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**EMERGING ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL:
SOCIO-ECONOMIC MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY
IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS**

(Item 6 (c) of the provisional agenda)

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC MEASURES TO
ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS
ON ITS FIRST SESSION**

SUMMARY

The Committee on Socio-economic Measures to Alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas held its first session at Bangkok from 15 to 17 September 1998. It was attended by 24 members and associate members of ESCAP. Representatives of 15 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, four intergovernmental organizations and eight non-governmental organizations were also in attendance.

The Committee reviewed various aspects of the poverty situation in the region and critical issues, including the economic, social and demographic impacts of economic liberalization on rural poverty, especially during the current economic crisis in many countries in the region. It emphasized that in recent decades economic liberalization had contributed to rapid economic growth and a reduction in absolute poverty. Economic restructuring could, however, cause economic distortions that disproportionately affected the poor and could have long-term consequences for their well-being. Hence, direct government intervention in poverty alleviation was justified and social safety nets were required.

The Committee also considered the implementation of the programme of work, 1998-1999 and proposed programme changes, and endorsed programme directions for the biennium 2000-2001 in the context of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

The Committee formulated a set of recommendations addressing the above issues and concerns.

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**I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION OR
TO BE BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION****A. Recommendations and decisions concerning the impact of
macroeconomic policies on poverty alleviation**

1. The Committee on Socio-economic Measures to Alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas stressed that, in formulating macroeconomic policies, it was necessary to take into account their effect on income distribution and the alleviation of poverty.
2. The Committee recommended that ESCAP assist governments in promoting a people-centred development approach linking economic liberalization policies with the needs of the poor.
3. In order to reduce the impact of future economic crises and their severe negative impact on poverty alleviation programmes, the Committee noted with interest the setting up of an early warning system on economic crises in the region.
4. The Committee recommended that ESCAP and other international organizations conduct studies on the social impact of the current Asian economic crisis. The Committee also requested the secretariat to analyse the impact of development policies for their effectiveness in alleviating poverty.
5. The Committee expressed gratitude to international organizations, development banks and donor countries for their assistance in the poverty alleviation efforts of developing countries but requested that more funds be made available for those efforts. The Committee urged developed countries to increase official development assistance and the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to provide more support for national poverty alleviation activities.

**B. Recommendations and decisions concerning the impact of agricultural
and rural development policies on poverty alleviation**

6. The Committee stressed that rural areas, with their already high incidence of poverty, were particularly affected by the recent economic crisis and were in need of focused relief measures. It therefore recommended that agricultural and rural development be moved back to centre stage. In that connection, ESCAP should initiate appropriate regional programmes to provide necessary support to countries, paying particular attention to the least developed countries.
7. The Committee recommended that governments should develop essential infrastructure such as irrigation, rural roads and power supply to alleviate poverty in rural areas. It also emphasized the need to develop microfinancing arrangements in rural areas to enable the poor to participate in productive activities.
8. The Committee stressed the importance of integrating science and technology in rural areas for poverty alleviation, and the need for exchanges of experience among countries on that subject. It recommended that microindustries and small industries in rural areas, including the agro-allied and handicrafts industries, should be promoted for income and employment generation through national action and regional cooperation particularly aimed at improved access to credits, transfer of technology

9. The Committee recommended that more national and international resources should be provided to upgrade land and increase labour productivity in the rural sector in order to achieve food security and other developmental goals.

C. Recommendations and decisions concerning the impact of social policies on poverty alleviation

10. The Committee recommended that ESCAP, in collaboration with United Nations bodies, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and donors, should assist in strengthening national capacities for more effective decentralization of administrative and service structures for social development planning and programming for poverty alleviation.

11. The Committee recommended that assistance should be given to governments, in particular to those of the least developed countries, to improve institutional mechanisms for the effective implementation of poverty alleviation programmes, especially to address the needs of the disadvantaged groups.

