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**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific****Seventy-fourth session**

Bangkok, 11–16 May 2018

Item 3 (e) of the provisional agenda\*

**Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure  
of the Commission, including the work of the regional  
institutions: information and communications  
technology, science, technology and innovation****Emerging trends in innovation policy to accelerate the  
achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals:  
promoting inclusive innovation and supporting social  
enterprises****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

Traditionally, innovation policies in the Asia-Pacific region have focused on stimulating economic competitiveness and growth with the private sector as the key actor in the innovation system. However, to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it will be critical for innovation policy, as well as the private sector, to focus on social and environmental concerns. The region is witnessing a growing social innovation movement stimulated by the implementation of enabling social enterprise and impact investment policies.

Additionally, to ensure that no one is left behind in the technological revolution, it will be important for innovation policies to be inclusive. The region is also witnessing an inclusive innovation movement with policies that include groups that are marginalized in some aspect of the innovation process and that ensure that innovations are accessible to the very poorest people.

The present document contains an introduction to the concepts of social enterprise, impact investment and inclusive innovation. Some policy approaches that Governments have implemented to catalyse these agendas are highlighted. It contains an outline of how the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has supported member States in the past in this area and how it proposes to do so in the future.

Members of the Commission are invited to share country experiences with regard to social enterprises, impact investment and inclusive innovation and to engage with the secretariat's projects on social enterprises and impact investment and on inclusive innovation.

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\* ESCAP/74/L.1/Rev.1.

## I. Definitions

1. Innovation can be defined as the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service) or process (such as a new marketing method) or a new organizational method (such as business practices, workplace organization or external relations). The minimum requirement for an innovation is that the product, process or organizational method must be new to the firm (or constitute a significant improvement).<sup>1</sup> Innovation is a broad agenda with a diverse range of concepts and subcategories. Given that the innovation agenda is so broad, definitions for four innovation concepts pertinent to the present document are provided below.

2. **Social innovation.** Social innovation can be defined similarly, with the caveat that it must simultaneously meet social needs while creating new social relationships or collaborations. In other words, social innovations change society and enhance its capacity to act.<sup>2</sup> Social enterprise and impact investment are two core concepts of social innovation.

3. **Social enterprises.** A social enterprise can be defined as an organization committed to explicitly including social and/or environmental returns as part of its core business while seeking profit or return on investment.<sup>3</sup>

4. **Impact investment.** Impact investments are investments made into companies, organizations and funds with the intention of generating social and environmental impact alongside a financial return.<sup>4</sup>

5. **Inclusive innovation.** Inclusive innovation comprises, in its broadest sense, initiatives that serve the welfare of lower-income groups, including the poor and excluded groups. Two broad perspectives can be used to outline inclusive innovation: (a) innovations for the poor or pro-inclusive innovation, a simpler and market-based perspective that defines inclusive innovation as innovation that promotes the creation of products and services that are specifically designed to meet the needs of low-income or excluded population groups; and (b) innovation by the poor, or grass-roots innovation, a more complete notion of development and inclusion that defines inclusive innovation as innovation that is carried out by low-income or excluded groups.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Eurostat, *Oslo Manual – Guidelines for Collecting and Interpreting Innovation Data* (Paris, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Robin Murray, Julie Caulier-Grice and Geoff Mulgan, “The open book of social innovation”, Social Innovator Series: Ways to Design, Develop and Grow Social Innovation (London, The Young Foundation and Nesta, 2010). Available from [www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/the\\_open\\_book\\_of\\_social\\_innovation.pdf](http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_open_book_of_social_innovation.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Shelagh Whitley, Emily Darko and Grace Howells, “Impact investing and beyond: mapping support to social enterprises in emerging markets” (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Monitor Institute, *Investing for Social & Environmental Impact: A Design for Catalyzing an Emerging Industry* (2009).

<sup>5</sup> OECD, *Innovation Policies for Inclusive Development: Scaling Up Inclusive Innovations* (Paris, 2015).

