

GENERAL

E/ESCAP/1056
28 February 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Fifty-third session
23-30 April 1997
Bangkok

**EMERGING ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL:
POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH ECONOMIC GROWTH
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

(Item 6 (c) of the provisional agenda)

**PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS AND
DECISIONS RELATING TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH
ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Note by the secretariat

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Introduction

1. The present note reports on the implementation of the following Commission resolutions: 48/3 of 23 April 1992 on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002; 50/3 of 13 April 1994 on participatory human settlements development; 51/2 of 1 May 1995 on strengthening regional cooperation in human resources development in Asia and the Pacific; 51/4 of 1 May 1995 on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region; 51/7 of 1 May 1995 on implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific; 52/3 of 24 April 1996 on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women; 52/4 of 24 April 1996 on promoting human resources development among youth in Asia and the Pacific; and 52/5 of 24 April 1996 on regional cooperation in response to the spread and consequences of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome in the Asian and Pacific region.
2. In addition, the note reviews action relevant to poverty alleviation that has been taken by the secretariat in follow-up to major decisions and recommendations by the Commission at its recent sessions.
3. The Commission may wish to review the progress in the implementation of these resolutions and decisions and provide guidance to the secretariat on enhancing effective implementation.

A. Progress in the implementation of recent Commission resolutions

1. Resolution 48/3 on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002

4. The Commission, in paragraph 7, requested the Executive Secretary to assist member and associate member Governments in the following:
 - (a) Developing and pursuing national programmes of action during the forthcoming Decade;
 - (b) Formulating and implementing technical guidelines and legislation to promote access by disabled persons to buildings, public facilities, transport and communications systems, information, education and training, and technical aids.
5. In paragraph 8, it further requested the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission biennially until the end of the Decade on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution and to submit recommendations to the Commission, as required, on action to maintain the momentum of the Decade.
6. In support of resolution 48/3, the Commission, at its fifty-second session in April 1996, endorsed the targets and recommendations for the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, including the gender dimensions.

7. In support of national action, the secretariat is involved in, *inter alia*, the following:

(a) *Strengthening of organizations of people with disabilities and promotion of their participation in the development process.* Through its technical cooperation trust fund for Decade activities, the secretariat supported the training and information activities of people with disabilities in the developing countries of the region. A Pacific subregional workshop held by ESCAP at Suva in February 1996 focused on developing linkages among, and strengthening the management of, organizations of people with disabilities. Assistance was also provided in the development of the Cambodian Disabled People's Organization and in the convening of the first workshop of people with diverse disabilities in Viet Nam, in October 1996. Follow-up support is being developed to reinforce the gains made;

(b) *Inclusion of gender dimensions.* A training workshop for women with disabilities was held at Bangkok in June 1995; it generated documentation on the gender dimensions of the Agenda for Action. Under the project, a publication on the issues faced by women with disabilities was issued and distributed at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the NGO Forum on Women, at Beijing in September 1995. Follow-up activities by the trainees included the issuance of a newsletter, participation in the NGO Forum and the convening of national workshops on gender issues in national disability movements;

(c) *Promotion of implementation of ESCAP Guidelines for the Promotion of Non-handicapping Environments for Disabled Persons.* In the development of pilot projects to implement the Guidelines, the secretariat is providing technical assistance to three cities, Bangkok, Beijing and New Delhi, which may be used as demonstration sites for technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) activities. In addition, the city of Johor Bahru, Malaysia, has used the ESCAP guidelines to incorporate barrier-free design in its urban renewal master plan. Through the intermediation of ESCAP, technical personnel from developing countries of the ESCAP region participated in workshops on access promotion in Japan in 1995 and 1996;

(d) *Promotion of regional cooperation for the local production of assistive devices for persons with disabilities.* With a view to improving the availability of assistive devices for poor persons with disabilities, the secretariat convened a regional workshop on the indigenous production and distribution of assistive devices, in South India in September 1995. Preparation of a publication, which will include a regional review and information on production methods for small workshops, is under way;

