

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific****Seventy-sixth session**

Bangkok, 21 May 2020

Item 5 (j) of the provisional agenda*

Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for**Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: statistics****Report of the Governing Council of the Statistical
Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its fifteenth session***Summary*

The fifteenth session of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific was held in Chiba, Japan, on 9 and 10 December 2019. During the session, Council members expressed their views on the independent evaluation and advised on the next steps for the finalization of the 2020–2024 strategic plan. The Council welcomed the proposals for the celebration of the Institute's fiftieth anniversary in 2020 and expressed its interest in contributing to the celebrations. Members reviewed proposals and made suggestions relating to the celebratory events. In addition, the Council considered the report of the Director of the Institute on its achievements in 2019 and the proposed workplan for 2020.

The Council reviewed the evaluation report presented by the independent evaluator and took note of the recommendations. Bearing in mind that the independent evaluation of the Institute was undertaken for the formulation of the 2020–2024 strategic plan, the Council broadly accepted the recommendations made in the independent evaluation report.

The Council endorsed the draft 2020–2024 strategic plan subject to minor changes as required. It also reviewed and endorsed the work programme and financial plan of the Institute for the year 2020.

* ESCAP/76/L.1/Rev. 1.

I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

1. Having reviewed the progress achieved by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific as well as its administrative and financial status, the Governing Council acknowledges the significant achievements of the Institute, especially in light of the staffing situation in 2019. The Council appreciates the support from members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), training institutions and partners for the activities of the Institute.

2. The Council calls on members and associate members of ESCAP to continue to provide and gradually increase voluntary cash contributions as well as in-kind contributions to support the activities of the Institute.

3. Having reviewed the evaluation report presented by the independent evaluator and taken note of the recommendations therein, and bearing in mind that the independent evaluation of the Institute was conducted for the formulation of the 2020–2024 strategic plan, the Council:

(a) Broadly accepts the recommendations made in the independent evaluation report;

(b) Notes with concern that the qualitative nature of the independent evaluation may not have adequately considered the situation of all countries in the region, and requests ESCAP and the Institute to be more inclusive in the scope and coverage of their activities in the future;

(c) Raises concerns about the human resource scenarios and recommends that ESCAP not interpret those scenarios as implying a certain human resource profile for the Institute;

(d) Notes the intention of ESCAP to discuss a human- and financial-resource-mobilization strategy with member States for consideration by the Council in 2020.

4. Having reviewed the draft 2020–2024 strategic plan and expressed support for the broad strategic direction of improving targeting and the multiplier effect, the Council notes that the strategic plan is focused on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and adequately addresses the following areas: training on big data, data analytics and applications; organization- and management-related training for the senior-level managers in the national statistical systems; improving e-learning training programmes; and the importance of face-to-face training, including blended training and long-term training provided with the support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

5. The Council welcomes the willingness of countries and international organizations to cooperate in the delivery of training in the region and subregions.

6. The Council agrees to a short targeted consultation with the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific and subregional organizations (through electronic communication only).

7. The Council endorses the draft 2020–2024 strategic plan subject to minor changes, if required.

8. The Council welcomes the proposal on the celebration of the Institute's fiftieth anniversary and expresses interest in contributing to the celebrations.

9. Having reviewed the document, the Council endorses the work programme and financial plan of the Institute for the year 2020.

10. The Council agrees that its sixteenth session will be held in Chiba, Japan, on 30 November and 1 December 2020.

II. Proceedings

A. Matters arising from the fourteenth session of the Governing Council

(Agenda item 2)

11. The Council had before it a note by the secretariat on matters arising from its fourteenth session (ESCAP/SIAP/GC/2019/1). It noted with satisfaction the action taken and the current status of the matters as reported by the Institute.

B. Report of the Director of the Institute

(Agenda item 3)

12. The Council had before it the report of the Director of the Institute (ESCAP/SIAP/GC/2019/2). The Director highlighted key results and accomplishments in 2019 and summarized the Institute's financial and administrative status.

13. The Director said that the Institute's major focus in 2019 had been to deliver training on the production of high-quality statistics on the indicators for monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and to modernize statistical business processes to improve the capability of member States. Efforts had also been made to strengthen partnerships for the delivery of training programmes through national and subregional training institutions and to expand the base of resource persons to support the Institute's course delivery.

