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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 FIFTH ASIAN AND PACIFIC MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The Conference reviewed and assessed the progress achieved towards attaining the goals and targets of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, in the context of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. While acknowledging the progress and continuous efforts made by many countries in the region in poverty alleviation, employment generation and social integration, it noted with concern the social challenges that remained to be addressed. It also took note of the "Message to Manila" issued by the NGO Forum on Social Development in Asia and the Pacific, held at Kuala Lumpur in September 1997. The Conference recognized the social development repercussions of international economic volatility and agreed that it would be necessary to monitor the impact of the present financial crisis in some parts of the region on the population at large and ensure that social development targets and goals were not adversely affected by the corrective economic measures being undertaken or planned. It deliberated on proposals, for national action and regional cooperation, towards accelerating the implementation of the Agenda for Action in the light of current and emerging social development challenges in Asia and the Pacific.

The Conference unanimously adopted the Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region. Annexed to the Declaration is a set of recommendations for national action on planning and target setting, mobilizing enablers and institutional support, mobilizing resources, capacity-building through human resources development, and monitoring and evaluation, as well as for regional and international action in support of national action recommended above, and for follow-up action.

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development was convened by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Manila from 5 to 11 November 1997. The Conference was hosted by the Government of the Philippines.
2. The Conference was held in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 50/161 of 22 December 1995, in which the regional commissions were invited, in cooperation with regional intergovernmental organizations and banks, to consider convening, on a biennial basis, meetings at a high political level to review progress made towards implementing the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.
3. The Conference was also held in pursuance of Commission resolution 51/4 of 1 May 1995 on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region (hereinafter referred to as the regional Social Development Agenda)¹, in which the Commission called for the convening of a regional ministerial conference on social development in 1997 to review and assess the progress achieved towards attaining the goals and targets of the regional Social Development Agenda, and to consider means of enhancing regional cooperation in support of the Agenda.
4. The Conference was attended by ministers and representatives of the following ESCAP members and associate members: Armenia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, China, Fiji, France, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Macau, Malaysia, Maldives, Micronesia (Federated States of), Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, United States of America, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. In addition, Peru was represented in an observer capacity.
5. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Colombo Plan Secretariat.
6. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Population Fund, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Health Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Meteorological Organization and United Nations Industrial Development Organization.
7. The following non-governmental and other organizations were represented: Asian Cultural Forum on Development, ASEAN Confederation on Women Organizations, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Centre for Public Policy of the University of Melbourne,

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¹ Adopted at the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development, held in Manila in October 1994.

Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements, International Alliance of Women, International Council on Social Welfare, International Council of Women, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Federation of Non-governmental Organizations for the Prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse, International Planned Parenthood Federation, International Social Security Association, Socialwatch Asia, Muslim World League, World Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises, World Confederation of Labour and World Veterans Federation.

II. OPENING OF THE MEETING

A. Inaugural address

8. The Conference was inaugurated by HE Mr Fidel V. Ramos, President of the Philippines.

9. In his address, President Ramos pointed out that the Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development provided a unique opportunity for all countries in the region to reconfirm collectively the commitments agreed upon in the regional Social Development Agenda, which had been adopted by the members and associate members of ESCAP in 1995. That Agenda had been transmitted by the President to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, and the concerns of the Asian and Pacific region had been incorporated into the Programme of Action of the World Summit.

10. The President stated that the present Conference was being held to survey the extent of the region's implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda. On the part of the Philippines, much action had been taken in support of that Agenda. National policies and programmes had been geared towards addressing poverty, unemployment and social inequity, as reflected in the "Philippine 2000" programme as well as in the Philippine Development Plan for 1992 to 1998. The President also stated that the Government of the Philippines was committed to the continuing increase of resources for human development priorities.

11. The President noted that, while the countries of Asia and the Pacific had recorded considerable progress in social development, the poverty challenge continued to be daunting. He called for a more conducive policy and programme implementation environment, and greater access to human development opportunities and services, including those offered by non-governmental organizations. He concluded by stating that the Conference would support the members and associated members of ESCAP in working collectively to address the human development challenges faced by the region and thereby to secure a better future for the peoples of Asia and the Pacific.

B. Opening statements

12. In her welcoming remarks, HE Ms Lina Laigo, Secretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Philippines, recalled that the members and associate members of ESCAP had expressed their firm commitment to social development through effective policies, programmes and adequate resources. She noted that the Ministerial Conference was aimed at reviewing the progress achieved and

deciding on further courses of action to accelerate the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda.

13. She drew attention to the "Message to Manila", adopted by the NGO Forum on Social Development in Asia and the Pacific, which contained priority targets for poverty alleviation and social integration, particularly of marginalized groups. She emphasized that the achievement of the goals and targets of the regional Social Development Agenda required close collaboration within and among governments, and regional and international development partners.

14. The president of ADB, Mr Mitsuo Sato, stated that ADB recognized that the objectives of social development and economic growth were closely interrelated as well as interdependent, and that neither could be achieved at the expense of the other. That concept had influenced the reshaping of the Bank's strategy formulation and operations. ADB therefore had decided to achieve a portfolio mix of about 50/50 between projects aimed at economic growth and those having social or environmental objectives. Towards that end, it had established a target that, by 2000, 40 per cent of the volume of ADB lending would be for social and environmental projects. He stated that ADB would continue to increase its emphasis on social development, taking into account the recommendations of the Conference.

