



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Ad hoc Intergovernmental Meeting on the new ESCAP subregional offices
for East and North-East Asia, North and Central Asia,
and South and South-West Asia

2-4 March 2010
Bangkok

**REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING TO IDENTIFY WORK
PRIORITIES OF THE NEW ESCAP SUBREGIONAL OFFICE
FOR SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA**

(Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

1. The Expert Group Meeting was organized to identify priority areas, in the context of the programme of work of ESCAP for 2010-2011 and proposals for the strategic framework for 2012-2013, that could form the focus of the work of the new ESCAP subregional office for South and South-West Asia. The Meeting was held in Bangkok on 21 and 22 October 2009.
2. The main objectives of the Expert Group Meeting were the following:
 - (a) To identify the priority needs of the South and South-West Asian subregion and the role that could be played by ESCAP through its subregional office in meeting those needs;
 - (b) To discuss mechanisms/modalities for national/subregional/regional cooperation;
 - (c) To identify possible challenges that could affect the operations of the new subregional office and to recommend measures to ensure proper implementation of the programme of work.
3. The meeting was attended by experts nominated by the Governments of countries located within the South and South-West Asian subregion, including, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Turkey.
4. The meeting was opened by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. In her opening remarks, the Executive Secretary emphasized the importance of interaction between policymakers from the subregion and ESCAP. She stated that the South and

South-West Asian subregion was a microcosm of the great diversity that characterized the Asia and Pacific region as a whole in terms of culture and social progress. She mentioned that economic growth and poverty reduction, renewable energy, technology transfer, trade and facilitation of the efforts of the United Nations to “deliver as one” were important issues to consider in view of the pressing needs of the subregion as well as the rapidly growing economies. Finally, she asked the experts to devise a concrete set of recommendations on strategic areas of work that could be addressed by the new subregional office.

5. Following the opening remarks of the Executive Secretary, the Principal Officer (Office of the Executive Secretary, ESCAP) in charge of the substantive side of setting up the subregional office, made his opening remarks on the objectives, format and expected outcome of the Expert Group Meeting, and briefly introduced the ESCAP programme areas. He stated that, by tapping into their collective experience and expertise, examining macroeconomic factors, social issues, energy demand and environmental sustainability issues, the experts should be able to develop a list of strategic work priorities for the new ESCAP subregional office. He mentioned to the importance of looking at partner organizations for possibilities for cooperation and synergies.

6. The following reflects the agenda adopted by the meeting:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Introduction: objectives, format and expected outcome of the Expert Group Meeting, and introduction to the ESCAP programme of work.
3. Priority needs in the South and South-West Asian subregion.
4. Modalities for national, subregional and regional cooperation.
5. Challenges for the ESCAP subregional office in South and South-West Asia.
6. Conclusions and recommendations.
7. Closing remarks.

7. As background for the above-mentioned agenda items, presentations were made on the strategic framework for 2010-2011 in respect of subprogramme 8, Subregional activities for development, and on lessons learned from the work of the existing subregional office for the Pacific.

8. The experts presented in-depth and relevant views and opinions on the priority needs of their respective countries. That was followed by rich discussions on priority work areas for the new subregional office. The meeting agreed on a concrete set of recommendations on possible work areas that could be considered for inclusion in the programme of work of the subregional office.

9. The Principal Officer delivered closing remarks. He emphasized that the recommendations to the secretariat from the Expert Group Meeting would feed into the intergovernmental meeting planned for early 2010.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The Meeting was of the view that the subregional office provided an important platform that could strengthen subregional cooperation in South and South-West Asia, focusing on key economic and social development issues, and ensure that the subregion's needs and perspectives were well reflected in the promotion of broader regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.

11. The Meeting agreed that the subregional office should promote technical cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation, among its member States. In doing so, it should aim to plan and implement programmes in a coherent and coordinated manner in line with United Nations efforts to "deliver as one", utilizing the full range of assets of the United Nations development system at the subregional and national levels to bridge key development gaps.

12. The Meeting emphasized the importance of ownership of the subregional office by its member States and recognized that the functioning of the office should evolve around the specific needs of the subregion and the existing subregional cooperation frameworks and institutional landscape.

13. The Meeting suggested that the subregional office should use its convening role to promote and operationalize regional integration, promote good will and foster people-to-people exchanges.

14. The Meeting stressed the need for building partnerships among governments, civil society, the media and the private sector to address the development challenges of the subregion and recommended a multi-stakeholder approach in the planning and implementation of programmes, including public-private partnerships.

15. The Meeting was of the view that, in undertaking its work, the subregional office should build strategic partnerships with other key intergovernmental institutions and development actors, including the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and its South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Programme, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank.

16. The Meeting emphasized the need to identify and exchange good practices across the different subregions of ESCAP and urged that all the ESCAP subregional offices should promote knowledge sharing and exchange of experiences across the subregions of Asia and the Pacific.

17. The Meeting urged the ESCAP secretariat and requested the member States and other development partners to equip the subregional office with the requisite resources to enable it to carry out its functions in an effective manner.

18. The table reflects the views of the experts in more detail. The experts agreed with all the priority areas as listed portraying their views as a unified group.

Table
Individual experts identified the following priority work areas

Priority area 1	Priority area 2	Other areas (optional)	Comments
Food security (agriculture, water resources)	Trade facilitation	Climate change management, tourism, ICT	
Millennium Development Goal support, including gender equality	Macroeconomic stabilization and social protection with a focus on poverty reduction	Agriculture for the economic prosperity of the masses	Programmes should be devised to close the Millennium Development Goal gaps in the short and medium term
Human resource development (education and health with a special focus on gender issues)	Infrastructure (interconnected with access issues)		
Cross-border (community, government) connectivity (through real cooperation - not only through transport)	Food security (not only through technology; through an improved knowledge base; with a focus on water)		Trust building is an important element
Energy (development of renewable)	Environment (addressing the problem of glacial lake outburst flood; climate change adaptation)		
Disaster risk management (early warning systems and related capacity-building)	Environment (setting up a forum for discussing environmental incentive systems; capacity building for environmental planning systems)		
Achieving sustainable economic growth (sharing best practices in resource management)	Trade promotion	Fighting illegal migration and human trafficking	

Priority area 1	Priority area 2	Other areas (optional)	Comments
Regional integration (work with existing subregional institutions; work together with other subregions in Asia and the Pacific)	Millennium Development Goal support to least developed countries and other countries with special needs		
Water management	Gender equality		
Infrastructure (cross-border)	Gender equality		
Improving connectivity for food security, economic development, climate change	Energy management	Water management	
Trade and transit facilitation	Energy cooperation	Border management	The role of the private sector is important (empowerment, connectivity); there should be a special focus on the sustainability of programmes for countries in transition

Notes:

All experts requested that their names not be shown in the table in order to present a consolidated table.

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