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

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

**Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the regional institutions****Programme performance report for the biennium 2014-2015****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present report provides an account of the programme performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for the biennium 2014-2015, as assessed against the expected accomplishments set out in the strategic framework for each subprogramme for the biennium. The programme performance report consists of highlights of programme achievements and results, by subprogramme, for the biennium 2014-2015.

The present report is central to holding ESCAP accountable to its members and associate members in terms of the efficient use of resources and the delivery of mandated results. The assessment of programme achievements and results is supported by information collected from the end users of the secretariat's products and services through surveys, interviews and evaluations or other reviews.

The present report was reviewed by the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission at its 364th session, which was held on 24 March 2016.

The Commission may wish to review the present report and comment on the overall performance of ESCAP and its eight subprogrammes. Based on the lessons learned, the Commission may also wish to provide the secretariat with guidance on future implementation modalities that would improve the effectiveness of ESCAP.

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### **I. Highlights of programme achievements in the biennium 2014-2015**

1. To address existing challenges in Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) promoted regional consensus for the balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, improved coherence across the United Nations system for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the inclusion of regional perspectives into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To ensure that all members, including the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, benefit from economic integration, ESCAP supported the engagement of its member States in regional and global policy dialogues and provided research, analysis and technical cooperation needed for making sound policies on macroeconomics and financing for development, trade and investment, science, innovation and technology transfer, international road transport and logistics systems, environment, information and communications technology and disaster risk management, social dimensions, and modernized statistical services. ESCAP also provided technical assistance to address subregional priorities, including climate change in the Pacific, environmental protection in East and North-East Asia, trade and transport facilitation in North and Central Asia, and attainment of internationally agreed development goals in South and South-West Asia.

#### **Challenges, obstacles and unmet goals**

2. To implement a sustainable development agenda, which fully integrates the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development, all stakeholders need to consider issues holistically. Attainment of internationally agreed development goals in Asia and the Pacific is often hampered by weaknesses in institutional frameworks and varying levels of development. These challenges may affect the effectiveness of design and implementation of policies and programmes at the national level. The rapid

evolution and technical nature of science and technology coupled with the difficulty in balancing current regulations with existing realities presents challenges for policymakers when integrating priority issues into national development strategies. Limitations to the sharing of data as well as agreement on norms affect the ability of countries to effectively cooperate at the regional level.

## II. Results achieved in the biennium 2014-2015<sup>1</sup>

### A. Executive direction and management

**Objective of the Organization:** To ensure full implementation of legislative mandates and compliance with United Nations policies and procedures with respect to the management of the programme of work and of staff and financial resources of ESCAP

#### **Expected accomplishment: (a) Programme of work is effectively managed**

**Statement of accomplishments:** As at end 2015, 97 per cent of mandated quantifiable outputs (biennial target – 93 per cent) had been delivered within established timelines. The delivery of outputs was hampered by protests that occurred in Thailand in early 2014, which led to the closure of and restricted access to the ESCAP premises for a prolonged period. Several meetings were postponed or cancelled, with a cascading effect into the second half of 2014. However, contingency plans activated by ESCAP ensured that the work programme delivery was not affected. ESCAP utilized 99.16 per cent (biennial target – 100 per cent) of its regular biennial budget. Through its programme of work, ESCAP assisted senior officials from member States and associate member Governments in regional and global policy dialogues and provided research, analysis and technical cooperation needed for making sound policies, particularly in the area of economic and social development.

#### **Expected accomplishment: (b) Identification of emerging issues that require attention by member States**

**Statement of accomplishments:** The **seventieth and seventy-first** sessions of the Commission set the tone for the biennium, delivering powerful resolutions that will have long-reaching impact. The adoption of Commission resolution 71/1 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission to be fit for the evolving post-2015 development agenda will strengthen the work of ESCAP on energy, financing for development and science, technology and innovation. As at December 2015, 203 recommendations (biennial target – 105) had been made by intergovernmental bodies on emerging issues requiring attention. Through the Office of the Executive Secretary, the secretariat provided strong planning coordination and leadership in delivering against the set target.

<sup>1</sup> Outputs mentioned in the present section are listed in the proposed programme budget submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session (A/68/6 (Sect. 19)). The programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 was approved by the General Assembly in its resolutions 69/263 A-C.

**Expected accomplishment: (c) Enhanced policy coherence in the management of the economic and social activities of the United Nations**

**Statement of accomplishments:** The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism continued to improve regional coordination and coherence across the United Nations system. The number of deliverables produced under the purview of the Mechanism has increased from 20 in 2012-2013 to 34 in 2014-2015 (biennial target – 30). The work of the Mechanism has led, inter alia, to a coherent and coordinated “Delivering as one” approach among United Nations agencies in the region in their cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as reflected in the ASEAN-UN Work Plan for 2015 and the formulation of the new ASEAN-UN Plan of Action for 2016-2020. ESCAP also developed a website through which members of the Mechanism can share information on meetings, thematic issues and other matters related to the body. The website serves as a tool to raise awareness about the work of the Mechanism among member States and other stakeholders.