15. In his opening statement, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP pointed out that the Asian and Pacific region could be proud of its significant social and economic development in recent decades. He noted, however, that poverty, hunger, unemployment, and gender, ethnic and other forms of discrimination remained critical social issues. Most recently, some countries of the region had experienced severe shocks from the currency crisis, escalating foreign debt and economic downturn which threatened to have wider regional socio-economic impact.

16. In the light of those challenges, he urged the Conference to review the adequacy of the measures taken to fulfil the commitments in the regional Social Development Agenda. It was necessary to build strong communities and strengthen social protection measures to withstand unexpected economic crises. He stressed the importance of regional and international cooperation, and emphasized that governments must act as prime movers, in close collaboration with the non-governmental and private sectors.

17. He expressed deep appreciation to the Government of the Philippines for the excellent facilities extended in hosting the Conference. He also acknowledged the support provided by ADB in the organization of the Conference.

III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

18. The Meeting elected the following bureau:

Chairperson: HE Mr Cielito F. Habito, Secretary for Socio-Economic Planning and Director-General of the National Economic and Development Authority, Philippines

Vice-Chairpersons: HE Ms Hranoush Hakobyan, Minister of Social Security, Ministry of Social

Security, Armenia

HE Dr Mozammel Hossain, State Minister for Social Welfare, Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh

HE Pehin Dato Haji Awang Hussain Mohd Yusof, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Brunei Darussalam

HE Ms Hao Jianxiu, Vice Chairman State Planning Commission, China

HE Mr B.S. Ramoowalia, Minister, Ministry of Welfare, India

HE Mr Mahmud Asgari Azad, Deputy Head for Social Affairs, Plan and Budget Organization, Islamic Republic of Iran

HE Mr Yoshiaki Harada, Parliamentary Vice Minister of Health and Welfare, Japan

HE Mr Soubanh Srithirath, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the National Committee on Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development, Lao People's Democratic Republic

HE Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail, Minister of National Unity and Social Development, Malaysia

HE Dr Catalino Cantero, Minister, National Department of Education, Micronesia (Federated States of)

HE Brigadier General Maung Kyi, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Myanmar

HE Mr Hong-Yoon Lee, Assistant Minister for Social Welfare Policy, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Republic of Korea

HE Mr Abdoussattor Djabarov, Minister of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, Tajikistan

HE Ms Nguyen Thi Hang, Deputy Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Viet Nam

Rapporteur: Ms G.K. Rup, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of National Planning, Fiji

IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

19. The Conference adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the Conference.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Social development into the twenty-first century: progress in and prospects of the implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region:
 - (a) Review of the progress achieved towards meeting the goals and targets of the Agenda for Action, in the context of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development;
 - (b) Proposals for accelerating the implementation of the Agenda for Action in the light of current and emerging social development challenges in Asia and the Pacific: priorities for national action and regional cooperation;

- (c) Report of the Meeting of Senior Officials.
- 5. Ministerial declaration on accelerated implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region: follow-up of the World Summit for Social Development.
- 6. Other matters.
- 7. Adoption of the report.

**V. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: PROGRESS IN AND PROSPECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENDA FOR ACTION ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ESCAP REGION
(Agenda item 4)**

20. The Conference had before it the following documents:
- The social development situation and prospects of Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: summary (E/ESCAP/SD/MCSD/1 and Corr.1)
 - Review of national progress achieved in the implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, in the context of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (E/ESCAP/SD/MCSD/2 and Corr.1)
 - Review of regional action taken in support of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, and the follow-up of the World Summit for Social Development (E/ESCAP/SD/MCSD/3)
 - Report of the Meeting of Senior Officials (E/ESCAP/SD/MCSD/4).
21. The delegations delivered statements on the progress achieved, in their respective countries and areas, towards meeting the goals and targets of the regional Social Development Agenda, in the context of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

A. Social development repercussions of international economic volatility

22. The Conference acknowledged that a major new challenge had emerged for some Asian and Pacific countries that had achieved rapid socio-economic progress in the past decade. That challenge was how to preserve the social development gains of recent years in the face of international economic turbulence and volatility. Fears were expressed that the serious economic volatility that had appeared in the region recently might continue and even intensify into the twenty-first century. It was felt that the adverse social consequences of such volatility could spread beyond the countries currently affected to other countries, especially those being rapidly integrated into the global economy. The Conference underlined the need to examine intensively the interrelationships and interdependence between the economic and social dimensions of development in the region in order to take effective action to maintain the region's course of social development in the presence of international economic fluctuations.

23. The Conference felt that, in the context of the present financial crisis in some parts of the region, it would be necessary to monitor the impact of the crisis on the population at large and ensure

that social development targets and goals were not adversely affected by the corrective economic measures being undertaken or planned. Countries in the region, with the support of major regional and international development partners, also needed to engage themselves collectively to formulate policies to stem the negative side-effects of economic globalization and developmental fragility.

B. Poverty alleviation

24. A number of delegations, including those representing the most populous countries of the region, reported that significant progress had been made in reducing poverty through macroeconomic and microeconomic strategies and multisectoral social development programmes for improved health, education, literacy, shelter, family planning, population and gender equality. Nevertheless, the Conference recognized the need for further efforts to accelerate poverty alleviation, particularly those targeted at "hard-core poor" communities and focused on income creation and asset accumulation, if the targets of the regional Social Development Agenda were to be met.

