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**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**  
Committee on Information and Communications Technology,  
Science, Technology and Innovation**First session**

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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**Policy issues for science, technology and innovation: fostering regional science, technology and innovation collaboration through an Asia-Pacific innovation forum****Terms of reference for the Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation seeks to build consensus on the objectives, theme, participation and modalities for an Asia-Pacific innovation forum, which will form the basis of its terms of reference and a resolution on the subject, to be submitted to the Commission at its seventy-third session. The present note contains the proposed terms of reference, an overview of the background for a forum and key points for discussion.

**I. Introduction**

1. Historically, the science, technology and innovation for sustainable development ecosystem has comprised government institutions, research and academic organizations, and civil society. However, this landscape is expanding along dimensions unforeseen even five years ago.
2. New actors are looking for original, transformative solutions. Philanthropic foundations and social impact investors are emerging as new sources of finance for innovations and technologies that have the potential to deliver both high social and environmental impact and economic returns.

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\* E/ESCAP/CICTSTI(1)/L.1.

3. The technology, design and creative industries themselves are exploring how their skills and expertise could have a new and different impact in the developing world. Today people entering the workforce are looking for opportunities that provide rewards beyond financial gain that also provide sense of social purpose. Some of the most promising development innovations are being pioneered by commercial enterprises that aim to deliver positive social and sustainable change.

4. Corporations are also exploring how they can benefit society and the environment as well as the economy. Corporations are equipped to deliver innovation at scale, and opportunity in the region is significant, given that 40 per cent of the Forbes Global 500 companies are headquartered in Asia.

5. The challenge for policymakers is to create an enabling environment for these actors to leverage their respective comparative advantages to proactively engage in sustainable development.

6. While the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation will provide an important venue for intergovernmental dialogue and collective action to harness science, technology and innovation for sustainable development, it is also critical to engage the diverse range of stakeholders now operating in this ecosystem if the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are to be met. The proposed multi-stakeholder Asia-Pacific innovation forum would provide such a platform to stimulate multisectoral collaboration and identify the opportunities and challenges that science, technology and innovation present.

7. While the Committee will provide an important venue for facilitating intergovernmental knowledge-sharing, cooperation and collective action, the biennial meeting schedule may hamper countries' abilities to keep pace with the fast-changing science, technology and innovation landscape. Given the significant science, technology and innovation activity taking place outside the confines of government, it is imperative that government officials have the opportunity to discuss and understand the dynamics from the source. Thus, it is recommended that an additional avenue of cooperation, provided by the proposed forum, be convened in alternate years to the Committee to allow for more regular interactions and to strengthen cooperation on science, technology and innovation among Governments and the diverse stakeholders in this ecosystem, especially in the South-South arena.

## **II. Background**

8. At its seventy-second session, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) adopted resolution 72/12 on harnessing science, technology and innovation for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. In it, the Commission invited member States to work further on convening a biennial Asia-Pacific innovation forum starting in 2017 through the Committee and to work further on its terms of reference and modalities, the forum to be held in alternative years to the Committee, as a means to enhance and facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration among member States, the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

### III. Proposed terms of reference

#### Terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum

##### 1. Objectives

1. The Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum shall provide a platform for the facilitation of knowledge-sharing and collective action and for the establishment of a diverse and multi-stakeholder network to address the challenges and opportunities presented by science, technology and innovation for sustainable development.

2. The Forum shall address the following objectives:

##### **(a) Science, technology and innovation knowledge-sharing and collaboration**

(i) Support North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international knowledge-sharing and cooperation;

(ii) Provide a venue for a sustained dialogue between the diverse actors in the science, technology and innovation for sustainable development ecosystem;

(iii) Share success stories and lessons learned in the pursuit of scientific breakthroughs, technological advancements and innovative practices;

(iv) Propose new initiatives and partnerships to harness science, technology and innovation for sustainable development;

(v) Matchmake between investors and innovators.

##### **(b) Science, technology and innovation policy and strategy**

(i) Surface and share best practices for policies and strategies on science, technology and innovation in pursuit of sustainable development from a multi-stakeholder perspective;

(ii) Explore innovative approaches to leveraging human and financial resources for science, technology and innovation;

(iii) Share approaches to measuring the implementation of science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals.

##### **(c) Science, technology and innovation foresight exercises**

(i) Showcase emerging scientific breakthroughs and technological advances;

(ii) Showcase innovative policy approaches for sustainable development;

(iii) Engage in regional foresight exercises.

##### **(d) Inform the deliberations of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation**

(i) Ensure that member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) have full visibility of best practices on policies, strategies, concepts, products and services for science, technology and innovation;

(ii) Ensure that member States keep abreast of emerging science, technology and innovation developments and innovative policy approaches;

(iii) Provide member States with innovative proposals to advance science, technology and innovation for sustainable development.

## **2. Theme**

3. The areas of science, technology and innovation have a fast-paced and ever-changing agenda. While some aspects of the Forum can be perennial, each Forum may also focus on a specific topic highlighting the means by which science, technology and innovation can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The secretariat of ESCAP shall propose themes for the Forum based on research and analysis of emerging opportunities and challenges in science, technology and innovation, which will be shared with the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation six months prior to each session of the Forum, and which shall be discussed and finalized at the relevant meeting of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission. A theme or critical issue shall be addressed at each session of the Forum.

## **3. Participation**

4. The Forum shall be collaborative and multi-stakeholder in nature, and shall include member States of ESCAP, United Nations entities, other multinational and regional entities, civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the philanthropic sector, the scientific community, academia, youth, indigenous peoples and others.

5. The role of stakeholders shall be to highlight how their sector can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through science, technology and innovation.

6. The Forum shall be open to participation of all accredited delegates and representatives. An open call for registration shall be made to ensure a wide range of participants.

## **4. Modalities**

7. The Forum shall be organized by ESCAP and be convened on alternate years to the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation. The Forum shall take place over two to three days.

8. The Forum may be convened in Bangkok or a different location.

## **5. Key output**

9. A key output of the Forum shall be a document on innovation for sustainable development which shall:

(a) Summarize discussions at the Forum on the key successes and lessons learned in the pursuit of scientific breakthroughs, technological advancement and innovative practices for sustainable development;

(b) Showcase emerging science, technology and innovation products, services and concepts on the horizon;

(c) Present proposals from the multi-stakeholder participants for new initiatives, areas of focus and partnerships to harness science, technology and innovation for sustainable development;

(d) Report on successful matchmaking for South-South or triangular cooperation;

(e) Include a proposal on an action agenda for the theme of the Forum, as informed by multi-stakeholder discussions.

#### **IV. Key points for discussion**

9. The terms of reference above are proposed for discussion, with a focus on the objectives, theme of the forum in 2017, participation and modalities.

10. Possible themes for the forum in 2017 include:

(a) Promoting open science in Asia and the Pacific;

(b) Fostering technology collaboration in Asia and the Pacific;

(c) Innovative financing for sustainable development;

(d) Developing innovation skills for sustainable development through education institutions and vocational training;

(e) Building the ecosystem for social enterprise and impact investment in Asia and the Pacific.

#### **V. Outcome**

11. The Committee seeks to build consensus on the objectives, theme, participation and modalities for an Asia-Pacific innovation forum, which will form the basis of its terms of reference and a resolution on the subject, to be submitted to the Commission at its seventy-third session.

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