The Regional Dimension of Development and the UN System

A study sponsored by the UN Regional Commissions

Economic Commission for Africa
Economic Commission for Europe
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
The Regional Dimension of Development and the UN System
A study Sponsored by the UN Regional Commissions

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Mr. Ansley Lancourt, Graphic Design.
Foreword

The drafters of the United Nations Charter rightly acknowledged the importance of action at the regional level in addressing threats to peace and security. The establishment of United Nations Regional Commissions during the early years of the Organization testified to the value of regionalism in responding to economic and social challenges.

This report carries forward these twin understandings, exploring in detail how regionalism can be harnessed in addressing issues ranging from trade, macroeconomic cooperation and food security to climate change, the spread of disease and the growing connectivity made possible by dramatic advances in information and communications technology.

Our work around the world continuously demonstrates the value of cooperating closely with regional organizations. I have maintained close contact with the leaders of a wide range of groups as we strive to respond to both crises and long-term trends. The United Nations as a whole has strengthened its ties to these entities.

I welcome this report and its concrete recommendations on how the United Nations system in general and its Regional Commissions in particular can engage more deeply and effectively with regional and subregional organizations. I will continue reaching out to regional partners to find common solutions to problems across the international agenda, and I commend this study to all those interested in the power of this collaboration.

BAN Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations

20 October 2011
Preface

The regional dimension of development is now recognized as being critical for an effective and coordinated response to an ever-growing number of developmental challenges. The last several years have witnessed acceleration and broadening of regional integration processes and many forms of intraregional cooperation. Many of the key policy actions and policy dialogues to address the impact of the multiple food, fuel and financial crises were initiated at the regional and subregional levels. Much of this was done by regional organizations and groupings which have evolved as important players in determining the development agenda at all levels.

With the regional development architecture evolving rapidly, this is an opportune time for the UN system, in particular the Regional Commissions, to reflect on its repositioning and interaction with the new regional dynamics, bearing in mind the growing regionalism and the role of regional institutions, including the Regional Commissions, as critical building blocks in enhanced global governance arrangements and global-regional nexus, as well as in making critical links to the country level.

With this in mind, the Regional Commissions have sponsored this study on “The Regional Dimension of Development and the United Nations System”. The study is a system-wide effort and draws upon contributions from more than 20 United Nations organizations, for which we are grateful. The study analyses the evolution of regionalism, and the current engagement between the UN system and the regional organizations and processes in order to support development outcomes. It draws lessons from the challenges and gaps, and provides recommendations for the UN system for working together to provide enhanced support to regional initiatives and priorities. It also highlights the contribution of regionalism, as a vital link between global processes and the national level.

While far from exhaustive, a number of substantive areas emerge from the analysis of the study as drivers of regionalism such as trade, connectivity (in terms of broader infrastructure and norms and standards in support of regional integration), monetary and financial coordination and cooperation, food and energy security, climate change, as well as health, employment and social protection concerns relating to an increasingly mobile world population. Such areas would benefit from closer and coordinated collaboration between the UN system at the regional level and non-UN regional organizations and partners. This elaborate and in-depth substantive work will have to be developed at the regional level where the UN system organizations working together in each region need to coordinate their interventions within an overarching collective strategy of engagement with the partner organizations and stakeholders, bearing in mind regional priorities and specificity. This is more urgent in view of the significant degree of engagement of UN organizations at the regional level indicated by the study, including through more than 150 different MoUs, agreements and other structures of collaboration with more than 30 diverse organizations in all regions. In capturing such a rich fabric of collaboration, the study could only be illustrative and not complete. The recommendations emanating from the study are focused therefore on highlighting key elements of processes and organizational frameworks that need to be put in place in order to facilitate such substantive engagement in the regions.
Clearly, the study has only been able to scratch the surface and reveal the vast potential for further work to develop the regional dimension of development. It is, however, abundantly clear that a new regional development architecture is evolving rapidly that needs to be understood, supported and partnered with to promote sustainable economic, social, ecological and political development. This is of particular importance in this present era of globalization characterized by instability, unpredictability and volatility. Since a growing number of issues cannot be dealt with effectively at the national level alone, the subregional and regional levels are increasingly seen as providing the technical and political arenas for the collaboration, analysis, advice and best practices to be developed. The trend is in all regions. The Regional Commissions, with their combination of formal and real legitimacy as “home grown” and trusted regional institutions, are well placed to play a key role in this rapidly evolving regional landscape. We are committed to leveraging our assets and capacity in collaboration with UN system partner organizations to support this growing new regionalism and infuse it with universal norms and values.