25. The Conference underscored the value of partnerships between government agencies, non-governmental organizations and civic society at the local level in improving the lives of the rural and urban poor, especially under conditions of acute resource constraint. It was recognized that decentralization of decision-making authority served as an effective and efficient means of supporting the development of such partnerships in practice.

26. Many delegations reported that their countries had increased the quantum of financial and human resources allocated for poverty alleviation, especially in the health and education sectors. Concerning efforts to ensure the sustainability of micro-finance institutions for poverty eradication, one delegation highlighted the mobilization of domestic resources as a first step towards self-reliance and called for initiatives to develop an alternative path to sustainable progress.

27. Several delegations emphasized the continuing need for regional and international action by developed countries to augment the national resources provided for poverty alleviation. It was felt that such action should include renewed efforts to (a) realize the 20/20 compact, (b) establish an international fund for social development and (c) provide preferential interest rates for loans earmarked for social development programmes and projects.

28. The Conference called on the donor countries to fulfil the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. It also called upon them to increase significantly their contributions to meet the social development needs of the least developed countries and the economies in transition, particularly through economic assistance, technology transfer and debt reduction. One delegation expressed the view that international assistance had not adequately addressed the problems faced by those countries in the region which were in transition from centrally planned to market economies. It called on ESCAP and other international agencies to initiate more effective measures to assist those countries in their social development efforts, particularly in addressing the rising poverty associated with the transition from central planning to market systems.

C. Employment expansion

29. The Conference noted that sustained economic growth had, in recent decades, led to a substantial expansion of productive employment, particularly in the urban areas of the region. As part of national development plans, many governments of the region had implemented a wide variety of programmes for productive employment. It was pointed out that human resources development, including through education, skills training and health care, was a major tool for increasing employment opportunities in the region.

30. The Conference stressed the importance of investment in human resources as a means of employment promotion. Improvements in social indicators, particularly those for education and health, were noted. Many delegations emphasized the need to intensify efforts to attain basic education for all, practical skills training and improvement of access to basic health services and a clean environment. Several delegations referred to the importance of policies and programmes to further promote gender equity, child and youth development, as well as capacity-building of local governments to accelerate people-centred and equitable development.

31. The Conference noted that increased international trade and investment, which had contributed positively to the employment situation in the region, had at the same time led to greater economic dependence. That dependence had left workers in many countries vulnerable to the impact of international economic fluctuations. In the countries facing economic transition, the positive impact of economic growth on employment had not yet been widely felt, nor had the increased vulnerability of employment to international economic fluctuations yet become a serious issue.

32. One delegation informed the Conference of its government's efforts to increase employment opportunities in the context of reform of state-owned enterprises and accelerated industrial restructuring. Those efforts included a massive urban re-employment project, as well as the development of the service sector, establishment of service centres, promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises and provision of community services.

33. The Conference noted with concern the adverse effect of globalization on vulnerable social groups, resulting in such problems as the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth and the erosion of traditional values among young people. Increased international labour mobility had also created a need to address international and regional issues related to the employment and protection of migrant workers.

D. Social integration

34. The Conference referred to the diverse approaches adopted by governments in the region to achieve social harmony and cohesion. It was noted that national differences in approaches to social integration issues were due primarily to differences in the priorities accorded to the overriding economic

and social issues and in the target groups identified by governments. Delegations identified the following social groups as the primary targets for their countries' social integration programmes: women, youth, people with disabilities, older persons, people with HIV/AIDS, ethnic minorities, tribal groups and migrant workers. Furthermore, the following social issues associated with social disintegration and requiring urgent remedial action were referred to: family breakdown, child abuse, drug abuse and juvenile delinquency.

35. A number of delegations pointed to their countries' efforts to develop social security systems and safety nets as prime examples of social integration programmes. However, it was recognized that the coverage of those programmes was limited to relatively small sections of the population. Furthermore, the benefits provided through those programmes generally did not provide adequately for the groups targeted. It was proposed that the countries of the region should share knowledge and experience in the implementation of social security programmes, to assist in avoiding fundamental errors in the design of national systems.

36. The Conference also referred to issues concerning the integration of ethnic, religious and political minorities into the national social mainstream. A number of delegations stressed the importance of tolerance and respect for divergent views and practices as a fundamental constituent element in all national social integration policies and programmes. The need for social mobilization, fostering of positive traditional values of mutual assistance and support, as well as priority action to address the deprivation faced by ethnic minorities located in remote areas and other socially discriminated communities, was noted. Many delegations mentioned recent initiatives which had led to a decline in violence and to enhanced community integration and social harmony. One delegation emphasized the need for a holistic approach to social integration, incorporating ethical values, to reinforce social and cultural resilience in all societies, especially those experiencing rapid transformation.

37. Several delegations drew attention to initiatives by their governments to protect human rights, particularly those of women, children, people with disabilities, older persons and people with HIV/AIDS. Specific social integration measures included public education on human rights, access improvements to public venues and public transportation, as well as the reform of legislation, policies and social practices and institutions.

38. Some delegations stressed that good governance was an integral part of social integration. One delegation reported that its government had enacted a local government code to expand the scope and power of local government units for social development. The Conference was informed that implementation of the code was supported by a devolution of responsibility and an increase in revenue allocation for the delivery of basic social services.

E. Report of the Meeting of Senior Officials

39. The Conference endorsed the report of the Meeting of Senior Officials (E/ESCAP/SD/MCSD/4) and the proposals contained therein for accelerating the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda in the light of the current and emerging social development challenges in the Asian and Pacific region.