**Expected accomplishment: (d) Increased exposure of the analytical, normative and capacity-building work of ESCAP, and increased visibility of ESCAP as the most comprehensive regional platform for inclusive and sustainable development as well as its role and impact in the policymaking process and their outcomes**

**Statement of accomplishments:** The media coverage on ESCAP activities consisted of 287 citations in key media outlets (biennial target – 146). There were an additional 290 citations related to the 22 op-eds by the Executive Secretary in top tier and regional/national outlets (biennial target – 36) such as the BBC, CNBC, Financial Times, Bloomberg, CCTV and Channel News Asia. The Commission’s social media footprint also continued to grow. During the biennium, the website received approximately 1.2 million visitors. ESCAP more than doubled its Facebook likes. The ESCAP Twitter account gained almost 30 per cent followers. All of this led to greater awareness of ESCAP activities and its position as a comprehensive regional platform.

**Expected accomplishment: (e) Increased timeliness of submission of documentation**

**Statement of accomplishments:** As of December 2015, 47.20 per cent of pre-session documents were submitted by the 10-week deadline (biennial target – 70 per cent). The low rate is primarily attributable to the protests in Thailand in early 2014, which led to the closure of and restricted access to United Nations premises. Rescheduling meetings to the second half of 2014 required substantive updates to background documents, resulting in delays in submission.

**B. Subprogramme 1: Macroeconomic policy and inclusive development**

**Objective of the Organization:** To foster a sound macroeconomic policy environment and enhance regional economic cooperation for inclusive and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in support of poverty reduction and other internationally agreed development goals, particularly among countries with special needs

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Enhanced understanding among policymakers and other target groups of development trends, emerging issues, macroeconomic challenges and evidence-based policy options that promote economic growth, reduce poverty and narrow the development gaps**

**Statement of accomplishments:** The Commission's work has generated innovative and timely discussions on emerging economic and social challenges facing the region. Eight-hundred references (biennial target – 850) were made in policy documents, academic literature and mass media to findings of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*. The final measurement is below the biennial target as the *2014 Survey* was launched through small-scale subregional events rather than a large regional one, due to the protests occurring in Thailand in early 2014. The references were in top-tier media outlets, such as the BBC, Bloomberg, CNN, Financial Times, Reuters, Wall Street Journal and Xinhua. There was also broad national pick-up across the region. The sessions of the Commission and of the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development also saw member countries frequently refer to the key findings and messages of the *Survey* in their policy statements and round-table discussions.

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Enhanced regional voice in global development forums and strengthened regional economic and financial cooperation to exploit synergies for mutual benefit towards inclusive and sustainable development, including through South-South cooperation**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP successfully organized high-level discussion platforms and workshops that supported member States in reaching a consensus on the formulation of sustainable development policies. Four outcome documents reflecting consensus on regional economic and financial cooperation (biennial target – 3) were endorsed by the Asia-Pacific Outreach Meeting on Sustainable Development Financing (10 and 11 June 2014, Jakarta) and the Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development (29 and 30 April 2015, Jakarta). These documents, together with the publication *Financing for Transformation: From Agenda to Action on Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific* contributed to strengthening the regional voice at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (13 to 16 July 2015, Addis Ababa). The adoption of Commission resolution 70/1 on the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific also demonstrated synergies and collaboration among member States for effective, inclusive and sustainable development in the region.

**Expected accomplishment: (c) Improved capacity of member States, particularly countries with special needs, to design and implement development policies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and internationally agreed development goals**

**Statement of accomplishments:** Thirty-one countries in the region (biennial target – 30) have incorporated principles or recommendations advanced by ESCAP to achieve the Millennium Development Goals into their strategies and government policies. Commitment of member States to implement the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action) was reflected in Commission resolution 70/3. Overall, 89.6 per cent of participants in ESCAP activities

(biennial target – 85 per cent) indicated that they were better able to design and implement sound economic development policies. Samoa and Maldives have graduated from least developed country status; while Kiribati, Tuvalu and Vanuatu are on their way to graduating. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Nepal intend to graduate by 2020.

**Expected accomplishment: (d) Improved capacity of member States to formulate and implement rural development policies that promote sustainable agriculture and food security**

**Statement of accomplishments:** The work of the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture contributed to improving evidence-based policymaking among member States in relation to sustainable agriculture and addressing its environmental, economic and social aspects. Through the Centre’s series of policy publications, it also contributed to enhancing knowledge on food security, the role of agriculture in structural transformation, agricultural innovation systems and market access for smallholder farmers. Overall, 81 per cent of participants (biennial target – 85 per cent) in the work of the Centre indicated that they were better able to formulate and implement rural development policies that promoted sustainable agriculture and food security.