We hope the present study will stimulate a more in-depth debate within the UN system, including through the CEB and the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), on the regional dimension of UN development work, enabling the system to continue the move towards more coherence in policy and delivery at the regional level and the regions to move forward towards a more equitable and balanced sustainable development.

Abdoulie Janneh
United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary Economic Commission for Africa

Jan Kubis
United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary Economic Commission for Europe

Alicia Barcena
United Nations-Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Noeleen Heyzer
United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Rima Khalaf
United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
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This study was carried out under the overall supervision and guidance of the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions, namely Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Mr. Jan Kubis, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Ms. Alicia Barcena, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Ms. Rima Khalaf, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

While sponsored by the UN Regional Commissions, the study is a system-wide effort with substantive contributions received from 24 UN and other organizations, in addition to the substantive inputs provided by the five UN Regional Commissions. Substantive contributions are gratefully acknowledged from the following UN system and other organizations members of CEB: ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, IAEA, IFAD, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UN-DESA, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNISDR, UNODC, UNWOMEN, UNWTO, UPU, WB, WFP, WHO, WIPO, WTO.

A core team prepared the study under the leadership of Mr. Lennart Bage, former President of IFAD and previous chair of the High-level Committee on Programmes of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB/HLCP), who generously accepted this assignment. The study gained immensely from his insights and inputs, including from his interaction in the regions with representatives of member States, regional and subregional organizations, and UN system organizations, individually and through the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), as well as from meetings he had with a number of executive heads of the UN organizations. Mr. Bage was supported in the preparation of the study by the Regional Commissions New York Office led by Mr. Amr Nour, Director, and his team, namely Mr. Srinivas Tata and Ms. Paola Bettelli.

The Executive Secretaries are grateful to all those who allocated their valuable time and efforts to the benefit of this study.
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<td>ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response</td>
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<td>ABMI</td>
<td>Asian Bond Markets Initiative</td>
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<td>ACNE</td>
<td>African Union Commission on Nuclear Energy</td>
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<td>APCD</td>
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<td>Council of Arab Economic Unity</td>
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<td>CCAD</td>
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<td>CMA</td>
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<td>COMESA</td>
<td>Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
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<td>Delivering as One</td>
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<td>Department of Economic and Social Affairs</td>
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<td>Disaster Risk Management</td>
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<td>Economic Commission for Africa</td>
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<td>ECWA</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Western Asia</td>
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<td>FDI</td>
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<td>GAFTA</td>
<td>Greater Arab Free Trade Area</td>
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<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>Hyogo Framework for Action</td>
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<td>Inter-American Development Bank</td>
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<td>International Atomic Energy Agency</td>
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<td>Initiative for ASEAN Integration</td>
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<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>IPA</td>
<td>Inter-Parliamentary Assembly</td>
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<td>ITSAM</td>
<td>Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq</td>
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<td>International Telecommunication Union</td>
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<td>League of Arab States</td>
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MDGs Millennium Development Goals
MERCOSUR Common Market of the Southern Cone
MoUs Memorandum of Understanding
MYPs Multi-year programme of cooperation
NAFTA North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEPAD New Partnership for Africa’s Development
NPoA NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency
OAS Organization of American States
OAU Organization of African Unity
OECD Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECS Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OLADE Latin American Energy Organization
PIF Pacific Islands Forum
PIFS Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PPP Public-Private Partnerships
PTAs Preferential Trade Agreements
RCC Regional Cooperation Council
RCM Regional Coordination Mechanism
RECs Regional economic communities
RFOs Regional farmers organizations
RIMES Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia
RSCC Regional Strategy on Climate Change
RTA Regional Trade Agreements
SAARC South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SACU Southern African Customs Union
SADC Southern African Development Community
SCO Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SEAMEO Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SEATO Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SECI Southeast European Cooperative Initiative
SICA Central American Integration System
SIECA Central American Economic Integration
SISCA Secretariat for Central American Social Integration
SOPAC South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission
SPC Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPECAS Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
SROs Subregional offices
TACRO UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
TIR International Road Transport
TPR Trade Policy Reviews
UEMAO West African Economic and Monetary Union
UN United Nations
UN/CEFACT UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and E-business
UN/EDIFACT UN Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNFCCC</td>
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<td>United Nations World Tourism Organization</td>
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<td>United Postal Union</td>
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<td>West African Economic and Monetary Union</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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Executive Summary

