



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Sixty-ninth session**

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Final review of the conference structure of the
Commission, including its subsidiary structure,
pursuant to resolutions 64/1 and 67/15****Final review of the conference structure of the Commission,
including its subsidiary structure, pursuant to resolutions
64/1 and 67/15******Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document is submitted pursuant to resolutions 64/1 and 67/15 in order to facilitate a review of the conference structure of the Commission at its sixty-ninth session. The document contains an assessment of the findings and recommendations of an independent evaluation of the functioning of the conference structure undertaken by an external evaluation team, and a proposal for the consideration of the Commission on a road map in implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation team. The analysis is based on the secretariat's empirical knowledge and experience gained in the implementation of resolution 64/1 and previous resolutions on the subject of the conference structure, as well as the views and suggestions made by secretariat staff through the review process. The document concludes with a set of proposed actions that the Commission may wish to consider in this regard.

I. Introduction

1. The present document is submitted pursuant to paragraph 8 of ESCAP resolution 64/1 on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission, in which the Executive Secretary was requested to submit to the Commission at its sixty-ninth session a report analysing the functioning of the conference structure in order to facilitate a review of the conference structure by the Commission at that session.

* E/ESCAP/69/L.1.

** The late submission of the present document is due to a delay in the finalization of the report of the external evaluation team on which it is based and the additional time needed for further consultations and obtaining clearance.

2. Further, it is submitted according to the terms of paragraph 19 of ESCAP resolution 67/15 on the midterm review of the functioning of the conference structure of the Commission, through which the Executive Secretary was requested to carry out further study and analysis, as well as the formulation of a new comprehensive questionnaire to facilitate the final review, and to submit the findings, including the questionnaire results, and recommendations to the Commission at its sixty-ninth session.

3. In preparing the document, the secretariat drew from the findings and recommendations of an independent evaluation conducted by an external evaluation team led by Mr. Hafiz Pasha, former Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations Development Programme. From September 2012 to February 2013, the independent evaluation team undertook a systematic assessment of the overall functioning of the conference structure and the specific issues highlighted in resolutions 64/1 and 67/15. The full report of the evaluation team is available as an information note.¹

4. Section II of the present document contains a brief overview of the development context in which the review of the conference structure is being undertaken. It also highlights the relevant issues and mandates contained in General Assembly resolution 67/226 of 21 December 2012 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held from 20 to 22 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, entitled “The future we want”.² These pronouncements by the General Assembly should be taken into account as critical elements of the context within which decisions may be taken on strengthening the conference structure of the Commission.

5. In section III, there is an assessment of the recommendations contained in the report of the evaluation team and a proposed road map for their implementation. Highlighted in the section also are issues for consideration by the Commission in its deliberations regarding the relevance and viability of the recommendations, as well as the feasibility of the proposed road map.

6. Section IV contains a set of possible actions that the Commission may wish to consider for implementing the recommendations described in section III.

II. Overall development context as it relates to strengthening the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

7. The review of the overall functioning of the conference structure takes place at a time of great transition. ESCAP member States are facing a multitude of development challenges and exploring a similar wealth of opportunities for the twenty-first century. At the same time, member States are faced with an ever-growing number of complex transboundary issues, ranging from financial crises to food price volatility and climate change. In addition to these emerging issues, the ESCAP region still faces the persistent problems of development, including poverty, growing inequalities, energy security, access to water resources, public health issues and natural disasters.

¹ See E/ESCAP/69/INF/9.

² See General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

8. The ESCAP region has entered an era in which the South has emerged as a critical player on the global economic stage and South-South cooperation will play an increasingly important role. The ESCAP region has a number of advantages that should help in accelerating economic integration and supporting the region as countries pursue the path of development. In addition to shared history and culture, economies in the region are also characterized by complementarities arising from their very different levels of development, endowments of natural resources, capital and workforces.

