

Summary Assessment

Third session of the Committee on Environment and Development Bangkok 29-31 October 2013

I. Introduction

The 3rd session of the Committee on Environment and Development was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 29-31 October 2013.

A questionnaire assessing the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee session was distributed to delegates of ESCAP members and associate members. The total number of submitted individual questionnaires was 13. The overall response rate is therefore 24% (N=13/55). The present assessment was prepared on the basis of these questionnaire responses.

This year, for the first time, and in line with the secretariat's efforts to reduce the use of paper and move towards paper smart meetings, an online version of the questionnaire was offered alongside the traditional paper version.

The main purpose of this assessment is to support the secretariat's ongoing efforts to improve its servicing of Committee sessions.

II. Attendance

The Committee session was attended by 27% (N=17/62) of ESCAP members and associate members, with a total number of 55 participants. The Committee session was also attended by 32 participants from other entities.

Almost half of delegations were headed by officials from the respective Capital (41%, N=7/17) – one of which at ministerial level (6%) – whereas the remaining 59% (N=10/17) were represented through their embassies in Bangkok.

The Committee has seen a fluctuation of attendance rates. In 2009, 26% of the members and associate members attended, a number that increased to 32% in 2012, but decreased again to 27% in 2013.

III. Relevance of the session

Respondents generally felt that the Committee session was relevant to the needs of the region. As presented with the aggregate ratings¹ in Table 1, there was widespread agreement that the agenda items reflected the development trends and issues of the Asian and Pacific region (79), and that they also reflected the needs and priorities of their respective countries (77). There were two suggestions on how to improve the relevance of the Committee session to the needs and priorities of the Asian and Pacific region: Firstly, to encourage more participation from member countries, and secondly, to provide detailed relevant documents to participants well in advance.

Table 1

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The agenda items reflected the development trends/issues of the Asian and Pacific region.	79
The agenda items reflected the needs and priorities of my country/territory.	77

IV. Effectiveness of the session

Overall, as can be seen from Table 2, respondents found the session to be effective in highlighting regional development trends and issues (77), identifying priority areas and emerging issues in the region (77), promoting dialogue on regional and subregional approaches (77), and promoting a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges at the regional and subregional levels (75). Furthermore, the session documents were found to be of good quality, concise, and stating the issues clearly (77).

Two suggestions were made to improve the Committee session's effectiveness in achieving its mandate: Firstly, to achieve member participation at higher levels; and secondly, to allow more time for discussion (although the results in the next section, V, indicate that the latter comment may have been representative of few participants only).

¹ The scores presented in this report are indices calculated according to the below formula, (actual value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses) / (maximum value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses). This allows transforming a raw variable, e. g. x , into a unit-free index between 0 and 1, and for the different indices to be added together. $\text{Min}(x)$ and $\text{max}(x)$ are the lowest and highest values the variable x can attain, respectively.

$$x\text{-index} = \frac{x - \text{min}(x)}{\text{max}(x) - \text{min}(x)}$$

Table 2

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The Committee session effectively highlighted regional development trends and issues.	77
The Committee session effectively identified priority areas and emerging issues in the region.	77
The Committee session successfully promoted dialogue on regional and subregional approaches.	77
The Committee session effectively promoted a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges at the regional and subregional levels.	75
The session documents were of high quality, concise, and state the issues clearly.	77

V. Efficiency of the organizational aspects of the session

The efficiency of the organizational aspects of the Committee session was rated very positively. In particular, respondents felt that the secretariat's servicing of the session was highly efficient (89), and that the time available for discussion during the meetings was adequate (88). Communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the session (81) were also seen as effective.

The organization of work prior and in between Committee sessions was also rated positively, but slightly less so (75).

It was suggested that the servicing of the session could have been improved by providing more detailed information on the agenda as well as supporting materials well in advance.

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The time available for discussion during the meetings was adequate.	88
The servicing by the secretariat was efficient and effective.	89
The communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the session were effective.	81
The organization of work prior and in between Committee sessions enabled the session to proceed efficiently.	75

VI. Most and least successful features

a. Most successful features

According to respondents, the highlight of this session of the Committee were the civil society organization dialogues.

b. Least successful features

Here, respondents mentioned the reduced number of attending member countries, the relatively low level of participation, and that not all matters were resolved during the discussion.

VII. Conclusion

Overall, in conclusion, responding delegates felt that the 3rd session of the Committee on Environment and Development was a success. Due to the relatively low questionnaire response rate, the findings need to be interpreted with caution, and cannot be generalized to the entire population of delegates attending this meeting.

To summarize the main trends highlighted above, the Committee session was generally seen as relevant to the needs of the region, and effective in highlighting regional trends and issues, and promoting dialogue and collaboration. The efficiency of the session received highly positive feedback, in particular the servicing of the session by the secretariat. Greater and higher-level participation from members would have been seen as beneficial.

Annex I
Comments from the
Environment and Development Division

General comments

The 3rd session of the Committee on Environment and Development, and its attendant side events and exhibition activities, were overall positively evaluated by participants.

Attendance

It is felt that for the 3rd session of the Committee on Environment and Development, attendance at the meeting was impacted by the security situation in Bangkok as well as limited financial assistance for participants. Attendance is often facilitated by holding the Committee meeting back-to-back with other meetings or events for which funding is available.

Lessons learnt

With regards to “II. Attendance” in the summary assessment, it is considered that gaining a high attendance rate from the capital poses a specific challenge for this Committee, taking into account the broad range of issues covered, i.e. energy, water, urbanization, environment and development. In none of our member countries, these subjects, together with their cross-sectoral coordination, fall under the responsibility of a single ministry. For future Committee sessions, the timing will attempt to facilitate additional participation by member States by organizing the meeting back-to-back with related events. In addition, the successful delivery of side events and a Pavilion of Partnerships for Capacity Building can be leveraged to encourage additional participation.

Conclusions

Further information on the CED3 can be found at

<http://www.unescap.org/events/third-session-committee-environment-and-development>