

Summary Assessment

Third session of the Committee on Trade and Investment Bangkok 20-22 November 2013

I. Introduction

The 3rd session of the Committee on Trade and Investment was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 20-22 November 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 41. The overall response rate was 54% (N=41/76). 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 50% (N=31/62) of ESCAP members and associate members, with a total number of 76 participants. The Committee session was also attended by 58 participants from other entities.

More than half of delegations were headed by officials from the respective Capital (77%, N=24/31) – two of which at ministerial level (8%) – whereas the remaining 23% (N=7/31) were represented through their embassies in Bangkok.

The Committee has seen an increase in attendance rates. In 2009, 37% of the members and associate members attended the Committee, a number which increased to 42% in 2011, and now to 50% in 2013.

III. Relevance of the session

Respondents overwhelmingly 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 (88), and also reflected the needs and priorities of their respective countries (82).

There were several suggestions on how to improve the relevance of the Committee session to the needs and priorities of the Asian and Pacific region, among which the following:

- to include a focus on Pacific issues; and
- to encourage participation of a higher number of member States.

Suggestions for possible future topics included:

- Creation of a favorable investment climate, improving the legislation of the participating countries
- Capacity building in the area of trade and development as well as investment chapter in the AFTA and RCEP

Table 1

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The agenda items reflected the development trends/issues of the Asian and Pacific region.	88
The agenda items reflected the needs and priorities of my country/territory.	82

IV. Effectiveness of the session

Overall, as can be seen from Table 2, respondents found the session to be highly effective in highlighting regional development trends and issues (88). Very positive ratings were obtained for the session's effectiveness in identifying priority areas and emerging issues in the region (83), promoting dialogue on regional and subregional approaches (79), and promoting a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges at the regional and subregional levels (79). Furthermore, the session documents were found to be of very high quality, concise, and stating the issues clearly (89).

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.

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

Some suggestions were made to improve the Committee session’s effectiveness in achieving its mandate: firstly, to encourage the practice that the same delegates attend successive Committee sessions where possible, to ensure continuity; to circulate copies of past and future discussions and agendas to delegates well in advance; to have breakout sessions for particular topic discussions; secondly, to allocate more time for discussion; thirdly, to more proactively involve all delegations to share their opinion and ideas; and finally, to ensure that relevant documents are circulated well before the session, on time.

Table 2

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The Committee session effectively highlighted regional development trends and issues.	88
The Committee session effectively identified priority areas and emerging issues in the region.	83
The Committee session successfully promoted dialogue on regional and subregional approaches.	79
The Committee session effectively promoted a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges at the regional and subregional levels.	79
The session documents were of high quality, concise, and state the issues clearly.	89

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 secretariat’s servicing was highly efficient and effective (91). Respondents also found the communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the session (83) to have been effective, and indicated that the organization of work prior and in between Committee sessions also contributed to the efficiency of the session (84). The adequacy of the time available for discussion during the meetings was also rated very positively, but slightly less so (80).

To improve the efficiency of the organizational and servicing of the session, it was suggested that more time should be allocated for discussion. The concern that relevant documents should be circulated well before the session, on time, was repeated here.

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The time available for discussion during the meetings was adequate.	80
The servicing by the secretariat was efficient and effective.	91
The communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the session were effective.	83
The organization of work prior and in between Committee sessions enabled the session to proceed efficiently.	84

VI. Most and least successful features

a. Most successful features

According to respondents, the following were among the highlights of this session of the Committee: the implementation of resolution 68/3; the panel discussion; the theme of the session; the review of recent trends and developments; the successful promotion of inclusive trade and investment; the Asia Pacific trade and investment report 2013; the paperless trade agreement, transfer of technology; the extent of information and knowledge sharing; and the active participation of representatives.

b. Least successful features

No specific comments were made here.

VII. Conclusion

Overall, in conclusion, responding delegates felt that the 3rd session of the Committee on Trade and Investment was a success.

To summarize the main trends highlighted above, the Committee session was seen as highly 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 particularly positive feedback, especially the servicing of the session by the secretariat. Respondents perceived several aspects of the session to have been highlights, among which: the implementation of resolution 68/3; the panel discussion; the Asia Pacific trade and investment report 2013; and the paperless trade agreement transfer technology. Particularly well appreciated were, also, the extent of information and knowledge sharing that took place; and the active participation of representatives.