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**Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure
of the Commission, including the work of the ESCAP
regional institutions**

Subprogramme overview: Issues and challenges related to inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific

Note by the secretariat

Summary

Issues and challenges related to inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific are addressed in the present document under the following eight headings: macroeconomic policy and inclusive development; trade and investment; transport; environment and development; information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction; social development; statistics; and subregional activities for development.

The document highlights the steps and activities undertaken and planned by the secretariat to support member countries through policy analysis, dialogue and capacity-building so that they will be able to address the challenges they face in those eight areas.

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I. Introduction

1. Development issues and challenges in the substantive areas covered by the eight subprogrammes of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) are addressed in the present document, as well as the support that the secretariat furnishes to member countries in the form of strategic analysis, policy options and technical cooperation, which they need to address those challenges. Also brought to the attention of member States are important issues relating to the work of the secretariat and its planned programme activities.

2. The eight areas are as follows:

(a) *Macroeconomic policy and inclusive development.* The challenges that countries in the region face in sustaining economic growth amid global uncertainty are discussed, as are their efforts to reduce poverty at a rapid rate and achieve the Millennium Development Goals in order to promote inclusive development. Also highlighted in the document are the challenges facing countries with special needs and the work being done by the secretariat to support those countries. The agricultural sector plays an important role in most developing countries in the region; the work of the Centre for the Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture (CAPSA) is discussed in this regard. The views and guidance of the Commission are sought on the issues and challenges raised and the related analytical work being undertaken by the secretariat under this subprogramme;

(b) *Trade and investment.* There is a brief overview of recent trends, developments and challenges in trade and investment, including private sector development in the region. There is an examination of key areas of policy action that Asia-Pacific countries need to pursue in order to exploit new opportunities in trade and investment that are emerging in the aftermath of the recent global economic crisis. The secretariat's initiatives to support countries in these efforts are also summarized;

(c) *Transport.* Recent developments and major issues and challenges in the transport sector in the region are discussed in a brief overview. There is a summary of current and proposed responses of the secretariat in moving towards the Commission's long-term vision of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system, with the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks as the major building blocks, and dry ports comprising an important additional component that would support the development of the two networks;

(d) *Environment and development.* A brief account of key issues and challenges related to environment and development in Asia and the Pacific is provided. These aspects include access to adequate housing, electricity, clean water and sanitation, as well as emerging trends towards inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in the region;

(e) *Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction.* Major issues and policy challenges in the area of information and communications technology (ICT) development, including space applications and disaster risk reduction, are covered in an overview. A number of secretariat initiatives undertaken and planned are highlighted,

including several initiatives and studies, such as (i) the publication in October 2010 of the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report, 2010*;¹ (ii) the Asia-Pacific Gateway for Disaster Risk Reduction and Development, which became operational in November 2010, thereby enabling the sharing of information and best practices; (iii) ICT capacity-building through the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development; (iv) the launch in September 2010 of the space information-based Regional Cooperative Mechanism on Disaster Monitoring and Early Warning, Particularly Drought; and (v) the promotion of regional collaborative disaster communication capacity through the Regional Interagency Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies;

(f) *Social development.* Regional preparations for two key global reviews are considered: (i) the comprehensive review by the General Assembly of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS² and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS;^{3,4} and (ii) the review and appraisal by the Commission for Social Development of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing;^{5,6}

(g) *Statistics.* An overview of the secretariat's current and planned actions to follow up on decisions and recommendations of the Committee on Statistics highlights its work to develop and improve social, vital and economic statistics in the region, to improve the coordination of statistical training and to support the modernization of statistical information systems by the region's national statistical systems, in support of the Committee's agreed strategic direction;

(h) Subregional activities for development:

(i) *East and North-East Asia.* The progress of the ESCAP Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia and the priorities and approaches discussed at its consultation meeting are highlighted. The Commission may wish to review the progress and make further suggestions on specific priority areas for the subregion, bearing in mind that the Subregional Office is complementary in its approach to already existing work programmes with specific emphasis on creating and maintaining knowledge-sharing platforms to strengthen partnerships and interdisciplinary collaborative efforts, on facilitating subregional collaboration and on promoting South-

¹ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy and Disaster Reduction, *Protecting Development Gains: Reducing Disaster Vulnerability and Building Resilience in Asia and the Pacific: The Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2010* (Bangkok, 2010). Available from [www.unescap.org/idd/pubs/Asia-Pacific-Disaster-Report per cent20-2010.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/idd/pubs/Asia-Pacific-Disaster-Report%20per%20cent20-2010.pdf).

² General Assembly resolution S-26/2, annex.

³ General Assembly resolution 60/262, annex.

⁴ As decided by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/180 of 20 December 2010.

⁵ *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

⁶ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2011, Supplement No. 6* (E/2011/26-E/CN.5/2011/12), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution III.

South cooperation through the transfer of knowledge and best practices;

- (ii) *The Pacific*. The Pacific subregion is working towards strengthening its capacity for sustainable and inclusive development, with particular emphasis on addressing the challenges of climate change, and the development of appropriate plans and policies to stimulate growth and overcome setbacks following the recent global crisis. Following the 2010 milestone reviews of progress towards implementing the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States^{7,8} and achieving the Millennium Development Goals,⁹ the subregion has been exploring solutions aimed at accelerating progress and addressing the vulnerability of those States to external shocks. An overview of recent and planned initiatives of the secretariat to support the achievement of inclusive and sustainable development in the Pacific subregion is provided.

II. Macroeconomic policy and inclusive development

A. Introduction

3. While economic recovery in Asia and the Pacific further strengthened in 2010, the region faces fresh challenges in 2011 arising from the slowing of the global economy and the return of the food-fuel crises. Food and fuel prices are rising rapidly, which can pose a major challenge for countries trying to maintain their economic growth momentum and protect the poor from rising inflation and food insecurity. Under this subprogramme, continued monitoring of the macroeconomic performance of the countries will be carried out, and policy options suggested for sustaining economic recovery and promoting macroeconomic stability. Containing inflationary pressures, particularly food price rises, as well as dealing with food security issues, will be critical in this regard. These aspects also underline the importance of the agricultural sector, the productivity of which needs to be enhanced further. Countries with special needs will remain a priority under the subprogramme.

B. Macroeconomic policy issues

4. The Asia-Pacific region has recovered strongly from the depths of the recent crisis but it still faces problems. The global environment in 2011 is more challenging than in 2010, as many leading developed countries are seeing their growth decline to anaemic levels. The continuing dependence

⁷ *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

⁸ See Commission resolution 66/2 of 19 May 2010. See also General Assembly resolutions 65/2 of 25 September 2010 and 65/156 of 20 December 2010.

⁹ See General Assembly resolutions 65/1 of 22 September 2010 and 65/10 of 23 November 2010.

of many small economies in the region on exporting to developed country markets means that growth rates in Asia and the Pacific will suffer negative impacts. Conversely, a trend towards increasing intraregional trade and strong domestic demand in the region will cushion the effects of the export slowdown to a certain extent. In coming years, the Asia-Pacific region is expected to play a central role both in driving its own development and serving as a critical anchor for the global recovery from the crisis.

5. Another key short-term challenge for the region stems from the impact of the enormous liquidity injections undertaken by developed economies as part of their policies to recover from the crisis. Favourable growth prospects and comparatively high interest rates in developing economies have attracted large foreign portfolio inflows from international investors to asset markets in the region. The capital inflows originated, in significant part, from the cheap liquidity available through near-zero interest rates and quantitative easing in developed economies; they have supported a burgeoning carry trade which invests in high-yielding assets of developing economies. These capital inflows have led to potential asset market bubbles in some countries and boosted demand-side inflationary pressures.

6. Excess global liquidity has also spurred dramatic rises in food and energy prices which, when coupled with supply disruptions in key producing economies, have led to renewed supply-side inflationary increases across the region. Additionally, capital inflows have led to pressure for exchange rate appreciation, thereby hampering the recovery of exports from the region. Countering the inflationary pressure will restrict the policy space for supporting growth and will lead to an additional downward impact on growth rates in the region in the year ahead. Price rises have made the ongoing challenge of inclusive development an increasingly urgent issue, with the burden of food and energy price increases having the strongest impacts on the poor.

7. In the year ahead, economies in the region will need to undertake complementary policies which address a number of objectives: (a) protecting macroeconomic fundamentals from global instability; (b) creating new sources of internal and regional growth in the medium term; and (c) improving the quality of growth to ensure that robust progress at the aggregate level translates into far more rapid improvement in the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable. The required policy measures would attempt to achieve these objectives in a holistic manner, ensuring that progress in achieving each of these aims does not prove detrimental to the other aims and indeed, where possible, serves to support them. The challenges and the recommended approaches to manage them will need to be tackled depending on their nature at the national, regional or global levels. While some actions may be undertaken using existing domestic institutional structures or newly formed global arrangements, such as the Group of Twenty (G20), actions at the regional level will in many cases require that cooperative set-ups be enhanced and sometimes that new ones be established. The secretariat will help in moving forward the agenda on these issues by organizing consultations among regional policymakers and providing analytical support through various publications.

C. Issues related to poverty and to inclusive development policy

8. Countries have made significant progress in reducing poverty over time. However, poverty remains a major challenge for most countries in the region, which is home to about 950 million people living below the poverty line. Currently high food prices will affect the poor disproportionately more, as they spend a large portion of their income on basic food commodities. Consequently, rising food prices may push more people below the poverty line. A strong and sustained growth momentum is needed to tackle the problem of poverty and food insecurity. Countries need to continue pursuing economic reforms to improve productivity, particularly that of their agricultural sector, strengthen public institutions, improve economic governance, enhance financial inclusion and build social safety nets to protect the more vulnerable segments of the population.

9. In the wake of the global financial and economic crises, G20 summits have assumed much greater importance for macroeconomic policy cooperation. In moving beyond crisis response, G20 has recently focused its attention on issues concerning the long-term growth and development of the global economy, recognizing that “narrowing the development gap and reducing poverty are integral to our broader objective of achieving strong, sustainable and balanced growth and ensuring a more robust and resilient global economy for all”. In October 2010, ESCAP held a high-level consultation on the G20 Seoul Summit 2010¹⁰ to enable both G20 and non-G20 members from the Asia-Pacific region to provide their perspectives on key policies aimed at narrowing development gaps and reducing poverty as means to ensure a more robust and resilient global economy for all. Such high-level consultations will be organized in the future to bring the perspectives of non-G20 members, especially those from the Asia-Pacific region, to the G20 summits.

10. Exploiting the potential for regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific could help close development gaps among countries. In this regard, strengthening physical and institutional connectivity will promote economic development in the region and, at the same time, contribute to the process of global rebalancing. The *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2011*¹¹ devotes a chapter to a detailed discussion of the critical role of regional connectivity in support of the region’s need to foster domestic and regional sources of aggregate demand. Among other things, the chapter provides an evaluation of how well connected the region is currently, identifies the main gaps or areas where improvements are needed and provides policy recommendations for deepening regional economic integration in Asia and the Pacific.