**C. Subprogramme 2: Trade and investment**

**Objective of the Organization:** To enhance trade, investment, enterprise development and technology transfer for inclusive and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Enhanced knowledge of ESCAP member States of trends, emerging issues and evidence-based policy options in the area of trade, investment, enterprise development and technology transfer in support of inclusive and sustainable development**

**Statement of accomplishments:** Analytical work, including the flagship publication *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report*, the Trade and Investment working paper series, and the Trade Insights and ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Databases series, provided a solid basis for evidence-based policymaking and implementation on emerging issues and generated a lot of interest among the media and policymakers. The number of review articles and references to ESCAP publications reached 106 in the area of trade and investment (biennial target – 35) and 34 in the area of technology and transfer and agricultural mechanization (biennial target – 10). The Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade continued to advance the understanding of evidence-based policy options among policymakers within the region, while the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific continued to enhance knowledge on cross-border paperless trade and other emerging issues related to trade facilitation.

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Strengthened regional cooperation in trade, investment, enterprise development, innovation and the development and transfer of technology in support of inclusive and sustainable development**

**Statement of accomplishments:** Negotiations to facilitate cross-border paperless trade advanced under Commission resolutions 68/3 and 70/6. Other ESCAP regional cooperation initiatives, including the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade and the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific, continued to grow. Thirty-four member States participating in regional cooperation mechanisms on trade and investment (biennial target – 26) and twenty-seven member States participating in regional cooperation mechanisms on innovation, technology transfer and agricultural mechanization (biennial target – 10) found them useful. The fourth round of tariff concession negotiations under the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement was successfully concluded, with Mongolia admitted as the seventh member pending national ratification. Although coverage of the Agreement, in terms of average margin of preferences, remained at 32 per cent (biennial target – 35 per cent), the number of products receiving preferences rose from 5,000 in 2013 to 10,868 (biennial target – 6,000).

**Expected accomplishment: (c) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States to formulate and implement more effective and coherent policies on trade, investment, enterprise development and technology transfer in support of inclusive and sustainable development**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP has worked actively to build the capacity of its members in trade and investment policymaking, particularly in the areas of trade policy analysis and trade facilitation, through 82 workshops. On average, 89 per cent of the participants (biennial target – 80 per cent) indicated that their capacity to formulate or implement policies on trade, investment and enterprise development had increased after attending ESCAP activities. In addition, 100 per cent of participants in the activities of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology and the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (biennial target – 80 per cent) acknowledged increased capacity. Analytical work and tools, including the *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report*, the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade studies, the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Agreement and the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Databases, provided a solid basis for more effective design and implementation of policies and international agreements.

**D. Subprogramme 3: Transport**

**Objective of the Organization:** To strengthen regional cooperation and integration in transport for inclusive and sustainable development in the ESCAP region

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Enhanced knowledge and increased capacity of ESCAP member States to develop and implement transport policies and programmes**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP continued to strengthen the capacities of governments and other stakeholders to develop and formulate policies on sustainable transport, thereby contributing to the development of

10 new policies, programmes and initiatives during the biennium, bringing the total number of policies, programmes and initiatives that reflect transport-related principles promoted by ESCAP to 90 (biennial target – 90). Topics covered included supporting infrastructure development through public-private partnerships; improving road safety, including the harmonization and standardization of road traffic rules and road signs in support of the global Decade of Action for Road Safety; and implementing sustainable transport policies. Resource materials on related issues were produced, including the launch of an e-learning series on public-private partnerships. In addition, the Committee on Transport and the Committee on Information and Communications Technology held their first joint session on “Harnessing cross-sectoral infrastructure synergies” to promote synergies between information and communications technology, energy and transport infrastructures.

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States and the private sector to plan and develop international intermodal transport linkages, including the Asian Highway network, the Trans-Asian Railway network and dry ports of international importance**

**Statement of accomplishments:** As governments exert efforts to reconcile the increasing demand for mobility with the need to reduce the negative externalities of the transport sector, the Intergovernmental Agreements on Dry Ports and the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway Networks aim at supporting countries in developing international intermodal transport corridors. During the biennium, three countries became signatories, while five became parties, to the Agreement on Dry Ports, bringing the total number of accessions by ESCAP member States to relevant global, regional and subregional agreements to 73 (biennial target – 70). Significant progress was made in the development and upgrading of the two networks, as reported by member States, in particular during the fourth session of the Committee on Transport in 2014 and the seventy-first session of the Commission in 2015. Specifically, during the biennium, 10 new national projects and feasibility studies were developed to upgrade regional transport infrastructure, bringing the total number of projects and feasibility studies to 70 (biennial target – 70).

