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**CONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATIVE BODY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING
REPORTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECTED COMMISSION RESOLUTIONS,
INCLUDING RESOLUTION 60/1 ON THE SHANGHAI DECLARATION:
POVERTY REDUCTION**

(Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda)

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON POVERTY REDUCTION
ON ITS THIRD SESSION**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The Committee on Poverty Reduction held its third session at Bangkok from 29 November to 1 December 2006. The Committee discussed issues related to the informal sector and its contributions to employment generation and poverty reduction. The Committee encouraged the secretariat to continue its work in facilitating the documentation and dissemination of innovative and effective experiences in poverty reduction and informal sector promotion. The Committee recommended that while extending assistance to member States to fight poverty, the secretariat should direct its efforts within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Committee deliberated on statistical issues pertaining to the measurement of the informal sector and its linkages to poverty, assessments of the progress towards the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals, as well as the strengthening of national statistical capacity by promoting the 2010 round of population and housing censuses. The Committee concurred that the proposed regional census programme was timely, responsive to countries' needs and contained the right mix of activities. A number of delegations supported the proposal to develop a draft resolution for statistical capacity-building related to a regional census programme which would then be submitted to the Commission at its sixty-third session.

The Committee reviewed and supported in principle the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2008-2009 with regard to the sub-programmes on (a) poverty and development (b) statistics, and (c) development of Pacific island countries and territories. The Committee considered the evaluation of two selected flagship projects in the thematic area of poverty reduction.

The Commission is invited to consider matters calling for its action or brought to its attention and provide further guidance to the secretariat.

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I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION OR TO BE BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

1. The Committee recognized the important role that the informal sector could play in poverty reduction and noted the value of learning from the different experiences of member countries; the Committee encouraged the secretariat to continue its work in facilitating the documentation and dissemination of innovative and effective experiences in poverty reduction and informal sector promotion. In that respect, it identified several useful instruments for improving the conditions of the poor and participants in the informal sector. Those included microfinance, skills training, community-based insurance schemes, the use of remittances and the development of an enabling environment for small and medium-sized enterprises.
2. The Committee recommended that the ESCAP secretariat take more initiatives to assist member States to develop their respective informal sectors, and particularly to build their capacities for data collection and analysis, and developing and promoting small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as microfinance.
3. The Committee noted that community-based monitoring system (CBMS) could play a key role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals at the local level. It noted with satisfaction the contribution of CBMS in providing disaggregated data on Millennium Development Goal indicators to policymakers in the Philippines. It urged other developing countries to also initiate and implement such innovative systems to be able to monitor the Millennium Development Goals at the local level, which would help in localizing the Goals.
4. The Committee noted with satisfaction the role and efforts of ESCAP in assisting member States to fight poverty and recommended that such efforts should be directed within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. The Committee recognized that the commitment contained in the Jakarta Declaration on Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific: The Way Forward 2015 (A/60/313, annex) and Commission resolution 62/1 of 12 April 2006 on Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the ESCAP region should form the basis for enhanced, sustained and concurrent actions at the regional level to reduce poverty and accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
5. The Committee observed that regional cooperation measures were adding significant value to national efforts and processes to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Committee further observed that several countries were finding it difficult to cost the Millennium Development Goals, which was essential for mobilizing the required resources. It requested the secretariat to facilitate linking countries that needed assistance in Millennium Development Goal costing to relevant agencies, such as the UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo.
6. The Committee expressed the need to develop a set of guidelines and a common definition of the informal sector, in conformity with ILO, which would facilitate international comparison of

informal sector data in Asia and the Pacific. The Committee requested that the secretariat disseminate international standards and methodologies employed in informal sector measurement.

7. The Committee recommended that the secretariat provide assistance to countries in collecting data on the informal sector and analysis and dissemination, especially in survey design and questionnaire development. It suggested that the secretariat compile detailed information on survey designs and methodologies already implemented in the region in order to disseminate best practices and inform future activities.