9. To deliver development support effectively within this evolving context, it is critical to shift from the traditional perspective of furnishing aid to developing countries to building partnerships for development cooperation, including South-South and regional cooperation, strengthening multisectoral approaches and linking global and regional norms and standards to national-level operations.

10. As the countries of the region are endeavouring to close development gaps and are building stronger, more resilient regionally integrated economies and as an increasing number of countries are emerging as significant sources of aid for development cooperation, so must ESCAP seize the opportunity afforded by the conference structure review to ensure that it is strategically positioned to provide member States with the most effective and efficient support possible for their development efforts. It is therefore vital that the Commission be further strengthened to serve as the most inclusive and comprehensive intergovernmental platform in the region for building effective regional cooperation and implementing innovative solutions to the shared challenges faced by member States.

11. Since the adoption of resolution 64/1, the secretariat has made significant efforts to strengthen and reposition the conference structure. Recent efforts towards strengthening the conference structure have increasingly been focused on providing an effective platform for member and associate member States to discuss and exchange views on development agendas, including the implementation of outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), and inputs into the shaping of the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.

12. In the Rio+20 outcome document, the significant role of the United Nations regional commissions and their subregional offices is emphasized as it relates to promoting balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their respective regions, and to the effective operationalization and implementation of efforts to achieve sustainable development. In this regard, the highest priority has been placed on promoting sustainable development as an overarching theme in deliberations of the Commission and other intergovernmental bodies. The recommendations of the independent evaluation as well as the secretariat's proposed road map also highlight the importance of a balanced and integrated approach to sustainable development.

13. In the landmark endorsement contained in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, it is also recognized that the regional commissions make vital contributions to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals and encourage the strengthening of collaboration with regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and regional banks, as appropriate. Such recognition reinforces the need for further strengthening of the Commission's conference structure.

14. In its resolution 67/226, the General Assembly exhorted United Nations agencies at the regional level to further strengthen cooperation and coordination among themselves, among the Governments in their region and the funds, programmes and specialized agencies that are not represented in their region. Means for furthering cooperation and coordination include enhanced technical, programme and administrative support, including through co-location, and the identification of appropriate mechanisms at the subregional level, bearing in mind the existing subregional offices of the regional commissions.

15. Through resolutions 67/14 and 68/8, the Commission has already proven its commitment to contributing to achieving the agenda set in the Rio+20 outcome document and General Assembly resolution 67/226. In these resolutions, the Commission has recognized that the regional dimension of development is critical for an effective and coordinated response to an ever growing number of regional and global issues faced by member States. The Commission also stressed the significant role played by the regional commissions and the importance of regional coordination mechanisms in promoting enhanced regional cooperation among agencies of the United Nations system and working together towards enhanced policy coherence and programme effectiveness and efficiency.

16. As had been indicated in the evaluation process, much has already been achieved in strengthening the role and profile of the Commission, particularly in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the conference structure and in attracting higher and wider representation from members and associate members. The presence of higher-level participants and their interventions at sessions of the Commission have further enriched the discussions and enhanced interest among members and associate members in attending. The number of Heads of State and/or Government and ministerial-level representatives participating in those sessions has held steady, ranging from 21 to 27 at sessions of the Commission since 2009. However, as guided by the Commission, the secretariat is committed to implementing additional measures aimed at further enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the conference structure.

III. Road map for implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation team and issues for consideration by the Commission

17. The independent evaluation has provided a rich and in-depth analysis of the functioning of the conference structure, resulting in the formulation of wide-ranging, bold and action-oriented recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the conference structure, based primarily on the feedback, suggestions and views gathered from member States. The secretariat has already made significant progress in strengthening the conference structure. Many of the recommendations are already current practices which would be further strengthened in the light of the recommendations of the review. Some of the other recommendations could be accommodated within the current conference structure established under resolution 64/1 and implemented immediately by the secretariat, and some others would require further consideration and action by the Commission. The secretariat has devised a broad road map for the implementation of the recommendations. The road map is presented as a three-phased approach, based mainly on the expected beneficial impact and perceived viability of the recommendations. The first phase consists of recommendations to be implemented within a year, by the time of the seventieth session of the

