



# Economic and Social Council

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## Committee for Programme and Coordination

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### Draft report

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#### Addendum

### Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2025

(Item 3 (a))

#### Programme 16

#### Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific

1. At its 9th meeting, on 17 May 2024, the Committee considered programme 16, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, of the proposed programme plan for 2025 and programme performance in 2023 (A/79/6 (Sect. 19)). The Committee also had before it a note by the Secretariat on the review of the proposed programme plan for 2025 by sectoral, functional and regional bodies (E/AC.51/2024/6).

#### Discussion

2. Delegations expressed appreciation and support for the work of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and for the presentation of the proposed programme plan for 2025 and programme performance information in 2023.

3. A delegation indicated that its country highly valued the committed work of ESCAP on multiple strands and that the country was committed to helping to get the Sustainable Development Goals “back on track”, ensuring that the United Nations development system was better able to deliver in line with the priorities of the global South. Accordingly, the delegation welcomed that programme’s focus on ambition towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Goals. The delegation reiterated its country’s strong commitment to Asia and the Pacific and to working collaboratively with the Organization and Member States to advance international cooperation towards economic, social and environmental development.

4. A delegation noted that, at the time, the Asia-Pacific region remained generally peaceful and stable, and the region’s position as an engine of global economic growth



had become more prominent, and further noted that ESCAP, as the most important regional cooperation mechanism of the United Nations in the Asia-Pacific region, had important missions. The delegation indicated that its country had been an important member of the Asia and the Pacific region, attached high importance to the role of ESCAP and had been actively participating in those activities. The delegation expressed its appreciation for the support of ESCAP for its member States in making progress towards the Goals, in particular in helping least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States to make progress towards the Goals. The delegation expressed its country's commitment to standing ready to work with ESCAP to firmly uphold multilateralism, jointly promoting the implementation of the Global Development Initiative, making joint efforts to pursue high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and making greater contributions to the building of a community with a shared future in the Asia-Pacific region.

5. A delegation expressed its belief that ESCAP played a crucial role in promoting cooperation among member States in Asia and the Pacific by supporting member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achieving the Goals.

6. A delegation expressed its appreciation for the mandate and work of ESCAP, including the Commission's support to the countries in the region, advancement of sustainable socioeconomic development and the realization of the Goals. With regard to the strategy outlined in the programme, the delegation expressed its appreciation for the commitment by ESCAP to further supporting the achievement of sustainable development at the regional, subregional and national levels, giving balanced attention to the three dimensions related to economic, social and environmental development. The delegation expressed its hope that the nine subprogrammes, which covered a broad spectrum of the Commission's work, would further enable ESCAP to advance multifaceted regional economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. The delegation noted that more concrete efforts were needed to tap the potential of regional and subregional cooperation and integration, including in the areas of trade, investment, innovation, connectivity, the environment, climate change and information and communications technology, among others, and encouraged ESCAP to continue to promote international and regional cooperation in support of its member States' efforts to achieve sustainable development in a resilient manner, giving special attention to the needs of the developing countries that were particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. In reference to paragraph 19.6, and noting that the proposed programme did not touch on all subregions in that broad region, the delegation sought additional thoughts of the Secretariat on the upcoming plans and initiatives, in particular in the South Asian subregion.

7. A delegation highly valued the role of ESCAP in promoting regional cooperation in sustainable development and inclusive growth across the Asia and the Pacific region, in particular through the promotion of communication, cooperation and capacity-building. The delegation considered ESCAP and other regional commissions to possess a distinct set of capabilities and knowledge, along with partnering networks and the requisite infrastructure at both the regional and national levels, to effectively support member States in advancing sustainable development, as well as in enhancing digital transformation and developing trade capacities and transport infrastructure. The delegation noted that, at the time of the current Committee meeting, the visit of a delegation to its country, organized by ESCAP within the framework of the voluntary national review twinning programme, had been successfully completed on the same day. The delegation welcomed the particular focus of the Commission on development of infrastructure and promotion of trade through enhancement of transport connectivity. The delegation also commended the emphasis on digitalization in many subprogrammes across the Commission's programme for 2025. Noting that over 30 countries in special situations were

