



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Subcommittee on Information, Communications and Space Technology

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**PROGRAMME MATTERS: REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE
FOR 2002-2003**

(Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

In line with the revitalization of ESCAP and the United Nations system-wide reforms introduced by the Secretary-General in 1997, ESCAP is making a full shift to results-based management. The results-based initiative allows the United Nations, including ESCAP, to determine more clearly and systematically the usefulness, relevance, effectiveness and impact of its work. The new approach also enhances ESCAP's accountability to its members and associate members in the use of resources and the delivery of results within its sphere of influence.

The present document contains the first results-based programme performance report for ESCAP, in line with the new reporting procedures established by United Nations Headquarters. It presents the consolidated achievements and results of activities undertaken under the ESCAP subprogramme on information, communication and space technology and the lessons learned during the biennium 2002-2003. The results have been evaluated according to the "expected accomplishments" of the biennial work programme, as contained in the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. The document serves as a key instrument by which ESCAP members and associate members can evaluate the results, relevance and performance of individual subprogrammes.

The Subcommittee is invited to review and comment on the document.

INTRODUCTION

1. In line with the revitalization of ESCAP and the United Nations system-wide reforms introduced by the Secretary-General in 1997 (see A/51/950 and Add.1-7), ESCAP has adopted a results-based approach in the planning, management and reporting of its programme of work. The results-based initiative allows ESCAP to determine more clearly and systematically the usefulness, relevance, effectiveness and impact of its work. This approach also enhances ESCAP's accountability to its members and associate members in the use of resources and the delivery of results within its sphere of influence.

2. The present document contains the first results-oriented performance report of the ESCAP programme of work, in line with the new reporting procedures established by United Nations Headquarters. It contains the consolidated results of activities undertaken under the information, communication and space technology subprogramme and the lessons learned during the biennium 2002-2003.

3. The document, as presented to the Commission at its sixtieth session, in April 2004, serves as a key instrument by which the ESCAP members and associate members can evaluate the results and the relevance of ESCAP's information, communication and space technology subprogramme. The results have been evaluated according to the "expected accomplishments" of the biennial work programme for 2002-2003, as contained in the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.¹ The primary means of determining or verifying the results achieved included a review of formal and informal records (for example, country papers submitted to ESCAP, reports of intergovernmental review bodies and expert group meetings, external or internal project assessments and mission reports); survey administration (including ex post facto surveys and end-of-workshop questionnaires); conduct of formal and non-formal interviews with direct project beneficiaries; and other methodologies, such as Internet research and tracking of the relevant media coverage.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/55/6/Rev.1)*, paras. 15.1-15.38; see also *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/57/6/Rev.1)*, paras. 15.1-15.40.

RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR THE BIENNIUM 2002-2003

Subprogramme 6: Information, communication and space technology

Objective: To strengthen the capacity of ESCAP members and associate members, especially the developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the region, particularly the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, to create an enabling environment for the development, transfer and application of information, communication and space technology.

Expected result 1: Improved national information and communication technology policy and regulatory frameworks and strengthened institutional capacity to facilitate the national development of such technology policies and regulatory framework

Progress: Two countries (Indonesia and Mongolia) have taken initiatives towards the development of national ICT policies as a direct result of their participation in ESCAP activities. A framework for regional cooperation on bridging the digital divide was also established with the adoption of the Tokyo Declaration resulting from the Asian Regional Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society, organized by ESCAP and ITU and held in Tokyo in January 2003. The Declaration provided a major regional input into the first phase of the World Summit and was selected as a basis for the formulation of the Summit's Plan of Action and Declaration of Principles. Inter-agency cooperation, with ESCAP in the lead role, has resulted in successful regional preparation for the World Summit and the formulation of a regional road map towards an information society. Ten developing countries received capacity-building assistance from ESCAP to improve their national ICT policies and regulatory frameworks.

Expected result 2: Enhanced regional cooperation in information and communication technology applications to support national efforts to strengthen the competitiveness of products and services

Progress: Regional cooperation was enhanced in ICT applications related to the competitiveness of products and services through the identification and promotion of sharing of good practices in e-business development among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). ESCAP identified a number of good practices in the use of ICT by SMEs in Cambodia, the Philippines, Singapore and Viet Nam and conducted a needs assessment for e-business development in Malaysia. In follow-up to the regional workshop on the promotion of training in information and communication technology, plans have also been made to establish two subregional training centres to provide financial and technical support to countries in their ICT-related capacity-building and development of human resources.

Expected result 3: Enhanced regional cooperation in the application of information and space technologies to support national efforts to reduce poverty

Progress: A set of recommendations, including on the roles of government, international organizations, the private sector and local communities, resulted from a series of poverty reduction

workshops organized by ESCAP. The recommendations will serve as the basis for formulating regional guidelines on the application of ICT to meet the needs of the rural poor. The ESCAP workshop on ICT-based poverty mapping also resulted in the preparation of a regional compendium of poverty mapping methods and recommendations on using ICT to improve, among others, data quality, regional networking, and training and research.

Expected result 4: (1) Enhanced national capacity and (2) regional cooperation in information and space technology applications for environmental protection and disaster management

Progress: (1) The implementation of three regional cooperative projects under the regional framework of cooperation, the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP), enhanced national capacity in the use of information and space technologies for environmental protection and sustainable development. Under the projects, officials from 16 countries in the ESCAP region were trained in the application of remote sensing, geographic information systems and modelling applications for sustainable development planning and natural resources management. In collaboration with FAO, ESCAP contributed to the capacity-building of seven countries, with the aim of developing a subregional multi-purpose environmental and natural resources information base. (2) Regional cooperation on space technology applications to support national disaster management efforts was enhanced under the project on capacity-building for disaster management in Asia and the Pacific. Twenty-one ESCAP members and associate members, including all countries in the Asian and Pacific region with space programmes, benefited from the exchange of information and experiences during the two regional workshops on disaster management organized by ESCAP under the project. Fifteen members and associate members expressed interest and made conditional commitments to participate in disaster-related activities involving regional cooperation. Four (China, India, France and the Republic of Korea) offered to support disaster-related training activities and to consider extension of expertise in space applications for natural disaster management.

Lessons learned

- For broader and more effective use of ICT-related tools in disaster management, more attention needs to be paid to targeting government officials at the decision-making level and raising their awareness of the benefits of space technology.
- As poverty mapping tools can be quite costly, a study should be undertaken with regard to their cost-effectiveness in poverty reduction programmes and to explore alternative approaches.
- Regional cooperation on ICT and space technology applications has been successful largely owing to the effective functioning of RESAP as the framework for regional cooperation and continued technical support of ESCAP members and associate members with space programmes. Such institutional arrangements should be taken into account in planning future interventions to help to ensure their effectiveness.