**Expected accomplishment: (c) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States and the private sector to implement measures to improve the efficiency of international transport operations and logistics**

**Statement of accomplishments:** The Commission’s assistance resulted in the signing of the Agreement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States on Facilitation of International Road Transport, as well as the adoption of a Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport (Commission resolution 71/7) and of an action plan to improve the performance of the transport corridor connecting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In addition, ESCAP facilitated a draft agreement on international road transport along the Asian highways among China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation. ESCAP also forged consensus on a regional standard model of logistics information systems. The number of initiatives to remove non-physical bottlenecks and facilitate the efficient movement of people, goods and vehicles along transport routes and at border crossings increased from 24 in 2012-2013 to 30 in 2014-2015 (biennial target – 30). Five countries developed training programmes on freight forwarding, multimodal transport and logistics, bringing the total number of countries to fifteen (biennial target – 15).



## E. Subprogramme 4: Environment and development

**Objective of the Organization:** To improve the sustainability, resilience and inclusiveness of societies in Asia and the Pacific, including through promoting quality of growth

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Enhanced understanding by local and national governments of environmental, energy and water and urban policies and strategies for poverty reduction and inclusive and sustainable development**

**Statement of accomplishments:** High-level regional forums, expert group meetings, multi-stakeholder dialogues and field projects were undertaken in 2014-2015 to enhance understanding by local and national governments and other stakeholders of environmental, energy and water, and urban policies and strategies to address poverty and inclusive and sustainable development challenges. ESCAP also published a number of analytical publications, technical reports and policy briefs and developed online platforms related to sustainable development, energy, water and sustainable urban development. This resulted in 29 references (biennial target – 13) to ESCAP publications, policy briefs, projects and related activities in policy documents, declarations and statements and in key media outlets.

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Improved capacity of Governments and other stakeholders in developing and implementing environmental, energy and water and urban policies and strategies for inclusive and sustainable development**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP delivered a series of workshops, study tours and online e-learning capacity-building programmes, including a web-based regional platform on sustainable development and green economy. It has also developed several new online e-learning course modules and launched a website, hosted on the ESCAP site, for the report *Transformation for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific Region*. Capacity-building activities helped to improve both national and regional capabilities to integrate environmental issues into economic and other development policies and plans, with a focus on low-carbon green growth, energy security and water resources and sustainable urban development. These activities reached more than 600 policymakers and key stakeholders in the region. They also contributed to 15 policies, strategies and initiatives developed by governments in the areas of environment, energy, water and urban policies (biennial target – 13).

**Expected accomplishment: (c) Strengthened regional cooperation and networking on environmental, energy and water and urban policies and strategies for inclusive and sustainable development**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP geared its capacity development activities towards supporting long-term consensus building, particularly in light of ongoing global debates related to the development of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Work was conducted to lay the foundation for building consensus and to provide member States with the latest research and analysis to support intergovernmental dialogue. During the biennium, ESCAP prepared the publication *The State of the Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific*, held the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (21 and 22

May 2015, Bangkok) and organized the Sixth Asia Pacific Urban Forum (19 to 21 October 2015, Jakarta) and the regional consultation on accountability and implementation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Twenty outcome documents, recommendations and initiatives (biennial target – 20) were issued to support the Commission’s work in the areas of the environment, energy security, water resources management and urban development.

**F. Subprogramme 5: Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction and management**

**Objective of the Organization:** To strengthen information and communications technology (ICT) connectivity and enhance regional cooperation and capacity for improved disaster risk reduction and management and associated socioeconomic risks towards an inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Improved capacity of member States to measure and analyse progress towards an inclusive and resilient information society**

**Statement of accomplishments:** Eighty-one per cent of policymakers (biennial target – 75 per cent) indicated that their knowledge and skills in developing policies and strategies for the application of information and communications technologies and for disaster risk reduction improved through analytical studies, regional workshops and multi-stakeholder policy dialogue. Member States continued to place value on the impact of the Commission’s efforts to enhance knowledge and skills to formulate policies and strategies in the field of information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction. This was demonstrated during the fourth session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology (14 to 16 October 2014, Bangkok), at which the Committee called on ESCAP to provide increased assistance, in particular to countries with special needs, to strengthen capacities for evidence-based policymaking in information and communications technology. As at end 2015, 11 policies, strategies and initiatives (biennial target – 11) had been written or undertaken in the area of information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction.

