



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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**REVIEW OF ISSUES PERTINENT TO THE SUBSIDIARY STRUCTURE OF
THE COMMISSION: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

(Agenda item 2 (g))

Draft report

1. The Commission had before it the report of the Committee on Social Development on its first session (E/ESCAP/65/11) and the summary of progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to social development issues (E/ESCAP/65/12).

2. The Commission expressed concern over the impact of the financial crisis on the well-being of people in the region, especially the poor and other vulnerable groups, including women. One delegation also noted that the crisis had led to the emergence of new vulnerable groups, such as laid-off workers, new graduates and low-income citizens. The Commission also recognized that migrants would be among the groups most affected by the crisis. In that connection, the Commission was informed of a policy dialogue on the impact of the global economic crisis on international migration that ESCAP and the International Organization for Migration were planning to organize in May 2009.

3. Several delegations informed the Commission of social protection schemes in their countries, such as employment guarantee schemes and conditional cash transfers, as well as initiatives that their Governments had taken to mitigate the impacts of the financial crisis, especially with regard to vulnerable groups, including women and older persons. It was noted that the strengthening of social protection needed to be a priority.

4. One delegation requested that the secretariat provide policy options and strategies for addressing the negative impacts of the financial crisis on social dimensions. Another delegation requested that the secretariat play a larger role in facilitating the sharing of experiences among the countries of the region with regard to dealing with the impacts of the financial crisis and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

5. Some delegations expressed support for Commission resolution 63/8 on sustainable financing towards achieving universal health-care coverage in Asia and

the Pacific, and noted the need to mitigate high out-of-pocket expenditures for healthcare. Some delegations noted that issues of maternal mortality, as well as maternal and child health, continued to be of great concern. One delegation called for further studies to be conducted on building partnerships among Governments, the private sector and financial institutions in Asia and the Pacific to finance health-care coverage.

6. Several delegations informed the Commission about measures taken for gender mainstreaming and achieving gender equality. One delegation noted that resource allocations for women and children needed to be strengthened and that indicators to measure such progress should be made available. Some delegations pointed out the importance of eliminating violence against women. One delegation recommended that the secretariat conduct further research and strengthen the collection of data to promote gender equality.

7. In view of the transition to an ageing society, some delegations noted the need to develop appropriate ageing readiness interventions to help countries to cope with population ageing. In that regard, one delegation stressed the need to undertake a gender-sensitive approach to population ageing.

8. One delegation reiterated the crucial role of family planning for reducing population growth and making sustainable progress towards achieving inclusive social development. The Commission was informed of the significant progress accomplished by the region towards the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and noted the considerable challenges and gaps that remained to be addressed for the region to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

9. One delegation suggested that ESCAP submit a regional report summarizing progress made by countries in the region to the General Assembly during the one-day event being organized to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development in October 2009.

10. Several delegations stressed the need for ESCAP to continue collecting data and conducting research on various aspects of population dynamics, in particular on international migration and ageing. One delegation noted the increased role of ESCAP in collecting information on international migration, undertaking research and serving as a platform for dialogue within its existing mandate.

11. Some delegations emphasized the importance of establishing and expanding social safety nets and protection schemes for socially vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities. The schemes mentioned by the delegations ranged from the promotion of employment for persons with disabilities in the general labour market and the provision to such persons of supplementary income, to the provision of services to enhance the access of children with disabilities to educational opportunities.

12. Some delegations commended the work of ESCAP in promoting the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action: Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, and stated that it had given much impetus to the establishment of national and subregional disability strategies and effective institutional arrangements for their implementation. They recommended that ESCAP continue its work to strengthen policy and institutional mechanisms at the national and subregional levels. In addition, the representative of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat requested the assistance of ESCAP in the organization of the Ministerial Meeting on Disability to be held later in 2009.

13. The Commission noted that the Republic of Korea had expressed its willingness to host the high-level intergovernmental meeting in 2012 to conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, in conjunction with its organization of the Rehabilitation International World Congress and the General Assembly of the Asia-Pacific Disability Forum.

14. The Commission expressed general support for the findings and recommendations of the Committee on Social Development on its first session, and requested that the secretariat consider implementing the recommendations in the context of the current and future programmes of work of the secretariat.