Commission. The second phase comprises recommendations to be implemented in two to three years, while the third phase of recommendations envisions implementation in four to five years. For ease of reference, a summary of the recommendations and their suggested implementation phases are provided below. For detailed discussion of each recommendation, please refer to the previously mentioned information note.¹

A. First phase recommendations

18. The recommendations for the first phase could be addressed quickly through a resolution of the Commission at its current session as an outcome of its final review of the conference structure established under resolution 64/1. These recommendations are listed in box 1 and have been grouped into the following categories: (a) improving the efficiency of the Commission session, including its duration and format; (b) attracting higher and wider representation from member States; (c) promoting greater participation by other stakeholders and strengthening the committees; and (d) integrating regional institutions.

Box 1

Recommendations for the first phase

1. Reduce duration of Commission session from seven days to five days (Monday to Friday).	
2. Have overarching themes for the whole session; for 2014 a possible choice could be “Promoting regional integration”.	Current practice. Will be strengthened further.
3. Establishment within the secretariat of interdivisional task forces on relevant themes, including the theme topic for the Commission session.	Current practice. Will be strengthened further.
4. Merge the theme study with the <i>Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific</i> .	
5. Expand coverage of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries and the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries to include annually issues of interest to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Pacific island States.	
6. Organize a one-day preparatory session prior to each of the Special Body meetings during the Commission session.	
7. Invite global/regional head of relevant United Nations agency (depending on the theme) to participate in high-level panel.	Current practice. Will be strengthened further.
8. Subregional offices to organize preparatory meetings prior to the Commission session at the subregional level, with participation by representatives of civil society and the private sector.	

9. As a special event at the end of the first day of the ministerial segment, organize an annual ESCAP distinguished lecture to be delivered by a global expert on the theme of the Commission session.	Current practice. Will be strengthened further.
10. Invite corporate leaders from the region for a special session on the role of the private sector in relation to the theme.	Current practice. Will be strengthened further.
11. Invite civil society organizations to showcase their work in exhibitions held during sessions of the Commission.	Current practice. Will be strengthened further.
12. Promote stronger media coverage at subregional and national levels.	Current practice. Will be strengthened further.
13. Resolution topics to evolve from substantive deliberations between member States.	Current practice. Will be strengthened further.
14. Draft resolutions should normally be introduced two weeks prior to sessions of the Commission.	Current practice is one month prior to session.
19. Committee meetings to be reduced in duration ranging from two to two and one half days.	
20. Extra half-day or full day to be used for joint meetings of the committees to enable thematic discussions.	
21. Invite participation of civil society and the private sector in committee meetings.	Current practice. Will be strengthened further in the first and second phases.
22. Quarterly meetings with more informal sessions on topical subjects, especially prior to sessions of the Commission.	
23. Advisory Committee to review periodically the work of the subregional offices and regional institutions.	
24. Increase participation by videoconference of Pacific island States.	
25. Advisory Committee may follow up and report on the implementation of resolutions by member States.	

1. Recommendations for improving the efficiency of sessions of the Commission, including duration and format

19. The results of the evaluation showed overwhelming support from member States for reducing the duration of each session of the Commission to five working days from the current six meeting days within a seven-day period.³ Under resolution 64/1, there is some flexibility for holding a session for up to a maximum of seven working days; thus, recommendation 1, if accepted, remains in line with the terms of that resolution. Shortening the

³ See E/ESCAP/69/INF/9, recommendation 1.

duration of sessions would require due consideration of how time is allocated within the sessions so that substantive deliberations and the achievement of clear outcomes are not hindered.

