

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

Bangkok, 11–16 May 2018

Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia
and the Pacific****Ministerial Declaration on Enhancing Regional
Economic Cooperation and Integration to Support the
Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific***Summary*

The Second Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok from 21 to 24 November 2017, adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Enhancing Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration to Support the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

The Declaration links the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific with the four priority areas of the 2013 Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific, and resolves to pursue cooperation across the following four areas in an integrated manner. These are:

- Promoting market integration by striving to reduce trade and transit costs through trade facilitation, and addressing protectionism
- Developing seamless connectivity across the region in transport, energy, and information and communications technology, among other areas, including through cooperation and collaboration on regional initiatives
- Enhancing regional financial cooperation, including in the areas of domestic resource mobilization, financial inclusion, development of capital markets and public-private partnerships, in a manner that supports financial stability
- Addressing shared vulnerabilities, risks and challenges by developing multi-hazard early warning systems, innovative tools and institutional mechanisms to mitigate the impact of disasters, environmental degradation and the effects of climate change

To review progress, the Conference decided to convene, on an ad hoc basis, the third Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific in 2021.

The Commission may wish to review and endorse the Ministerial Declaration and provide guidance on its implementation.

* ESCAP/74/L.1.

I. Preamble

1. *We, the Ministers and representatives of the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific attending the Second Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok from 21 to 24 November 2017,*
2. *Recalling* the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹ the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,² the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030,³ the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change⁴ and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,⁵
3. *Bearing in mind* the special needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, and recalling commitments with respect to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,⁶ the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024⁷ and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway,⁸
4. *Recognizing* the specific challenges middle-income countries face and the need to address the diverse and specific development needs of middle-income countries,
5. *Recognizing also* the significant role and potential of regional economic cooperation and integration in supporting inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific,
6. *Appreciating* the ongoing work of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to strengthen regional economic cooperation and integration to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region,
7. *Recalling* Commission resolution 70/1 of 23 May 2014 on the implementation of the 2013 Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific, with particular focus on pursuing regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific in four areas: moving towards the formation of an integrated market, the development of seamless connectivity in the region, enhancing financial cooperation, and increasing economic cooperation to address shared vulnerabilities, risks and challenges,
8. *Acknowledging* the efforts of the secretariat to support the work of the four Expert Working Groups, each focusing on one of the areas of regional

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² General Assembly resolution 69/313.

³ General Assembly resolution 69/283.

⁴ See FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21, annex.

⁵ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

⁶ *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9–13 May 2011 (A/CONF.219/7)*, chap. II.

⁷ General Assembly resolution 69/137, annex II.

⁸ General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex.

economic cooperation and integration identified in the 2013 Bangkok Declaration, as requested in resolution 70/1,

9. *Recalling* Commission resolution 73/9 of 19 May 2017 on the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific,

10. *Acknowledging* that the areas for cooperation identified in the regional road map include the four areas of regional economic cooperation and integration identified in resolution 70/1,

11. *Acknowledging also* the significant contribution of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises to the economic growth and income generation in the wider region,

12. *Recognizing* the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment and of removing the barriers to women's full participation in regional economic cooperation and integration,

13. *Noting* the discussions that took place during the High-level Dialogue on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration at the seventy-second session of the Commission,⁹ the High-level Dialogue on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration for Enhancing Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok in April 2017¹⁰ and the High-level Dialogue on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the seventy-third session of the Commission,¹¹

14. *Stressing* the importance of effective economic cooperation and integration within the Asia-Pacific region in order to harness significant trade and investment opportunities as an engine for growth and poverty reduction,

15. *Recognizing* further the centrality of connectivity in intensifying and expanding regional economic cooperation and integration to promoting trade, attracting investment, boosting tourism, fostering social and cultural ties and achieving greater mobility, thus creating opportunities for achieving broader sustainable development goals,

16. *Reaffirming* the importance of leaving no one behind, and recognizing the need for regional economic cooperation and integration to be anchored to the imperatives of sustainable development and to be supported by policies that facilitate inclusive economic growth, reduce inequalities, foster social cohesion and enhance gender equality,

17. *Emphasizing* the need to encourage regional economic cooperation and integration policies and frameworks to be in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals so that they encompass economic, social and environmental considerations in an integrated and balanced manner,

18. *Emphasizing also* the important role of timely, internationally-comparable and disaggregated data in moving towards the formation of an integrated market, the development of seamless connectivity in the region, enhancing financial cooperation, and increasing economic cooperation to address shared vulnerabilities, risks and challenges, as well as in identifying

⁹ E/ESCAP/72/34, paras. 254–265.