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Strengthened regional cooperation in ICT connectivity for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development**

**Statement of accomplishments:** Fifteen ESCAP member States (biennial target – 10) indicated that they derived benefits from ESCAP-promoted regional cooperation mechanisms in the areas of information and communications technology connectivity and space technology applications for disaster risk reduction, as evidenced by the statements and reports made in 2014-2015. The regional cooperation mechanism efforts included the Asia-Pacific information superhighway initiatives, geo-referenced information systems for disaster risk management and the Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning, which focused on supporting developing countries in the region. United Nations agencies and regional organizations also expressed their support for the Commission’s regional cooperation programmes to promote information and communications technology connectivity and geospatial information applications for disaster risk reduction. In addition, ESCAP led the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action 2012-2017, which has made progress as a result of the support of member States and global/regional partners.

**Expected accomplishment: (c) Improved knowledge and awareness of member States of effective policies and strategies in disaster risk reduction in the region**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP contributed to improving knowledge of policymakers on effective policies and strategies in disaster risk reduction and resilience building through analytical and normative studies, regional sharing of good practices and lessons learned, and regional cooperation activities. Eighty per cent of ESCAP member States (biennial target – 62) who have attended ESCAP-organized activities have indicated that they were better able to assess, prepare and manage disaster risks. In particular, the knowledge and awareness of government officials in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into multisectoral and subnational development planning have improved. ESCAP enhanced assessment tools for disaster- and climate-related vulnerabilities and risks and disaster information management, including in seismic risk reduction. Regional strategies on disaster-related statistics were identified at ESCAP-organized regional platforms. ESCAP also identified regional cooperation strategies for addressing shared risks, improving regional multi-hazard early warning systems and establishing regional cooperative mechanisms for transboundary hazards.

**Expected accomplishment: (d) Strengthened capacity of member States to apply ICT for inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development policies and programmes**

**Statement of accomplishments:** The Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development has been rolled out in 30 countries and expanded to 11 modules. More than 30,000 government officials, policymakers and civil service trainers have been reached through face-to-face and online training activities. Ninety per cent of stakeholders participating in the Centre's events (biennial target – 85 per cent) recognized their relevance and usefulness. By the end of 2015, 361 national training initiatives (biennial target – 195) reflected or integrated modules developed by the Centre, thereby enhancing the sustainability and impact of the Academy programme. The Virtual Academy modules are available in 16 languages. The Primer Series on ICTD for Youth has been rolled out in 14 countries and 7 languages and adopted by more than 130 universities, thereby filling the gap in the area of information and communications technology for development at institutions of higher learning in the region.

**G. Subprogramme 6: Social development**

**Objective of the Organization:** To strengthen regional cooperation in building a socially inclusive society that protects, empowers and ensures equality for all social groups in Asia and the Pacific

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Increased knowledge and awareness of social development and population trends and policies in the region, including their gender dimensions, as a basis for effective decision-making by ESCAP member States**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP identified key priorities and practical approaches to support evidence-based policies of member States through ground-breaking research on youth exclusion, trends with regards to the HIV response, the status of the Beijing Platform for Action, the situation of persons with disability, international migration, social protection and inequality, population and development, and ageing. Twelve ESCAP member States (biennial target – 12) found ESCAP-promoted social development policy options, strategies and good practices useful for effective decision-making. Ninety-four per cent of respondents to evaluations of ESCAP publications and reports (biennial target – 80 per cent) indicated that their knowledge and awareness of social development and population trends, policies and good practices had been enhanced. Similarly, 93 per cent of respondents to evaluations of analytical products (biennial target – 70 per cent) indicated that their knowledge and awareness of the gender dimensions of social development and population trends had been enhanced.

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Enhanced regional cooperation and capacity in implementing international commitments to promote social integration and social protection, particularly for vulnerable social groups, in Asia and the Pacific**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP member States adopted 14 resolutions, decisions and recommendations (biennial target – 12) reflecting consensus on advancing the implementation of international and regional commitments to promote social integration and social protection. Seventeen regional and subregional frameworks, partnerships and arrangements (biennial target – 5) were established on related issues. The ESCAP Roadmap on HIV and AIDS, which reflects regional consensus on priority areas for action on achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, has been implemented in at least 13 countries. It received renewed endorsement when the ESCAP Regional Framework for Action on HIV and AIDS beyond 2015 was adopted by the Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS in 2015. The Asia-Pacific Youth Alliance, launched in 2014, has served as a platform for further subregional networks and initiatives. In particular, the Kathmandu Call for Action, agreed in March 2015, developed partnerships that were subsequently instrumental in youth-led earthquake responses.

**Expected accomplishment: (c) Enhanced regional cooperation and capacity in implementing international commitments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP has enhanced regional cooperation to promote the adoption and implementation of normative frameworks for realizing gender equality and to strengthen the capacities of government entities, including national women's machineries, to mainstream gender in national development agendas. The impact of the Commission's work was demonstrated by the regional consensus built around the need for a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2030 Agenda. The importance accorded by member States to regional cooperation in advancing gender equality was evidenced by five recommendations, decisions and initiatives undertaken by member States (biennial target – 3), including the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the enhanced ability of government officials in monitoring progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action through gender indicators.