8. The Committee urged the secretariat to collaborate closely with other regional and subregional bodies in initiatives on informal sector measurement, and encouraged the secretariat to explore cooperation opportunities with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

9. The Committee requested further information on statistical matching techniques, one of the methods used to produce the data needed to study the relationship between the informal sector and poverty. The Committee considered that technical cooperation could help to enhance the necessary capacity to implement such methodologies in member States.

10. The Committee expressed its support to the initiatives proposed by the secretariat to improve the availability of data to assess the progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Committee endorsed the specific approaches proposed to strengthen national statistical capacity for data analysis and production through the use of administrative records and registers, and the 2010 round of population and housing censuses (see Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/13).

11. As a means of improving consistency in data values used for assessing progress at the global, regional and national levels, the Committee encouraged the ESCAP secretariat to pursue activities aimed at promoting stronger coordination, both within national statistical systems and between national statistical systems and the international custodian agencies for Millennium Development Goal-related indicators. These activities should include advocacy for a more central role of national statistical offices in Millennium Development Goal data production in national, subregional, regional and international forums, including the Inter-agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators, and through national strategic planning for the development of statistics.

12. The Committee underscored the importance of the proposed ESCAP regional census programme (see E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/4) and noted that a number of countries supported the submission of a draft resolution to the Commission at its sixty-third session to give the secretariat a mandate to assist member and associate member countries in the preparation and implementation of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses.

13. Recognizing that solid waste management was an urgent problem affecting many cities and towns of the region, the Committee applauded the meaningful and significant efforts undertaken by

the secretariat through its project on community-based solid waste management (see E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/6). It emphasized the need to undertake more pilot projects and summarize the lessons learned. It also pointed out the need for further efforts to upscale such pilot projects.

14. The Committee recognized that addressing the needs of persons with disabilities is an important policy issue, particularly in the Asia and Pacific region, and expressed its appreciation of the secretariat's work on the project on "Improving disability statistics and measurement in support of the Biwako Millennium Framework" (see E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/7). The Committee encouraged the secretariat to continue its work to develop disability statistics in order to generate a greater and longer-lasting impact on the availability, quality and comparability of information on persons with disabilities.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE SESSION

A. Poverty and the informal sector

15. The Committee had before it two documents entitled "Role of the informal sector in poverty reduction" (E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/1) and "Measurement issues" (E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/2). A wide ranging and substantive discussion took place on both policy issues and measurement issues related to poverty and the informal sector.

16. The Committee recognized the importance of the informal sector in the economy, particularly in terms of employment generation. In some countries the informal sector was very large and workers were forced to join the informal sector to earn a living due to the lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector. While the informal sector was heterogeneous and covered many activities, it was dominated by the services subsector. The Committee noted that, in the wake of the Asian financial crisis of 1997, many people in the affected countries had lost their jobs in the formal sector and had turned to the informal sector as a last resort. They had been able to find employment opportunities in the informal sector to support themselves and their families. The importance of the informal sector in generating employment had become much more apparent during the financial crisis.

17. The Committee recognized the role of the informal sector in poverty reduction. The earnings and incomes of participants in the informal sector tended to be low. However, without that sector, many people would have been driven to destitution if they had not been able to find employment opportunities elsewhere. Measures were needed to improve the productivity and incomes of informal sector participants, which would strengthen its role in poverty reduction. However, the Committee emphasized that the ultimate objective should be to formalize all informal producers and workers by gradually reducing the share and size of the informal sector in order to ensure that the formal sector could grow and to improve incomes and working conditions of the population in general.

18. The Committee noted the various policies and programmes adopted by countries to raise the productivity of those working in the informal sector. They included the provision of credit, skills

training, improved access to physical infrastructure, the extension of social protection, assistance in the formation of self-help groups and businesses and workers' associations, and the strengthening of linkages with the formal sector.

