

**ASSESSMENT OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE
ON STATISTICS**

Bangkok, Thailand
4-6 February 2009

Summary Assessment

The first session of the Committee on Statistics was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 4 to 6 February 2009. A questionnaire was distributed towards the end of the session to obtain feedback from participants on its relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. The response rate to the questionnaire was high as 79% or 26 of 33 participating delegations responded.

The present assessment has been conducted on the basis of the feed-back received from delegations together with a qualitative analysis of the draft report of the session, bearing in mind the terms of reference for the Committee on Statistics, as contained in resolution 64/1 on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission.

I. Attendance

The Committee session was well-attended, with 53% (N = 33/62) of ESCAP members and associate members participating.

High-level officials attended the Committee on Statistics. The highest-ranking government official in the area of statistics headed the majority (66%, N = 22/33) of delegations, while 24% (N=8/33) were headed by the second-highest ranking official in the area of statistics. The majority (72%) of delegations comprised officials from the national statistical office.

Some delegations provided suggestions on how to encourage even higher and wider representation from their countries at committee sessions, including: (a) financial support; (b) an official letter from ESCAP to governments after each meeting held under the conference structure on the outcomes and positive effects of attendance at the meeting; and (c) the inclusion of agenda items that require decision-making and, therefore, high-level representation from other ministries at the session.

II. Ownership

The sense of ownership by participants of the Committee was strong, with the majority of respondents indicating that the committee session was owned and driven by member States (88%, N=24/26), that the overall outcome of the deliberations was a result of a collaborative effort (92%, N=24/26) and that the draft report adequately reflected the discussions, decisions and recommendations of the committee (92%, N=24/26).

III. Relevance

The feed-back indicates that participants were of the view that the Committee on Statistics is a relevant mechanism for discussing statistics development in the region. The majority of respondents agreed that the Committee session was relevant to issues and trends regarding official statistics in the Asian and Pacific region (92%, N=24/26), reflected the needs and priorities of their countries (88%, N=23/26) and that the benefits of their delegation's attendance outweighed the costs (88%, N=23/26).

The most relevant agenda items for the delegations in attendance included (in order):
(1) Regional technical cooperation and capacity building in statistics development;
(2) Towards an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region; and (3) Statistics development in Asia and the Pacific.

IV. Efficiency

The feed-back indicates that member States were content with the efficiency of organization and conduct of the Committee session. The majority of respondents agreed that the pre-session documents conveyed clear messages (88%, N=23/26), were issued in a timely manner (85%, N=22/26), that the Committee used efficiently the time provided and that the conference services provided by the secretariat were efficient (92%, N=24/26).

V. Outcomes in light of ESCAP resolution 64/1

The majority of respondents agreed that the first session of the Committee on Statistics addressed effectively the issues outlined in resolution 64/1 that should be addressed by all Committees subsidiary to the Commission, including: to review and analyze regional trends (73%, N=19/26), identify priorities and emerging issues (77%, N=20/26), and promote dialogue on regional and subregional approaches (81%, N=21/26). The qualitative analysis of the session documentation concurred with the results of the questionnaire. For example, the Committee identified capacity building for research and analysis and the strengthening of civil registration systems as priority issues for the region. Additionally, the meeting facilitated the exchange of experiences on policies and programmes, including the Bhutanese Gross National Happiness index and the experience of the Philippines with gender statistics.

VI. Most and least successful

The Committee's agreement on the role and functioning of the Bureau of the Committee was rated as the most successful feature of the session by a number of delegations, whereas others highlighted the benefits of a meeting environment that facilitated engagement by attending member States. Time management was rated least successful; an issue the secretariat will seek to improve at future sessions.

Other suggested improvements included the increased use of IT for meeting facilitation, such as circulation of soft copies of documents prior to the sessions, inter-session video-conferences, and production of CD-ROMs containing meeting materials. It was also suggested to involve member States further in the development of the meeting agenda; an issue that could be facilitated through the newly established Bureau of the Committee on Statistics.