12. The Committee recommended that the countries of the region should strengthen their efforts in mainstreaming gender issues and perspectives in their development policies and programmes. That was particularly important in view of the continuing economic crisis in the region, which called for special measures to protect women in poverty who were faced with the possibility of bearing a disproportionate burden of social and economic adjustment.

13. The Committee recommended that special measures should be adopted to increase the access of women in poverty to productive resources such as microfinance, skills, and educational and health facilities. It urged the secretariat to strengthen its activities in that regard with special focus on small business, microcredit and other income-generating activities.

14. The Committee stressed that, in approaches to poverty alleviation, it was important to ensure that family income was accessible to females in the household, as they were often primarily responsible for purchases of food, the education of the children and the health care of family members.

15. The Committee stressed the importance of protecting government budgets for the social sector to prevent the worsening of poverty conditions and social destabilization in the restructuring process, particularly in times of economic downturn.

16. The Committee urged that ESCAP provide governments with assistance in the formulation of social policies. Special attention should be given to the needs of the disadvantaged groups and communities. Policies should be developed to strengthen the role of the family in the provision of social safety nets.

17. The Committee stressed the importance of population size, growth and structure to national development and the achievement of social goals, and urged the secretariat to continue its assistance to countries in formulating and implementing their population and development programmes, including for reproductive health.

18. The Committee called upon the secretariat to promote human resources development in the region, focusing on the areas of education, health promotion and employment creation, as a strategy for alleviating poverty.

19. The Committee requested the secretariat to focus particular attention in its human resources development work on the skills development needs of the poor, including rural youth, in the least developed countries.

20. The Committee requested the secretariat to include disabled persons in the secretariat's poverty alleviation activities, in consonance with Commission resolution 54/1 of 22 April 1998 on strengthening regional support for persons with disabilities into the twenty-first century, and the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002.

D. Recommendations and decisions concerning integrated approaches to poverty alleviation

21. The Committee urged that ESCAP continue to play a catalytic role in formulating approaches to the alleviation of poverty, including effective mechanisms for the targeting of poverty alleviation programmes and improving the efficient delivery of services. The secretariat should do this by conducting research, collecting information, providing training, organizing workshops and maintaining professional and institutional networks. ESCAP should also identify and disseminate information about best practices in poverty alleviation programmes.

22. The Committee recommended that ESCAP, in collaboration with other United Nations bodies, should assist in developing techniques for empowering local communities, families and individuals. Such techniques could include leadership training and involve mass organizations, non-governmental organizations, cooperatives and various microgroups.

23. The Committee requested the secretariat to assist in developing projects in the context of country-specific integrated strategies and programmes to alleviate poverty and to evaluate their effectiveness, upon the request of interested governments.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE SESSION

A. Economic liberalization and rural poverty alleviation: the economic, social and demographic impacts

24. The Committee had before it documents E/ESCAP/POP/SOCSEM/1 and E/ESCAP/POP/SOCSEM/2. It noted that, during the past decade and a half, there had been a substantial reduction in the number of households below the poverty line in countries in the region, but that the pace of poverty

reduction had varied among countries and that South Asia had remained the main locus of poverty in the region. Continuation of the trend towards poverty reduction was not assured, as the recent experience in some countries in South-East Asia had demonstrated.

25. The Committee noted that macrolevel policies pursued by countries were important in determining trends in poverty alleviation. It emphasized four lessons drawn from recent experience in Asia: (a) in most countries in Asia, agricultural development vitally affected rural poverty reduction; (b) direct government intervention in poverty reduction was fully justified; (c) even in rapidly expanding economies, it was necessary to have safety nets for the poor; and (d) it was necessary for institutional development to keep pace with policy changes.

26. The Committee observed that, in recent decades, in several East and South-East Asian economies, increased trade, partially spurred by foreign direct investment, had contributed to rapid economic growth and had helped to reduce absolute poverty by expanding output and employment in labour-intensive export industries. There was a risk, however, that when trade and capital flows were liberalized, economic distortions could occur that could disproportionately affect the poor. While the poor were expected to benefit in the long run from greater economic growth and efficiency, even temporary reductions in their incomes could have serious long-term consequences for their social and demographic welfare.