members of ESCAP and that the delegation's awareness of the active work of the Commission was aimed at addressing the challenges of those countries arising from their structural constraints, and noting with satisfaction the direct link between the main deliverables of the programme and the priorities of the most vulnerable countries, the delegation sought elaboration by ESCAP on the work to be done by the Commission in support of global efforts to address the developmental and structural challenges of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The delegation concluded by once again reaffirming its readiness to work closely with ESCAP in various areas towards advancing Goals in the delegation's country and in other regions of Asia and the Pacific.

8. A delegation noted that, as a long-standing member of the Commission, the delegation's country reiterated its unwavering support for the role of ESCAP in promoting the 2030 Agenda in the region. The delegation noted that all lines of programming reflected important challenges that the Commission should address and supported all subprogrammes. The delegation expressed its appreciation for the fact that a gender perspective was mainstreamed not only in subprogramme 6, Social development, but also in many other subprogrammes, for example in the programme performance for subprogramme 2, Trade, investment and innovation, noting the increasing amount of capital finance available for women entrepreneurs.

9. A delegation expressed its country's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the Goals and its wish to continue its close partnership with ESCAP and other Member States to accelerate achievement of the Goals. The delegation also expressed its country's commitment to an ESCAP region that was free and open, connected, prosperous, resilient and secure – a region that steadfastly supported the four pillars of the Charter of the United Nations: peace and security, development, rule of law and human rights. The delegation supported efforts of ESCAP to promote digital connectivity through the Action Plan for Implementing the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative, 2022–2026, and was proud to help to lead that effort as Co-Chair of the working group on connectivity for all. The delegation applauded the environmental efforts of ESCAP, in particular the Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution, which was taking important steps to rally the region to strengthen data-sharing and transparency to tackle transboundary air pollution. Noting that the Goals could not be achieved without the support of the entire multilateral and international system within and beyond the United Nations, as well as innovative and inclusive partnerships, the delegation expressed its strong support for the central role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the Asia-Pacific region and applauded the provisions in the ESCAP proposed programme plan that committed to expanded cooperation between ESCAP and ASEAN, including on the Goals. Noting that the comprehensive strategic partnership between ASEAN and the United States of America, signed in 2022, committed to partnership on the Goals, the delegation welcomed collaboration with both ESCAP and ASEAN on the Goals, as well as further multilateral partnerships towards that goal. Noting the close partnership between the delegation's country, Pacific Island countries and the Pacific Island Forum, including through the Partners in the Blue Pacific mechanism, the delegation applauded the efforts of ESCAP to support the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent of the Pacific Islands Forum and welcomed collaboration in that regard.

10. A delegation highlighted that ESCAP, as the principal intergovernmental platform for the United Nations in the Asia-Pacific region, was of utmost relevance to the region in assisting member States in pursuing solutions with regard to sustainable development and help with research and analysis, facilitation of intergovernmental consensus-building, technical cooperation and capacity development. The delegation noted that it was important for the work of ESCAP to

continue to adequately reflect the priorities of developing countries. The delegation acknowledged that the programme covered various aspects of important issues, including environment, transportation, trade and disaster risk management, as well as statistics and social development, in the Asia-Pacific region. Noting that ESCAP and its various centres were playing a leading role in development activities in the Asia-Pacific region, the delegation expressed the commitment of its country, a member of ESCAP and the host of its Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management team, to continuing its support for and active participation in the work of ESCAP.

11. A delegation that is a member of the European Union acknowledged the importance of both regional cooperation and the work of ESCAP to the member States in the region. With reference to the mention of the resident coordinator system in the programme plan, the delegation sought explanations of how ESCAP worked together with the resident coordinators on the ground and of what was needed by ESCAP from the resident coordinators for its own work to fulfil its mandate in the best way possible.

