



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Seventy-first session**

Bangkok, 25-29 May 2015

Seventy-first session of the Commission**Agenda item 1****Opening of the session****Senior officials segment**

1. The senior officials segment was opened by the Executive Secretary on 25 May 2015. The Executive Secretary delivered a welcoming statement.

Ministerial segment

2. The Acting Chair of the seventieth session, Mr. Ly Tuch (Cambodia), presided over the opening session of the ministerial segment of the seventy-first session on 28 May 2015. The Executive Secretary read out the message of the Secretary-General and delivered her welcoming and policy address. General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.), Prime Minister of Thailand, delivered the inaugural address on behalf of the Government of Thailand.

3. Keynote addresses were made by Mr. Anote Tong, President of Kiribati; Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of Nauru; Mr. Enele Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu; and Mr. Henry Puna, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands.

Agenda item 2**Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries**

4. In addition to the common documents that were being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the report on ESCAP support for implementation of the Samoa Pathway for the sustainable development of small island developing States (E/ESCAP/71/1/Rev.1), the report on ESCAP support for implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries (E/ESCAP/71/2), the outcome of the High-level Policy Dialogue on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (E/ESCAP/71/3) and the summary of the Asia-Pacific countries with special needs development report (E/ESCAP/71/39).

5. The Commission noted the key recommendations of the Preparatory Meeting of the Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries, held in Bangkok on 26 May 2015, as reported by the Chair of the Preparatory Meeting and contained in document E/ESCAP/71/CRP.1.

Summary of messages from the high-level exchange between Pacific leaders and the Executive Secretary on the Samoa Pathway

6. The high-level exchange focused on the Samoa Pathway, the outcome document of the third International Conference on Small Island States (SIDS) held in Apia from 1 to 4 September 2014, which called for urgent action to support and accelerate development for the people of the Pacific. ESCAP had undertaken activities to improve support the Pacific in the following key areas: climate change and disasters; connectivity; social inclusion and the Pacific voice; better data and statistics; and trade. The Executive Secretary served as moderator of the panel and delivered some introductory remarks. The panel members were:

Mr. Anote Tong (Kiribati);
Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa (Nauru);
Mr. Christopher Jorebon Loeak (Marshall Islands);
Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama (Fiji);
Mr. Enele Sopoaga (Tuvalu);
Mr. Henry Puna (Cook Islands).

7. In her introductory remarks, the Executive Secretary noted that ESCAP had undertaken to improve support and delivery to the Pacific in five key areas: climate change and disasters; connectivity; social inclusion and the Pacific voice; better data and statistics; and trade.

8. Small island developing States were most at-risk to external shocks – particularly natural disasters – and ESCAP had mobilized new high-resolution satellite-derived imagery and damage maps, especially to support disaster response and relief in Vanuatu and Tuvalu. ESCAP was also working with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research Operational Satellite Applications Programme and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to streamline future use of space technologies for disaster management, and would conduct specialized training in Pacific countries to strengthen multi-hazard risk assessment and early warning systems.

9. In support of the Samoa Pathway, with the assistance of potential donors, ESCAP was working on a new project to strengthen climate risk knowledge, build meteorological and hydrological capacities, and establish national multi-stakeholder forums in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. That was in addition to existing work with the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission to assist Pacific countries in operating national geo-portals for disaster risk management; efforts with the Government of Fiji to create a new South-South cooperation forum on climate resilient agriculture; and the development of tools and guidelines to help integrate disaster risk reduction into development and financial planning.

10. The Executive Secretary pointed out that Pacific connectivity – especially in inter-island shipping – was another key challenge, best addressed through better subregional cooperation and integration. ESCAP had, therefore, initiated a pilot project to enhance maritime transport connectivity among the Pacific small island developing States, and was negotiating funding support for a new project on maritime safety.

11. The voice of the Pacific had been more strongly heard at the intergovernmental level over the past year in addressing social inclusion – as ESCAP had been supporting this work. A record 15 Pacific countries participated in the Asia and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and

Women's Empowerment: Beijing +20 Review – and under the strong leadership of the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, the outcome was considered to be the most progressive of any region in the Beijing+20 review process. Pacific leadership also ensured a strong and concrete outcome to the ESCAP-organized Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS, with the President of Fiji serving as the Chair.

12. The Executive Secretary recalled that in Samoa, she had made the point that a quick scan of the ESCAP databases showed that of the 169 proposed targets for the new sustainable development goals, indicators could only be produced for about 36 in the Pacific – about 21 per cent. ESCAP had, therefore, been working with the Pacific member States to address some of those data and statistical gaps, which also aligned very closely with the Samoa Pathway.

13. One of the projects launched after the small island developing States Conference was aimed at supporting the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Palau, Samoa and Vanuatu in improving their ability to compile policy-relevant environmental indicators. Part of that work had entailed assisting with the implementation of the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA).

14. The Executive Secretary also recalled the signing in Apia of the treaty to establish the Micronesian Trade and Economic Community. ESCAP had begun work on supporting the formulation of national export strategies for the Community members to pave the way for a future road map to synergize trade strategies and diversify export commodities and markets.

15. Market access had also been a focus of ESCAP work on regional economic cooperation and integration, with experts from the Community and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat making contributions to working group meetings. Recognizing the importance of regional value chains, ESCAP had also completed studies for selected Pacific countries to examine the benefits of accession to the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement as a stepping stone to further integration with the larger regional economies.

16. During the high-level exchange Mr. Bainimarama informed the meeting that development in the Pacific had come at the cost of environmental degradation. The Green Growth Framework of Fiji, the first of its kind in the Pacific, represented a master plan to build a more sustainable economic model and served as the core of development with all new projects to be measured against it. The Prime Minister observed that the resources of Fiji must be held in a sacred trust for future generations. He said that the country would lead the charge in Paris for a legally binding agreement on climate change, and would continue to promote the responsible use of natural resources at land or at sea.

17. Mr. Tong asked the meeting whether the international community was ready to act collectively to turn the tide against climate change to ensure that the people of Kiribati did not become a people without a home. He informed the meeting that migration resulting from climate change presented a great challenge which could not be ignored. Some communities had already been forced to relocate in Kiribati. There was need for people to relocate with dignity rather than become climate refugees, while stressing that the issue was real even though the term did not exist in international law. Migration with dignity would provide a choice when it would no longer be tenable for his people to live in their homelands.

18. Mr. Loeak gave a clear message that the international community had a challenging agenda in 2015, but as a low lying atoll, the Paris climate change negotiations were of primary importance to his country. With an average elevation of less than two meters, climate change was a security issue to the Marshall Islands. Sustainable fisheries represented a primary pathway for the development of small island developing States. He noted that Pacific island countries were working to build the world's largest sustainable tuna industry, which was an effort that would require the commitment of distant fishing nations.

19. Mr. Waqa informed the meeting that thanks to a number of initiatives and reform measures, the Nauru economy had returned to 10 per cent growth in 2014, the highest level in a decade. The country's Nauru National Sustainable Development Strategy 2005-2025 provided a road map to follow to 2025, and had contributed to building the economic base of Nauru, including the economic returns from fisheries as a renewable form of income. The Government of Nauru was also investing in the development of the private sector and the provision of banking services which would further accelerate growth.

20. Mr. Sopoaga highlighted the unprecedented damage and destruction being caused by climate change-related natural disasters, such as the recent Tropical Cyclone Pam. As those impacts would only get worse, there was urgent need to work towards a legally binding agreement to limit temperature rise to less than 1.5 degrees at the Conference of the Parties 21 (COP21), to be held in Paris on 7 and 8 December 2015. Temperature increases of above 1.5 degrees would result in the submersion of Tuvalu and other low-lying islands. To do that, he sought cooperation and support from ESCAP and ESCAP members. He also highlighted the difficulty in accessing climate change funds, and noted that the Tuvalu Trust Fund could assist in that regard.

21. Mr. Puna informed the meeting that in order to live sustainably, society needed to work within nature's boundaries for future generations. In support of that the Cook Islands had achieved a 50 per cent conversion rate from fossil to renewable energy and were planning raise that rate to 100 per cent by 2020. The government of the Cook Island had also set aside 2.4 million square kilometres as a marine protected area. The Prime Minister announced that the Cook Islands was on target to achieve all of the Millennium Development Goals. Incorporating the Goals into national and sector plans had greatly helped that effort and could serve as an important lesson for achieving the sustainable development goals.

22. At the conclusion of the high-level exchange Mr. Douglas Ete, Deputy Prime Minister (Solomon Islands), welcomed role ESCAP was playing in the development agenda beyond 2015, adding that he looked forward to further assistance from the secretariat in the implementation of the Samoa Pathway. The delegation of Bangladesh lent its support to Pacific small island developing States, noting that the country shared many common interests and challenges with small island developing States, including climate vulnerability, food security challenges and a commitment to the sustainable use of marine resources. The delegation of Samoa highlighted the resolution on the implementation of the Samoa Pathway, which had been proposed by the Governments of Fiji and Samoa, and urged the Commission to support the resolution.

23. The Commission took note of the summary of the Asia-Pacific countries in the special needs development report.

24. The Commission adopted resolutions 71/2 on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 in Asia and the Pacific, 71/3 on the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, and 71/4 on implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

Agenda item 3

Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the regional institutions

25. The Commission had before it a summary of progress in the implementation of Commission resolutions (E/ESCAP/71/4/Rev.1) and the interim programme performance report for the biennium 2014-2015 (E/ESCAP/71/5).

Sub-item (a)

Macroeconomic policy, poverty reduction and inclusive development

26. In addition to the common documents that were being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the report on financing for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/71/6), report of the Governing Council of the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture on its eleventh session (E/ESCAP/71/7); and the Chair's summary of the Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development (E/ESCAP/71/INF/8).

27. Statements were made by representatives of the following countries: Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; India; Indonesia; Malaysia; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; and Russian Federation.

28. The Commission expressed appreciation to ESCAP for supporting countries to improve their capacity to implement sustainable macroeconomic policies and for its analytical work on inclusive growth contained in the 2015 edition of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*.

29. The Commission noted that despite the overall success of Asia and the Pacific in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, hundreds of millions of its inhabitants still lived in abject poverty without access to basic services and opportunities. The Commission also noted that economic growth did not necessarily translate into poverty reduction and job creation and consequently highlighted the need for growth to be inclusive, benefiting those living in poverty and deprivation.

30. The Commission expressed the view that eradicating poverty and reducing social disparities should be at the centre of the development agenda beyond 2015. For that purpose, the Commission expressed the need to balance the economic, social and environmental pillars of development, address climate change, secure health and education for all, and enhance creativity and human capacities.

31. The Commission highlighted the importance of infrastructure development, particularly in energy and transport, to support economic growth, improve competitiveness and create jobs. In that regard, it was noted that a favourable environment for foreign investment and intergovernmental cooperation agreements could boost private sector confidence to invest in infrastructure.

32. The Commission shared the view that securing financing resources for sustainable development was an indispensable requirement for the successful implementation of the development agenda beyond 2015. In that respect, the Commission noted with appreciation the Asia-Pacific High-Level Consultation on Financing for Development, which was organized by ESCAP and the Ministry of Finance of Indonesia in Jakarta on 29 and 30 April 2015.

33. The Commission highlighted the importance of expanding and strengthening the tax bases of developing countries of the region, one of the recommendations discussed in the High-level Consultation, and recommended furthering cooperation among ESCAP members in that area.

34. The Commission noted that while measures to boost domestic resource mobilization, leverage private investment and attract foreign direct investment (FDI) were important, those measures should not compensate for declines in official development assistance (ODA). ODA continued to be the most important source of development finance for those countries and would play a critical role in the implementation of the development agenda beyond 2015 in those countries. For that purpose, the Commission shared the view that ODA should be more strategically deployed, prioritizing countries that need it the most to contribute to the capacity-building and institution development required for effective resource mobilization.

35. The Commission highlighted the importance of regional cooperation to support countries in the implementation of sustainable development. In that regard, the Commission welcomed the upcoming second Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific.