VI. MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON ACCELERATED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENDA FOR ACTION ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ESCAP REGION

40. The Conference had before it a draft declaration on accelerated implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, as submitted by the Meeting of Senior Officials. The Conference agreed to several amendments to the draft declaration.

41. The Conference unanimously adopted the attached Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region.

VII. OTHER MATTERS

42. The Conference expressed its appreciation of the support extended by ADB to the secretariat in the preparations for the Conference.

43. The Meeting took note of the [Message to Manila], adopted by the NGO Forum on Social Development in Asia and the Pacific in September 1997. It welcomed the Message as an important initiative by non-governmental organizations, especially in its presentation of a three-year (1997 to 2000) regional priority plan, along with a set of measures to address the underlying causes of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. The Meeting voiced its support for empowering NGOs and strengthening the role of civil society in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social development policies, programmes and projects. The role of collective political will was emphasized in promoting collaborative action of governments, NGOs, the private sector and civil society to attain the targets and goals of the regional Social Development Agenda.

44. The Conference agreed to meet again, in accordance with the mandate provided in General Assembly resolution 50/161, to review further progress in implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda, as revised.

45. The Conference noted with regret the impending retirement of the Director, ESCAP Social Development Division, and commended him for his contributions to social development in the Asian and Pacific region, particularly through his direct involvement in the formulation of the regional Social Development Agenda.

VIII. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

46. The Conference adopted its report on 11 November 1997.

**MANILA DECLARATION ON ACCELERATED IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE AGENDA FOR ACTION ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE ESCAP REGION**

We, the Governments of the Asian and Pacific region participating in the Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development, gathered here in Manila from 5 to 11 November 1997 to review the implementation and determine the further action required to accelerate the fulfilment of the goals of poverty alleviation, employment expansion and social integration contained in the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region (hereinafter referred to as the regional Social Development Agenda):

Recalling the commitments made at the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development, convened at Manila in October 1994, with the adoption of the regional Social Development Agenda,

Further recalling the continuing relevance of global and regional mandates such as the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development, the Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development in the ESCAP Region, the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, the Jakarta Declaration for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific, and the Proclamation on Ageing,

Recognizing that, since October 1994, the world community has adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the Declaration of the Paris AIDS Summit, the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action, the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and the Habitat Agenda, and the Microcredit Summit Plan of Action,

Acknowledging the progress and continuing efforts made by many countries in the region concerning poverty alleviation, the generation of productive employment and the enhancement of social integration,

Taking into account the decision of the General Assembly to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development,

Noting with concern the vulnerability of many economies in the region to widening trade deficits, mounting foreign debt repayments, currency crises and economic slowdown, which have serious implications for social progress and cohesion,

Also noting with concern the social challenges that remain to be addressed, arising from economic transition, inter-country labour mobility, demographic processes, urbanization, changing family

relations, changing gender relations, changing consumption patterns, advances in technology, environmental change and HIV/AIDS,

Taking note of the Message to Manila issued by the NGO Forum on Social Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Kuala Lumpur in September 1997,

1. Decide:

- (a) **To intensify** efforts to fulfil the goals and targets contained in the regional Social Development Agenda (see annex II), within the context of national situations;
- (b) **To foster** an enabling environment of peace and good governance;
- (c) **To ensure** that the region's rural and urban poor, who constitute two-thirds of the world's poor, can enter the new millennium free from hunger, ill health, illiteracy, unemployment, discrimination and exclusion;
- (d) **To increase** the level of resources for social development aimed at improving the quality of life of all the people, by (i) ensuring that higher priority is given to basic social programmes in the national budget, (ii) ensuring effective resource utilization and minimizing resource leakages, (iii) encouraging voluntary contributions, and (iv) promoting domestic savings;
- (e) **To strengthen** social protection programmes for all disadvantaged groups, especially the "hard-core" poor, providing for income security, good health including reproductive health, decent living conditions, education and involvement in community life;
- (f) **To augment** investment in human resources development for all, to improve access to education, training, employment, health care, support services and assets, with particular attention to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups;
- (g) **To strengthen** multisectoral collaboration among public institutions, development agencies and civil society, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector;
- (h) **To ensure** efficient coordination and transparency with and among development partners on technical and funding assistance, to enhance the positive impact of such assistance on social development;
- (i) **To encourage**, among public, private and NGO decision-makers and managers, a strong sense of public service, as well as high standards of integrity, commitment to equality of opportunity, openness, accountability and transparency in decision-making and resource allocation at all levels;
- (j) **To expand** opportunities for social and economic mobility to empower people to

determine their own future, with due regard for the rights of disadvantaged groups to self-representation, organization, productive participation in the decision-making process of government and an equitable share in national wealth;

- (k) **To revise**, as appropriate, legislation to increase local autonomy and citizens' participation in all matters affecting local communities and, where introduced, to support such decentralization measures with training to strengthen community participation and the functioning of local authorities;
- (l) **To urge** all members of the United Nations system, as well as all other multilateral agencies and bilateral donors, including the Asian Development Bank and other concerned regional and subregional entities: (i) to review critically the impact of their technical assistance programmes on the fulfilment of the regional Social Development Agenda goals and targets, and make the requisite adjustments, (ii) to provide support for the social development initiatives taken by the countries of Asia and the Pacific in implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda, (iii) to strengthen national capacity for the effective integration of social concerns in the development process, and (iv) to mobilize additional resources, both human and financial, to implement the regional Social Development Agenda;
- (m) **To request** the Executive Secretary to take immediate action to harness the multi-disciplinary potential of the secretariat to ensure full support for the effective implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda.

