

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Seventy-seventh session

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Items 4 (f) and (i) of the provisional agenda*

Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission:

Committee on Environment and Development

Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction

Annual reports of international and intergovernmental organizations provided to the Commission**

Summary

The present document contains overviews of the annual reports of the following international and intergovernmental organizations: the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia; the Mekong River Commission; the Typhoon Committee; and the Panel on Tropical Cyclones.

These organizations were established under the auspices of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to work on areas under their respective competence to support economic and social development in the region.

The Commission may wish to comment on the work of these organizations and take note of the present document.

I. Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia

1. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has been established under the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) since 1966. In 1991, the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has become an independent intergovernmental organization. With a vision to be “a premier intergovernmental Earth Science Organization in East and Southeast Asia”, the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has worked towards its mission to contribute significantly to the economic development and sustainable management of the environment and of improving the quality of life of its member countries by the application of Earth Science knowledge.

* ESCAP/77/L.1.

** The present document is being issued without formal editing.

2. Starting from January 2021, the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has introduced a new strategic plan (2021–2025) with a vision “To be a leading intergovernmental Geoscience Organization for sustainable development in East and Southeast Asia”, the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has worked towards its mission “To work together on advancing geoscience for better lives on a future earth, in line with the goals of international conventions including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework, and the Paris Agreement, through: the application of geoscience knowledge and provision of technical solutions, provision of advice and geoinformation for economic development and sustainable management of the national resources and environment; adapting to digital transformation in geoscience for future earth; and the promotion of education, capability building and outreach”. The organization also promotes young geoscientists and equal gender issue.

3. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia now has a total of 16 member countries including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia also has 14 cooperating countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America); and 16 cooperating organizations located around the world. The activities of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia cover a wide range of geoscience including energy and mineral resources, groundwater, marine geology, geohazard, climate change, urban geology, geoscience big data, education and outreach, etc.

4. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has carried out the technical programmes and activities based on its previous strategic plan that focuses on capacity building, knowledge sharing and technology transfer, through a series of workshops, training courses, symposiums, working group meetings and expert visits. The activities carried out during 2020: Outreach: 1; Cooperation and Partnership: 35; Knowledge Enhancement and Sharing: 2; and Data and Information: 2. However, since the beginning of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, almost all activities had been conducted through online meetings. All activities were open to all participants nominated by the Permanent Representatives of the member countries.

5. Despite the prohibition on travelling, the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has taken the advantage of using information technology and online communication to keep its cooperation and partnerships among its member countries through various programmes and activities. The new 5-year Strategic Plan (2021–2025) supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the promotion of “Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in East and Southeast Asia”. Other activities include reaching out for regional cooperation with other agencies, e.g., a programme in cooperation with the Korea Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources on “Urban geology technology transfer for sustainable cities in East and Southeast Asia” for the sharing of smart Integrated Solution System Technology in response to cities’ complex geological hazards and disasters. The programme starts in March 2021 and will benefit all of our member countries in the East and Southeast Asia region.

More information about the activities of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia can be found at: <http://www.ccop.or.th/publication-details/95>.

II. Mekong River Commission

6. In the year 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the worst pandemics in human history in terms of impact to all facets of life and human interactions, the Mekong River Commission adapted and continued to implement its core river basin management functions including basin planning, river monitoring, flood and drought forecasting, coordinating implementation of water utilization procedures for data sharing, water quality monitoring and maintenance of river flows, and facilitating cooperation and consultation on major infrastructure projects on the Mekong mainstream, and with partners and stakeholders.

7. A new Basin Development Strategy for the Mekong River Basin 2021–2030 and the Mekong River Commission Strategic Plan 2021–2025 was prepared through extensive consultations and approved by the governments of the four Mekong River Commission member countries. The Basin Development Strategy sets common direction for the basin for all relevant actors in terms of improving the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and State of the Basin in 5–10 years time, with key indicators in environmental, social, economic, climate and cooperation dimensions. The Mekong River Commission Strategic Plan sets activities and milestones for the Mekong River Commission to implement in response to the Basin Development Strategy.

8. In the areas of environmental protection, fisheries management and development, and navigation enhancement, the Commission approved new basin-wide strategies in the Strategy for Basin-wide Management of Environmental Assets, the Project Based Action Plan for Fisheries Management and the Master Plan for Regional Waterborne Transportation.

9. Another major highlight for the Commission is the completion of the prior consultation process for the proposed Luang Prabang mainstream hydropower project, which resulted in agreement on a Joint Statement and Joint Action Plan by member countries. This provides ongoing engagement mechanism for the Mekong River Commission and its stakeholders to engage in the process of improving and monitoring the implementation of the mitigation measures for potential negative impacts.

10. Similarly, the Joint Environment Monitoring programme for two mainstream dams of Xayaburi and Don Sahong had started, responding to stakeholder concerns and setting the foundation for establishing common monitoring methodology, establishing baselines, enhance data collection and reporting, and the direction to integrate into the core river monitoring network.

11. Finally, a historic agreement with China on year-round data sharing was secured. This will improve the Mekong River Commission's knowledge about the water level and flow from the Upper Mekong river into the Lower Mekong River Basin and enable the Mekong River Commission to report and better inform management and planning for the Lower Mekong Basin countries and peoples.

More information about the activities of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia can be found at: <http://interactive.mrcmekong.org/mrc-annual-report-2019/homepage/>.