20. Should the Commission decide to reduce the duration of the sessions, it may wish to consider several factors: (a) the format of each session, including the number of days allocated to the senior officials segment, the ministerial segment and the working group on draft resolutions; (b) strict adherence to the time allocated for each agenda item, including an examination of alternative modalities for delivering country statements, such as by circulating either a summary or full version of the statement in electronic form; and (c) the time allocated for negotiation of draft resolutions and their eventual adoption.

21. On the issue of the format and content of the session, the evaluation team suggested a revised format which would incorporate the following changes: (a) the senior officials segment could be reduced to two days from three, with the ministerial segment continuing to be three days; (b) the panel on the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific* should be scheduled with priority in order to highlight the broader developments in the region, followed by the panel on the theme study; and (c) further streamlining the report of the session. Regarding the last point, the Commission may wish to consider limiting the report to contain only the decisions and resolutions adopted at the session and other administrative matters. The proceedings of the session, meanwhile, could be kept as audio files, properly archived and indexed, similar in practice to that of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, thereby greatly reducing the time and cost of reporting and translation.

22. Furthermore, when considering a revised format for its session, the Commission may wish to refer to the secretariat report on the midterm review of the functioning of the conference structure,⁴ in which information on the practices of other regional commissions, including the issues of duration, format and reporting, is provided for comparative analysis.

23. The recommendation to adopt an overarching theme for an entire session of the Commission,⁵ if accepted, would enable efforts to be made in support of more focused and coherent deliberations, particularly during the ministerial segment, and would further enhance the ability of member States to determine the most appropriate composition of their delegations. Sessions also would benefit from clear and relevant themes which would in turn contribute to the overall relevance of the sessions. If accepted, this recommendation could be implemented for the seventieth session, in 2014. There are currently three proposed themes before the Commission for its consideration under item 7 of the provisional agenda;⁶ the Commission could choose from among the three, propose another, or consider a theme suggested by the evaluation team: "Promoting regional integration".

24. A related recommendation⁷ concerning the establishment within the secretariat of interdivisional task forces on relevant themes could be implemented by strengthening existing practices in the preparation of the theme study for the Commission. The establishment of such task forces

⁴ See E/ESCAP/67/15.

⁵ See E/ESCAP/69/INF/9, recommendation 2.

⁶ See E/ESCAP/69/20.

⁷ Ibid., recommendation 3.

would contribute to improving the secretariat's ability to work efficiently on cross-cutting and thematic issues.

25. Combining the annual *Survey* report with the theme study⁸ would present an opportunity to further streamline the Commission's proceedings, increase efficiency and reduce related costs. The proposal would also be in support of the ongoing efforts by the entire United Nations Secretariat to reduce the number of publications, shorten their length and minimize distribution of printed copies through various means, including more effective and efficient use of modern information and communications technologies (ICTs). In addition, implementing the recommendation would strengthen the utilization of the research capacity of ESCAP by focusing on fewer publications.

26. Expanding the coverage of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries and the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries to include, at each session, issues of interest to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Pacific island States,⁹ instead of doing so at alternate sessions, as is the current practice, could easily be accommodated. Accepting the related recommendation¹⁰ of convening a one-day preparatory session prior to each of the Special Body meetings to discuss issues related to all three groups of countries would raise the following issues: (a) the timing and level of representation of the proposed preparatory session if the Commission were to decide to adopt a Monday-to-Friday schedule, including whether to place the Special Body in the ministerial segment or have it remain part of the senior officials segment; (b) additional budget implications for servicing the additional session, and (c) the terms of reference for the session, including requirements for reporting to the Commission.

2. Recommendations for attracting higher and wider representation from member States and promoting greater participation by other stakeholders

27. The evaluation confirmed that the current practice of inviting Heads of State and/or Government and ministerial-level representatives has further enhanced interest in sessions of the Commission and has increased participation. The secretariat will continue to enhance this practice, taking into account the suggestions made by member States, including: (a) making advance preparations, such as early distribution of the agenda and relevant pre-session documents to enable delegations and their counterparts in capitals to identify the appropriate level of participants; and (b) placing greater and clearer focus on relevant issues for consideration in order to encourage higher and wider participation. Advisory Committee members also play a critical role in encouraging their focal points in the capitals to facilitate the appropriate level of participation and enhance awareness among officials in relevant government units of the importance of the Commission and its relevance to national interests, as well as the commitment to participate at the ministerial level.