## II. Social enterprises and impact investment as key means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

### A. Context

6. Social enterprises and impact investment policies are part of an emerging trend in innovation and are gaining traction in the Asia-Pacific region. Social enterprises and impact investment harness trade, investment and business activity to social and environmental objectives. The goals of social enterprises and impact investment are to create economic, social and environmental impact aligned to the three-dimensional nature of sustainable development. Hence, social enterprises and impact investment can play strategically important roles in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Social enterprises are increasingly seen as an important vehicle for reaching marginalized and underserved communities. Governments in the Asia-Pacific region have been leading the way on innovative policymaking in this area. While they are gaining momentum across the region, some of the critical challenges facing social enterprises need to be addressed in order to ensure that social enterprises are financially viable and scalable and that they generate the desired social impact. Governments and other key stakeholders can play an important role in supporting social enterprises in navigating legal structures, gaining necessary skills and accessing financing.

8. In order to meet the financing gap for the Sustainable Development Goals and to support the growth of social enterprises, innovative finance solutions to mobilize private capital are required. One such solution is impact investment. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development contains a commitment to promote social innovation,<sup>6</sup> of which impact investment is a key pillar. Asia and the Pacific continues to be a dynamic and developing region for impact investment. The Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ranked sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia as the largest markets for impact investment activity.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the Global Impact Investment Network published a survey of 158 impact investors from across the world in 2016. The report confirmed the survey results of the Department for International Development by highlighting South Asia as well as East and South-East Asia as key markets for impact investment.<sup>8</sup> While data on impact investment are limited, the Global Impact Investment Network released a regional report on the impact investment landscape in South Asia, focusing on six South Asian economies, with an estimated \$9 billion of impact capital deployed between 2004 and 2014.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> General Assembly resolution 69/313, para. 116.

<sup>7</sup> *Survey of the Impact Investment Markets 2014: Challenges and Opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia* (2015). Available from [www.theimpactprogramme.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/DFID-Impact-Programme-Market-Survey-Web-20151.pdf](http://www.theimpactprogramme.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/DFID-Impact-Programme-Market-Survey-Web-20151.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> *Annual Impact Investor Survey 2016* (New York, 2016), figure 14, p. 14. Available from [https://thegiin.org/assets/2016%20GIIN%20Annual%20Impact%20Investor%20Survey\\_Web.pdf](https://thegiin.org/assets/2016%20GIIN%20Annual%20Impact%20Investor%20Survey_Web.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> *The Landscape for Impact Investing in South Asia: Understanding the Current Status, Trends, Opportunities, and Challenges in Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka* (New York, 2015), figures 1A and 1B, p. 1. Available from <https://thegiin.org/research/publication/the-landscape-for-impact-investing-in-south-asia>.

To date, the level of impact investment remains relatively small. There are several issues hindering the growth of impact investment, one of which is the lack of investment-ready enterprises in the region.

## **B. Policy approaches for social enterprise and impact investment development**

9. The present document contains some areas of policy consideration for Governments as they seek to support the development of social enterprises and impact investment in their countries.

### **1. Monitoring the social enterprise sector**

10. In order to craft appropriate policies and strategies to grow the social enterprise sector, it is essential that Governments understand the social enterprise landscape within their countries. This requires regular engagement with and surveys of the social enterprise sector. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), together with its partners, has conducted social enterprise surveys in Pakistan and the Philippines. Studies are planned for Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Such surveys can help policymakers to identify key bottlenecks and appropriate policy interventions.

### **2. Enacting legislation to support social enterprises**

11. ESCAP and its partners have provided support to the Government of the Philippines on draft legislation on poverty reduction through social entrepreneurship. The legislation would recognize social enterprises as an effective means of grass-roots engagement and it would support the entrepreneurial poor. It would mandate the establishment of a national programme on poverty reduction through social entrepreneurship, which would be one of the Government's flagship programmes. The law would also provide priority support and incentives to social enterprises, such as access to non-collateralized loans guaranteed by a pool of funds set up for such purpose; the establishment of a comprehensive insurance system to reduce their vulnerability to climate change and natural calamities; mainstreaming of social entrepreneurship into the educational system at all levels to ensure strategic human resource development; preferential treatment in government procurement, including coverage of their performance bonds; and cash incentives equivalent to at least 25 per cent of the minimum wage for social enterprises employing persons with disabilities.<sup>10</sup>