36. The Commission emphasized the importance of the agricultural and rural sectors to foster inclusive growth and eventually eradicate poverty. For that purpose, policies should be devised to increase agricultural productivity and competitiveness and ensure food security, while using natural resources in a sustainable manner.

37. The Commission observed that as the current environmental challenges affects food production, it was important to prioritize investments in agricultural technology and improvements in agricultural policies. In that respect, the Commission commended the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture for its knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and other activities in the areas of poverty, food security, sustainability and climate change.

38. Members of the Commission who are also members of the Governing Council of the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture reaffirmed their commitment to continue and, if possible, increase yearly voluntary contributions to the Centre and to continue working with the Centre in knowledge-sharing and other activities beneficial to the region.

39. The Commission took note of the report on financing for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

40. The Commission endorsed the report of the Governing Council of the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture on its eleventh session. It adopted resolution 71/5 on implementing the outcome of the Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development.

Sub-item (b)
Trade and investment

41. In addition to the common documents that were being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the document entitled “Global value chains, regional integration and sustainable development: linkages and policy implications” (E/ESCAP/71/8 and Corr.1), the report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology on its tenth session (E/ESCAP/71/9), the report of the Governing Council of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization on its tenth session (E/ESCAP/71/10) and the report of the First Meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation (E/ESCAP/71/41).

42. Statements were made by representatives of the following countries: Bangladesh; China; India; Indonesia; Malaysia; Republic of Korea and Russian Federation.

43. The Commission noted the importance of trade and investment for development and the need for a fair, transparent and predictable multilateral trading system. In that context, one delegation called for strengthening the multilateral trading rules under the World Trade Organization in order to combat unfair trade and trade protectionism, including the use of trade sanctions, and to promote fair trade, in particular in agriculture.

44. The Commission noted the efforts made by various countries to strengthen regional cooperation and integration within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, the ASEAN Economic Community, the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and the South Asian Free Trade Area, among others.

45. The Commission generally supported the secretariat’s recommendations as contained in document E/ESCAP/71/8 on global value chains (GVCs), subject to the availability of financial resources and expertise of the secretariat.

46. The Commission, while recognizing the spread of GVCs, noted that their potential had not yet been fully harnessed and that the benefits of GVCs should be equitable and balanced, keeping in mind the differences in economic structures and development levels across the Asia-Pacific region.

47. In that context, the Commission requested the secretariat to build on existing areas of work and statistical databases on GVCs and promote the effective participation of low income countries and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in GVCs through capacity-building.

48. One delegation requested the secretariat to further analyse GVCs at the sectoral level and design a cooperation strategy for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to effectively participate in them. Such a strategy could provide mechanisms for the following: exchange of information on regulatory mechanisms; organization of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprise business fairs; networking of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprise associations; development of capacity-building programmes; and establishment of a micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises portal. Another delegation noted the importance of enhancing the net positive impact of GVCs on all three dimensions of sustainable development. In particular, that delegation called for extending enhanced support to micro-, small- and

medium-sized enterprises to help them to reduce their carbon footprint and produce and utilize climate smart products and technologies.

49. The Commission agreed that trade facilitation and the reduction of trade costs were instrumental in promoting trade and investment and, in that regard, strongly supported efforts of an intergovernmental steering group to negotiate and conclude a regional agreement on paperless trade. In that context, one delegation observed that trade facilitation initiatives should take into account capacity constraints of some countries to implement the trade facilitation recommendations made by the secretariat.

50. The Commission was informed that China was actively supporting trade facilitation projects and had provided \$200,000 to the secretariat for a project on capacity-building in trade facilitation for poverty reduction. It was also informed that China would also host the seventh Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2015, to be held in Wuhan on 20 and 21 October.

51. The Commission was informed of efforts of the Russian Federation to improve the business and investment climate in Siberia and its far eastern region and to attract investment projects in those areas.

52. One delegation called for the implementation of the decision taken by the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference, which was held in Bali, Indonesia, from 3 to 7 December 2013, on duty-free and quota-free market access for products originating from least developed countries.

53. The Commission requested the secretariat to provide further clarification on the concept of a regional sustainability index, how to compute it and what benefits countries might get from it and to engage and consult countries on the development of this index.

54. The Commission expressed its support for the work of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology and the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization.

55. The Commission took note of the report entitled “Global value chains, regional integration and sustainable development: linkages and policy implications” and the report on the First Meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation.

56. The Commission endorsed the reports of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology on its tenth session and the Governing Council of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization on its tenth session.

Sub-item (c)
Transport

57. In addition to the common documents that were being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the report on an integrated intermodal transport and logistics systems under the sustainable development agenda (E/ESCAP/71/11) and the report of the Committee on Transport on its fourth session (E/ESCAP/71/12).

58. Statements were made by the representatives of the following countries: Bangladesh; China; India; Indonesia; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

59. The Commission expressed satisfaction with the work of the secretariat and pledged continued support to the secretariat in its efforts to promote regional cooperation in support of transport infrastructure development through the implementation of phase II (2012-2016) of the Regional Action Programme on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2012-2016).

60. The Commission stressed the importance of developing connectivity, including maritime connectivity, to support sustainable and inclusive development through the establishment of intraregional and interregional intermodal transport corridors, which could evolve into economic corridors. In that respect, the Commission acknowledged the Road and Belt Initiative of the Government of China and the Eurasia Initiative of the Government of the Republic of Korea as two frameworks for intraregional and interregional cooperation that contribute towards achieving that objective. It also welcomed the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Korea to the ASEM Symposium on Eurasia Transport and Logistics Network, to be held in Seoul from 9 to 11 September 2015.

61. The Commission was also apprised of other initiatives taken by member States to improve transport connectivity with neighbouring countries through the provision of new infrastructure or the operation of new services. In India, projects were being implemented to upgrade national highways for better connectivity between South-East Asia and North-East India. The country was also supporting the construction of a trilateral highway connecting India, Myanmar and Thailand, and the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project in Myanmar. The Government of India was also enhancing rail connectivity with Bangladesh and Pakistan, and working on extending its rail network to Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal, while also assisting Sri Lanka in the reconstruction of rail infrastructure in the northern part of that country. It had also introduced cross-border bus services to Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, and was in discussions with Myanmar regarding the future operation of similar services. The Lao People's Democratic Republic had been exerting efforts to construct the "friendship bridges" across the Mekong River for better road connectivity with Myanmar and Thailand, and to upgrade its road linkages to Cambodia, China and Viet Nam. Malaysia signed an agreement with Singapore to develop a high-speed rail line between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. When completed, the 400-km line would reduce travel time between the two cities to 90 minutes. The Commission also noted the implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project to strengthen transport connectivity with China and Central Asia and then later on with Europe.

62. The Commission acknowledged the efforts being made across the region to align the development of an efficient transport sector with environmental goals. Related measures included the adoption and implementation of multimodal policies, such as the National Integrated Multimodal Transport Policy 2013 of Bangladesh, the Study for the Development of a Master Plan for Sustainable Transport System and the Mitigation of Climate Change Impacts of Thailand, endorsed in 2013 and the enactment by Indonesia of regulations on intermodal and multimodal transport operations within the framework of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, which was adopted in 2010. Measures were also being implemented to enhance the role of railway transport. The Government of Indonesia was constructing dedicated rail links connecting seaport, dry ports and airports to improve the distribution of freight and relieve congestion around major cities. Meanwhile, the Government of Malaysia was implementing a number of urban rail projects in and around Kuala Lumpur to

improve connectivity, reduce congestion and enhance the quality of life in the Klang valley.

63. The Commission noted the continued commitment of member States in further developing the Asian Highway network. In India, of the 11,690 km of Asian Highway routes which cross the country, 6,901 km were already a four-lane configuration, while work was ongoing to widen another 2,254 km of routes to four-lane standards. Upgrading of road linkages among Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam was also taking place on Asian Highway 11 and Asian Highway 12.

64. The Commission also noted the efforts made by member States to implement the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports through the continued development of dry ports to improve supply chain management and logistics and support a modal shift from road to rail. In Thailand, the development of the Chiang Khong Intermodal Facilities listed under annex I to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports was being actively pursued to enhance freight transport among Thailand, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Southern China. Furthermore, the Commission noted with appreciation that the Cabinet of India had already consented to become a Party to the Agreement, while the related legislative process was in its final stages in the Russian Federation. In that connection, the Commission called upon member States to become a Party to the Agreement to secure its early entry into force.

65. The Commission recognized that the delivery of efficient connectivity required the enactment of institutional measures to facilitate the cross-border movements of people, goods and transport means. In that respect, it noted with satisfaction the role of the secretariat in developing common transport facilitation frameworks to strengthen transport connectivity and foster regional economic integration and development. The Commission welcomed the development of the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport, under a project financed by the Government of Russian Federation, to support greater use of railways across the region and reaffirmed its support to the Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation as a means to facilitate cross-border and transit transport in the region. With a view to achieving practical results, the Commission highlighted the potential of the draft agreement between China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation in providing seamless connectivity for the transportation of goods along Asian Highway 4.

66. The Commission acknowledged the various initiatives undertaken by member States to facilitate cross border and transit traffic through: (a) implementation of existing subregional agreements; (b) formulation of new bilateral, multilateral, and subregional agreements; (c) enhanced cooperation within the frameworks of subregional organizations; and (d) establishment of single stop/single window inspection.

67. The Commission recognized the role of the secretariat in building capacity among member States and noted the request of the Government of Afghanistan for assistance in identifying potential transport corridors that could be developed in order to connect Central Asia and South Asia, and transform Afghanistan from being a landlocked country to one that was land-linked country.

68. The Commission also recognized the growing need for funding of transport infrastructure development and noted that Bangladesh had approved the Road Maintenance Fund Board Act in 2013 to create a dedicated fund for

sustainable maintenance of the country's road network. The Commission indicated the potential of public-private partnerships as a way to channel more resources towards infrastructure development and noted that the establishment of new financing initiatives, such as the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank and Silk Road Fund, could also contribute to strengthened regional connectivity. It also acknowledged the continued role played by the existing bilateral and multilateral financial institutions, such as the Asian Development Bank.

69. The Commission further recognized that connectivity was a multi-stakeholder issue that required enhanced regional cooperation and the development of synergies with the assistance programmes undertaken by subregional groupings, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for regional Cooperation, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, the Greater Mekong Subregion, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation.

70. The Commission took note of the report on integrated intermodal transport and logistics systems under the sustainable development agenda.

71. The Commission endorsed the report of the Committee on Transport at its fourth session.

72. The Commission adopted resolutions 71/6 on maritime transport connectivity for sustainable development, 71/7 on adoption of the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport and 71/8 on strengthening intraregional and interregional connectivity in Asia and the Pacific.

Sub-item (d)
Environment and development

73. In addition to the common documents that were being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the report entitled "Towards a sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban future for Asia and the Pacific" (E/ESCAP/71/13), the report of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development on its second session (E/ESCAP/71/14), the report on the intergovernmental consultative process on the future architecture of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (E/ESCAP/71/15), the report of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia (E/ESCAP/71/INF/1), and the Report of the Mekong River Commission (E/ESCAP/71/INF/2).

74. Statements were made by representatives of the following countries: Azerbaijan; Indonesia; Philippines; Russian Federation; and Tonga.

75. The Commission drew attention to the rapid pace of urbanization in the Asia-Pacific region, which had brought about both challenges and opportunities. It noted that rapid urbanization had, and would, result in an unprecedented demographic, economic and cultural shift that would shape the region's future. Such transformation should be harnessed, but at present, many cities in the region had exhibited inefficient patterns of resource use, high levels of income and other forms of inequality, environmental degradation and ineffective governance systems, which required urgent attention. The Commission recognized that sustainable urban development required transformative policies at multiple levels of governance, as well as a

multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach. It observed that policies were required to ensure that the benefits of urban growth were distributed in an equitable manner and to manage the spatial distribution of populations.