19. The Committee further observed that the provision of skills training was key to enhancing the efficiency of workers in the informal sector. Skills training enhanced opportunities for people to obtain jobs and, at the same time, those with skills training were better able to protect their rights and secure better working conditions and incomes. Skills training should be provided in those locations and places where informal workers were concentrated and short courses of skills training provided to develop marketable skills.

20. The Committee emphasized that informal producers and workers could improve their productivity and incomes through their own organized efforts and through self-help groups. Associations of businesses and workers could facilitate access to credit, arrange training for workers, and assist in introducing modern technologies and in dealing with harassment from regulatory authorities.

21. The Committee recognized that local government bodies could implement some of the development programmes for the informal sector in a more effective and efficient manner. In that respect, it was important for elected local government bodies to include representatives of the informal sector.

22. The Committee observed that many countries in the region had established programmes for the benefit of participants of the informal sector. However, there was a general lack of awareness of such programmes and their usefulness. Therefore, it was important that awareness about the programmes be raised through all possible means, including the mass media.

23. The Committee was informed of the findings of the Expert Group Meeting on Localizing the Millennium Development Goals through community-based monitoring system (CBMS), which met the day before the Committee began its work. The findings had an important bearing on monitoring the Millennium Development Goals at the local level, as well as informal sector development. The very limited availability of official information on the informal sector made it difficult to assess the impact of various policy interventions on the informal sector. The CBMS was a major tool to collect data at the local level to complement official statistics obtained through household censuses. It also encouraged community participation in the collection and validation of data, including those related to Millennium Development Goal indicators. As the CBMS covered all households in the community, it also captured the activities of the informal sector. The collected data helped local governments to implement effectively targeted strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the process promoted ownership to the community and local governments. Thus, CBMS also helped in promoting decentralization and localizing the Millennium Development Goals.

24. The Committee noted the value of learning from the different experiences of member States and encouraged the secretariat to continue its work in facilitating the documentation and dissemination of innovative and effective experiences in poverty reduction and informal sector development. It identified several useful instruments to improve the conditions of the poor and informal sector participants. Those included microfinance, skills training, community-based insurance schemes, the use of remittances and the development of an enabling environment for small and medium-sized enterprises. The Committee encouraged increased programmatic cooperation among member States and the secretariat in those areas. Poverty reduction programmes relying on direct cash transfers was another instrument identified as increasingly relevant and the conditions under which such programmes work should be researched and analysed.

25. The Committee noted various government programmes in member States to improve the living conditions of the urban and rural poor. Notable successes had been achieved in some countries through integrated strategies, which looked beyond economic development. The importance of increasing the capacities of the poor themselves was also highlighted. In that respect, the Committee expressed its appreciation to the delegation of Thailand for its presentation on the concept of self-sufficiency. The approach was aimed at fostering social harmony and making the poor aware of the need to live within one's means by reducing unnecessary expenditures before trying to increase incomes. Such an approach could also ease migratory pressures in an increasingly urbanized region.

26. The Committee noted that the sustainable development of rural employment and income generation and assuring the food security of the rural people could be achieved by improving agricultural programmes and developing infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, education and telecommunication services. Lack of infrastructure, particularly roads and bridges, created difficulties for farmers when transporting their products to market, thus limiting food supply and contributing to the poverty in rural areas. For island developing States, lack of effective water transport posed a constraint to poverty reduction. In the context of rural poverty, the Committee also noted with appreciation the effort undertaken by the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Secondary Crops Development in Asia and the Pacific in reducing poverty through the development of secondary crops.

27. The Committee noted the achievements of the "One Tambon One Product" (OTOP) project and the "Supporting Rural Industrial Development" (SRID) project, which were aimed at increasing the income of the poor in Thailand. Those projects showed the relevance of linking rural and urban areas in addressing poverty issues. The production of high-value products at the local level could be stimulated by facilitating access to a larger urban consumer base and markets and by providing support by developing products and marketing skills, as demonstrated in the OTOP project. Similarly, the cooperation established between the government, private sector and rural communities led to the transfer of manufacturing activities, supported by targeted local-level capacity-building as carried out by SRID, have had a significant impact on the income of people in rural areas.

