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Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the regional institutions**Interim programme performance report for the biennium 2014-2015****Note by the secretariat*****Summary*

The present report provides an account of the mid-biennium programme performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for the biennium 2014-2015, as assessed against the expected accomplishments set out in the strategic framework. It presents the interim results achieved for each subprogramme and for executive direction and management.

The present report is central to holding the Commission accountable to its members and associate members in terms of the efficient use of resources and the delivery of mandated results. The assessment of programme achievements and results is supported by information collected from the end-users of the secretariat's products and services through surveys, interviews and evaluations or other reviews.

The Commission may wish to review the present report and comment on the overall performance of ESCAP and its eight subprogrammes. Based on the lessons learned, the Commission may also wish to provide the secretariat with guidance on future implementation modalities that would improve the effectiveness of ESCAP.

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** The present document was submitted late owing to the internal review of the report by the Policy and Oversight Coordination Services, Office of the Under-Secretary-General, Department of Management.

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I. Highlights of programme achievements in the mid-biennium 2014-2015

A. Highlights of programme results

1. To address existing challenges in Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) promoted regional consensus for the balanced integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, inclusion of regional perspectives into the post-2015 development agenda and improved coherence across the United Nations system for implementing the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. To ensure that all members, including the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, benefit from economic integration, ESCAP supported the engagement of its member States in regional and global policy dialogues, and provided research and analysis and technical cooperation needed for making sound policies related to macroeconomics and financing for development, trade and investment, private sector development and technology transfer, international road transport and logistics systems, sustainable development, information and communications technology and disaster risk management, social dimensions, including population and development and modernized statistical services. ESCAP also provided technical assistance to address issues of climate change and social development in the Pacific, environmental protection in East and North-East Asia, trade and transport facilitation, water and energy resources in North and Central Asia and attainment of internationally agreed development goals in South and South-West Asia.

B. Challenges, obstacles and unmet goals

2. To implement a sustainable development agenda, which fully integrates the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development, requires all stakeholders to consider issues holistically. Attainment of internationally agreed development goals in Asia and the Pacific is often hampered by weaknesses in institutional frameworks and varying levels of development. These challenges may affect the effectiveness of design and implementation of policies and programmes at the national level. The rapid evolution and technical nature of science and technology coupled with the difficulty in balancing current regulations with existing realities presents challenges for policymakers when integrating priority issues into national development strategies. Limitations to the sharing of data as well as agreement on norms affect the ability of countries to effectively cooperate at the regional level.

II. Results at mid-biennium 2014-2015¹

A. Executive direction and management

Objective of the Organization: To ensure full implementation of legislative mandates and compliance with United Nations policies and procedures with respect to the management of the programme of work and of staff and financial resources of ESCAP

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Programme of work is effectively managed
- (b) Identification of emerging issues that require attention by member States
- (c) Enhanced policy coherence in the management of the economic and social activities of the United Nations
- (d) Increased exposure of the analytical, normative and capacity-building work of ESCAP, and increased visibility of ESCAP as the most comprehensive regional platform for inclusive and sustainable development as well as its role and impact in the policy-making process and their outcomes
- (e) Increased timeliness of submission of documentation

1. As at end 2014, 31 per cent of legislative outputs had been delivered within established deadlines. The delivery of outputs was hampered by the protests that occurred in Thailand until May 2014, which led to closure and restricted access to the United Nations premises for a prolonged period. ESCAP utilized 95.76 per cent of its regular budget for 2014. The impact thus far has been mostly in terms of assisting senior officials from member and associate member Governments with capacity-building (both at the individual and institution levels) to build knowledge, skills, competencies and capacity, in particular economic and social development.

2. The seventieth session of the Commission set the tone for 2014, delivering powerful resolutions that will have long-reaching impact, and saw

¹ Outputs mentioned in the present section are listed in the proposed programme budget submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session (A/68/6 (Sect. 19)). The programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 was approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/248 A-C.

the ESCAP member States converting the ESCAP intergovernmental platform into the most inclusive decision-making forum for the region. As at December 2014, 105 recommendations had been made by intergovernmental bodies on emerging issues requiring attention, in line with the biennial target. Through the Office of the Executive Secretary, the secretariat provided strong planning coordination and leadership in achieving the set target.