76. The Commission recognized the relevance of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) as one of the first major global conferences to be held after the adoption of the development agenda beyond 2015 and an opportunity to develop a shared perspective on human settlements and sustainable urban development, including on challenges and opportunities that urbanization offers for the implementation of the sustainable development goals.

77. The Commission was informed that the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for Habitat III for Asia-Pacific would be hosted by Indonesia and was scheduled to take place in Jakarta on 22 and 23 October 2015, back-to-back with the sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, scheduled to take place from 19 to 21 October 2015. The Commission was also informed that the third and final meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III would also be hosted by Indonesia and was scheduled to take place in July 2016. The representative of Indonesia invited all members and associate members, as well as relevant stakeholders, to participate actively at the regional and global preparatory meetings for Habitat III.

78. In supporting the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, the Commission called on member States to ensure that environmental protection was embedded into economic, social and political decision-making, and highlighted the need to put ecosystems at the centre of development planning and to manage natural resources in fair and accountable ways in order to bring economic and social benefits and ensure water and energy security for all. The Commission further called on member States to support with knowledge, lessons learned, assessments and tools, the embedding of the real value of ecosystem services, well-being and human capital into national accounting systems, and national and local sustainable development strategies.

79. The Commission expressed appreciation to the secretariat for the work undertaken to implement the outcomes of the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum and called for enlarging the platform for regional dialogue on energy security. One delegation expressed support for the efforts undertaken in reforming the conference structure and hoped that cooperation would continue with regards to the proposed Committee on Energy.

80. In reflecting on the need to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development, one delegation emphasized the importance of the environmental dimension and called on the Commission to pay more attention to transboundary pollution.

81. The Commission generally welcomed the recommendations contained in the report entitled “Towards a sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban future for Asia and the Pacific”.

82. The Commission endorsed the report of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development on its second session, and took note of the report on the intergovernmental consultative process on the future architecture of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

83. The Commission also took note of the reports of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia, and the

Mekong River Commission. The Commission adopted resolution 71/9 on strengthening cooperation on sustainable management of water resources in Asia and the Pacific. The delegation of Uzbekistan disassociated itself from the resolution due to the fact that not all of its proposals and comments on the resolution were included in the final version.

Sub-item (e)

Information and communications technology

84. In addition to the common documents that were being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the report entitled “Asia-Pacific information superhighway: for inclusive and seamless connectivity” (E/ESCAP/71/16), the report of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology on its fourth session (E/ESCAP/71/18) and the report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development on its ninth session (E/ESCAP/71/19).

85. Statements were made by representatives of the following countries: Bangladesh; Bhutan; China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Thailand; Tonga; and Vanuatu.

86. The Commission recognized the critical role of information and communications technology in enabling sustainable and inclusive regional development and expressed its support for the efforts of the secretariat to promote information and communications technology (ICT) for development. In that context, it expressed its support for the collaboration between the secretariat and other development partners in ICT, such as the International Telecommunication Union, and underscored the role of ESCAP as a regional platform for intergovernmental cooperation.

87. The Commission endorsed the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative for regional connectivity. The Government of the Republic of Korea announced it would provide the necessary support for the implementation of that initiative. The Commission called on members to support the open-ended working group, as established by the fourth session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, and emphasized the importance of involving a broad range of stakeholders, including international organizations. Strong support and appreciation was also expressed for the continuation of the secretariat’s work in developing the concept of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway, including its norms and principles, as well as a master plan. The Commission noted the importance of harnessing cross-sectoral synergies, including the consideration of amending the agreements of the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway to include provisions for the co-deployment of fibre optic communications network infrastructure along roads and railway networks.

88. The Commission noted the importance of ICT for promoting cross-sectoral growth and the development of an inclusive information society. The Commission pointed out that gaps in access to communications technology presented development obstacles for marginalized communities and should be addressed. In that regard, the importance of a diverse and resilient communications infrastructure, including enhanced fibre optic backbone connectivity, was emphasized. The Commission noted the actions of several member States in addressing the digital divide through access centres, innovative funding mechanisms and means of implementation, e-government services, and outreach programmes to bring the benefits of these technologies

to all. The Commission also noted the key role ICT could play in early warning systems and preparedness for disasters.

89. The Commission underscored the importance of ICT for disaster resilience in the context of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Providing secure and resilient infrastructure had been widely acknowledged as a matter of increasing importance and relevance for the development agenda beyond 2015, particularly among disaster-prone developing countries. In that regard, it was recognized that the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative had a strong role to play in promoting sustainable and resilient infrastructure in the region through enhancement of backbone connectivity and in the inclusion of marginalized groups.

90. The Commission recognized the important role of ICT in sustainable development, and noted that capacity-building needed to be given special attention. With the changing ICT landscape in Asia and the Pacific, including increased connectivity and penetration of mobile devices, new opportunities and challenges in ICT human capacity development were emerging.

91. The Commission expressed appreciation for the broad range of capacity building programmes and services provided by the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communications Technology for Development. It noted that the Centre's "Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders" and "Turning Today's Youth into Tomorrow's Leaders" programmes were having a global impact, reaching countries in the region and beyond. It also expressed appreciation for the Centre's efforts to facilitate regional partnerships and knowledge-sharing, and to respond to the development needs and challenges of countries in the region. It welcomed the development of Centre's new flagship programme, the Women and ICT Frontier Initiative.

92. The Commission noted that e-government applications were increasingly important for governments and citizens in the region, and that capacity development in that area was essential. The Commission encouraged the use of the Centre's e-learning platform for capacity development on e-government and other topics. The Commission called for more resources and capacity-building to support ICT for development programmes and activities in the Pacific island countries.

93. The Commission took note of the report entitled "Asia-Pacific information superhighway: for inclusive and seamless connectivity".

94. The Commission endorsed the reports of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology on its fourth session, and the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre Information and Communication Technology for Development and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development on its ninth session.

95. The Commission adopted resolution 71/10 on strengthening regional information and communications technology connectivity through the Asia-Pacific information superhighway.

Sub-item (f)
Disaster risk reduction and management

96. In addition to the common documents that were being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the report entitled

“Building resilience to disasters: protecting the gains from sustainable development (E/ESCAP/71/17), the report of the Typhoon Committee (E/ESCAP/71/INF/3) and the report of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones (E/ESCAP/71/INF/4).

97. Statements were made by representatives of the following countries: Bangladesh; Bhutan; China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Russian Federation; Thailand; Tonga; and Vanuatu. Representatives of the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee and the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones also delivered statements.

98. The Commission recognized the importance of disaster risk reduction and expressed appreciation to the secretariat for its initiatives and programmes to assist member States in addressing disaster risks through policy analysis, regional advisory services, post-disaster needs assessments and capacity-building initiatives. It acknowledged the crucial role of ESCAP in identifying policy options and regional strategies for disaster risk reduction, fostering regional cooperation mechanisms and developing tools and standards in disaster statistics. The Commission encouraged the continuation of such initiatives and called for greater regional cooperation, technical assistance and capacity-building for disaster risk reduction and management.

99. The Commission expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for its ongoing efforts in supporting member States in utilizing ICT, space technology and geographic information system (GIS) applications for disaster risk reduction. In that regard, the Commission requested the secretariat to continue to play a key role in addressing disaster risk reduction through the effective use of space-derived products and GIS, and the provision of satellite images for emergency response and damage assessment to disaster-affected countries.

100. The Commission welcomed the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and emphasized its relevance for the Asia-Pacific region. The Commission highlighted important regional role of ESCAP in taking forward the priorities of the Sendai Framework and expressed its support for the secretariat’s plan to follow up on the implementation of the Framework at the regional and national levels through existing cooperation mechanisms.

101. The Commission emphasized that disaster risk reduction was critical to protecting development gains and to ensuring the success of international efforts in implementing the development agenda beyond 2015 and reaching the sustainable development goals. In that regard, the Commission requested the secretariat to integrate disaster risk reduction with sustainable development and take actions to outline linkages between the development agenda beyond 2015 and the regional strategy for implementation of the Sendai Framework. The Commission was informed of one delegation’s intention to provide future support to the secretariat’s initiatives on technical cooperation projects for disaster risk reduction in Central Asia.

102. In recognizing the vulnerability of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States to disasters and their inadequate capacity in building resilience, the Commission requested the secretariat to pay special attention to enhancing the institutional capacity of those countries through policy advice, technical assistance, regional cooperation and sharing of good practices in disaster risk reduction and the use of ICT, space technology and GIS applications for monitoring, assessment, early warning, response and relief to disasters.

103. The Commission suggested that integrating ecosystem-based adaptation approaches in development plans for building resilience and disaster risk reduction for small island developing States and coastal areas be considered, and called for effective financial mechanisms and capacity-building to support climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction activities those States. It was also suggested that ESCAP assist in the implementation of the frameworks and mechanisms that were set up in the region and at the national level in the Pacific.

104. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the contributions to multi-hazard early warning systems made through the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries in addressing gaps in early warning and strengthening regional cooperation, especially the establishment of the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia. The Commission supported expanding the coverage of the Trust Fund to the Pacific.

105. The Commission noted with appreciation that the Government of India had committed \$1 million to replenish the Trust Fund to benefit high-risk developing countries by strengthening intergovernmental mechanisms, such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, the ESCAP/WMO Panel on Tropical Cyclones, the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia and SAARC.

106. The Commission expressed its continued support to the secretariat for providing technical assistance and capacity-building in disaster risk reduction, in particular the technical cooperation projects through the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development and its training networks, such as the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, the Regional Network of Knowledge and Innovation Centres in Disaster Risk Reduction and the Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning in Asia and the Pacific. In that respect, the delegation of Bhutan requested technical support for the establishment and use of georeferenced information systems for disaster risk management and land use planning.

107. The delegation of Japan expressed appreciation to other member States for their active participation in the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, which Japan hosted from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai. Recalling the extensive loss of life and damage caused by tsunamis in the Asian-Pacific region and elsewhere, the delegation solicited support for the possible establishment of a World Tsunami Day as a way to deepen understanding of the threats of tsunami and to promote precautionary measures.

108. The delegation of India informed the Commission that the country would host the next Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in the post-2105 era, to be held in 2016. At the conference, the regional strategy for implementation of the Sendai Framework was expected to be outlined. The delegation requested United Nations organizations and partners to consider proposing that the theme of the session be based on regional cooperation for disaster early warning and space technology applications and to make concerted efforts to integrate seamlessly the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference with the work of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction and subsequently with that of the Commission.

109. The delegation of Vanuatu expressed gratitude and appreciation to other member States and the secretariat for providing critical support in the country's recovery after Tropical Cyclone Pam. The country experienced first-hand the important role of early warning systems and ICT in disseminating information and early warning systems in preparedness for the cyclone that hit Vanuatu in March 2015.

110. The delegation of Nepal expressed gratitude for the immediate support provided by other member States, organizations and the secretariat for the response and relief operations in the aftermath of the April 2015 earthquake. The Commission took note of the call by the delegation for continued assistance, technical advice and the sharing of best practices in resilient recovery for the extensive reconstruction work in Nepal.

111. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran informed the Commission that all preparations towards the operationalization of the Asian-Pacific centre for the development of disaster information management have been made with the technical assistance of the secretariat, in accordance with resolution 67/4. The delegation added that technical assistance to Bhutan on seismic microzonation and to Nepal for resilient recovery and reconstruction would be followed up after the resolution for the establishment of the centre was adopted at the present session.

112. The Commission noted with appreciation the outcomes of the first joint session in 18 years of the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee and the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones, hosted by ESCAP in February 2015. The session included the joint development of synergized standard operating procedures and call for increased cooperation between the two bodies through a mechanism for future cooperation, including joint projects and capacity-building in cooperation with ESCAP, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the regional specialized meteorological centres.

113. The Commission took note of the report entitled "Building resilience to disasters: protecting the gains from sustainable development and the reports of the Typhoon Committee and the Panel on Tropical Cyclones.

