

MOST IMMEDIATE

No. K-14011/12/2019-ESCAP
Government of India
Ministry of Commerce & Industry
Department of Commerce
ESCAP Section

Udyog Bhawan, New Delhi
Dated: 25.4.2019

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: **Summary of the meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission held in 2018-2019 – report of the Committee on Statistics on its sixth session – 75th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) to be held from 27 to 31 May, 2019 at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok - reg.**

The undersigned is directed to enclose a copy of the UNESCAP's document No.ESCAP/75/4 relating to "**Summary of the meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission held in 2018-2019 – report of the Committee on Statistics on its sixth session**". Soft copy of the reports are available on ESCAP website www.unescap.org/commission/75/documents.

2. The 75th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific(UNESCAP) will be held from 27 to 31 May, 2019 at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok. The forthcoming Commission session will comprise two segments, Ministerial Segment on 27 to 28 May, 2019 and the Senior Officials Segment which will be held from 29 to 31 May, 2019.
3. It is requested to provide a measured response from India's view point on the subject for participation in the Annual Session and provide the brief comments/inputs relevant to them on the above document to this Department, for preparing statement/intervention by the Indian Delegation at the upcoming Session. This may please be sent urgently at e-mail: indu.nair@gov.in, anurag.goel@nic.in and moc_escap@nic.in, latest by 3rd May, 2019.
4. This may please be accorded "TOP PRIORITY".



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Encl: As above.

To

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

Bangkok, 27–31 May 2019

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific**Summary of the meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission held in the period 2018–2019****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document contains the matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific or brought to its attention emanating from the Committees that met since the seventy-fourth session of the Commission, namely: the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation on its second session; the Committee on Statistics on its sixth session; the Committee on Transport on its fifth session; the Committee on Environment and Development on its fifth session; the Committee on Social Development on its fifth session; and the Committee on Trade and Investment on its sixth session.

The Commission may wish to provide guidance on these matters and endorse the recommendations brought to its attention.

I. Introduction

1. The present document contains the matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) or brought to its attention emanating from the Committees that met since the seventy-fourth session of the Commission, namely: the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation on its second session; the Committee on Statistics on its sixth session; the Committee on Transport on its fifth session; the Committee on Environment and Development on its fifth session; the Committee on Social Development on its fifth session; and the Committee on Trade and Investment on its sixth session.

* ESCAP/75/L.1.

II. Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation on its second session

A. Overview

2. The Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation held its second session in Bangkok from 29 to 31 August 2018.¹

3. The Committee recognized that limited resources and human and institutional capacity in many developing countries were often the challenges for taking advantage of frontier technologies. In that regard, the Committee highlighted a need to ensure that the developing countries should benefit from frontier technologies and consider inclusivity of underserved groups and countries.

4. The Committee noted that digital and space innovations represented key frontier technologies with the potential to bring transformative changes in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also noted that through ESCAP regional cooperation mechanisms, such as the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative, the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development and, relatedly, its Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning, qualitative breakthroughs in the implementation of the ESCAP programme were possible.

5. The Committee recognized the role of information and communications technology (ICT) in improving the delivery of government services, productivity, inclusion, e-resilience and infrastructure sharing, and the need to prioritize ICT infrastructure investment and connectivity.

B. Matters calling for action by the Commission

6. The following recommendations of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation are brought to the attention of the Commission for its consideration and action:

Recommendation 1

The Committee emphasizes the importance of science, technology and innovation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommends that the secretariat prioritize science, technology and innovation as a key means of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the secretariat support member States, upon request, in developing their science, technology and innovation policies, strategies and road maps for the Sustainable Development Goals, in order to effectively harness science, technology and innovation for sustainable development.

¹ ESCAP/CICTSTI/2018/9.