1. Macroeconomic policies

27. The Committee emphasized that poverty alleviation should be an integral part of macroeconomic policies. It stressed the necessity of maintaining a stable macroeconomic environment by controlling inflation and reducing the effects of the financial crisis.

28. The Committee recognized that economic liberalization had contributed to stimulating economic growth. While in the long run that might have resulted in alleviating poverty, in the short run it could have affected the poor adversely. Hence, it was important to assess the role of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy and to study their distributive effects, particularly on the incomes of the poor.

29. Although liberalization and market reform had tended to accelerate the reduction of poverty, the Committee stressed that the Asian economic crisis had demonstrated new vulnerabilities and that the urban and rural poor, particularly women, disabled persons and other disadvantaged groups, were most exposed to those negative effects. The economic downturn had increased unemployment in urban areas, causing some migrants to return to rural areas, thus exacerbating unemployment and underemployment there.

2. Agricultural and rural development policies

30. The Committee encouraged its members to take domestic action to deal with poverty, thus contributing to regional stability. Measures to be taken should be based on a people-centred development approach, bureaucratic reform, development of social safety nets, enhanced food security, and improvement of environmental protection and infrastructure, especially in rural areas. The current economic crisis brought forth the criticality of microenterprises as a sustainable means of poverty alleviation and, in the short term, the adoption of labour-intensive programmes such as food-for-work programmes.

31. The Committee recognized that the agricultural sector should receive priority attention when national development programmes were being formulated, especially during the current economic crisis, as the sector continued to provide the majority of the poor with income and employment.

32. The Committee noted that a number of critical steps had been taken in the agricultural sector to provide farmers with support. In China, the agricultural sector had played a crucial role, especially after 1978, in alleviating poverty. In India, the integrated rural development programme continued to provide support for the rural poor in augmenting income through employment-generation activities. In the Republic of Korea, agricultural commodity price stabilization measures had been taken. In Viet Nam, landless farmers had been allocated cultivable land. It was, however, recognized that the apparent reduction in investment in agricultural and rural development needed to be reversed, particularly in the context of the Asian economic crisis.

3. Social policies

33. The Committee reiterated the importance of promoting comprehensive social development policies in efforts for rural poverty alleviation in the context of governments' commitments in the Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development and in the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region. It noted that efforts to improve the quality of life for the poor were dependent on their access to basic services such as health and education, and to other productive assets for employment and full participation in the socio-economic mainstream. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups among the poor, including disabled persons, older persons, unemployed youth, children, women and isolated communities that had been most affected by the current financial crisis. Further, the Committee noted the positive impact of multisectoral policies and programmes designed to empower the family to lift itself out of poverty, given the importance of the family support system in Asia and the Pacific.

34. The Committee pointed out that the current financial crisis in the East and South-East Asian countries had underscored the vital importance of providing adequate social safety nets to mitigate the adverse impact on the poverty situation. In that regard, social safety nets were understood to include the continued provision of basic social services programmes, development of people's productive

capacities, employment expansion and direct assistance or subsidies designed for the poor. In many countries, positive results for poverty alleviation had been achieved through decentralized administrative and service delivery structures that could better respond to community needs and more effectively facilitate the mobilization of resources and people's participation, particularly of the poor and disadvantaged groups.

35. Noting the particularly negative impact of the economic downturn on disabled persons, the Committee underscored the need for specific policy and programme initiatives that ensured the inclusion of disabled persons as target beneficiaries in poverty alleviation measures. The Committee was informed of anti-poverty measures for disabled persons' rehabilitation, skills development and the formation of self-help groups, especially in rural areas. Support for their empowerment, employment and self-employment was advocated.