11. Reform of the international financial architecture is critical for promoting economic growth and macroeconomic stability. At the same time, the elements of regional financial architecture need to be elaborated in order to enhance the availability of capital for long-term development projects in the region. A stronger regional financial architecture could help direct regional savings to regional infrastructure needs, thereby contributing to growth and development. The work done under this subprogramme will help advance the agenda on these issues and contribute to capacity-building for policymakers, thereby enabling them to address these issues.

¹⁰ See www.seoulsummit.kr.

¹¹ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.II.F.2.

D. Policy issues related to countries with special needs

12. Despite the impressive progress and dynamism of the region, the Asian and Pacific countries with special needs, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, continue to face tremendous challenges in maintaining economic growth and implementing poverty reduction programmes. They face development gaps and challenges that are specific to this group of countries and which are addressed in the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010,¹² the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries¹³ and the Mauritius Strategy. Lack of productive capacity is impeding opportunities for expansion of trade, as the analysis in the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2011* shows. These countries have also encountered great difficulties in making sufficient progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goal targets to be attained by 2015, as they have suffered multiple effects owing to the food and energy crises and the global financial and economic crises in recent years.

13. The food and fuel crises that occurred just prior to the economic crisis had a devastating impact on the poor, the spectre of which has again surfaced with food and fuel price inflation in 2010. The climate change consequences are also placing tremendous stress on these countries, reversing their development gains in many instances. The agricultural sector, which is the backbone of many least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, has been neglected for almost a decade, complicating their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in eliminating hunger and reducing child and maternal mortality. The external environment has been equally challenging. Many of the commitments made by the development partners in support of countries with special needs have remained unfulfilled. Although there have been some encouraging signs in recent years with regard to official development assistance, ODA may not be maintained at levels sufficient to meet the needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as their traditional development partners face severe budgetary constraints due to the global economic crisis.

14. While redoubling their efforts in addressing development challenges, the countries with special needs could benefit from the diverse performance and experience of other developing countries in the region in reducing poverty and promoting inclusive and sustainable development through regional cooperation and South-South cooperation. Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States need to increase their capacity significantly in order to benefit fully from the region's dynamism and learn from the experience of successful countries. Some least developed countries in the region also need increased assistance if they are to graduate from their current status; they will have to put in place strategies that will help them to improve their productive

¹² A/CONF.191/13, chap. II.

¹³ *Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003 (A/CONF.202/3), annex I.*

capacity and compete more effectively in international markets. ODA will have to be reoriented for infrastructure development and improved food security by investing in the agricultural sector. Opportunities offered by regional cooperation, South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation will have to be exploited in order to close the development gaps in these countries. The capacity of countries with special needs to engage more robustly in global and regional forums needs to be further strengthened.

E. Poverty alleviation through sustainable agriculture

15. Developing countries in Asia and the Pacific still account for the majority of the world's poor and they have the highest proportion of undernourished people in the world. Poverty remains predominantly a rural phenomenon, and the poor are often concentrated on marginal lands. The agricultural sector is the backbone of the economies of many developing countries, particularly countries with special needs, but growth in this sector has usually been sluggish, or the sector has too often relied on unsustainable production practices. Sustainable productivity increases are urgently required to meet the Millennium Development Goals related to food security and poverty reduction. This will require faster and more widespread adoption of technological solutions and approaches to adding value than is currently the case. To accelerate the diffusion and adoption processes, the system of agricultural research for development needs to be altered. Stakeholders need to work together more effectively within countries and across the region to focus on transforming the outputs of research into development outcomes. Attention also needs to be paid to building and strengthening capacity in research and government decision-making bodies in Asia and the Pacific.

16. CAPSA will contribute to improving the capacity of member States to formulate and implement rural development policies that promote sustainable agriculture and food security by strengthening South-South dialogue and intraregional learning. CAPSA, together with its network of partners, is attempting to mobilize extrabudgetary resources that will enable the Centre to assist member States in several areas as described below. First, CAPSA will contribute to enhanced national capacity for socio-economic and policy research on sustainable agriculture for poverty reduction and food security and it will prioritize research needs in relation to poverty, food security and sustainable agriculture by facilitating access to relevant data, by enhancing the capacity of scientists to apply relevant methods and by preparing and developing synthesis reports on relevant and applicable research findings. Second, it will contribute to enhanced regional coordination and networking for successfully scaling up and scaling out research findings that have implications for policy design and implementation related to sustainable agriculture and rural development. Third, the Centre will work towards enhancing the capacity of policymakers and senior government officials to design and implement policies for achieving sustainable agriculture, rural development, poverty reduction and food security in Asia and the Pacific. CAPSA will endeavour to provide policy advice on effective national strategies, policies, programmes and good practices relating to food security, poverty reduction and sustainable agriculture through various means, including the organization of workshops, round tables and consultations, as well as regional dialogue and collaboration among member States and regional and subregional institutions.

F. Issues for consideration by the Commission

17. Member States may wish to share their experiences and views on the issues and challenges raised under this subprogramme. Some of these issues will be discussed in greater detail during the second session of the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development, which is scheduled to be held in December 2011. The Commission may wish to provide the secretariat with guidance on the provisional agenda of the second session of the Committee.

III. Trade and investment

A. Introduction

18. Economies of Asia and the Pacific have largely recovered from the severe global economic and financial crises that started in 2008. The rebound in exports in mid-2009 has continued unabated, and export volumes have now returned to pre-crisis levels in most developing economies of the region. The *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2010*¹⁴ forecast that regional exports would rise by over 10 per cent in 2011, after rising by nearly 20 per cent in 2010. The nature of the recovery has demonstrated that trade will remain an important driver of economic growth and development in the region.

19. The crises also highlighted the need to build more resilient and flexible economies that can weather such crises in the future and seize on new and emerging opportunities in trade and investment.

20. In the present document, the secretariat examines the key areas of policy action that countries in the Asia-Pacific region need to pursue in order to benefit from this new reality. The Trade and Investment Week 2011, to be held in Bangkok from 25 to 29 July, will provide a comprehensive platform for debating this thematic issue, sharing good practices and charting the way forward.

B. Deepening regional connectivity

21. The renewed interest of the region in increasing intraregional trade would very much depend on how effectively trade facilitation concerns are addressed. Research conducted by the secretariat shows that, on average, the region's costs of trading with North America and the European Union are 20 per cent lower than those of intraregional trade. In other words, national trade facilitation programmes in many developing countries have inherently focused on facilitating imports from and exports to developed countries.

22. Some countries in the region have made progress in reducing their trade costs over the past decade, including costs of trade with other Asian countries. Some economies in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as in the China-Japan-Republic of Korea triangle, have achieved high levels of trade efficiency among themselves, on par with developed country groupings.

¹⁴ ST/ESCAP/2590.

23. However, the majority of countries and subregions still face unacceptably high costs of trade with their neighbours. Trade costs among South Asian and North and Central Asian countries are more than double those among South-East Asian countries. The cost of importing or exporting from these subregions to or from ASEAN countries remains consistently higher than that between these countries and traditional developed country markets.

24. Undoubtedly, inadequate transport and logistics infrastructure is a key issue and it will require massive amounts of investment over time. What all countries can and should easily focus on, however, is ensuring that whatever hard infrastructure is available is used at maximum efficiency, but this can only happen if “soft infrastructure” issues are addressed: many forms of institutional barriers, regulatory procedures and bureaucratic red tape.

25. On average, it still takes 30 days to move goods from factory to ship-deck in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region, which is at least three times longer than it takes in countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Overall, the hidden cost of red tape can amount to 15 per cent of the value of the goods being exported; for the developing Asia-Pacific region, that represents \$300 billion per year.

26. Reducing trade costs begins at home. Making clear the procedures and relevant steps to complete them could save traders a tremendous amount of time and cost. Mapping out existing trade procedures is necessary to identify redundancies and simplify procedures. Harmonizing data by applying international standards should be the next step.

27. Most of these improvements can be achieved through fairly simple, low-cost interventions. However, political commitment is crucial if inefficient practices are to be changed. Making use of state-of-the-art, one-stop, single-window facilities for traders and the Government to exchange information would help countries to reduce the complexity, time and costs involved in international trade. Reducing trade costs in Asia and the Pacific also calls for action at the regional level. For example, region-wide enforcement of consistent transit rules that are based on international conventions may help landlocked countries in Central Asia gain access to seaports more easily.

28. The secretariat has been assisting member States in addressing inefficiencies and bottlenecks in international trade by: (a) building capacity among trade facilitation practitioners; (b) developing trade facilitation implementation methodologies and tools; (c) undertaking analytical and advocacy work; and (d) fostering a regional community of knowledge and best practices for trade facilitation. The United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade (UNNExT) is the main modality through which ESCAP delivers its trade facilitation programme. The platform for knowledge sharing and regional policy dialogue is provided by the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum. During 2010, about 320 officials and trade facilitation stakeholders — including 13 least developed and landlocked developing countries — benefited from various capacity-building activities.

C. Benefiting from opportunities for investment and business in Asia and the Pacific

29. There are several emerging opportunities for inclusive and sustainable business and investment in the region.

30. First, various Asia-Pacific developing countries are gaining importance as sources of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the region. These flows further support the development of regional and global value chains; hence, they provide unprecedented opportunities for business.

31. Second, expanding global/regional value chains is offering new opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow and prosper as integrated components of these value chains, often in the form of suppliers of parts, components and services. Most developing countries in the region have implemented a variety of interventions that can be grouped into six key areas: (a) adopting pro-business policy and regulatory frameworks; (b) supporting infrastructure; (c) fostering a culture of entrepreneurship; (d) facilitating access to finance; (e) promoting the development and adaptation of technology; and (f) improving business development services. However, an integrated approach to cover all six key areas effectively is missing, as these activities focus on only some of the issues and are implemented fragmentally.

32. It is imperative to further boost technical assistance in order to develop the capacity of SMEs. Governments need to harness private-sector resources in addressing development issues by establishing meaningful public-private partnerships. At the same time, SMEs need to incorporate the principles of corporate social responsibility as an important component in efforts to strengthen their competitiveness.

33. Against this background, the secretariat has been working closely with various countries and subregions in implementing a series of technical assistance activities for private sector development for several years. The secretariat has recently initiated the implementation of a technical assistance project on promoting the participation of SMEs from the Greater Mekong Subregion in regional and global value chains. Through its Investors for Development project, the secretariat attempts to strengthen national global compact networks and assist companies in increasing their competitiveness by embedding the principles of the United Nations Global Compact in core business strategies. In December 2010, a stakeholder consultation meeting was conducted in Bangkok for least developed countries of the region to assess their technical assistance needs in promoting and facilitating inclusive and sustainable FDI. A technical assistance programme was developed and will be circulated to potential donors shortly. The secretariat also organizes the annual Asia-Pacific Business Forum in order to promote public-private dialogues on issues of mutual interest, such as developing an enabling business environment and contributing to a low-carbon economy. The next Forum is scheduled to be held in July as part of Trade and Investment Week 2011.

34. In close cooperation with the ESCAP secretariat, the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) and the United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (UNAPCAEM) have increased their activities designed to promote regional cooperation for the transfer and development of technologies and

machinery in support of inclusive and sustainable development, including so-called climate-smart technologies.

