



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Sixty-fifth session
23-29 April 2009
Bangkok

**DATES, VENUE AND THEME TOPIC FOR THE SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE COMMISSION**

(Item 7 of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The present document contains information on the possible dates and venue of the sixty-sixth session of the Commission to be held in 2010 and proposals for the theme topic for that session. The Commission may wish to provide its recommendations on these matters.

1. The present document contains suggestions made by the secretariat for the consideration of the Commission at its sixty-fifth session. The Commission may wish to consider the dates, venue and theme topic for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission, to be held in 2010, and to provide guidance to the secretariat in this regard.

A. Date and venue

2. Rule 1 of the rules of procedure of the Commission requires it to recommend the date and venue for its next session, subject to the approval of the Economic and Social Council and in consultation with the Secretary-General. In accordance with established practice, at each session the Commission recommends the convening of the next session in April or May of the following year. The actual dates and venue are then determined by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the members and the Chairperson of the Commission.

3. In addition, rule 1 of the rules of procedure states that sessions of the Commission shall ordinarily be held at the office of the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific, unless the Commission recommends otherwise.

B. Theme topic for the sixty-sixth session

4. The choice of a theme topic for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission should be made at the sixty-fifth session of the Commission. A list of the theme topics of previous Commission sessions is contained in an annex to the present document.

5. The following proposals are submitted for the consideration of the Commission:

- (a) Low carbon Green Growth: technology and financing;
- (b) Strengthening social foundations through social protection for a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable Asia-Pacific region;
- (c) Towards a stable and supportive financial system for achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
- (d) Implementing a trans-Asia-Pacific sustainable energy system;
- (e) Water security for inclusive and sustainable development.

1. Low carbon Green Growth: technology and financing

6. Due to the relatively higher vulnerability of the ecological and socioeconomic systems of the Asia-Pacific region, it is expected that many of its subregions will suffer far more severe impacts from climate change than most other parts of the world. Thus, finding an effective way to both mitigate and adapt to the world's changing climate is an immediate challenge for most subregions in Asia and the Pacific. At the same time, the region has to find ways to overcome the current global economic recession in such a way that responses to tackling the climate crisis and the economic crisis are mutually reinforcing, thereby leading the region's economy to become more resilient. The region should recognize the strong probability that economic transformation will be one of the outcomes of global responses to the two crises, particularly the responses of developed countries. The European Union and the incoming Administration of the United States of America are promoting new economic systems, such as the Green New Deal, green economy and green collar jobs, in order to simultaneously tackle the climate and economic crises. Furthermore, in the course of negotiations on the post-2012 framework on climate change, developing countries have expressed their concerns about the spillover effects of new mitigation policies on developing countries, in particular from changes in trade regimes as developed countries are expected to strengthen policies for lowering the carbon-intensity of business practices and products.

7. The adoption of Commission resolution 61/9 of 18 May 2005 on the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific shows that ESCAP member States have already recognized the need to make significant efforts for advancing the conceptual and policy frameworks of the Green Growth approach. This approach has a significant potential to provide the essential components of a low-carbon development strategy, thereby supporting developing countries in their efforts to undertake nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMA) under the Bali Action Plan¹ adopted by the 13th Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. However, further regional consultations are necessary to harness the potential for the region to make progress towards a low-carbon development path.

8. Enabling effective climate action in developing countries also requires technology transfer and financing, as clearly spelled out by the Bali Action Plan. In this regard, the 14th COP, held in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008, adopted the "Poznan Strategic Programme on Technology Transfer", and decided to provide developing countries with direct access to the Adaptation Fund starting in 2009.

¹ FCCC/CP/2007/6/Add.1, decision 1/CP. 13.

Nevertheless, this alone may not be sufficient to meet the enormous demands of developing countries for both mitigation and adaptation. The Strategic Programme still focuses on technology needs assessment rather than actual technology transfer and the scale of the Adaptation Fund at present is also too small to make meaningful contributions to the adaptation efforts of developing countries. Thus, in addition to such formal mechanisms under the Convention, other complimentary, innovative and parallel mechanisms for technology transfer and financing need to be put in place.

9. Considering the urgency of strengthening technology transfer and financing so that developing countries can make concrete responses to climatic and economic challenges, the Commission may wish to make “Low carbon, green growth: technology and financing” the theme of its sixty-sixth session.