(e) *Facilitation of regional coordination of and support for Decade action.* ESCAP serves as the secretariat of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP) Subcommittee on Disability-related Concerns. Its biannual meetings are attended by members of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations (17) and governments of the region interested in supporting Decade-related regional cooperation. Through their respective networks, Subcommittee members assist

in mobilizing support for Decade action and in disseminating information material on the Decade, including to blind persons. Recent projects developed with the involvement of the members include those aimed at mainstreaming people with disabilities in vocational training and employment, empowerment of people with disabilities, and promotion of multisectoral and multilevel action for the participation of people with disabilities in mainstream development programmes.

8. Preparations were under way to convene the meeting of senior officials to mark the mid-point of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons at Seoul in September 1997.

9. Recent secretariat publications include *Guidelines for the Promotion of Non-handicapping Physical Environments for Disabled Persons* (ST/ESCAP/1492), *Promotion of Non-handicapping Physical Environments for Disabled Persons: Case Studies* (ST/ESCAP/1510), *Hidden Sisters: Women and Girls with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region* (ST/ESCAP/1548), *Legislation on Equal Opportunities and Full Participation in Development for Disabled Persons: A Regional Review* (ST/ESCAP/1622) and *Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons: Action Targets and Gender Dimensions* (ST/ESCAP/1669).

10. In response to paragraph 8 of resolution 48/3, the secretariat reports to the Commission biennially on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution and submits recommendations to the Commission, as required, on action to maintain the momentum of the Decade.

2. Resolution 50/3 on participatory human settlements development

11. In this resolution, the Commission adopted the Regional Action Plan on Urbanization which had been prepared by the Ministerial Conference on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific, held at Bangkok in November 1993; the Plan would serve as a blueprint for urban development and improved urban management. The Commission urged members and associate members to encourage the active involvement of non-governmental and community-based organizations in the policy and strategy formulation process and in the implementation of shelter projects, and to establish national- and local-level urban forums composed of representatives from the relevant departments and different levels of government, as well as the private sector, community associations and non-governmental organizations, to institutionalize the process of cooperation and collaboration in the formulation of urban action plans. It called upon members and associate members to involve all actors concerned with human settlements issues in their preparations for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). It requested the secretariat to monitor and review the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Urbanization on a biennial basis. As the last review was submitted to the Commission at its fifty-second session, a complete report on the progress achieved will be submitted at the fifty-fourth session in 1998.

12. The secretariat convened, as mandated in the Regional Action Plan, the Second Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, with financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Australia, in March 1996. More than 200 urban professionals attended the Forum, representing the different actors, national governments, local authorities, research and training institutions, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the media. The Forum reviewed a discussion paper entitled "Living in Asian cities" which, together with the proceedings of the Forum, was presented as the regional input into the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements held at Istanbul in June 1996. The Forum served as a platform for all actors to exchange ideas and experience and to discuss policy approaches and options that should be pursued in solving specific urban issues requiring urgent attention. Its major focus was on building new and effective partnerships between government, civic society, the media and the private sector for better urban management. Discussion groups were formed on 12 themes and reported to the plenary on their findings. Four subregional forums, South and Central Asia, Pacific Islands and Oceania, South-East Asia, and East Asia, discussed major urban issues in the subregions, the scope for cooperation within and between subregions and the role of the United Nations and other international agencies in promoting such cooperation.

13. The secretariat has undertaken a number of activities in support of urban forums in the region. These activities include: (a) the compilation of case studies of local urban forums; (b) assistance to the training course on social marketing for urban forums in Thailand, held in November 1996; (c) advisory services to the Mangalore Urban Forum; and (d) assistance in the setting up of a local level urban forum at Cebu City, Philippines. In addition, activities leading to the Second Ministerial Conference on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific, to be held in 1998, have been initiated with the participation of local urban forums.