3. The Asia-Pacific Coordination Mechanism continued to improve coordination and coherence across the United Nations system at the regional level. The Mechanism held four meetings, two of which were dedicated to the joint preparation of inputs for the Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United Nations. Two meetings in Jakarta and Bangkok were held to agree on the general principles and strategy for the development of Phase 2 of the ASEAN-United Nations strategic plan of cooperation on disaster management.

4. The media coverage on ESCAP activities had a total of 1,432 published articles, including 10 op-eds, which appeared in 133 media outlets. These included top-tier outlets BBC, CNBC, Financial Times, Bloomberg, CCTV and Channel News Asia. In 2014, ESCAP also launched a new website, continued to strengthen its social media presence and increased media and op-ed coverage of the organization. It also enhanced communications mission support to the newly appointed Executive Secretary. The number of ESCAP Twitter followers increased by 18 per cent from 26,210 in the first half of 2014 to 31,816 followers by the end of 2014.

5. As at December 2014, 38 per cent of pre-session documents had been submitted by the 10-week deadline. The low rate is partly attributable to the closure and restricted access to the United Nations premises for a prolonged period in the first half of 2014, which affected preparations for the high number of meetings. The resulting high volume of meetings in the second half of 2014 affected preparation and submission of pre-session documents. The rescheduling also necessitated substantive updates to a number of background documents for the meetings in order to keep them relevant and up-to-date, thereby resulting in delays in submission by the 10-week deadline.

B. Subprogramme 1. Macroeconomic policy and inclusive development

Objective of the Organization: To foster a sound macroeconomic policy environment and enhance regional economic cooperation for inclusive and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in support of poverty reduction and other internationally agreed development goals, particularly among countries with special needs

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Enhanced understanding among policymakers and other target groups of development trends, emerging issues, macroeconomic challenges and evidence-based policy options that promote economic growth, reduce poverty and narrow the development gaps
- (b) Enhanced regional voice in global development forums and strengthened regional economic and financial cooperation to exploit synergies for mutual benefit towards inclusive and sustainable development, including through South-South cooperation
- (c) Improved capacity of member States, particularly countries with special needs, to design and implement development policies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and implementing the

Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and internationally agreed development goals

- (d) Improved capacity of member States to formulate and implement rural development policies that promote sustainable agriculture and food security

6. The Commission's work has generated innovative and timely discussions on emerging economic and social challenges facing the region. Four hundred references (biennial target – 850) were made in policy documents, academic literature and mass media to findings of the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific. The references were in top-tier media outlets, such as BBC, Bloomberg, CNN, Financial Times, Reuters, Wall Street Journal, Xinhua as well as broad national pick-up in countries across the region. The Commission sessions saw member countries frequently refer to the key findings and messages of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific* in their policy statements and round-table discussions.

7. The Asia-Pacific outreach meeting on sustainable development and financing to foster regional financial cooperation and strengthen the regional voice in global processes culminated into an outcome document containing several recommendations for ESCAP as well as the global processes relating to financing for development. The secretariat organized four area-specific working group meetings in 2014 to develop concrete recommendations for the second Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific in 2015. To strengthen the regional voice, the secretariat also organized a high-level consultation on the agenda of the Brisbane G20 summit. Activities were complemented by analytical work, including substantive background papers, policy briefs and working papers.

8. Most of the countries in the region have incorporated Millennium Development Goals in their development strategies. As at end 2014, 96.2 per cent of participants in ESCAP activities (biennial target – 85 per cent) indicated that they were better able to design and implement sound economic development policies. ESCAP contributed to increased number of government policies from 26 in 2013 to 30 in 2014. Commitment of least developed countries to implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action is reflected in the adoption of Commission resolution 70/3. Samoa and Maldives had already graduated, and Kiribati, Vanuatu and Tuvalu were well on their way to graduate. In addition, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Nepal had expressed their intention to graduate by 2020.

9. A major outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development includes agreement to develop strong sustainable development goals on food security and sustainable agriculture. The work of the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture contributed to a transformation of knowledge management for sustainable agriculture and addressing the environmental, economic and social aspects. Eighty per cent of participants (biennial target – 85 per cent) in the work of the Centre indicated that they were better able to formulate and implement rural development policies that promoted sustainable agriculture and food security. In 2014, book chapters, working papers, policy briefs and fact sheets were published to address food security in the post-2015 agenda, agricultural innovation systems and market access for smallholder farmers coupled with needed capacity development activities on these topics.