D. Capturing the first-mover advantage in climate-smart goods, services and technologies

35. To avoid the worst effects of global warming, the ESCAP region would require additional investments of approximately \$150 billion per year for the development of environmentally friendly/climate-smart infrastructure, goods and services during the period 2011-2015, rising to about \$500 billion annually during the period 2026-2030.

36. The challenge lies in mitigating climate change without compromising economic growth. Tapping into opportunities in trade and investment in low-carbon or climate-smart goods and technologies could be a solution. Climate change mitigation and adaptation measures have created opportunities for “green” business, trade and investment. Markets for these products and services are rapidly expanding all over the world. Product and brand features such as “environmentally friendly” and “low carbon” could play an increasingly important role in global competition. This is an area where developing countries in the region could grasp first-mover advantages. It would also help them to diversify their export structures and market destinations. Such win-win solutions, however, require political commitment and coordinated national policy actions as well as regional and global partnerships, including public-private partnerships. Aid for trade could be mobilized to improve the capacity of developing countries to produce and utilize these products and technologies.

37. The ESCAP secretariat has already implemented various activities in the area of climate change. The Regional Symposium on Trade, Investment and Climate Change, which was held in Bali, Indonesia, in October 2010, brought together policymakers and environmental experts to explore the challenges and opportunities in this area. A forthcoming ESCAP publication on trade, investment and climate change will shed some light on the current debate, identify win-win opportunities for developing countries in the region and showcase best practices in this area. The Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network (ARTNeT) will take up more analysis and research in this regard.

E. Pursuing and deepening regional integration

38. In the aftermath of the current global economic crisis, a strong case has been made for increasing intraregional trade. The rapid proliferation of regional trade agreements (RTAs), however, has led to a confusing network of overlapping and sometimes conflicting commitments among countries, which are often signatories to multiple agreements with overlapping membership. In order for RTAs to evolve into orderly building blocks of regional integration and of the multilateral trading system, it is important that they be: (a) strengthened in terms of coverage and commitment; (b) expanded in terms of membership; and (c) harmonized and consolidated.

39. The Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) continues to be a potential driver of regional integration in Asia and the Pacific, since its membership is open and includes some of the region’s largest and most dynamic economies: China, India and the Republic of Korea. APTA has relatively simple and flexible rules of origin, which could be used as a

template for common rules of origin for the region. APTA also provides flexibilities and special tariff concessions for least developed countries. Over the past several years, APTA members have made significant progress in expanding the scope of their commitments, in particular through the adoption of framework agreements on investment, services and trade facilitation and through consultations on non-tariff measures. For APTA to truly serve as the driver of regional integration, its scope will need to be further expanded and its membership broadened. Efforts are ongoing to expand its scope and increase its membership, both by the participating countries and ESCAP, which serves as the APTA secretariat.

F. Ensuring the primacy of the multilateral trading system

40. The global economic crisis prompted many countries to resort to protectionist measures despite rhetoric to the contrary and the pledges they had made at various international forums. The role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) becomes indispensable in monitoring protectionist trends and championing the role of trade in economic growth and recovery. The multilateral trading system overseen by WTO is the only system that comprises a universal body of enforceable non-discriminatory rules governing international trade. This system of rules has enhanced the stability, transparency and predictability of international trade and warrants support from WTO members. Successful conclusion of the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations would send a strong signal that the global economy remains open and committed to trade. There are signs that WTO members are speeding up the process with a view to finalizing the round in 2011. Making this happen is the responsibility of all WTO members.

41. ESCAP has been helping countries participate effectively in the multilateral trading system, in particular by helping them accede to WTO, implement their WTO commitments effectively and participate effectively in negotiations concerning the Doha Development Agenda.¹⁵ Special attention is given to the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries. For this purpose, ESCAP organizes trade policy courses and specific training courses on WTO agreements and Doha Development Agenda issues, as well as regional policy dialogues among Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders. These forms of assistance are delivered through the ESCAP/WTO Technical Assistance Programme. The capacity of trade policy researchers in the region has been enhanced through ARTNeT.

G. Issues for consideration by the Commission

42. The Commission may wish to comment on the following: (a) the issues and challenges identified in capturing new and emerging trade and investment opportunities; (b) priority actions and policy measures identified by the secretariat for further consideration at the national, regional and global levels; and (c) the appropriateness of the work of the secretariat in addressing these challenges.

¹⁵ See A/C.2/56/7, annex.

IV. Transport

A. Introduction

43. Now more than ever, the region's development relies on its transport systems. The benefits of regional transport connectivity are widely recognized and can include greater regional integration and the development of intraregional trade. Connectivity also provides better access to markets for landlocked and island developing countries and offers economic and social opportunities to hinterland populations. The vision of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system articulated by ministers in the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/63/13, chap. V)¹⁶ and reiterated three years later in the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia (E/ESCAP/66/11, chap. IV),¹⁷ is aimed at fully realizing the potential economic and social benefits of improved transport connectivity while mitigating the negative impacts. The wide range of issues pertaining to the development of efficient transport infrastructure and services will be discussed extensively at the Ministerial Conference on Transport which will be held in Bangkok in November 2011, and which will consider phase II (2012-2016) of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific. The Regional Action Programme will be the road map for the secretariat to follow in working collaboratively with member countries and institutional partners to put in place inclusive and sustainable policies towards efficient transport that serves the region's economic and social development.

B. Promoting regional transport connectivity

44. The Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway are playing a pivotal role in fostering the coordinated development of regional road and rail networks. This collaborative work between the secretariat and member countries culminated in the formalization of the two networks through the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network¹⁸ and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway,¹⁹ which entered into force in July 2005 and June 2009, respectively. With these instruments in place, Governments in the region and development partners are collaborating to further expand capacity and improve connectivity with other regions. The meetings of the working groups on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks will be milestone events for the subprogramme in advancing priority projects with the greatest expected impact on connectivity.

45. In order to integrate the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway into an integrated intermodal transport and logistics system, the recent focus has been on the development of dry ports and efficient logistics, both of

¹⁶ Subsequently endorsed by the Commission in its resolution 63/9 of 23 May 2007 on the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011).

¹⁷ Subsequently endorsed by the Commission in its resolution 66/4 of 19 May 2010 on the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia.

¹⁸ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2323, No. 41607.

¹⁹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, No. 46171.

which are seen as critical steps to further regional economic cooperation and integration. The development of an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports that defines common functions and guiding principles would assist countries in developing overall strategies and policy and regulatory measures for the development of dry ports.

46. In order to achieve the full potential of the connectivity provided by the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks and dry ports, it is essential to facilitate cross-border and transit transport to improve efficiency and reduce costs. The facilitation of trade and transport is now becoming increasingly important in the context of growing intraregional trade, which already is on par with trade with that of other regions and offers substantial opportunity for further expansion.

47. Examples abound of non-physical barriers which continue to impede cross-border and transit transport movements over land: inconsistent and difficult border-crossing formalities and procedures; large numbers of documents; duplication of inspections by different authorities; restrictive visa requirements; incompatible working hours at borders; restrictions and limitations on the entry of vehicles; forced trans-shipment operations at borders; different standards for vehicles and drivers; and a lack of coordination among various stakeholders. Renewed efforts to address those issues will have a direct impact on reducing the cost of transport and the competitiveness of the region's enterprises. Related issues will be a core theme of the forthcoming Ministerial Conference on Transport.

48. While the access provided by transport is important to all countries, it is critical to the domestic commerce and international trade of archipelagic and island developing countries. Owing to their small size, low population levels, limited production base and vast interisland distances, shipping services to and between these countries face unique challenges related to low and often irregular traffic volumes, long voyage distances and physical constraints in associated seaport infrastructure, superstructure and equipment. Although significant progress has been made in recent years in addressing some of the legislative, regulatory and training issues related to maritime transport, notably in the Pacific, with the technical advice and capacity-building services of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in the areas of maritime law, training and security, the demand and supply constraints impeding interisland shipping need to be reviewed and possible solutions identified.

49. In most countries of the region, the costs associated with logistics are high. Logistics service providers are still small in size, and the industry is fragmented. Countries have started to implement policies to establish an efficient logistics industry; however, owing to the cross-sectoral nature of the issues to be addressed, it is a challenge for many countries in the region to enable stakeholders to develop and implement comprehensive logistics policies in a coordinated and consistent manner. Enhancing the professionalism and competitiveness of logistics service providers through, among other things, the establishment of minimum standards and codes of conduct, and the training of operators and officials are two important steps in addressing some of these issues. Past advisory services furnished by the secretariat have proven beneficial to a number of member States in enhancing the development of their nascent logistics industry. The secretariat is poised to mobilize resources to furnish similar services upon request.

50. Many subregional and intergovernmental organizations in the ESCAP region have taken up the further extension of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway and been active in formulating subregional transport networks. They have also been developing a legislative and regulatory environment to smooth the flow of traffic between their member countries. Many subregions are now looking beyond their own territory towards establishing wider trading relationships and, in some cases, transiting other subregions. In so doing, some technical, regulatory and operational differences have been found between subregions, and these can act as physical and non-physical barriers to smooth and efficient transport. The subprogramme will enhance the role of the secretariat in providing a platform for subregional organizations to share experiences in developing subregional transport and in removing physical and non-physical barriers to intersubregional transport in order to further promote region-wide connectivity.

C. Connecting rural and urban areas to economic and social opportunities

51. Many of the obstacles to achieving the Millennium Development Goals are related to connectivity and access. These include access to markets, employment, productivity-enhancing extension services, education and health services, as well as meeting gender-specific transport needs. Transport, by providing such access, can help to address the poverty, educational, gender, child mortality and health-related Goals. Transport can also target Goal 8 on partnership by incorporating the special needs of landlocked and small island developing countries, as well as involving the private sector in the development process.

52. Improved transport and logistics infrastructure and services can increase food security. There are many countries in the region with large spatial inequalities in income and wealth due to lack of all-weather roads to villages, infrequent or unreliable transport services to outlying islands, poor physical access to deeper hinterlands and weak rural-urban connectivity. Rural logistics and farm-to-market supply chains also need to be supported and developed.

53. Furthermore, efficient transport infrastructure assumes primary importance when disasters occur and relief aid needs to be transported to victims, as demonstrated recently in a number of member countries. The ability to respond to disasters requires not only the adoption of risk-mitigation strategies, such as the development of contingency transport and logistics plans, but also the adaptation of the design and alignment of infrastructure so that it is resilient to such disasters. Experience has shown that more attention needs to be paid to such mitigation and adaptation strategies in the transport and logistics sectors. The secretariat will help policymakers examine the wider implications of transport infrastructure in the appraisal of projects.

54. While the benefits of transport connectivity are significant, the necessary investments can be equally significant. Some countries have been successful in attracting private financing for infrastructure development; others are experiencing difficulties in creating an institutional and regulatory environment that is conducive to public-private partnerships (PPPs). Some countries are also facing substantial challenges in developing, implementing and managing such partnership projects due to a lack of clear

understanding of PPPs and a lack of capacity among public officials; challenges also arise from non-standardized administrative processes and documents. Because it is necessary to overcome these barriers to PPP development, the secretariat has developed a set of training materials on assessing PPP-readiness. Refining these materials and strengthening the regional network of PPP units and practitioners will continue to be important activities in this regard.