12. The Republic of Korea announced its Social Enterprise Promotion Act in 2007. The Act provides social entrepreneurs with management consultation, access to professional services and technical assistance, and even provides subsidized rentals and reduced taxes. The Seoul Metropolitan Government also opened a Social Economy Support Centre that acts as an incubator for social enterprises. This initiative, in tandem with other strategies, resulted in a 353 per cent growth in the number of social enterprises in Seoul between 2012 and 2015.<sup>11</sup>

13. The Government of Malaysia recently implemented its Social Enterprise Blueprint 2015–2018 to develop a social enterprise ecosystem. It contains a variety of policy measures, including building human capital by

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<sup>10</sup> See [http://philsocialenterprisenetwork.com/poverty\\_reduction.html](http://philsocialenterprisenetwork.com/poverty_reduction.html) (accessed 6 March 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Adam Pillsbury, "Building a social economy in Asia", *Pioneer Post*, 16 June 2016. Available from <https://avpn.asia/2016/06/16/building-a-social-economy-in-asia/>.

including social entrepreneurship in national education systems. The Government of Thailand has also actively focused on developing its social enterprise sector. It established the Thai Social Enterprise Office in 2010 and followed it up with a social enterprise promotion bill which could facilitate tax relief for businesses establishing social enterprises as well as tax incentives for impact investments.<sup>12</sup> The Government of Viet Nam revised its Law on Enterprise in 2014 to provide a legal definition of social enterprise, and the Government promised to encourage, support and promote the development of social enterprises through measures such as facilitating the raising of capital and the formation of public-private partnerships.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Introducing innovative financing mechanisms for the social enterprise sector

14. Securing access to finance and creating an economically viable small and medium-sized enterprise is a challenge, which is accentuated for social enterprises seeking to also pursue economic, social and/or environmental goals given that traditional investment decisions are made solely on commercial and economic criteria. Therefore, creating an enabling environment for impact investment is critical. However, before implementing policies to create an enabling impact investment environment, the foundations for an effective investment regime must be in place. Fundamental policy objectives, such as efficient processes for starting a business, resolving insolvency, strengthening protection for minority investors, and enforcing contracts, must be first-order priorities.<sup>14</sup>

15. Once that foundation has been established, potential policy avenues include establishing seed funds and innovative financing mechanisms and providing incentives to investors to consider social and environmental dimensions in investment decisions. For example, in the Republic of Korea, the Social Impact Bond will provide child welfare services over three years to a total of \$9.4 million.<sup>15</sup> Those services will include work with children and young people in group homes to improve their social outcomes and to build capacity for long-term independence and well-being. In Australia, the Social Enterprise Development and Investment Fund leverages private sector investment with the important objective of diverting private capital towards development challenges; this will be critical to efforts to mainstream the scale of delivery required to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> British Council, “Social enterprise is set to take off in Thailand”. Available from [www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/news-events/news-social-enterprise-set-to-take-off-in-thailand](http://www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/news-events/news-social-enterprise-set-to-take-off-in-thailand) (accessed 6 March 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Jenkin, “It’s not charity: the rise of social enterprise in Vietnam”, *The Guardian*, 31 March 2015. Available from [www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/mar/31/its-not-charity-the-rise-of-social-enterprise-in-vietnam](http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/mar/31/its-not-charity-the-rise-of-social-enterprise-in-vietnam).

<sup>14</sup> ESCAP, “Policy approaches to scale impact investment in Asia-Pacific”, Policy Briefs, No. 47 (Bangkok, 2017), Available from [www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/PB%20No.47%20Scale%20Impact%20Investment.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/PB%20No.47%20Scale%20Impact%20Investment.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Philanthropy Impact, “Social investment as a vehicle to achieve sustainable development goals”, 7 December 2017. Available from [www.philanthropy-impact.org/article/social-investment-vehicle-achieve-sustainable-development-goals](http://www.philanthropy-impact.org/article/social-investment-vehicle-achieve-sustainable-development-goals).

