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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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

(Item 11 of the provisional agenda)

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

1. During the period under review (June-December 2000), the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission (ACPR) held five regular sessions, one meeting of the Open-ended Informal Working Group of ACPR and two informal briefings.

2. The Advisory Committee discussed various topics during those sessions, including the following:

- (a) Review of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission, Bangkok, 1-7 June 2000;
- (b) Work plan of ACPR, 2000/2001;
- (c) Progress report on the implementation of resolutions and other major decisions of the Commission;
- (d) Draft programme of work, 2002-2003;
- (e) Preparations for the following sessions of the legislative committees and Special Body of the Commission:
  - (i) Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development, third session, 15-17 November 2000, Bangkok;
  - (ii) Committee on Statistics, twelfth session, 29 November–1 December 2000, Bangkok;
  - (iii) Committee on Socio-economic Measures to Alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas, third session, 6-8 December, 2000, Bangkok;
  - (iv) Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries, fifth session, 20-21 February 2001, Bangkok;
- (f) Preparations and review of the following intergovernmental meetings:
  - (i) Regional Consultative Meeting on Financing for Development, 2-5 August 2000, Jakarta;
  - (ii) Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, Kitakyushu City, Japan, 31 August-5 September 2000;
  - (iii) Steering Group of the Committee on Regional Economic Cooperation, twelfth meeting, 25-27 October 2000, Incheon City, Republic of Korea;
- (g) Preparation for the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, 21-24 November 2000, Bali, Indonesia;
- (h) Report on the staffing situation with a view to strengthening the secretariat's capacity;
- (i) Preparations for the fifty-seventh session of the Commission, tentative dates, provisional agenda, annotated provisional agenda, and proposal for a Ministerial Round Table in lieu of the informal panel discussion;
- (j) Calendar of meetings, January 2001- March 2002.

3. Her Excellency Ms Laxanachantorn Laohaphan, Director-General and Permanent Representative of Thailand, Department of International Organizations of the Royal Thai Government, had been appointed Rapporteur of ACPR to present its report to the Commission for consideration.

4. ACPR expressed general satisfaction with the outcome of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission, held from 1 to 7 June 2000, and the organization of the informal panel discussion. However, it proposed various measures to further improve the organization and proceedings of the session. Such proposals included (a) better compliance with documentation deadlines; (b) strict adherence to the Commission's timetable; (c) full observance of the time limits for submitting draft resolutions and delivery of country statements; (d) review of the necessity for the Chairmen of the Committees of the Whole to report back on the proceedings and conclusions reached by their respective Committees during the closing plenary session of the Ministerial Segment, as their reports had already been circulated; and (e) shortening the presentations by panellists to facilitate greater participation by delegations.

5. In preparation for the Regional Consultative Meeting on Financing for Development, held in Jakarta from 2 to 5 August 2000, ACPR requested the secretariat to focus the meeting on lessons learned from the Asian financial crisis and related structural reforms, human resources development and success stories aiding the recovery and development of some Asian countries so as to make for more constructive discussions and concrete input into the global meeting envisaged for 2001.

6. The outcome of the Regional Round Table on Information Technology and Development, held in New Delhi on 21 and 22 June 2000, including the issues of the digital divide, was acknowledged by ACPR. It noted the 10 recommendations which had emerged from the Round Table, including the preparation of a composite country index of readiness in the digital era, the promotion of human resources development, regional and South-South cooperation in exchanging experience and information, the provision of technical assistance in the transfer of technology, and the creation of a related regional development fund.

7. ACPR welcomed the new Executive Secretary and expressed appreciation of his forward-looking opening statement, which he delivered at the two hundred and forty-eighth session. ACPR also expressed its intention to work closely with the Executive Secretary in revitalizing ESCAP and enhancing its relevance to the region. Further, it welcomed the Executive Secretary's determination to focus efforts on larger interdisciplinary projects that would respond more effectively to the needs of the region. In that regard, it held the view that an integrated approach within ESCAP and with civil society and non-governmental organizations would be needed. It also advised the Executive Secretary to ensure that recommendations emanating from meetings, seminars, workshops and advisory services focused on practical, rather than theoretical, approaches to development.

8. ACPR endorsed the Executive Secretary's plan to undertake a management consultancy and to ensure that recommendations arising therefrom were practical and implementable. It also requested that it be kept informed regularly on the progress achieved in that regard.