Ninety-three per cent of participants (biennial target – 80) who attended the workshops on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment agreed that their knowledge and skills had been enhanced.

**Expected accomplishment: (d) Enhanced regional cooperation and capacity to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific**

**Statement of accomplishments:** Through support to the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities and interventions to raise awareness and build technical capacity, ESCAP enhanced regional cooperation and the capacity of member States to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. This was reflected in the 13 recommendations, decisions and initiatives (biennial target – 8) made and undertaken by ESCAP member States towards strengthening regional and subregional frameworks for cooperation in this area. Those included high-level commitments to the Roadmap on the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, implementation of 15 national action plans on substantive goals of the Incheon Strategy and references to persons with disabilities in regional and global intergovernmental commitments on disaster risk reduction and gender equality. All participants in ESCAP activities (biennial target – 80 per cent) indicated that they had enhanced their knowledge on disability.

## H. Subprogramme 7: Statistics

**Objective of the Organization:** To improve the use of statistics for evidence-based decision-making and to develop and disseminate quality statistics for inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies in the ESCAP region

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Enhanced understanding among decision makers and members of the public, through statistical information and analysis, of development trends and emerging issues in order to promote inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP produced various materials analysing development trends and emerging issues throughout the region. Sixty per cent (biennial target – 60 per cent) of national decision makers and members of the public found the Commission’s analytical tools relevant and useful. The scope and use of statistical databases was expanded with new indicators and important products, including ESCAP flagship publications and monitoring platforms. Downloads of ESCAP statistical products have increased from 500 per month in 2012-2013 to 2,127 per month in 2014-2015 (biennial target – 600). Online dissemination of the *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2014* proved successful, as evidenced by a concurrent increase in database user activity. The *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2015* reoriented the analysis around the Sustainable Development Goals. *Making It Happen: Technology, Finance and Statistics for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*, the 2015 issue of the *Asia-Pacific Regional Millennium Development Goals Report* series, focused on the need to build statistical capacity to enable evidence-based decisions. ESCAP introduced Stats Briefs and working papers as vehicles for research on a number of sustainable development goals-related measurement topics.

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States to produce, disseminate and use statistics in accordance with internationally agreed standards and good practices in support of progress towards inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies**

**Statement of accomplishments:** The Commission's regional programmes on statistics focused specifically on increasing the capacity of member States to produce, disseminate and use statistics, mobilizing funds, providing advisory services, and organizing expert group meetings and seminars. The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific trained more than 1,400 government statisticians from 65 countries. Ninety-six per cent of participants who attended the workshops and expert meetings (biennial target – 65 per cent) indicated that they were able to apply knowledge gained for better provision and use of comparable data. Sixty-five per cent of statisticians from national systems trained by the Institute (biennial target – 70 per cent) indicated that they were better able to produce timely and high-quality data. ESCAP supported member States in devising action plans to identify statistical capacity gaps required to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **I. Subprogramme 8: Subregional activities for development**

### **Component 1**

#### **Subregional activities for development in the Pacific**

**Objective of the Organization:** To effectively address the priority areas of the Pacific subregion in the formulation and implementation of inclusive and sustainable development policies for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 and the Millennium Development Goals

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Increased capacity to formulate and implement concrete and additional measures at the national and/or subregional level to effectively address the vulnerabilities and development needs of Pacific island countries and territories**

**Statement of accomplishments:** During the biennium, 18 requests from governments in the Pacific (biennial target – 10) were received and processed by ESCAP. Two countries developed a national labour migration plan which addressed vulnerabilities to climate change, and another country completed a national labour survey. Ten countries enhanced their capacities to formulate regional policy dialogue positions to address the vulnerabilities and development needs of Pacific island countries, in particular in relation to climate change and social exclusion. As a result, the outcome of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (1 to 4 September 2014, Apia), SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, reflected a majority of the concerns of small island developing countries in the Pacific. Three countries enhanced their capacities towards incorporating sustainable development into their respective national development strategic plans. Two countries developed national plans on collecting environmental statistics to strengthen evidence-based policies on sustainable development.

**Expected accomplishment: (b) The Pacific island countries and territories are able to influence the work of regional and global sustainable development policy forums and processes**

**Statement of accomplishments:** An increasing number of Pacific island delegates at senior levels have been attending ESCAP meetings, which has influenced the work of the Commission and resulted in resolutions addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing countries. Thirteen strategic sustainable development policy objectives and initiatives (biennial target – 10) have been addressed by ESCAP. The Pacific Regional Data Repository for Sustainable Energy for All was endorsed by energy ministers. A second phase of the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy was developed as a result of regional inputs by countries at the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee meetings. One country completed its universal periodic review and submitted it to the Human Rights Council. Pacific civil registrars shared information for the improvement of the collection and storing of civil registration and vital statistics.

