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**EMERGING ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL:
SOCIO-ECONOMIC MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY
IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS**

(Item 7 (c) of the provisional agenda)

**PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS AND
DECISIONS RELATING TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC MEASURES TO
ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The Commission, at recent sessions, adopted a number of resolutions with the aim of alleviating poverty in the region. The present document reports on the implementation of the following resolutions: 48/3 of 23 April 1992 on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002; 49/6 of 29 April 1993 on the Proclamation and Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002; 51/2 of 1 May 1995 on strengthening regional cooperation in human resources development in Asia and the Pacific; 51/4 of 1 May 1995 on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region; 51/7 of 1 May 1995 on implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific; 52/3 of 24 April 1996 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women; 52/4 of 24 April 1996 on promoting human resources development among youth in Asia and the Pacific; 52/5 of 24 April 1996 on regional cooperation in response to the spread and consequences of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome in the Asian and Pacific region; 53/2 of 30 April 1997 on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for the advancement of women; 53/4 of 30 April 1997 on the elimination of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and youth in Asia and the Pacific; 54/1 of 22 April 1998 on strengthening regional support for persons with disabilities into the twenty-first century; 54/2 of 22 April 1998 on the Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region; 54/4 of 22 April 1998 on the mobilization of human and financial resources for further implementation of actions to achieve the population and development goals of the ESCAP region; 54/5 of 22 April 1998 on the International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages; 54/6 of 22 April 1998 on strengthening the role of the family in social development; and 55/4 of 28 April 1999 towards a society for all ages: Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific.

In addition, the document reviews actions relevant to poverty alleviation that have been taken by the secretariat in follow-up to major decisions and recommendations by the Commission at recent sessions, particularly the studies on the need for social security and safety nets which has become more prominent in many countries in the region. The actions were taken in four different fields: population, rural development, poverty and disabled persons and development research and policy analysis.

The Commission may wish to review the progress achieved in the implementation of the above-mentioned resolutions and decisions and provide guidance to the secretariat on enhancing the effectiveness of implementation and on the future direction of its work.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present document reports on the implementation of the following Commission resolutions: 48/3 of 23 April 1992 on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002; 49/6 of 29 April 1993 on the Proclamation and Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002; 51/2 of 1 May 1995 on strengthening regional cooperation in human resources development in Asia and the Pacific; 51/4 of 1 May 1995 on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region; 51/7 of 1 May 1995 on implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific; 52/3 of 24 April 1996 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women; 52/4 of 24 April 1996 on promoting human resources development among youth in Asia and the Pacific; 52/5 of 24 April 1996 on regional cooperation in response to the spread and consequences of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome in the Asian and Pacific region; 53/2 of 30 April 1997 on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for the advancement of women; 53/4 of 30 April 1997 on the elimination of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and youth in Asia and the Pacific; 54/1 of 22 April 1998 on strengthening regional support for persons with disabilities into the twenty-first century; 54/2 of 22 April 1998 on the Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region; 54/4 of 22 April 1998 on the mobilization of human and financial resources for further implementation of actions to achieve the population and development goals of the ESCAP region; 54/5 of 22 April 1998 on the International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages; 54/6 of 22 April 1998 on strengthening the role of the family in social development; and 55/4 of 28 April 1999 towards a society for all ages: Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific.

2. In addition, the note reviews actions relevant to poverty alleviation that have been taken by the secretariat in follow-up to major decisions and recommendations by the Commission at its recent sessions.

3. The Commission may wish to review the progress achieved in the implementation of these resolutions and decisions and provide guidance to the secretariat on enhancing effective implementation.

I. PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECENT COMMISSION RESOLUTIONS

A. Resolution 48/3 on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002

4. ESCAP activities related to pilot projects to implement the access promotion guidelines have led to the development and strengthening of guidelines to promote access in China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. ESCAP guidelines on training disabled persons as trainers for the

promotion of non-handicapping environments combines regional experience of access promotion with that of strengthening the self-help initiative of disabled persons. The implementation of both sets of access promotion guidelines will be promoted through a new project directed at local-level advocacy by disabled persons and directed at, inter alia, public administration personnel. A regional workshop on access to public transport by disabled persons is planned to be held in 2000 with the support of the Government of China.

