ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Committee on STATISTICS
11-13 December 2024
Power of Data

High-Level Panel on whole-of-government approach to building agile statistical systems

Concept Note

11 December 2024, 10:00-10:55 hrs., UN Conference Centre, Bangkok
Agenda Item 2

Background

The statistical community in Asia and the Pacific committed to advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development as set out in two documents: "A collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community",[1] endorsed at the fifth session of the Committee on Statistics in 2016 and the "Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind",[2] endorsed by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) at its seventy-fifth session in 2019.[3]

The 9th session of the Committee on Statistics will discuss progress made in implementing the Declaration. It starts with a high-level segment on 11 December which will reflect on priority actions that require resources, initiatives, engagement or other investment by Governments, as well as participation by the whole of society, to put the region fully on track to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Agenda item 2 will consider the document ESCAP/CST(9)/2 on 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. The document notes the need for increased political and financial support for inclusive national statistical systems and emphasizes that implementing the Declaration requires a whole-of-society approach, involving both state and non-state actors in decision-making processes for official statistics.

Objectives

This is the first of two panel/round tables. This first panel will focus on the role of government in building agile statistical systems and will be followed by a round table discussion with speakers from outside government.

[1] E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1.
[2] ESCAP/75/4/Add.1.
[3] ESCAP/75/9

This first panel discussion will consider **the following questions:**

- *Why has progress been insufficient in meeting the commitments of the collective vision?*
- *What strategic, institutional and resource support is needed to strengthen statistical systems and what can be done to make the financial case for investing in data and data systems?*
- *How can statistical systems extend their role of providing data for public decision-making to also support transparency, foster accountability, and drive innovation?*
- *How can countries implement a whole-of-government approach to building national statistical systems which includes stakeholders from across government and beyond government?*

Organization & speakers

The panel discussion is organized under Agenda item 2 which will consider the document ESCAP/CST(9)/2 on 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.

The panel will have speakers from across different parts of government providing their perspectives on building agile statistical systems. Speakers will be asked not to use Powerpoint slides.

Distinguished Speakers

- Dr Ali Haidar Ahmed, Minister of Housing, Land and Urban Development, the Maldives.
- H.E. Mr. Siromi Turaga, Minister, Ministry for Justice, Fiji.
- Mme. Phonesaly Souksavath, Deputy Minister and Director General of Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning and Investment.
- Hon. Claire Dennis Mapa, National Statistician and Civil Registrar General, Philippine Statistics Authority

Moderator

- Lin Yang, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP.

Discussion questions

There will be two rounds of questions which will explore how to build agile statistical systems which meet the needs of government and other data users.

First round of questions

It would be appreciated if our distinguished speakers could please stay within 4 minutes for the intervention.

- **Dr Ali Haidar Ahmed, Minister of Housing, Land and Urban Development, the Maldives:**
    - Why do you think progress to strengthen statistical systems has been slower than hoped?
    - What specific strategies have you been using in the Maldives to promote collaboration across government as part of a whole-of-government approach to building a stronger statistical system?

- **H.E. Mr. Siromi Turaga, Minister for Justice, Fiji**
    - Why do you think progress to strengthen statistical systems has been slower than hoped?
    - Given the importance of data privacy and data security in a whole-of-government approach to building strong statistical systems can I also ask what steps Fiji is taking to protect citizen data while still enabling effective data sharing across government departments?

- **Mme. Phonesaly Souksavath, Deputy Minister and Director General of Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning and Investment.**
    - Why do you think progress to strengthen statistical systems has been slower than hoped?
    - How can development partners support a country like Laos to develop a strong statistical system through a whole of government approach?

- **Hon. Dennis S. Mapa, National Statistician and Civil Registrar General Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).**
    - Why do you think progress to strengthen statistical systems has been slower than hoped?
    - Given your unique role leading both the statistical authority as well as the civil registration and now national identification authority you understand the importance of data privacy and data security in a whole-of-government approach to building strong statistical systems. Can I ask what steps the Philippines is taking to protect citizen data while still enabling effective data sharing across government departments?

Second round of questions

In the background paper we have noted that achieving the 2030 Agenda requires a multi-stakeholder approach that extends beyond governments.

Can each speaker share one or two practical steps which could be taken by countries to build a whole-of-society approach to implement the Declaration on Navigating policy with data to leave no one behind?

Speakers will have a maximum of three minutes for the second round of questions.

Conclusion

The panel will finish with the moderator highlighting key issues and thanking the speakers.

After the completion of the two formal sessions ministers and heads of delegations are invited to deliver brief statements on national efforts to implement the commitments of the collective vision and framework for action, and the Declaration. They may also want to share their perspectives on the midpoint reflections and express their commitment to the proposed priority actions outlined in document (ESCAP/CST(9)/2).

Short bio details of moderator and speakers



Moderator: Lin Yang is the Deputy Executive Secretary for the Programme of ESCAP overseeing programmes on finance, social development, statistics, along with five regional institutions. She coordinates ESCAP's regional collaboration with other UN agencies. Previously she led Strategic Planning and Communication Services at DESA, advising on intergovernmental processes and reviews of the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, SAMOA Pathway, and Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.



Dr Ali Haidar Ahmed, Minister of Housing, Land and Urban Development, for the Maldives obtained his Bachelor in Town and Country Planning from the University of Manchester and his PhD in Planning Studies from University College London. He has worked in various roles in the Government of the Maldives and was appointed as the Minister of Housing, Land and Urban Development in 2023.



H.E. Mr. Siromi Turaga, Minister for Justice, Fiji, appointed in June 2024, and previously served as Attorney General and Minister for Justice since December 2022, is a lawyer and politician who brings over 30 years of legal and public service experience. He has served as a Resident Magistrate, Principal Legal Officer, and legal consultant, specializing in criminal, civil, family, and land matters. A practicing Barrister and Solicitor since 1999, Hon. Turaga holds a Bachelor of Law and Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice from USP, along with specialized diplomas in Litigation and Refugee Law. He is also a Methodist Lay Preacher, actively engaged in community programs, and is married with four children.



Mme. Phonesaly Souksavath, Deputy Minister and Director General of Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning and Investment, became the first female head of the Bureau in July 2020. She was recently appointed to be a member of National Steering Committee on SDGs Implementation and the National Steering Committee to lead the 5th Lao Population and Housing Census. Under her leadership, she is committed to continuing to lead the development of Lao's national statistical systems within the new data ecosystem and to working on cooperation in the areas of statistics at regional and international levels.



Hon. Dennis S. Mapa, National Statistician and Civil Registrar General Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), was appointed in 2019. He previously served as dean and professor at the School of Statistics at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City and as the vice president and executive director of the Statistical Center Research Foundation at the University of Philippines. He has a bachelor's degree in statistics as well an MA Economics and MS Statistics and a Ph.D. in economics.

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