114. The Commission adopted resolution 71/12 on strengthening regional mechanisms for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Asia and the Pacific.

Sub-item (g)
Social development

115. In addition to the common documents that were being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the report on key issues and challenges in achieving the social-sector-related Millennium Development Goals (E/ESCAP/71/20); the report of the Committee on Social Development on its third session (E/ESCAP/71/21); the report of the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review (E/ESCAP/71/22); and the report of the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS (E/ESCAP/71/23).

116. Statements were made by representatives of the following countries: Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; China; India; Japan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; and Russian Federation. A representative of the International Organization for Migration also made a statement.

117. The Commission recognized the important role and contribution of ESCAP in promoting social development in the Asian and Pacific region, particularly in the context of supporting countries in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Commission also noted the steps taken in the region to implement legislative frameworks, policies and programmes to promote social development in a range of areas.

118. The Commission noted the significant progress achieved in the region towards the social-related Millennium Development Goals, in particular on reducing income poverty and achieving universal primary education. At the same time, it was also acknowledged that further progress was required towards eliminating malnutrition, achieving gender equality and reducing child and maternal mortality. In that context, the Commission noted the importance of increasing investments in social policies, ensuring gender equality and reducing inequalities as being central to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Some delegations also noted the importance of Millennium Development Goal 8 in addressing social issues by promoting partnerships, exchanging experiences and technology transfer.

119. The Commission expressed appreciation for the secretariat's work in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the region, with particular respect to the comprehensive regional 20-year review of progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the organization of the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review, held in Bangkok from 17 to 20 November 2014.

120. The Commission highlighted the timeliness of the Regional Conference, and the necessity of accelerated action through gender mainstreaming and gender-targeted initiatives to achieve the aims of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Delegations recognized that significant progress had been made towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment, however, they also recognized the persistence of serious challenges.

121. The Commission noted that gender equality and women's empowerment were cornerstones of inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. The Commission stressed the importance of addressing obstacles, such as violence against women, and emphasized the need to empower women economically and increase their political participation.

122. In highlighting the success of the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review, the Commission emphasized the critical importance of implementing the resulting Ministerial Declaration, including through the alignment of national policies and development plans with the Declaration.

123. The Commission expressed its support for the five priority areas of action identified in the Ministerial Declaration, namely strengthening institutions; increasing financing; enhancing accountability; forging stronger partnerships; and strengthening regional cooperation. In that regard, the Commission recognized the important role of the secretariat in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the region, in particular, through support to member States in the implementation of both the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

124. In further recognition of the need for accelerated action towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, several delegations stressed the importance of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment in the forthcoming development agenda beyond 2015 and mainstreaming of gender across all future development goals.

125. The Commission expressed strong support for secretariat's work on disability. The secretariat was commended for providing valuable technical assistance to member States in the implementation of the Incheon strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, including through building national capacities to collect reliable and comparable disability data for the Incheon Strategy indicators.

126. Several delegations pointed out that disability-inclusive development was key to promoting inclusive and sustainable development. Reference was made to efforts aimed at harmonizing domestic legislation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and accelerating progress in the implementation of the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. Furthermore, delegations reported on specific initiatives to address disability concerns, including the setting up of disability focal departments; establishing quotas in government employment for persons with disabilities; and enhancing the accessibility of the physical environment, public transportation, and information and communications technologies for persons with disabilities. It was noted that involving multiple stakeholders and fostering greater international cooperation were required to more effectively promote the rights of persons with disabilities at the regional level.

127. Regarding the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS, the Commission expressed its support for efforts to address legal and policy barriers to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support in the Asia-Pacific region, and highlighted the secretariat's efforts to support countries' efforts towards achieving the goal of ending HIV and AIDS in the region, in particular through ensuring access to HIV services for key populations. In that regard, several delegations expressed the view that the Regional Framework for Action on HIV and AIDS beyond 2015 was a useful tool for guiding national efforts. Some delegations also stressed the importance of ensuring the financial sustainability of responses to HIV in the region, including the need to ensure sustainable domestic financing.

128. The Commission was informed that Bangladesh would host the 12th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, to be held from 20 to 23 November 2015 in Dhaka. All ESCAP members and associate members were invited to attend the Congress, and the cooperation of relevant international agencies, including ESCAP, was sought to ensure its success.

129. Some delegations also pointed to the importance of investing in youth policies to be able to harness the youth dividend in countries that still had that opportunity. Providing decent work was considered as key to harnessing the youth dividend and reducing existing inequalities.

130. While noting the significant challenges posed by rapid population ageing, several delegations expressed their support for secretariat's work on ageing, particularly with regards to the rights of older persons and income security for older persons, and highlighted their provision of financial support for technical cooperation projects on population ageing.

131. Some delegations expressed support for the work of the secretariat on international migration, noting that it was an issue of major importance for many member States. The efforts undertaken by ESCAP to collect data on migration and promote the social protection of migrants were highlighted as being particularly useful for member States in assisting and protecting migrants.

132. Although the analysis in document E/ESCAP/71/20 was based on data from official United Nations sources, the delegation of Azerbaijan expressed its concern about a statement made in paragraph 20, noting that, according to its own national statistics, Azerbaijan had already achieved universal primary education before 2015. The delegation also drew the attention of the secretariat to large discrepancies between national statistics and official United Nations statistics, and in that context, encouraged ESCAP to make use of national statistics in future reports.

133. The International Organization for Migration highlighted the significance of international migration for the region, noting that, although well-managed migration had significant potential to benefit countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as migrants themselves, many challenges remained in ensuring that migrants were productive and protected. The need for regional and international cooperation to tackle those challenges was stressed, especially in relation to environmentally induced migration and maritime movements of vulnerable persons. The importance of reducing remittance costs was also emphasized.

134. The Commission took note of the report on key issues and challenges in achieving the social-sector-related Millennium Development Goals.

135. The Commission endorsed the reports on the Committee on Social Development on its third session, and the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS.

136. The Commission adopted resolution 71/13 on implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

137. The delegation of the United States of America said it was pleased to join the consensus on the resolution implementing the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. It commended the secretariat's commitment to the following: implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; mainstreaming gender into the work of the Commission and continuing to review progress towards achieving those goals. The delegation noted, however, that certain paragraphs in the Ministerial Declaration did not reflect the experience of women in the United States or the treaty obligations of the Government of the United States. The delegation said that although the political Declaration did not necessarily reflect its understanding of international law, it supported the aims and the spirit of the resolution and looked forward to working with the Commission to achieve its shared goals of gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Sub-item (h)
Statistics**

138. In addition to the common documents that were being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the report entitled "Statistics for the development agenda beyond 2015 in Asia and the Pacific:

leveraging the data revolution” (E/ESCAP/71/24); the report of the Committee on Statistics on its fourth session (E/ESCAP/71/25); the report of the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/71/27); the summaries of special sessions of the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/71/INF/5); the report of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its tenth session (E/ESCAP/71/INF/7); and the draft revised terms of reference for the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/71/INF/9).

139. Statements were made by representatives of the following countries: Australia; Bangladesh; India; Japan; Malaysia; Mongolia; Philippines; and Russian Federation.

140. The Commission emphasized the important role of data and statistics for follow-up and review of the development agenda beyond 2015. In that regard, the Commission stressed the critical importance of strengthening national statistical institutions in Asia and the Pacific and mobilizing the data revolution, including the improvement of members and associate members’ ability to analyse and interpret data, and taking advantage of the opportunities presented by new technologies and the emergence of big data to further support decision-making.

141. The Commission welcomed the active and growing support and involvement of member States and development partners in the work of the Committee on Statistics, including through membership of expert groups created by the Committee, sharing of skills and knowledge, hosting of training and other events, and provision of funding support.

142. The Commission congratulated the Committee on successfully deciding on a number of strategic priority issues pertaining to regional collaboration on statistics development at its fourth session, including on population and social statistics, economic statistics, environment statistics, disaster-related statistics, modernization of statistical products and services and on civil registration and vital statistics.

143. The Commission emphasized the need to further strengthen collaboration for effective implementation of the decisions of the Committee.

144. Highlighting civil registration and vital statistics as a fundamental building block for good governance, human rights and development planning data, the Commission strongly supported the “Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade” for 2015-2024, the Ministerial Declaration to “Get Every One in the picture” and the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

145. The Commission commended the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the secretariat and development partners for convening the successful Ministerial Conference Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and expressed its gratitude for the draft resolution sponsored by the Government of the Philippines, which would endorse the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference.

146. The Commission welcomed progress being made by countries in developing their civil registration and vital statistics systems, and stressed the importance of national plans and target-setting for the successful implementation of the commitments made at the Ministerial Conference.

147. The Commission highlighted the increasing importance of statistical training in building capacity to follow-up and review progress towards achieving the sustainable development goals, as well as in producing basic economic, environment and agricultural statistics. In that regard the Commission expressed its appreciation for the work of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, including the support provided to the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific, and the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics 2013-2017.

148. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the support extended by Japan as the host government of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific. It noted with appreciation that Japan had secured an increase in its cash contribution to the Institute and planned in fiscal year 2015 to provide in-kind contributions by updating audio equipment and strengthening computer security. The Commission also expressed its appreciation for contributions to the Institute received from international organizations and ESCAP member and associate members, and stressed the importance of further cash and in-kind contributions from a broader base of contributors to sustain the Institute's training programmes.

149. The Commission took note of the report entitled "Statistics for the development agenda beyond 2015 in Asia and the Pacific: leveraging the data revolution.

150. The Commission endorsed the report of the Committee on Statistics on its fourth session.

151. The Commission endorsed the terms of reference of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/71/INF/9) and decided that the composition of its membership for the term spanning 2015-2017 would be as follows:

Members:

- (1) Armenia
- (2) Australia
- (3) Bangladesh
- (4) Bhutan
- (5) Cook Islands
- (6) Fiji
- (7) India
- (8) Indonesia
- (9) Iran (Islamic Republic of)
- (10) Kazakhstan
- (11) Malaysia
- (12) Mongolia
- (13) New Zealand
- (14) Pakistan
- (15) Philippines
- (16) Republic of Korea
- (17) Thailand
- (18) Turkey
- (19) United States
- (20) Vanuatu
- (21) Vacant
- (22) Vacant

Organizations:

- (23) United Nations Children's Fund
- (24) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- (25) World Health Organization
- (26) World Bank Group
- (27) Brisbane Accord Group
- (28) Data2X
- (29) Plan International
- (30) World Vision International

152. The Commission also decided to entrust the constituted Regional Steering Group with overseeing a process to fill the two vacant membership positions as soon as possible.

153. The Commission took note of the summaries of special sessions of the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and the report of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its tenth session.

154. The Commission adopted resolution 71/14 on the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, 2015-2024.

Sub-item (i)**Subregional activities for development**

155. In addition to the common documents that were being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the subprogramme overview: issues and challenges related to inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/71/28) and the report of the Governing Council of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia on its ninth session (E/ESCAP/71/29).

156. Statements were made by representatives of the following countries: Afghanistan; Azerbaijan; China; Fiji; India; Japan; Mongolia; Nepal; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; and Solomon Islands.

157. The Commission noted the specific sustainable and inclusive development challenges and respective priorities of the different subregions of Asia and the Pacific. The Commission expressed appreciation to the secretariat for its subregional focus and reaffirmed its strong commitment to strengthening subregional cooperation in the region. Several delegations noted the need for the secretariat to increase the delivery of more relevant capacity development activities for specific development needs and challenges in the subregions and to strengthen the subregional offices.

158. In the implementation of the secretariat's subregional activities under the subprogramme, the Commission recommended that subregional offices increase their communications and advocacy efforts to member States and seek greater coordination and coherence between ESCAP activities with the activities of other international development partners and multilateral organizations in the subregions. In particular, the Commission recognized the subregional offices' strategic engagement with subregional organizations, including the SAARC Secretariat, and the governments in the subregion to bring greater relevance, focus and direct support to meet the particular needs and capacity development requirements of the people. The Commission also called for an increase in the number of activities and meetings held in subregions and outside headquarters in Bangkok.