D. Addressing the negative impacts of transport

55. The transport sector is one of the largest consumers of energy in the ESCAP region and is the largest consumer of petroleum products, which most countries must import. The sector is also the second largest contributor to carbon dioxide emissions, which are the primary source of greenhouse gases. In view of the rapid growth in international trade, income and motorization in the region, energy consumption and atmospheric pollution by the transport sector will continue to increase if measures are not taken to mitigate their impact.

56. There is considerable potential for countries in the ESCAP region to take further measures to reduce energy consumption and emissions in the transport sector. They have the opportunity to develop integrated intermodal transport systems, for example, which, where appropriate, take advantage of the higher fuel efficiency and lower emissions of rail and inland water transport. Improving logistics is a further means of reducing fuel consumption and associated emissions. For such approaches to be successful, Governments need to implement initiatives to promote energy-efficient and environmentally friendly modes of transport for the movement of goods and people.

57. Currently, over half the world's road fatalities occur in the ESCAP region, and estimates are that the region's share could rise to two thirds of the global total by 2020. Road accidents cut across the most active segments of populations and have a huge economic and social impact. Recognizing the loss incurred through road accidents, the ESCAP Ministerial Conference on Transport in 2006 adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/63/13, chap. IV), and, in 2010, the Commission adopted resolution 66/6 on improving road safety in Asia and the Pacific. This followed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 64/255 of 2 March 2010 on improving global road safety, in which the Assembly, among other things, proclaimed the period 2011-2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety, a goal of which is to stabilize and then reduce the forecast level of road traffic fatalities around the world by increasing activities conducted at the national, regional and global levels. The purpose of these measures is to make road safety a foremost priority in all member countries, ensuring that the issue is integrated into national planning and policies and that sufficient measures are taken to enhance public awareness of the need to address the issue.

58. Member States will be assisted in developing national road safety strategies and action plans with measurable road safety goals and targets, as well as tools to monitor progress in this regard. The secretariat will create opportunities for relevant ministries/agencies to exchange experiences and best practices in order to enhance the capacity of countries to plan and implement policy measures to improve road safety.

E. Issues for consideration by the Commission

59. Member countries may wish to share their experiences and views on the above-mentioned issues and challenges. The Commission may wish to provide the secretariat with guidance on approaches considered appropriate for the secretariat to follow in its future work, taking into account the recommendations of the Committee on Transport at its second session (see E/ESCAP/67/7).

V. Environment and development

A. Renewed highlights on the region's resource challenges

60. While steadily recovering from the recent financial and economic crises, most economies in the region proved relatively resilient to the financial instability, high food prices and energy and commodity price volatility that severely affected the rest of the world. However, persistent inequalities, intensifying natural disasters and climate and environmental change still overshadow the regional outlook.

61. There is growing concern over the increasing vulnerability of the region's globalizing economy towards resource constraints. Countries heavily dependent on imported oil continue to be at risk if they try to stabilize their economic growth when oil prices are volatile. The region's water resources are also becoming scarce and further threatened by natural disasters and pollution. Meeting the unmet needs of current urban populations, as well as those of future generations, would require simultaneously ensuring continued economic growth and poverty reduction while minimizing the adverse impacts of economic growth and urban development on the environment and natural resource base. Daily reports on various implications have raised the region's renewed concern about its resilience to economic, resource and food crises.

B. The region's concerted response: the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

62. The Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific was organized by ESCAP and held in Astana from 27 September to 2 October 2010. Attended by more than 800 participants and stakeholders, including ministers and heads of delegation from 46 ESCAP member States, it adopted three main outcome documents: (a) the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2010; (b) the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and Pacific, 2011-2015; and (c) the Astana "Green Bridge" Initiative: Europe-Asia-Pacific Partnership for the Implementation of "Green Growth" (see E/ESCAP/67/8).

63. The Declaration reaffirmed that regional cooperation should be strengthened to reinforce national efforts to improve the resilience of economies in the region to external shocks. It particularly recognized that "green growth, as appropriately adapted to country-specific circumstances and as understood in the context of sustainable development, is one of the approaches for supporting rapid economic growth, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and environmental sustainability".

C. Key areas for action by the secretariat

64. The above-mentioned plan identified the following key areas for action: harmonizing rapid economic growth, employment generation and environmental sustainability; promoting sustainable urban development; enhancing ecological carrying capacity; improving energy resource management; improving water resource management; and enhancing the resilience of socio-economic development to climate change. The following descriptions provide an overview of ongoing activities and those planned by the secretariat to facilitate regional and national activities in specific areas.

1. Harmonizing rapid economic growth, employment generation and environmental sustainability

65. In order to build a foundation for implementing the recommendations of the Conference, the secretariat will continue to conduct green growth capacity-building events to facilitate the enhancement of national institutional capacities for developing and implementing green growth policy options. Specific efforts have been made to assist least developed countries, such as Cambodia, and Pacific small island developing States, such as Samoa, where green business models are applied in order to enhance the eco-efficiency of resource use and where renewable energy services (biogas, solar) are furnished for the benefit of the rural poor. These appropriate actions help such countries in their efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goals 1 and 7. These models are being piloted, and localized green solutions will be replicated.

66. As ecosystems have become more degraded and the demand for services provided by natural capital grows more critical, ESCAP has become active at the regional, subregional and national levels in providing a comprehensive overview of practical ways in which investments in natural capital could be promoted, including the use of market-based policy approaches to internalize ecological prices as a way to support greener growth patterns which harmonize economic growth, local livelihood and environmental sustainability. Lessons learned from a pilot project regarding payment for ecological services in Aceh, Indonesia, as well as other work in South-East Asian countries, have been shared to support the development of the relevant national policies in a broader range of countries.

2. Promoting sustainable urban development

67. Since the sixty-sixth Commission session, the secretariat's work on urban issues has progressed in a number of areas. Among others, under a project jointly conducted with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), ESCAP has developed a methodology and guidelines for policymakers and planners to assess the eco-efficiency of urban infrastructure in an integrated manner and to develop strategies and actions to improve it. Under a project on pro-poor and sustainable solid waste management in secondary cities and small towns, ESCAP has introduced integrated resource recovery centres as a pro-poor, environmentally sustainable and economically viable approach for solid waste management in several cities in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. As part of a project on eco-efficient water infrastructure development in Asia, ESCAP has developed guidelines for policymakers and piloted water systems for public buildings. In

addition, ESCAP, jointly with UN-HABITAT, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific, prepared *The State of Asian Cities 2010/11* report and finalized activities linked to projects on housing finance and the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment.²⁰ ESCAP also initiated research on pro-poor eco-settlements and commenced work on a joint project with UN-HABITAT to increase the resilience and adaptive capacity of cities to climate change.

68. Ongoing and planned work is aligned with the outcome documents of the Conference, which call for the Asia-Pacific region to promote sustainable urban development while integrating economic, ecological and social aspects in key action areas, such as urban planning and design, infrastructure and housing, urban financing, and capacity-building. Work modalities include: (a) undertaking research on emerging issues and innovative solutions to develop replicable models and policy recommendations; (b) convening high-level policy dialogues and forums, such as the forthcoming fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, to promote these successful policies and practices; (c) improving the capacity of developing countries to adapt, replicate and scale up innovative practices and policy initiatives; and (d) promoting North-South and South-South cooperation through networking and resource transfer.

3. Enhancing energy security by improving energy resource management for sustainable development

69. In building on the outcome of the theme study for the sixty-fourth session of the Commission,²¹ entitled *Energy Security and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*,²² the secretariat continues to conduct analytical work on energy security and promote the exchange of views and experiences in order to develop a regional framework to strengthen energy security. The secretariat will continue to provide a forum for deliberation on a possible regional cooperation modality for that purpose. Moreover, the secretariat has conducted a study on a low-carbon development path, which takes a co-benefit approach that enables policymakers to demonstrate environmental benefits and the benefits to be obtained by addressing developmental priorities, including energy security, energy efficiency and widening access to energy services.

70. With respect to energy efficiency, the secretariat is currently implementing a project to strengthen institutional capacity to support energy efficiency in Central, South and South-East Asia. Under the United Nations Development Account, the secretariat will embark on a project to address widening access to energy services for the rural poor based on the findings and lessons learned from the previous project on pro-poor public-private partnership.

²⁰ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific 2000, Kitakyushu, Japan, 31 August-5 September 2000: Ministerial Declaration, Regional Action Programme (2001-2005) and Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment (ST/ESCAP/2096)* (Sales No. E.01.II.F.12), Part Three.

²¹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 19 (E/2008/39-E/ESCAP/64/39)*, paras. 266-287.

²² United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.II.F.13.

4. Improving water resource management for sustainable development

71. Application of the green growth approach to water resources management has gained sufficient ground in terms of the development of eco-efficient water infrastructure, especially for the promotion of improved sanitation and wastewater management. Application of this concept was supported by a trend towards increased decentralization of the planning and decision-making processes together with enhancement of public awareness and participation, as well as recent advances in wastewater treatment technologies.

72. In addition, efforts were made to promote regional actions on water resources management through the identification of “water hotspots” as areas or countries that would require concerted efforts and assistance to meet urgent socio-economic development needs, such as those countries that may not achieve the Millennium Development Goals or are highly vulnerable to water-related disasters.

73. These efforts are in line with regional efforts to enhance the resilience of the region in meeting the growing challenges to sustainable water resources management and food security.

D. Opportunities and the way forward

74. Several important initiatives proposed by member countries were adopted by the Ministerial Conference; these will be essential in driving the region towards achieving sustainable development through regional cooperation.

75. The Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative was adopted by the Conference for the purpose of stimulating transregional cooperation, especially in the areas of the green economy, ensuring access to green technologies and developing framework mechanisms to stimulate their implementation. The key areas of the initiative include the following: (a) eco-efficient use of natural resources and investment in ecosystem services; (b) low-carbon development and adaptation to climate change; (c) promotion of sustainable urban development; (d) promotion of green business and green technology; and (e) promotion of sustainable lifestyles and improvement of the quality of life. Specific activities will soon be proposed by the Government of Kazakhstan in consultation with other member States.

76. Based on an assessment of activities during the period 2005-2010, the Seoul Initiative on Green Growth²³ was extended for five years; it is aimed at further promotion of the green growth approach and policy options for the Asia-Pacific region.

77. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, will focus on two themes: (a) a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and (b) the institutional framework for sustainable

²³ See Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *The Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2005* (Sales No. E.05.II.F.31), annex III.

development. Various preparations for that Conference are being undertaken at the global, regional and national levels.

78. A regional preparatory process in Asia and the Pacific will be conducted to formulate, among other things, a regional statement to the Conference, reflecting the region's experience in implementing Agenda 21,²⁴ the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21²⁵ and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,²⁶ as well as in applying green economy policies and regional perspectives on challenges and opportunities for further advancement towards sustainable development. The regional statement will be linked to the outcome of the Ministerial Conference as the latest collective views on sustainable development of the member countries.

E. Issues for consideration by the Commission

79. The members of the Commission may wish to share their experiences and views on the issues and challenges raised. The Commission may wish to encourage countries to enhance regional cooperation on integrating key challenges in the water-food-energy nexus into their socio-economic development process. It may also wish to identify priorities and provide the secretariat with further guidance on the approaches it wishes the secretariat to follow in its future work.