14. The secretariat has also promoted coordination among the different actors concerned with human settlements issues at the regional level by convening regular meetings of the Inter-organizational Subcommittee on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific. The membership of the Subcommittee comprises not only the representatives of United Nations organizations and specialized agencies but also regional networks working in the field of human settlements, such as the Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements (CITYNET), the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) and the Network of Training, Research and Information Institutes in Human Settlements (TRISHNET) as well as representatives of donor countries and member countries participating as observers.

15. Among the main issues considered by the Subcommittee during its last two meetings were the following:

- (a) The development of a human settlements web site by the Asian Institute of Technology

(AIT), which contains information on the Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme, general information about human settlements in Asia, on urban environmental management etc. AIT and ESCAP have entered into an agreement on the extension of the web site to incorporate abstracts from newsletters or publications and articles produced by regional actors, a database of professionals in the region to which ESCAP, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)(UNCHS), the Urban Management Programme and Asia Pacific 2000 would contribute, and the database prepared by ESCAP on ongoing and planned urban projects of international agencies in the region;

(b) In cooperation with ESCAP and CITYNET, the World Health Organization had promoted the Healthy Cities Programme through subregional seminars and a regional seminar. It was envisaged that that cooperation would continue;

(c) Subcommittee members cooperated with UNCHS on some of the technical cooperation projects in the Asian and Pacific region, for instance, a project in Vientiane had benefited greatly from inputs on community development and cost recovery provided by ESCAP and ACHR;

(d) CITYNET was seeking support for a seminar on participatory urban management to be held in conjunction with its General Council Meeting at Yokohama in 1997. Cooperation in workshops and seminars of the Urban Management Programme and ESCAP in the fields of municipal finance and urban environmental management was highly appreciated;

(e) The Subcommittee has reviewed preparations for the Second Ministerial Conference on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific, which is scheduled for late 1998. It proposed that the Conference could be organized under the title Asia-Pacific Urban Forum - Under One Roof: Creative Partnerships for a Better Future.

16. As a direct follow-up to Habitat II, the Subcommittee undertook a comparative review of the Habitat Agenda and noted that a stronger role for local authorities had been advocated by the Conference. This was in line with the emphasis of the Regional Action Plan on Urbanization for Asia and the Pacific, adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific in 1993.

17. The Second Ministerial Conference would undertake a revision of the Regional Action Plan in the light of the Habitat Agenda and its global plan of action, with a view to harmonizing the two plans.

18. ESCAP and UNCHS are coordinating their efforts to integrate their work through the newly established UNCHS Regional Office in Fukuoka, Japan. In this regard, ESCAP presented a paper entitled "Partnership between developed countries, developing countries and international organizations for post-habitat II action in Asia and the Pacific: perspective from international agencies" at the Symposium on Post-Habitat II Action For International Cooperation in Human Settlements in Asia and the Pacific organized by UNCHS, at Fukuoka, Japan, in February 1997.

19. ESCAP is providing support to the International Capacity-building Network formed as an

outcome of Habitat II. The next activity of the network will be the International Expert Group Meeting on Capacity-building for Sustainable Cities in Asia, to be held in June 1997, for which ESCAP will provide financial assistance.

3. Resolution 51/2 on strengthening regional cooperation in human resources development in Asia and the Pacific

20. In compliance with the requests in paragraph 4 of the resolution, the secretariat has taken the following action:

(a) Paragraph 4(a). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to "examine the feasibility of organizing a regional network of centres of excellence in development policy analysis to promote the sharing of views, exchange of experts and other forms of regional cooperation in human resources development in Asia and the Pacific".

Action

With the financial support of the Government of Japan, the secretariat initiated in August 1996 a regional project on networking national centres of excellence for human resources development research and training. The project aims to create a sustainable learning platform for countries of the region to identify and exchange best practices in human resources development research and training through training, exchange of experience, and information dissemination in both printed form and through the World Wide Web. All member governments have been invited to nominate centres of excellence for possible inclusion in the regional network;

(b) Paragraph 4(b). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to "seek the continued advice of the members of the Panel of Eminent Persons on further means of action to promote regional cooperation in human resources development in Asia and the Pacific".