The Pacific

159. The Commission noted that the sustainable development challenges of Pacific small island developing States included overall low and uneven economic growth, with only two Pacific island countries on track to achieve all of the Millennium Development Goals. Climate change had been acknowledged by Pacific leaders as the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of Pacific people. Natural resource management and social issues, such as gender inequality, youth unemployment and non-communicable diseases, also presented significant challenges to Pacific small island developing States. The Commission observed that in response to the Samoa Pathway, priority areas for action by the secretariat included support for integrated planning for sustainable development through the National Sustainable Development Strategy process; statistical capacity development (including the monitoring of sustainable development goals); support for obligations in social sectors; climate change mobility and disaster risk management; and Pacific regional connectivity through transport, ICT, trade and energy cooperation.

East and North-East Asia

160. The countries of the subregion emphasized their continued support for the subregional office. They expressed appreciation for the technical assistance received from ESCAP in such areas as cleaner and environmentally sound technologies, and requested further support for such areas as technology transfer. Some countries also encouraged continuation of work such as the carbon footprint network and the North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum and highlighted areas such as disaster statistics and remote sensing in which further cooperation could be sought.

North and Central Asia

161. The Commission noted that the future programme of the subregional office for North and Central Asia would be focused on transport, energy and ICT connectivity, as well as on strengthening cooperation within the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia to better address the needs of member States in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

162. In appreciating the work of the subregional office, especially on connectivity, the Commission noted a suggestion by the delegation of Azerbaijan to synergize the activities of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme of the Asian Development Bank to enhance ICT connectivity and bridge the digital divide in the subregion.

South and South-West Asia

163. The countries of the subregion reaffirmed their strong commitment to the office, in particular the Government of India with the provision of premises and an annual contribution. They also commended the secretariat for its support to the subregion in formulating its perspective on the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals, as

specified in the Nagarkot Statement,¹ in cooperation with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

164. Several delegations requested greater support and activities from the secretariat to overcome specific sustainable development challenges in the subregion, and a strengthening of the subregional office and its analytical and capacity-building work. Members requested increased support for regional cooperation and integration; formulating and implementing strategies for least developed country graduation; post-disaster support, including in needs assessment and analysis of the macroeconomic impact in the subregion of disasters such as the recent earthquake in Nepal; capacity-building for implementation of the sustainable development goals; and technical assistance for landlocked developing countries, including through regional connectivity and transport corridors.

165. One delegation expressed its appreciation for the support of the subregional office in capacity-building for assistance to the WTO accession and post-accession processes of Afghanistan, including the Fifth Technical Capacity-Building Workshop on Afghanistan's Accession to the WTO: WTO Notification Systems and Selected Trade Information Tools held in New Delhi in 2014.

166. The Commission took note of the subprogramme overview: issues and challenges related to the sustainable economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific.

167. The Commission endorsed the report of the Governing Council of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia on its ninth session.

Agenda item 4 Management issues

Sub-item (a) Draft programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017

168. The Commission had before it the draft programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 (E/ESCAP/71/30).

169. The Executive Secretary made an introductory statement on management issues.

170. The Commission expressed support for the draft programme of work, which included the use of measurable targets and welcomed the adjustments made in line with the evolving post-2015 development agenda processes.

171. The Commission endorsed the draft programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017.

Sub-item (b) Programme changes for the biennium 2014-2015

172. The Commission had before it programme changes for the biennium 2014-2015 document (E/ESCAP/71/31).

173. The Commission endorsed the proposed programme changes for the biennium 2014-2015.

¹ Available from www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Key_Recommendations_South-Asia_consultation_Nepal_26-28_August_2014.pdf.

Sub-item (c)**Partnerships and extrabudgetary contributions**

174. The Commission had before it an overview of partnerships and extrabudgetary contributions (E/ESCAP/71/32), which provided a description of the secretariat's engagement with partners, extrabudgetary contributions and technical cooperation activities in 2014.

175. Statements were made by representatives of the following countries: China; India; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Thailand; and Viet Nam.

176. The Commission noted that the secretariat's total extrabudgetary cash contributions in 2014 for technical cooperation activities and host country support to the subregional offices amounted to \$13.3 million. The Commission also noted that the total cash contributions received by ESCAP in 2014 for technical cooperation work amounted to \$18.2 million, of which \$11.6 million came from extrabudgetary sources and the balance from the regular budget.

177. The delegation of the Republic of Korea reflected on the achievements of the Seoul Initiative on Sustainable Economic Growth (Green Growth) over the last 10 years in promoting the principles and the implementation of related policies for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. The delegation indicated that its Government intended to provide additional in-cash and in-kind contributions to support the work of the Seoul Initiative for a further five years from 2016 to 2020.

178. The delegation of Indonesia highlighted the importance of the work of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development in promoting the role of ICT in economic and social development, and urged other member States also to provide in-cash or in-kind contributions to the institution.

179. The delegation of Viet Nam expressed deep appreciation for the work of the regional institutions of ESCAP.

180. The Commission took note of the overview of partnerships and extrabudgetary contributions and expressed its appreciation for pledges amounting to \$9,044,725 for 2015 from: Brunei Darussalam; China; India; Indonesia; Japan; Macao, China; Malaysia; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Thailand; and Viet Nam.

Agenda item 5**Review of the conference structure of the Commission in implementation of resolution 69/1**

181. The Commission had before it the review of the conference structure of the Commission in implementation of resolution 69/1 (E/ESCAP/71/33) and the report on the outcomes of the changes to the conference structure in implementation of resolution 69/1 (E/ESCAP/71/40).

182. Statements were made by the representatives of China and the Republic of Korea.

183. The delegation of the Republic of Korea said it supported the conversion of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology to the Committee on Information and Communications

Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation. However, the delegation had concerns about the functioning of the new committee regarding how it would address ICT and science, technology and innovation issues in a timely and effective manner, and hoped that member States and the secretariat could find ways to efficiently conduct the work on both. The delegation added that if the committee were to expand its remit it needed to be supported through increased human resources and organizational support. The delegation underscored its support for the secretariat's work in the area of science, technology and innovation, as it had been doing for ICT development.

184. The delegation of China expressed its support for the conference structure reform, indicating that the reform would strengthen the work of ESCAP, particularly in capacity-building and sustainable development. The delegation added that China would continue to support the work of ESCAP and the initiatives of the Executive Secretary.

185. The Commission decided that henceforth the annual theme study and the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific* would be produced as separate publications.

186. The Commission adopted resolution 71/1 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission to be fit for the evolving post-2015 development agenda. The delegation of the United States said it supported efforts to restructure conferences, with the aim of improving transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. It welcomed efforts to improve the functioning of regional institutions, including the focus on extrabudgetary resources to sustain them. However, given the financial constraints that many member States faced, the delegation of the United States said that it was dismayed by the significant budget implication that was attached to the resolution. It expressed its disappointment that further efforts were not made to offset or phase-in changes, given the substantial amount of additional funding that was implicated. The delegation said that it thought there needed to be a more extensive conversation concerning ways to implement reforms in a more cost-effective manner, and therefore respectfully disassociated itself from the resolution.

Agenda item 6

Evaluation pursuant to resolution 67/4: Establishment of the Asian and Pacific centre for the development of disaster information management

187. The Commission had before it the document on the evaluation pursuant to resolution 67/4: establishment of the Asian and Pacific centre for the development of disaster information management (E/ESCAP/71/34) and the information note on the report of the Evaluation Team (E/ESCAP/71/INF/6).

188. A statement was made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

189. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for the valuable technical support provided during the process towards the establishment of the centre in accordance with Commission resolution 67/4. The delegation informed the Commission that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran had cooperated fully in the process, provided all the necessary resources for meeting the requirements in establishing the centre as a regional institution of the Commission and was committed to ensure the sustainability of the centre. It stated that the establishment of the

centre would contribute to the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Asia and the Pacific.

190. The Commission adopted resolution 71/11 on the establishment of the Asian and Pacific centre for the development of disaster information management.

Agenda item 7

Activities of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission

191. The Commission had before it the report of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission (E/ESCAP/71/35).

192. In his capacity as the Rapporteur of the Advisory Committee, the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran presented the highlights of the activities of the Advisory Committee since the seventieth session of the Commission, noting in particular that it had provided important advice and guidance to the secretariat on important issues, and that it served as an important channel for the member States to cooperate with each other and with the secretariat.

193. The Commission took note of the report of the Advisory Committee.

Agenda item 8

Dates, venue and theme topic for the seventy-second session of the Commission (2016)

194. The Commission had before it the note by the secretariat on the dates, venue and theme topic for the seventy-second session of the Commission (E/ESCAP/71/36).

195. The Commission decided to hold its seventy-second session in April or May 2016; the actual dates would be determined in consultation with the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission.

196. The Commission also decided that the theme topic for its seventy-second session would be science, technology and innovation for sustainable development.

Agenda item 9

Policy issues for the Asia-Pacific region

Sub-item (a)

Key challenges to inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific

Policy statement by the Executive Secretary

197. The Executive Secretary noted that 2015 was a year of global and regional opportunity. The seventy-first Commission session was taking place amid a confluence of key events, such as the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Charter, the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 10th anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol. Moreover, during the year, global leaders would lay the foundations of a far-reaching new sustainable development agenda that would be reinforced with a new agreement on climate change and new global partnerships.

198. The Executive Secretary highlighted that the Asia-Pacific region was well known for its resources, resilience and entrepreneurial spirit though recurring vulnerabilities and exogenous shocks demanded vigilance and course correction. The hesitant global recovery, rising inequalities and environmental stress called for adjustments in traditional growth models and development paths in five areas: (a) domestic consumption and demand as future drivers of growth rather than sole dependence on export-demand-driven models; (b) pursuit of inclusive growth; the new ESCAP multidimensional Index of Inclusiveness offers a tool to understand and track progress on inclusiveness; (c) structural reforms to improve competitiveness, innovation and productivity; (d) regional economic cooperation and integration through enhanced transboundary connectivity, action on environmental hazards and financial and trade integration; and (e) balanced and integrated development to tackle multiple forms of deprivation, including disparities between genders, income brackets and across the urban-rural divide. Investing in social development was a key driver of deeper and more sustained economic growth, and therefore development.

199. Highlighting that Asia and the Pacific has achieved 13 out of the 21 targets of the Millennium Development Goals, and drawing on the experience gained during their implementation, the Executive Secretary said that the region had intensified regional consultations on sustainable development goals and financing with policymakers, civil society and the business community. Besides addressing substantial unfinished business, the sustainable development goals called for integrated approaches to development, country ownership and good governance, supported by global and regional partnerships in areas such as finance, technology and data, which currently left much to be desired. To better service the intergovernmental priorities in the post-2015 development agenda, ESCAP was also strengthening the analytical and capacity-building work of the secretariat.

200. To promote the voice and priorities of the countries with special needs, the Executive Secretary pointed out that ESCAP was promoting the Samoa Pathway, the Vienna Programme of Action for the landlocked developing countries, and the Siem Reap-Angkor Outcome Document on the least developed countries. Those intergovernmental priorities have been supported by the work of ESCAP on graduation from the category of least developed country, economic diversification and connectivity of landlocked developing countries, and the new annual *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report*.

201. The Executive Secretary also noted that the secretariat was taking steps to advance holistic regional connectivity. Regional integrated intermodal and multimodal transport and logistics systems could combine the strengths of the Trans-Asian Railway and Asian Highway networks into a single integrated intermodal system, with the inclusion of dry ports and maritime transport. The launch of a number of large-scale regional initiatives, including China's Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the Eurasia Initiative of the Republic of Korea and the Central-South Asia corridor, has also seen the emergence of investment-pooling mechanisms to support regional infrastructure projects, such as the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and, more recently, the allocation by Japan of \$110 billion for infrastructure, as well as capital augmentation by the multilateral development banks. The Executive Secretary emphasized that to take advantage of these opportunities, economies of the region would need to strengthen enabling environments, fast-track project development pipelines and improve legislation to encourage private sector participation and funding.