¹⁰ See E/ESCAP/73/INF/9.

¹¹ E/ESCAP/73/41, paras. 262–278.

vulnerable groups of people, and emphasizing the need for supporting member countries in developing adequate capacity to produce such data,

19. *Recognizing* that sustainable development needs to be underpinned by peaceful, just and inclusive societies,

20. *Emphasizing* the significance of boosting regional banking and payment arrangements through regional financial cooperation to support and facilitate trade and commercial transactions among the countries in the Asia-Pacific region,

21. *Emphasizing also* the key role that multilateral development banks and other regional initiatives and development partners can play in promoting regional connectivity and in catalysing the required financing,

22. *Acknowledging* the valuable role of regional and subregional initiatives and the private sector in furthering regional and subregional economic cooperation and integration,

23. *Recognizing* that regional and subregional organizations and forums are important building blocks of regional economic cooperation and integration in the Asia-Pacific region and that there are considerable opportunities for these organizations to benefit from cooperation as well as the exchange of ideas and experiences among themselves,

24. *Recognizing also*, in this regard, the need for the Commission to enhance dialogue and cooperation with regional and subregional organizations to enhance synergy and complementarity in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific,

25. *Recognizing further* the need to make maximum use of the research outcomes and experiences already accumulated by those bodies in the areas of regional economic cooperation and integration and connectivity in an effort to minimize duplication of work and to attain high cost effectiveness and efficiency,

II. Policy directions

26. *Resolve* to work together to enhance regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific in a manner that supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

27. *Affirm* our support for the implementation of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific by, inter alia, taking synergetic action under the priority areas for regional economic cooperation and integration identified in the 2013 Bangkok Declaration, including:

(a) Promoting market integration by striving to reduce trade and transit costs through trade facilitation, and addressing protectionism;

(b) Developing seamless connectivity across the region in transport, energy, and information and communications technology, among other areas, including through cooperation and collaboration on regional initiatives;

(c) Enhancing regional financial cooperation, including in the areas of domestic resource mobilization, financial inclusion, development of capital markets and public-private partnerships, in a manner that supports financial stability;

(d) Addressing shared vulnerabilities, risks and challenges by developing multi-hazard early warning systems, innovative tools and institutional mechanisms to mitigate the impact of disasters, environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change;

28. *Resolve* to pursue such cooperation across all four areas in an integrated manner;

29. *Recognize* the importance of safe, orderly and regular migration; in this context it is also necessary to enhance regional dialogue to address the protection of the rights of migrant workers in accordance with internationally agreed principles, as appropriate, as well as applicable national laws, regulations and policies;

30. *Affirm* our common and shared efforts to provide countries with special needs, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, with priority assistance, including, as appropriate, support to enhance their capacities and technical assistance, to help them to take advantage of opportunities arising from regional economic cooperation and integration;

31. *Endeavour* to transform, as appropriate and where necessary, national statistical systems and related national data infrastructure as a means of significantly improving the availability of robust and comparable data and statistics relevant to regional economic cooperation and integration;

32. *Encourage and support* member States to promote gender equality and to identify and address the barriers to women's full economic participation;

33. *Invite* members and associate members of the Commission, donor countries, multilateral financing institutions, relevant agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental and regional organizations, relevant non-governmental organizations, international think tanks and the private sector, as appropriate, to continue to provide financial and technical support, within their mandates and core competencies, for the implementation of the agenda for regional economic cooperation and integration;

34. *Decide* to convene, on an ad hoc basis, the third Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific in 2021, as appropriate, to review the progress made in the advancement of the regional economic cooperation and integration agenda;

35. *Request* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To continue to accord high priority to enhancing economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific in the programme of work and through the conference structure of the Commission;

(b) To continue to facilitate member States' efforts in regional economic cooperation and integration in a manner that promotes the 2030 Agenda, through analytical studies, policy dialogues and capacity-building programmes;

(c) To continue to support member States, upon request, in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda in an integrated manner and in light of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific;

(d) To strengthen and promote communication, cooperation and collaboration among the relevant organizations of the United Nations system in the Asia-Pacific region and other stakeholders, as appropriate, in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through enhanced regional economic cooperation and integration;

(e) To continue to build and strengthen partnerships between the Commission and other relevant organizations, institutions and initiatives to promote regional economic cooperation and integration;

(f) To support the convening of the third Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific in 2021.
