

## Summary Assessment

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### **Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific**

Bangkok

17-20 December 2013

#### **I. Introduction**

The Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 17-20 December 2013.

A questionnaire assessing the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Conference was distributed to delegates of ESCAP members and associate members. The total number of submitted individual questionnaires was 22. The overall response rate is therefore 16% (N=22/136). The present assessment was prepared on the basis of these questionnaire responses.

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 intergovernmental meetings.

#### **II. Attendance**

The Conference was attended by 58% (N=36/62) of ESCAP members and associate members, with a total number of 136 participants. The Conference was also attended by 17 participants from other entities.

More than half of delegations were headed by officials from the respective Capital (53%, N=19/36) – eight of which (42%) at ministerial level – whereas the remaining 47% (N=17/36) were represented through their embassies in Bangkok and other countries.

### III. Relevance of the session

Respondents overwhelmingly felt that the Conference was relevant to the needs of the region. As presented with the aggregated ratings<sup>1</sup> in Table 1, there was widespread agreement that the agenda items reflected the development trends and issues of the Asian and Pacific region (90), and that they also reflected the needs and priorities of their respective countries (85).

Suggestions on improving the relevance of the Conference included the idea to have separate meetings for LDCs, LLDCs and Small Island Developing countries, to support and complement the general discussions.

**Table 1**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The agenda items reflected the development trends/issues of the Asian and Pacific region.	90
The agenda items reflected the needs and priorities of my country/territory.	85

### IV. Effectiveness of the session

Overall, as can be seen from Table 2, respondents found the Conference to be very effective in facilitating a regional discussion on how to enhance regional economic cooperation and integration issues in Asia and the Pacific (89), identifying means to enhance regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific (83), promoting dialogue on regional economic cooperation and integration issues (84), and promoting a collaborative approach to discuss ways to enhance regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific (88). Furthermore, the session documents were found to be of high quality, concise, and stating the issues clearly (85).

Some suggestions were made, to improve the Conference's effectiveness in achieving its mandate: firstly, to allocate more speaking time to each delegation; secondly, to categorize recommendations under headings relating to the specific issues of groups of countries (e. g. developing member States, least developed countries, small island developing countries); thirdly, to ensure that relevant documents are circulated well

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

before the session, on time, and finally, that the Chair move the discussions forward more effectively.

**Table 2**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The Conference effectively facilitated a regional discussion on how to enhance regional economic cooperation and integration issues in Asia and the Pacific.	89
The Conference effectively identified means to enhance regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific.	83
The Conference successfully promoted dialogue on regional economic cooperation and integration issues.	84
The Conference effectively promoted a collaborative approach to discuss ways to enhance regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific.	88
The session documents were of high quality, concise, and state the issues clearly.	85

#### V. Efficiency of the organizational aspects of the session

The efficiency of the organizational aspects of the Conference was rated very positively. In particular, respondents felt that the communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the session were efficient (85), and that the secretariat's servicing of the Conference was efficient and effective (85).

The adequacy of the time available for discussion during the meetings, and the organization of two preparatory consultation meetings in August and November to discuss the elements of the draft Ministerial Declaration were also rated very positively (both 83).

There were two suggestions on how the organizational and servicing of the session could have been improved: Firstly, by more clearly identifying the main agenda and issues of discussion, and secondly, to ensure that relevant documents are circulated well before the session, on time.

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The time available for discussion during the meetings was adequate.	83
The servicing by the secretariat was efficient and effective.	85

The communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the session were effective.	85
The organization of two preparatory consultation meetings in August and November to discuss the elements of the draft Ministerial Declaration enabled the session to proceed efficiently.	83

### **Most and least successful features**

#### **a. Most successful features**

According to respondents, the highlights of the Conference were: the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration on regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific; the active participation and commitment of the delegates; the leadership of the Chair; and the guest lectures.

#### **b. Least successful features**

The main features mentioned here were: that last minutes additions were made; and time management. It was also suggested that a press conference could have been held for the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration on regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Overall, in conclusion, responding delegates felt that The Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific 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 Conference was overwhelmingly 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. Highlights noted by delegates were the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration on regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific, and the guest lectures. The delegates also appreciated the active participation and commitment of the delegates; the leadership of the Chair.