistan (existing member), Singapore (new member), Uzbekistan (new member) and Vanuatu (new member). On 19 May 2023, the Chair of the Committee wrote to the Chair of the fifty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, Ms. Gabriella Vukovich, with these recommendations.

B. Evaluation of and feedback on the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics

13. The bureau reviewed feedback from the evaluation of the eighth session of the Committee. The session was attended by 38 members and associate members; one permanent observer; one entity of the Secretariat; 11 United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds; five intergovernmental organizations; and two other entities. In total, there were 201 registered participants, of whom 94 were female (47 per cent).

14. The evaluation results indicated that the issues discussed reflected present trends and issues in the Asia-Pacific region and were useful for the attending Governments and organizations. In addition, the evaluation

[3] E/CN.3/2017/2, annex I, and E/CN.3/2022/4, annex I.

highlighted the value of sharing country experiences and the opportunities to learn from each other.

15. The participants rated the Committee's efficiency as high and were very satisfied with the organization of the event and the support extended by the secretariat. They found that the session documents were easily accessible and provided in a timely manner, and they assessed communications and technical support as being effective and timely.

C. Taking action on the decisions made at the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics

16. At its meeting on 26 August 2022 and at subsequent meetings, the bureau discussed and agreed on how to take action on the decisions made at the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics.

17. Regarding decision 1 on endorsing the revised terms of reference of the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics and decision 2 on the continuation of the technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the bureau noted the link to decision 5 on the review of the Committee structures.

18. Regarding decision 3 on data governance, the bureau discussed it and agreed on the following actions:

(a) Develop a conceptual framework on data governance;

(b) Recommend that data governance serve as the topic for the seventeenth Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific, organized by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific;

(c) Conduct a stocktake of the data governance arrangements in countries across the region;

(d) Broaden discussions on data governance to include other stakeholders, possibly in the format of expert dialogues.

19. Data governance was the focus of the seventeenth Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific, held on 14 and 15 December 2022. In addition, the secretariat organized an expert meeting on data governance in Asia and the Pacific, held from 5 to 7 September 2023, during which the bureau members met in person. At that meeting, members of the bureau and the secretariat shared information on key upcoming statistical activities and events. The bureau discussed and agreed on the next steps for work on data governance, including plans for refining the framework and compendium of country practices. The data governance framework and compendium were discussed further in a series of subregional Asia-Pacific Stats Café sessions, held on 22 January, 29 January, 5 February and 12 February 2024, where bureau members from Fiji, India, Mongolia and Singapore shared their experiences.

20. Regarding decision 4 on complementary progress measures, at the meeting on 26 August 2022, members of the bureau shared their related work, including challenges faced with regard to climate change-related statistics. The secretariat updated the bureau on the work of a task force from ECE that was preparing guidance on the role of national statistical offices in meeting national climate change objectives and in which the secretariat participates. Bureau members were invited to join the task force. The secretariat also provided

information on an upcoming global expert forum on disaster-related statistics and the global list of climate change-related indicators agreed to by the Statistical Commission in 2022.

21. Also at its meeting on 26 August 2022, the bureau discussed decision 5 and agreed that the bureau should act as a steering committee for the review of the Committee structure. The secretariat, under the direction of the bureau, shared an approach paper on 26 October 2022, which was refined on the basis of comments received from the bureau and through discussions at the bureau meeting held on 18 January 2023. The bureau discussed the emerging recommendations at its meeting on 7 September 2023.

22. The review was further discussed by the bureau at its meeting on 28 May 2024, where the members agreed to conduct two formal consultation rounds with support from the secretariat. For each round, a consultation paper would be circulated with a feedback form. In addition, two sessions of the Asia-Pacific Stats Café were conducted under the heading "Committee on Statistics: Fit for the Future" on 20 June and 30 July 2024, which were chaired by the bureau Chair and the bureau Rapporteur, respectively. The proposed recommendations were presented, and the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments on the recommendations. The final recommendations agreed upon by the bureau are included in the note by the secretariat on progress made in implementing the decisions taken by the Committee on Statistics at its eighth session.[4]

D. Discussions at the Statistical Commission

23. At its meeting on 18 January 2023, the bureau reviewed the agenda for the fifty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission.

24. In order to present a unified voice from the Asia-Pacific region, the bureau requested the secretariat to prepare draft talking points on specific agenda items. Once received, the bureau would approve the talking points, and a member of the bureau would then deliver the statement on behalf of the bureau at the fifty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission. The draft written statements were circulated to all members of the Committee for their comments on 10 February 2023 and discussed at the open meeting of the bureau on 27 February 2023, where it was agreed on which items the bureau would make statements. On behalf of the bureau, the Chair made statements on the following agenda items: 3 (g), on regional statistics development; 3 (h), on environmental-economic accounting; 3 (i), on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics; and 3 (n), on big data.

25. At its meeting on 12 January 2024, the bureau reviewed the proposed agenda for the fifty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission and highlighted items for intervention by delegates, possibly on behalf of the region. Those agenda items were: 3 (a), on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics; 3 (b), on working methods of the Statistical Commission; 3 (c), on data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; 3 (d), on data science; 3 (f), on national accounts; 3 (g), on economic statistics; 3 (h), on environmental-economic accounting; 3 (j), on social statistics; 3 (k), on gender statistics; 3 (l), on population and housing censuses; and 3 (m), on regional statistical development.

[4] ESCAP/CST(9)/4.

26. In order to present a unified voice from the Asia-Pacific region, the bureau requested the secretariat to prepare draft talking points on specific agenda items. Once received, the bureau would approve the talking points, and a member of the bureau would then deliver the statement on behalf of the bureau at the fifty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission. The draft written statements were circulated to all members of the Committee for their comments on 7 February 2024 and discussed at the open meeting of the bureau on 26 February 2024, where it was agreed on which items the bureau would make statements. The bureau made statements on the following agenda items: 3 (d), on data science, and 3 (k), on gender statistics.

E. Preparation for the ninth session of the Committee on Statistics

27. At its meeting on 7 September 2023, the bureau discussed preparations for the ninth session of the Committee on Statistics, including possible topics for the emerging issue paper.

28. At the meeting on 28 May 2024, the bureau discussed preparations for the ninth session of the Committee on Statistics, including midterm reflections on progress made with regard to the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind,[5] the review of the Committee structure and the emerging issue paper on agile statistical systems. The bureau reviewed the draft agenda and the draft annotated provisional agenda of the ninth session of the Committee on Statistics and provided inputs on the focus of agenda items and documents for the session.

29. The bureau met on 16 September 2024 to review preparations for the ninth session of the Committee on Statistics, including plans for the high-level segment.

IV. Issues for consideration by the Committee

30. The Committee is invited to take note of the report and offer feedback to the bureau on its activities.

31. Considering that the bureau has been operating in line with the terms of reference endorsed by the Committee at its eighth session, the Committee may wish to share their perspectives on the effectiveness of the new terms of reference.

[5] ESCAP/75/4/Add.1.