VI. Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction

A. Introduction

80. With the meteoric rise of the digital economy over the past few decades, information and communications technologies (ICTs) have become "synergistic" technologies crucial to the region's development potential. Wired telephony is quickly giving way to wireless telephony and providing new income-earning opportunities for the poor; narrowband networks are being replaced by high-capacity broadband networks; they have all opened up opportunities for the region to evolve into one that is knowledge-based. Access to mobile telephones has become more equal, and user terminals for accessing relevant services are also becoming more powerful and affordable. During 2010, new mobile subscriptions in China and India were estimated to exceed 20 million monthly.

81. While developed countries in the ESCAP region were approaching 100 mobile telephone subscriptions for every 100 persons in the population in 2009, the figure stood at only 27.4 per 100 in least developed countries and 24.2 per 100 in Pacific small island developing States. An even starker comparison relates to the number of Internet users: in least developed countries the number is 1 per 100 on average compared with 80 per 100 in developed countries.

²⁴ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

²⁵ General Assembly resolution S/19-2.

²⁶ *Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2001)* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex).

82. Likewise, the full introduction of broadband networks in the region lags behind that of North America, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, despite the fact that some countries in the Asia-Pacific region have the highest broadband penetration in the world.²⁷

83. Furthermore, as rapid technological advances converge with social interactions, contradictory forces are at play: on one hand, increased ICT-enabled exchanges of content-rich information can enhance people-to-people connectivity, promote linguistic diversity, enrich cultures and enhance knowledge systems; on the other, Internet-based societies also give rise to new structures of social organization that may displace values inherent in traditional communities. Social and ethnic tensions inevitably have arisen, a situation which raises questions about social cohesiveness and leaves open the possibility that these technologies may loosen as well as deepen the bonds of solidarity that are needed for cooperation across generations, communities and countries.

B. Cybersecurity

84. Borderless global interconnectivity also furnishes a conduit for criminal activities, which were estimated to have generated revenue amounting to more than \$10 billion in 2007—an amount that for the first time outstripped the revenue gained from the trade in illicit drugs.²⁸ The effects of such criminal activities are pervasive, causing degradation or interruption of services, theft of confidential or private information, loss of customer orders and financial fraud. More worrisome is that the trust and goodwill among institutions, societies and individuals can be lost, while the damage to ICT infrastructure and services is highly disruptive. ICT infrastructure that is not secure and reliable also discourages foreign investment, which has negative repercussions on ICT innovation and adoption.

85. Some countries have developed highly regulated environments; others have little or no restrictions, a situation which makes it almost impossible for a single country to enforce cybersecurity on its own. Therefore, international and regional cooperation is required to respond to such security threats.

C. Reducing economic losses and social vulnerability while protecting development gains from disasters

86. Reducing economic losses from disasters continues to be a major challenge. Globally, economic losses from disasters in 2010 reached a value of \$222 billion compared with \$36 billion in 2009. Of even greater concern is the fact that about 260,000 people were killed in disasters in 2010, the highest number since 1976.²⁹ The Asian and Pacific region produces only one quarter of the world's GDP, but accounts for a staggering 85 per cent of

²⁷ International Telecommunication Union, World telecommunication/ICT indicators 2010 database.

²⁸ Kelley O'Connell, "Cyber-crime hits \$100 billion in 2007, out-earning illegal drug trade", Internet Business Law Services, Inc., 17 October 2007. Available from: www.ibls.com/internet_law_news_portal_view_prn.aspx?s=latestnews&id=1882.

²⁹ More information on preliminary estimates for 2010 natural catastrophes and man-made disasters may be obtained from Swiss Re at www.swissre.com/media/media_information under the heading "Preliminary 2010 catastrophes estimates from sigma".

the deaths and 38 per cent of the global economic losses caused by disasters during the period 1980-2009.¹ The floods that swept across Pakistan in 2010 affected 20 million people and claimed nearly 2,000 lives, while causing direct damage and indirect losses estimated at \$9.7 billion in value.³⁰

87. The *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report, 2010*, apart from profiling disaster risks in all ESCAP subregions, indicated that the ongoing efforts made by high-risk developing countries towards reducing disaster vulnerability are not enough. The study called for the scaling up of efforts in disaster risk reduction and new multidisciplinary policy approaches. The post-disaster efforts in the region were found to be devoted disproportionately to rebuilding infrastructure and other sectors of the economy, even though the damage and losses were greater in the social sectors, a divergence that risked widening the levels of socio-economic inequity that expose the poor to disasters.

88. Disaster risk-reduction strategies should be considered within broader development frameworks and multisectoral budgetary processes that address these inequities. It is important to recognize the need to address the special situation of women, children, older persons and other vulnerable groups, and to address the psychosocial impacts that disasters have in both the short and long term. It is necessary for countries to be equipped with enhanced institutional capacity and strengthened planning processes so that their policies would include disaster-responsive social protection systems.³¹

D. Integration of disaster risk reduction and development

89. Environmental imbalances that have arisen from improper development are another area of concern, since weather-related disaster risk is expanding rapidly in terms of the territories affected, the losses reported and the frequency of events.³² In the light of the growing recognition that climate variability and extreme weather events are likely to increase in frequency, it is important to recognize that addressing the underlying causes of disaster risks offers the potential for a “triple win”, that is, for addressing disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and poverty reduction. There is an urgent need to scale up commitments, including technical and financial assistance from donor countries and international organizations, and to promote innovative approaches to reduce disaster risks in order to achieve the objectives of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters³³ and the Millennium Development Goals.

90. At the fourth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, which was held at Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 25 to 28

³⁰ *Pakistan Floods 2010: Preliminary Damage and Needs Assessment* (Islamabad, Asian Development Bank and World Bank, 2010). News release available from: www.adb.org/Media/Articles/2010/13363-pakistan-flooding-assessments/ADB-WB-pakistan-assessment.pdf

³¹ For a discussion of social protection, see E/ESCAP/67/20.

³² Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, *2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction: Risk and Poverty in a Changing Climate: Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow* (Geneva, United Nations, 2009). Available at <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/>.

³³ A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

October 2010, ESCAP contributed to the technical session and ministerial-level plenary session on integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation to sustainable development. The Conference adopted the Incheon Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and the Pacific 2010,³⁴ which focuses on (a) raising awareness and building capacity for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation; (b) developing and sharing information, technology, sound practices and lessons learned in climate and disaster risk management; and (c) promoting the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into sustainable development. The Declaration also highlighted the following issues on promoting investments in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation: building capacities to track disaster risk reduction investments; evaluating financial and economic costs and benefits of disaster risk reduction to promote greater investments in reducing disasters in the region; promoting comprehensive preparedness planning to mitigate the impacts of disasters; strengthening governance structures and advocating the international donor community to increase its funding support for regional and national activities for disaster risk reduction and implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action; apportioning by 2015 at least 10 per cent of humanitarian assistance and 2 per cent of development assistance for disaster risk reduction; and encouraging developed countries to offer their support to developing countries in terms of financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building.

E. Regional cooperation on space information for disaster monitoring and early warning

91. While many governmental and some commercial remote-sensing satellite operators are providing valuable information to support disaster response efforts through various international and regional initiatives, many gaps remain. Affordable access to satellite data for pre-disaster preparedness and early warning and the provision of appropriate products and services to meet the technical and institutional capabilities of most developing countries, particularly least developed countries, are important.

92. Flood and drought are the two disasters that most severely affect the Asia-Pacific region. Integrated analysis of space- and ground-based observations may provide effective monitoring and early warning of drought disasters and give valuable lead-time for stakeholders to take measures to prevent drought hazards from becoming major disasters. While some international organizations, such as the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), are furnishing drought-monitoring services at the global level, more detailed drought risk analysis for action at the local level needs higher-resolution satellite data and complex technologies. Based on the support expressed by China, India, Japan, the Philippines, the Russian Federation and Thailand as well as relevant international organizations, such as WMO and the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization, ESCAP has been promoting the Regional Cooperative Mechanism on Disaster Monitoring and Early Warning, Particularly Drought, in order to provide member countries with substantive technical support, including satellite information products and services, an information portal and capacity-building activities, for the development of national drought disaster monitoring and early warning capabilities and services. The mechanism was launched by ESCAP in September 2010 and is moving

³⁴ See www.preventionweb.net/files/16327_finalincheondeclaration1028.pdf.

towards its operational phase. To expand the scope of the mechanism to cover floods and other major disasters, efforts will be made to explore the enabling policies of countries in the region that operate satellites. The purpose would be to enable those countries to provide more affordable satellite information for flood preparedness and to assist other countries in the region in making effective use of their services during major flood disaster emergencies.

F. Collaborative building of regional disaster communication capacities

93. Disaster communication capacities are critical for the timely dissemination of early warning alerts, for the timely and accurate reporting of the occurrence of disasters and for effectively organizing and coordinating response actions among various governmental and non-governmental bodies. Saving human lives within the first 72 hours of a major disaster is crucial; in most such situations, terrestrial telecommunication infrastructure, if it existed, is destroyed by the disaster. Rapid deployment, restoration and expansion of the means of emergency communication therefore are vital until terrestrial networks are restored. Collaborative capacities include (a) rapidly deployable standby equipment and services for emergency response; and (b) pre-disaster distributed capacity for reporting and early warning. Technically, such capacities should be a hybrid of all infrastructure and services available in the area to ensure accessibility and usefulness. Institutionally, capacities should be activated, deployed and put into effect at short notice, often in minutes.

94. In many countries, disaster management and telecommunication authorities work together to develop national disaster communications capacities. Some United Nations entities and humanitarian assistance organizations have the capacity to support their field actions. However, such capacities are rarely used, and building them individually is beyond the capabilities of most developing countries and small economies. Building capacities collaboratively is more cost-effective and affordable for many developing countries.

95. The financial sustainability of such collaborative capacities needs to be supported by multi-stakeholders and public-private partnerships. Moreover, cross-boundary movement of equipment and provision of services involve making arrangements for legal and regulatory solutions.

G. ESCAP secretariat response

96. As economic integration deepens in the region, the need to enhance economic connectivity has increased. The secretariat will promote trade and transport facilitation through ICT infrastructure and applications in the region with studies to map out the potential for integrating communications infrastructure development with road, railway and power infrastructure projects, and the synergies and cost savings that would emerge as a result. Particular attention will be paid to connectivity in the Pacific subregion.

97. To enhance understanding of the quantitative impacts that rapid ICT advances have on development and in support of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, the secretariat will work closely with the members and associate members of the Commission to strengthen data collection and reporting.

98. In collaboration with development partners, including the ASEAN secretariat in support of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity,³⁵ the ESCAP secretariat proposes to undertake studies and policy dialogues that examine, from socio-economic and socio-cultural perspectives, information and communications technologies and their effect on people-to-people connectivity. Furthermore, in recognition of the significance that the World Summit on the Information Society accorded the issue of cybersecurity,³⁶ and the importance that the General Assembly has placed on the creation of a global culture of cybersecurity and the protection of critical information infrastructures,³⁷ ESCAP, in consultation with national stakeholders, will assist in promoting and developing a regional approach to cybersecurity.