2. Reaffirm our commitment to fulfilling the goals and targets of the regional Social Development Agenda and adopt the recommendations for accelerated implementation contained in annex I.

Annex I

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCELERATED IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE AGENDA FOR ACTION ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE ESCAP REGION**

I. NATIONAL ACTION

We, the Governments of Asia and the Pacific, decide to take the following action to accelerate the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda:

A. Planning and target setting

1. To accelerate progress towards the eradication of poverty by (a) giving particular attention to prioritizing programmes to assist the "hard-core" poor through asset reforms and access to necessary resources, such as credit, technology, entrepreneurship and legislative support; (b) formulating pro-poor policies to address poverty through appropriate fiscal policy measures, commodity pricing and improved employment and self-employment conditions; and (c) strengthening social protection programmes for the poor, extending beyond income support to building human productive capacity, with emphasis on provision for basic minimum needs.

2. To strengthen programmes for employment expansion by (a) giving particular attention to ensuring that appropriate employment conditions and labour welfare are promoted in the context of growing globalization, growth-oriented macroeconomic policies and structural adjustment programmes; (b) improving working and living conditions, notably for women and children, migrant labour and other disadvantaged elements of the labour force; (c) improving human resource development through skills upgrading to cater to changing labour demands in the context of new and emerging technologies, and to reduce the mismatch between labour force skills and employer requirements; (d) providing and strengthening social safety nets, especially in the least developed and transitional economies; and (e) supporting the growth of the informal economic sector through appropriate incentives and a regulatory framework supportive of enterprise formation, improved access to credit and technologies, and enhanced linkages between the informal and formal sectors.

3. To enhance programmes for social integration by (a) giving particular attention to the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including women, youth, children, dysfunctional families, persons with disabilities, older persons, ethnic minorities, people with HIV/AIDS and other socially stigmatizing diseases, disaster victims, refugees and migrant workers; (b) increasing budgetary allocations for the provision of infrastructure and social services to benefit remote and isolated areas, and disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; and (c) undertaking proactive monitoring and analysis of national development situations to anticipate and address potentially destabilizing circumstances.

4. To study further the criteria for estimating the incidence of absolute poverty, to facilitate

identification and targeting of the absolute poor.

5. To devise appropriate methods for estimating the magnitude and distribution of underemployment and unemployment.
6. To compile data on (a) the distribution of poverty among population groups, especially those which are disadvantaged, vulnerable and/or socially excluded; (b) the characteristics of the major socially excluded groups and their needs, priorities and capacities; and (c) the factors contributing to the poverty of major socially excluded groups, as a basis for evolving strategies to address their problems.
7. To identify priority social development targets and population groups for action plans and programmes.
8. To conduct systematic analysis of the impact of macro and sectoral policies on poverty alleviation, employment and social integration, aimed at ensuring equitable and sustainable development.
9. To strengthen cooperation and coordination among line ministries and related institutions in the social sector, on the one hand, and the planning and finance ministries, on the other, for the conduct of systematic analysis and generation of policy options to address poverty alleviation, employment expansion and social integration.
10. To formulate integrated, multisectoral and comprehensive national social development plans, keeping in view the prevailing political process and economic imperatives.
11. To incorporate in national social development plans both short-term and intermediate time-bound targets to monitor progress towards achieving the goals contained in the regional Social Development Agenda.
12. To establish mechanisms for rapid assessment of the social impact of economic fluctuations, as a basis for instituting compensatory measures to minimize the adverse social repercussions of economic fluctuations.

B. Mobilizing enablers and institutional support

13. To designate a national focal point, such as the national development planning body, to coordinate and oversee the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda and to harmonize and monitor the social development activities of government agencies, NGOs and the private sector.
14. To decentralize political, administrative and decision-making functions to the local level, to facilitate improved response to local social development priorities, while enhancing the transparency and accountability of local government agencies.

15. To mobilize the private sector to participate actively in national social development initiatives, and encourage it to adopt labour-friendly employment practices.
16. To mobilize the labour force to promote work safety and environmental concerns, and strengthen the participation of women and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in leadership and decision-making processes.
17. To create an enabling environment for government-NGO cooperation in the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda by (a) encouraging NGO participation in policy formulation and priority setting, as well as planning and implementation of social development programmes and projects; (b) recognizing that NGOs are important channels for voicing the concerns of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and that they have built capacity and constituencies on social and environmental issues that are relevant for sustainable development; (c) respecting the autonomy of NGOs to evolve their own perspectives and positions and express them freely; and (d) supporting NGOs through co-financing of social programmes in areas where they have demonstrated a comparative advantage.
18. To stimulate NGO participation in social development by strengthening their capacity through technical assistance, training and other assistance in building up their organizational and managerial skills.
19. To facilitate the establishment of umbrella organizations of NGOs to coordinate NGO activities and concerns on social development issues as well as to promote their transparency and effective interaction with other groups, including government agencies, and to draw up codes of conduct and self-regulation for NGOs.
20. To mobilize communities, civic leaders and the public at large as enablers for promoting the attainment of the goals and targets contained in the regional Social Development Agenda, with emphasis on promoting the participation of community members and leaders, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, as well as the public in the identification of constraints and opportunities in the choice of social and economic interventions and implementation modalities.
21. To ensure the full participation of the media in the dissemination of public information on social development issues.

