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**ROLE OF THE SUBREGIONAL OFFICES IN ADDRESSING THE
PRIORITY NEEDS OF THE FOLLOWING SUBREGIONS:
NORTH AND CENTRAL ASIA**

(Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda)

**ROLE OF THE SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR NORTH AND CENTRAL
ASIA IN ADDRESSING THE PRIORITY NEEDS
OF THE SUBREGION**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The present document discusses the role of the ESCAP subregional office in Almaty, Kazakhstan, which is responsible for addressing priority needs in the North and Central Asian subregion. This subregional office will also serve as the ESCAP-Economic Commission for Europe joint office for the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECAs). A brief look at the ESCAP areas of work that are relevant to the subregion, along with some overarching principles, sets the foundation for guiding the nature of the relationships among ESCAP headquarters, the subregional office, and other potential partner entities.

* The late submission of the present document is due to the exhaustive consultative process undertaken by the working group on subregional offices, which is comprised of ESCAP senior managers, in order to develop the agenda and scope for the meeting.

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Introduction

1. The primary role of ESCAP subprogramme 8, component 3, Subregional activities for development in North and Central Asia, is to support the work of ESCAP at the subregional level by addressing specific key priorities through better targeted programme delivery. The countries covered under this subregional office are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The countries covered under the joint ESCAP-Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) office for the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

I. RELEVANT WORK AREAS OF ESCAP

2. Under the programme of technical assistance on macroeconomic reforms and development policy for the countries of North and Central Asia, cooperative subregional activities are expected to be undertaken to mitigate the negative effects of the current economic crisis, enhance economic resilience to further shocks and increase growth potential.

3. Annual ESCAP publications, including the report on progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*, which are spearheaded by the Macroeconomic Policy and Development Division, include perspectives on this subregion. Related policy dialogues and panel discussions, including subregional seminars on the findings and recommendations of the *Survey*, will be organized in close cooperation with this and the other subregional offices.

4. ESCAP, through the work of SPECA, with its six project working groups, covers a broad range of regional cooperation areas. These areas include the joint management of water and energy resources, protection of the environment and climate change adaptation. Efforts to develop better transport links include work on Eurasian transport corridors, improved border crossing and road safety. The introduction of electronic data corridors, the single window concept and other trade facilitation measures is intended to enhance trade in the subregion. The promotion of knowledge-based development includes the dissemination of international best practices in improving innovation-based competitiveness and the effective protection and management of intellectual property.

5. Through the SPECA Project Working Group on Statistics, any statistics-related activities in this subregion would be harmonized to tap into the comparative strengths of the ESCAP Statistics Division and the ECE Statistics Division. While

ECE has more extensive experience working with the countries in this subregion and is giving priority to them in its statistical activities, the support provided to the North and Central Asian subregional office by the ESCAP Statistics Division would focus on areas where it is running technical cooperation projects and has specialized expertise.

6. Approaching economic development from the gender perspective is particularly important in a subregion where the entrepreneurship of women is a significant driving force of economic growth. The Social Development Division of ESCAP assists member States in conducting research and studies on persistent and emerging challenges that hinder women's full and equal participation in societies throughout each subregion, such as the impact of current forms of globalization and the evolving information society, the rise of HIV/AIDS among women, the feminization of ageing, migration, trafficking and other forms of gender violence, and systemic institutional inequalities. Such technical support would be carried out in collaboration with other ESCAP divisions in areas such as environment, natural resources management, climate change adaptation, food and energy security, ageing and youth policy, social protection, migration and human trafficking, women in local government, statistics, information and communications policy and technologies, and women's economic participation, including in trade and enterprise development and, in particular, within the context of SPECA.

7. Through the work of the Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, ESCAP conducts knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities and develops technical materials on multi-hazard preparedness and early warning with a view to improving disaster management and reducing socio-economic risks, taking gender dimensions into account. These activities could cover North and Central Asian subregional perspectives by, where possible, tapping into the network of this subregional office.

II. POSSIBLE AREAS OF WORK OF THE SUBREGIONAL OFFICE

8. Outputs under the programme of work of the subregional office in North and Central Asia include implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries,¹ as well as supporting the work of SPECA, including servicing its Governing Council. In particular, the ESCAP-ECE joint implementation of the SPECA cooperation strategy aims to promote the rational and effective use of water and energy resources (see A/64/6 (Sect. 18), para. 18.95).

9. The subregional office would also share knowledge through the dissemination of technical materials on economic and social development policy and good practices in the North and Central Asian subregion (see A/64/6 (Sect. 18), para. 18.95). The office could also assist in ensuring that a gender dimension is considered in the formulation and implementation of national level development policies and programmes.

10. Since, in many cases, national level source documents may be in local languages and/or Russian, the subregional office in North and Central Asia, depending on the availability of resources, could undertake the following duties in relation to official statistics and information:

¹ *Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003 (A/CONF.202/3), annex I.*

(a) Monitor the development of key policy planning documents, including national reports on the Millennium Development Goals, national human development reports and poverty reduction strategy papers, and the use of statistical progress indicators in them;

(b) Work towards improving the flow of information, including statistical data, in particular with regard to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

11. The subregional office will supplement the work of ESCAP headquarters by providing subregional perspectives for the report on progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific* in the short to medium term and, possibly, in the long term, as well.

III. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ENTITIES

12. To ensure the efficient utilization of resources, the subregional office would increasingly build working relationships with national and subregional partner organizations and institutions, while playing a supporting role in the relevant work of ESCAP headquarters to strengthen linkages with regional organizations, institutions and mechanisms.

13. A harmonized approach will be used to maintain balance when engaging in collaborative efforts in order to manage the workloads of the subregional office and ESCAP headquarters effectively. Where appropriate, the same approach would govern collaboration among the ESCAP subregional offices.

14. The relationship of the subregional office with partner organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme, and regional institutions, such as the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, where applicable, would be complementary and would avoid duplication of efforts. Other such strategic partnerships could also be pursued with the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Community and members of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation to promote subregional cooperation within a regional framework.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

15. ESCAP plans to deliver more effective services to member States through the subregional office in North and Central Asia. In order to maintain a complementary and balanced approach, the initial focus areas of the subregional office would include promoting subregional collaboration, supporting the implementation of macroeconomic reforms, and work related to environmental sustainability, including energy and water, trade and transport. Supporting the work of SPECA is envisaged in the short, medium and possibly long term.

16. The meeting may wish to recommend that the subregional office play a supporting role in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including the cross-cutting area of gender equality, and that it build partnerships in this regard in the short to medium term.

17. The meeting may wish to recommend that a North and Central Asian subregional perspective figure prominently in knowledge-sharing and capacity-building efforts and technical materials related to disaster risk reduction.

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