28. The secretariat has already made significant efforts to deepen the engagement of other United Nations entities and regional/subregional organizations during sessions of the Commission in support of the

⁸ Ibid., recommendation 4.

⁹ Ibid., recommendation 5.

¹⁰ Ibid., recommendation 6.

“Delivering as one” initiative.¹¹ The secretariat will continue to seek ways to further enhance the engagement of other United Nations entities, in particular by establishing mechanisms for United Nations entities to provide substantive inputs into the preparation of key conference documents and contribute to the deliberations at sessions of the Commission, including as participants in high-level panel discussions. In doing so, ESCAP could lend its convening power to support the endeavours of other United Nations agencies, which would contribute to linking the global and regional-level discussions with implementation at the national level and enrich the discussions and contents of the sessions of the Commission.

29. As part of its ongoing effort to enhance the quality of deliberations at annual sessions of the Commission, the secretariat will continue the current practice of organizing lectures by distinguished persons and world-renowned experts.¹² Such a special event could be scheduled at any time during a Commission session with a view to attracting higher and wider participation from member States and other key stakeholders and support the endeavours of ESCAP towards creating more awareness of sessions of the Commission at the subregional and national levels. Furthermore, organizing such a special event would add substance and weight to the discussion on the theme for sessions of the Commission.

30. Inviting corporate leaders to attend a special event on the role of the private sector in relation to the theme and inviting civil society organizations to showcase their work at sessions of the Commission would revive similar practices from previous years.¹³ The secretariat would also continue to explore more ways to enhance the engagement of civil society organizations in order to enable them to introduce their unique experience and perspectives into discussions on addressing regional challenges. It should be emphasized, however, that due care and consideration would have to be given to the modalities and extent of their involvement. While their participation would be enhanced in the first phase using existing procedures and mechanisms, other approaches to enhancing engagement with civil society and the private sector would also be considered in the second phase in consultation with member States.

31. Preparatory meetings at the subregional level would enable greater and more meaningful involvement of more stakeholders, including civil society organizations and the private sector.¹⁴ Implementing this recommendation would strengthen linkages between the secretariat and Governments and would contribute positively to the outreach of ESCAP. Implementation would also strengthen relationships between ESCAP and subregional intergovernmental organizations. The modality and nature of these meetings would need to be studied carefully, however, and adjusted to meet the specific requirements of each subregion and the resources available to each subregional office.

3. Recommendations for strengthening committees and integrating regional institutions and other bodies under the conference structure

32. The Commission may wish to consider reducing committee meetings to two or two and a half days in duration, with an extra half day or full day

¹¹ Ibid., recommendation 7.

¹² Ibid., recommendation 9.

¹³ Ibid., recommendations 10 and 11.

¹⁴ Ibid., recommendation 8.

added for joint meetings of committees to enable thematic discussions,¹⁵ if this could be achieved without adversely affecting the quality of the discussions and changing the current procedures for preparing the final report. The proposal for joint meetings may be considered as an innovative way of enabling interlinkages between committees and promoting collaboration on thematic issues across sectors, such as a session between the committees on information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction.

33. The secretariat would continue to promote greater and wider participation of civil society organizations and the private sector in committee meetings by strengthening its current practices.¹⁶ Doing so would enable the Commission to engage in diverse discussions and result in more inclusive outputs. It should be noted that, under the current terms of reference,¹⁷ committee meetings are mandated to promote a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges in the region, where appropriate, between the Governments and civil society, the private sector and other partners at the regional and subregional levels.