C. Mobilizing resources

22. To review budgetary expenditure for the social sector to establish benchmarks for such expenditure, especially on basic social services, and to ensure effective and efficient resource utilization.

23. To study the possibility of excluding disadvantaged and vulnerable groups from indirect tax liabilities, user fees and other such payments for goods and services, including primary education and basic health care, where appropriate.

24. To provide adequate funding for the social service programmes of local government agencies through grants and revenue-sharing arrangements, and through devolution of authority to impose and collect taxes and fees and utilize revenue for basic social services.

25. To provide incentives and remove constraints for social development activities funded by the private sector, taking into account the need for basic regulatory and standard-setting requirements; and to encourage the philanthropic contributions of commercial enterprises, corporate leaders and business associations, to tap private sector funding for social development activities.

26. To encourage NGO mobilization of funds for social development by (a) removing obstacles and providing a facilitating framework; (b) introducing measures to ensure NGO accountability for the use of funds and transparency in decision-making systems; and (c) adopting area-, group- and issue-focused approaches for mobilizing additional external resources for social development.

27. To renew the call for the establishment of an international fund for development to make available additional resources for implementing the regional Social Development Agenda.

28. To pursue partnerships within the framework of the 20/20 compact to raise additional resources for social development and devise feasible modalities for realizing the compact.

D. Capacity-building through human resources development

29. To strengthen the human resources capacity of the public sector for the promotion of effective social development through the identification of personnel training needs and the delivery of training to impart new skills in policy and programme development and management.

30. To allocate adequate resources for the training of social development personnel at both central and local levels to strengthen skills in the planning and delivery of basic social services to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including children, youth, women, older persons, disabled persons and indigenous people.

31. To promote government-NGO exchange of experiences to facilitate the adaptation and replication of innovative approaches to social development at a wider level.

32. To encourage the networking of human resources development research and training institutes to promote the exchange of experience and best practices in human resources development.

E. Monitoring and evaluation

33. To activate the operations of the national focal point to include regular monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes formulated in the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda, in order to ensure the early achievement of the goals and targets of the Agenda.

34. To establish a social development information system to support the monitoring and evaluation of social development programmes, and incorporate in the monitoring and evaluation system benchmarks, mid-period goals and intermediate targets.

II. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACTION

We, the Governments of Asia and the Pacific, request the Executive Secretary, as well as the heads of other concerned United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and donor institutions to support the accelerated implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, by taking the following action:

A. Target setting

35. To adopt the following intermediate regional targets for the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda:

- (a) Reducing, by 2000, absolute poverty to half the 1990 level;
- (b) Reducing, by 2000, infant mortality to half that prevailing in 1990;
- (c) Achieving, by 2000, life expectancy at birth of 65 years, and for countries and areas experiencing high mortality rates, achieving, by 2000, life expectancy at birth of 60 years;
- (d) Providing, by 2000, access to basic education for at least 80 per cent of the population;
- (e) Providing, by 2000, access to secondary education for at least 80 per cent of those who qualify.

36. To revise the following targets of the regional Social Development Agenda (see annex II):

- (a) Achieving, by an earlier date than 2010, the target for redesigning the secondary education curricula;
- (b) Achieving, by an earlier date than 2010, the formulation and implementation of policies and enabling mechanisms to eliminate wage differentials between men and women, taking into consideration the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women;
- (c) Specifying actions and time-frames to promote the strengthening of the family, taking into account the International Year of the Family and its follow-up;
- (d) Initiating immediate action for the prevention, control and eventual eradication of malaria,

B. Strengthening planning and programming

37. To conduct analytical studies on the social impact of macroeconomic and sectoral policies and programmes on poverty alleviation, employment expansion and social integration.

38. To support the strengthening of national multisectoral and integrated social development planning and programming aimed at (a) minimizing the adverse social repercussions of economic fluctuations, and (b) meeting priority targets for poverty alleviation, employment expansion and social integration.

39. To identify and promote technical cooperation activities on best practice in the design, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes which benefit disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

40. To establish a regional network of national social development information systems to support intersectoral planning and evaluation of social development programmes.

C. Capacity-building

41. To support the establishment and strengthening of national multisectoral coordinating bodies to spearhead the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda, including the conduct of national and regional workshops to assess the efficacy of the structure and functions of current national coordinating bodies.

42. To provide technical assistance to promote decentralization in the planning and delivery of social development programmes, by undertaking country case studies and regional seminars to share methodologies for decentralization and local-level governance in the social sector.

43. To promote capacity-building of national human resources for social development policy makers and personnel, at the central as well as the local government levels, through training workshops and field study programmes to enhance skills and knowledge in social development planning, service delivery, institution-building, project management, gender analysis, community resource mobilization and information technology.

44. To strengthen measures for ensuring provision of access to quality education to girl children, especially to those belonging to marginalized and socially disadvantaged communities, and to provide an enabling environment for the empowerment and social integration of socially disabled groups, including through motivation and awareness generation, to facilitate their upward mobility.

45. To promote policies and programmes to strengthen the capabilities of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, especially persons with disabilities, through training, technical assistance and other forms of support, including development of distance education, in order to improve their access to education, information and the built environment, including user-friendly public transportation systems,

for their effective participation in community life and mainstream development programmes.