VII. Conclusion

This assessment concludes that the first session of the Committee on Statistics was highly successful. High-level attendance and a sense of ownership by delegations enabled productive substantive discussions and agreement on a number of important issues.

Annex I. Questionnaire results**A. Overall relevance of the session**

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)	No Answer
a. The agenda items were timely and relevant to issues and trends regarding official statistics in the Asian and Pacific region.	58% (15)	35% (9)	8% (2)	-	-	-
b. The agenda items reflected the needs and priorities of my country.	31% (8)	58% (15)	8% (2)	4% (1)	-	-
c. The benefits of my delegation's attendance justified the costs (travel, time, opportunity cost of absence from the office).	62% (16)	27% (7)	12% (3)	-	-	-

B. Organization

2. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)	No Answer
a. The pre-session documents conveyed clear messages concerning the issues placed on the agenda.	42% (11)	46% (12)	8% (2)	4% (1)	-	-
b. The pre-session documents were issued in a timely manner.	35% (9)	50% (13)	15% (4)	-	-	-
c. The Committee used efficiently the time available for discussions.	38% (10)	54% (14)	-	8% (2)	-	-
d. The conference services provided by the secretariat were efficient.	50% (13)	42% (11)	4% (1)	4% (1)	-	-
e. The organization of work prior to/in between Committee sessions contributed to the effective functioning of the Committee (ACPR, working groups, task forces, communication with the secretariat).	31% (8)	46% (12)	15% (4)	4% (1)	-	4% (1)

C. Substantive outcome of the session

3. To what extent did the deliberations on the following substantive agenda items meet the expected outcomes as described below?	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)	No answer
a. Agenda item 3, Statistics development in Asia and the Pacific: <i>Discuss key achievements and challenges identified with regard to statistics development including the demand for official statistics and priorities for national statistics systems.</i>	42% (11)	54% (14)	4% (1)	-	-	-

Annex I. Questionnaire results

3. To what extent did the deliberations on the following substantive agenda items meet the expected outcomes as described below?	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)	No answer
<p>b. Agenda item 4, Regional technical cooperation in statistics development:</p> <p><i>Provide guidance on the technical cooperation strategy of ESCAP statistics projects and the role of SIAP in strengthening statistical capacity in the region.</i></p>	46% (12)	42% (11)	12% (3)	-	-	-
<p>c. Agenda item 5, Improving gender statistics: measuring violence against women:</p> <p><i>Consider a common Asian and Pacific position on the recommendations regarding the indicators of violence against women and provide guidance to the secretariat on its future work regarding the measurement of violence against women.</i></p>	15% (4)	65% (17)	19% (5)	-	-	-
<p>d. Agenda item 6, Towards an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region:</p> <p><i>Discuss the barriers to implementing the 1993 SNA and the feasibility of implementing the 2008 SNA as well as modalities for an action plan for the development of economic statistics in Asian and Pacific countries.</i></p>	35% (9)	58% (15)	8% (2)	-	-	-
<p>e. Agenda item 7, Producing population estimates on an annual basis: the central role of vital statistical systems:</p> <p><i>Provide guidance to the secretariat concerning the regional and global initiatives for improving vital statistics and on the feasibility of using the WHO/HMN guidelines and methods to strengthen national statistics systems.</i></p>	35% (9)	58% (15)	4% (1)	4% (1)	-	-
<p>f. Agenda item 8, Measuring the progress of societies:</p> <p><i>Provide guidance on the possible participation of the secretariat as a partner of the OECD's Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies through statistical capacity-building in developing countries.</i></p>	19% (5)	54% (14)	15% (4)	4% (1)	-	8% (2)

