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

Ninth session
Bangkok, 11–13 December 2024

Report of the Committee on Statistics on its ninth session

I. Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific or brought to its attention

A. Matters calling for action by the Commission

1. The following recommendations of the Committee on Statistics are brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for its consideration and possible action:

Recommendation 1

Acknowledging the need to accelerate the implementation of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, the Committee on Statistics recommends that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific call upon its members and associate members to increase political and financial support for inclusive statistical systems to help achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and call for support from development partners, as appropriate.

Recommendation 2

The Committee on Statistics requests that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific acknowledge that the successful implementation of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind requires a whole-of-society approach that recognizes the importance of and facilitates the agency and participation of all governmental actors and continue engagement with development partners[1] and other relevant stakeholders in decision-making for official statistics.

[1] Development partners include international, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society.

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Recommendation 3

The Committee on Statistics requests that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific encourage Governments to develop strategic visions for data that recognize the power of data and are supported by national partnerships that bring together political leaders and technical experts for the identification of shared priorities and the establishment of inclusive data governance arrangements.

B. Matters brought to the attention of the Commission

2. The following decisions adopted by the Committee are brought to the attention of the Commission:

Decision 1

The Committee on Statistics decides to promote a whole-of-society approach to advance the implementation of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, with an emphasis on sharing country research and experiences and facilitating the provision of technical assistance, while bearing in mind the need to stay within existing regular budget resources.

Decision 2

The Committee on Statistics decides to advance the development of national data partnerships and the establishment of national data user advisory groups to advise chief statisticians and to support the development of strategic visions for data, with an emphasis on sharing country research and experiences and facilitating the provision of technical assistance, while bearing in mind the need to stay within existing regular budget resources.

Decision 3

The Committee on Statistics decides that building agile statistical systems should be among the priorities of its work. It requests the bureau to propose, with support from the secretariat and in consultation with member States and development partners, draft recommendations to that end for consideration by the Committee, while bearing in mind the need to stay within existing regular budget resources.

Decision 4

The Committee on Statistics decides to replace its groups and communities of practice – the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics, the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the Asia-Pacific Data Integration Community of Practice, the technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific and the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific – with more flexible task teams; requests the bureau, in consultation with the secretariat, to oversee the functioning of the teams; and requests the secretariat to report on the work of the teams, as appropriate, in its note on the activities of the bureau submitted to the Committee at its regular sessions, while bearing in mind the need to stay within existing regular budget resources.

II. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

3. The Committee held its ninth session in Bangkok from 11 to 13 December 2024. The session was opened by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Digital Economy and Society of Thailand, Mr. Prasert Jantararuangthong. The Executive Secretary and the Chair of the eighth session of the Committee, Mr. Batdavaa Batmunkh, made statements.

4. The Committee comprised a high-level segment, held on 11 December 2024, and a senior officials segment, held on 12 and 13 December 2024.

B. Attendance

5. Representatives of the following member States attended: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nauru, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, Türkiye, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

6. Representatives of the following associate members also attended: Cook Islands and Hong Kong, China.

7. Representatives of the following offices of the Secretariat and other United Nations entities attended: International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, International Telecommunication Union, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Statistics Korea-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Centre of Excellence for Statistics on Crime and Criminal Justice in Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Population Fund and World Bank Group.

8. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations attended: Asian Development Bank, Commonwealth of Independent States and Pacific Community.

9. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other entities attended: International Women's Development Agency, Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, Vital Strategies and World Vision East Asia.

10. In accordance with rule 12 of the Commission's rules of procedure, the Chair and Vice-Chairs examined the credentials of all the representatives and found them to be in order.

C. Election of officers

11. The Committee elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. Eng Chuan Koh (Singapore)
Vice-Chairs:	Ms. Jianhong Ruan (China) Mr. Olzhas Tuleuov (Kazakhstan) Mr. Bakhodir Begalov (Uzbekistan)
Member:	Ms. Aritita Tekaieti (Kiribati)
Rapporteur:	Ms. Aishath Hassan (Maldives)

D. Agenda

12. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session:

   (a) Opening addresses;

   (b) Election of officers;

   (c) Adoption of the agenda.

High-level segment

2. Harnessing the power of data to leave no one behind.

Senior officials segment

3. Emerging issue: agile statistical systems that are fit for the future.

4. Progress made since the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics:

   (a) Progress made in implementing the decisions taken by the Committee at its eighth session;

   (b) Report of the bureau;

   (c) Reports of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific.

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5. Other matters.

6. Adoption of the report of the Committee on Statistics on its ninth session.

E. Other events

13. The ninth session of the Committee was convened in conjunction with the twentieth session of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, held on 9 and 10 December 2024, and the nineteenth Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific, held on 10 December 2024, as part of Asia-Pacific Statistics Week.