36. The Committee emphasized the importance of human resources development as a sustainable strategy to alleviate poverty in the region. It drew attention to the education and skills development, health, and employment needs of marginalized social groups. A variety of national initiatives aimed at literacy promotion and universalization of basic education, including schemes for enhancing the quality and accessibility of education and expanding school infrastructure, were highlighted. National schemes directed at supporting the acquisition of skills and productive assets by rural youth for self-employment were advocated. The Committee expressed its concern over the child labour issue in the region. It supported government policies to regulate child labour, particularly in hazardous working conditions, and to provide child workers with educational, training and health services. The Committee recognized that progress had been achieved in health infrastructure provision and disease control, with positive implications for the reduction of preventable causes of disability. However, there was a need for greater efforts to enhance human resources availability for health service delivery in the rural areas.

37. The Committee observed that economic liberalization measures adopted by the countries of the region had brought challenges as well as opportunities for improving the economic and social status of women. However, the ongoing economic crisis in the region was likely to give rise to widespread unemployment among women, many of whom would be forced to go back to rural areas for economic survival, thereby accentuating rural poverty. As remittances sent by women workers constituted a significant part of the incomes of the recipient families, the changing pattern of migration could lead to increased poverty in the affected countries.

38. The Committee noted that access to productive resources constituted an effective means to alleviate poverty among women. Carefully designed microfinance schemes and the promotion of women in small businesses could make a significant contribution to improving the economic and social status of women. The Committee noted with satisfaction the progress made in implementing the ESCAP project on the promotion of women in small business in Indo-China and hoped that a large number of countries would be able to benefit from the outcome of that project.

39. The Committee noted with concern that women continued to form a disproportionate part of the poor. In many countries of the region, the demographic trends also made their position highly vulnerable to sudden changes in economic and social conditions. The Committee urged the countries of the region to pay special attention to the needs of women in poverty, especially during the current crisis, with a renewed focus on the creation of social safety nets and adequate provision of other support services.

4. Direct interventions for target groups

40. Although macroeconomic and sectoral development policies were paramount in poverty alleviation strategies, the Committee recognized that programmes of direct intervention to provide targeted groups in poverty with support were necessary. Several delegations described special funds for poverty alleviation that were used for direct assistance to the poor. In some cases the funds were provided for impoverished communities. Some countries in the region were providing food at subsidized prices, especially because of the current economic crisis. Many governments provided free schooling and health care for those who could not afford to pay for those services. Programmes of direct intervention were also necessary for some people with social problems and for victims of natural disasters, for example.

5. International cooperation

41. Particularly as a result of globalization and economic liberalization, the economies of the region were interlinked. The economic crisis in some countries had a severe impact on other countries because of reduced trade, foreign direct investment and other capital flows. The Committee stressed that solutions to the economic crisis needed to be sought through international cooperation. The developed countries were urged to provide greater amounts of official development assistance and to prevent recessions in their own countries. The international development banks were urged to provide adequate support for countries struggling with the economic crisis.

42. The Committee emphasized that more data, information, research and policy analysis on poverty in the region were needed. ESCAP was encouraged to act as a catalyst in that connection and to assist governments and civil society organizations in data collection and analysis.

43. ESCAP was also urged to continue and strengthen those programmes that had a direct impact on poverty alleviation, including, *inter alia*, those that promoted agriculture and rural development; social development; human resources development; women in development; support for disadvantaged groups, including disabled persons and older persons; urban governance; and population programmes, including reproductive health.

B. Programme planning and implementation

44. The Committee endorsed the proposed programme changes, 1998-1999, as contained in document E/ESCAP/POP/SOCEM/3 and Corr.1, as well as the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2000-2001, as contained in document E/ESCAP/POP/SOCEM/4 and Corr.1 and 2, with the following comments.

45. In the discussion on programme planning and implementation in the biennium 1998-1999, it was noted that document E/ESCAP/POP/SOCEM/3 and Corr.1 did not provide detailed enough information to determine the level of performance during the first half of 1998. One delegation stated that the percentage of implementation of the subprogramme of work should have been indicated.