D. Outcome in the light of ESCAP resolution 64/1 and the Committee's general terms of reference

4. All eight ESCAP Committees have common terms of reference. To what extent did the Committee session succeed in performing the following?	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)	No Answer
a. Review and analyze regional trends.	27% (7)	46% (12)	15% (4)	4% (1)	-	8% (2)
b. Identify priorities and emerging issues, particularly those with implications for the work of the secretariat.	23% (6)	54% (14)	23% (6)	-	-	-
c. Promote dialogue on regional and subregional approaches and an exchange of experiences on policies and programmes.	27% (7)	54% (14)	19% (5)	-	-	-
d. Promote a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges at the regional and subregional levels.	35% (9)	42% (11)	15% (4)	-	-	8% (2)

E. Participation

5. To what extent do you feel that...	To a great extent (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Not at all (5)	No Answer
a. the Committee session was owned and driven by member States?	50% (13)	38% (10)	12% (3)	-	-	-
b. the overall outcome of the deliberations is a result of a collaborative effort by members of the Committee?	50% (13)	42% (11)	8% (2)	-	-	-
c. the draft report adequately reflects the discussions, decisions and recommendations of the Committee?	38% (10)	54% (14)	4% (1)	-	-	4% (1)
d. the secretariat's in-session interventions contributed to effective conduct and outcome of the session?	31% (8)	54% (14)	12% (3)	-	-	4% (1)

6. My delegation's attendance at the Committee session was:

4% (1)	mainly from the Capital - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
27% (7)	mainly from the Capital - Line Ministry
8% (2)	mainly from representatives in Bangkok (Embassy)
12% (3)	a combination of the above
46% (12)	other:
No answer 4% (1)	

Annex II. Questionnaire comments

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[Verbatim from the completed questionnaires]

Question 4. What was the most relevant agenda item for your delegation?

- 4. Improving gender statistics and 5. Measuring the progress of societies.
- Regional technical cooperation and capacity building in statistics development.
- Items 3, 4, 6, 9
- Item 6
- Statistics Development in Asia and the Pacific (agenda item 3).
- Agenda item 4
- Items 3 and 4
- Agenda item 3, 4, 6 and 7
- No. 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7
- Agenda 6
- 8
- a, b, c, d
- a, b, c, d
- Agenda item 6.

Question 6. How can the Committee more effectively address its terms of reference (5 (a-d) above)?

- To have the needs of the member countries and try to address the problems/meet needs of the countries concerned.
- By creating specific working groups.
- By working closely with its Bureau.
- We think it's very necessary, because each country need more develop about statistics in coordinate by ESCAP.
- Active participation and data dissemination.
- Establish the proper working mechanize to ensure systematic coordination between the bureau and committee, and bureau and secretariat as well as donors. In addition, technical advisor groups need to be established to address individual countries' need.
- Active participation.
- Address country specific needs. The committee should look into policies/strategies of UNESCAP and recommend country needs and urgencies to improve statistical organizations of individual countries.
- If the committee sends the draft terms of reference before session and discusses about the TOR by online or email, after that take approval and endorse in the session. (That's just my idea).
- Not applicable for first session of the Committee on Statistics.
- Focus on cluster of country issues.
- The Committee needs to have good mechanism or system for Committee can use.

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- Provide more coordination among country members within the Asia Pacific region.
- The election of a bureau with its role and functions fully deliberated and endorsed by the Committee is expected to be able to address the terms of reference effectively.

Question 9. Is there anything that could have been done to encourage higher and wider representation from your country at the Committee session?

- Provide funding for additional delegations.
- Wide agenda items that will involve decision making from other ministries that produce statistics such as agriculture etc.
- I am comfortable with me as the delegation.
- We give some statistics issues that important for Asia and the Pacific countries.
- An official letter on outcomes and positive effects (appeal) to the country's government would be beneficial.
- More time is required for the sub-committee. The discussion has to be in the form of smaller working groups.
- Financial resources.
- Nothing specific.
- Participation was at the highest level.
- Yes, it is worthwhile to bring one of delegates from Ministry of Planning and Finance.
- Statistical issues are important and would need political will from my country. I would be encouraged to see government representative at the ministry level represented in this Committee session.
- The representation of the Committee by the Commissioner for Census and Statistics is considered suitable and adequate.