5. New ESCAP information materials to support national Decade action include two publications on regional and country perspectives concerning the Decade with emphasis on multisectoral collaboration and national coordination, and a third on the experiences of pilot projects to implement the ESCAP guidelines on the promotion of non-handicapping environments. A new ESCAP video entitled "Freedom from Barriers" aims to promote awareness of the right of access and movement of disabled persons. Another video on the Decade is intended for use by disabled persons and other user groups to support their efforts to raise awareness of the Decade goal of full participation and equality for disabled persons in the development process.

B. Resolution 49/6 on the Proclamation and Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002

6. Since the fifty-fifth session of the Commission four more ESCAP members have signed the Proclamation, bringing the number of signatories to 40.

7. Two critical issues were addressed for the first time in regional forums: poverty alleviation among rural persons with disabilities, held at Hyderabad, India in December 1999, and disability statistics, held at New Delhi in February 2000. Both the Hyderabad seminar and the New Delhi training workshop generated strong recommendations on further action concerning the poverty of rural disabled persons and the lack of disability data.

8. In the last biennium, ESCAP held biannual plenary meetings of the Subcommittee on Disability-related Concerns of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP). Subcommittee action generated useful outcomes on effective placement services (Singapore, March 1999) and education (Bangkok, November 1999 and January 2000).

9. ESCAP support for activities to promote positive attitudes towards children and adults with disabilities includes collaboration with non-governmental organizations and government agencies on annual regional campaigns, which took place in Hong Kong, China in 1998, Kuala Lumpur in 1999 and Bangkok in 2000. ESCAP supported a series of "art for all" activities (seminar, art camp, exhibition and publication) that involved hundreds of children and youth with disabilities, art teachers and volunteers in Thailand in 1999.

C. Resolution 51/2 on strengthening regional cooperation in human resources development in Asia and the Pacific

10. ESCAP has implemented several activities in pursuance of the above resolution. One of the major activities is the establishment of the ESCAP HRD (human resources development) Network of Centres of Excellence for HRD Research and Training. Membership of the Network was based on identification of organizations (academic, government and NGOs) which demonstrate innovative practices in HRD research and training in the region, as well as of notable international centres of excellence from outside the region which can provide technical support. At present, 113 institutions have been chosen for membership in the Network.

11. The purpose of the Network is to strengthen cooperation between the centres of excellence in order to promote the exchange of experiences and innovative practices, as well as to publicize and disseminate the work of the institutions. The goal is thus to promote the wider diffusion of HRD research and training in the Asian and Pacific region. To that end, the database of the centres of excellence is accessible both on the Internet at the ESCAP HRD Web site, (<www.escap-hrd.org>), as well as in the form of a printed compendium.

12. In addition, ESCAP has been collaborating with several regional and international centres of excellence in the development of the ESCAP HRD course on poverty alleviation. ESCAP launched the course in July 1999, the objectives of which are the following: (a) to promote awareness among policy makers and senior officials of the latest thinking on social development, concepts and practice; and (b) to enhance the knowledge and skills of programme managers in poverty alleviation project/programme design, implementation and evaluation. The course consists of 11 modules. The first three modules, comprising the core curriculum, are designed for senior-level policy makers, while the remaining eight, focusing on poverty alleviation techniques, target programme and project managers. The course has been designed to be flexible, and each module can stand alone as a training programme, or different modules can be chosen and packaged together according to the needs of the targeted participants. Together, however, they comprise a complete package of the necessary knowledge, skills and tools required for the successful implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. The ESCAP HRD course on poverty alleviation will be conducted at both the subregional and national levels, based on demand from countries. So far over 20 countries and organizations have requested ESCAP to deliver the course in the year 2000.