14. The Institute had organized 11 training courses, workshops and seminars attended by 944 participants from 52 countries in 2019, as of 30 September. All the training programmes had achieved targets based on key performance indicators. Workshops and seminars had also addressed institutional issues, including stakeholder engagement and designing national strategies for statistical development. The achievements during the year were consistent with the 2015–2019 strategic plan of the Institute and the approval given by the Council in its previous session.

15. The Institute had delivered training programmes in collaboration with the Department of Statistics of Malaysia, Statistics Korea and the Government of Japan. The Institute had also delivered training programmes in collaboration with international agencies, including the following: Asian Development Bank; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); International Labour Organization; International Monetary Fund; Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century; Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat; Statistics Division, ESCAP; and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

16. The Institute's core staffing structure consisted of ten full-time posts. Of those, six were at the professional level: one director (D-1), one deputy director (P-5), and four statisticians/lecturers (P-3). The remaining four were general service posts: one training assistant (G-6), one administrative assistant (G-6), one programme management assistant (G-5) and one staff assistant (G-5). All the posts in the Institute had been filled except one lecturer post. The person selected for that post would be joining in June 2020. The Institute had used the services of interns and consultants for the delivery of training programmes.

17. As of 30 September 2019, the Institute had a fund balance of \$6,283,587 from a total income of \$2,845,665, less expenditure of \$1,423,587, plus fund balance as of 1 January 2019 of \$4,861,509.

C. 2020–2024 strategic plan of the Institute

(Agenda item 4)

Evaluation of the Institute

(Agenda item 4 (a))

18. The Council had before it the report on the evaluation of the Institute (ESCAP/SIAP/GC/2019/3). The evaluator, consultant and ESCAP presented the summary of the report.

19. The report on the evaluation of the Institute contained the findings of an evaluation carried out by ESCAP in 2019 through an independent evaluator to review the performance of the Institute during the period from 2015 to 2019, including substantive relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, sustainability and gender and human rights issues in the programmes of the Institute. The evaluation provided recommendations to ESCAP member States and management, the Council and the Institute for the development of its 2020–2024 strategic plan.

20. The Council reviewed the evaluation report and recommendations and provided guidance for their implementation in the 2020–2024 strategic plan of the Institute.

21. The Council broadly accepted the recommendations made in the independent evaluation report.

22. The representative of Japan said that the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis methodology was not properly carried out as it did not consider the expected organizational conflicts (overlapping or unnecessary duplication) between the Institute and the Statistics Division of ESCAP. It was the position of his Government that the expansion of statistical coordination by the Institute, as recommended in the evaluation report, should not be taken up. The representative said that the evaluation was not acceptable to his Government and requested that the 2020–2024 strategic plan be formulated without reflections from the evaluation report.

23. The evaluator said that the Institute would be moving away from solely focusing on technical direct training, which had its limitations for enhancing the statistical capacity of countries in terms of reporting on Sustainable Development Goals, and would consider training higher-level staff and increasing its coordination and facilitation role, which was reflected in the human resource requirements scenarios.

24. Regarding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis methodology, the evaluator acknowledged that the evaluation had faced capacity limitations in collecting quantitative data. He said that the Institute would need to work with ESCAP to clearly delineate the roles of the respective organizations in order to avoid duplication.

25. The Council expressed concerns that the qualitative nature of the independent evaluation might not have adequately considered the situation of all countries in the region and asked ESCAP and the Institute to be more inclusive in the scope and coverage of their activities in the future. Some representatives said that the report did not encompass the Pacific member States, which faced a very different working situation from other member States in Asia as they had only one or two staff persons working on statistical subjects, and also indicated their high interest in environmental statistics. Furthermore, there were limited training opportunities for the Pacific and Central Asian member States, and the Pacific region lacked representation at the Institute as none of the Council members were from the Pacific.

26. The evaluator said that the Fiji Bureau of Statistics had been included in the preparation of the report in that its views had been shared through Skype interviews. It had been noted in the report that the Pacific and Central Asian member States were underrepresented in the Institute's activities. No case study had been done on the Pacific countries, owing to the need to focus the case studies on the areas where the Institute's activities had been centered and on the countries in which large numbers of staff members had received training at the Institute.