Question 10. What was the most successful feature of the Committee session?

- Accommodating the delegates comments during deliberations and act accordingly.
- In electing the office bureau and drawing-up their TOR.
- Adequate time given for discussion.
- Agenda item 2
- The formation of the inter-sessional Bureau.
- Bringing up the commitment among membership of the countries.
- The forum format/ unofficial talks
- unofficial talks
- Establish a mode which will help countries to get assistance to develop our system and improve statistics in general.
- Openness and provisions of opportunities for participations by attendees. Side event on Statistical cooperation.
- Regional technical cooperation and capacity-building in statistic development.
- Deliberations on topical issues.
- TOR of the Committee and Formation of Bureau.
- Terms of Reference of the Committee.

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- Preparation of terms of reference of the Committee on Statistics by involving all delegates.
- The most feature of the Committee session have successful.
- The setting up of the Committee Bureau TOR which will do address the statistical issues discuss and provide way forward for country members.
- The TOR of the Committee session have been agreed by all participants.
- There was a high turnout of representatives at senior level of the countries/territories concerned.
- High attendance and level of officials representing the importance of the final session of the Committee.

Question 11. What was the least successful feature of the Committee session?

- More time needed to finalize the roles and responsibilities of the Bureau.
- It's about the arrangement of the agenda schedule.
- It should not be just a place to exchange information; committee may be in the future used as a decision-making, especially on methodological issues.
- Time management!
- At the beginning not very clear of how things are and should be.
- Set the TOR and functioning of the committee on statistics.
- Disagreement on the TOR of the Bureau.
- Nothing.
- The lease feature of the Committee session have successful all.
- Issues must be address at a more generic level not targeting individual country or region.
- There seemed to be too many agenda items and papers for the meeting. It would be better if 4 days can be allocated for a biennial session.
- Disorganization of housekeeping details, running of the agenda.

Question 12. Please provide any additional comments you may have on the Committee session and further suggestions on how we may improve on secretariat preparations for and the servicing of future session:

- circulate the draft agenda items well ahead and invite feedback from member countries and also invite agenda from them.
- The secretariat organized the session very well and thank you all secretariat staff.
- By providing softcopy version of the documents.
- The Committee should more prepare on the Agenda no. 2 regarding the Terms of Reference and Functioning of the Committee on Statistics.
- For the sake of better time management, numbers of presentations on length of each presentation should be limited. (On a certain agenda item, presentations took almost one hour and it was simply too long).
- In order to save money we can try to organize videoconference(s), especially in inter-session period. It would be more effective to limit participation of countries by head of the offices, so not agenda related issues would not be discussed.

Annex II. Questionnaire comments

- Nothing.
- Appreciated the hospitality and arrangements of ESCAP secretariat.
- For development statistics agenda, it may include activities such as Industrial Statistics, measuring of consumer price and all price deflation for use compilation of GDP.
- 1. Social events; i.e. reception lunch/dinner should be identified in the tentative programme. 2. CD-ROM of all presentations and documents should be provided.
- I'm provide to Committee, for the future, the Committee session have to prepare this Committee session to attend all delegation about the all facility to attend this meeting.
- It maybe useful that future meetings have enough time for all country representatives to give views and deliberations.
- It would be useful if a pre-meeting briefing can be given to participants regarding the rules and procedures based on which the Committee works, in particular its relationship with the Commission.

