Second Joint Meeting of the Steering Groups of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics

(Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics)

15 October 2024 (Virtual)

Concept Note

1. Background

The ESCAP Committee on Statistics has developed and approved the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific[1] and the Implementation Plan of the Regional Strategy to Improve Population and Social Statistics in Asia and the Pacific,[2] and established two Steering Groups, namely, the Steering Group of the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (SGRPES) and the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics (RSG-PSS) to oversee the implementation of the Programme and Plan. The two groups have worked to strengthen statistical capacity in the region, according to their respective programmes. Following the Committee's endorsement in 2016 of the *collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community*[3], as a regional approach to meeting the urgent and evolving statistical demands arising from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the groups aligned their efforts with this vision.

In 2022, recognizing the rapid evolution of data ecosystems and the growing importance of non-domain specific areas such as big data, data governance, gender

[1] E/ESCAP/CST(2)/5
[2] E/ESCAP/CST(5)/3 and E/ESCAP/CST(5)/3/Corr.1
[3] E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1

statistics, and well-being and sustainability measures, the Committee on Statistics, at its eighth session, decided to review its groups and communities of practice. The review aimed to streamline, combine and enhance the Committee structure to ensure its fit for the future.

In view of the Committee decision, the Steering Groups (SGRPES and RSG-PSS) met from 31 October to 2 November 2023 to foster coordination of their activities. Prior to and during the joint session, the Steering Groups undertook consultations and discussions on the Committee's decision and how they can best deliver on their mandate. Overall, the Steering Groups acknowledged the value-added of the groups, while there was an understanding of the need for more focused, time-bound, and agile groups on high-priority themes or topics. The Steering Groups broadly supported the restructuring of the Committee as proposed by the Bureau and made suggestions to enhance its effectiveness.

During the joint session, members of the Steering Groups shared their national experiences, practices, and innovations in economic, social, and population statistics, as well as a few related to the priority topics recommended by the Committee on Statistics, including data governance, big data, gender statistics, and well-being and sustainability measures. The members also learned about relevant initiatives by regional and international development partners.

The Steering Groups acknowledged the relevance and importance of the priority topics recommended by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics and suggested additional priorities such as register-based census, population projections for small geographic areas and subgroups, environmental statistics, measuring the digital economy, labour market statistics as well as data integration with a focus on using administrative data in capacity building activities and sharing of knowledge and experiences.

Building on the outcomes of the first meeting, the Steering Groups, with administrative support from the ESCAP secretariat, will conduct a second joint meeting on 15 October 2024, from 12:00 to 16:00 Bangkok time. The meeting will enable members of the steering groups to share updates on their efforts and latest innovations in advancing development in priority topics set by the Committee.

2. Meeting objectives

The main objectives of the meeting are to:

- Share national innovations that enhance the agility of producing and disseminating economic and social statistics, such as:
    - Modernizing data and IT infrastructures with technologies like Artificial Intelligence, open-source tools, and cloud computing.
    - Implementing human resource strategies focused on skills development and acquisition to meet emerging needs in data science, visualization, and communication.
    - Promoting a culture of innovation and continuous learning that fosters creativity and encourages responsible risk-taking.
- Learn of relevant initiatives by regional and international development partners
- Identify priority areas/topics for regional collaboration in future, bearing in mind the anticipated, revised structure and working modalities of the Committee on Statistics.

3. Meeting format and participation

The modality will be a combination of presentations and interactive discussions in plenary and group sessions.

All member countries of the two Steering Groups are invited to the meeting.

4. Agenda

The agenda of the meeting tentatively includes:

a) Share national innovations that enhance the agility of producing and disseminating economic and social statistics

b) Briefing on the relevant initiatives and tools by development partners

c) Discussion on priority areas/topics for regional collaboration in future, bearing in mind the anticipated, revised structure and working modalities of the Committee on Statistics

5. Expected outputs

- Gained insights into innovative approaches applied to enhance the agility of producing and disseminating economic and social statistics
- Enhanced knowledge by members of the Steering Groups of relevant initiatives and tools by development partners
- List of priority areas/topics for regional collaboration in future, bearing in mind the anticipated, revised structure and working modalities of the Committee on Statistics.

6. Language

The meeting will be conducted in English only.

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