34. The secretariat strongly supports holding additional informal sessions of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission,¹⁸ as this would enable the Advisory Committee to discuss more substantive issues. The secretariat would welcome further advice and suggestions from the Commission on ways to address this recommendation in view of the existing arrangements for current meetings of the Advisory Committee.

35. The agenda of Advisory Committee meetings could include, on a regular basis, an item on the work of the subregional offices and regional institutions.¹⁹ Enabling the Advisory Committee to review the work of the subregional offices and regional institutions would strengthen the perceived ownership and awareness of those member States that are not actively involved in the governance structures of the regional institutions or geographically located in the subregion.

36. In view of the emergence of modern communications technology, it is now possible to invite designated representatives from Pacific island States to participate in Advisory Committee meetings by means of videoconferencing facilitated by the ESCAP Pacific Office, in Suva.²⁰ Involving the Pacific island States in those meetings would strengthen the outreach of ESCAP and create a stronger sense of ownership and involvement among member States that do not have diplomatic representation in Bangkok. This recommendation could also be applied to the members of ESCAP in the Central Asian subregion.

37. The Commission may wish to consider enhancing the role of the Advisory Committee in the follow-up to and reporting of national implementation of resolutions.²¹ For this purpose, guidelines or templates would need to be formulated and agreed by member States. Strengthening the

¹⁵ Ibid., recommendations 19 and 20.

¹⁶ Ibid., recommendation 21.

¹⁷ See ESCAP resolution 64/1, annex II.

¹⁸ See E/ESCAP/69/INF/9, recommendation 22.

¹⁹ Ibid., recommendation 23.

²⁰ Ibid., recommendation 24.

²¹ Ibid., recommendation 25.

Advisory Committee's role in this area would build on the existing linkages between the representatives and their respective capitals and enable improved communication between ESCAP headquarters and the capitals.

B. Second phase recommendations

38. The recommendations for the second phase are listed in box 2; these may require further study and analysis before their full implementation in two to three years.

Box 2

Recommendations for the second phase

15. Resolutions to explicitly indicate actions by member States and the secretariat, respectively, with measurable outcomes and reporting modalities.	Current practice. Will be strengthened further.
27. The governing council and technical committee to be merged into one steering committee which would be chaired by the host country and which would report to the relevant committees, as appropriate.	

39. Commission resolutions should explicitly indicate actions by member States, with support from the secretariat, and measurable outcomes and reporting modalities with a view to concrete impacts at the national level.²² In addressing this recommendation, the Commission may wish to consider adopting guidelines for formulating action-oriented resolutions and reporting mechanisms and modalities, including those that would involve the Advisory Committee. Special consideration should also be given to the potential for involving the United Nations Development Group, the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism for Asia and the Pacific and United Nations agencies in supporting member States in the implementation of resolutions and reporting of outcomes.

40. The Commission may wish to study further the recommendation²³ that the governing councils and technical committees of regional institutions be merged into one steering committee to be chaired by the host country, and that it would report to the relevant committees in order to create a more streamlined and effective governance structure. Any changes to the current arrangements would need to be addressed through a revision of the current statutes of the regional institutions.

C. Third phase recommendations

41. The third phase recommendations are listed in box 3 and would entail far-reaching structural amendments before they could be implemented in four to five years.

²² Ibid., recommendation 15.

²³ Ibid., recommendation 27.

Box 3

Recommendations for the third phase

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| 16. Constitute new committee on energy. |
| 17. Committee on Information and Communications Technology to be converted into a technology committee. |
| 18. Each committee to meet every alternate year. However, when a particular topic becomes an urgent issue to the region, the Commission may mandate a specific committee or multiple committees to meet in the gap year. |
| 26. The regional institutions of ESCAP to be further integrated into the subprogrammes. |

42. Establishing a new committee on energy and converting the current Committee on Information and Communications Technology to one covering technology²⁴ would require consideration of several factors: (a) allocation of additional resources from the regular budget, particularly for staff, to organize the new energy committee; (b) clarity on the issues to be considered by the two committees, particularly the proposed technology committee; and (c) identifying and addressing any possible overlaps in the operations and outreach of existing regional/subregional forums on these topics. These factors notwithstanding, the Commission may wish to review carefully the need to implement these recommendations, taking into account the justifications provided by the evaluators.