Action

The secretariat has been in touch with selected members of the Panel of Eminent Persons for advice on the implementation of various human resources development activities;

(c) Paragraph 4(c). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to "highlight human resources development as a strategy to alleviate poverty in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001".

Action

Under the subprogramme "Poverty alleviation through economic growth and social development" in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, human resources development has been identified as an approach to combating poverty in the Asian and Pacific region and activities in support of the implementation of the Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development in the

ESCAP Region have been accorded priority;

(d) Paragraph 4(d). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to "devote particular attention to promoting women's human resources development as a means of ensuring gender equity".

Action

With the financial support of the Governments of the Netherlands and the Republic of Korea, two multi-year projects to promote capacity-building of non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations to provide literacy training for women for the South Asian, Pacific and Indo-China subregions are being implemented by the secretariat with the cooperation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific;

(e) Paragraph 4(e). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to "monitor and assess the progress achieved in human resources development through regional cooperation, with particular reference to the implementation of the proposals for action contained in the theme study, and prepare a report on that matter for presentation to the Commission at its session in 1999 as part of the secretariat's overall review of the implementation of phase III of the Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development in the ESCAP Region".

Action

The report has been programmed for implementation in the programme budget for 1998-1999 and will be submitted to the Commission at its session in 1999, as requested.

**4. Resolution 51/4 on the Agenda for Action on Social Development
in the ESCAP Region**

21. In this resolution, the Commission endorsed the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, adopted by the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development, held at Manila in October 1994. It welcomed the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development, convened in Copenhagen in March 1995.

22. In paragraph 6 of the resolution, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to undertake several activities in support of the implementation of the Agenda for Action. In compliance with those requests, the secretariat has taken the following action:

(a) Paragraph 6(a). An information document was prepared on "Steps taken in the implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region" and submitted to the Committee on Poverty Alleviation through Economic Growth and Social Development, at its third session held at Bangkok in October 1996.

(b) Paragraph 6(b). The secretariat completed a project on strengthening national capabilities in implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region into the twenty-first century with funding support from the Government of the Netherlands. The project activities included: (i) convening of the Regional Workshop on Guidelines for the Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, Bangkok, March 1996, and (ii) preparation and dissemination of two publications: *Guidelines for Implementing the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region* (ST/ESCAP/1700) and *Policy and Programme Perspectives in the Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region* (ST/ESCAP/1714). The secretariat completed and disseminated the publication *Towards Social Security for the Poor in the Asia-Pacific Region* (ST/ESCAP/1673). It contains an analytical study and a regional study on social security systems and their effectiveness in providing social security to the poor, eight country studies, covering a representative cross-section of the developing Asian and Pacific region [China, Fiji, India, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Uzbekistan] and the report on the expert group meeting held at Bangkok in November 1995. There has been a heavy demand for the publication, which has received high ratings for its quality and usefulness. The possibility of its being reprinted is being considered. The project was funded by the Government of the Netherlands. ESCAP, on the basis of a series of research studies and meetings, facilitated the development of a policy framework for life-long preparation for old age in Asia and the Pacific. The policy framework, which was published and disseminated shortly after its adoption by a meeting of senior officials convened by ESCAP in May 1996, will guide national policy and programme development in a wide spectrum of areas of concern, ranging from income security and employment to health, education and housing. The secretariat has provided assistance through advisory missions and national workshops on the implementation of the regional Agenda for Action in Fiji (February 1997), Maldives (February 1997), Mongolia (October 1996), Nepal (December 1996) and Vanuatu (February 1997), with funding support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The services of the regional adviser on poverty alleviation and social integration were provided to: Brunei Darussalam, on development of a national social development data bank; Islamic Republic of Iran, on review of the national poverty alleviation programme; Kyrgyzstan, on social services delivery to vulnerable groups; Lao People's Democratic Republic, on including issues on maximizing the social and economic benefits in preparation for a workshop on the second proposed Lao-Thai cross-Mekong bridge project; Mongolia, on enhancing the role of non-governmental organizations in poverty alleviation and social integration; Philippines, on assessment of the national comprehensive integrated delivery of the social services project; Sri Lanka, on a monitoring system for the national poverty alleviation (Samurdhi) programme; Thailand, on land settlement schemes for the poor; and Viet Nam, on institutional arrangements for social protection of the poor. The secretariat has prepared and disseminated recent issues of the *Social Development Newsletter* (Nos. 34 and 35) focusing on the core themes of poverty alleviation and social integration. Issue No. 36 is being prepared with a focus on employment

expansion.

