

GENERAL

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Fifty-sixth session  
1-7 June 2000  
Bangkok

**ACTIVITIES OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVES AND OTHER REPRESENTATIVES  
DESIGNATED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION**

(Item 11 of the provisional agenda)

*Addendum*



1. This addendum updates the report on the activities of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission contained in document E/ESCAP/1195. It covers the period from March to May 2000, during which the Advisory Committee held three regular sessions.

2. Items on the agenda of the sessions included the following:

- (a) Draft medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005;
- (b) Report on the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999;
- (c) Programme planning: proposed programme changes, 2000-2001;
- (d) High-level Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;
- (e) Senior Officials' Meeting on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region;
- (f) Committee on Socio-economic Measures to Alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas;
- (g) Report of the Open-ended Informal Working Group of ACPR;
- (h) Preparations for the fifty-sixth session of the Commission, including panel discussion modalities, bureaux and draft resolution;
- (i) Preparations for the fifty-seventh session of the Commission;
- (j) Report on activities of ACPR to the Commission at its fifty-sixth session;
- (k) Engagement of consultancy services and short-term/medium-term staff;
- (l) Work and activities of the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre;
- (m) Matters relating to General Assembly resolution 54/196 on high-level international intergovernmental consideration of financing for development;
- (n) Regional meeting on information technology and development.

3. At the two hundred and forty-fifth session of ACPR, the secretariat updated the Advisory Committee on the progress in the processing of the draft medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 that had been endorsed by ACPR at its two hundred and forty-third session. An advance copy of the unedited version (available in English only) of the proposed medium-term plan as further revised by the Programme Planning and Budget Division at Headquarters, with additional inputs of the ESCAP secretariat, was also submitted to ACPR.

4. In reviewing the consolidated end-of-biennium report on the implementation of the work

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programme for 1998-1999, ACPR commended the analysis in part I of the report on the overview of achievements. It recommended that the analysis focusing on the outcome and benefits accruing to member States should continue to be included in future reports on programme implementation. On part II, ACPR was concerned about the lack of consistency in reporting and expressed the view that it would have been preferable had more uniform emphasis been placed on the assessment of the outputs and achievements by each subprogramme rather than on the description of outputs. The Advisory Committee was also concerned at the number of planned publications that had not been implemented. It further advised that more prudent planning, management and implementation of the regular budget activities across all subprogrammes should be undertaken.

5. The proposed changes to the programme of work, 2000-2001, were generally acceptable to ACPR, which requested that the issues and activities overseen by the former Industry and Technology Division, and which remained urgent in the region, should be sufficiently reflected in the programme of ESCAP.

6. The Advisory Committee was pleased at the senior level of participation in the High-level Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, which was held at Bangkok from 26 to 29 October 1999. It noted that the Meeting had included advocacy of the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and that the outcome of the Meeting would serve as regional input to the June 2000 Global Review of the Platform for Action.

7. The Advisory Committee noted that the Senior Officials' Meeting on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region, which was held in Bangkok from 1 to 5 November 1999, adopted the regional perspective and recommendations for the global review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development by the General Assembly at its special session in 2000. Particular reference was made to the offer by the Government of Japan to provide approximately \$US1 million to fund an ESCAP project under its Human Security Fund contribution to the United Nations.

8. In reviewing the second session of the Committee on Socio-economic Measures to Alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas, which was held at Bangkok from 1 to 3 December 1999, the Advisory Committee suggested that the secretariat, in consultation with the Asian Development Bank, should initiate joint activities at the regional level as a follow-up to the recommendations. The low attendance at the meeting was attributed in part to the agenda, which could have been more focused. In order to improve the visibility of ESCAP, a database on successful programmes and activities could be compiled.

9. The report of the Open-ended Informal Working Group was endorsed by ACPR for submission to the Commission at its fifty-sixth session as document E/ESCAP/1195/Add.2. The Advisory Committee expressed its warm appreciation to Mr Anuson for his excellent leadership and guidance and to Mr E. Kawahara for his important initiatives in the work of the Group. The active participation and briefings of

the secretariat in its presentations and documentation were also appreciated. The Advisory Committee requested that the proceedings of the meetings of the Open-ended Informal Working Group, including the informal summaries and papers provided by the respective divisions, should be bound together and made available in the ESCAP Library, where they would serve as a useful reference for new representatives to familiarize themselves with the work of ESCAP.

10. In discussing the preparations for the fifty-sixth session of the Commission, the Advisory Committee agreed that the main thrust of the panel discussion would be the role of the World Trade Organization integration process, including regional and subregional cooperation in that process. Information technology, electronic commerce and market access would be subsumed under those areas. The Advisory Committee preferred that the practice of holding panel discussions should be continued until they could be properly evaluated. It also considered various ways of stimulating more productive and livelier interaction during the panel discussions.