**Expected accomplishment: (c) Strengthened intraregional cooperation and integration for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development, including through South-South cooperation**

**Statement of accomplishments:** Fifteen intraregional cooperation initiatives, including South-South cooperation (biennial target – 12) between Pacific island countries and Asia were facilitated through or with ESCAP. Following a Pacific regional workshop on the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement, 11 Pacific island countries showed interest and requested ESCAP to undertake country-specific studies to assess the costs and benefits of joining the Agreement. ESCAP also facilitated discussions and agreement of a regional position for the post-2015 development agenda between 14 Pacific island countries. During the Asia-Pacific High-Level Consultation on Financing for Development, nine Pacific island countries were provided with information on infrastructure developments in the Pacific islands, which enhanced meaningful dialogue with Asian countries. As a result of an ESCAP-led regional meeting, eight Pacific island countries strengthened intraregional integration through the strategies developed to improve medium-term expenditure planning as a tool for achieving national sustainable development.

## **Component 2**

### **Subregional activities for development in East and North-East Asia**

**Objective of the Organization:** To effectively address the priority areas of the East and North-East Asian subregion in the formulation and implementation of inclusive and sustainable development policies for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States to formulate and implement development policies and programmes, including those with a gender dimension, that address sustainable development, taking into account the green economy in the context of the sustainable development and poverty eradication approach and energy efficiency, ICT, disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management, poverty reduction and infrastructure development**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP made significant progress in promoting subregional cooperation through which member States enhanced their capacities on subregional connectivity, sustainable development, energy efficiency, disaster risk reduction and inclusive development. In the field of environmental sustainability, cooperation was expanded into transboundary air pollution, transboundary nature conservation, marine protected areas and low carbon cities through new field projects and formal frameworks under the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation. To address disparity among member States in the region in terms of economic development and limited experience with cooperation, ESCAP maintained regular communication with countries through consultative events and identified potential joint activities that helped to enhance cooperation among members and to expand the scope of subregional cooperation in addressing broad issues of sustainable development. Eighty per cent of participants in ESCAP activities (biennial target – 75 per cent) recognized the importance and relevance of ESCAP in formulating and implementing policies and programmes in key priority areas.

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Strengthened knowledge-sharing and partnerships among member States, regional organizations, civil society and other relevant development partners to address key priority areas in East and North-East Asia to support the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP collaborated with member States and other stakeholders to formulate a programme of work addressing key priority areas in the subregion. Seventy per cent of member States (biennial target – 60) indicated that regional cooperation on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals among key stakeholders had increased. ESCAP launched a platform to share innovative ideas for actions by governments, local authorities, the private sector and civil society to create age-friendly societies in the subregion. In view of the growing importance of financing for development as the means of implementing the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the subregion's role as an emerging donor bloc, ESCAP established the North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum to facilitate discussions based on research and analysis of policies and practices of development assistance and cooperation. Seven partner institutions in the subregion (biennial target – 6) participated in ESCAP knowledge-sharing activities.

### **Component 3**

#### **Subregional activities for development in North and Central Asia**

**Objective of the Organization:** To effectively address the priority areas of the North and Central Asian subregion in the formulation and implementation of inclusive and sustainable development policies for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Increased capacity of ESCAP member States to formulate and implement development policies and programmes, including those with a gender dimension, that address transport and trade facilitation and water, energy and the environment**



**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP worked closely with member States to respond to the subregional needs for increased capacity in policy formulation and implementation for inclusive and sustainable development with a focus on trade and transport facilitation, environmental issues, including energy security, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Subregional priorities and developmental gaps were identified and addressed through analysis of key socioeconomic trends and dissemination of the Commission's research findings and policy recommendations, flagship publications, policy briefs and information notes as well as through consultative meetings involving government representatives, policy experts and stakeholders from academia and business. The importance of the Commission's work in promoting regional cooperation in the subregion and the subregion's deeper integration with the rest of Asia and the Pacific was recognized by 77 per cent of member States, as evidenced by the statements made at the seventy-first session of the Commission, as well as at various committee meetings (biennial target – 70).