46. To disseminate, in national languages, training curricula for human resources development courses for social service and health personnel working in the areas of poverty alleviation, youth development and protection and rehabilitation of sexually abused and exploited children and youth, for use by national institutes in training national and local-level personnel.

47. To assist governments and NGOs in the planning and delivery of social services to the poor and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, through implementation of pilot projects to improve access of these groups to basic social services, including education, skills training and health care.

48. To strengthen the identification and dissemination of examples of best practice in social development in general, and in the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda in particular.

49. To continue administering the annual ESCAP Human Resources Development (HRD) Award, which recognizes innovative achievement in human resources development in the ESCAP region, and to promote information-sharing of best practices through the Regional Network of Centres of Excellence for HRD Research and Training.

50. To document and disseminate information on social development issues, policies and programmes through the *Social Development Newsletter*, the *ESCAP HRD Newsletter*, and the *Asia-Pacific Fact Sheet for Drug Demand Reduction and HIV/AIDS Prevention*, as well as the ESCAP Homepage on the World Wide Web (Internet).

51. To accelerate actions for the full participation and equality of people with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific through continued active implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, with special reference to (a) training in disability statistics, (b) technical exchange on the indigenous production of assistive devices, (c) promotion of disabled children's equal access to education, (d) training disabled women for participation in gender equality programmes, and (e) training disabled persons as enablers in community-based rehabilitation programmes.

D. Mobilizing enablers and resources

52. To promote an enabling international environment for the developing countries in Asia and the Pacific to eradicate poverty, expand productive employment and enhance social integration, by reducing the debt burden of the low-income countries in accordance with the commitments made by the G-7 and other international forums, and as advocated by regional and subregional forums such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the South Pacific Commission (SPC), for the promotion of an open, equitable,

stable and secure international trading system in goods and services, including foreign direct investment.

53. To request development partners to set preferential interest rates for social development projects.

54. To act as catalysts in mobilizing both technical and financial assistance for social development, by bringing together interested donors and recipient developing countries to improve their financial allocations for basic social services under the 20:20 compact.

55. To urge donor governments and agencies, as well as multilateral financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to take into account more explicitly the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda, as well as other United Nations action programmes related to social development concerns, in their loans, funding and general development assistance operations.

56. To play a catalytic role in strengthening cooperation among subregional organizations, including ASEAN, SAARC, ECO and SPC, to enhance the impact of their efforts on social development in general and in accelerating the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda.

57. To request ADB, as well as other multilateral financial institutions, to expand their loan and technical assistance operations for social development in Asia and the Pacific, taking into account recent initiatives to incorporate poverty reduction, the enhancement of the role of women in development and human resources development in its operations.

58. To consider with the United Nations Development Programme suitable mechanisms to facilitate coordination of assistance for social development in the Asian and Pacific region, including the convening of multi-donor consultations on support to the region in the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda.

59. To request the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, in close cooperation with its six co-sponsors, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, ESCAP and other key partners, to promote intercountry, subregional and regional cooperation in the prevention of HIV infection and care for people with AIDS.

60. To strengthen collaboration between ESCAP and ADB on social development, particularly in developing indicators for monitoring the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda, identifying and targeting the absolute poor and promoting effective anti-poverty and social integration programmes, and facilitating the establishment of social development information systems.

61. To facilitate the participation of regional and national NGOs, as well as the private sector, in intergovernmental forums, encourage the inclusion of NGO representatives in government delegations

and ensure the participation of the regional mass media in the dissemination of public information on social development issues through appropriate programmes.

62. To collaborate with NGOs such as the Regional Steering Committee for the Economic Advancement of Rural and Island Women in the Asia-Pacific Region to advocate the strengthening of policies and programmes which empower women in poverty, including women and girls with disabilities.

E. Enhancing advocacy and coordination

63. To promote and monitor the regional implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda, as well as related international conventions and regional programmes of action concerning social development.

64. To support the production and dissemination of local-language versions of the regional Social Development Agenda and related strategies, plans and programmes.

65. To initiate and strengthen cross-border collaboration between neighbouring countries on the prevention of HIV/AIDS, malaria, drug abuse, and women and child trafficking, and on the protection of the environment.

66. To strengthen the coordination of the planning and programming of all regional organizations concerned with the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda, utilizing fully the capabilities of the Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific.

F. Review and evaluation

67. To convene a workshop to discuss the individual countries' intermediate targets with the end in view of assisting member countries to attain the regional social development targets.

68. To develop regional baseline data for monitoring progress towards attaining the time-bound goals and targets of the regional Social Development Agenda, using 1990 as the base year for measuring implementation progress.

G. Providing for follow-up action

69. To undertake, in 1999, in pursuance of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and Commission resolution 51/4 of 1 May 1995, the next regional review on the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda in preparation for the global review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development by the United Nations General Assembly at its special session in 2000.