<sup>16</sup> OECD, “Social enterprise development and investment funds”. Available from [www.oecd.org/governance/observatory-public-sector-innovation/innovations/page/socialenterprisedevelopmentandinvestmentfundssedif.htm#tab\\_description](http://www.oecd.org/governance/observatory-public-sector-innovation/innovations/page/socialenterprisedevelopmentandinvestmentfundssedif.htm#tab_description) (accessed 15 March 2018).

16. ESCAP has also provided support to the Social Impact Exchange of the Government of Malaysia. It was launched by the Prime Minister in December 2017 and will provide financial support to start-up social enterprises.<sup>17</sup>

#### **4. National advisory boards for impact investment**

17. In 2015, during the United Kingdom presidency of the Group of Eight, the Social Impact Investment Task Force was established. The successor body, the Global Social Impact Investment Steering Group, currently has 15 member countries, plus the European Union, which have established national advisory boards to create a platform for policymakers and impact investors to work together to support the development of enabling environments for impact investment and to create a global network to facilitate knowledge-sharing.

18. ESCAP has partnered with the Steering Group to support the development of national advisory boards in the region. In February 2018, ESCAP supported an event and a workshop on fostering impact investment and social entrepreneurship in the Asia-Pacific region, which was attended by leaders from Government and philanthropy and investment bodies from 12 countries who wanted to learn from the example of the Republic of Korea.

#### **C. The need for continued policy experimenting and evaluation**

19. Governments in the region have demonstrated global leadership through the implementation of innovative and experimental policies to support social enterprises and create enabling environments for impact investment.

20. It is important to recognize that the concepts of social enterprise and impact investment are relatively new and innovative. The evaluation of the impact of initiatives highlighted in the present document, among others, should be a policy priority for the region alongside continued innovative policy experimentation to establish what works and, equally importantly, what does not. Through these activities, best practices frameworks can be developed to unlock the potential of social enterprises and impact investment for the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **III. The necessity of inclusive innovation policies for sustainable development**

#### **A. Context**

21. Science, technology and innovation are critical means of achieving sustainable development. They have the potential to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of efforts to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda and to create benefits for society, the economy and the environment.

22. Yet, science, technology and innovation can also be a source of inequality and exclusion. They are a source of exclusion when least developed countries and small island developing States in Asia and the Pacific do not have the necessary capabilities to make full use of the potential that technology and innovation offer for addressing sustainable goals – in other words, when they lack capacities to develop, adopt, adapt and apply relevant technologies and

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<sup>17</sup> Yiswaree Palansamy, “PM announces Social Impact Exchange initiative for start-ups”, *Malay Mail Online*, 12 December 2017. Available from [www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/pm-announces-social-impact-exchange-initiative-for-start-ups](http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/pm-announces-social-impact-exchange-initiative-for-start-ups).

innovations that bring solutions to social, economic and environmental problems.

23. Science, technology and innovation are also a source of inequality and exclusion when scientific research systems and the technologies developed do not respond to the basic needs of more vulnerable and marginalized groups.

24. Technology and innovation can also be drivers of inequality when women, the poor, older persons or other disadvantaged groups, from any country regardless of its level of development, cannot benefit from technological advances and cannot fully participate in innovation processes.

25. To ensure that science, technology and innovation are an effective means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Governments need to put in place inclusive technology and innovation policies that are congruent with national economic, social and environmental objectives and that leave no one behind.

26. National technology and innovation policies in many developed and developing countries, including in Asia and the Pacific, include in their objectives the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, policy is lagging behind when it comes to delivering on those Goals and on leaving no one behind.<sup>18</sup> General policy commitments to support the achievement of the Goals are not necessarily translated into specific technology and innovation plans that leave no one behind, and while there may be good policies and plans, they are not always effectively implemented.<sup>19</sup>

27. Countries in Asia and the Pacific are home to some of the most compelling inclusive innovations. In India, for instance, the grass-roots innovation movement is providing effective solutions to development challenges faced by rural and poor communities that are often unmet by formal innovation systems.<sup>20</sup> Section III of the present document contains an introduction to inclusive innovation policies, a summary of some of the policies and programmes implemented by countries in Asia and the Pacific, and an invitation to member States to participate in and contribute to the Commission's work in this area.