2. Strengthening social foundations through social protection for a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable Asia-Pacific region

10. The persistence of regional and intracountry disparities in Asia and the Pacific, despite sustained economic growth, and the emergence of new risks and vulnerabilities, such as financial upheavals, climate change, and food and energy security issues, present families, communities and Governments with serious challenges.

11. These concerns can be addressed by forging a stronger social foundation with more effective and inclusive social protection policies and programmes. Social protection can be a defensive strategy to provide security against various threats and risks, especially for the most vulnerable. It can also serve as a functional component of development strategies aimed at economic growth and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Comprehensive, well-designed social protection measures can have economic benefits, as inadequate public provision of social services and pensions often leads to higher levels of savings and low levels of consumption. In addition, social protection measures can lead to increased domestic demand for an economy that is led more by domestic consumption.

12. The need for social protection initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect against livelihood risks and ill-health, and promote social justice by enhancing the social status and rights of the marginalized is being increasingly recognized. Coupled with low coverage and the predominance of the informal sector, there is considerable scope for more inclusive social protection systems and increased partnerships for social protection provision in the region.

13. The study would draw mainly upon experiences within the Asia-Pacific region, supplemented by experiences from outside the region, and would review the variety of current policies and approaches, taking into account variations in local conditions, target groups, areas of intervention, and delivery mechanisms. These would include social assistance and social insurance programmes, service subsidies and conditional cash transfers. Issues examined would also include coverage, affordability, coverage of the informal sector, macroeconomic linkages as well as impacts and outcomes. It would also consider the enabling environment required particularly in terms of institutional frameworks and regulatory and legal systems for ensuring effective social protection. Finally, it would examine how to incorporate these approaches into coherent social policies that provide not only short-term remedial actions but also long-term capacities to build more resilient, inclusive and sustainable societies in the region.

3. Towards a stable and supportive financial system for achieving the Millennium Development Goals

14. As the unprecedented financial turmoil and economic contraction works its way through the global economy, financial issues feature once again as a top priority of the international policy agenda. For the Asia-Pacific region, devising a financial system that is supportive of inclusive and sustainable development has particular significance.

15. As events unfold, it has become clear that the build-up of financial disequilibria leading to the present crisis was in part due to lax supervision of financial systems, excessive credit creation and asset bubbles. While most countries in the Asia-Pacific region, hardened by the experience of the 1997 financial crisis, are in better position than they were a decade ago to withstand the turbulence emanating from the financial centres of the world, financial contagion has already affected some countries while all are experiencing significant downward pressures on economic growth. Thus, examining ways to design financial systems so that they are more conducive to macroeconomic stability, consequently allowing the region to continue to build on progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, is particularly important.

16. Furthermore, a major constraint in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, is the lack of financing resources as was pointed out in the third report on the Goals, *A Future Within Reach 2008: Regional Partnerships for the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific*.² These constraints are particularly severe in the least developed countries, which are estimated to require an additional \$8 billion a year, on top of current committed resources, to achieve the Goals. Other countries with special needs face a similar resource gap. Improving access to finance is particularly important for achieving inclusive growth and development. It is the poor, particularly women, who are most likely to be excluded from formal financial systems, leaving them with few choices for financing their investment and consumption needs, except perhaps to borrow from the informal market at exorbitant interest rates that perpetuate the vicious circle of poverty and debt.

17. The proposed theme study would examine how financial systems could be improved for greater stability while also catering to the needs of the poor for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. It would also explore possible regional cooperation arrangements aimed at ensuring stable and supportive financial systems. Finally, as Asia and the Pacific is an outward-oriented region with a high level of integration in international trade, investment and financial flows, the study would act as an important contribution from the region to the current debate on reforming the global financial architecture. The study would present members and associate members of ESCAP with cutting edge, region-specific analysis, and provide policy options which would allow them to work towards a political consensus around the reform directions that will be needed for a stable and supportive financial system for achieving the Goals. Such actions are necessary and can no longer be postponed.