27. The Director of the Institute said that the current Council members had been elected at the seventy-fifth session of the Commission by vote. Both ESCAP and the Institute would continue to listen to the voices of the observers and work with the ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific.

28. The Council raised concerns about the human resource scenarios and recommended that ESCAP not interpret those scenarios as implying a certain human resource profile for the Institute. The representative of Japan said that he could not accept the evaluation report, explaining that although the report presented a rosy future for the Institute, it was requesting human resources that the Government of Japan could not accept. The staffing pattern of having only P-3 lecturers had already been agreed to at the fourteenth session of the Council. The difference between the P-4 and P-3 grade (minimum working experience of seven years compared to five years) was not enough justification for the Government of Japan to allow funding for a higher level of staff.

29. One representative supported the observations made by the representative of Japan, saying that the justification for the human resource requirement scenarios in the report was not clear and that it was difficult to understand the difference between a P-3 and P-4 staff member, nor was there any particular evidence that a P-3 staff member could not do the same level of work as a P-4 staff member. When deciding human resource matters, not only staff costs but also currency exchange fluctuations should be considered. Changing budget alignments was difficult for the Governments, and without financial support on the staffing costs it would be meaningless to discuss the restructuring of staff.

30. The evaluator said that the human resource requirements under each of the three scenarios for the future development of the Institute had not indicated a specific grade such as P-3 or P-4, but were rather an elaboration of the necessary capacities required of internal staff within the current budget allocation for the Institute.

31. The Director of the Statistics Division of ESCAP noted concerns from member States about the human resource requirement scenarios presented in the report, agreed that the logic and scenario behind recommendation No. 4 on human resources was not conclusive enough and acknowledged that it was difficult to differentiate between the P-3 and P-4 grades.

32. The Council noted the intention of ESCAP to discuss a human resource and financial resource mobilization strategy with member States for consideration by the Council in 2020.

33. The Director of the Statistics Division of ESCAP welcomed the findings of the evaluation, which showed the value of the Institute, and was in favor of accepting all recommendations with the Council members' support. The Council was informed that a management response would be prepared for submission to the Commission at its seventy-sixth session and that further discussions would be held with member States on a human- and financial-resource mobilization strategy.

Draft 2020–2024 strategic plan of the Institute

(Agenda item 4 (b))

34. The draft 2020–2024 strategic plan developed by the Institute was based on the recommendation made by the Council at its fourteenth session, in which it identified the following issues to be addressed in the plan: improving course effectiveness; impact of e-learning; supply and demand analysis; use of country expertise; mobilizing necessary resources to meet short-term demands; flexibility in delivery modalities and mobilization of expertise in highly specialized areas; better targeting and multiplier effect; and delivery through partnerships with national training institutions and other development partners. The draft developed by the Institute was circulated among members of small working groups set up by the Council for the purpose and was revised based on the comments and suggestions received. The draft was further revised to take into account the recommendations made in the evaluation report.

35. The Council had before it the draft 2020–2024 strategic plan of the Institute (ESCAP/SIAP/GC/2019/4). The Director of the Institute summarized the draft, which the Council then reviewed.

36. The Council endorsed the draft 2020–2024 strategic plan subject to minor changes, if required.

37. The Council welcomed the willingness of countries and international organizations to cooperate in the delivery of training in the region and subregions. In addition, the following suggestions were made:

(a) Noting the partnership between the Institute and ESCAP and the Russian Federation on statistical training and translation of the Institute's training materials into Russian for the Central Asian countries, the representative of China recommended that a similar partnership be established with the Government of China to translate the Institute's training materials into Chinese;

(b) The representative of India suggested that further partnerships could be taken up with the National Statistical Systems Training Academy in India;

(c) The representative of the Russian Federation expressed that country's continued commitment to contribute to the Institute through cash contributions and joint statistical activities;

(d) The representative of Thailand requested that the entry- and mid-level long-term courses be continued and suggested that the Institute should deliver training courses on topics such as the Sustainable Development Goals and big data in collaboration with national statistical office training institutes. The Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific could be utilized for cooperation between training organizations.