Recommendation 3

The Committee strongly supports the Commission's work on inclusive technology and innovation policies and further recommends that the secretariat provide support to member States in promoting inclusive technology and innovation; mainstreaming gender and disadvantaged groups into science, technology and innovation policies through facilitating the sharing of best practices and learning; holding forums to facilitate regional collaboration; building policymaking capacities; analysing the inclusive dimension of science, technology and innovation policies; and making tools available for promoting and assessing inclusive technology and innovation policies.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the secretariat facilitate science, technology and innovation knowledge-sharing and collaboration in the region, and that the ESCAP discussions on science, technology and innovation be linked, as appropriate, to relevant broader conversations, including at the annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, which takes place throughout the lifespan of the 2030 Agenda.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends the continuation of the current work of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology in addition to the emerging areas on ICT, big data, artificial intelligence and the Internet of things.

Recommendation 6

The Committee, being of the opinion that the mandate and the work of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology is crucial and relevant to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, recommends that the Centre's current mandate should not be changed or diluted in any form and calls for the further strengthening of the Centre.

Recommendation 7

The Committee expresses the concern that the current human resources and financial capacities of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology are not satisfactory in terms of carrying out mandated activities and meeting the growing demand for the Centre's activities. The Committee requests non-contributing member States to consider providing voluntary financial contributions and member countries to enhance their level of voluntary contributions to strengthen support for the Centre.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the updates to the Master Plan for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Regional Cooperation Framework Document be endorsed by the Commission, unless any objection is expressed by members or associate members by 31 October 2018,² while also noting the satisfactory outcomes of

² No objections were expressed.

the second session of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Commission prioritize the needs of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in the implementation of the Master Plan for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Regional Cooperation Framework Document.

C. Matters brought to the attention of the Commission

7. The following decisions adopted by the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation are brought to the attention of the Commission:

Decision 1

The Committee decides to carry forward the work under the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative and calls upon all ESCAP member countries to contribute substantively to the further implementation of its Master Plan.

Decision 2

The Committee endorses the updates to the Master Plan, unless the secretariat receives objections by 31 October 2018 by any member or associate member.³

Decision 3

The Committee requests the secretariat to continue its convening role by providing a regional platform that promotes regional cooperation on ICT connectivity, noting in particular the usefulness of the analytical research generated for strengthened evidence-based policymaking and capacity development in emerging technologies related to ICT.

Decision 4

The Committee calls for the active participation of Governments, the private sector, international organizations, regional institutions and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative.

Decision 5

The Committee welcomes the offer of the Government of Mongolia to host an Asia-Pacific information superhighway subregional steering group meeting in Ulaanbaatar in 2019.

Decision 6

The Committee calls for the active participation of ministers at the forthcoming third Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, to be held in Bangkok on

³ No objections were received.

10 October 2018, and expresses support for drafting the Asia-Pacific plan of action on space applications for sustainable development (2018–2030) and the ministerial declaration.

✓ III. Committee on Statistics on its sixth session

A. Overview

8. The Committee on Statistics held its sixth session in Bangkok from 16 to 19 October 2018.⁴

9. The Committee noted the importance of high-quality, timely, reliable, relevant and disaggregated data in support of the 2030 Agenda and the importance of official statistics to good governance of effective societies that were transparent, accountable and inclusive.

10. The Committee emphasized the role of advocacy in the use and expanded use of official statistics in policy processes, government reports, Sustainable Development Goal prioritization, modernization efforts, government reforms and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

11. The Committee recognized the importance of human resources and skills development and efforts under way in the region to strengthen skills, including by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific.

12. The Committee recognized the value of financial and technical assistance in developing and strengthening national statistical systems extended by the secretariat and development partners.

13. The Committee noted progress made in terms of achievements and overcoming challenges related to the implementation of the collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community at the national and subregional levels for advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda. The Committee was reminded of the importance of establishing specific measures for governance and practical monitoring of the implementation of the collective vision and framework for action.

B. Matters calling for action by the Commission

14. The following recommendations of the Committee on Statistics are brought to the attention of the Commission for its consideration and action:

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the declaration on navigating policy with data to leave no one behind (ESCAP/CST/2018/7) be adopted by the Commission.

Recommendation 2

The Committee endorses the statistical contents of the Disaster-related Statistics Framework and supports the application of it to produce harmonized statistics related to disasters, to strengthen the evidence base for disaster risk reduction policies and to assist in monitoring the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the 2030 Agenda.

