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and South and South-West Asia

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**ROLE OF THE SUBREGIONAL OFFICES IN ADDRESSING THE
PRIORITY NEEDS OF THE FOLLOWING SUBREGIONS:
SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA**

(Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda)

**ROLE OF THE SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST
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 New Delhi, which is responsible for addressing the priority needs in the South and South-West Asian subregion. Some of the relevant areas of work carried out at ESCAP headquarters are discussed in order to indicate possible directions for work to be undertaken by the subregional office in the short to medium term. The overarching principles for guiding the nature of the relationships among ESCAP headquarters, the subregional office and other potential partner entities are based on using a balanced approach when harmonizing relevant areas of work.

The meeting may wish to provide the secretariat with guidance to further refine the programme of work of the subregional office.

* 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 4, Subregional activities for development in South and South-West Asia, is to support better-targeted subregional-level programme delivery by addressing specific key priorities. The countries covered under this subregional office are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

I. RELEVANT WORK AREAS OF ESCAP

2. In the area of trade and investment and, specifically, in terms of trade facilitation, the South and South-West Asian subregion lags behind other subregions. The traders in this subregion, in particular the small and medium-sized enterprises, suffer due to high trade costs and long delays, which are largely attributable to administrative hurdles, cumbersome trade procedures, formalities and inadequate logistics services. These delays have a critical effect on landlocked countries, as their trade depends on the cooperation of neighbouring transit countries. It is essential to remove these administrative hurdles through the implementation of trade facilitation measures to enable these countries to reap the benefits of trade.

3. The ESCAP Trade and Investment Division, in collaboration with the subregional office, could provide the South and South-West Asian subregion with the following technical services:

(a) Assisting in undertaking subregional initiatives on trade policy, trade facilitation and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises;

(b) Assisting member States in participating effectively in the negotiation and implementation of multilateral and regional trade agreements, such as the World Trade Organization agreement on trade facilitation;

(c) Assisting member States in adopting needs-driven trade facilitation measures to improve national trading environments, including the simplification and harmonization of trade procedures and documents through the use of international standards and the establishment of national trade facilitation coordination bodies;

(d) Conducting analytical work to address salient issues on trade facilitation;

(e) Exchanging information and experiences with other Asian and Pacific subregions.

4. 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. Other areas of work to be addressed in collaboration with the subregional office could include improved networking with macroeconomic policy institutions, with the main objective of increasing their capacity to design and implement relevant policies and programmes. This type of collaboration could assist in efforts to assess the efficacy and long-term consequences of the global economic crisis, fiscal policy in crisis management, the role of monetary policies in a post-crisis period and crisis transmission mechanisms, such as trade, capital flows and exchange rate policies.

5. 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 the subregions, 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.

6. With regard to social protection, including health, the Social Development Division could support the subregional office in work related to the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the promotion of policy options, strategies and good practices in social protection, including those with a focus on poverty reduction. More specifically, the Division could facilitate exchanges of knowledge and capacity-building and provide the subregional office with data, analytical studies and tested methodologies in the following areas:

(a) The strengthening of health promotion systems and health finance systems as well as the formulation/adaptation of health access policies;

(b) The formulation of social protection policies, strategies and interventions in response to emerging challenges, targeting specific social groups (youth, the elderly, women, etc.) or in specific sectors/services, such as health, employment and education.

7. Multi-hazard preparedness and early warning systems to improve disaster management and reduce socio-economic risks are an important part of the work of ESCAP and should include gender perspectives. The work of the Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division of ESCAP in this area includes knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities, and the development of technical materials. These activities could cover South and South-West Asian subregional perspectives.

II. POSSIBLE AREAS OF WORK OF THE SUBREGIONAL OFFICE

8. The short-term programme of work of the subregional office in South and South-West Asia revolves around building partnerships to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the areas of poverty reduction and gender mainstreaming, as well as sharing knowledge through the dissemination of technical materials on economic and social development policy and good practices in the South and South-West Asian subregion (see A/64/6 (Sect. 18), paras. 18.99 and 18.101). In addition, areas identified as priorities during the Expert Group Meeting to

Identify Work Priorities of the New ESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia, which was held in Bangkok on 21 and 22 October 2009, included the provision of support for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (including gender equality), trade facilitation, infrastructure development and connectivity, food security, energy, water management, environmental issues, climate change adaptation and regional integration, to be achieved by working with existing subregional institutions and with other subregions.

9. 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

10. 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 supportive role in the relevant work of ESCAP headquarters to strengthening linkages with regional organizations, institutions and mechanisms.

11. A harmonized approach will be used to maintain a 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.

12. The relationship of the subregional office with partner organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme, and regional institutions, such as the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology, where applicable, would be complementary and would avoid duplication of efforts. Other such strategic partnerships could also be pursued with the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and others to promote subregional cooperation.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

13. The secretariat of ESCAP plans to deliver more effective services to member States through the subregional office in South and South-West Asia. In order to maintain a complementary and balanced approach, the initial focus areas of the subregional office would include building partnerships to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the area of poverty reduction. The office would also assist in ensuring that a gender dimension is considered in the formulation and implementation of national level development policies and programmes.

14. 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 areas of poverty reduction and gender equality, and that it build partnerships in this regard in the medium term, as well.

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

16. The meeting may wish to recommend that knowledge-sharing within the South and South-West Asian subregion through the dissemination of technical materials on socio-economic policy and good practices, including in the area of poverty reduction, also include environmental perspectives, and that this be done by drawing on success stories from other subregions, as well.

17. The meeting may wish to recommend that the activities of the subregional office be expanded, through strategic partnerships and/or by securing additional resources, to include some of the areas identified at the Expert Group Meeting mentioned above in the medium to long term.

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