III. Typhoon Committee

12. The ESCAP/World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Typhoon Committee is an intergovernmental body organized under the joint auspices of ESCAP and WMO in 1968 in order to promote and coordinate the planning and implementation of measures required for minimizing the loss of life and material damage caused by typhoons in Asia and the Pacific. The Committee develops activities under three substantive components: meteorology, hydrology, and disaster risk reduction, as well as in training and research. The mission of the Committee is to reduce the loss of lives and minimize social, economic and environmental impacts caused by typhoon-related disasters through integrated and enhanced regional collaboration.

13. In 2020, due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation around the world some activities of the Committee have been affected. However, under the efforts of all Members, Advisory Working Group, working groups, and the Typhoon Committee Secretariat, the Committee has smoothly implemented the decisions of the Committee and achieved its mission to integrate and enhance regional activities of Members within international frameworks to reduce the loss of lives and minimize social, economic, and environmental impacts by typhoon-related disasters.

Typhoons in the Region

14. In 2020, 23 named tropical cyclones of tropical storm intensity or above formed over the western North Pacific and the South China Sea. This number was below the climatological average of 25.6 (1981–2010). In particular, it was the first time that no tropical cyclone was named in July.

15. There were 5 tropical cyclones which made landfall over China in the year, namely Nuri (2002), Hagupit (2004), Mekkhala (2006), Higos (2007) and Nangka (2016). The number was below the multi-year average for the same period (6.7). In addition, 3 tropical cyclones, Bavi (2008), Maysak (2009) and Haishen (2010) affected northeast China in succession between August and September and brought more than 180 mm rainfall in total. Both the number and the rainfall set a new record since 1949. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was hit by tropical cyclone Bavi (2008) in August. There was no tropical cyclone which made landfall over Japan. It was the first time in the last 12 years.

16. The Philippines was hit by 5 tropical cyclones, namely Vongfong (2001), Saudel (2017), Molave (2018), Goni (2019) and Vamco (2022), plus two locally named storms (Nori and Ofel). Goni was the most intense storm which affected the country in the year. It made landfall over Bato, Catanduanes on 1 November and caused catastrophic damage: 25 people died and 399 were injured, and the social and economic loss was estimated to be over 17 billion Philippines Pesos. A minimum pressure of 912.1 hectopascal was reported in Virac and a maximum gust of 198 kilometres per hour was reported in Legaspi City.

17. The Republic of Korea was affected by 4 tropical cyclones, and 3 of them made landfall over the Korean Peninsula, namely Jangmi (2005), Maysak (2009) and Haishen (2010). Among them, Maysak brought extensive rain to the country with a total rainfall of 1037 millimetres. A maximum gust of 66 metres per second was recorded during the passage of the storm.

18. Viet Nam was affected by 9 tropical cyclones in the year, namely Sinlaku (2003), Noul (2011), Linfa (2015), Nangka (2016), Saudel (2017), Molave (2018), Goni (2019), Etau (2021) and Vamco (2022). Molave was the most intense storm among them with a maximum gust of 42 metres per second

recorded in Bình Châu and the total rainfall ranged from 150 to 400 millimetres in the country. The 4 successive storms (Linfa, Nangka, Saudel and Molave) in October combined with the cold air caused heavy rain, flood and landslide to central regions of Viet Nam.

Strategic Development

19. The current Strategic Plan of the Typhoon Committee for 2017–2021 was approved by the 49th Session of the Committee, on 21–24 February 2017, in Yokohama, Japan. The Committee has now initiated the process to renew the Strategic Plan for 2022–2026 and requested the United States of America to take the lead in this regard.

More information about the activities of the Committee can be found at: <http://www.typhooncommittee.org/tc-annual-session/>.

IV. Panel on Tropical Cyclones

20. The WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones is an intergovernmental regional body jointly established by WMO and ESCAP in 1972 in order to promote and coordinate the planning and implementation of measures required for addressing the impacts of tropical cyclones. The Panel is composed of 13 members: Bangladesh, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. It has been recognized as an important body that integrates the actions and plans of the meteorological, hydrological and disaster risk reduction components to reduce the impacts of tropical cyclone-related disasters through enhanced regional collaboration.

21. The forty-seventh session of the Panel was held online and hosted by the United Arab Emirates on 23, 24 and 26 November 2020. The session was attended by 88 participants from the thirteen members of the Panel, and representatives from ESCAP and WMO. The Panel reviewed the 2019–2020 cyclone seasons and discussed possible changes in the frequency and intensification of tropical cyclones. In 2019, the number of cyclones was higher than the average, and the total cyclone disturbance period was also high, compared with climatological value. Representatives from member States presented to the Panel impact of tropical cyclones in 2019 and 2020, including Cyclone Amphan (Bangladesh and India in May 2020), Cyclone Goni (India in June 2020).

22. At the session, the Panel Members discussed the Tropical Cyclone Operational Plan, seasonal forecasting of tropical cyclones to support national planning for better preparedness and impact forecasting to bridge the gap between early warning communities and disaster management authorities. Further, the Panel decided to establish a task team, composed of one representative from each of the Panel Members and secretariat staff from ESCAP and WMO, to review the success and areas to be improved further, emerging new issues and to propose the sub-structural composition of the Panel, and corresponding working mechanism. In addition, an updated list of tropical cyclone names was also presented and discussed. The Panel approved the updating and changed of Operational Plan including the new list of tropical cyclone names.

23. The Panel requested the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre, New Delhi of the India Meteorological Department to consider providing seasonal forecasting of tropical cyclones to the Panel Members as early as possible.

More information about the activities of the Panel can be found at:
<https://community.wmo.int/meetings/forty-seventh-session-wmoescap-panel-tropical-cyclones-ptc-47>.
