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Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

Dates, venue and theme topic for the seventy-second session of the Commission (2016)

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Note by the secretariat**

Summary

The present note contains information on the possible dates and venue of the seventy-second session of the Commission, which is to be held in 2016, and a proposal for a theme topic for that session.

The Commission may wish to make a decision on these matters.

I. Introduction

1. The present note contains suggestions made by the secretariat for the consideration of the Commission at its seventy-first session. The Commission may wish to consider the dates, venue and theme topic for its seventy-second session, to be held in 2016, and to provide the secretariat with guidance in this regard.

II. Dates and venue

2. Rule 1 of the rules of procedure of the Commission requires it to recommend the dates and venue for its next session, subject to the approval of the Economic and Social Council and in consultation with the Secretary-General. In accordance with established practice, at each session, the Commission recommends the convening of the next session. The actual dates and venue are then determined by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the members and the Chair of the Commission.

3. In addition, in rule 1 of the rules of procedure it is stated that sessions of the Commission shall ordinarily be held at the office of the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific, unless the Commission recommends otherwise.

* E/ESCAP/71/L.1/Rev.1.

** The present note has been submitted late owing to the need to take into account the views of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, which were expressed at its 359th session and during informal consultations.

III. Theme topic

4. The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission at its 359th session held on 23 March 2015, the Informal Working Group on the Conference Structure Review at its meeting held on 1 April 2015 and the Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions at its first session held on 20 April 2015 considered proposals for a theme topic for the seventy-second session of the Commission and decided to submit the following proposal for consideration by the Commission: “Science, technology and innovation for sustainable development”.

Background

5. Science, technology and innovation (STI) have been identified as means of implementing the development agenda beyond 2015 and for assisting member States in achieving their national sustainable development goals; enhancing international cooperation and access to STI is currently a target under goal 17 of the proposed sustainable development goals. It is very clear that the achievement of some of the sustainable development goals requires major innovations and technological advances that, in turn, require sound STI knowledge, infrastructure and an enabling environment created through STI policies and delivery mechanisms. STI has a cross-cutting role in addressing the interconnection of the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) by providing effective and integrated solutions to the development agenda beyond 2015.

6. STI is necessary to address the major challenges faced by the world today, such as: mitigation and adaptation to climate change; disaster risk reduction and management; improvements to global and regional connectivity; food production with dwindling arable land and rising populations; access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene; and emerging diseases and resistance of microbes to treatments of diseases, to name a few. They all require the development of new products and services suitable for the national, regional and global settings through innovation and development of new technologies. It is also important to clarify interrelationships among science, technology and innovation and their application to balance the three pillars of sustainable development. This will help stakeholders arrive at a coherent strategy and evolve national policy frameworks to promote STI for sustainable development, including through regional cooperation.

Key issues and challenges in Asia and the Pacific

7. In the Asia-Pacific region, STI could be used as an enabling mechanism to address critical developmental issues and challenges through technological solutions. However, for that purpose member States need to address some key issues and challenges in creating an enabling environment and nurturing innovation ecosystems. Some of these issues and challenges include: weak and fragmented national STI policies; inadequate STI statistical data and knowledge for evidence-based policymaking; top-down approaches in STI policy and planning; poor linkages among national innovation system components and partnerships among stakeholders; limited access to intellectual property in core areas of sustainable development; predominantly carbon-intensive development strategies; and weak evaluation and governance of STI. In particular, STI policies should have a clear link with the sustainable development goals.

Strategic interventions

8. Many challenges outlined above are critical to most of the developing and least developed countries of the region, and the Commission could foster sustainable development in the region by enhancing the capacity of member States in evidence-based STI strategy development and policymaking; strengthening of national technology innovation ecosystems; developing tools for evaluation and governance of STI policies and delivery mechanisms; promoting an efficient national intellectual property environment for the public good; protection and promotion of traditional and indigenously developed technologies; and transfer and absorption of foreign technologies. The Commission could also discuss promoting low-carbon and green growth strategies; popularizing adoption of grass-roots technological innovations and practices; and piloting innovative STI-based models for delivering the benefits of sustainable development.

9. Based on a comprehensive literature review and lessons learnt from the STI capacity-building activities of ESCAP, the study could present a conceptual framework outlining the relationship between STI, on the one hand, and sustainable development and the wider development agenda beyond 2015, on the other hand. In particular, specific sustainable development goals and targets could be identified that require an STI intervention. The conceptual framework could help identify how STI applications can balance the three pillars of sustainable development, including identification of the principal stakeholders and their roles, including Governments and the private sector. The study could focus on the needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