⁴ ESCAP/CST/2018/6.

Recommendation 3

The Committee has considered the recommendations of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific and:

(a) Supports the next phase of work to apply the Disaster-related Statistics Framework to the production and dissemination of statistics and indicators;

(b) Supports the development of training materials and technical assistance programmes on the implementation of the Framework;

(c) Generally supports the recommendation to transform the Expert Group into a technical working group, subject to review by the Committee of the draft terms of reference for the technical working group.

15. The Committee supports conveying recommendations 2 and 3 to the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction at its sixth session in 2019 and to the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in 2019.

C. Matters brought to the attention of the Commission

16. The following decisions adopted by the Committee on Statistics are brought to the attention of the Commission:

Decision 1

The Committee decides to establish communities of practice covering the dimensions of process, data, conceptual and disciplinary integration and requests the Bureau of the Committee, with support from the secretariat, to develop terms of reference for the communities of practice, with the modality of the communities being electronic only.

Decision 2

The Committee endorses the suggestions of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific on future implementation of the Programme, including those pertaining to a review of the core set of economic statistics and the extension of the Regional Programme to 2030 to strengthen alignment with the 2030 Agenda.

Decision 3

The Committee endorses the use of the policy-data integration tool entitled "Every policy is connected" to strengthen user-producer dialogue to ensure effective demand for, and investment in, the development of official statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The Committee recommends that the regional statistical initiatives of the Committee and the Commission apply the tool.

Decision 4

The Committee decides to abolish the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific in its current form and transfer its responsibilities and functions to the Thematic Working Group on Statistics of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism.

IV. Committee on Transport on its fifth session

A. Overview

17. The Committee on Transport held its fifth session in Bangkok from 19 to 21 November 2018.⁵

18. The Committee recognized that efficient transport connectivity was critical to enhancing the region's position in global trade and supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

19. The Committee noted that innovation and the use of emerging technologies could play an important role in achieving sustainable connectivity. It also highlighted that a modal shift to more environmentally friendly modes of transport, such as rail and inland waterways, could reduce fossil fuel demand in the transport sector, contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, and promote intermodality.

20. Recalling the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Transport held in Moscow in December 2016, the Committee noted that an interregional coordination committee on transport between Asia and Europe would provide a valuable platform for addressing issues relating to enhancing intraregional and interregional connectivity. In that connection, the Committee requested the secretariat to enhance cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe towards the establishment and full functioning of that interregional committee.

21. The Committee also discussed key transport issues, including transport and logistics facilitation, cross-border transport, dry ports, transport infrastructure, urban transport systems and services, and improving road safety.

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

22. The Committee on Transport encourages those member States that have not already done so to consider expediting their respective internal formalities to deposit an instrument of acceptance to annex II bis to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network entitled "Asian Highway Design Standards for Road Safety".

23. The Committee recommends the continued development of the sustainable urban transport index and its further promotion throughout the region.

V. Committee on Environment and Development on its fifth session

A. Overview

24. The Committee on Environment and Development held its fifth session in Bangkok from 21 to 23 November 2018.⁶

⁵ ESCAP/CTR/2018/8.

⁶ ESCAP/CED/2018/4.

25. The Committee noted the significant environmental challenges confronting the Asia-Pacific region, including marine pollution, water pollution, air pollution, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable management of natural resources, inefficient management of waste and climate change-induced disasters. It noted that those environmental challenges posed serious economic costs and negatively impacted human health and livelihoods as well as the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. The Committee underlined the benefits of regional cooperation in several areas, including sustainable consumption and production, ecotourism, transboundary air pollution, ocean governance and natural disasters. It was pointed out that regional forums enabled networking, research and technical support and that international cooperation frameworks promoted connectivity and collaboration. The United Nations, development partners, non-governmental organizations and donors were called upon to further support national strategies and means of implementation.