202. Elaborating further, the Executive Secretary also noted that work on energy connectivity would be launched to support the outcomes of intergovernmental deliberations at the first Asian and Pacific Energy Forum in 2013. ESCAP had developed an implementation support mechanism for the Forum and was preparing for the second session of the Forum, to be held in Tonga in 2018. Moreover, to close the widening digital divide in the region, the intergovernmental processes were negotiating principles and norms, and preparing a master plan for the proposed Asia-Pacific information superhighway to provide affordable and reliable access to broadband Internet for all.

203. Underscoring the importance of social justice for sustainable development, the Executive Secretary noted that within the overall framework of “leaving no-one behind”, the pursuit of social justice called for equal rights and access for all people in the Asia-Pacific region. To those ends, the intergovernmental work had established progressive regional norms to: advance gender equality and women’s empowerment; remove discriminatory legal barriers; and promote universal access to health and social services, as well as equal rights — particularly for marginalized social groups. To address rising inequalities, the secretariat would assist Governments in building comprehensive social protection systems, which promoted decent work, income security and universal health care. To better harness the region’s “youth dividend”, work was also underway on the links between social exclusion and youth participation in employment, education and civic affairs.

204. To support implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, ESCAP was proposing the establishment of a resource facility on innovative financing for gender equality. For the midterm review in 2017 of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022 the secretariat would step-up support for generating comparable disability statistics. This would also help to monitor progress in implementation of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

205. The Executive Secretary noted that the 2015 theme study, “Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation”, advocated social justice and ecological protection as primary policy objectives and the pursuit of balanced integration and policy shifts critical to the achievement of robust and inclusive growth and sustainability. In that context, in the deliberations of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, held just before the Commission session, member States highlighted five prerequisites for balanced and integrated development: (a) building resilience to leverage the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability in an integrated manner; (b) investing in the environment to deal with challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, pollution and overexploitation of water sources; (c) the importance of financing for development; (d) promoting science, technology and innovation; and (e) effective data, follow-up and review of the implementation of sustainable development goals. The likely mandate and role for the regional commissions would be to support member States in developing baseline information and ensuring coherence and consistency in implementation. That would require increased investment in relevant, measurable, accurate, complete, timely and internationally comparable data and statistics, as well as the strengthening of national statistical systems.

206. Emphasizing the notion that success demanded action, the Executive Secretary said that the people of Asia and the Pacific were poised to lead — in economic growth, in social innovation and in environmental stewardship. It is up to the leaders of the region to seize the opportunities of sustainable development and to ensure that 2015 also marked the real start of the Asia-Pacific century.

207. The Commission had before it the summary of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015* (E/ESCAP/71/37).

208. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Afghanistan; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; France; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Tonga; United States of America; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam.

209. The Commission welcomed the views and recommendations that were presented in the *Survey* as it outlined the policy agenda to address short-term challenges, and presented policies that could help countries to achieve an inclusive and sustainable growth.

210. The Commission noted that while the region had led global economic growth, it still remained home to a great deal of poverty. The Commission highlighted the need for structural reforms to increase the growth potential, including through boosting the role of the private sector and improving the efficiency of the public sector. The Commission noted that without economic growth, improvements in other development indicators would not be possible. In that regard, the Commission emphasized the need to maintain growth given the threats from economic shocks and slow global economic recovery. To achieve development, it was also necessary to expand the conception of growth to include the "quality of growth", such as by increasing pro-poor growth policies.

211. The Commission noted that the region was facing the challenge of securing sufficient employment for its citizens, especially for its young people. There was a need to increase decent employment to propagate inclusive development.

212. The Commission underlined the importance of having stable macroeconomic conditions and sound macroeconomic fundamentals in achieving economic growth in the region. The Commission noted that countries in the region had implemented fiscal policies to promote inclusive and sustainable development. Among others, those included tax incentives and spending programmes to support agricultural activities and rural residents, promote small and medium-sized businesses, and enhance the welfare of workers. Public investment in large-scale infrastructure projects also facilitated access to markets. In that regard, the Commission highlighted that the region had the potential to collect more tax revenues to finance much needed development projects. That could be achieved through, among other policy measures, broadening the tax base, making tax administration more efficient and effective and promoting stronger regional cooperation to mitigate tax evasion.

213. The Commission noted that slow growth in foreign exchange inflows and deteriorating terms of trade due to fluctuations of international

commodity prices posed significant challenges for the member States that were more dependent on a limited number of key commodity exports.

214. The Commission noted that the financing need was enormous for Asia-Pacific developing countries, especially least developed countries, to achieve sustainable development objectives. It would be important to adopt well-conceived policy reforms to nurture more competitive, dynamic, diversified and inclusive financial markets, given their central role in resource mobilization. Measures required included strengthening the banking sector, broadening and deepening capital markets, improving regulatory frameworks and enhancing financial inclusion.

215. The Commission noted the importance of private sector and civil society institutions in achieving the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. The Commission noted the efforts of various countries to diversify their economies and stimulate private sector and entrepreneurship led growth through trade liberalization and capacity-building, innovation, private sector development and improving the investment climate.

216. The Commission emphasized that the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda would require a more comprehensive and balanced framework of global development cooperation, which upheld the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities”. It also required significantly strengthened financial, technological and institutional support for developing countries, in particular the least developed countries. In that regard, the Commission urged the developed partners to fulfil their pledges on ODA, and to expand the scope and enhance the development effect of existing North-South cooperation. It also encouraged broader engagement with both traditional and non-traditional partners, including private and civil society partners.

217. The Commission also recognized the increasing importance of regional cooperation and integration in promoting social and economic progress, closing development gaps and raising the welfare of all the people in Asia and the Pacific. It was argued that complementary South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation would inject fresh impetus into the region’s development and contribute to an open Asia-Pacific economy featuring innovative development, interconnected growth and converging interests.

218. At the same time, the Commission stressed that the primary responsibility of development rested with the Government of each country; and the right of all countries to choose their development paths in light of their national conditions and development stages should be respected. It highly valued the coordinating role of the secretariat and the United Nations system in regional cooperation on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit.

219. The Commission was informed that Siberia and the Russian Far East had become increasingly important for the regional trade architecture, and that there was pending establishment of a single market within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, which was open to all interested countries with the ultimate aim to establish a common economic space reaching from Vladivostok to Istanbul.

220. One delegation observed that trade and investment had acted as engines of growth, recognized the work done by ESCAP in that area and requested the secretariat to: (1) undertake research and analysis on the

inclusive development aspects of trade and investment, including facilitation of the transfer of technology; (2) undertake capacity-building and awareness creation on the flexibilities contained in the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and the Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health to ensure access to medicines to all; (3) identify trade restrictions and distortions in agricultural market access and their adverse effects on trade for the Asia-Pacific economies; (4) enhance the capacities of WTO members in the region, in particular least developed countries, on negotiating special and differential treatment provisions under the Doha Round. The delegation also informed the Commission of recent initiatives to promote sustainable urban development, in particular through the 100 Smart Cities programme and the Clean India Mission, and ambitious targets to increase renewable energy generation and the achievements of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission.

221. Another delegation requested that the secretariat promote trade and economic cooperation for the countries of Central Asia with the aim to reduce physical and non-physical barriers to trade, and promote trade facilitation and investment growth, which were essential for innovation and technology transfer. That delegation also highlighted the interregional Green Bridge Partnership Programme and called on countries in the Asia-Pacific region to join its charter of joint implementation.

222. The Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization informed the Commission of the implementation of its Trade Agreement and the activities of his organization to increase trade capacity and reduce trade barriers among its members. He also noted that a Trade Development Bank had been established to provide trade development financing.

223. The Commission noted that despite the achievement of several Millennium Development Goals, particularly the progress in eradicating extreme poverty in the Asia-Pacific region, large differences in outcomes across the rural and urban sector, between genders and across income quintiles continued to persist. Therefore, efforts were still required to achieve sustainable development. Among other issues, poverty eradication, understood as multidimensional poverty, as well as increasing inequalities had been identified as key challenges in the distribution of benefits from the Asia-Pacific economic expansion. While a steady economic expansion of the economy was recognized as an essential driving force to create opportunities, the Commission noted that it was not sufficient to achieve sustainable development, and more targeted actions were necessary. In particular, clear post-2015 targets would provide a stronger basis to mobilize a full spectrum of actions to pull people out of poverty.

224. The Commission also noted that the achievement of sustainable development, and by implication, inclusive growth, could be achieved by fostering the creation of more employment by increasing and improving training of the labour force and by developing new skills, by improving access to education, health and social protection services through an increase in investments in those areas, as well as by broadening financial inclusion. Three factors were also identified as key determinants in the achievement of sustainable development: strengthening the engagement of the private sector in the development process; increasing the political will and commitment at all levels of Government and civil society; and strengthening resilience to natural disasters.

225. The Commission deliberated on the theme topic “Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation”,

which was deemed timely in the lead up to the expected adoption of the post-2015 sustainable development goals in September 2015. A holistic approach was critical in light of the multiple challenges facing the world and Asia and the Pacific, including rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, natural disasters, climate change, income inequality and irregular migration. The Commission emphasized the importance of a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental) into national policy planning and implementation.

226. The Commission noted that Asia and the Pacific could and should play a leading role in the launch and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Many countries in the region had incorporated sustainable development into their national development plans; the region was also home to national visions and philosophies such as “gross national happiness” and “sufficiency economy”, which were aimed at improving people’s livelihoods while protecting nature and the environment.

227. The Commission emphasized that poverty eradication should remain at the centre of the development agenda, as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. Countries in the region should commit to achieving the unmet goals and targets under the Millennium Development Goals. Countries should also strive to ensure that development reached all people, including through enhanced access to essential services, education, health care and social protection, access to finance, gender equality and women’s empowerment and the empowerment of agricultural communities and cooperatives. There should also be a greater cooperation framework on the protection of migrants. To achieve sustainable development, it was also important to do away with violent extremism and nurture peaceful societies and promote good governance.

228. The Commission highlighted climate change and its impacts as one of the most pressing challenges for the region. The Commission stressed the urgent need take action to limit global greenhouse gas emissions so as to keep the global temperature rise below 2 degrees, and in this regard highlighted the forthcoming 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as a key milestone.

229. The Commission recognized the particular urgency facing many small island developing States, which were threatened by rising sea levels. The Commission reaffirmed the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. At the same time, many countries in the region were moving towards a resource-efficient development trajectory, including through adopting green growth strategies and renewable energy targets and investing in sustainable cities, green infrastructure, universal sanitation, water resources and waste management. The Commission also noted the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development.

230. The Commission recognized sustainable management of natural resources, and in particular energy, water and food, as a key sustainable development priority. The Commission recognized the importance of promoting resource-efficient economic growth and the need to ensure access to energy for all. The Commission called for increased regional cooperation on energy security under the auspices of ESCAP, including under the umbrella of the Asia-Pacific Energy Forum and through the creation of a dedicated committee on energy. The Commission noted the progress made by several member States in increasing the use of renewable energies. The Commission also recognized water scarcity and pollution as key sustainable

development challenges and noted the negative impact of climate change and natural disasters on water availability.

231. The Commission expressed its full support and solidarity with the people of Nepal in the wake of the devastating earthquakes, and with the people of Vanuatu and other cyclone-hit island States in the Pacific. The Commission committed to strong cooperation on disaster risk reduction, in line with the outcomes of the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015, and building on successful initiatives such as the ESCAP Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development and the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness for Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries. The establishment of the Asia-Pacific centre for the development of disaster information management could further strengthen regional efforts. One delegation proposed to designate 5 November as “World Tsunami Day” to increase awareness and reduce the number of victims.

232. The Commission recognized that in order to achieve sustainable development, adequate financial, technological and other necessary means of implementation would be needed. Relevant, reliable and timely data would be crucial for assessing the progress; improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems was an important step. A supportive global environment for sustainable development should be created, including through more democratic and inclusive institutions of global governance and strengthened support for least developed countries, small island developing States and other vulnerable countries, including through frameworks such as the Samoa Pathway.