D. Resolution 51/4 on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region

13. The Commission, in this resolution, endorsed the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region (hereinafter referred to as the regional Social Development Agenda), adopted by the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development, held at Manila in October 1994. It requested the Executive Secretary to convene a regional ministerial conference on social development in 1997 to review and assess the progress

achieved towards attaining the goals and targets of the Agenda, and to report to the Commission in 2000 on progress and recommend further action. The Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development, held at Manila in November 1997, reviewed the implementation of the Agenda and recommended further action for the achievement of its goals and targets. The Conference adopted the Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region.

14. The Meeting of Senior Officials on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region was held at Bangkok in November 1999. Members and associate members reviewed the progress made and constraints encountered in the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda in the context of the Copenhagen Programme of Action for Social Development adopted by the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen in March 1995. It considered development trends and emerging challenges to the full implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda. Finally, the Meeting adopted the regional perspective and recommendations for the global review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, for consideration by the General Assembly at its special session in June 2000. Details on these are contained in the report of the Meeting, E/ESCAP/1173, which has been submitted to the present session of the Commission for its endorsement.

E. Resolution 51/7 on implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific

and

F. Resolution 52/3 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

and

G. Resolution 53/2 on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for the advancement of women

15. A significant event in follow-up to the above resolutions was the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, which was held at Bangkok in October 1999. The Meeting was held pursuant to a decision by the Commission at its fifty-fourth session in 1998 to review the regional implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995. It also constituted the regional preparatory activity for the special session of the General Assembly entitled, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", to be held at New York in June 2000. The Meeting had been preceded by an Expert Group Meeting, held in April 1999, which set the framework for the broad issues and concerns within which the twelve critical areas of concern, as contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, would be evaluated. The Meeting was attended by over 400 representatives. It focused on key issues within the context of global trends and demographic changes in the region and adopted its report containing key actions and initiatives to accelerate regional implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

16. ESCAP continued to promote the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by supporting networks of non-governmental organizations in the Pacific in their awareness-raising activities on women's rights as human rights. The project results were presented and assessed at a subregional meeting held at Suva in May 1999.

17. To alleviate the feminization of poverty, the Regional Seminar on the Empowerment of Women in Poverty was held at Dhaka in July 1999 to deliberate on the integration of gender issues into macroeconomic and social policies, effective empowerment mechanisms and social mobilization for the collective empowerment of women.

18. With regard to the economic empowerment of women, following the successful completion of the Subregional Seminar on the Promotion of Women in Small Businesses in Indochina, an exchange programme to promote entrepreneurial activities was conducted at Manila in August 1999. Women entrepreneurs from Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam participated in the training workshop entitled "Business Enhancement Course for Women". Under the same project, a 25-minute videotape entitled "Women in business/Forces of change", was produced to promote women in small businesses in the Indochina region. The videotape addresses the problems faced by women when starting, maintaining, or expanding their business in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam.

19. The activities of the ESCAP Women's Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (WINAP), including the biannual WINAP newsletter and Women in Development home page, have been well received.

H. Resolution 52/4 on promoting human resources development among youth in Asia and the Pacific

20. ESCAP will initiate a five-year regional programme, starting in June 2000, on Promoting HRD of young people through integrated approaches to sexual and reproductive health, and substance abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention in Asia. The participating countries are Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Viet Nam and Sri Lanka.

21. The mandate for work in this field was received from the Second Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on Human Resources Development for Youth, held in Bangkok in June 1998. Technical support in the development of the project was provided by ESCAP in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

22. The goal of the programme is to promote the health and development of young people, focusing on integrated health concerns related to sexual and reproductive health, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS.

23. In addition, ESCAP is implementing a project on Promoting HRD among youth in transitional and less advantaged countries. During the past year, a series of ESCAP national HRD courses for youth development was held in Bangladesh, China, Maldives, Nepal and Viet Nam. In early 2000, additional courses will be held in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. The courses focus on imparting project formulation and management skills as well as entrepreneurship development as a means of income generation.