43. Having committees meet more often on particular emerging topics and issues as mandated by the Commission would be a suitable way to create continuity in the work of the committees and improve the relevance and impact of the deliberations. There are several practical and procedural implications that would need to be considered, however, including: (a) readjusting the schedule for committee meetings; (b) supporting the divisions with additional resources so that organizing additional committee meetings would be possible; and (c) ensuring that there would be sufficient time to organize the supplementary committee meeting if the Commission makes a decision in favour of this recommendation.

44. The secretariat would like to obtain further advice from the Commission on how best to address the recommendation to further integrate the regional institutions into the subprogrammes.²⁵

45. The secretariat would face difficulties in implementing the recommendation on expert group meetings.²⁶ The current and customary practice of the secretariat is derived from an administrative instruction²⁷ defining expert group meetings as “small meetings of recognized experts in a given field, convened by the Secretary-General, sometimes at the request of a legislative body, for the purpose of obtaining advice, information and an exchange of experience on a clearly defined topic. Although the experts may be nominated by Governments, they normally attend in their personal capacity, without governmental responsibility”.

²⁴ Ibid., recommendations 16 and 17.

²⁵ Ibid., recommendation 26.

²⁶ Ibid., recommendation 28.

²⁷ See ST/AI/189/Add.22, para. 2.

46. It is further stated in the administrative instruction that expert groups appointed by the Secretary-General fall essentially into two categories, one of which is “to advise him on, and assist him in, implementing various parts of the work programme of a given Secretariat unit”.²⁸

47. As for the deliberations and decisions of expert groups, the following is stated in the administrative instruction: “The recommendations, advice and suggestions of expert groups are generally directed to, and primarily for the use of, the Secretary-General. Unless the legislative body which requests the Secretary-General to appoint such a group specifies that the report of the group should be made available to a legislative body, the report is submitted to the Secretary-General; only a concise report by the Secretary-General setting forth his recommendations for action is normally submitted to a legislative body”.²⁹

IV. Conclusion

48. The review process initiated in fulfilment of resolution 64/1 has generated a wealth of rich and diverse findings, views, suggestions and recommendations emerging from all key stakeholders related to the Commission’s conference structure, and this leads to the conclusion that the conference structure has contributed to fulfilling the Commission’s mandate as the main economic and social development centre in the United Nations system for the Asian and Pacific region.

49. At the same time, the secretariat acknowledges that certain reforms are necessary for the Commission to remain effective in its role during a historic time of change and transformation in the region. It is evident that the ESCAP of the future will need to address not only the dominant development challenges of today but also be able to anticipate the emerging issues of tomorrow which could hinder the development of member States.

50. In a world where regional approaches and solutions are an increasingly vital part of the global development landscape, it is critical that ESCAP intensify its efforts to provide the prime forum for considering together the diverse interests and needs of the region, for facilitating common solutions to common issues and for conveying the Asia-Pacific perspective to the world at large. This work must include continuous assessment and strengthening of interactions of ESCAP not only with the other United Nations agencies, the private sector and civil society but also with regional initiatives, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, with a view to building powerful partnerships for the benefit of the entire region.

51. In taking into consideration the analysis provided above, the Commission may wish to adopt a resolution on the functioning of the conference structure which (a) calls for the implementation of the first phase recommendations by the time of the seventieth session of the Commission, and (b) charts a road map for the implementation of the recommendations for the second and third phases, including through further study and analysis of the recommendations.

²⁸ Ibid., para. 7(b).

²⁹ Ibid., para. 8.