28. The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts of the Government of Sri Lanka to improve living conditions in the poorest villages of the country through a programme called “Gama Neguma”. The programme adopted a multisectoral approach that included the development of strong communities, the construction of physical infrastructure and the development of agricultural industries, as well as capacity-building and microfinance for small enterprises and income-generation activities.

29. The Committee noted that there was a serious lack of data on the informal sector in the region, even though it was widely believed that there was a relationship between poverty and the informal sector, supporting statistical evidence was extremely limited. It was noted by several delegations that there was a strong need to increase the availability of data on the informal sector in the region in order to conduct evidence-based assessments and to develop relevant policies. The Committee thus requested that the secretariat support country initiatives in collecting, analysing and disseminating data on the informal sector. More specifically, the Committee encouraged the secretariat to support countries in survey design and questionnaire development by compiling a repository of country practices and methodologies. One delegation suggested that countries in the region should consider including regular production of informal sector data in their statistical work programme. Several delegations noted that funding constraints might hamper their data collection efforts.

30. The Committee expressed the need to have a common definition of the informal sector in order to ensure data comparability across countries. One delegation noted that in 1999 the Delhi Group had proposed a set of criteria to be followed by countries for international reporting purposes. That proposal did not exclude the possibility of adopting national definitions to take into account country-specific institutional arrangements or social circumstances. The secretariat would implement a harmonized definition in countries participating in the project on “Interregional cooperation on the measurement of the informal sector and informal employment” (funded by the Development Account), in conformity with the definition on the informal sector adopted by the Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians in January 1993 and its refinement by the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics.

31. The Committee encouraged the secretariat to cooperate and coordinate with other regional and subregional organizations in initiatives and activities on the informal sector. In particular, possible synergies with the European Community-Association of Southeast Asian Nations capacity-building programme in statistics could be explored, as one important component of it was informal sector and non-observed economy. The Committee was also informed that the Seventh ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting (AHSOM) had stressed the importance of the informal sector and included the development of the informal sector as an agenda item for its next meeting.

32. Various experiences were shared by delegations on methodologies, which could possibly be used to analyse the links between poverty and the informal sector. Two main approaches were presented: one involving a single comprehensive survey designed to collect information on both poverty and the informal sector, and the second utilizing data from multiple sources through statistical matching techniques. The Committee recognized that designing a comprehensive survey might lead to questionnaires being too long, which would in turn affect the level and accuracy of responses. The Committee also underlined the challenge of linking special survey data with official statistics.

33. One country noted that initiating a regular programme of labour force and household expenditure surveys to collect data on the informal sector and poverty would be a more sustainable approach. The Committee highlighted that relevant data might be available from censuses, sample surveys and administrative records, but linking that information could be technically difficult and raised confidentiality issues. In order to tackle technical difficulties, it was emphasized that the secretariat should provide more information on statistical matching methods and disseminate a list of best practices. The Committee noted that, in order to protect the confidentiality of respondents, anonymization methods were available and used at the international level in microdata dissemination.

34. The Committee recognized that panel data was essential to understand poverty dynamics and evaluate policy measures. However, that kind of data were not generally available due to the lack of technical capacity and insufficient funding. Many countries in the region did not have regular survey programmes and often relied on international donors to conduct household surveys. The Committee noted that introducing rotating sample schemes in the design of the existing surveys would provide longitudinal information as the same sample units were interviewed on at least two different occasions. That rotation scheme would also contribute to reducing the variability of data over time.

B. Statistical challenges in assessing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals

35. The Committee had before it a document entitled “Statistical challenges in assessing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals” (E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/3).

36. The Committee stressed the importance of assessing progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including the outcome of poverty reduction and development efforts. Assessments made at different levels – global, regional, and national – provided complementary policy perspectives.