24. Under another project entitled Capacity-building in national youth policy-making in Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP is conducting research to be used in the preparation of a series of country monographs on the youth situation, policies and programmes in Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. The monographs are to be used by participating governments to formulate national youth policies and develop national youth action plans in the participating countries.

I. Resolution 52/5 on regional cooperation in response to the spread and consequences of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome in the Asian and Pacific region

25. The Commission, in this resolution, requested the Executive Secretary to undertake further initiatives, subject to the availability of resources and in collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and other agencies and bodies and subregional intergovernmental organizations, to promote regional cooperation to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, including the development of area-specific information systems and effective community-based strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention and the establishment of mechanisms for cross-border collaboration.

26. The secretariat, in the course of the period 1997-1999, implemented three projects on (a) developing national strategies for community-based drug demand reduction and HIV/AIDS prevention in five countries, namely Bangladesh, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan and Viet Nam; (b) preventing drug abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS at the Myanmar-Thai border; and (c) cross-border collaboration for the prevention and spread of HIV/AIDS.

27. As part of its effort to disseminate information on the issue, ESCAP has issued and distributed two publications: *Manual on Community-based Responses to Critical Social Issues: Poverty, Drug Abuse and HIV/AIDS* (ST/ESCAP/1922) and *Strategies for Community-based Drug Demand Reduction* (ST/ESCAP/1931).

J. Resolution 53/4 on the elimination of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and youth in Asia and the Pacific

28. ESCAP is currently in its second year of implementation of the above resolution. A consortium of donors is supporting the 12-country regional programme, which focuses on strengthening national HRD capabilities through the training of social service and health personnel to combat sexual abuse and exploitation of youth.

29. A total of US\$ 1.73 million of extrabudgetary funds was secured for the implementation of project activities for 1998, 1999, as well as for 2000 and 2001.
30. At present, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency is providing approximately US\$ 1 million for the implementation of project activities in the six countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion: Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam and Yunnan Province of China. The Government of Japan has provided approximately US\$ 394,000 for the implementation of parallel activities in the Philippines as well as five countries in South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Government of Australia has contributed another US\$ 200,000 for capacity-building activities at national level in South Asia.
31. The project activities commenced in January 1998 with research in the participating countries. UNFPA provided supplementary funds for the capacity-building of the national counterpart organizations in the Greater Mekong Subregion. The resulting national research reports identified the health needs of sexually abused and exploited children and youth, and the gaps in the provision of services to these young people, and formed the basis for activities in the second year of the project. In addition, in June 1998, ESCAP held the second Asia-Pacific Meeting on Human Resources Development for Youth, which was on the theme of the elimination of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth.
32. In the second year activities have focused on the implementation of national HRD workshops in the 12 participating countries, in order to publicize the research findings, conduct a training needs assessment for health and social service providers, and develop a pilot project. Following the workshops, community-level pilot projects are being implemented to raise awareness of the relationship between sexual exploitation and drug use.
33. ESCAP is also finalizing a directory of organizations that provide services to sexually abused and exploited children, as well as a database of reference materials. These materials will be linked with the Section for International Maternal and Child Health of Uppsala University, Sweden.
34. In addition, based on the outcome of the training needs assessments, training materials to enhance the capacity of social service and health professionals in dealing with sexually abused and sexually exploited children and youth are being developed. UNDCP and UNAIDS have both provided additional funding for the development of training materials on the relationship between sexual exploitation and drug use and HIV/AIDS. In the third year project activities will thus focus on the conduct of the ESCAP HRD course on medical and psycho-social services for sexually abused and sexually exploited children and youth at the subregional level for health and social service providers. The course will focus on medical and psycho-social problems of children living in especially difficult circumstances; preventive and remedial actions for helping such children; as well as drug use and HIV/AIDS modules. The curriculum and training materials, which will be translated into national languages, will provide input for the training of other social service and health

personnel, and allow for project sustainability and improved services to sexually abused and sexually exploited children and youth.

35. In the fourth year activities will focus on follow-up to the course, including national-level conduct of the course, as well as implementation of a series of pilot projects at the community level. It should be noted that media coverage in both the international and national or local press of the work of ESCAP in this field has been extensive.