99. In its resolution 66/14, the Commission mandated the continuation of the operation of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT) beyond 2011. There are plans to expand the Centre's human and institutional capacity-building programmes to promote the use of ICT for socio-economic development and strengthen its role as a credible multilateral cooperation mechanism on ICT human resources development in the region. It will continue to adopt an inclusive and participatory approach to enhance the reach and impact of its flagship online distance-learning programme, the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders, by establishing and nurturing strategic partnerships with national and subregional organizations, localizing the programme to meet country-specific needs and widening the beneficiary group. In response to strong demand from member States, the programme will also accord priority to training in more advanced aspects of ICT for development and the role of technology in addressing disaster risk management and climate change. Further, APCICT will make concerted efforts through its research pillar to further highlight the potential of ICT capacity-building for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and will seek to enhance the visibility of its work.

100. At its first session, in March 2009, the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction gave importance to enhanced knowledge of disaster risk reduction policies and tools for socio-economic vulnerability and disaster impact assessment (see E/ESCAP/65/9, para. 6); therefore, the secretariat will regularly publish the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report*, in cooperation with the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and other key partners. The report will analyse regional trends on disasters and development, including those related to climate change adaptation, and focus on emerging socio-economic challenges that the region faces in addressing disasters and the policy responses needed. In addition, the Asia-Pacific Gateway for Disaster Risk Reduction and Development will be further developed. Capacity-building in utilizing the damage and loss assessment methodology, in collaboration with ECLAC and other regional organizations, will be made available to the subregions.

³⁵ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, *Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity* (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2010). Available from: www.aseansec.org/documents/MPAC.pdf.

³⁶ See the Declaration of Principles of the World Summit on the Information Society (A/C.2/59/3), para. 35.

³⁷ In its resolution 58/199, the General Assembly, among other things, encouraged Member States to share their best practices and measures that could assist others in their efforts to facilitate the achievement of cybersecurity and the protection of critical information infrastructures.

101. Along with regional networking for the effective exchange of information and sound practices, the secretariat will continue to provide high-risk least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States with technical assistance. This includes: (a) regional activities in support of flood-resilient recovery efforts in Pakistan; (b) promotion of subregional networking in flood risk reduction, taking into account extreme weather events in Central Asia; (c) cooperative disaster risk reduction activities involving the secretariats of ESCAP and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in the work of the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee and the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones; and (d) support for the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia through the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries.

102. To provide member States with substantive technical tools for effective disaster risk reduction and management, the secretariat will promote the Regional Cooperative Mechanism on Disaster Monitoring and Early Warning and its operational services for drought disaster management, and explore ways to expand its scope to cover flood and other major disasters. The secretariat will also work closely with the members of the regional Interagency Working Group on Information and Communications Technology to carry out a study on the details of the proposed collaborative building of disaster communication capabilities for the Asia-Pacific region.

H. Issues for consideration by the Commission

103. The members of the Commission may wish to share their experiences and views on the issues and challenges raised. The Commission may then wish to identify priorities and provide the secretariat with guidance on the approaches that it would like the secretariat to take in future work under this subprogramme.

VII. Social development

A. Asia-Pacific regional preparations for the comprehensive review by the General Assembly of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

104. The Commission's guidance is sought on Asia-Pacific regional priorities as an input to the comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS² and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS³ to be conducted by the General Assembly in June 2011 in accordance with its resolution 65/180. In that resolution, the Assembly, among other things, invited the regional commissions to participate in a high-level meeting to be convened in New York by the General Assembly from 8 to 10 June 2011, and to consider initiatives in support of the preparatory process and the high-level meeting.

105. The comprehensive review by the General Assembly is significant as it will mark three decades of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the 10-year review of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and its time-bound measurable goals and targets, and the five-year review of the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, with the goal of achieving universal access to

comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. Given that these goals and targets expired at the end of 2010, there is an urgent need for the international community to renew the political will for, and to continue fulfilling its commitments to, the global response to HIV/AIDS.

106. The sixty-seventh session of the Commission provides a timely opportunity for ESCAP member States to report on national and regional progress in meeting the above-mentioned commitments in preparation for the General Assembly's comprehensive review.

107. A decade ago, as part of regional preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, held in New York from 25 to 27 June 2001, the Commission adopted resolution 57/1 of 25 April 2001 on the regional call for action to fight HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific. Among other things, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to bring the resolution to the attention of the General Assembly at its special session on HIV/AIDS, and the resolution served as a regional input for the preparation of the draft declaration of commitment and other preparatory activities at the special session of the General Assembly.

108. In accordance with past practice, the Commission may thus wish to consider putting forward a resolution during its sixty-seventh session to provide a regional input to the forthcoming comprehensive review.

109. In considering the above-mentioned matter, the Commission may wish to note the developments described below.

110. The overall trend in the Asian and Pacific region has been broadly positive, with most national HIV epidemics stabilizing in the last five years. By the end of 2009, an estimated 4.9 million people were living with HIV in the region. This accounted for 14.7 per cent of the global population of people living with HIV, about the same number and proportion as five years earlier. From 1999 to 2009, the number of total new infections declined by more than 20 per cent in the region. Equally encouraging is that wider access to services preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV has led to a 15 per cent decrease in new infections of children aged 0 to 14 during the same period. In addition, from 1999 to 2009, the proportion of females aged 15 or older living with HIV relative to the total population of the same age group stabilized at about 35 per cent.

111. Despite these broadly positive developments, key affected populations within the region continue to be particularly vulnerable to the HIV epidemic. According to some estimates, 75 per cent of all HIV infections in the region are among: (a) injecting drug users and their partners; (b) female sex workers, their clients and their clients' partners; and (c) men who have sex with men.

112. National and other reports prepared recently in follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS have indicated that prevention programmes in the region were able to reach no more than 30 per cent of key affected populations. Moreover, national prevention programmes still need to develop effective approaches to address issues surrounding the female partners of men who pay for sex, inject drugs and have sex with men. Of new infections among women — a growing population in some countries in the region — 25 to 40 per cent are among the partners of men who pay for sex, inject drugs and have sex with men.

113. In the Asia-Pacific region, the legal, regulatory and policy environments often prevent comprehensive responses to HIV and AIDS from being carried out. In the region, 90 per cent of countries reportedly have laws which obstruct the rights of people living with HIV. Barriers of this nature significantly hinder progress in developing and implementing effective responses to HIV and AIDS, especially among key affected populations. Such barriers and the need to overcome them were emphasized by the Commission in its resolution 66/10 of 19 May 2010 on the regional call for action to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support in Asia and the Pacific.

114. These aspects notwithstanding, positive developments have occurred recently, with a number of countries in the region taking steps to provide environments that decrease marginalization and stigma, including programmes to address these issues specifically, lifting HIV-related travel restrictions and decriminalizing consensual same-sex relations among adults, either through legislation or court judgements. Such developments need to be built upon in order to achieve greater success across the region in terms of access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

B. Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

115. The Commission's guidance is sought on the regional preparations for the Asia-Pacific regional review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.⁵

116. In line with Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/14 of 22 July 2010 on the future implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, the second global review and appraisal of the Plan will be conducted in 2013 at the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, the theme of which will be "Full implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing: social situation, well-being and dignity, development and the full realization of all human rights for older persons". In its resolution 2010/14, the Economic and Social Council called on the regional commissions to organize regional review and appraisal meetings in 2012 as part of the preparatory process for the global review.

117. In its resolution 65/182 on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the General Assembly encouraged all States Members of the United Nations to further implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and mainstream the concerns of older persons into national policy agendas.

118. Pursuant to the above-mentioned resolutions, ESCAP will be supporting member States in their preparations for the second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, as well as convening the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Regional Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in early 2012.

119. The modalities for the second review and appraisal are outlined as follows:

(a) Member States will conduct a national review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2011. The principal

approach, as recommended by the Commission for Social Development,⁶ should be a bottom-up participatory approach through the collection of information on the implementation of progress at the grass-roots level, involving civil society organizations and older persons;

(b) The secretariat will conduct a regional survey among Governments in 2011 with a view to compiling an update on the situation of older persons and national actions, particularly the development of new policies and programmes since the first regional review and appraisal conducted in 2007. The secretariat will send a questionnaire survey to all members and associate members;

(c) The secretariat will prepare an analysis of progress in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing based on the national reports and the findings of the above-mentioned regional survey;

(d) ESCAP will convene a preparatory meeting in October 2011 to identify regional priorities and review the background documentation, including the regional analysis, for the intergovernmental meeting;

(e) The Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Regional Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing will be convened in early 2012. The outcome document of the meeting will be submitted to the global review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

120. It is proposed that the agenda for the intergovernmental meeting focus on a review of the progress and challenges in the implementation of the three pillars of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing: (a) older persons and development; (b) advancing health and well-being into old age; and (c) ensuring enabling and supportive environments. In addition, the meeting would serve as a regional platform for the sharing of national experiences and good practices, including social protection for older persons, promotion of active ageing and elderly care services.

121. As for regional trends, the number of older persons in Asia and the Pacific is rising at an unprecedented pace. It is estimated that the number of older persons in the region will triple from 419 million in 2010 to more than 1.2 billion by 2050, when one in four people in the region will be aged 60 or older. The situation will be particularly acute in East and North-East Asia, where more than one in three people will be older than 60 years by 2050. This dramatic demographic shift is unmatched in scale anywhere else in the world.

122. Such a rapid increase in the population of older persons has profound and far-reaching social, economic and political implications. Rural-to-urban migration and changing family structures have left many older persons without traditional means of support. A large number of older persons in the region have to grapple with income insecurity due to a lack of social protection. In developing Asian and Pacific countries, only about 30 per cent of older persons receive some form of pension. Most countries' health systems have limited capacity to meet the need for geriatric care services, and few have been adapted to address the range of chronic conditions facing older persons; such conditions require a multidisciplinary continuum of care, including specialized diagnostic and therapeutic care. In addition, there is rising demand for age-friendly and barrier-free environments, including housing, infrastructure and

public facilities, to enable continued freedom of movement and active participation of older persons in society.

123. The fast pace of the demographic transition towards an ageing population may have adverse effects on economic performance and prospects due to a shrinking labour force, lower saving and investment rates and rising health-care and pension costs. Reforming policies and institutions would be vital for sustaining economic growth and preventing a decline in standards of living.

124. The feminization of the elderly population is notable, with women constituting the majority of the older population and an even greater majority of the “oldest old” population (80 years and older). Older women, more so than older men, tend to live alone due to the death of a spouse. Older women are also more vulnerable to poverty and social isolation, and face greater risks of physical and psychological abuse due to discriminatory social attitudes. It is thus critically important to address the gender dimension of ageing.

125. Timely policy measures are thus needed by Governments in the region in order to make the vital social and economic adjustments in preparation for the region’s rapid transition to an ageing society.

VIII. Statistics

A. Introduction

126. In recognition of the urgent need for the development of statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the Committee on Statistics at its second session, held from 15 to 17 December 2010, established a clear strategic direction for its work over the next 10 years with the goals of: (a) ensuring that all countries in the region have, by 2020, the capability to provide an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environment statistics; and (b) creating a more adaptive and cost-effective information management environment for national statistical offices through stronger collaboration (see E/ESCAP/67/12).