9. ACPR commended the preparation of the plan of action for the implementation of the resolutions and major decisions of the Commission at its fifty-sixth session, in particular the technical assistance to be rendered to the countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

10. In follow-up to the recommendations of the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, ACPR requested ESCAP to expedite the implementation of the short-listed projects embodied in the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development.

11. The preparatory work undertaken by the secretariat in the organization of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development, held in Kitakyushu City, Japan, from 31 August to 5 September 2000, was highly commended by ACPR. It was pleased to note that the current programme of work of ESCAP and that of the following biennium, 2002-2003, were in line with the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 2001-2005, adopted by the Conference. It was also pleased to note that, while most of the recommendations contained in the Regional Action Programme would be for action by governments, there were new elements, as contained in the Kitakyushu Initiative, which ESCAP could undertake within the current programme budget and in the project formulation exercise for the next biennium.

12. ACPR took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the action taken in dealing with the vacancy issues in the Professional and higher categories, succession planning and the recruitment of regional advisers. It noted, in particular, the creation of the web page on job opportunities to facilitate access to ESCAP vacancy announcements by external candidates. The Committee commended the secretariat for its transparent policy on recruitment and the steps and measures taken by the Executive Secretary in that regard. It noted that there was a strong need for effective succession planning measures and urged that vigorous efforts be taken to expedite the recruitment process.

13. In the subgroup of the Open-ended Informal Working Group, the Advisory Committee deliberated and agreed on issues of concern that warranted in-depth consideration by ACPR. In that regard, it highlighted two main areas: (a) enhancing the efficiency of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission, and (b) reform of ESCAP within the framework of resolution 53/1 of 30 April 1997. The issues raised included restructuring of the activities of the Commission to meet future challenges, holding the Commission session at two-year intervals, and the conduct of sessions without background documentation to see if considerable resources could be saved. The issue of reorganizing the conference structure, with a view to streamlining the number and frequency of meetings, was raised and supported by ACPR in principle. In considering such issues, however, it would be useful

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to take into account the deliberations of the Open-ended Informal Working Group of ACPR on the same issues in previous years.

14. The subgroup agreed that the review of the reform process should be a joint exercise between the Open-ended Informal Working Group of ACPR and the secretariat, with the Working Group taking a proactive role.

15. ACPR expressed appreciation to the secretariat for organizing two informal briefings for ACPR members on (a) the progress in the implementation of resolutions and other major decisions of the Commission, and (b) the draft programme of work, 2002-2003.

16. ACPR commended the determined efforts of the secretariat in mobilizing extrabudgetary funding from both the traditional and non-traditional donors. It welcomed, in particular, the approval of the two ESCAP projects for funding from the Development Account. In that regard, it looked forward to receiving more information and data from the secretariat at a later stage. The Committee appreciated the efforts of the Executive Secretary to mobilize resources from the private sector. However, it cautioned that care should be exercised in that regard.

17. ACPR expressed concern over the late submission of draft resolutions by some members during the previous Commission session. It urged members and associate members to observe the deadlines strictly and to submit draft resolutions at least two months before the session to enable ACPR to consider them at its regular sessions, so as to facilitate the efficient conduct of the Working Group on Draft Resolutions.

18. ACPR agreed to the dates proposed by the secretariat for convening the fifty-seventh session of the Commission. It shared the view of the secretariat that the Ministerial Segment of the session should be made more interactive and meaningful. It supported the proposal of the Executive Secretary for a Ministerial Round Table to replace the existing informal panel discussion. ACPR was generally of the view that selected members of delegations could join in the Round Table.

19. ACPR supported the Executive Secretary's idea that he should moderate the discussion of the Ministerial Round Table around the theme topic for the session. It held the view that the Round Table should provide decisive directions for ESCAP activities and that it should be attractive to the media and innovative.

20. ACPR expressed satisfaction with the progress made on the theme study on the topic "Balanced development of urban and rural areas and regions within the countries of Asia and the Pacific".

21. In reviewing the significance of the Human Resources Development Award, which was awarded annually during Commission sessions, ACPR noted that the activity constituted an important element of a project with extrabudgetary funding provided by the donor. While acknowledging that the activity helped to enhance the visibility of ESCAP, it urged that the frequency of the award and

the resources connected with it be reviewed. It also urged the secretariat to consider promoting new awards on other important issues.

22. ACPR commended the secretariat's efforts in implementing the resolutions and major decisions of the Commission, particularly the numerous activities undertaken to implement resolution 53/3 of 30 April 1997, on the Framework for the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation.

23. The present report covers the activities of ACPR during the period June to December 2000. An addendum will be issued to cover the activities from January to March 2001.