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Strengthened knowledge-sharing and partnerships among member States, regional organizations, civil society and other relevant development partners to address key priority areas in North and Central Asia to support the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP continued to support the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, a platform for facilitating evolving consensus, concerted actions and strategic partnerships and relationships in support of internationally agreed development goals in North and Central Asia. Sixty per cent of member States (biennial target – 60) indicated that collaboration on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals among key stakeholders had increased. Member States of the Special Programme agreed to be more pro-actively involved, through in-kind and financial contributions. Furthermore, they agreed to ensure better coordination among regional programmes, organizations and donors, to highlight and develop the linkages between the Programme and the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, and to engage fully in the 2030 Agenda. Six partner institutions in the subregion (biennial target – 6) also participated in the knowledge-sharing activities facilitated by ESCAP.

#### **Component 4**

##### **Subregional activities for development in South and South-West Asia**

**Objective of the Organization:** To effectively address the priority areas of the South and South-West Asian subregion in the formulation and implementation of inclusive and sustainable development policies for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Enhanced capacity of ESCAP member States in South and South-West Asia to formulate and implement development policies and programmes to address their key development challenges and to harness the potential of regional and South-South cooperation, with a special focus on countries with special needs in the subregion**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP helped member States and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) secretariat to articulate subregional priorities with regard to the 2030 Agenda. ESCAP provided policy options and capacity-building on employment and social protection and supported the SAARC Gender Policy Advocacy Group to mainstream entrepreneurship in its women's empowerment strategy. The Commission's work on transport connectivity advocated multimodal corridors extended beyond SAARC to contiguous subregions to maximize network externalities, an approach endorsed by SAARC leaders. Capacity-building support was provided to least developed countries on multilateral and regional trading arrangements. Other policy discussions focused on sustainable urbanization and public-private partnerships for infrastructure development. Eighty-five per cent of participants (biennial target – 70 per cent) found the work relevant and useful in addressing key subregional priorities. The work of ESCAP received support during the Commission sessions and was referenced in key media in South and South-West Asia with over 150 citations (biennial target – 100).

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Strengthened knowledge-sharing and partnerships among member States, regional organizations, civil society and other relevant development partners to address key priority areas in South and South-West Asia to support the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP strived to fulfil its role as a subregional knowledge hub and platform for consensus-building, concerted actions and strategic partnerships, in support of internationally agreed development goals. Ninety-one per cent of member States (biennial target – 60 per cent) indicated that cooperation on the achievement of the development goals had increased. ESCAP prepared and disseminated a broad range of policy-relevant knowledge products, including *South and South-West Asia Development Report 2015-16: Regional Cooperation for Inclusive and Sustainable Development*, the Development Papers series, policy briefs and e-newsletters. It also convened and contributed to highly visible subregional forums, acting as an authoritative source of policy-relevant analysis to address challenges facing the subregion and advance regional economic integration. Ten partners (biennial target – 8) were closely engaged in the subregional knowledge-sharing activities of ESCAP. In particular, ESCAP worked closely with the SAARC secretariat in responding to the subregion's capacity development needs in selected areas of regional cooperation for inclusive development.

## **Component 5**

### **Subregional activities for development in South-East Asia**

**Objective of the Organization:** To effectively address the priority areas of the South-East Asian subregion in the formulation and implementation of inclusive and sustainable development policies for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

**Expected accomplishment: (a) Enhanced capacity of ESCAP member States in South-East Asia to formulate and implement development policies and programmes to address their key development challenges, with particular focus on countries with special needs in South-East Asia**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP continued to assist Myanmar in its efforts to integrate into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and provided support to build the capacity of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for its upcoming chairmanship of ASEAN in 2016. ESCAP also supported these two Governments in their eventual graduation from the least developed countries category. ESCAP enhanced national capacities to promote investment for small and medium-sized enterprises, develop transport and undertake statistical analyses of monitoring indicators in support of inclusive development policies and of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Through sharing of regional best practices, ESCAP assisted Timor-Leste in strengthening the capacity of officials to implement its National Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030. Seventy per cent of participants in ESCAP activities (biennial target – 75 per cent) found those activities relevant and useful for formulating and implementing policies and programmes in key priority areas.

**Expected accomplishment: (b) Strengthened partnerships and knowledge-sharing among member States, regional organizations, civil society and other relevant development partners in addressing key priority areas in South-East Asia in support of the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals**

**Statement of accomplishments:** ESCAP facilitated five collaborative initiatives involving member States and other stakeholders (biennial target – 6) to address subregional priority areas. ESCAP provided the platform for knowledge sharing on the status, challenges and prospects of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In partnership with the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, ESCAP organized a subregional advocacy workshop on the Millennium Development Goals (24 to 26 June 2014, Vientiane). Through the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, ESCAP also facilitated the launch of the Zero Hunger Challenge in Timor-Leste in January 2014. The key development priorities of the subregion were to strengthen the Myanmar SME Link platform in connecting local entrepreneurs with global opportunities, generate jobs and promote inclusive development, facilitate the development of an integrated transport and logistics system in ASEAN countries and the Pacific subregion, and promote South-South cooperation.