Annex II

**Summary of goals and targets of the Agenda for Action on
Social Development in the ESCAP Region***

Theme Paragraph No.	Goal/target	Target year
Poverty alleviation		
41	Eradicate absolute poverty	2010
	Identify and target the absolute poor	Immediate
	Reduce relative poverty	....
Population		
44	Reduce maternal mortality to half of the 1990 rates	2000
	Further reduce maternal mortality by one half	2015
45	Empower women to participate in reproductive health care	....
Health		
47	Attain health for all	2000
	Provide full access to primary health care for all	....
51	Expand primary health care networks and provide basic health-care products and services	Immediate
48	Reduce infant mortality to 40 or less per 1,000 live births	2010
	Further reduce infant mortality to 35 or less per 1,000 live births	2015
	Reduce under-five mortality rates to 70 per 1,000 live births or by a third of their 1990 levels, whichever is less	2000
	Further reduce under-five mortality rates to 45 or less per 1,000 live births	2015
	Attain the targets on immunization, the eradication of polio and neonatal tetanus, and reduction of measles, diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections	2000
	Achieve a life expectancy at birth greater than 70 years (or 65 for countries with the highest levels of mortality)	2005
	Achieve a life expectancy at birth greater than 75 years (or 70 for countries with the highest levels of mortality)	2015

* The regional Social Development Agenda is reproduced in *Proceedings of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development* (ST/ESCAP/1475).

50	Halve 1990 rates of malnutrition	2000
	Reduce micronutrient deficiencies, reduce low birth weight and promote breastfeeding	2000
49, 53	Control the spread of HIV/AIDS	Immediate
54	Formulate coordinated strategies to control drug demand and supply	Immediate
55	Enact legislation and regulations for health and safety at work and in the neighbourhood	....

Education

56	Provide basic education for all	2000
57	Halve the 1990 levels of adult illiteracy	2000
58	Ensure universal access to basic education	2010
	Ensure completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of schoolchildren	2000
60	Ensure access to secondary education for all who qualify	2010
	Redesign secondary education curricula	2010
61	Ensure equal participation rates for girls and boys in primary and secondary education	2005
	Increase access of girls and women to higher education	....
62	Provide vocational training relevant to the labour market, giving particular attention to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups	....

Employment

64	Support informal sector employment by: (a) Revising restrictive laws and services (b) Providing infrastructure and services (c) Supporting NGOs and entities providing technology and credit (d) Encouraging private lending and soft loans	....
65	Support small farmers by: (a) Raising agricultural productivity and market access (b) Supporting off-farm employment	....
67	Establish a framework for rural and urban land reform	2000
68	Introduce greater labour-market flexibility by: (a) Giving full play to collective bargaining (b) Providing both job seekers and employers with job information	....
69	Improve working conditions by: (a) Encouraging cooperatives and workers' associations (b) Providing occupational health and safety standards (c) Promoting awareness of workers' rights	....
70	Promulgate and enforce laws against the employment and	2000

exploitation of children

71	Introduce regulations to eliminate wage differentials between men and women and improve women's status in the labour force	2010
72	Enact laws and regulations against discrimination and provide subsidies for the employment of persons with disabilities	....
73	Provide assistance, information, protection and equality of treatment for migrant workers, especially women	....
74	Explore new means of employment expansion, including: (a) Emphasis on capital-saving, labour-intensive technologies (b) Pursuit of activities that protect the environment or augment natural resources (c) Adjustment in the production structure, including promotion of employment in the service sector (d) Promotion of human resources development	....
75	Undertake retraining programmes for older workers, persons with disabilities, retrenched workers and workers returning from overseas	....

Shelter

77	Provide adequate shelter for all	2000
	Ensure that housing and land use are supportive of intergenerational contact, social cohesion and mutual support	Immediate
	Create a barrier-free environment for disabled persons	Immediate
78	Provide access to safe water and sanitary means of human waste disposal for all	2000
	Ensure adequate energy supply, sewerage and solid waste disposal in all settlements	2025
79	Establish a legal framework to mobilize shelter providers	....
80	Revise shelter-related policies	As necessary
	Develop appropriate construction methods and materials	....

Environment

82	Formulate plans for poverty-group-focused environmental protection, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources	As soon as possible
83	Formulate plans for land and marine management supportive of the welfare of local and indigenous communities	As soon as possible
84	Introduce measures to enforce the environmentally sound management of toxic and hazardous products and wastes	As soon as possible
	Include appropriate environmental and health safeguards in national development plans	As soon as possible

Disasters

85	Establish comprehensive contingency plans to prepare for and deal with natural disasters	2000
86	Build disaster avoidance into development plans and programmes	2000
87	Strengthen capacity to mitigate the effects of natural disasters	2000
88	Develop regional and subregional plans for collective security against natural disasters	2000
Crime		
90	Prevent juvenile crime through community, family, educational and media support	....
91	Improve treatment of young delinquents and offenders through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Training of law enforcement personnel (b) Setting up of special mechanisms (c) Enhancing economic and social rehabilitation	....
92	Promulgate and enforce appropriate legislation on crimes against women and children	....
	Strengthen counselling and support services for victims of crime	....
93	Strengthen national, subregional and regional efforts to deal with transnational crimes, especially relating to trafficking of drugs, people and arms	....
Social protection		
95	Formulate an overall policy framework for basic social protection	2000
96	Broaden coverage of formal social security systems or appropriate alternatives, especially for informal sector workers	....
97	Provide people with disabilities with education, health care, training and employment, and other social services, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Local-level and community-based support services (b) Social and economic rehabilitation (c) Entry of persons with disabilities into the development mainstream 	As soon as possible
	Establish social security and support services to bring elderly people into the economic and social mainstream	As soon as possible
98	Provide fiscal and other incentives in support of the family as the basic provider of social protection to its dependent members	As soon as possible
Family		
100	Help to provide an environment supportive of strengthening the institution of the family and mutual respect within the family	Immediate