C. Subprogramme 2. Trade and investment

Objective of the Organization: To enhance trade, investment, enterprise development and technology transfer for inclusive and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Enhanced knowledge of ESCAP member States of trends, emerging issues and evidence-based policy options in the area of trade, investment, enterprise development and technology transfer in support of inclusive and sustainable development
- (b) Strengthened regional cooperation in trade, investment, enterprise development, innovation and the development and transfer of technology in support of inclusive and sustainable development
- (c) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States to formulate and implement more effective and coherent policies on trade, investment, enterprise development and technology transfer in support of inclusive and sustainable development

10. The *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report* has become a flagship publication, generating a lot of interest in media and among policymakers. ESCAP has worked actively to build capacity of its members in emerging issues and evidence-based policymaking. The number of review articles and references to ESCAP publications in the area of trade and investment reached 27 in 2014, against the biennial target of 35, while in the area of technology and transfer and agricultural mechanization the number increased from 8 review articles in 2013 to 15 in 2014, surpassing its biennial target of 10. The Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) continued to advance the understanding of evidence-based policy options among policymakers within the region, while the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT) continued to enhance knowledge on cross-border paperless trade and other emerging issues related to trade facilitation.

11. Negotiations to facilitate cross-border paperless trade advanced under Commission resolutions 68/3 and 70/6. With the addition of new members and partners, the regional network of trade and investment research institutions (ARTNeT) now comprises 59 member institutions and 13 partners. The number of experts registered on the UNNExT reached 175. Thirty-one member States found participation in regional cooperation mechanisms on trade and investment useful in 2014, surpassing the biennial target of 26. The comparable figure for innovation, technology transfer and agricultural mechanization increased to 23 in 2014, thereby surpassing the biennial target of 10. Although coverage of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement, in terms of average margin of preferences, remained at 32 per cent, the number of products receiving preferences based on the fourth round of tariff concession negotiations rose from 5,000 in 2013 to 10,868 the following year.

12. ESCAP has worked actively to build capacity of its members in trade and investment policymaking and trained approximately 1,800 participants through 42 capacity-building events organized by ESCAP. On average, 93 per cent of the participants (biennial target – 80 per cent) indicated that their capacity to formulate or implement policies on trade, investment and enterprise development had increased after attending ESCAP activities. In addition, 89.5 per cent of participants in the activities of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology and the Centre for Sustainable

Agricultural Mechanization (biennial target – 80 per cent) acknowledged increased capacity. Analytical work and tools, including the *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report*, Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade studies, the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Agreement and ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Databases, together provided a solid basis for more effective policymaking and implementation.

D. Subprogramme 3. Transport

Objective of the Organization: To strengthen regional cooperation and integration in transport for inclusive and sustainable development in the ESCAP region

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Enhanced knowledge and increased capacity of ESCAP member States to develop and implement transport policies and programmes
- (b) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States and the private sector to plan and develop international intermodal transport linkages, including the Asian Highway network, the Trans-Asian Railway network and dry ports of international importance
- (c) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States and the private sector to implement measures to improve the efficiency of international transport operations and logistics

13. ESCAP continued to engage Governments and stakeholders in sustainable transport development, public-private partnerships and road safety areas as it contributed to increased number of government policies, programmes and initiatives from 80 in 2013 to 85 in 2014. Member States adopted resolutions 70/7 on implementation of the Suva Declaration on Improving Maritime Transport and Related Services in the Pacific and 70/8 on implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport as a Key to Sustainable Development and Regional Integration at the seventieth session of the Commission. For the first time, the Committee on Transport and the Committee on Information and Communications Technology held a joint session on “Harnessing cross-sectoral infrastructure synergies” to promote synergies between ICT, energy and transport infrastructures.

14. The number of national projects and programmes to upgrade regional transport infrastructure increased from 60 in 2013 to 65 in 2014. The Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports, together with the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, formed an institutional framework, which supported member countries in their efforts to develop international intermodal transport corridors. In 2014, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Turkey became signatories, while the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam became parties to the Agreement, bringing the number of signatories and parties to 17 and 3 member States, respectively. Significant progress was made in the development and upgrading of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks as well as logistics facilities as reported by member States during the fourth session of the Committee on Transport in October 2014.