37. The Committee noted with concern that data gaps and inconsistencies hampered both national and regional assessments of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, the lack of subnational data made it difficult to assess existing disparities among subgroups. The Committee agreed that the Community-Based Monitoring System could complement official data collection activities by national statistical offices and improve the availability of

Millennium Development Goal and other indicators at the local level. Furthermore, localizing the Millennium Development Goals would help to integrate them into national development strategies.

38. In discussing the problem of data availability, the Committee noted that Millennium Development Goal data could be derived from multiple data sources, including censuses, sample surveys, administrative records and vital registration systems. A sustainable and cost-effective strategy to produce most of the Millennium Development Goal data could be to enhance the quality of administrative and registration-based statistics. In the absence of good quality administrative statistics, sample surveys represented an important alternative source of Millennium Development Goal data. In that regard, the Committee expressed its support to the approach of integrated data collection currently being studied by the International Household Survey Network.

39. In discussing data discrepancies between data produced by international agencies and data produced by national statistical systems, the Committee agreed that Government-provided data should be the basic source of all assessments. To reduce discrepancies, the Committee stressed the importance of adopting international concepts, standards and classifications by national statistical systems; better coordination mechanisms at the national level for reviewing available data and deciding on official values to be provided to the international system; and better communication between custodian agencies and data producers in countries/areas. The Committee recalled the recommendation of the Friends of the Chair on Millennium Development Goals indicators to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session to better reflect data available at the national level.

40. The Committee agreed that closer coordination between the secretariat, the national Millennium Development Goal focal points and national statistical offices in the preparation of regional and global Millennium Development Goal progress reports might ensure that analytical work is based on the most recent data.

41. The Committee observed that it was indispensable to strengthen analytical and monitoring capacity in order to evaluate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and formulate relevant development policies. The Committee welcomed the secretariat's capacity-building proposal on strengthening the utilization of administrative records and vital registration systems for official statistics and the programme supporting the 2010 round of population and housing censuses. It noted that enhancing analytical capacity through methodological studies, development of guidelines and hands-on training were also effective modalities for capacity-building.

42. The Committee took note of the importance to member States of costing the Millennium Development Goals and the UNDP project, which provided technical assistance to nine countries to allow them to undertake costing exercises.

43. The Committee welcomed the invitation of the delegation of the Philippines to participate in the 2007 International Conference on Millennium Development Goal Statistics, to be held in Manila

from 1 to 3 October 2007. The Conference would serve as a forum for sharing good practices and methodologies in data collection and analysis of trends, and to discuss cooperation and coordination at the national and international levels.

44. The Committee observed that poverty reduction should be included in the national economic and social development planning. In that context, villages and counties with a high incidence of poverty could be identified for targeted assistance with concentrated efforts and comprehensive planning. Poverty alleviation through development strategies would involve the mobilization of both the authorities and the masses in poverty-stricken areas in order to achieve comprehensive development combining improvements in economic, scientific, technological, cultural and health areas.

45. The Committee was informed by the Government of Japan that it would continue to support poverty reduction efforts in striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in accordance with the concept of human security, which emphasized protection and empowerment of vulnerable populations. The Government of Japan also informed the Committee that it intended to contribute an additional US\$ 10 billion in official development assistance (ODA) from 2005 to 2009.

46. The Committee noted that while developing countries had the primary responsibility to address their development challenges on their own, it urged developed countries to collaborate with them as equal partners. The Committee noted the assistance provided by the Government of Japan in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the developing countries of the region. It noted that such assistance was being provided within the context of human security and observed that the situation of people living at the subsistence level and under poor conditions needed to be improved urgently. The Committee also emphasized the need for greater cooperation with the private sector in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in making the benefits of information and communication technology available to all developing countries.