46. In considering the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2000-2001, the Committee accorded high priority, within the subprogramme for poverty alleviation, to [social development], with its programme elements on [human resources development], [women in development] and [social policy and integration of disadvantaged groups].

47. With regard to social policy and integration of disadvantaged groups, the Committee requested that priority be given to the implementation of Commission resolutions 51/4 of 1 May 1995 and 54/1, 54/2 and 54/6 of 22 April 1998, particularly with regard to strengthening support for disabled persons and the role of the family in social development and social safety net provision, as contained in the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region. It expressed support for the secretariat's activities in promoting the role of non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda. The Committee requested the secretariat to develop a project focusing on diverse approaches to poverty alleviation among rural disabled persons, including support for the formation of self-help groups, social mobilization for their active participation in rural development, and skills enhancement for their economic self-sufficiency.

48. With regard to human resources development, the Committee expressed particular support for the secretariat's work to develop the human resources of youth, facilitate the regional networking of centres of excellence for human resources development research and training, and promote national capacity-building through training of social development personnel. Particular mention was also made of the value of the ESCAP Human Resources Development Award, which was presented annually to an organization or individual for outstanding work in the field of human resources development. The Government of India offered to host a workshop or field study visit in connection with the secretariat's work on regional networking of centres of excellence for human resources development through one of its centres of excellence.

49. With regard to women in development, the Committee highlighted the importance of the feminization of poverty, especially issues related to women's access to land and property rights. Legislation, technical support and cooperative development programmes which improved access of

women farmers to productive resources for income generation such as land, irrigation and water were also emphasized as being crucial interventions to alleviate poverty.

50. With regard to rural development, the Committee acknowledged the criticality of agricultural and rural development for poverty alleviation and stressed that they should be accorded priority in the programme for 2000-2001. In that context, suggestions were made to consider the implementation of, among others, activities concerning land and water management and the interface between agricultural research, extension and farmers' associations to improve access to information resources and technologies. It was also suggested that activities related to the development of rural infrastructure in the context of poverty alleviation should be emphasized.

51. The Committee supported a request by an organization for the secretariat to further enhance its collaboration with non-governmental organizations in its poverty alleviation programmes and to include non-governmental organizations in the planning, implementation and evaluation of those programmes.

52. The Committee reiterated that the secretariat should carry out a review of its recurrent publications programme in the spirit of the mandate by the Commission to shift some regular budget funds from publications to such operational activities as technical assistance and training. That could be done through recourse to compact disks and diskettes in such a way as not to affect adversely the current state of dissemination of information. The secretariat informed the Committee that such a review was scheduled during the remainder of 1998 in conjunction with the preparation of ESCAP programme budget proposals for 2000-2001.

53. The Committee indicated that the secretariat documents would have been more useful if they had provided a more qualitative narrative of new programme directions and the reasons for any changes. An explanation of any major shifts in emphasis between the bienniums 1998-1999 and 2000-2001 would have been valuable. The Committee also stressed that priorities had not been assigned to the subprogrammes under its purview. The secretariat indicated that priority-setting was an ongoing exercise and that the Committee on Socio-economic Measures to Alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas was one forum in which priorities could be expressed.

54. The Committee also stated that document E/ESCAP/POP/SOCEM/4 and Corr.1 and 2 on programme directions for the biennium 2000-2001 should have indicated the resources available for each of the subprogrammes and programme areas. The secretariat informed the Committee that the precise amount of resources would not be known until the General Assembly had approved the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2000-2001 but that, in the meantime, resources could be assumed to be roughly constant. The secretariat also informed the Committee that one regular budget Professional post had recently been redeployed from another programme area to the area of social development.

55. The Committee noted the offer of the Government of India to publish the proceedings of the first session of the Committee.

