



# Economic and Social Council

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## Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

### Sixty-eighth session

Bangkok, 17-23 May 2012

Agenda item 3 (d)

### Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the ESCAP regional institutions: Environment and development

## Draft report

### Environment and development

1. In addition to the common documents being considered under agenda item 3, the Commission had before it the report of the Committee on Environment and Development on its second session (E/ESCAP/68/10) and two information documents: the report of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia (E/ESCAP/68/INF/4) and the report of the Mekong River Commission (E/ESCAP/68/INF/5).
2. Representatives of the following countries made statements: Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Russian Federation; and Thailand.
3. A representative from the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) also made a statement.
4. The Commission highlighted the importance of achieving sustainable development through the balanced integration of the three pillars of economic development, social development, and environmental protection and conservation.
5. The Commission emphasized the need for sustainable development policies to be inclusive, particularly with regard to the most vulnerable and the poor. One delegation noted that unsustainable development threatened not only the environmental and social livelihoods of people but also the in-depth cultural significance that is important for survival.
6. The Commission emphasized that significant challenges remain in implementing sustainable development policies, including the uncertainties in the global economic situation, inadequate resources, lack of capacity to implement national programmes and lack of knowledge and technology, and requested assistance from the international community with respect to those challenges.

7. The Commission recognized the importance of the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference) and highlighted that as an important opportunity to renew high-level political commitment and cooperation to supporting sustainable development. The Commission also recognized that sustainable development should be based on the Rio Principles, and in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

8. The Commission expressed appreciation to the Republic of Korea for hosting the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Rio+20 Conference in October 2011 in Seoul. It endorsed the Seoul Outcome, which was part of the report of that meeting, as the consensus input to the Rio+20 Conference from the Asian and Pacific region.

9. Many delegations noted one of the themes of Rio+20, “green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication”, but emphasized that the green economy should be viewed in the broader context of sustainable development.

10. Some delegations also noted that green economy policies and strategies should be applied in a flexible manner at the national level in recognition of the specific circumstances of each country and should not be used as an excuse for green protectionism. One delegation took the view that green economy policies should not be used as an excuse for technology-based discrimination.

11. Some delegations recognized the green economy approach as a means for economic growth in an environmentally sensitive manner, which had the potential to create new jobs and address unemployment.

12. The Commission recognized the importance of the other theme of the Rio+20 Conference, “an institutional framework for sustainable development” and highlighted the need for the Conference to agree on that issue.

13. The Commission was informed of the outcomes of other preparatory events for the Rio+20 Conference, such as the Delhi Ministerial Dialogue on Green Economy and Inclusive Growth, held in New Delhi in October 2011, and the High-Level Symposium on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Beijing in September 2011.

14. Several delegations underscored the importance of a timely start of the implementation of the Rio+20 outcome. Areas of possible intervention were mobilization of additional financing and expertise, facilitation of technology transfer necessary for transition to green economy, capacity-building, and knowledge sharing.

15. The Commission took note of the proposal that any discussion on sustainable development goals expected to be launched at the Rio+20 Conference should build on lessons learned in efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. One delegation emphasized the need for a systematic monitoring of sustainable development goals.

16. The Commission was informed of the progress of national efforts in implementing different environmental conventions, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on

Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, as well as conventions pertaining to the use of chemicals.

17. The Commission highlighted climate change as an enormous challenge for the region in achieving sustained economic growth in terms of enhancing food and water security, managing forests and agricultural productivity, resilience to disasters, and the development of mountains as well as coastal areas, and thus overshadowing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the region. Several delegations underscored the need for further assistance from the international community, in particular, in enhancing the resilience and adaptability of vulnerable countries.

18. Some delegations noted the analytical work conducted by the secretariat on the region-specific issues pertaining to sustainable development, and commended in particular, the recent ESCAP publication *Low Carbon Green Growth Roadmap*. It was also underlined that member States should have the opportunity to choose policy options according to their nationally specific development priorities and experiences.

19. The delegation of Cambodia informed the Commission that its country was the first least developed country to have developed a national green growth road map and that it had established the national Green Growth Secretariat with a view to ensuring sustainable development. The delegation of Mongolia also informed the Commission that it was working on establishing a green growth committee.

20. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran urged the secretariat to contribute to an international dialogue on post-Kyoto mechanisms under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in which the historical responsibility of greenhouse gas emissions had to be further acknowledged. The delegation also drew the attention of the Commission to the ongoing transboundary dust- and sandstorm phenomena triggered by drought intensification in neighbouring countries. In that context, it suggested the development of a joint initiative by ESCAP and the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to facilitate bilateral and regional cooperation and technical solutions to manage the problem.

21. The Commission noted that countries of the region were urbanizing and that urbanization had created significant additional pressure on public infrastructure.

22. Several delegations commended the secretariat for documenting and sharing good practices and country experiences in eco-city development, promotion of public transportation, green buildings, 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle) strategies, sustainable urban planning, solid waste management, water supply, sewerage, participatory approaches to urban management, promotion of public-private partnerships and municipal finance. They requested the secretariat to continue its work in those areas.

23. The Commission noted that capacity development for local authorities to integrate economic, social and environmental aspects of urban development was of crucial importance for sustainable urban development and that the activities of ESCAP in those areas could be greatly beneficial for member States.

24. The Commission was informed of the convening of the World Urban Forum in Naples, Italy, from 1 to 7 September 2012.

25. The Commission recognized the common goal of achieving energy security and noted the important role of clean energy, energy efficiency and renewable energy. It also noted the need to speed up technology transfer through regional cooperation, and enhance cooperation on energy connectivity at the regional and subregional levels.

26. The Commission noted different options and mechanisms utilized for improving energy consumption and promoting the use of renewable energy in the industrial, transport and residential sectors, such as the development of a national cleaner fuel policy, the establishment of revolving funds, tax incentives and the formulation of standards and regulations.

27. The Commission welcomed the confirmation given by the Russian Federation that it would host the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum at the ministerial level in May 2013 in Vladivostock. The Commission also urged member States to actively participate in the preparatory process as well as in the Forum itself.

28. The Commission recognized the need for integrated water resources management in the light of the floods in Thailand in 2011, which from an economic perspective had had ripple effects on the industrial supply chain as the floods had adversely affected the operations of major parts suppliers to manufacturers of cars and electronics. It noted the importance of establishing a platform to share beneficial experiences and best practices on disaster management and integrated water resources management. One delegation highlighted water scarcity and drought in some member countries, which would also require efficient water resource management and closer regional cooperation.

29. The Commission endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Environment and Development on its second session.

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