(c) Paragraph 6(c). Preparations continue for the convening of the Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development. The Committee on Poverty Alleviation through Economic Growth and Social Development, at its third session, welcomed the offer of the Government of the Philippines to host the Ministerial Conference. Subsequently, the Government has proposed that the Conference be held at Manila or Subic Bay from 5 to 11 November 1997. The Government has also re-established the National Organizing Committee to prepare for the Conference. The Conference will review and assess progress towards attaining the goals and targets of the regional Agenda for Action and the means to enhance regional cooperation in its support. The secretariat has formulated a project proposal on implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in Asia and the Pacific, for funding support by ADB, to enable the secretariat to undertake the series of preparatory activities leading up to the Ministerial Conference. In January 1996, the Executive Secretary invited governments in the region to designate focal points, which would participate actively in substantive activities to strengthen implementation of the regional Agenda for Action and assist in national preparations for the Ministerial Conference. So far the secretariat has received responses from 28 countries and areas; those governments which have not yet designated their focal points are encouraged to do so.

(d) Paragraph 6(d). In this paragraph, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to promote an integrated, intersectoral approach, and ensure effective coordination of the activities of all concerned United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and non-governmental, private voluntary, and community-based organizations, in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the Agenda for Action. Through the RICAP Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation, the secretariat is implementing the resolution in close collaboration with the concerned United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. The NGO Workshop on Government-NGO Cooperation for Older Persons was organized in January 1997 to facilitate and enhance cooperation between governments and non-governmental organizations in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes for older persons. The substantive preparations for the Ministerial Conference are being undertaken in close consultation with those organizations. UNDP and other bodies and specialized agencies had provided strong support to the secretariat in its monitoring and reporting, and participated in advisory missions and national workshops on implementation of the regional Agenda for Action. It is expected that these and other organizations will assist in the national and regional preparations for the Ministerial Conference as well as further implementation of the Agenda for Action. The secretariat is also promoting the active participation of non-governmental organizations. An NGO forum on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the Asian and Pacific Region, will be convened at Bangkok early in October 1997. The results of the forum will be submitted to the Ministerial Conference. In support of the effective partnership with non-governmental organizations, the secretariat has issued the publication *Enhancing the role of NGOs in Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region*

(ST/ESCAP/1625). The publication reviews contributions of non-governmental organizations in addressing the major social issues raised in the regional Agenda for Action and provides policy and operational guidelines for strengthening governmental and non-governmental relations in the social development endeavour.

5. Resolution 51/7 on implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific

23. In accordance with this resolution, the secretariat established the Inter-agency Subcommittee on the Advancement of Women. The first meeting of the Subcommittee was held on 19 October 1995 and the second on 6 November 1996. Exchange of information and cooperation among United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and ESCAP on gender issues was highlighted at the meetings. Reports on the deliberations of the Subcommittee have been forwarded to the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality.

24. In response to the call in Commission resolution 51/7 for the mobilization of resources, financial and technical expertise and other forms of assistance, donor countries and agencies have provided extrabudgetary funds for implementation of the activities outlined in the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action. These funds were for critical areas of concern identified in the Plan of Action. Contributions in kind and in the form of experts on non-reimbursable loan were also provided by donor countries.