15. The number of initiatives to remove non-physical bottlenecks and facilitate the efficient movement of people, goods and vehicles along transport routes and at border crossings increased from 24 in 2013 to 27 in 2014. In 2014, the Commission’s assistance resulted in the signing of the Agreement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States on

Facilitation of International Road Transport. A series of policy dialogues were conducted in South and South-West Asia to engage policymakers and key stakeholders in the subregion in transport facilitation aspects, which resulted in a strong commitment towards strengthening transport connectivity and the need to extend transport corridors and connectivity for the subregion. Technical assistance through training workshops continued to be provided to 10 member States (biennial target – 15) to implement transport facilitation tools to overcome non-physical barriers to inland transport.

E. Subprogramme 4. Environment and development

Objective of the Organization: To improve the sustainability, resilience and inclusiveness of societies in Asia and the Pacific, including through promoting quality of growth

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Enhanced understanding by local and national Governments of environmental, energy and water and urban policies and strategies for poverty reduction and inclusive and sustainable development
- (b) Improved capacity of Governments and other stakeholders in developing and implementing environmental, energy, water and urban policies and strategies for inclusive and sustainable development
- (c) Strengthened regional cooperation and networking on environmental, energy and water and urban policies and strategies for inclusive and sustainable development

16. Various activities such as an expert group meeting, multi-stakeholder dialogues and field projects took place in 2014 to enhance understanding by local and national governments and other stakeholders of environmental, energy and water, and urban policies and strategies to address poverty and inclusive and sustainable development challenges, leading to 9 references (biennial target – 13) to ESCAP publications, policy briefs, projects and related activities in policy documents, declarations and statements and in key media outlets.

17. ESCAP delivered a series of workshops, study tours and online e-learning capacity-building programmes, including the web-based regional platform on sustainable development and the green economy, with the development of several new online e-learning course modules and the launch of the Transformation for the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific Regional Report website hosted on the ESCAP site. Capacity-building activities helped to improve both national and regional capabilities to integrate environment into economic and other development policies and plans, with a focus on low-carbon green growth, energy security and water resources and sustainable urban development, reaching out to over 600 policymakers and key stakeholders in the region. These activities contributed to 8 policies, strategies and initiatives developed by Governments in the areas of environment, energy, water and urban policies (biennial target – 13) in 2014.

18. Capacity development activities in 2014 were geared towards supporting long-term consensus-building, particularly in the light of ongoing global debates related to the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. Regional priorities on key issues such as the green growth approach, resource efficiency, efficient management of energy and water resources and eco-city development were highlighted. Much work

was conducted to lay the foundation for building consensus and providing member States with the latest research and analysis to support intergovernmental dialogue. Ten outcome documents, recommendations and initiatives (biennial target – 20) were issued to support the Commission's work in the areas of environment, energy security, water resources management and urban development. Among them were four ESCAP resolutions 70/9, 70/10, 70/11 and 70/12 and two chair's summaries highlighting regional priorities and perspectives.

F. Subprogramme 5. Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction

Objective of the Organization: To strengthen information and communications technology (ICT) connectivity and enhance regional cooperation and capacity for improved disaster risk reduction and management and associated socioeconomic risks towards an inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Improved capacity of member States to measure and analyse progress towards an inclusive and resilient information society
- (b) Strengthened regional cooperation in ICT connectivity for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development
- (c) Improved knowledge and awareness of member States of effective policies and strategies in disaster risk reduction in the region
- (d) Strengthened capacity of member States to apply ICT for inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development policies and programmes

19. Eighty-one per cent of policymakers (biennial target – 75 per cent) indicated that their knowledge and skills in developing policies and strategies for applications of information and communications technologies and for disaster risk reduction improved through analytical studies, regional workshops and multi-stakeholder policy dialogue. Member States continued to place value on the impact of ESCAP efforts to enhance knowledge and skills to formulate policies and strategies in the field of ICT and disaster risk reduction. As at end 2014, 10 policies, strategies and initiatives (biennial target – 11) had been undertaken in the area of information and communications technology and disaster reduction.