47. The Committee observed that a large gap existed between the financial needs of least developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing States, and the development assistance available to help them to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It noted that the actual levels of ODA disbursement showed that the declining trend that had lasted for almost a decade was in the process of being reversed. The Committee emphasized that, unless aid commitments were translated into actual delivery, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals would remain elusive.

C. Strengthening national statistical capacity by promoting the 2010 round of population and housing censuses

48. The Committee had before it a document entitled “Strengthening national statistical capacity by promoting the 2010 round of population and housing censuses” (E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/4), which

presented the proposal of the secretariat for a regional census programme. Moreover, the Committee heard with interest the recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on an ESCAP Regional Census Programme, which was held in Bangkok on 27 and 28 November 2006.

49. The Expert Group had concurred that the proposed regional census programme was not only timely but also responsive to the needs of countries in the region and contained the right mix of priorities and activities. The experts had welcomed the proposal to establish regional networks of local experts in thematic areas to facilitate knowledge sharing and as a resource pool, as well as other proposals to promote country-to-country cooperation, including South-South cooperation, and to provide assistance in data processing and dissemination. In addition, they emphasized the need to gender sensitize the census, and to ensure that programme activities were scheduled according to country needs at different phases of a census cycle and to establish coordination and partnerships with other international and subregional bodies active in the region in order to avoid duplication and maximize the impact of the programme. The experts had also made specific recommendations on each of the three priority areas of the census programme and had recommended that, in the absence of a statistical committee, the secretariat might consider submitting a resolution at the subsequent session of the Commission to provide the Statistics Division with a clear mandate to develop and implement the regional census programme.

50. The Committee welcomed the efforts of the secretariat and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific to promote national statistical capacity-building in the region through the 2010 World Population and Housing Census programme. In discussing the proposed regional census programme, the Committee highlighted the importance of keeping the census questionnaire short and only using a longer question set in a sample-based census or in a post-census survey. In addition, the Committee observed that disability was a complex phenomenon, which could not be adequately measured by solely relying on the census. The use of surveys and administrative records should also be considered.

51. Some delegations shared their past experiences and plans of including disability questions in population censuses and surveys. In that regard, the Committee suggested that the secretariat should provide assistance in analysing disability statistics for more effective policy formulation.

52. The secretariat was requested to provide guidance on the use of intelligent character recognition (ICR) during the census operations, its advantages and disadvantages, as well as suitable hardware and software applications. ESCAP was furthermore requested to provide guidance on how countries with relatively low fertility and mortality rates could accurately estimate annual changes in basic demographic indicators.

D. Programme planning and evaluation

*1. Review of the proposed work programme for the biennium 2008-2009
in respect of the subprogrammes on poverty and development, statistics
and development of Pacific island countries and territories*

53. The Committee had before it a document on the draft programme of work (2008-2009) for subprogramme 1, Poverty and development; subprogramme 2, Statistics; and subprogramme 3, Development of Pacific island countries and territories (E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/5).

54. In introducing the item, the secretariat informed the Committee that the ESCAP strategic framework for 2008-2009, comprising the objectives, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement and strategy, had been endorsed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination on 6 September 2006.¹ It was noted that the proposed strategic framework was currently being considered by the Fifth Committee and subsequently would be adopted by the General Assembly.

55. The Committee was invited to review the output citations, as contained in annexes I, II and III of the draft programme of work (2008-2009) (E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/5), which had been developed by the Poverty and Development Division, the Statistics Division and the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre. The Committee was informed that the draft programme of work for 2008-2009 would be further developed and submitted for consideration by the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission (ACPR) in January 2007, before being reviewed and endorsed by the Commission at its sixty-third session in 2007.