K. Resolution 54/1 on strengthening regional support for persons with disabilities into the twenty-first century

36. ESCAP convened a series of three regional meetings at Bangkok in November 1999: (a) education for children and youth with disabilities; (b) meeting Decade targets and equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities; and (c) eighteenth session of the RICAP Subcommittee on Disability-related Concerns, in follow-up to both meetings. The outcome of the education meeting was incorporated into the Decade targets meeting.

37. The meetings revised and strengthened 73 targets for the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002. The new time frame for target fulfilment is January 2000 to December 2002. The revisions reflect the issues encountered in implementation experience and the progress made since the targets were adopted in June 1995. Noteworthy are revisions concerning the protection of the right of access of disabled persons to educational, informational and recreational materials in appropriate formats, and the specification of more vulnerable groups such as deaf-blind persons, persons with intellectual disabilities and women and girls with disabilities.

38. ESCAP conducted an in-house exercise to raise disability awareness among secretariat staff. A workshop for ESCAP staff from various Divisions addressed issues related to attitudes towards disabled persons and how disability concerns could be included in the development process. Its outcome was conveyed to senior staff for consideration and support. The exercise reinforces further regional action on awareness raising among public administration and technical personnel concerning disability as a development issue.

L. Resolution 54/2 on the Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region

39. The effective implementation of the Manila Declaration on Accelerated Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region was given the highest priority by the secretariat in its provision of technical assistance and support to members and associate members, in line with the commitment to the social development goals and targets reaffirmed by the Commission at its fifty-fifth session.

40. It should be noted that the report of and details on the Meeting of Senior Officials on the

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Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, held at Bangkok in November 1999, are contained in the presentation under resolution 51/4 above and in the report of the meeting (E/ESCAP/1173).

41. A set of information materials on the implementation of the regional Social Development Agenda in the ESCAP Region and follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development was prepared with the collaboration of other United Nations bodies and agencies, printed and disseminated.

42. The secretariat completed phase I of the project on assistance in the establishment of a national social development management information system (SOMIS) in the context of the regional Social Development Agenda. An expert group consultation was convened in November 1998, at which emerging issues and relevant indicators were identified and a regional framework for SOMIS was developed. Under phase II, national workshops on the establishment of SOMIS were organized at Manila in July 1999 and at Tehran in January 2000 to develop relevant national social development indicators, and to test and operationalize the national SOMIS systems. The third national workshop was scheduled to be held in Maldives in March 2000. A publication (ST/ESCAP/1953) containing a brief regional review of social development information systems and a proposed conceptual and operational framework was prepared at the national workshops and disseminated there, as well as to other target readers.

43. In order to promote the exchange of information and the use of current information technology in social development work, the secretariat organized a regional workshop on social development information exchange through the Internet at Bangkok in November 1998. A publication containing the report on the workshop, as well as the software developed to access Internet web sites was disseminated regionwide. A social development information exchange network of organizations represented at the workshop and others working in the field of social development was established and an Internet linkage was set up among these organizations. The project results and the linked web sites of social development information sources were posted on the ESCAP home page <<http://www.unescap.org>>.

44. The secretariat has been implementing an inter-divisional project on promoting the right to development. A workshop on promoting the right to development was held at Bangkok in March 1999.

45. The RICAP Subcommittee on the Regional Social Development Agenda was established on 20 August 1998. Three sessions were held between August 1998 and September 1999. This Subcommittee is actively contributing towards enhanced collaboration and coordination among United Nations and other regional development actors in the planning and programming for regional social development in the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the regional Social Development Agenda.

46. The secretariat has been collaborating with the United Nations Development Programme at its regional and international meetings to promote realization of the 20/20 initiative for social development among interested countries.

47. Issue numbers 40 and 41 of the biannual publication entitled *Social Development Newsletter* were published and disseminated. Issue number 42 is expected to be released in May 2000.