27. In considering the future focus of the ESCAP subprogramme on environment and development, the Committee called for continuous support from the secretariat through capacity-building, technical assistance, financial assistance, knowledge-sharing and enhancing access of countries to technology and innovation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

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

28. The Committee on Environment and Development recommends that the activities under the subprogramme on environment and development continue to be based upon and contribute to the achievement of the objectives and priority areas identified in the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development for Asia and the Pacific, 2017, and the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

29. The Committee puts forward for consideration by the Commission the suggestion to create a platform for resource efficiency.

VI. Committee on Social Development on its fifth session

A. Overview

30. The Committee on Social Development held its fifth session in Bangkok from 28 to 30 November 2018.⁷

31. The Committee noted the progress on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment but also the remaining challenges.

32. The Committee reaffirmed its commitment to the equal rights of persons with disabilities as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

33. The Committee noted that, in response to current and future development challenges, social protection was a powerful tool to break cycles of poverty, to protect vulnerable groups from falling into poverty and to promote inclusive development.

⁷ ESCAP/CSD/2018/4.

34. The Committee stressed the need for greater regional cooperation on social protection.

B. Matters calling for action by the Commission

35. The following recommendations of the Committee on Social Development are brought to the attention of the Commission for its consideration and action:

Recommendation 1

The Committee requests the secretariat to continue and strengthen support to member States through analysis, knowledge-sharing and technical assistance on the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific, in particular in relation to social protection, women's empowerment, population dynamics and disability inclusion.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends strengthening regional cooperation on social protection, and encourages the secretariat, in coordination with relevant United Nations agencies, to explore and develop a modality for regional cooperation to support member States in this regard.

VII. Committee on Trade and Investment on its sixth session

A. Overview

36. The Committee on Trade and Investment held its sixth session in Bangkok from 13 to 15 March 2019.⁸

37. The Committee shared the view that a safe and seamless trade environment was instrumental for trade growth and sustainable development and, in that context, noted the importance of trade facilitation, including the adoption and implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization.

38. The Committee noted that trade development in some countries was constrained by limited product diversification, isolation from global markets, weak infrastructure, limited access to finance, lack of testing facilities to comply with non-tariff measures, poor ICT connectivity, and the lack of an enabling environment to support the development of trade, in particular paperless trade and e-commerce.

39. The Committee recognized that responsible business conduct principles and standards emphasized the integration of environmental and social concerns within core business operations but noted that lack of willingness and insufficient knowledge among the owners of and investors in various companies had continued to be challenges to mainstreaming these principles and standards in business operations. In that regard, the Committee recognized that Governments had played a vital role to motivate and apply pressure to companies to adopt these principles and standards for ensuring benefits for both workers and companies themselves through proper policies and legislation.

⁸ ESCAP/CTI/2019/9.

B. Matters calling for action by the Commission

40. The following recommendations of the Committee on Trade and Investment are brought to the attention of the Commission for its consideration and action:

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the secretariat continue its activities in trade and investment with a view to promoting regional cooperation among ESCAP members and associate members with regard to achieving the targets of the 2030 Agenda.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the secretariat continue a joint study with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on the impact of non-tariff measures, with particular attention to the impact on the private sector, including the perspectives of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the research findings of the joint ESCAP-UNCTAD study on the impact of non-tariff measures be discussed in 2019 as appropriate and for further discussion in the Committee on Trade and Investment.

C. Matters brought to the attention of the Commission

41. The following decision adopted by the Committee on Trade and Investment is brought to the attention of the Commission:

Decision

The Committee takes note of the findings and recommendations contained in the following documents:

(a) Summary of the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2018 (ESCAP/CTI/2019/1);

(b) Navigating non-tariff measures towards sustainable development (ESCAP/CTI/2019/2);

(c) Promoting cross-border paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/CTI/2019/3);

(d) Leveraging e-commerce for graduation of least developed countries (ESCAP/CTI/2019/4);

(e) Promoting sustainable investment and business (ESCAP/CTI/2019/5);

(f) Engaging the business sector in promoting sustainable development (ESCAP/CTI/2019/6);

(g) Recent activities and priorities for future work of the secretariat in the area of trade and investment under the subprogramme on trade, investment and innovation (ESCAP/CTI/2019/7);

(h) Strategic direction of the Committee on Trade and Investment (ESCAP/CTI/2019/8).