20. An increased number of ESCAP member States derived benefits from ESCAP-promoted regional cooperation mechanisms in the area of information and communications technology connectivity, space applications and disaster risk reduction, as evidenced by 9 statements and reports made in 2014 (biennial target – 10). Geo-referenced information systems for disaster risk management and the Regional Drought Mechanism have been administered in selected pilot countries, and the good practices were shared by other disaster-prone countries, in particular the countries with special needs. ESCAP led implementation of the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action 2012-2017, which has achieved progress as a result of the support of member States and global/regional partners. Many analytical works and knowledge toolkits were developed to assist member States effectively together with capacity-building programmes.

21. ESCAP contributed to the improved knowledge of policymakers on effective policies in disaster risk reduction and resilience-building through analytical studies and the sharing of strategies and good practices on disaster

risk reduction at regional expert group meetings. Sixty per cent of ESCAP member States (biennial target – 62) indicated that they were better able to assess, prepare and manage disaster risks. The knowledge of government officials in disaster information management, including in seismic risk reduction and applications of microzonation, was enhanced. Regional strategies on disaster statistics, disaster- and climate-related vulnerabilities and risks were deliberated through ESCAP-organized regional platforms. ESCAP continued to strengthen capacities of member States in early warning and better preparedness through ESCAP-promoted regional cooperative mechanisms.

22. The Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development programme has been rolled out in 29 countries and expanded to 11 modules. Over 27,600 government officials, policymakers and civil service trainers have been reached through face-to-face and online training. More than 85 per cent of stakeholders participating in the Centre's events (biennial target – 85 per cent) had recognized their relevance and usefulness for their professional work. The programme is increasingly being integrated into national capacity-building frameworks, thereby enhancing its sustainability and impact. By the end of 2014, 185 national training initiatives (biennial target – 185) were developed by the Training Centre. The APCICT Virtual Academy modules are available in 14 languages. The Primer Series has now been rolled out in 14 countries, 6 languages, and adopted by an increasing number of universities.

G. Subprogramme 6. Social development

Objective of the Organization: To strengthen regional cooperation in building a socially inclusive society that protects, empowers and ensures equality for all social groups in Asia and the Pacific

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Increased knowledge and awareness of social development and population trends and policies in the region, including their gender dimensions, as a basis for effective decision-making by ESCAP member States
- (b) Enhanced regional cooperation and capacity in implementing international commitments to promote social integration and social protection, particularly for vulnerable social groups, in Asia and the Pacific
- (c) Enhanced regional cooperation and capacity in implementing international commitments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific
- (d) Enhanced regional cooperation and capacity to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific

23. Six ESCAP member States (biennial target – 12) made reference to the usefulness of social development policy options, strategies and good practices promoted by ESCAP for effective decision-making with regards to the Incheon Strategy, the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, the Social Protection Toolbox and on gender mainstreaming and women's economic empowerment. Ninety-four per cent of respondents to evaluations of ESCAP publications and reports (biennial target – 80 per cent) indicated their knowledge and awareness of social development and population trends, policies and good practices had been enhanced, particularly with respect to ageing, gender, inequality, social

protection and women's empowerment. Ninety-three per cent of respondents to evaluations of analytical products (biennial target – 70 per cent) indicated their knowledge and awareness of the gender dimensions of social development and population trends had been enhanced, particularly in the area of ageing.

24. In 2014, ESCAP member States adopted eight resolutions, decisions and recommendations to reflect regional consensus on advancing the implementation of international and regional commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment, the participation of youth in sustainable development and the implementation of the Road Map on the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. Nine regional and subregional frameworks, partnerships and arrangements (biennial target – 5 activities) have been established for cooperation, including the Asia-Pacific youth service alliance, the Plan of Action for the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection, and seven national measures to implement the ESCAP Roadmap to 2015: Regional Framework for Action on HIV and AIDS.

25. ESCAP member States adopted 3 recommendations (biennial target – 3) towards strengthening regional and subregional frameworks and arrangements for cooperation to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; the report of the Committee on Social Development on its third session; and the Asia-Pacific input to the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women on the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls. Ninety-three per cent of government participants (biennial target – 80 per cent) attending the regional workshops to support gender mainstreaming and women's economic empowerment, as well as the social integration and the rights of older persons in the region, agreed that their knowledge and skills had been enhanced on gender equality and women's empowerment.