233. The Commission stressed the importance of marine ecosystems and resources for the sustainable development of the region and the need to recognize that oceans, seas and coastal areas formed an integrated and essential component of the earth ecosystems and were a source of invaluable living and non-living resources for current and future generations. In that context, one delegation underscored the importance of combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing for the region.

234. The Commission highlighted the challenges and opportunities that had been brought about by rapid urbanization in the region and emphasized the need to expand urban infrastructure and access to services, including water, sanitation, energy and housing, to a growing number of urban residents and to promote sustainable urbanization, including through a dedicated sustainable development goal.

235. The Commission was informed of programmes in the Maldives to support the achievement of the ambitious national target to increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix to 25 per cent from 1 per cent by 2020, and in particular the projects Accelerating Sustainable Private Investments in Renewable Energy and Preparing Outer Islands for Sustainable Energy Development. The Commission was also informed of efforts by the Government of Malaysia to shift towards a green growth pathway guided by the Eleventh Malaysia Plan, which relied on four key strategies: strengthening the enabling environment for green growth; adopting the sustainable consumption and production concept; conserving natural resources; and strengthening resilience against climate change and natural disasters. The Commission noted the pledge by the Government of Australia of 200 million Australian dollars to the Green Climate Fund.

236. Several delegations underscored the importance of addressing the impact of ongoing demographic changes, such as rapid growth in the youth

population and population ageing, in development strategies and programmes. It was also noted that all development efforts should take into consideration the concerns of vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities, and involve their full participation development processes.

237. In the context of addressing gender equality and women's empowerment, several delegations emphasized the need to mainstream gender in sustainable development strategies. The cost of the exclusion of women from labour markets was highlighted as a particular barrier to development efforts in the region.

238. One delegation called for greater cooperation among member States on addressing international migration to maximize its positive impact while minimizing the negative one. That delegation also highlighted the need for greater protection of the rights of migrants as outlined in the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and by the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and their accompanying protocols.

239. The Commission welcomed the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and highlighted the need for its urgent implementation, given that Asia and the Pacific was the world's most disaster-prone region. The Commission called on the secretariat to take forward the implementation of the Framework at the regional level. Recognizing the importance of regional cooperation, in particular the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development, the Commission commended the efforts made by the secretariat in facilitating the capacity development of the member States for disaster risk reduction. In that regard, the Commission urged the secretariat to strengthen the capacity of developing countries in effective utilization of ICT and space technology applications through regional advisory services, technical assistance and regional cooperation, and building resilience of small islands developing States in particular to address disaster risk reduction and climate change.

240. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the Sendai Cooperation Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction of the Government of Japan, and for the disaster risk reduction efforts by ESCAP. The Commission also acknowledged the actions taken by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the secretariat towards the establishment of the Asia and Pacific centre for disaster information management. The Commission took note that the centre would be funded by extrabudgetary resources from the host government. The Commission also appreciated the commitment by India of a \$1 million contribution to the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness for Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries to support capacity-building in early warning systems, especially in South Asian countries. The Commission noted the request from the Government of Nepal for the technical assistance of Nepal in the recovery and reconstruction efforts following the 2015 Gorkha Nepal earthquake.

241. The Commission recognized the importance of enhancing regional connectivity through ICT and the important role that that played in enhancing social cohesion, deepening economic integration and promoting economic growth. ICT has made a positive contribution to development, particularly in the Pacific island countries. The Commission raised its concern about the potential negative effects of the digital divide. The Commission noted the importance of effective information management in disaster planning and response as had been demonstrated by recent disasters in the region.

242. The Commission noted that Asia-Pacific least developed countries needed additional resources for financing sustainable development efforts. In that connection, development partners were called to meet their commitments and obligations and to enhance their development cooperation and support to the most vulnerable countries, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in implementing the post-2015 development agenda. In view of their current economic vulnerability, ODA could continue to play a critical role in reducing financing gaps to help progress and sustainable development of least developed countries.

243. The Commission noted the commitment and the progress of Asia-Pacific least developed countries, with the support of United Nations organizations such as ESCAP, in implementing the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 towards achieving the goal of graduating from least developed status.

244. The Commission noted the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for Decade of 2014-2024 adopted during the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing countries held in Vienna in November 2014. One delegation called on Asian landlocked developing countries to accede to the Multilateral Agreement for the establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries in order to identify sustainable responses to development challenges caused by common geographic disadvantages and the negative impact of climate change.

245. The Commission noted that Pacific small island developing States had embraced the Samoa Pathway with the continuous support rendered by the secretariat for an integrated approach to sustainable development.

246. The Commission highlighted the importance of measurable targets and quality statistics for monitoring the progress towards achieving sustainable development goals and as a means of implementation for the post-2015 development agenda. In that regard, the Commission called for continued regional cooperation to address capacity gaps in Asian and Pacific countries, especially in countries with special needs, and noted the need for continued support for the development of statistics in Asia and the Pacific, especially for better civil registration and vital statistics systems and, more broadly, in the areas of economic and social statistics. One delegation supported the proposal for creating a regional trust fund for statistics.

Sub-item (b)

Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015

247. The ministerial panel on the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015* focused on the policy challenges faced by the region's countries as they attempted to achieve inclusive growth.

248. The panel was moderated by Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga (Tuvalu). The panellists were:

- (a) Mr. Abdul Sattar Murad (Afghanistan);
- (b) Mr. Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev (Azerbaijan);
- (c) Mr. M. A. Mannan (Bangladesh);
- (d) Ms. Rosemarie Edillon (Philippines);
- (e) Mr. Stephen P. Groff (Asian Development Bank);
- (f) Mr. Nanak Kakwani (formerly at the United Nations Development Programme).

249. Mr. Sopoaga provided an overview of the analysis and recommendations on inclusive growth contained in the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015*. In particular, he noted that different forms of deprivation tended to reinforce each other, and mentioned as an example that insufficient access to sanitation, health and education services worsened employment prospects and the capacity to generate income, perpetuating inequalities. He noted that the main obstacle Tuvalu faced to further its development was insufficient infrastructure in areas such as maritime shipping, telecommunications and seawalls. He highlighted the vulnerability of the Pacific island developing States to climate change and associated natural disasters such as the recent Cyclone Pam, which could erase decades of development progress in one day. Another serious consequence of climate change was ocean acidification, which was affecting fisheries and damaging coral reefs and tourism.

250. In response to a question on government policies to promote inclusive growth in Afghanistan, Mr. Murad emphasized that some of the government priorities are to ensure peace and security, increase the well-being of people, promote human rights, and improve governance. Mr. Murad noted that a significant increase in income levels in Afghanistan had taken place in the past decade together with a rapid economic growth record and some improvements in social indicators and infrastructure networks. He highlighted that the country had favourable growth potential given its large reserves of natural resources. Despite that progress and potential, Mr. Murad noted that the rates of poverty and malnutrition remained high. Those development gaps were due, among other factors, to the insufficient number of jobs, low labour force participation rate and limited human capital. In that regard, the Government was transforming its reform agenda, such as those on tackling corruption, easing investment constraints and boosting the number of decent jobs, into actionable programmes. Mr. Murad also highlighted the need for the Government, the private sector, civil society and international development community to work together to achieve inclusive and sustainable development in Afghanistan. The country would particularly benefit from financial assistance, preferential trade agreements and transfers of modern technology.

251. Mr. Mammad-Guliyev shared the experience of Azerbaijan in using revenues generated from natural resources for the eradication of extreme poverty and socioeconomic development. Upon independence, the country embarked on a three-pronged strategy of attracting foreign investment in the energy sector, diversifying the gas pipelines and establishing a national oil fund to recycle revenues for infrastructure development, education and research and to support internally displaced persons. Over time, infrastructure development created more than one million employment opportunities and drove double-digit annual GDP growth. A national scholarship programme had supported over 3,000 students to study in top foreign universities; the national educational system was also being modernized. Special attention had been given to internally displaced persons through housing and other support measures. All those achievements would not have been possible without the fight against corruption and organized crime. The Government had paid particular attention to the efficient and transparent delivery of public services, including through collaboration between state agencies and the private sector. At the same time, with a view to diversifying its economy, the Government was actively developing its agricultural and tourism sectors and also the ICT and transport sectors, including through cross-border projects. While the recent decline in global oil prices had had an impact on the economy, the country had strong fiscal and financial buffers against external shocks;

a recent devaluation of the currency was also helping non-oil products become more competitive.

252. Ms. Edillon shared the experience of the Philippines on the implementation of policies aimed at making growth more inclusive. She agreed on the need to eradicate poverty, provide adequate social conditions, ensure gender equality, and provide high-quality jobs as presented in the *Survey*. She noted that the Government of the Philippines viewed inclusive growth as rapid and sustained growth, which created jobs and reduced poverty, and that five key elements should be considered in the achievement of inclusive growth, namely: credible institutions and good governance were important platforms; macroeconomic and political stability was required for sustainable growth; economic growth was necessary but not sufficient for poverty reduction; disaster risks could push back development achievements; and growth strategy needed to have special and sectoral dimensions to ensure inclusivity. Ms. Edillon also mentioned that it was important to reduce the vulnerability of countries to regional, global and geo-climatic shocks. She noted that investing in human capital and infrastructure remained the Government's priority but national authorities had realigned the development strategies on the basis of geographical criteria with a stratification approach that took into account the proportion and number of poor people in a region. Furthermore, the Government had launched several public-private partnerships for the development of specific infrastructure, such as health facilities, airport terminals and roads. The use of such partnerships allowed the Government to free some fiscal resources for education, training, poverty eradication and social protection programmes, such as conditional cash programmes. Ms. Edillon noted that going forward the reform agenda needed to be broadened and deepened, and that the Philippines stood ready to learn from other countries, and was keen to hold exchanges on a way to escape the middle-income trap. In this regard, ESCAP could play an instrumental role in assisting the country.

253. Mr. Mannan shared the experience of the Government of Bangladesh in improving development outcomes with strategic policy interventions since 1971. Even though Bangladesh was a least developed country, the policymakers had been extremely mindful of the reorientation of economic policies to bring about inclusive growth, and to diversify production and trade structure. The revenue of the Government was dependent on three key areas: agriculture; garment and clothing manufacturing; and remittances. There were several national policies to upgrade the skills of the labour force and human capital through a high-quality educational system, technological upgrading, and unlocking resources to improve the efficiency of the supply chain to reap the benefits of trade linkages. Furthermore, the Government had taken a keen interest in developing strategic "look East" policies, especially with South-East Asia and the Pacific island countries. Critically, the Government had introduced specific policy measures to address the following: income disparities; access to finance by small and medium-sized enterprises; and women's empowerment. Those policy measures had already shown a significant positive impact in development outcomes, especially in terms of reducing the gender gap in the labour force, and in reducing wage gaps. Due to a steady increase in health expenditure and improvement in the freshwater supply, the life expectancy of the population had increased dramatically in the past decade. The Government was now actively promoting the development of domestic infrastructure and connectivity with neighbours, strengthening public-private partnerships, and seeking the financial support of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and multilateral and regional development banks, with a view to accelerating the achievement of inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

254. Mr. Groff noted that while the region had made tremendous gains in reducing poverty and especially in reducing extreme poverty, it was necessary to address the emerging challenge of inequality. Even though inequality in the region was not high relative to some other parts of the world, the concern was that it had been increasing dramatically in recent decades. Inequality was important as it could reduce the impact of growth on reducing poverty. Dealing with inequality was, however, complicated by the fact that some of the same factors that had contributed to the good growth performance of the region had also contributed to rising inequality. Those factors included globalization, technological change and market-oriented reforms. Therefore, it would be necessary to be careful in undertaking measures to reduce inequality and knee-jerk reactions should be avoided. In dealing with inequality it was more important to deal with inequality of access as compared with inequality of income. Fiscal policy was a particularly useful tool to address inequality of access. One example was rationalizing subsidies, which would in turn provide increased government revenues and reduce inequality of access to government services. It would be necessary to look at alternative sources of increasing government revenues other than tax revenues. That would become increasingly important because of ageing societies in many countries, which would reduce tax income as well as increasing the demand for government services. Apart from increasing government revenues, there remained a role for redistribution of existing government revenues to make growth more inclusive, such as through the use of conditional cash transfers.