10. The study could discuss the role of Government and the policies necessary to advance STI. In particular, the study could also examine the conditions for successful STI development by considering the parameters and conditions that are required to develop successful STI policies and infrastructure for creating an enabling environment necessary to implement the development agenda beyond 2015. Policies could be identified for both technology development and transfer, and for the establishment of national and subnational innovation systems. Various supporting policy areas required for successful STI development could be identified, with due reference to countries' international and multilateral obligations, including policies for developing a business environment that is conducive to research and development and innovation, trade and investment policies, policies that promote services (technical, financial and market), policies that promote traditional knowledge, and policies related to developing and strengthening the necessary STI infrastructure, including human resources and intellectual property rights protection. The study could also explore the modalities for technology-based entrepreneurship and technology transfer, in particular foreign direct investment and licensing, and assess the advantages and disadvantages of each modality. Technology financing could be discussed as a modality to develop indigenous technological capabilities. The study could also identify public policies required to address market failures and provide public goods, such as higher education and skills development, and also policies that ensure that the benefits of scientific research and technological developments reach all groups of society. The study could also examine how different countries could benefit from STI policies that are best suited to their national context. Finally, the study could also focus on the requirements for the development of national, subnational and sectoral innovation systems based on best practices in the region.

11. The study could explore ongoing and potential modalities for regional cooperation in the area of STI, with a focus on enhancing collaboration among Governments and other STI stakeholders across the region, including research and academic institutions. With diffusion of technology and expansion of regional supply and distribution chains, the study could explore various forms of North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation to develop solutions to common problems in sectors of particular importance to the sustainable development of the region, such as agriculture, energy and health. The study could conclude with a proposal for a regional strategy for advancing STI for sustainable development, identifying the key challenges to be addressed, the role of Governments and other stakeholders and how they may work together at the regional level. Finally, the study could identify the role of ESCAP in advancing STI for sustainable development for consideration by member States.

12. The study could examine the effective engagement of enterprises in STI, including micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, which are the largest employment providers both in the formal and informal sectors. The study could explore the role of trade and investment in advancing STI, including the importance of technology-based entrepreneurship and enterprise development, technology business incubators, venture financing and a transparent but competitive business environment. The need for technology partnerships and smart specialization and the impact of innovation along supply chains could also be covered.

13. With women comprising approximately half of the total 4.1 billion people living in the Asia-Pacific region, the study could focus on the gender aspect in various dimensions of STI, including women in higher and technical education, research and development personnel, entrepreneurship and gender-specific STI infrastructure. The study could also focus on the current national policies that promote participation of women in STI and entrepreneurship, and identify gaps. The report could propose specific national policies and support measures to address these gaps and to explore new opportunities for the participation of women in achieving STI-based sustainable development.

IV. Previous theme topics

14. For reference, a list of the theme topics of previous Commission sessions is contained in the annex to the present note.

Annex

List of theme topics of previous Commission sessions*

Session	Year	Theme topic
40	1984	Technology for development
41	1985	Technology for development
42	1986	Human resources development
43	1987	Human resources development
44	1988	Human resources development
45	1989	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
46	1990	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
47	1991	Industrial restructuring in Asia and the Pacific, in particular with a view to strengthening regional cooperation
48	1992	Regional economic cooperation in the ESCAP region: prospects, priorities and policy options
49	1993	Expansion of investment and intraregional trade as a vehicle for enhancing regional economic cooperation and development
50	1994	Infrastructure development as key to economic growth and regional economic cooperation
51	1995	Strengthening of regional cooperation in human resources development with special reference to the social implications of sustainable economic growth in Asia and the Pacific
52	1996	Sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Asia and the Pacific
53	1997	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: opportunities and challenges for ESCAP
54	1998	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: status of and prospects for social development
55	1999	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: information technology, globalization, economic security and development
56	2000	Development through globalization and partnership in the twenty-first century: an Asia-Pacific perspective for integrating developing countries and economies in transition into the international trading system on a fair and equitable basis
57	2001	Balanced development of urban and rural areas and regions within the countries of Asia and the Pacific
58	2002	Sustainable social development in a period of rapid globalization: challenges, opportunities and policy options
59	2003	Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region
60	2004	Meeting the challenges in an era of globalization by strengthening regional development cooperation
61	2005	Implementing the Monterrey Consensus in the Asian and Pacific region: achieving coherence and consistency

Session	Year	Theme topic
62	2006	Enhancing regional cooperation in infrastructure development, including that related to disaster management
63	2007	Development of health systems in the context of enhancing economic growth towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific
64	2008	Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific
65	2009	Towards sustainable agriculture and food security in the Asia-Pacific region
66	2010	Addressing challenges in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: promoting a stable and supportive financial system; and green growth or environmentally sustainable economic growth, including through technology and financing
67	2011	Beyond the crises: Long-term perspectives on social protection and development in Asia and the Pacific
68	2012	Enhancing regional economic integration in Asia and the Pacific
69	2013	Opportunities to build resilience to natural disasters and major economic crises
70	2014	Regional connectivity for shared prosperity
71	2015	Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation

* Fortieth through seventy-first sessions.