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Annex III. Achievement of substantive outcomes

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Agenda Item	Substantive Outcome	Quantitative survey response	Qualitative assessment based on a review of the draft report of the session
Agenda item 3: Statistics development in Asia and the Pacific	Discuss key achievements and challenges identified with regard to statistics development including the demand for official statistics and priorities for national statistics systems;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 96% agree to a great extent or to a reasonable extent that outcomes were achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were met. • Some of the key achievements that were discussed include the capacity building work undertaken by the secretariat and other entities. • Some of the challenges identified include that there are no clear guidelines on how to adapt international statistical standards and frameworks to the context of individual countries, particularly small island developing states; also concern was expressed over a shortage of qualified statisticians. • Some of the priorities that were identified include continuous statistical capacity building in order to produce and disseminate internationally comparable data, agreement on a set of indicators that could be used for tracking the development of statistics in Asia and the Pacific and a long-term collective approach to delivering capacity building.
Agenda item 4: Regional technical cooperation and capacity building in statistics development	Provide guidance on the technical cooperation strategy of ESCAP statistics projects and the role of SIAP in strengthening statistical capacity in the region;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 88% agree to a great extent or to a reasonable extent that outcomes were achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were partly met; the discussion focused on providing guidance on the role SIAP with very little discussion on the ESCAP approach to regional technical cooperation. • The committee recommended that SIAP increase its training on capacity building for research and analysis. • With regards to the committee’s guidance on the role of SIAP in statistical capacity building, the committee discussed the importance of receiving feedback from member states regarding their specific needs for statistical capacity building.

Annex III. Achievement of substantive outcomes

<p>Agenda item 5: Improving gender statistics: measuring violence against women</p>	<p>Consider a common Asian and Pacific position on the recommendations regarding the indicators of violence against women and provide guidance to the secretariat on its future work regarding the measurement of violence against women;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% agree to a great extent or to a reasonable extent that outcomes were achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were partly met; a common Asian and Pacific position on the recommendations regarding the indicators of violence against women was not the focus of the deliberations. • Guidance to the secretariat included recommendations for streamlining the proposed set of indicators and making them internationally comparable.
<p>Agenda item 6: Towards an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region</p>	<p>Discuss the barriers to implementing the 1993 SNA and the feasibility of implementing the 2008 SNA as well as modalities for an action plan for the development of economic statistics in Asian and Pacific countries;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 93% agree to a great extent or to a reasonable extent that outcomes were achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were met. • Barriers identified to implementing the 1993 SNA include that the need to produce basic economic statistics and national accounts varies from country to country, thus some countries cannot meaningfully participate in regional and global programmes on SNA implementation. • Modalities that were discussed for the regional action plan for the development of economic statistics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) A bottom-up approach to the compilation of national accounts that would contribute towards a compilation of regional accounts. (ii) The committee adopted a coordinating governance structure that would guide the development, implementation and monitoring of an action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region. (iii) The committee decided to establish a technical advisory group to provide guidance to its Bureau and the ESCAP

Annex III. Achievement of substantive outcomes

			secretariat on methodological issues related to the development and periodic revision of a regional programme for the development of economic statistics.
Agenda item 7: Producing population estimates on an annual basis: the central role of vital statistical systems	Provide guidance to the secretariat concerning the regional and global initiatives for improving vital statistics and on the feasibility of using the WHO/HMN guidelines and methods to strengthen national statistics systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 93% agree to a great extent or to a reasonable extent that outcomes were achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were met. • The committee discussed the need for collaboration among health authorities, registrars-general and national statisticians in order to produce reliable vital statistics. • The committee recommended that the secretariat assist countries with weak civil registration systems to explore alternative methods of generating vital statistics. • The committee recommended that the secretariat explore modalities for organizing an expert group meeting of health authorities, registrars-general and national statisticians in member countries.
Agenda item 8: Measuring the progress of societies	Provide guidance on the possible participation of the secretariat as a partner of the OECD's Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies through statistical capacity-building in developing countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 73% agree to a great extent or to a reasonable extent that outcomes were achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected outcomes were met. • The committee discussed the need to develop new ways to measure societal progress that could cover a variety of dimensions including sustainable development or social cohesion. • The committee suggested that the secretariat could serve as the regional coordinator in Asia and the Pacific for the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies, led by the OECD at the global level.