## **B. Inclusive innovation policy approaches**

28. There are multiple avenues through which innovation policy can address the Sustainable Development Goals in a more inclusive and integrated manner. Policymakers can adopt whole-of-government approaches that support inclusive innovation policy processes and outcomes in terms of designing policies to address complex socioeconomic and environmental challenges (for instance, mission-oriented policies) and in terms of inclusive participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of innovation policies (for instance, adopting bottom-up approaches in public sector innovation). Policymakers can also put in place targeted science, technology

<sup>18</sup> Nesta, "How can innovation policy get better at delivering social benefit?", 13 February 2018. Available from [www.nesta.org.uk/blog/how-can-innovation-policy-get-better-delivering-social-benefit](http://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/how-can-innovation-policy-get-better-delivering-social-benefit).

<sup>19</sup> Transformative Innovation Policy Consortium, "Prospects for transformative innovation policy – conference report 2017" (2017).

<sup>20</sup> Chux Daniels, Olga Ustyuzhantseva and Wei Yao, "Innovation for inclusive development, public policy support and triple helix: perspectives from BRICS", *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*, vol. 9, No. 5 (July 2017). Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20421338.2017.1327923>.

and innovation policies and mechanisms that allocate specific financial, human and institutional resources to, for instance, support problem-solving research and development or the design and use of appropriate technologies.<sup>21</sup>

## 1. Whole-of-government approaches

### (a) Mission-oriented policies

29. Mission-oriented policies are a set of complementary policies and measures aiming to address complex societal challenges. They seek to respond to complex development challenges, for example transforming fuel-based energy systems to renewable energy in China. These policies guide changes in the direction of technological systems, focus on the diffusion of technologies and, to achieve their objectives, seek the development of both radical and incremental innovations.<sup>22</sup>

30. The role of government in this regard is not only as a market fixer but a market maker. Public action can support system-wide transformations that ensure that no one is left behind. Governments can influence the direction of technology and their diffusion and adoption. Through public investments, policies and procurement, Governments can lead the development of technologies and innovations that address social and environmental challenges. A number of Governments in the Asia-Pacific region have been very successful in introducing mission-oriented policies to promote technologies that bring services to the poor on a large scale.

31. For example, in India the stack technology platform based on the Aadhaar biometric identification system has enabled the financial inclusion of 1.2 billion people in India. The Aadhaar project is a government-led, technology-based financial inclusion system. It uses a unique identification number (based on biometric and demographic data) linked to a mobile phone number, a low-cost bank account and an open mobile platform. The combination of those elements enabled public and private banks to establish an open and interoperable low-cost payment system that is accessible to everyone with a bank account and a mobile phone. More than 338.6 million beneficiaries have now received direct benefit transfers, saving the Government \$7.51 billion over three years.<sup>23</sup>

32. Typically, these mission-oriented approaches have required leadership from the top, long-term investments, and comprehensive and coherent supply and demand side policies that support the development and adoption of technologies.

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<sup>21</sup> This section is largely based on ESCAP, *Inequality in Asia and the Pacific in the Era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (forthcoming).

<sup>22</sup> Mariana Mazzucato, “Mission-oriented innovation policy: challenges and opportunities”, IPPP Working Paper, No. 2017-01 (London, Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, University College London, 2017). Available from [www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/public-purpose/sites/public-purpose/files/moip-challenges-and-opportunities-working-paper-2017-1.pdf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/public-purpose/sites/public-purpose/files/moip-challenges-and-opportunities-working-paper-2017-1.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> “New innovation approaches to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals”, statement by India at the twentieth session of the United Nations Commission of Science and Technology for Development, Geneva, 10 May 2017. Available from <http://pmindiaun.org/pages.php?id=1467>.



**(b) Bottom-up approaches to designing and delivering public services**

33. Governments can also promote inclusive innovation when they innovate in the delivery of public services, particularly when they promote bottom-up approaches that encourage participation in the design and delivery of public services.