48. An interregional workshop on the social implications of the financial crisis and the Expert Group Meeting on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region were held at Bangkok in May 1999.

**M. Resolution 54/4 on the mobilization of human and financial resources
for further implementation of actions to achieve the population
and development goals of the ESCAP region**

49. The secretariat has assisted members and associate members in achieving their population and development goals by providing technical assistance and training, conducting research and disseminating information. ESCAP, in cooperation with UNFPA and other agencies, is executing several components of the Asia-Pacific Regional Programme on Population and Sustainable Development. The secretariat will seek support for convening the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in 2002 as a component of the regional programme.

**N. Resolution 54/5 on the International Year of Older Persons:
towards a society for all ages**

50. Renewed efforts have been made by the secretariat to create awareness and understanding of issues relating to population ageing and older persons and to assist ESCAP members in developing comprehensive national policies on ageing. Focus has been placed on strengthening national capacity to deal with the challenges posed by population ageing and integrating older persons into mainstream development, especially in view of the observance of the International Year of Older Persons (1999).

51. The secretariat continued to provide technical advice and coordination of regional and subregional activities in support of the Year to governments and NGOs in the region, including to the Governments of China; India; the Islamic Republic of Iran; Macao, China; the Philippines and Viet Nam.

52. The publication entitled *Promoting a Society for All Ages in Asia and the Pacific* (ST/ESCAP/1892) which contains the regional studies on ageing and development and promoting multi-generational relationships and the report of the Regional Seminar on Society for All Ages was disseminated widely, including through the Internet.

53. The ESCAP home page on the Year, containing national policies and programmes for older persons, has been updated and provides important links to other related web sites on social development. Several issues of an ESCAP news bulletin for the Year have been and will continue to be prepared and disseminated through the ESCAP Internet home page.

54. As requested in resolution 54/5, the report of the Executive Secretary on the observance of the Year and on progress in the implementation of the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, in consultation with members and associate members, as contained in E/ESCAP/1175, has been submitted for consideration by the Commission.

O. Resolution 54/6 on strengthening the role of the family in social development

55. The secretariat is facilitating regional cooperation on strengthening the role of the family in social development in the context of the regional Social Development Agenda and the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. This issue was considered as a theme for collaboration among the member agencies of the RICAP Subcommittee on the Regional Social Development Agenda at its third session in September 1999.

56. The secretariat continues to facilitate the exchange of experience and information through the recurrent publication and dissemination of the *Social Development Newsletter*.

57. The secretariat organized the Regional Seminar on the Family and the Elderly at Bangkok in October 1998. The secretariat has incorporated a distinct component on the role of the family in all its activities concerning the regional observance of the International Year of Older Persons, 1999. The Macao Plan of Action on Ageing contains a section on the role of the family in providing support to its older members. A separate agenda item on the family was considered at the Regional Seminar on Promoting a Society for All Ages held at Bangkok in December 1998. The publication entitled *Promoting a Society for All Ages in Asia and the Pacific* (ST/ESCAP/1892) devotes one chapter to the role of the family. The Regional Seminar on Support and Protection of Older Persons as Consumers held by the secretariat at Shanghai, China in October 1999, also included a component on the promotion of the family.

58. The members and associate members have been receiving technical assistance in formulating policies that support the role of the family, civil society and communities in caring for older persons, in promoting their active participation in society, and in strengthening multi-generational relationships. As a benefit of this support, countries will actively move towards building family-friendly societies through appropriate policies and programmes.

59. Efforts will continue to be made by the secretariat to mobilize funding support to convene a regional workshop on strengthening the role of the family in providing social protection and to prepare a publication on that topic for dissemination.

P. Resolution 55/4 towards a society for all ages: Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific

60. The Macao Plan of Action on Ageing provides governments with a policy framework and guidance on the establishment or strengthening of their national policies and infrastructure for ageing. The secretariat has been working closely with national focal points on ageing in the region in the implementation of the Plan of Action. Many governments in the ESCAP region continue to establish or strengthen legislation, policies and infrastructure on matters relating to ageing and older persons through the advisory and technical assistance support measures provided by the secretariat and through the enhanced regional cooperation it has facilitated. Advice has been provided to NGOs and other civil society members actively working for older persons. Attention has been paid to emerging issues affecting the quality of life of older persons.