255. Mr. Kakwani shared his views on key challenges that countries in the region faced in making growth not only progressive but more inclusive. Mr. Kakwani stressed that no one common approach existed for achieving lower inequality and making growth more inclusive. Rather than holding the conventional view that inequality is a by-product of growth, he said that he believed that Governments could influence inequality in numerous ways, namely through social programmes, social insurance, labour market reforms, taxation, public expenditures, appropriate infrastructure developments and adequate provision of basic services. His empirical analysis of more than 20 countries in Asia showed that increased per capita income was accompanied by a decline in the Gini index, indicating no causal relationship between growth and change in inequality. His work on inequality had revealed that labour income had by far been the most dominant factor in reducing inequality. On the issue of how Asia could achieve inclusive growth, as there was yet to be any agreed definition of inclusive growth, Mr. Kakwani provided a more comprehensive definition of inclusive growth as the process of reducing social tension. He spelled out the seven dimensions of social tensions, namely: high inequality; the existence of absolute poverty; a diminishing middle class; increased polarization; lack of social mobility; food insecurity to meet minimum requirements; and inequities in the provision of basic education and health. Mr. Kakwani shared his views on the increase in per capita income and sharp decline in inequality in Brazil, and also discussed the diversity in human characteristics, abilities, ownership of assets and other factors that should also be considered in the quest to reduce inequality. Deeper analysis was required as different countries entailed varied details. Finally, he stressed that as there is no one-size-fits-all answer; policy recommendations should come from each country.

Agenda item 10**Theme topic for the seventy-first session of the Commission: “Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation”**

256. The Commission had before it a summary of the theme study for its seventy-first session: Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation (E/ESCAP/71/38).

257. The Ministerial Round Table reviewed and discussed examples of government action that advanced progress in priority areas identified by the theme study. The Round Table highlighted the need for economic growth strategies that were people-centred and respected planetary resource boundaries. The Round Table also discussed national and regional actions that were in place, as well as those that were still required to deliver on balanced, integrated, sustainable development.

258. The panel was moderated by Mr. Anote Tong (Kiribati). The panellists were:

- (a) Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan;
- (b) General Anupong Paojinda (Thailand);
- (c) Mr. Gennady Gatilov (Russian Federation);
- (d) Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman (India);
- (e) Mr. Wu Hongbo (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs);
- (f) Ms. Yoke Ling Chee (Third World Network).

259. Mr. Tong provided an overview of the theme study, which proposed a conceptual framework for the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) and specific strategies and policies for inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth. It also identified specific aspects of a supportive institutional framework, such as: a long-term national vision; institutions for high-level strategy and policy coordination; strengthened capacity for stakeholder engagement; and institutional mechanisms for monitoring and incorporating lessons learned from implementation and stakeholder feedback. The theme study also recommended four areas for follow-up at the regional level: a regional road map to support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda; strengthened regional economic integration initiatives; regional platforms for the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development; and reform of the United Nations system to support these initiatives.

260. General Anupong described recent achievements of the Government of Thailand in promoting the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy had played an important role in the Government’s efforts to build a sustainable society based on sharing communities and self-sustaining individuals. To reduce poverty and promote inclusive development, special economic development zones had been established and a project to manage the use of public land for poverty reduction and rural development had been implemented. Small enterprises were supported through the One Tambon One Product programme to promote entrepreneurship and strengthen community economies and linkages. Civil registration and vital statistics were highlighted as essential in providing key baseline data for addressing social inequality and providing access to basic services. In relation to the environment, collective resilience

to natural disasters was being strengthened by a legal framework on, and systematic mechanisms at all levels for, disaster risk reduction, as well as supportive community-based and volunteer projects.

261. Mr. Khan highlighted the national sustainable development strategy of Pakistan, which had been introduced in 2013, as an integrated agenda to promote a number of priority areas: the green economy and the efficient use of water and energy; sustainable infrastructure, including transport; sustainable consumption and production, particularly in the agricultural sector; eliminating absolute poverty and inequality through the provision of equal opportunities; ensuring gender parity and protection of minorities; ensuring waste recycling and energy conservation; biodiversity and habitat conservation, and natural and human-induced disaster readiness. Complex development challenges were compounded by resource constraints, energy shortages, natural disasters, an inadequate institutional capacity, lack of infrastructure, and limited health and education coverage. As violent extremism constituted one of the key challenges, the protection of the people had been placed as the highest priority for the Government. A national action plan had been established and improvements to governance were being made to ensure inclusion of all stakeholders. Further progress would instil confidence in the institutions of the state and the people's confidence in participating in economic activity and taking further steps toward sustainable development.

262. Mr. Gatilov described initiatives in the Russian Federation to eradicate poverty by promoting sustainable economic growth and environmental protection as the highest priority development objectives. Noting the centrality of infrastructure for sustainable regional socioeconomic development, he expressed appreciation and support for the work of ESCAP on regional connectivity. He highlighted major investments in sustainable infrastructure focusing on transport infrastructure as a crucial link in the context of globalization and increased cooperation. The Government of the Russian Federation was redeveloping the trans-Siberian railway, establishing a new route from Baikal to Amur, investing in road infrastructure, as well as enhancing the carrying capacity of ports and promoting road safety. Inclusion and access to basic services were also emphasized, and in particular the importance of a programme to provide energy access to all across the region, for which an efficient and effective energy network was essential. He also highlighted the importance of a sound national health system and of industrialization strategies, which should be centred on advancing inclusion addressed through a dedicated sustainable development goal.

263. Ms. Sitharaman shared several initiatives being implemented by the Government of India to advance poverty alleviation and sustainable growth through an inclusive agenda, along with environmental protection. Recent poverty alleviation efforts, focused on the absolute poor and on financial inclusion, were yielding multiple benefits. The Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana programme to establish bank accounts for the "unbanked" had brought more than 120 million citizens into the financial sector, and so allowed food, travel and energy allowances to be transferred directly to the beneficiaries under the Direct Benefit Transfer scheme. That reduced opportunities for mismanagement by removing intermediaries. The deposits in those banks had grown dramatically since the start of the programme. The newly created Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (Mudra) Bank had "funded the unfunded", and expanded and strengthened entrepreneurship and livelihood opportunities by increasing access to credit and reducing dependence on private moneylenders. Two affordable subsidized insurance schemes and a pension scheme complemented and

strengthened those measures by enhancing social protection and “securing the unsecured”. A separate ministry had been created to focus on jobs and skills development, especially for the youth, and dedicated centres were being established to increase access to employment and meet market demands. Finally, the Government had invested public finance in improving public infrastructure and environmental and waste management through the “100 smart cities” programme.

264. Mr. Wu elaborated on the ways in which the United Nations system should evolve to address an integrated development agenda. He emphasized the need to change mindsets to support the long term re-positioning of the United Nations. That was currently being discussed at the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. Mr Wu cited the Inter-agency Technical Support Team, which brought together as many as 60 United Nations entities to support to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, as an excellent example and model of how the United Nations system could work together across sectors and agency-specific agendas. He highlighted the ongoing United Nations-wide discussion on how the United Nations could become fit for purpose as a response to the need to adapt to changing contexts. The mobilization of all stakeholders that had characterized the development of the post-2015 development agenda should continue, and Governments should widen their contacts with the United Nations system to cover the three dimensions of sustainable development. He stressed that best use should be made of existing United Nations and other relevant institutions. The newly created High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development was highlighted as a key mechanism to provide leadership, guidance and recommendations on implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

265. Ms. Chee shared her thoughts on stakeholder engagement at the national, regional and global levels and focused attention on specific messages from the theme study. She emphasized that meaningful engagement with stakeholders should recognize the diversity of stakeholders and interests. Four points from the report were explored. The first was that resource constraints could not be addressed by technology alone; people were an important resource that along with the traditional appreciation for people, for knowledge and for nature that should be further invested in. The second message was that the primary responsibility for action on sustainable development rested with Governments; she underlined that the market could not be left to follow its own path. The third was the role of the State, in particular in balancing all of the various interests, and the need to institutionalize engagement with a broad range of stakeholders across society on norm-setting and policymaking and as a way for dealing with conflicts and contradictions. Positive examples in this regard included the Pacific Island Development Forum, which included Governments and civil society actors, and the work of ESCAP with the Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism. Finally, she highlighted two key areas in which engagement and stakeholder mobilization would need to be strengthened in terms of their implementation: new and emerging infrastructure financing initiatives; and the follow-up to a new antibiotic resistance action plan adopted by the World Health Organization.

266. The panellists then turned their attention to regional cooperation as a way to strengthen the achievement of sustainable development goals, articulating their perspectives on economic integration, infrastructure development and the sharing of knowledge.

267. In relation to trade and investment, Ms. Sitharaman noted that India had provided specific support for market access to least developed country members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and was strengthening its “Act East” policy, engaging on environmental issues among others. The sustainable development agenda of India, she said, would be linked with its ASEAN+6 neighbours. Mr. Khan described Pakistan’s focus on shared prosperity, inclusion and a raised quality of life through trade, investment, financial and customs systems, as well as the connectivity of energy, telecommunications and transport infrastructure. Mr. Gatilov stated that the efforts of the Russian Federation to create a Eurasian common market through the Eurasian Economic Union were intended to increase economic trade between Europe and Asia and would build on existing progress on trade relationships between the two regions. Related to these initiatives, Ms. Chee emphasized the need to eliminate contradictions between trade and investment policy and sustainable development policy and to ensure policy space for member States to pursue sustainable development strategies.

268. With respect to the regional sharing of experiences, General Anupong invited all countries to explore the experiences of the application of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. Mr. Gatilov urged increased cooperation and the sharing of knowledge as follow-up to the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum, and expressed his expectation for the enhanced role of the regional commissions as a useful platform for exchanging experiences. Reaffirming the added value of regional cooperation in advancing the global agenda, Mr. Wu emphasized the critical role played by the regional commissions, as well as regional financial institutions. Complementing the panellists’ interventions, Mr. Tong also noted the potential for regional cooperation in the sustainable management of transboundary resources.

269. In a statement following the Round Table discussion, the delegation from the Republic of Korea underlined the need for strategic foresight to pursue integrated approaches. Commenting on the theme study, the delegation highlighted the need for participation and active engagement of all stakeholders, noting that the three-year plan of the Republic of Korea for economic integration and the second five-year plan for green growth followed this line of thinking in terms of preparation and implementation.

Agenda item 11 **Other matters**

Election of the members of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development

270. In accordance with paragraph 8 of the statute of the Centre, in addition to the host country, the Republic of Korea, the Commission elected the following countries to the Governing Council of the Centre for the period from 2015 to 2018: Bangladesh; Cambodia; India; Indonesia; Pakistan; Philippines; Sri Lanka; and Thailand.

Election of the members of the Governing Council of the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture

271. In accordance with paragraph 9 of the statute of the Centre, in addition to the host country, Indonesia, the Commission elected the following countries to the Governing Council of the Centre for the period from 2015 to 2018: Bangladesh; Cambodia; Fiji; Malaysia; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Sri Lanka; and Thailand.

Election of the members of the Governing Council of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization

272. In accordance with paragraph 9 of the statute of the Centre, in addition to the host country, China, the Commission elected the following countries to the Governing Council of the Centre for the period from 2015 to 2018: Bangladesh; Cambodia; India; Indonesia; Pakistan; Sri Lanka; Thailand; and Viet Nam.

Agenda item 12**Adoption of the report of the Commission**

273. The report of the Commission on its seventy-first session (E/ESCAP/71/42) was adopted unanimously at its fifth plenary meeting on 29 May 2015.