4. Implementing a trans-Asia-Pacific sustainable energy system

18. Securing reliable and affordable energy resources is strategically important to support poverty reduction, economic growth and social progress in Asia and the Pacific. Despite the global financial crisis and the imminent recession, the quest for energy security has been intensified by the unstable and fluctuating energy prices and

² United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.II.F.15.

supply interruptions. The Asia-Pacific region accounts for approximately 36 per cent of the global energy trade and is likely to increase its proportion. Currently, most of the energy trade takes place on a bilateral basis, though several consultations on regional and subregional cooperation are in progress.

19. To improve regional energy security, it is critical at the present time to strengthen regional cooperation which includes promoting better access to data and information concerning energy supply and demand. This could minimize speculative operation, promote more stable and predictable energy trade in commodities and services, and provide a transparent and enabling environment to facilitate energy cooperation. Further, in addressing energy security for sustainable development, adequate consideration must be given to diversifying energy sources and improving energy efficiency, which could directly contribute to widening energy access, controlling environmental pollution and combating climate change. The proposed policy study will build on the theme study for the sixty-fourth³ session and review the existing arrangements and practices for energy trade and cooperation and explore various options and mechanisms to facilitate energy trade and expand energy cooperation at the regional and subregional levels to contribute towards sustainable development.

5. Water security for inclusive and sustainable development

20. The evidence of the impacts of global warming and climate change as highlighted in the *Climate Change 2007 Synthesis Report* or AR4⁴ report of the IPCC, are virtually incontestable. Land and water are two of the most significant natural resources required for any economic activity, whether it is a basic economic activity or high-powered national and multinational initiatives. The management of one will have an impact on the other. The impact of climate change on water resources and related water infrastructure is imminent, as a result of the emission of greenhouse gases from the economic activities of the past 30 years. Evidence of the impact on water resources can already be seen from the frequent drought and floods that have been occurring in a number of subregions and countries in the Asia-Pacific region, for example Australia, South Asia and South-East Asia. The impact is being felt most acutely by the poorest and most vulnerable populations in the region. Thus, while the region is still grappling with traditional water security issues, such as survival, sanitation and transboundary issues, the situation has been exacerbated by the impact of climate change on water resources and the management of those resources.

21. There is a need to review water-related policies vis-à-vis sustainable economic development, in order to devise strategies and action plans that can minimize the impact of extreme rainfall, floods, drought and sea level rise on water availability.

³ *Energy Security and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.II.F.13).

⁴ IPCC, *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II, III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, Pachauri, R.K. and Reisinger, A. (eds.)] (IPCC, 2007, Geneva).

Annex

List of theme topics of Commission sessions
(Fortieth through sixty-fifth)

<i>Session</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme topic</i>
40	1984	Technology for development
41	1985	Technology for development
42	1986	Human resources development
43	1987	Human resources development
44	1988	Human resources development
45	1989	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
46	1990	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
47	1991	Industrial restructuring in Asia and the Pacific, in particular with a view to strengthening regional cooperation
48	1992	Regional economic cooperation in the ESCAP region: prospects, priorities and policy options
49	1993	Expansion of investment and intraregional trade as a vehicle for enhancing regional economic cooperation and development
50	1994	Infrastructure development as key to economic growth and regional economic cooperation
51	1995	Strengthening of regional cooperation in human resources development with special reference to the social implications of sustainable economic growth in Asia and the Pacific
52	1996	Sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Asia and the Pacific
53	1997	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: opportunities and challenges for ESCAP
54	1998	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: status of and prospects for social development
55	1999	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: information technology, globalization, economic security and development
56	2000	Development through globalization and partnership in the twenty-first century: an Asia-Pacific perspective for integrating developing countries and economies in transition into the international trading system on a fair and equitable basis
57	2001	Balanced development of urban and rural areas and regions within the countries of Asia and the Pacific
58	2002	Sustainable social development in a period of rapid globalization: challenges, opportunities and policy options

<i>Session</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme topic</i>
59	2003	Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region
60	2004	Meeting the challenges in an era of globalization by strengthening regional development cooperation
61	2005	Implementing the Monterrey Consensus in the Asian and Pacific region: achieving coherence and consistency
62	2006	Enhancing regional cooperation in infrastructure development, including that related to disaster management
63	2007	Development of health systems in the context of enhancing economic growth towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific
64	2008	Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific
65	2009	Towards sustainable agriculture and food security in the Asia-Pacific region

.