26. Eight recommendations, decisions and initiatives (biennial target – 8) had been undertaken by ESCAP member States towards strengthening regional and subregional frameworks for cooperation to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Some of these initiatives included: high-level commitment to the Regional Road Map on the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy; launch of the Incheon Strategy in six countries; 15 national action plans on the substantive goals of the Incheon Strategy; and one national action plan on data generation for the Incheon Strategy indicators. Ninety-five per cent of respondents to the evaluation of the “Asia-Pacific Meeting on Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction: Changing Mindsets through Knowledge”, held on 22 and 23 April 2014 in Sendai, Japan, agreed that the good practice sharing at the meeting had enhanced their knowledge on disability-inclusion in disaster risk reduction.

H. Subprogramme 7. Statistics

Objective of the Organization: To improve the use of statistics for evidence-based decision-making and to develop and disseminate quality statistics for inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies in the ESCAP region

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Enhanced understanding among decision makers and members of the public, through statistical information and analysis, of development trends and emerging issues in order to promote inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies
- (b) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States to produce, disseminate and use statistics in accordance with internationally agreed standards and good practices in support of progress towards inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies

27. New analytical applications of the statistical database were developed during 2014, particularly in relation to the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report and the Asia-Pacific Energy Forum monitoring platform. The scope of energy statistics indicators compiled in the ESCAP statistical databases was greatly expanded, with new indicators related to import dependency, domestic use of energy and renewable energy production. The number of downloads of online statistical products provided by ESCAP increased from 500 per month in 2013 to 1,000 per month in 2014. The updated format for online dissemination of the Statistical Yearbook proved successful, as evidenced by increased user activity of the online database during 2014. ESCAP introduced a new series of publications called “Stats Briefs” with a successful increase in its wider readership. These knowledge products and tools have increased the skills and capacity of policymakers to promote inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies.

28. The first Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics endorsed a regional action programme for the decade 2015-2024. The High-level Meeting for Coordinated Implementation of International Standards for Macroeconomic Statistics contributed to the enhanced coordination among the producers and users of economic statistics. One hundred per cent of participants in workshops and expert meetings (biennial target – 65) indicated that they were able to apply the knowledge gained for the better provision and use of comparable data. Seven hundred and twenty-nine government officials and statisticians improved their knowledge of internationally agreed standards, methods and frameworks and enhanced their skills by participating in ESCAP training programmes. Sixty-one per cent of statisticians from national systems trained by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (biennial target – 70) indicated that they were better able to produce timely and high-quality data.

I. Subprogramme 8: Subregional activities for development

Component 1

Subregional activities for development in the Pacific

Objective of the Organization: To effectively address the priority areas of the Pacific subregion in the formulation and implementation of inclusive and sustainable development policies for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 and the Millennium Development Goals

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Increased capacity to formulate and implement concrete and additional measures at the national and/or subregional level to effectively address the vulnerabilities and development needs of Pacific island countries and territories
- (b) The Pacific island countries and territories are able to influence the work of regional and global sustainable development policy forums and processes
- (c) Strengthened intraregional cooperation and integration for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development, including through South-South cooperation

29. During 2014, seven requests from Governments in the Pacific (biennial target – 10) were received and processed by ESCAP. Three Pacific island countries' government officials increased their knowledge of the impact of climate change on migration, while Kiribati developed a national workplan and a strategy for initiating its national implementation. Three countries increased their written reports on women's rights and drafted legislation on rights of persons with disabilities in compliance with international standards. This led to one Pacific island country (Marshall Islands) acceding to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Through technical publications co-authored by the subregional office for the Pacific and launched during the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, at least 10 other Pacific island countries increased their awareness and knowledge in the areas of climate change and migration, social exclusion and fisheries and sustainable development.

30. Increased numbers and seniority of Pacific delegates at ESCAP meetings has led to regular Commission resolutions addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing countries. Six strategic sustainable development policy objectives and initiatives (biennial target – 10) were addressed by ESCAP. With the Commission's substantive technical support and advice on green growth, the Pacific Island Development Forum developed a Green Growth Framework. Through technical inputs in the area of statistics, the regional Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy Phase II design was developed. As a result of technical inputs in the area of disabilities, the universal periodic review for Kiribati was completed and submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council for review.