25. The Commission, in the same resolution, also called for the strengthening for subregional and regional activities and, towards that objective, several activities have been undertaken. Subregional activities have been held for the least developed countries in Asia and the Pacific and for the Central Asian republics. In addition, in 1996 a subregional activity for Indo-China focused on the promotion of women's participation in the economic development of Indo-China. At the regional level, various activities have been undertaken covering critical areas of concern in the Jakarta Plan of Action. These included studies on the feminization of poverty, expert group meetings on women in decision-making (covering politics and government), women's rights as human rights (including violence against women) and a regional seminar on strengthening national machineries for the advancement of women.

26. The secretariat continues to work closely with non-governmental organizations at the local, subregional, regional and international levels. At the regional level, cooperation is maintained with the Asia and Pacific Watch Group, which was formerly the Asia and Pacific NGO Working Group. A directory of women's organizations (including non-governmental organizations in Central Asia) has been published in collaboration with UNDP.

27. In response to the call in the resolution to play an advocacy and catalytic role for the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action, the dissemination activities undertaken include translation of the Declaration and Plan of Action into local languages, and sponsoring national

workshops to discuss implementation of the Plan. A videotape and brochure on the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action have been produced.

28. As directed by the resolution, a regional review is being undertaken of the progress achieved in the critical areas of concern identified in the Jakarta Plan of Action.

6. Resolution 52/3 on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

29. In this resolution, the Commission urged all members and associate members to ensure full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Pursuant to the Conference, reports from several countries in the region indicate that they have developed or are developing national plans of action to implement the Platform for Action.

30. In response to the resolution, the secretariat has been providing support to national efforts in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These include the convening of national workshops to adopt national plans of action for women's participation in economic development in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, and organizing national workshops to discuss implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in coordination with the Jakarta Plan of Action.

31. The Commission also called for the promotion of measures to alleviate and eradicate the feminization of poverty. This issue is addressed through various activities, including a project on improving the status of women in poverty under which a regional survey focusing on female-headed and female-maintained households in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and the Philippines has been undertaken. The project will provide recommendations based on these empirical studies and on lessons learned.

32. The Commission called for the mainstreaming of women's issues and gender perspectives into the Commission's programme of work; towards this end, an ad hoc interdivisional mechanism has been initiated to coordinate ESCAP activities on women in development. Interdivisional meetings have been held to discuss the integration of priorities set in the Platform for Action into the work programme of relevant divisions of ESCAP. At the regional level, ESCAP is the convener of the RICAP Inter-agency Subcommittee on the Advancement of Women, which brings together United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to facilitate the exchange of information to avoid overlap and mechanism; it also provides the institutional framework for joint and collaborative activities based on objectives set by the regional Jakarta Plan of Action and the global Beijing Platform for Action taking into consideration the United Nations system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1996/34 of 25 July 1996.

33. With regard to the call in resolution 52/3 for cooperation with subregional organizations and relevant institutions in Asia and the Pacific, collaboration is maintained with intergovernmental organizations such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Association of South East Asian Nations,

the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the South Pacific Commission, non-governmental organizations, especially the Asia and Pacific Watch Group (coordinating preparatory activities of non-governmental organizations for the Fourth World Conference on Women), financial institutions and development banks, especially the World Bank and ADB, research institutions and the private sector.

34. In response to the call in the resolution for developing countries in the Asian and Pacific region to contribute resources, and financial and/or technical expertise, the Republic of Korea provided funds for the regional seminar on strengthening national machineries for the advancement of women, which was held at Seoul in September 1996. Efforts are being made to mobilize resources from other developing countries.

35. In accordance with the call in the resolution for a regional review and follow-up of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action as inputs for the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the action taken includes preparation of a monitoring framework for categorizing implementation of the critical areas of concern, preliminary tabulation of inputs based on available information, and circulation of a questionnaire requesting supplementary information.

7. Resolution 52/4 on promoting human resources development among youth in Asia and the Pacific

36. In compliance with the requests in paragraph 4 of the resolution, the secretariat has taken the following action:

(a) Paragraph 4(a). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to ☐convene a regional meeting of senior officials in 1996, within available resources, to consider the means of promoting human resources development among youth through the implementation in Asia and the Pacific of the World Programme of Action for Youth☐.