61. The secretariat held the Regional Seminar on Support and Protection of Older Persons as Consumers at Shanghai, China in October 1999. A set of recommendations on the protection and support of older consumers was adopted.

62. The International Symposium on Planning Attainable Targets for Societies for All Ages was organized at Macao, China in October 1999 and focused on the development of guidelines for the implementation of the Macao Plan of Action.

63. A preliminary questionnaire on national implementation of the Macao Plan of Action and the observance of the International Year was sent to governments and NGOs in the region to gather information for a report that the secretariat will submit to the Commission in 2000 on the theme. The secretariat will also report, on a regular five-year basis, on progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action.

64. The secretariat plans to organize training workshops for officials of government agencies and non-governmental organizations on the formulation and implementation of national plans of action on ageing.

65. The secretariat will continue to facilitate the exchange of national experience and information and to collect, analyse and disseminate data, publications and other materials concerning older persons, including the utilization of the Internet, electronic facilities and other means, within existing and available resources.

II. ACTION TAKEN IN FOLLOW-UP OF MAJOR DECISIONS

A. Action in the field of population

66. Pursuant to the Commission's call at its fifty-fifth session for the secretariat to conduct studies on population dynamics and rural poverty, the secretariat published and disseminated volumes on the family and older persons in Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand in

its Asian Population Studies Series. The studies are based on the results of small-scale surveys of household structure and older persons which were carried out in those countries in 1997 and 1998.

67. The secretariat assisted the developing countries in the region by organizing training courses, seminars and workshops for selected managerial and technical staff of governments in order to promote self-reliance among member countries through the sharing of experience, and pooling and utilization of their technical resources. For example, it organized two training workshops on information technology for population information professionals within the framework of the Population Information Network (POPIN), one for the Pacific POPIN members and the other for Asia-Pacific POPIN members, in May and October 1999 respectively; a regional training workshop on improving national capacity in the interpretation and analysis of data for the key indicators for monitoring and evaluation of reproductive health and family planning programmes, in May 1999; an Asia-Pacific POPIN training workshop on the repackaging of population data and information: preparing for the 2000 round of population census, in August 1999; a training workshop on interpretation and analysis of population data for assessing the gender dimensions of population and development, from August to September 1999; and a regional seminar on strengthening performance on monitoring and evaluation systems for measuring the progress of reproductive health and family planning programmes, from September to October 1999.

68. Advisory services were provided to Cambodia, Mongolia and Viet Nam on issues related to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development. Also during this period, the secretariat fostered technical cooperation among developing countries through an exchange programme for Chinese officials to visit their counterparts in the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand.

69. The secretariat organized various thematic committee and subcommittee sessions to discuss population issues, including the second session of the Committee on Socio-economic Measures to Alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas, held in December 1999 and the sixth session of the RICAP Subcommittee on Population and Development, held in June 1999.

B. Action in the field of rural development

70. In the area of rural poverty alleviation, ESCAP continued to provide support to strengthen the capacity of governmental and non-governmental organizations to develop innovative methods of rural poverty alleviation and sustainable agricultural development through regional activities, policy analysis studies and exchange of information and experience. Studies on strengthening linkages between rural credit, agricultural extension and marketing were completed, followed by national workshops in Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. A regional expert group meeting is planned to be held at Bangkok in April 2000. The project on integrated pest management and green farming to promote the use of integrated pest management and environmental farming in rural poverty alleviation started

recently. Country studies will be carried out in 15 countries and the results will be considered at a regional workshop in 2000. Activities related to the development of Integrated Plant Nutrition Management System concepts and studies are also in progress. The project on poverty alleviation through market-generated rural employment was continued as a follow-up to the success-case-replication programme. The results of the field trial were presented at the Second Asia-Pacific Conference on Sustainable Agriculture, held at Phitsanulok, Thailand in October 1999. A seminar on success-case-replication was organized in Sri Lanka for the Ministry of Agriculture in November 1999. A manual is under preparation for wider publicity to accelerate the adoption of the methodology throughout the region.

