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Seventieth session

Bangkok, 23 May 2014 (Phase I)

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Dates, venue and theme topic for the seventy-first session of the Commission (2015)

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Note by the secretariat**

Summary

The present document contains information on the possible dates and venue of the seventy-first session of the Commission, which is to be held in 2015, and two proposals for a theme topic for that session.

The Commission may wish to make a decision on these matters.

I. Introduction

1. The present document contains suggestions made by the secretariat for the consideration of the Commission at its seventieth session. The Commission may wish to consider the dates, venue and theme topic for its seventy-first session, to be held in 2015, and to provide the secretariat with guidance in this regard.

II. Dates and venue

2. Rule 1 of the rules of procedure of the Commission requires it to recommend the dates and venue for its next session, subject to the approval of the Economic and Social Council and in consultation with the Secretary-General. In accordance with established practice, at each session, the Commission recommends the convening of the next session. The actual dates and venue are then determined by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the members and the Chair of the Commission.

* E/ESCAP/70/L.1/Rev.1.

** The late submission of the present document is due to the delay in consultations with the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission (ACPR) due to the exceptional circumstances.

3. In addition, in rule 1 of the rules of procedure it is stated that sessions of the Commission shall ordinarily be held at the office of the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific, unless the Commission recommends otherwise.

III. Theme topic

4. At an informal meeting on the theme study for the seventy-first session held on 14 May 2014, the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission (ACPR) proposed the following as the theme study for the seventy-first session:

“Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: From integration to implementation”.

5. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in June 2012, resulted in an outcome document subsequently adopted as General Assembly resolution 66/288 (“The Future We Want”) in which Member States renewed their commitment to sustainable development and to ensuring the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for present and future generations. The outcome tasked the regional commissions with promoting the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in their respective regions.

6. Although there is consensus that the achievement of sustainable development requires an integrated approach to policy formulation and decision-making across the economic, social and environmental pillars, there is a dearth of thinking about how to operationalize such an integrated approach. The first task of this study, therefore, will be to consider a conceptual framework that can capture the synergies and trade-offs among the three dimensions of sustainable development. Such a framework will provide a way to evaluate the extent to which various policy options contribute to sustainable development.

7. The study will subsequently consider which types of institutions and policies are best suited for a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development. For that purpose, the study will explore the feasibility of adopting decision-making processes that assist in coordinating or integrating the predominantly sectoral approaches which are the current norm. In addition, the study will discuss the importance of enhanced coordination and collaboration between local, subnational and national levels of government, as well as between government and non-State actors, for the achievement of sustainable development. It will also draw lessons from the experiences of countries that have implemented cross-sectoral approaches that seek to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development. In addition, the study will discuss the type of regional support needed to promote the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development at the country level.

8. The study should promote policy dialogues in the region on concrete policy measures and institutional reforms required to help Asia and the Pacific take pioneering steps towards the implementation of sustainable development.

9. The proposed theme study will do the following:

(a) Analyse the trade-offs and synergies among the three dimensions and how they interact with one another. Through this analysis,

the study will be able to identify key areas where the three pillars overlap and hence, identify opportunities for maximizing synergies;

(b) Examine, through national and regional case studies, how countries have attempted to integrate the three pillars in their policies in a manner that addresses economic growth, poverty reduction, inequalities, exclusion, resilience and environmental sustainability; also analyse lessons learned from these country experiences;

(c) Propose a conceptual framework that will assist countries in examining economic, social and environmental dimensions of specific policies and which strategies and approaches would maximize the synergies and the minimize the trade-offs between the three pillars;

(d) Examine which institutional frameworks are best suited for putting in place cross-sectoral policies that advance sustainable development and implement them;

(e) Illustrate, through case studies, how national and regional institutions and projects have integrated the economic, social and environmental pillars in development;

(f) Consider norms for building stronger institutional frameworks at the country and regional levels to enable the transition towards sustainable development.

10. In addition to summarizing the key findings and messages, the concluding section of the study will reflect on three critical means of implementation of sustainable development across the region – finance, trade, and technology transfer and capacity-building – and discuss how development partners and South-South cooperation could support countries with special needs in these areas. This will set the stage for an in-depth study to be undertaken later.

IV. Previous theme topics

11. For reference, a list of the theme topics of previous Commission sessions is contained in the annex to the present document.

Annex

List of theme topics of previous Commission sessions*

Session	Year	Theme topic
40	1984	Technology for development
41	1985	Technology for development
42	1986	Human resources development
43	1987	Human resources development
44	1988	Human resources development
45	1989	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
46	1990	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
47	1991	Industrial restructuring in Asia and the Pacific, in particular with a view to strengthening regional cooperation
48	1992	Regional economic cooperation in the ESCAP region: prospects, priorities and policy options
49	1993	Expansion of investment and intraregional trade as a vehicle for enhancing regional economic cooperation and development
50	1994	Infrastructure development as key to economic growth and regional economic cooperation
51	1995	Strengthening of regional cooperation in human resources development with special reference to the social implications of sustainable economic growth in Asia and the Pacific
52	1996	Sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Asia and the Pacific
53	1997	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: opportunities and challenges for ESCAP
54	1998	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: status of and prospects for social development
55	1999	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: information technology, globalization, economic security and development
56	2000	Development through globalization and partnership in the twenty-first century: an Asia-Pacific perspective for integrating developing countries and economies in transition into the international trading system on a fair and equitable basis
57	2001	Balanced development of urban and rural areas and regions within the countries of Asia and the Pacific
58	2002	Sustainable social development in a period of rapid globalization: challenges, opportunities and policy options
59	2003	Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region
60	2004	Meeting the challenges in an era of globalization by strengthening regional development cooperation

Session	Year	Theme topic
61	2005	Implementing the Monterrey Consensus in the Asian and Pacific region: achieving coherence and consistency
62	2006	Enhancing regional cooperation in infrastructure development, including that related to disaster management
63	2007	Development of health systems in the context of enhancing economic growth towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific
64	2008	Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific
65	2009	Towards sustainable agriculture and food security in the Asia-Pacific region
66	2010	Addressing challenges in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: promoting a stable and supportive financial system; and green growth or environmentally sustainable economic growth, including through technology and financing
67	2011	Beyond the crises: Long-term perspectives on social protection and development in Asia and the Pacific
68	2012	Enhancing regional economic integration in Asia and the Pacific
69	2013	Opportunities to build resilience to natural disasters and major economic crises
70	2014	Regional connectivity for shared prosperity

* Fortieth through seventieth sessions.