12. A delegation raised a question as to whether the use of hybrid and virtual modalities was still relevant to and effective in fulfilling the mandated service delivery of ESCAP. Another delegation made reference to the indication from other regional commissions that placed greater relevance on having hybrid and virtual conferencing tools for inclusivity, and sought an assessment by ESCAP of how important it was to have hybrid and virtual conferencing tools for the Commission's work.

13. With regard to subprogramme 1, Macroeconomic policy, poverty reduction and financing for development, in reference to paragraph 19.30, a delegation expressed its appreciation for the value of the work of ESCAP on digitization and asked what reduction in tax evasion had been achieved through the digitalization of tax administration in a specific country, implemented in 2023.

14. With regard to subprogramme 3, Transport, a delegation expressed its appreciation for the committed work of ESCAP on that subprogramme and, in reference to paragraph 19.64, enquired as to – following the agreement on including safe transport in the regional action programme in 2021, the regional action plan in 2022 and road safety policies in 2023 – what the reduction in road traffic deaths was to date as a result of the subprogramme's work in Bangladesh, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, recognizing that the programme would have further years to be implemented.

15. With regard to subprogramme 4, Environment and development, a delegation expressed its support for ESCAP activities, in line with that subprogramme and its belief that enhanced cooperation and capacity-building could promote environmental sustainability in the region. The delegation noted that, since 2005, its country had been working on sharing good practices of green growth with the Seoul Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth and would be happy to collaborate further on those matters.

16. With regard to subprogramme 5, Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction and management, a delegation noted that the objectives of bridging the digital divide and using new technologies to adapt to climate change, as well as to achieve the 2030 Agenda, were completely in line with the policies of the delegation's Government. The delegation further noted that its country was a host country for the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development and that the delegation's country would continue to support the capacity-building of developing countries with regard to information and communications technology. The delegation enquired as to how ESCAP viewed the

challenges presented by artificial intelligence technology and whether ESCAP had any further plans to explore that matter in the coming years.

17. With regard to subprogramme 7, Statistics, a delegation expressed its appreciation for the work of ESCAP on that subprogramme and, in reference to paragraph 19.122, asked which member States the planned world café-style sessions on data governance and other issues would be open to and whether there would an opportunity for synergy beyond the region.

18. A delegation said that it would welcome any further data on the impact of collaboration, beyond the useful data on participation in those valuable programmes. For example, with regard to subprogramme 8, Subregional activities for development, and component 2, Subregional activities for development in East and North-East Asia, and in reference to paragraph 19.147, the delegation asked whether the programme measured actual impact on air pollution and, with regard to subprogramme 8, component 5, Subregional activities for development in South-East Asia, and in reference to paragraph 19.189, the delegation enquired as to whether the programme measured actual impact on sustainable foreign direct investments in the subregion in the 80 per cent of member States reporting an increase in capacity to promote it.

#### **Conclusions and recommendations**

19. **The Committee commended ESCAP for its efforts in promoting the economic and social development of Asia and the Pacific and supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in accordance with its mandate, and recommended that the General Assembly encourage the Commission to accelerate its efforts to support its member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in close coordination with its partners at the regional, subregional and country levels.**

20. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly encourage the Commission to continue its efforts to promote international and regional cooperation in support of its member States' efforts to achieve sustainable development in a resilient manner, giving special attention to the needs of the developing countries, which are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.**

21. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly encourage the Commission to continue its efforts to build resilience and sustainability, alleviate poverty and inequality and invest in the welfare of people by promoting regional transport networks and connectivity, trade facilitation, digitalization, sustainable urban development, rural revitalization and sustainable energy and paying attention to those member States in special situations, namely the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.**

22. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of programme 16, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, of the proposed programme budget for 2025.**