11. As in the past year, in order to facilitate the work of the Working Group on Draft Resolutions, the Advisory Committee reconvened an informal working group which undertook a preliminary review of the available draft resolutions, together with their budgetary implications, proposed for consideration and adoption by the Commission at its fifty-sixth session. The Advisory Committee noted with appreciation the arrangements made by the secretariat, as in past years, to provide liaison officers to assist government delegations to the Commission during their official stay in Bangkok.

12. After intensive deliberation, the Advisory Committee agreed that the theme topic for the fifty-seventh session of the Commission should be "Balanced development of urban and rural areas and regions within the countries of Asia and the Pacific" and that it should be submitted for consideration by the Commission at its fifty-sixth session. Specific perspectives such as decentralization, regional disparities within countries, and sustainable economic development should be included in the theme study. With a view to increasing the visibility of ESCAP, ACPR generally concurred that the sessions of the Commission should be held in other countries from time to time, but noted that the costs incurred by a host country would be a constraint. Countries with the potential and capacity to provide host facilities should be informed about the level of costs involved in order for them to be able to consider the financial implications.

13. The Advisory Committee deliberated at length on issues and procedures involved in the engagement of consultancy services and short-term and medium-term staff. Various concerns were expressed by ACPR on which the secretariat provided clarification, including the selection and recruitment of consultants, the criteria used for the levels of remuneration and procedures for assessing their services. ACPR concluded that it entrusted the secretariat to take decisions in line with United Nations rules and regulations. It further noted that, especially concerning extrabudgetary funding, donor governments could help to ensure that United Nations rules and regulations were followed and could conduct close reviews of

consultancy requirements and proposed fees during the project appraisal process.

14. In view of cost considerations, it was decided that the Head of the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre would, in the morning of Wednesday, 31 May 2000, provide a briefing on the work and activities of the Centre during the session of the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries to be held on 30 and 31 May. All representatives were invited to attend that briefing.

15. The Advisory Committee welcomed the offer of the Government of Indonesia to host a regional high-level meeting on financing for development in Jakarta from 2 to 5 August 2000, noting the importance of the topic for the region. The Committee favoured high-level regional interaction for providing inputs to the substantive global preparatory process which was under way for the high-level intergovernmental event on the same subject, as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 54/196 of 22 December 1999.

16. Preparations for the Regional Round Table on Information Technology and Development, to be held at New Delhi on 21 and 22 June 2000, were well under way. The conclusions and recommendations would serve as inputs for the consideration of the subject at the forthcoming session of the Economic and Social Council.

17. As requested, the secretariat provided the Advisory Committee with an information note on activities of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) and briefed ACPR on those activities. The Advisory Committee noted that a presentation on SPECA, co-chaired by the Economic Commission for Europe and ESCAP, was held on 27 April as a parallel event to the Eurasian Economic Summit 2000 organized by the World Economic Forum at Almaty from 26 to 28 April 2000. The presentation highlighted the activities carried out under SPECA to strengthen subregional cooperation among member countries and its importance in the globalizing world. Considering the similarity of issues discussed at the Summit, participants in the presentation looked forward to the inclusion of SPECA in the future agendas of Eurasian economic summits. An information note on the report on the hearing for the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held at Tokyo on 9 and 10 September 1999, in preparation for the United Nations Millennium Assembly, was also made available to the Advisory Committee. Information and other documents relating to the Millennium Assembly can be downloaded from the United Nations web page at <[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)>.

18. The Advisory Committee noted the convening of the Second Regional Coordination Meeting at Bangkok on 25 April 2000, which was attended by 18 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. The Meeting had decided to merge the former Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP) with the Regional Coordination Meeting. Consequently, the former 14 subcommittees of RICAP were discontinued. The Second Regional Coordination Meeting identified nine advocacy or work agendas focusing on priority areas as a follow-up to the global conferences. Accordingly, nine related thematic working groups, with a time frame, were set up. Other advocacy areas would be added as needed. Inter-agency work on other areas could continue on an ad hoc basis, as determined by the respective agencies. The Advisory Committee appreciated the efforts of the secretariat to strengthen its inter-agency collaborative efforts through the restructuring of its inter-agency coordination mechanism, and looked forward to productive results.

19. The Advisory Committee appointed as rapporteur the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to ESCAP. The report of ACPR to the Commission was discussed and approved, as amended, for submission to the Commission at its fifty-sixth session as document E/ESCAP/1195 and Add.1 and 2.