31. Six South-South cooperation initiatives between Pacific and Asia (biennial target – 12) promoted inclusive and sustainable development. The office organized a workshop on the prospective benefits of membership in the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement, in which Pacific island countries showed interest and requested ESCAP to undertake country-specific studies to assess the costs and benefits of joining. The first meeting of the working group on economic and technical cooperation addressed shared vulnerabilities and risks in Asia and the Pacific. The Pacific Consultation on Millennium Development Goals and Post-2015 Development Agenda provided the Pacific island countries with a platform to discuss and agree on a regional position on the post-2015 development agenda.

Component 2

Subregional activities for development in East and North-East Asia

Objective of the Organization: To effectively address the priority areas of the East and North-East Asian subregion in the formulation and implementation

of inclusive and sustainable development policies for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States to formulate and implement development policies and programmes, including those with a gender dimension, that address sustainable development, taking into account the green economy in the context of the sustainable development and poverty eradication approach, and energy efficiency, ICT, disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management, poverty reduction and infrastructure development
- (b) Strengthened knowledge-sharing and partnerships among member States, regional organizations, civil society and other relevant development partners to address key priority areas in East and North-East Asia to support the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

32. ESCAP made significant progress in addressing gaps in subregional cooperation through which member States enhanced their capacities to address subregional connectivity, sustainable development, energy efficiency, disaster risk reduction and inclusive development. Ninety-five per cent of participants in ESCAP activities (biennial target – 75 per cent) recognized the importance and relevance of ESCAP in formulating and implementing policies and programmes in key priority areas. ESCAP continued to build capacity for trade and transport facilitation, in particular focusing on Mongolia by mobilizing technical assistance from other members in the subregion. To address disparity among member States of East and North-East Asia in economic development and cooperation, ESCAP maintained regular consultations with member States through consultative events and refined and identified potential joint activities that helped to enhance cooperation among members and expand the scope of subregional cooperation in addressing broad issues of sustainable development.

33. Through the subregional office for East and North-East Asia, ESCAP collaborated with member States and other stakeholders leading to a formulation of a programme of work to address key priority areas in the subregion. An estimated 70 per cent of member States (biennial target – 70) indicated that cooperation on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals among key stakeholders in the region had increased. ESCAP launched a platform to share innovative ideas for actions by Governments, local authorities, the private sector and civil society to create age-friendly societies in East and North-East Asia. ESCAP established the North-East Asia Development Forum to facilitate discussions based on research and analysis of policies and practices of development assistance and cooperation in North-East Asian countries. Five partner institutions in the subregion (biennial target – 6) participated in the knowledge-sharing activities facilitated by ESCAP.

Component 3

Subregional activities for development in North and Central Asia

Objective of the Organization: To effectively address the priority areas of the North and Central Asian subregion in the formulation and implementation of inclusive and sustainable development policies for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States to formulate and implement development policies and programmes, including those with a gender dimension, that address transport and trade facilitation and water, energy and the environment
- (b) Strengthened knowledge-sharing and partnerships among member States, regional organizations, civil society and other relevant development partners to address key priority areas in North and Central Asia to support the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

34. Through the subregional office for North and Central Asia, ESCAP worked closely with member States to respond to demands for increased policy formulation and implementation capacity in key development areas of concern for the subregion in the areas of trade, transport facilitation, water and energy resources and climate change adaptation. The importance of ESCAP activities in regional economic cooperation was recognized by 75 per cent of member States, international organizations and partners (biennial target – 70). The capacity-building activities implemented by the office raised the awareness of member States and increased knowledge and information-sharing among members in the subregion.

35. ESCAP continued to facilitate the platform for evolving consensus, concerted actions and strategic partnerships and relationships, in support of internationally agreed development goals in North and Central Asia through the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia. An estimated 60 per cent of member States (biennial target – 60) indicated that collaboration on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals among key stakeholders in the region had increased. The member States of the Special Programme agreed to strengthen its role to allow for a more proactive involvement of participating countries in donor coordination, and to ensure a better coordination among regional programmes, organizations and donors. Five partner institutions in the subregion (biennial target – 6) participated in the knowledge-sharing activities facilitated by ESCAP.