14. The following events were held in conjunction with the ninth session of the Committee:

(a) 9 December 2024: expert group meeting on unleashing the power of big data in official statistics, organized by the secretariat;

(b) 11 December 2024: side event on unlocking the power of civil registration data for effective governance, organized by the secretariat;

(c) 12 December 2024: side event on adopting a country-first approach to drive smarter data monitoring, co-organized by the Subregional Office for the Pacific and the Pacific Community;

(d) 13 December 2024: expert group meeting on data and artificial intelligence for sustainable development, co-organized by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and the secretariat;

(e) 13 December 2024: session of lightning talks on the power of data to spark innovation, organized by the secretariat;

(f) 13 December 2024: intersessional meeting of the bureaux of the eighth and ninth sessions of the Committee on Statistics.

III. Account of proceedings

15. The discussions held during the session have been summarized in an account of proceedings (see annex II).

Annex I

List of documents

Symbol	*Title*	*Agenda item*
General series		
ESCAP/CST(9)/1	Provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/CST(9)/1/Add.1	Annotated provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/CST(9)/2 and ESCAP/CST(9)/2/Corr.1	Harnessing the power of data to leave no one behind: reflections on the status of implementation of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind	2
ESCAP/CST(9)/3	Agile statistical systems that are fit for the future	3
ESCAP/CST(9)/4	Progress made in implementing the decisions taken by the Committee on Statistics at its eighth session	4 (a)
ESCAP/CST(9)/5	Activities of the bureau since the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics	4 (b)
ESCAP/CST(9)/6	Report of the Committee on Statistics on its ninth session	
ESCAP/79/19	Report of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its eighteenth session	4 (c)
ESCAP/80/19	Report of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its nineteenth session	4 (c)
Limited series		
ESCAP/CST(9)/L.1	Draft report	6

Note: The information for participants, the list of participants and the tentative programme are available at www.unescap.org/events/2024/committee-statistics-ninth-session.

Annex II

Account of proceedings

I. Introduction

1. The ninth session of the Committee on Statistics was held under the theme “The power of data”. The topics discussed during the session had been determined by the bureau of the eighth session. During the ninth session, representatives of the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), intergovernmental bodies, United Nations entities, specialized agencies and other stakeholders engaged in a dialogue on statistical development in Asia and the Pacific.

II. Summary of discussions

A. Harnessing the power of data to leave no one behind (agenda item 2)

2. The Committee had before it the note by the secretariat entitled “Harnessing the power of data to leave no one behind: reflections on the status of implementation of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind” (ESCAP/CST(9)/2) and its corrigendum (ESCAP/CST(9)/2/Corr.1).

3. Representatives of the following member States made statements: Bangladesh, China, Fiji, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uzbekistan.

4. Representatives of the following United Nations entities also made statements: International Labour Organization (ILO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

5. A representative of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, an intergovernmental organization, also made a statement.

6. The Committee benefited from a high-level panel discussion on the whole-of-government approach to building agile statistical systems, followed by a round-table discussion on the whole-of-society approach to building agile statistical systems. The high-level panel featured the following speakers: Minister of Housing, Land and Urban Development of Maldives, Mr. Ali Haidar Ahmed; Minister for Justice of Fiji, Mr. Siromi Turaga; Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Planning and Investment and Director General of the Lao Statistics Bureau, Ms. Phonesaly Souksavath; and National Statistician and Civil Registrar General of the Philippine Statistics Authority, Mr. Claire Dennis Mapa. The discussion was moderated by the ESCAP Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme. The round-table discussion featured the following speakers: Chief Statistician of the World Bank and Director of its Development Data Group, Ms. Haishan Fu; Executive Director V, Commission on Population and Development of the Philippines, Ms. Lisa Grace S. Bersales; Director of Strategy and Innovation for the East Asia Regional Office of World Vision, Mr. Seyong Park; and Vice-President of Data Solutions of Telkomsel (Indonesia), Mr. Alfian Manullang. The discussion was moderated by youth

advocate, artificial intelligence engineer and representative of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development Youth Forum 2023 and the United Nations World Data Forum 2023, Ms. Prim Rajasurang Wongkrasaemongkol.

7. The Committee reiterated its commitment to implementing the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind[1] and stressed the continued importance and relevance of the Declaration.

8. The Committee took note of the progress made on the action areas and commitments set out in the Declaration and in the collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community [2] that underpinned it, and acknowledged that significant efforts had been made in several areas, including national Sustainable Development Goal data platforms, big data utilization, paperless data collection, reviews of national statistical systems, environmental-economic accounting and data disaggregation to address the needs of vulnerable groups, including through small area estimation.

9. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the secretariat and other development partners for the support extended to countries in implementing the Declaration.

10. Notwithstanding the efforts that had been made, the Committee noted the urgent need to accelerate progress in order to meet critical data needs to inform decision-making at the national and subnational levels, considering that only six years remained to achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Significant capacity and technical gaps persisted, including for the widespread adoption of non-traditional data sources, such as administrative data and big data, and of new technology, such as machine learning, to advance economic, population and environmental statistics. In addition, there was a need for further financial and capacity development support, with a particular focus on small island developing States and territories.

11. In reflecting on progress made, gaps identified and lessons learned since the adoption of the Declaration, the Committee emphasized the need to enhance political and financial support for statistics, embrace a whole-of-society approach and promote strategic visions for data and national data partnerships.

12. The Committee acknowledged the benefits and necessity of expanding from a whole-of-government to a whole-of-society approach to better link data and policy. Several representatives shared initiatives undertaken towards that end, such as inclusive statistical forums for users and researchers and the expansion of advisory committees to include members from the private sector and academia in addition to government representatives. The need to strengthen data capacity to instil a data mindset in all stakeholder institutions and ensure data privacy and security were highlighted as key to successful national data partnerships and data governance arrangements.

13. Looking ahead, the Committee fully supported continued regional collaboration to implement the Declaration and harness the power of data, and several representatives expressed the willingness and intent of their

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

[2] E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1.

Governments to contribute national experience and expertise or provide funds or in-kind support to advance statistics development in the region.

14. The Committee was informed of initiatives undertaken by various United Nations entities to address data challenges and promote inclusivity, including the Women Count programme (UN-Women); the standards adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians at its nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first sessions (ILO); the international recommendations on refugee, internally displaced persons and statelessness statistics (UNHCR); and initiatives related to modernizing censuses, leveraging geospatial technologies and strengthening health and gender-based violence data systems (UNFPA).

15. The representative of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States highlighted the hub it had developed to provide its members with centralized access to statistical data and metadata, which featured an analytical system, a knowledge management system, multilingual accessibility and interactive visualization tools.

B. Emerging issue: agile statistical systems that are fit for the future (agenda item 3)

16. The Committee had before it the note by the secretariat on agile statistical systems that are fit for the future (ESCAP/CST(9)/3).

17. Representatives of the following member States made statements: Armenia, Bangladesh, China, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Thailand and Uzbekistan.

18. A representative of the Statistics Korea-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Centre of Excellence for Statistics on Crime and Criminal Justice in Asia and the Pacific also made a statement.

19. A representative of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, an intergovernmental organization, also made a statement.

20. A video presentation prepared by the secretariat was played, after which the Director of the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mr. Bakhodir Begalov, presented the key messages from the nineteenth Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok on 10 December 2024 under the theme "Agile statistical systems fit for the future".

21. The Committee underscored the important role of agile statistical systems in addressing the growing demand for high-quality, real-time, granular data in a time of rapid change driven by technological advancements.

22. The Committee noted the various initiatives that had been undertaken by member States to support the development of agile statistical systems at the national level. These initiatives included efforts to improve statistical business processes by adopting international frameworks, such as the Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations and the Generic Statistical Business Process Model. The application of artificial intelligence and data science tools to automate data coding and other statistical production processes was also highlighted as an approach that could enhance the efficiency of statistical production.

23. The Committee acknowledged the need to design statistical systems with a strong focus on understanding and addressing the evolving data needs of diverse stakeholders, which entailed ensuring that national statistical offices would respond effectively to the requirements of governments, academic institutions, researchers, businesses and the general public. National examples of mechanisms for stakeholder engagement across the data value chain were presented, including national statistical councils, as well as initiatives to enhance statistical literacy.

24. The Committee recognized a range of national initiatives aimed at enhancing data dissemination and improving the user experience. Those initiatives included the development of centralized data repositories, data portals and data visualization tools designed to make official statistics more accessible and user-friendly for diverse stakeholders, alongside the publication of metadata. The importance of leveraging digital technologies and platforms to streamline dissemination processes, including the use of application programming interfaces, was highlighted.

25. The Committee noted the importance of expanding the use of non-traditional data sources, such as administrative data, earth observation and other geospatial data, data gathered through web scraping, scanner data and citizen data, to meet user demands for granular and timely data more effectively.

26. The Committee underscored the need to invest in capacity-building and training programmes for statistical staff at all levels, including senior leadership. Those initiatives included leadership development workshops to strengthen strategic decision-making, technical training on emerging tools and methodologies to keep pace with technological advancements and programmes designed to cultivate a culture of continuous learning and innovation. National examples highlighted efforts to implement flexible organizational structures to adapt to evolving demands and to promote inclusive human resources policies and practices that fostered diversity and equity. Such measures were aimed at developing a well-prepared, motivated and resilient workforce capable of effectively addressing the evolving challenges faced by national statistical systems.