34. For instance, since 2009, the Seoul Metropolitan Government has enacted comprehensive policies to promote social enterprises that, inter alia, deliver public services to address growing inequalities, high youth unemployment rates and an aging society. For instance, 218 social enterprises provided social services to 1.6 million people in 2013 and 2014 and 359 social housing units for marginalized groups in 2015. An increased focus on the social economy has resulted in more social services and an expansion of social housing for marginalized groups. The cooperative governance model that encourages private and public stakeholder participation throughout the policy cycle, from policy formulation through to execution, is one of the main factors contributing to the success of these policies.<sup>24</sup>

**2. Targeted technology and innovation policies and programmes**

35. Targeted technology and innovation policies and programmes, in contrast to whole-of-government approaches, focus on specific inclusion issues. Some examples include public research programmes that specifically address social problems, programmes that promote grass-roots innovations, policies promoting women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers, or policies that promote enabling technology for people with disabilities.

**(a) Public research focused on addressing social problems**

36. Governments can fund social-problem research programmes that specifically seek solutions to development problems. The Republic of Korea, for example, has dedicated specific resources for multi-departmental research projects addressing priority social problems.

37. Social problem-solving research and development projects are driven by demand instead of supply and require shifting the policy process from policy setting, planning and implementation to policy evaluation. They require, for instance, joint planning and implementation across different research departments as well as more intense participation by civil society and citizens. In this context, one of the main roles of government is to establish the platforms that enable various stakeholders to effectively participate in the planning and implementation of the activities.

**(b) Supporting grass-roots innovation**

38. Grass-roots innovations are driven by groups typically excluded from the innovation process and are generally projects designed by local communities and/or inventions designed to meet specific local needs.<sup>25</sup> While, by definition, these innovations are driven by grass-roots organizations,

<sup>24</sup> *Innovative Financing for Development in Asia and the Pacific: Government Policies on Impact Investment and Public Finance for Innovation* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.II.F.23). Available from [www.unescap.org/publications/innovative-financing-development-asia-and-pacific](http://www.unescap.org/publications/innovative-financing-development-asia-and-pacific).

<sup>25</sup> OECD, *Innovation Policies for Inclusive Development: Scaling Up Inclusive Innovations*.

governments can also encourage them. For example, the Government of India established the National Innovation Foundation in 2000 to strengthen grass-roots technological innovation and harvest outstanding traditional knowledge. The Foundation has supported the validation of thousands of grass-roots technologies through collaboration with research and development and academic institutions.

**(c) Promoting women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers**

39. While women represent a slight majority of university graduates worldwide (53 per cent), their participation shrinks as they advance in science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers.<sup>26</sup> For instance, the number of women in high-level positions in science, technology and innovation establishments is often statistically insignificant. Governments have a wide range of options to promote women and girls in these careers that go beyond promoting higher entry rates and include supporting women researchers through, for instance, better day-care services or more rational working hours, or providing ring-fenced research funding that requires female researchers.

**(d) Promoting technologies that support people with disabilities**

40. People with disabilities are often at a disadvantage when trying to use information and communications technologies. Governments can actively encourage, through regulation and soft measures, digital accessibility. For example, Vanuatu has a number of policies to promote digital accessibility, including a universal access policy and a right to information policy. It has also promoted web accessibility guidelines that are based on international standards but positioned in the local context.<sup>27</sup>

**C. The importance of cooperation to inclusive innovation policy**

41. Implementing inclusive innovation and technology policies requires a shared understanding among policymakers on how to simultaneously promote innovation and social inclusion. It also requires participatory approaches and platforms that allow a meaningful interaction between ministries, organizations, experts and stakeholders from different communities (for instance, the scientific and technological community and the social welfare community) that have different values, conceptions and motivations.

42. Thoughtful research and policy analysis, cross-government cooperation, intergovernmental knowledge-sharing, and honest, open and regular discussions with civil society and the private sector will be critical to ensure technologies and innovation policies leave no one behind.