B. Promoting the development of statistics in support of inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

127. The secretariat is uniquely positioned to support national statistical capacity development by promoting the development and implementation of international statistical standards by linking up with global statistical development initiatives and addressing regional perspectives and country needs. In targeting primarily producers of official statistics in national statistical systems while attempting to influence data users (including policymakers), the secretariat works towards the improvement of basic social, economic, demographic and environmental statistics and supports the development of new measurements and statistical standards required for addressing emerging policy issues. The secretariat promotes an innovative regional approach that combines advocacy and standard setting with the provision of technical assistance and forums for knowledge sharing, and works in close coordination and collaboration with other international, regional, subregional and bilateral development partners.

128. The following are its activities in this regard:

- (a) Improving basic demographic, social and economic statistics:
 - (i) *Using an agreed core set of economic statistics to guide the regional development of such statistics.* Many developing countries in the region lack the capacity to produce and disseminate relevant economic statistics for short- and long-term economic analyses and decision-making. The recent global financial and economic crises further highlighted the importance of timely, reliable and comparable economic statistics for monitoring financial and economic changes. At its first session, in February 2009, the Committee on Statistics decided to develop an action plan to promote the improvement of economic statistics in the region.³⁸ At its second session, the Committee endorsed a core set of economic statistics, developed by a technical advisory group that it had established, as a regional guideline for developing the capacity of national statistical systems.³⁹ The endorsed core set of economic statistics has given ESCAP a regional voice in the development of global guidelines and standards on economic statistics. It anchors the development of a proposed regional programme for the improvement of economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which was prepared by the secretariat in consultation with member States and the technical advisory group and endorsed by the Committee, including the principles, key components, activities and management arrangements.⁴⁰ A steering group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics is being established by the Committee;⁴¹
 - (ii) *Supporting the improvement of agricultural and rural statistics to address food security issues.* Agricultural and rural statistics not only provide valuable information regarding the agricultural sector of an economy, but they are also necessary for addressing food security issues. The global food crisis and rising food prices demonstrate the urgent need to improve agricultural statistics in the region and the importance of integrating agricultural statistics into national statistical systems. In this regard, the Committee on Statistics at its second session endorsed the proposal of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to develop a regional implementation plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, and requested the secretariat to coordinate this effort in partnership with FAO and other relevant

³⁸ See E/ESCAP/65/13, chap. I, sect. B, decision 1/2.

³⁹ See E/ESCAP/67/12, chap I, sect. B, decision 2/5.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, decision 2/6.

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, para. 1 (d).

regional and subregional organizations.⁴² Integrating agricultural and rural statistics into the regional programme for the improvement of economic statistics will facilitate the development of a coordinated regional approach to improve both economic and agricultural statistics;

- (iii) *Improving civil registration and vital statistics as a building-block of national statistical systems.* Vital statistics provide essential information for social and economic development and planning. In well-developed statistical systems, vital statistics, derived from civil registration systems, are a cornerstone of good governance, public planning and resource allocation, especially those that are critical for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Many developing countries in Asia and the Pacific, however, do not have well-functioning civil registration systems and suffer from a lack of timely and reliable vital statistics. The Committee recognized that improving civil registration and vital statistics is the only sustainable way to improve evidence-based policymaking, and urged that this long-neglected issue be made a priority on the regional agenda for statistics development.⁴³ In response to the Committee's request, the secretariat organized a regional forum for experts from national statistical offices, ministries of health and civil registrars to explore collectively the strategy for a regional approach towards promoting the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics. It worked closely with member States and development partners to conduct a region-wide self-assessment of national civil registration and vital statistics systems, and develop a regional programme to secure political commitment and support country efforts. The Committee on Statistics at its second session supported the development of a full regional programme for the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific;⁴⁴
- (iv) *Promoting the development of social statistics to support inclusive and sustainable development.* Relevant social statistics, which are necessary for informed decision-making in the context of inclusive and sustainable development, are often lacking, as revealed by the persistent gaps in the data required for assessing progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals and its related targets. At its second session, the Committee decided to establish a technical advisory group on social statistics to advise it on strategies for developing a regional programme to improve social statistics in Asia and the Pacific.⁴⁵ More

⁴² See *ibid.*, decision 2/7.

⁴³ See *ibid.*, decisions 2/3 and 2/10.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, decision 2/4.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, decision 2/2.

specifically, the technical advisory group is to provide recommendations on the scope of social statistics that all countries in the region should be in a position to provide by 2020, taking into consideration the relevance of the statistics, policy priorities and the varying national statistical capacities of member States. It would also provide methodological and substantive guidelines on the formulation and implementation of a regional programme on social statistics through, among other things, the development of a core set or sets of social statistics. The technical advisory group would guide the development of long- and medium-term plans for implementing the regional programme on social statistics, including monitoring and evaluating that programme;

(b) Supporting the development of new measurements and responding to emerging issues through a regional approach:

- (i) *Improving disability measurements and statistics to promote the rights of people with disabilities.* Guided by the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific⁴⁶ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴⁷ and in support of the regional initiative to promote the rights of people with disabilities, the secretariat is committed to working towards improving disability measurement and statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The secretariat continues to advocate the approach under the framework of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health of the World Health Organization (WHO), and facilitates the development of standard methods for disability data collection. It has trained staff of national statistical offices in the skills required for designing questionnaires to collect data on disability. The Social Development Division and the Statistics Division of the secretariat are working on further integrating their work towards supporting countries in the collection of data on persons with disabilities through censuses and surveys;
- (ii) *Improving informal sector and informal employment measurement through interregional cooperation.* In many Asian and Pacific developing countries, the informal sector accounts for a large percentage of the national economy and employment. Despite the importance of that sector, reliable statistics for measuring the size of the informal sector and its relationship with gender, income, vulnerable populations and other social issues are severely lacking. In recent years, the secretariat has worked to help

⁴⁶ See Commission resolution 59/3 of 4 September 2003 (for the text of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action, see E/ESCAP/APDDP/4/Rev.1).

⁴⁷ General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I.

improve informal sector and informal employment measurement through interregional cooperation with other regional commissions, the United Nations Statistics Division and other relevant partner agencies, particularly by developing a common data collection methodology, providing countries with training and technical assistance through pilot survey projects and facilitating knowledge sharing among countries both within and across regions. The secretariat will continue to support measurement development and country data collection and data analysis in the Asia-Pacific region through a new interregional cooperation project led by the Economic Commission for Africa. ESCAP will focus on providing a regional forum for knowledge sharing and supporting capacity development in national statistical offices in specific areas of national accounts related to the informal sector;

- (iii) *Promoting gender equality through improvements in statistics and analysis on women and men.* Fifteen years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action⁴⁸ clearly laid out 12 priority areas and highlighted the importance of making available data on women and men, the need and demand for gender statistics continue to grow but remain unmet. In the Asia-Pacific region, a strong reminder emerged in 2009 from the Bangkok Declaration on Beijing + 15 (see E/ESCAP/66/14, chap. I) concerning the need to “intensify support for statistical capacity-building efforts on the generation of gender statistics”. In recognition of the region’s need for more and better disaggregated data and statistics on women and men, gender-based indicators, maximum utilization of existing resources and tools for improved gender-based analysis and the need for new statistical standards and methodologies, a regional capacity development programme on gender statistics is being developed. The Consultative Meeting to Develop a Regional Programme on Gender Statistics in Asia and the Pacific was organized by the secretariat and held in September 2010 as part of a series of consultations and surveys involving statistical systems and women’s machineries to review the status of gender statistics in the region and to identify strategic priorities and needs for capacity-building in support of national policy development and progress monitoring. The regional approach to improving gender statistics is aimed not only at responding to urgent development needs, supporting national commitments and plans and building a regional resource pool, but also at working towards “regionalizing” ongoing global initiatives and building strategic partnerships;

⁴⁸ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

- (iv) *Addressing emerging needs in the modernization of statistical information systems.* Recent developments in information technology, in particular the Internet, are changing the role of official statistics. More statistical information is easily accessible and new data suppliers are emerging. The need for countries to adopt technology and use it effectively to compile, analyse and disseminate statistics is apparent. The secretariat is working to assist countries in this information management transformation by building awareness, discussing ways to utilize technology and facilitating forums on the topic. In December 2010, a side event was held during the second session of the Committee on Statistics to discuss how the Internet and related technologies were revolutionizing the exchange and use of information and how national statistical offices, the primary producers and disseminators of official statistical information, were being affected by the changes (see E/ESCAP/67/12, para. 123). Emerging standards and concepts are critical to facilitating the flow of statistical information from countries to users and from new sources of statistical data to countries. Clearly, there is an urgent need for the statistical community to work together to develop common solutions and recognize that their respective transformation processes would greatly benefit, not least in terms of increased cost-effectiveness, from joint further development of related concepts, standards and tools. In response to a recommendation from the side event, the secretariat is organizing an expert group meeting to review and take stock of ongoing initiatives and explore options and modalities for regional collaboration in this area;

(c) *Promoting regional statistics development through improved statistical coordination.* The ESCAP region has experienced rapid progress in statistics development over recent years; however, some countries still require significant assistance in training and capacity development. The Statistical Commission, while reviewing recent statistics development in Asia and the Pacific in 2009, noted the readiness expressed by countries to assist the ESCAP secretariat in steering statistics development in the region and requested that the ESCAP secretariat facilitate the establishment of “an informal mechanism for donor coordination for statistical development in the region, taking into account existing mechanism, roles and responsibilities”.⁴⁹ Working closely with committed development partners, the secretariat organized the first meeting of Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific alongside the second session of the Committee on Statistics in December 2010. The participants, who included representatives of international, regional and subregional organizations and bilateral donors, as well as government representatives from Australia, Japan and the Russian Federation, agreed to establish a partnership as a regional mechanism for coordinating support for statistics development. The partnership agreed to align its work with the decisions and priorities

⁴⁹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2009, Supplement No. 4* (E/2009/24-E/CN.3/2009/29), chap. I, sect. B, decision 40/112, para. (f).

delineated by the Committee on Statistics and to report to the Committee on the progress made.⁵⁰

(d) The Committee on Statistics at its second session recognized the importance of the coordination of statistical training in Asia and the Pacific. The Committee agreed that, by establishing a network of training providers in the region that would include academic institutions, and by developing appropriate coordination mechanisms, the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of training offered in the region could be strengthened. The establishment of a mechanism for the coordination of statistical training will help to identify and address training gaps in the region. In this regard, the Committee decided to establish a small working group charged with preparing a proposal on the coordination of statistical training to be put before the Committee, through the Bureau.⁵¹ The secretariat, through the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) and the ESCAP Statistics Division, will support the establishment of the working group and work towards improved coordination of statistical training.

C. Issues for consideration by the Commission

129. The Committee on Statistics at its second session set priorities for the improvement of official statistics in the Asia-Pacific region and discussed activities carried out under the subprogramme in 2009-2010 and proposed activities for 2011-2012 (see E/ESCAP/67/12). Member countries may wish to share their experiences and views, and the Commission may wish to support the decisions made by the Committee and provide further guidance on approaches it wishes the secretariat to take in its future work.