C. Other matters

56. The Committee considered the timing and possible topics of the second session of the Committee. The secretariat indicated that the terms of reference of the Committee stated that it was to meet annually, unless a ministerial-level meeting related to poverty alleviation was scheduled for the same year. As that was not the case, the second session was expected to be held in 1999. Concerning the agenda of the second session, the Committee acknowledged that it should not attempt to fix the topic at the current session. The Committee requested the secretariat to bring the question of the agenda to the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission in 1999, but to provide documentation early enough for members and associate members to consult their capitals before discussing the topic at a meeting.

D. Adoption of the report

57. The Committee adopted the report on its first session on 17 September 1998.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

58. The Committee on Socio-economic Measures to Alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas held its first session at Bangkok from 15 to 17 September 1998. The session was opened by the Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP, who informed representatives about a number of activities being carried out by the secretariat to assist members and associate members to alleviate poverty. The secretariat had recommended increasing the incomes and participation of the poor in the economy by expanding employment, increasing productivity and skills, and widening access to land, credit and other productive assets. It had also recommended organizing and empowering the poor themselves, targeting programmes at the poorest localities and groups, and devising social protection schemes to meet the basic needs of the poor.

59. ESCAP was devoting its efforts towards identifying the most effective strategies for poverty alleviation in both rural and urban areas and assisting government and civil society to implement those strategies. Much of its focus was currently on devising programmes to ameliorate the impact of the recent economic crisis, especially as it affected the poorest members of society.

60. HE Mr Bhichai Rattakul, Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of Thailand, presented the opening address. He observed that only a few years ago globalization and the growth of international markets had seemed to mean that a new era of prosperity had dawned for developing countries, especially in Asia. Globalization promised to be a mechanism that would help in lifting poor people out

of poverty. Unfortunately, it had to be recognized that the globalization process was not a panacea, that it held disadvantages as well as advantages, and that its benefits were not evenly distributed.

61. The Deputy Prime Minister expressed the hope that the Committee's focus on that issue would assist in maximizing the advantages and minimizing the disadvantages of globalization and the free market system, while creating a better balance in the social context in which people lived.

62. The secretariat had prepared the following background documents to guide the Committee in its deliberations: "Economic impacts on rural poverty" (E/ESCAP/POP/SOCEM/1); "The impact of globalization and economic liberalization on social and demographic change and poverty in rural areas" (E/ESCAP/POP/SOCEM/2); "Programme planning and implementation: implementation of the programme of work, 1998-1999 and proposed programme changes" (E/ESCAP/POP/SOCEM/3 and Corr.1); and "Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2000-2001" (E/ESCAP/POP/SOCEM/4 and Corr.1 and 2).

B. Attendance

63. The first session of the Committee was attended by representatives of the following 24 members and associate members of ESCAP: Bangladesh, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, United States of America, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

64. In addition, 15 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies attended: United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Fund for Women, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations International Drug Control Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Centre for Regional Development, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Civil Aviation Organization, World Health Organization and World Meteorological Organization. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO was also represented.

65. Four intergovernmental organizations were represented: Asian Development Bank, Asian-Pacific Postal Union, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific, and International Organization for Migration.

66. The following non-governmental organizations in general consultative status were represented: International Movement ATD Fourth World, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Council of Women, International Council on Social Welfare, International Planned Parenthood Federation, World Muslim Congress and World Veterans Federation. The following organization in special consultative status was also represented: World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises.

67. Other organizations represented at the session included the Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements.

C. Election of officers

68. The Committee elected Mr P. L. Sanjeev Reddy (India) Chairperson, Mr Wang Guoliang (China) and Mr Seyedjafar Sajadieh (Islamic Republic of Iran) Vice-Chairpersons and Mr Jack Chawanin (Papua New Guinea) Rapporteur.

D. Agenda

69. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Economic liberalization and rural poverty alleviation: the economic, social and demographic impacts.
5. Programme planning and implementation:
 - (a) Implementation of the programme of work, 1998-1999 and proposed programme changes;
 - (b) Programme directions for the biennium 2000-2001 in the context of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.
6. Other matters.
7. Adoption of the report.