Component 4**Subregional activities for development in South and South-West Asia**

Objective of the Organization: To effectively address the priority areas of the South and South-West Asian subregion in the formulation and implementation of inclusive and sustainable development policies for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Enhanced capacity of ESCAP member States in South and South-West Asia to formulate and implement development policies and programmes to address their key development challenges and to harness the potential of regional and South-South cooperation, with a special focus on countries with special needs in the subregion
- (b) Strengthened knowledge-sharing and partnerships among member States, regional organizations, civil society and other relevant development partners to address key priority areas in South and South-West Asia to support the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

36. Through its subregional office for South and South-West Asia, ESCAP worked closely with member States to respond to the demand for increased policy formulation and implementation capacity in key development areas of concern for the subregion, including inclusive growth, acceleration of progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, trade promotion and regional connectivity, regional economic integration, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development/urbanization. A range of targeted regional policy dialogues, capacity-building workshops and expert group meetings were held, supported by rigorous evidence-based research and analysis, and policy recommendations. Approximately 80 per cent of participants in ESCAP activities (biennial target – 70) found the work of ESCAP relevant and useful in formulating and implementing policies and programmes to address key priority areas in South and South-West Asia. The number of references to the subregional work of ESCAP in key media in South and South-West Asia was estimated at 63 in 2014 (biennial target – 100).

37. ESCAP strived to continue to fulfil its role as a subregional knowledge hub and platform for evolving consensus, concerted actions and strategic partnerships and relationships, in support of internationally agreed development goals. An estimated 60 per cent of member States (biennial target – 60) indicated that cooperation on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals among key stakeholders in the region had increased. Over the year, the office prepared and disseminated a broad range of policy-relevant knowledge products through various channels based on a multipronged strategy, including various issues of the Development Paper series, the e-newsletter *Development Monitor* and the website. The office launched several flagship publications and convened and contributed to highly visible seminars and summits. Eight partner institutions in the subregion (biennial target – 8) participated in the knowledge-sharing activities facilitated by ESCAP.

Component 5

Subregional activities for development in South-East Asia

Objective of the Organization: To effectively address the priority areas of the South-East Asian subregion in the formulation and implementation of inclusive and sustainable development policies for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

Expected accomplishments:

- (a) Enhanced capacity of ESCAP member States in South-East Asia to formulate and implement development policies and programmes to address their key development challenges, with particular focus on countries with special needs in South-East Asia
- (b) Strengthened partnerships and knowledge-sharing among member States, regional organizations, civil society and other relevant development partners in addressing key priority areas in South-East Asia in support of the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

38. ESCAP continued to assist the Government of Myanmar in its efforts to integrate into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and ensure that the private sector and other stakeholders were fully involved in the reform process. ESCAP enhanced capacities in promoting investment for small and medium-sized enterprises by strengthening capacities of government officials in the areas of inclusive and sustainable transport development, including

enhancement of the capacity of statisticians to undertake statistical analyses of monitoring indicators in support of inclusive development policies in the subregion. Through sharing of regional best practices, ESCAP assisted Timor-Leste in strengthening the capacity of government officials to implement its National Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030. Through informal consultations, 70 per cent of participants in ESCAP activities (biennial target – 75 per cent) indicated that they found those activities relevant and useful for formulating and implementing policies and programmes in addressing key priority areas in South-East Asia.

39. ESCAP facilitated five collaborative initiatives involving member States and other stakeholders (biennial target – 6) to address priority areas of the subregion. In partnership with the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, ESCAP organized a subregional advocacy workshop on the Millennium Development Goals for South-East Asia in Vientiane, from 24 to 26 June 2014. Through the United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, ESCAP also facilitated the launch of the Zero Hunger Challenge in Timor-Leste in January 2014. ESCAP provided the platform for knowledge-sharing on the status, challenges and prospects of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In the face of emerging challenges, the key development priorities of the subregion were to strengthen the Myanmar SME Link platform in connecting local entrepreneurs with global opportunities; generate jobs and promote inclusive development; facilitate the development of an integrated transport and logistics system in ASEAN countries and the Pacific subregion; and promote South-South cooperation through various technical cooperation and capacity-building programmes on the ASEAN Economic Community for ASEAN members States with least developed State status.