38. The Council agreed to a short targeted consultation with the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific and subregional organizations through electronic communication only. In response to a question from one representative about the necessity of consultation with the Network on the draft strategic plan, the Director of the Institute said that consultation with the Network and subregional organizations would be important in terms of partnerships and collaboration on training courses.

39. In response to a question from one representative regarding the proposal to hold the management seminar annually, the Director said that the proposal was based on the need for higher-level training, advocated by member States such as Thailand and Indonesia, for national statistical office heads to be able to address emerging problems, adding that many organizations and regional institutions held such seminars annually.

40. The representative of Japan said that his Government had been providing in-kind contributions for the current e-learning infrastructure of the Institute, but that additional financial resources from the host Government for that purpose would not be available. The Director expressed appreciation for the in-kind contributions provided by the Government of Japan for the current infrastructure and said that the Institute trust fund could be used to make the infrastructure more effective and visually appealing to participants and, by extension, more user-friendly.

41. The representative of China requested the removal of table 5, entitled “Contributions in 2015–2019 and projected contributions for 2020–2024”, from the annexes to the strategic plan since its inclusion would require approval from the Government of China. The Director said that the table had been added at the request of the representative of Bangladesh, who needed that kind of documentation to persuade the Government of Bangladesh to increase its cash contributions to the Institute. The Director suggested that the title of table 5 could be changed to “Contributions in 2015–2019 and projected voluntary contributions for 2020–2024”, thereby clarifying the voluntary nature of the contributions.

42. The representative of China noted the priority given to Sustainable Development Goal monitoring in future training programmes and requested that training on tier 1 indicators be provided. The Director noted the request and said that training on tier 1 indicators was under way and would continue to be carried out in the Institute’s training programmes.

D. Events for the fiftieth anniversary of the Institute

(Agenda item 5)

43. The Council had before it a note by the secretariat on events for the fiftieth anniversary of the Institute (ESCAP/SIAP/GC/2019/5).

44. The Council welcomed the proposal for the celebration of the Institute’s fiftieth anniversary and expressed its interest in contributing to the celebrations. The following suggestions were made:

(a) The representative of Bangladesh offered to connect that country's national festivals planned in 2020 with the fiftieth anniversary of the Institute;

(b) The representative of the Russian Federation was planning to organize an international conference on the digitization of statistics and proposed dedicating one session to promoting the Institute's activities;

(c) The representative of Thailand proposed uploading documentary videos about the Institute's fiftieth anniversary on the national statistics office website;

(d) The representative of Indonesia proposed holding an open competition for countries to submit the results of past trainings received from the Institute, including in the form of infographics, short videos or posters.

E. Work programme and financial plan for 2020

(Agenda item 6)

45. The Council had before it the Institute's work programme and financial plan for 2020 (ESCAP/SIAP/GC/2019/6).

46. The Director of the Institute presented the proposed 2020 training courses, workshops and seminars, training development activities and indicative timetable. The work programme had been developed keeping in view the strategic plan of the Institute.

47. Some representatives stressed the importance of long-term training courses in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Each course required the combined effort of many agencies, including ministries of the Government of Japan and national statistical offices and line ministries in many countries. The Director of the Institute also confirmed the importance of the courses, both in the present context and with regard to national statistical systems. Nevertheless, with respect to the number of participants, he said that there should be 20 participants per course in order to maximize the utility of internal staff and external resource persons and the effectiveness of the course.

48. The Council reviewed and endorsed the Institute's work programme and financial plan for 2020.

F. Other matters

(Agenda item 7)

49. No other matters were raised.

G. Dates of and venue for the sixteenth session of the Governing Council

(Agenda item 8)

50. The Council had before it the proposed dates of and venue for its sixteenth session (ESCAP/SIAP/GC/2019/7).

51. The Council decided to hold its sixteenth session in Chiba, Japan, on 30 November and 1 December 2020.

H. Adoption of the report of the Governing Council on its fifteenth session

(Agenda item 9)

52. On 10 December 2019, the Council discussed section I of the present report and adopted the recommendations and decisions therein.

53. It was agreed that, as Secretary of the Council, the Director of the Institute would prepare the full report of the Council on its fifteenth session for submission to the Commission at its seventy-sixth session.

III. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

54. The fifteenth session of the Council was held in Chiba, Japan, on 9 and 10 December 2019.

55. The representative of Japan, who had served as Vice-Chair of the fourteenth session of the Council, officially opened the fifteenth session.

B. Attendance

56. The session was attended by representatives of the host Government, Japan, and by seven of the eight elected members of the Council: Bangladesh; China; India; Mongolia; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; and Thailand. The representative of Pakistan was unable to attend.

57. Representatives of the following members and associate members of the Commission attended the session as observers: Fiji; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Kazakhstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Marshall Islands; Nepal; Niue; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Samoa; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam.

58. Representatives of FAO; International Telecommunication Union; Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; and UN-Women attended the session as observers.

C. Election of officers

59. The Council elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chair: Ms. Ariunzaya Ayush (Mongolia)

Vice-Chair: Mr. Akira Tsumura (Japan)

D. Agenda

60. The Council adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session:
 - (a) Opening statements;
 - (b) Election of officers;
 - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
2. Matters arising from the fourteenth session of the Governing Council.
3. Report of the Director of the Institute.

4. 2020–2024 strategic plan of the Institute:
 - (a) Evaluation of the Institute;
 - (b) Draft 2020–2024 strategic plan of the Institute.
5. Events for the fiftieth anniversary of the Institute.
6. Work programme and financial plan for 2020.
7. Other matters.
8. Dates of and venue for the sixteenth session of the Governing Council.
9. Adoption of the report of the Governing Council on its fifteenth session.

Annex I

List of documents

<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
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ESCAP/SIAP/GC/2019/3	Report on the evaluation of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific	4 (a)
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Annex II**Financial statement of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific for the year ended 31 December 2019**
(United States dollars)

<i>Income</i>	
Contributions	2 874 572
Interest income	118 079
Total income	2 992 651
<i>Less: expenditure</i>	
	(2 135 912)
Net income over expenditure	856 739
Fund balance as at 1 January 2019	4 861 509
Refunds to donors/fund transfer	(77 250)
Fund balance as at 31 December 2019	5 640 998

Annex III

Financial statement of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific for the year ended 31 December 2019, by project component
(United States dollars)

	<i>Joint contributions – capacity development project</i>	<i>Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Income</i>			
Contributions	2 874 572	-	2 874 572
Interest income	117 232	847	118 079
Total income	2 991 804	847	2 992 651
<i>Less: expenditure</i>			
	(2 136 532)	620	(2 135 912)
Net income over expenditure	855 272	1 467	856 739
Fund balance as at 1 January 2019	4 785 726	75 783	4 861 509
Refunds to donors/fund transfer	-	(77 250)	(77 250)
Fund balance as at 31 December 2019	5 640 998	-	5 640 998

Annex IV

Cash contributions to the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific for the institutional support account received for the year ended 31 December 2019
(United States dollars)

<i>Country/area/organization</i>	<i>Year ended 31 December 2019</i>	<i>Year ended 31 December 2018</i>
Australia	34 875	-
Azerbaijan	-	-
Bangladesh	5 000	-
Bhutan	-	-
Brunei Darussalam	15 000	30 000
Cambodia	2 000	2 000
China	70 000	70 000
Fiji	9 173	9 510
Hong Kong, China	30 000	30 000
India	50 000	25 000
Indonesia	30 000	30 000
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	-	-
Japan	2 350 799	3 056 401
Kazakhstan	5 000	5 000
Kiribati	-	-
Macao, China	20 000	20 000
Malaysia	20 000	-
Maldives	4 000	2 000
Mongolia	9 982	7 160
Myanmar	1 000	1 000
Pakistan	14 994	13 495
Papua New Guinea	-	-
Philippines	36 750	18 735
Republic of Korea	53 500	57 881
Russian Federation	45 000	30 000
Samoa	-	-
Singapore	15 000	15 000
Sri Lanka	10 000	10 000
Thailand	23 000	23 000
Timor-Leste	-	-
Tonga	-	-
Turkey	-	-
Tuvalu	-	1 121

<i>Country/area/organization</i>	<i>Year ended 31 December 2019</i>	<i>Year ended 31 December 2018</i>
Vanuatu	-	-
Viet Nam	19 500	17 000
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	-	139 720
Total	2 874 572	3 614 023