IX. Subregional activities for development

A. Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia

130. In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 63/260, ESCAP established the Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in May 2010, a fact that was acknowledged by the Commission at its sixty-sixth session.⁵² Subsequently, priority areas of work were identified for the Subregional Office to pursue during the biennium 2010-2011. At an intergovernmental consultation held in Incheon in November 2010, the priority activities were further refined as they related to: (a) environment; (b) transport and trade facilitation; (c) disaster reduction through information and technology; and (d) poverty alleviation.

131. The meeting suggested that the Subregional Office provide member countries in the subregion with assistance in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, create a knowledge-sharing platform for best practices and act as a conduit for South-South cooperation. Another role identified at the meeting was for the Subregional Office to enhance subregional cooperation and integration in implementing regional, multilateral and global mandates. The meeting participants also recommended that the

⁵⁰ See E/ESCAP/67/12, chap. I, sect. B, decision 2/9. See also *ibid.*, chap. II, paras. 70-75.

⁵¹ See E/ESCAP/67/12, chap. I, sect. B, decision 2/8.

⁵² See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2010, Supplement No. 19* (E/2010/39-E/ESCAP/66/27), paras. 160-167.

Subregional Office act as a facilitator for capacity-building activities for policymakers and for major stakeholders, including NGOs and women.

132. The meeting also suggested that the Subregional Office could undertake other activities, such as gender mainstreaming, HIV/AIDS, ageing, youth issues and unemployment, Millennium Development Goal statistics, social protection, trade and transportation facilitation, and green innovation and technologies. Tools for knowledge sharing would include the creation of a subregional profile, quarterly newsletter, website, publications and database of experts and think tanks in the subregion. The Subregional Office could implement its activities using different modalities, such as workshops, policy consultations and seminars. In terms of the modality of its work, there would be no duplication with mandates or programmes implemented by the ESCAP secretariat in Bangkok and other United Nations agencies. Instead there would be an effort to create complementarities and synergies with national institutions, civil society, academia and research institutions. The Subregional Office would ensure transparency and accountability in all its proceedings and keep close contact with member States. Furthermore, its work on sustainable socio-economic development would emphasize all-inclusiveness.

133. The Subregional Office has started to create a knowledge-sharing platform for best practices. The first issue of a periodic newsletter was published during the consultation. The newsletter focused on Mongolia, the only landlocked country in East and North-East Asia, and outlined some of the challenges faced by that country's economy and the policy options for its socio-economic development. Future issues of the newsletter are expected to address matters of concern to the subregion, affording the opportunity for stakeholders to express their perspectives, to share experiences gained, to identify areas of possible collaboration and to highlight subregional specificity requirements towards setting an inclusive and sustainable development agenda.

134. Concerning the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, it is anticipated that the Subregional Office would receive constructive feedback from member States and share the experiences of experts and civil society organizations at the community level, which could be useful for governmental policymakers in formulating and implementing policies effectively. In particular, formulating economic and social development policies requires reliable data and information to understand and analyse the current situation and mobilize a wider range of stakeholders towards improving the current situation in respect of setting targets within a certain time frame. Therefore, making the process of assessing and formulating development policies inclusive for civil society and other stakeholders is a critical condition for attaining the ultimate goal of all-inclusive sustainable development. To this end, the Subregional Office has developed a close partnership with SIAP and Statistics Korea, and organized a subregional training workshop on dissemination and communication of Millennium Development Goal statistics for effective use in policy- and decision-making which was held in Daejeon, Republic of Korea, in October 2010. As a result of the training, experts from civil society in North-East Asia were provided with the opportunity to add a new dimension to the training by sharing their knowledge, views and requirements with government policymakers and statisticians. That meeting brought together government officials and experts from civil society and identified the necessary

elements of data collection and approaches towards the dissemination and communication of Millennium Development Goal statistics.

135. As the secretariat for the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation, the Subregional Office facilitated dialogues among member States on nature conservation in transboundary areas. This work was done in collaboration with the State Forestry Administration of China, the National Institute for Environmental Research of the Republic of Korea, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the World Wide Fund for Nature (China branch), among others. The Subregional Office participated in events on energy and environment organized by the Secretariat of the Greater Tumen Initiative and discussed various areas for possible collaboration. The Subregional Office has also been in consultation with the World Resources Institute (China Office) and the Scientific Research Institute for Atmospheric Air Protection of the Russian Federation for the purpose of developing subregional activities in the field of low-carbon development and environmental impact assessment of air pollution. In addition, it has been developing joint activities with the Mongolian National Committee to Combat Desertification and the China National Training Centre for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,⁵³ in order to strengthen national and subregional responses to desertification.

136. The Subregional Office held the Expert Group Meeting on Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas in Hunchun, China, in November 2010. That meeting enabled member States to discuss and formulate various approaches towards developing a cooperative framework for nature conservation and identify pilot activities in support of transboundary cooperation. The Subregional Office also supported the Asia Economic Community Forum 2010, held in Incheon on 8 November 2010, by focusing on the theme of a new development paradigm in North-East Asia: green economy.

137. Based on the experience gained during the first year of operations, it is expected that the Subregional Office would play an active role in strengthening subregional support towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals through capacity development in the subregion. The Subregional Office could also contribute meaningfully as a facilitator for capacity-building activities for policymakers and other major stakeholders, including NGOs and women, in close collaboration with others concerned with these issues. Partnerships have been developed and maintained with numerous United Nations, and multilateral and government agencies, research/academic institutions and NGOs. In addition to its work with the foreign affairs ministries in member States, the Subregional Office initiated close cooperation with the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan, the National Development and Innovation Committee of Mongolia, the Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism of Mongolia, the Global Green Growth Institute of the Republic of Korea, the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the Russian Federation, the Global Environmental Institute of China, the World Wide Fund for Nature (Moscow Office), the World Resources Institute (China Office) and Good Neighbors International of the Republic of Korea, among others. These partnerships ensure an all-inclusive exchange of views

⁵³ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

and knowledge on subregional challenges to setting a sustainable development agenda and identifying areas of subregional cooperation.

138. During the period 2011 to 2013, the Subregional Office will attempt to strengthen cooperation within a subregional framework by, among other things: (a) providing regular analysis of the socio-economic trends and priorities of countries in the subregion; (b) ensuring balanced delivery of technical assistance through more in-depth and focused capacity-building activities; (c) strengthening further working relations with multilateral organizations and other relevant partners; (d) supporting intergovernmental processes; and (e) acting as a knowledge hub for gathering and disseminating good policy-related development practices. The main objective of the subprogramme has been pursued by increasing the capacity of Governments in East and North-East Asia, civil society and the private sector to promote inclusive and sustainable development in order to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, focusing on specific subregional priorities.

B. Subregional Office for the Pacific

139. With regard to the Pacific subregion, the subprogramme addresses issues faced by 12 members that are small island developing economies and 7 associate members of the Commission, as well as the subregion's two developed countries: Australia and New Zealand. Among them are five countries considered least developed: Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. With the exception of Papua New Guinea, which has a population of approximately 6 million, the other developing countries and territories in the subregion are small.

140. These countries and territories are located in the largest ocean in the world. They have shown resilience to weather and increasingly frequent and intense natural disasters, not to mention the external shocks caused by the crises in global markets, as well as climate change. As was found during the five-year review⁵⁴ of the Mauritius Strategy, the vulnerability of Pacific island developing countries and territories has increased while their ability to cope has not.

141. The many challenges that these island countries and territories face relate to their geographic disadvantages of remoteness, smallness and dispersion. This situation drives up the costs of food, transport and development, and limits the opportunities of these countries and territories to realize economies of scale. Rapid population growth also exerts pressure on their resources and efforts to raise living standards. Their shortage of professional and technical skills, paucity of domestic savings and vulnerability to external shocks pose further constraints.

142. Significant fluctuations in fuel and commodity prices, as well as the global economic crisis that started in 2008, have had further adverse impacts on the real sector of their economies. These issues, together with the rise in sea level and increased frequency of extreme weather due to climate change, leads to a number of long-term challenges for these countries and their people, including those that are most vulnerable.

⁵⁴ See the Port Vila Outcome Statement (E/ESCAP/66/1).

143. A challenge for regional approaches is that these Pacific island countries and territories form a very diverse group having the development challenges of small atoll island economies as well as those of resource- and land-rich countries, such as Papua New Guinea. Thus, the subprogramme will focus on strengthening the institutional capacities of national Governments, especially in the least developed countries of the Pacific, to formulate and implement their own evidence-based policies that address their varied development concerns, with a special focus on the needs of vulnerable groups.

144. The final beneficiaries of the subprogramme are the people in these countries and territories, since implementation of sustainable development strategies will benefit all, including disadvantaged and marginalized groups. The target groups are government planners, policy advisors, statisticians and decision makers, including elected government representatives in ministries. Civil society organizations, the private sector and development partners are also target groups as they are key actors in the preparation and implementation of national sustainable development strategies.

145. The strategic direction for the programme of work of the ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific stems from internationally agreed development goals and mandates, including the Millennium Development Goals, the 2005 World Summit Outcome,⁵⁵ the World Summit on Sustainable Development,⁵⁶ the Almaty Programme of Action¹³ and the Mauritius Strategy.⁷

146. Given the vast coverage and diversity of the Pacific subregion, the ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific would continue to strengthen the presence and strategic position of ESCAP in the Pacific, enabling better targeting and delivery of programmes that address specific key priorities of Pacific small island developing countries and territories. The Subregional Office would provide an important platform for strengthening regional cooperation on key economic, social and environmental issues, ensuring that the needs and perspectives of the Pacific subregion are incorporated in the broader Asia-Pacific regional framework.

147. The ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific will further facilitate the analytical and normative work of the Commission, supporting capacity development through: (a) publications on development issues that are of the utmost importance to the region, based on consultation with experts; (b) technical cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation among ESCAP member States; and (c) the provision, on request, of advisory services. Emphasis would be placed on knowledge sharing and networking, including the dissemination of good practices for adaptation, sharing experiences and replication. The programme of work involves the collection of data and production of regional analyses with regard to identified priority areas in order to ensure greater depth and coverage of the secretariat's knowledge products.

⁵⁵ General Assembly resolution 60/1.

⁵⁶ See Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex).

148. The ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific will collaborate with the relevant divisions and offices of the ESCAP secretariat to ensure effective leadership and management of the subprogramme. Examples of collaboration with substantive divisions include: (a) statistical capacity-building and evidence-based policy development in close cooperation with the Statistics Division; (b) green growth and gender issues supported by the Environment and Development and Social Development divisions; (c) a programme on Pacific connectivity will be implemented with the Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division; (d) collaboration with the Trade and Investment Division to implement APTA; and (e) ongoing work with the Macroeconomic Policy and Development Division on the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*, Millennium Development Goal reports and global reviews of agreements on and for countries with special needs.

149. Under the subprogramme work is also carried out directly with national Governments in the Pacific and through subregional organizations, including the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, as well as civil society organizations and United Nations bodies, funds and programmes. The Subregional Office for the Pacific plays an active role in the United Nations country teams in the Pacific, focusing on leading coordination activities regarding global reviews and regional initiatives. The Subregional Office also coordinates with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States concerning issues involving small island developing States and least developed countries.