Action

The Asia-Pacific Meeting on Human Resources Development for Youth was convened at Beijing in October 1996. The Meeting was hosted by the Government of China through the All-China Youth Federation. In addition, financial assistance for the organization of the Meeting was received from the Christian Conference of Asia and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Meeting developed and adopted eight proposals for action in implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth;

(b) Paragraph 4(b). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to ☐prepare, as an input to that regional meeting, a comprehensive survey of the youth situation and human resources development policies, plans and programmes for youth in Asia and the Pacific☐.

Action

The above survey was prepared as a background document for the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Human Resources Development for Youth. The survey will be printed and disseminated to all relevant youth ministries and organizations early in 1997;

(c) Paragraph 4(c). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to provide advisory services to members and associate members in the formulation of their policies, plans and programmes to enhance youth skills and promote youth participation in development.

Action

Advisory services to assist governments in the formulation of their national youth policies, plans and programmes have been rendered to the countries of the Indo-China subregion, as well as to Bangladesh. In 1997, advisory services will continue to be provided to the less advantaged countries of the region;

(d) Paragraph 4(d). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to conduct a series of training activities directed at youth work personnel to enhance youth skills for productive employment and youth participation in community development.

Action

A series of ESCAP human resources development courses for youth participation in development, focusing on skills development for productive employment for youth and their community participation, will be held in the period 1997-1999 in Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Viet Nam;

(e) Paragraph 4(e). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to assist members and associate members, where necessary, beginning with the countries of Indo-China, in designing their youth policy frameworks and contributing to the implementation of those policy frameworks, taking into account the resources available.

Action

Advisory services in designing a youth policy framework were rendered in 1996 to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam. Further assistance to those countries, as well as to Maldives, Myanmar and Nepal, will be rendered in the period 1997-1999;

(f) Paragraph 4(f). The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to prepare a report on the implementation of the resolution for consideration by the Commission at its fifty-fourth session.

Action

The report will be prepared, as requested, for that session of the Commission.

8. Resolution 52/5 on regional cooperation in response to the spread and consequences of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome in the Asian and Pacific region

37. The Commission, in this resolution, requested the Executive Secretary: to undertake further initiatives, subject to the availability of resources and in collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and other concerned United Nations bodies and agencies and subregional intergovernmental organizations, to promote regional cooperation to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, including the development of area-specific information systems and of effective community-based strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention, and the establishment of mechanisms for cross-border collaboration; and to report to the Commission at its fifty-third session on the implementation of the resolution and on proposed follow-up measures.

38. In complying with the above directive, the secretariat continued to implement a project to assist in developing national strategies for community-based drug demand reduction and HIV/AIDS prevention in five countries, Bangladesh, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan and Viet Nam. A project at the Myanmar-Thailand border to prevent drug abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS has also been initiated. Both projects are being implemented with funding support from the United Nations International Drug Control Programme; the first project also has funding support from the Governments of Australia and Japan. The secretariat developed a project proposal on cross-border collaboration for the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS for consideration of funding by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. Consultations were held with the Programme on the implementation and mechanisms of such a project. Furthermore, the secretariat serviced the RICAP Subcommittee on HIV/AIDS. It developed, in cooperation with the agencies concerned, a draft strategy paper on cross-border collaboration for consideration and adoption of the Subcommittee.

B. Action taken in follow-up of major decisions

1. Action in the field of population

39. The Inter-organizational Subcommittee on Population and Development in Asia and the Pacific had been established in 1995 by decision of RICAP so that the member organizations could devote particular attention to the interrelated issues of population and development in Asia and the Pacific.

40. The second session of the Inter-organization Subcommittee was held at Bangkok on 26 July 1996. It was attended by representatives of 10 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and of six other organizations in the field.

41. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP opened the meeting. He pointed out that as fertility rates had fallen in the region, age structures had changed. Those changes had initially presented a challenge to provide sufficient employment for persons entering the labour force, and later to adapt the labour

force to rapid technological change. Labour shortages had developed in several countries of the region, met first by rural-urban migration and then by international migration. Population ageing would pose serious challenges to national economies and health care systems in the near future. He also stressed the importance of the role of women in determining fertility levels, affecting child development and influencing national economic development. Human resources were necessary for development but, more importantly, the objective of development itself must be seen as the improvement of the well-being of the population.

42. Each member organization present described its current programmes and activities related to population and development. The strengthening of regional cooperation among the member organizations was also suggested.

43. Under the agenda item on strengthening regional cooperation in population and development activities, ESCAP announced that it proposed to organize a regional meeting in 1997 to review action taken to implement the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development of 1992 and the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development. The convening of the regional meeting had also been recommended by the Committee on Poverty Alleviation through Economic Growth and Social Development at its third session. The proposed meeting would be convened in 1997 to review the implementation of the recommendations of the above-mentioned conferences and to examine the population and development implications of globalization. The Committee had further requested the secretariat to seek extrabudgetary resources for that purpose and to report to the Commission at its fifty-third session on action taken to organize the regional meeting.

44. The secretariat has prepared a proposal for organizing the regional meeting to follow up implementation of the Bali Declaration and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The proposal has been submitted to UNFPA for its consideration and possible financial support.

2. Action on the provision of technical assistance and advisory services, particularly in designing and implementing poverty alleviation programmes (recommendation of the Commission in paragraph 175 of the report on its fifty-second session¹)

45. The secretariat has been assisting the countries in the SAARC subregion in the establishment of forums and networks at the grass-roots level for improving coordination between agents and beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes with a view to improving the effectiveness of such programmes. These have been accomplished through the implementation of a UNDP-funded project entitled "SAARC Seven Sisters: district development coordination and improved poverty project

¹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 16 (E/1996/36-E/ESCAP/1044).*

design¹ which started early in 1996 and has made substantial progress. Forums have been created in five districts nominated by the governments of five SAARC countries. The forums, under the leadership of focal points nominated by the respective SAARC governments, are operating effectively and have already had a strong impact in enhancing benefits to the poor. In a meeting of the SAARC-wide network of these forums held in October 1996, experience with creating and operationalizing the forums was discussed and action plans were formulated. The final meeting of the subregional network is scheduled to be held in March 1997.

3. Action on the formulation of policies and programmes to enhance the productivity and income of the participants of the informal sector (recommendation of the Commission in paragraph 176 of the report on its fifty-second session²)

46. Under the project on the role of the informal service sector in poverty alleviation, country studies were prepared focusing on the problems and constraints faced by the sector and examining policies and programmes for enhancing productivity and earnings in the sector, particularly for those in poverty. A regional seminar on the role of the informal service sector in poverty alleviation was

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² Ibid.

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held at Bangkok in May 1996. The participants, who included representatives of nine countries, formulated and adopted a comprehensive set of policy recommendations for the attention of governments covering the areas of general economic policies, education and training and credit-related issues. The recommendations were made available to participants in the third session of the Committee on Poverty Alleviation through Economic Growth and Social Development in the form of an information document. A publication based on the reference material prepared and the proceedings of the regional seminar will be issued shortly.

4. Action in the field of industry and technology

47. Pursuant to the Commission's call at its fifty-second session for the secretariat to strengthen its efforts in promoting technology transfer and the technological upgrading of small and medium-scale industries which provided employment for the low-income population,³ the Seminar on Poverty Alleviation through Technological Capability Building was held at Beijing in June 1996 and the Nanjing Forum 1996 on Technology Cooperation for Rural Small and Medium-scale Industries was organized in cooperation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization at Nanjing, China, in November 1996. The Seminar formulated recommendations at the national and regional levels aimed at promoting poverty alleviation through the introduction of technology for the development of small and medium-scale industries. Participants in the Forum shared their experiences in developing rural small and medium-scale industries and private sector representatives discussed possible contracts for technology transfer with local entrepreneurs.

³ Ibid., para. 179.