27. Representatives of many member States emphasized the importance of national statistical development strategies, or other data strategies, in strengthening organizational capacity to address emerging opportunities and challenges effectively. National examples were provided, demonstrating how updated statistical legislation had supported the development of agile national statistical systems by fostering enhanced coordination and collaboration.

28. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for the support provided across various areas of statistical governance, production and dissemination, aimed at enhancing the agility of national statistical systems.

29. A representative of the Statistics Korea-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Centre of Excellence for Statistics on Crime and Criminal Justice in Asia and the Pacific highlighted the support it provided to member States in relation to crime and criminal justice data and emphasized the urgency of addressing cybercrime in the Asia-Pacific region.

C. Progress made since the eighth session of the Committee on Statistics (agenda item 4)

Progress made in implementing the decisions taken by the Committee at its eighth session (agenda item 4 (a))

30. The Committee had before it the note by the secretariat on progress made in implementing the decisions taken by the Committee at its eighth session (ESCAP/CST(9)/4).

31. Representatives of the following member States made statements: China, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Uzbekistan.

32. The Committee supported the decision to replace its groups and communities of practice with more flexible task teams and recommended that the draft terms of reference for those task teams be circulated to members and associate members for consultation prior to finalization. That approach would ensure the incorporation of diverse perspectives, thereby enhancing the scope, comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the task teams' work. In addition, the Committee suggested that the task teams provide annual written progress reports to the bureau to maintain transparency and accountability.

33. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for its efforts in advancing the implementation of decisions made at the Committee's eighth session. It acknowledged in particular the secretariat's work on data governance and climate change-related statistics. The Committee also recognized the value of the Asia-Pacific Stats Café sessions in facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences across the region.

34. The Committee took note of several national initiatives, highlighting innovative approaches to producing statistics. Those initiatives included the use of big data sources (such as satellite imagery, e-commerce platforms and mobile positioning data) and small area estimation techniques, as well as the enhanced use of administrative data sources with a focus on population censuses.

35. The representative of Indonesia, the host country of the regional hub on big data and data science for Asia and the Pacific, expressed the interest of his Government in fostering the sharing of knowledge and experience through the hub.

36. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the success of the conference on data governance and integration for maximum development impact, jointly organized by Statistics Korea and ESCAP, held in Seoul on 10 and 11 September 2024.

Report of the bureau (agenda item 4 (b))

37. The Committee had before it the note by the secretariat on the activities of the bureau since the eighth session of the Committee (ESCAP/CST(9)/5).

38. Representatives of the following member States made statements: China, Japan and Republic of Korea.

39. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the bureau for its leadership in supporting the Committee to fulfil its functions and extended its full support to the newly elected bureau. The Committee encouraged the new

bureau to ensure continued close cooperation and communication with the Committee during the intersessional period and to make concerted efforts to implement the Committee's decisions while ensuring transparency.

40. The representative of the Republic of Korea, who had been elected Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission at its fifty-fifth session, informed the Committee about a recent adjustment to the functioning of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission, whereby the Chair of each regional Committee on Statistics is invited to the meetings of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission. He thanked the Chair of the eighth session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics for attending those meetings and noted that he looked forward to working closely with the newly elected Chair. In addition, he informed the Committee that the membership of the Statistical Commission would be expanded, starting in 2026, when two vacancies would become available. Interested member States were encouraged to consult with their Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Mission to the United Nations, as well as the secretariat of the Statistical Commission.

Reports of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (agenda item 4 (c))

41. The Committee had before it the reports of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its eighteenth session (ESCAP/79/19) and on its nineteenth session (ESCAP/80/19).

42. The representative of Japan made a statement.

43. Representatives of the following United Nations entities also made statements: ILO and International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

44. The representative of Japan, the host country of the Institute, reaffirmed his Government's commitment to supporting the Institute and expressed its appreciation for the Institute's efforts in effectively responding to the needs of members and associate members. He acknowledged the growing and diverse demands for capacity development and encouraged the Institute to continue addressing those needs in collaboration with a broad range of partners.

45. Representatives from ILO and ITU recognized the pivotal role of the Institute in building statistical capacity and expressed their commitment to supporting the Institute's training programme. The representative of ITU also highlighted the resources available from ITU for leveraging mobile telephone data for official statistics and the free online training courses available through its academy.

D. Other matters (agenda item 5)

46. No other matters were discussed.

E. Adoption of the report of the Committee on Statistics on its ninth session (agenda item 6)

47. On 13 December 2024, the Committee adopted the report on its ninth session.