56. The Committee supported, in principle, the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2008-2009, and made the following comments on the outputs of the proposed work programme:

(a) A number of delegations stressed the importance of measuring achievements at the outcome level in addition to the output level;

(b) Under subprogramme 1, a representative expressed appreciation for the emphasis placed on capacity-building for enhanced self-reliance, recognizing the importance of economic and social development for poverty reduction;

(c) Under subprogramme 3, a delegation requested clarification on whether the proposed Pacific island knowledge centre would be a new centre or form part of an existing centre. The secretariat explained that the centre would be established giving due recognition to existing organizations and knowledge hubs in the subregion and would complement, rather than duplicate, existing work in that area;

(d) Although subprogramme 3 focused on a specific geographical area, the secretariat pointed out that good practices could be shared between Asian countries and Pacific countries and territories.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/61/16)*, paras. 215-230.

57. A delegation drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that the subprogrammes under consideration might be revised in the following year due to the ongoing reform process of ESCAP, and that reform process might include changing the conference structure of the secretariat. The delegation held the view the thematic framework should be either discontinued or revised so that the focus of work could be sharpened in order to narrow the scope of coverage.

2. Monitoring and evaluation: review of selected projects in the thematic area of poverty reduction

58. The Committee had before it two documents, entitled “Community-based solid waste management” (E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/6), and “Improving disability statistics and measurement in support of the Biwako Millennium Framework” (E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/7).

59. The Committee welcomed the fact that the secretariat attached great importance to monitoring and evaluation and encouraged it to further develop the monitoring and evaluation mechanism in order to implement its activities more effectively by introducing such measures, such as setting more concrete indicators of achievement.

60. The Committee noted that solid waste management was a major problem affecting many cities and towns of the region and the inadequacy of existing conventional approaches to solid waste management. It agreed that new approaches were needed, which incorporated the informal recycling industry, generated revenues from treating organic wastes and improved collection services. In that connection, it expressed its appreciation of the secretariat’s project on community-based solid waste management. It noted that the approach promoted decentralized and integrated resource recovery centres, which had the potential to generate funds for local governments and provide higher, more regular incomes and better working conditions for informal sector waste pickers.

61. The Committee commended the secretariat for initiating and implementing the project “Improvement of disability statistics and measurement in support of the Biwako Millennium Framework”, as it provided tangible advice on collecting comparable information on persons with disability. That information was essential for formulating national policies supporting equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

62. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Korea for its generous funding of the project. It acknowledged the expert advice and other support provided to the project by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the World Health Organization, the Washington Group on Disability Statistics and the efforts of the five pilot countries, which had tested questionnaires based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. The Committee asked ESCAP to facilitate the sharing of national experiences in collecting disability statistics.

E. Consideration of draft resolutions and decisions for submission to the Commission at its sixty-third session

63. A number of delegations supported the proposal to develop a draft resolution for statistical capacity-building related to a regional census programme, which would then be submitted to ACPR and at the Commission at its sixty-third session for further consideration. The secretariat offered to assist interested countries in further developing the concept and in explaining the process for submitting such a draft resolution.

F. Other matters

64. No other matters were raised.

G. Adoption of the report

65. The Committee adopted the report on its third session on 1 December 2006.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening, duration and organization

66. The third session of the Committee on Poverty Reduction was held in Bangkok from 29 November to 1 December 2006.

67. In his opening statement, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP highlighted some of the major policy issues and challenges and ESCAP initiatives to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including efforts to reduce poverty. In that context, he briefed the Committee on the activities under the tripartite partnership between ESCAP, United Nations Development Programme and Asian Development Bank on assisting the countries in achieving the goals. Regarding the main theme of the session, poverty and the informal sector, he noted that a vast majority of the poor could be found in the informal sector, where productivity and incomes remained low. He suggested a two-pronged strategy to help informal sector participants. Policy interventions to increase the productivity and incomes of those involved in marginal and subsistence activities included providing credit, education and skills training, improving access to physical infrastructure, extending social protection, encouraging and assisting in the formation of self-help groups, and strengthening linkages with the formal sector. Informal sector participants who were engaged in activities, which were modern and dynamic and had a potential for growth needed to be assisted to enable them to graduate to the formal sector. He urged participants to provide the secretariat with guidance on its continued work on the informal sector and ways to facilitate the graduation of informal businesses to formal ones.