71. The dissemination of information on rural poverty alleviation and the environmentally friendly use of agro-chemicals was continued through the publication of quarterly newsletters on poverty alleviation initiatives, agro-chemical news in brief, other non-recurrent publications, as well as through electronic media. The ESCAP web site on rural development is constantly developed and updated to provide information to all users in the region and has become one of the most visited sites on the subject. Intensive training on the use of the Internet and web site development was conducted in six countries and an evaluation workshop on Internet-based networking for sustainable fertilizer information management in Asia and the Pacific is to be held at Bangkok in May 2000.

72. The fourth session of the RICAP Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation was held in June 1999 to review the proposed framework for United Nations inter-agency cooperation. ESCAP continued its close collaboration with other United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific, the Asian Productivity Organization and NGOs. Technical and substantive support was provided to the Regional Coordination Centre for Research and Development of Coarse Grains, Pulses, Roots and Tuber Crops in the Humid Tropics of Asia and the Pacific.

C. Action in the field of poverty and disabled persons

73. ESCAP and the Government of India, through its Ministry of Rural Development, organized the field study-cum-regional seminar on poverty alleviation among rural persons with disabilities in December 1999. The seminar was held at the National Institute for Rural Development, Hyderabad, India. The 30 participants were persons in charge of the implementation of field programmes on poverty alleviation, with the participation of disabled persons from the respective ministries. The field study included discussions with self-help groups of the rural poor, including disabled persons, engaged in self-empowerment. The participants committed themselves to actions in follow-up to their seminar experience.

D. Action in the field of development research and policy analysis

74. In the wake of the recent economic crisis, the need for social security and safety nets has

become more prominent. The secretariat has prepared an analytical review of social security and safety nets in countries of the region. The review, published as chapter III of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2000*, comprises a critical appraisal of the concepts of and modalities for providing social security and safety nets, a review of selected programmes in the region and policy suggestions for government action to strengthen these programmes.

75. In the context of the widespread social impact of the economic crisis and the action of national governments and international organizations to mitigate them, a project entitled evaluation of income/employment generating programmes to alleviate socio-economic impacts of the economic crisis is being implemented to evaluate selected national programmes. Primary information on a number of areas (including targeting, meeting the needs of the beneficiaries, extent of benefits actually received by the beneficiaries, and so forth) relevant for evaluating the effectiveness of the programmes is being collected and analysed to find out the achievements and constraints faced. The intention is to recommend measures to increase the effectiveness of current programmes and the design of future programmes.

76. A project entitled growth with equity: policy lessons from the experiences of selected countries in the ESCAP region was undertaken. National experts from six countries: India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand prepared country studies and the secretariat prepared a regional synthesis paper. A regional seminar was held at Seoul in June 1999. The seminar concluded with some policy recommendations that have been divided into three broad groups: (a) long-term policies and programmes; (b) short-term measures and programmes to minimize the adverse impact of economic crises on the poor; and (c) information and data needs for policy formulation and targeting purposes. The conclusions of the seminar, the regional synthesis paper and country studies have been published in a volume entitled *growth with equity: policy lessons from the experiences of selected Asian countries* (ST/ESCAP/2007).

77. A project on the preparation and dissemination of a manual for evaluating poverty alleviation programmes is under implementation. A draft manual has been prepared in which methodologies for the quantitative evaluation of various aspects of poverty alleviation programmes have been formulated. Numerical illustrations of the methodologies have been provided. The draft manual was discussed at an interregional seminar held at Bangkok in June 1999. The experts confirmed that no such manual had existed before and that the project had made a substantial contribution in the area of evaluation of targeted programmes. The experts contributed useful suggestions for improving the methodology which have been incorporated in the manual. The manual is being edited and will be printed shortly.