<sup>26</sup> *Harnessing Science, Technology and Innovation for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.II.F.12). Available from [www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/STI\\_Theme\\_Study.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/STI_Theme_Study.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Gunela Astbrink, “Increasing ICT accessibility to information for people with disability”, (accessed 8 March 2018), available from [https://aprigf2017.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/20170727\\_ws74\\_2\\_gunela.pdf](https://aprigf2017.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/20170727_ws74_2_gunela.pdf); and Vanuatu, *RTI Web Accessibility Guidelines: Guidance for Web Developers and Content Managers* (Port Vila, 2016), available from [https://ogcio.gov.vu/images/RTI\\_Vanuatu\\_Accessibility\\_Guidelines\\_MF.pdf](https://ogcio.gov.vu/images/RTI_Vanuatu_Accessibility_Guidelines_MF.pdf).

## IV. The role of the Commission and looking forward

43. To date, ESCAP has focused on research, analysis, capacity-building and fostering knowledge-sharing across the region with regard to the emerging agendas outlined in the present document. Reports have been published on topics such as inclusive innovation, innovative financing and social enterprises. In the spirit of the One United Nations initiative, ESCAP has also partnered with other agencies, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization, to provide capacity-building and policy advice to Governments in the region. To foster regional knowledge-sharing, in partnership with the Government of China, ESCAP hosted a regional science, technology and innovation forum in Hefei, China, which brought together policymakers and representatives from the major science and technology parks in 22 countries in Asia. The forum focused on sharing knowledge of effective practices in developing such parks, and site visits to leading frontier technology companies were conducted.

44. ESCAP will continue to support its members in their efforts to implement these policy agendas by:

- Conducting policy research
- Supporting member States in developing appropriate policies by supporting knowledge-sharing on the growing expertise in the region
- Serving as a platform for discussion, debate and consensus-building through regional intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platforms
- Linking regional and global knowledge bases to share knowledge on the emerging movements on these agendas in the region.

45. Two initiatives, in particular, may be of interest to the Commission: the initiative on social enterprises and impact investment and the initiative on inclusive innovation.

### A. Social enterprises and impact investment

46. In September 2017, ESCAP convened the inaugural Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on Social Enterprise and Impact Investment in Christchurch, New Zealand. More than 40 senior government officials from 17 countries as well as key private sector figures acknowledged that social enterprises and impact investment were critical drivers of innovation for sustainable development and that they could play a catalytic role in advancing inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, which ESCAP could play a key role in supporting.

47. During the Policy Dialogue, a global coalition comprising ESCAP, the British Council, the Social Enterprise World Forum, the Global Social Impact Investment Steering Group, the Global Social Entrepreneurship Network, the Asian Venture Philanthropy Network and the Ākina Foundation was announced. The aim of this coalition is to build a community of leaders across the Asia-Pacific region in order to share experiences and pool expertise on the growth of social enterprises and impact investment in support of the 2030 Agenda.

48. ESCAP and its partners can support member States on the development of social enterprises and impact investment in the following ways:

- Research and analysis of social enterprise markets
- Regional policy dialogue and knowledge-sharing
- Supporting the establishment of national advisory boards for impact investment
- Bespoke support to Governments.

## **B. Inclusive innovation**

49. ESCAP is launching a programme to support Governments across the region to design and implement inclusive technology and innovation policies. This programme will explore ways to make technology and innovation policies more inclusive to ensure that no one is left behind in benefiting from the opportunities that technology offers. The programme includes a research and analysis component, which will examine how innovation policies can be more inclusive. The programme will also offer advisory services to Governments wishing to explore how national innovation policies can be made more inclusive. It is an ambitious but practical programme that aims to make sure that technology and innovation address the needs of poor communities, that citizens have a say in the direction of technology change and that women can fully participate in science, technology and innovation activities.

## **V. Issues for consideration by the Commission**

50. Member States are invited to share their experiences on social enterprises, impact investment and inclusive innovation and to signal their interest in (a) sharing national experiences on social enterprises and impact investment with the wider region and/or receiving support from the secretariat to develop social enterprise and impact investment policies; (b) contributing to debate and research on inclusive technology and innovation policies, by sharing their experiences on the design and implementation of inclusive technology and innovation policies, and/or receiving support from the secretariat in the form of training or advisory services to guide the development of more inclusive technology and innovation policies.

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