68. Regarding measurement issues related to poverty and the informal sector, the Executive Secretary emphasized that effective policymaking required more information on the linkages between poverty and informal sector employment. He noted that the Committee would have an opportunity to deliberate on the statistical challenges related to the national monitoring of the achievement of the

Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals. He emphasized that the 2010 round of population and housing censuses offered a major opportunity to improve the data needed for national policy planning, including Millennium Development Goal and other development indicators. He urged participants to provide feedback on the ESCAP secretariat proposal to support the 2010 census round.

69. The Minister of the Interior of the Government of Thailand delivered the inaugural address. He emphasized the need to enhance the productivity and incomes of informal sector participants so that they emerge from poverty. He elaborated on some of the initiatives being pursued by his country to deal with the problem of poverty and help those who were working in the informal sector. He noted that the People's Bank in Thailand assisted the poor to obtain small loans without collateral. He touched upon Thailand's "One Tambon One Product" (OTOP) project, which encouraged village communities to produce and market unique products and handicrafts made from locally available materials and using local wisdom and skills. The project provided rural communities with the opportunity to develop distinctive products for both domestic and international markets, with technical and managerial assistance from the government. He referred to the government-sponsored free health-care scheme, which covered the entire population, including informal sector participants.

70. He urged all stakeholders, including public authorities, the private sector, donors and civil society, to join hands to eradicate poverty. Moreover, the poor themselves would be involved in decision-making and implementation of poverty reduction programmes. He emphasized that the United Nations had an important role in helping countries to reduce poverty and in that regard, ESCAP, as a regional arm of the United Nations, should continue playing a major role in extending guidance and support to countries in the region in reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

B. Attendance

71. Representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP attended the session: Bangladesh; Brunei Darussalam; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; France; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Viet Nam; Hong Kong, China; Macao, China; and New Caledonia.

72. In addition, the following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies attended the session: International Labour Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Health Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

73. The following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations were represented: Asian Development Bank, Economic Cooperation Organization, European Union, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, International Movement ATD Fourth World.

74. The United Nations Association of Afghanistan attended the meeting under the status “other entity”.

C. Election of officers

75. Mr. Domingo Panganiban (Philippines) was elected Chairperson. Mr. Chamnan Wattanasiri (Thailand) and Mr. Vishnu Kumar (India) were elected Vice-Chairpersons. Ms. Juliana Kubak (Papua New Guinea) was elected Rapporteur.

D. Agenda

76. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Poverty and the informal sector.
5. Statistical challenges in assessing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.
6. Strengthening national statistical capacity by promoting the 2010 round of population and housing censuses.
7. Programme planning and evaluation:
 - (a) Review of the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2008-2009 in respect of the subprogrammes on poverty and development, statistics and development of Pacific island countries and territories;
 - (b) Monitoring and evaluation: review of selected projects in the thematic area of poverty reduction.
8. Consideration of draft resolutions and decisions for submission to the Commission at its sixty-third session.
9. Other matters.
10. Adoption of the report.

Annex

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/L.1/Rev.1	Revised provisional agenda
E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/L.2/Rev.1	Revised annotated provisional agenda
E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/1	Role of the informal sector in poverty reduction
E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/2	Measurement issues
E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/3 and Corr.1	Statistical challenges in assessing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals
E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/4	Strengthening national statistical capacity by promoting the 2010 round of population and housing censuses
E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/5	Review of the proposed work programme for the biennium 2008-2009 in respect of the subprogrammes on poverty and development, statistics and development of Pacific island countries and territories
E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/6	Monitoring and evaluation: review of selected projects in the thematic area of poverty reduction: community-based solid waste management
E/ESCAP/CPR(3)/7	Monitoring and evaluation: review of selected projects in the thematic area of poverty reduction: improving of disability statistics and measurement in support of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action

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