1. The process of globalization has accelerated in recent decades. Driven, inter alia, by the processes of technological change, migration, trade, innovation and connectivity, the world has become more tightly woven together. While in a number of countries, the positive impacts of globalization have been reaped in the form of rapid economic growth, globalization has also given rise to a range of challenging issues including rapid transmission of financial shocks, international crime and drug trafficking, increasingly volatile and turbulent international financial and product markets, issues of food and energy security, climate change, migration and a widening of income and social inequalities. There is a recognition that these issues could not be effectively dealt with except through coordinated global and regional action, requiring effective regional and global institutions, as well as governance mechanisms.

2. Partly as a response to these challenges, there has been a broadening of regional integration processes and many forms of intraregional cooperation. Many of the key policy actions and policy dialogues to address the impact of the multiple crises have been initiated at the regional and subregional levels. Much of this has been done by regional organizations and groupings, which have evolved as important players in determining the development agenda at all levels. The regional dimension of development is now being recognized as being critical for an effective and coordinated response to addressing an ever-growing number of transboundary issues.

3. Regionalism has evolved from a means to improve countries’ capabilities, including by drawing on economies of scale, to a new regionalism driven by issues such as trade, connectivity, monetary and financial coordination and cooperation, and meeting the health, food security and social protection concerns of an increasingly mobile world population. The large commonality between the issues driving the new regionalism and globalization underlines the growing potential of the regional dimension in providing effective and efficient links between the global and national levels for driving an inclusive and sustainable globalization.

4. Regionalism has also gained increased importance as a buffer against global shocks and crises at a time when global regulations and institutions have proved inadequate or ineffective. Consequently, the regional governance architecture is growing as an essential building block of effective global governance, with an important bearing on the decision-making process at the global level. It may be useful to recall that most of the regional integration and cooperation initiatives are underlined by political projects critical to promoting peace and security in the respective regions, and in the world.
at large, thereby contributing to a more sustainable globalization. The development of regionalism is unique due to the ongoing changing dynamics between the global and regional spheres of power and governance.

5. The synergies between the global and regional agendas are a clear indication of the need and the importance for the UN system to work coherently and effectively horizontally at the regional level, as well as vertically at the global and national levels. This was recognized by the CEB in 2009, when it acknowledged that “a significant number of responses can most effectively be undertaken at the regional level – integrating the regional dimension is, therefore, essential”. The World Summit Outcome document (2005) calls for a “stronger relationship between the UN and regional and subregional organizations, pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter”. Although Chapter VIII focuses on peace and security, the inter-linkages between peace and security and development are widely recognized.

6. The study indicates that there is a significant degree of engagement by UN organizations with the regional intergovernmental bodies and entities, and that the UN is able to provide them with valuable support in a number of substantive areas relating to development. The contributions received to the study point to more than 150 different MoUs, agreements or other structures for collaboration with more than 30 different organizations from all regions. Evidence suggests that whenever there is a high degree of collaboration between UN system agencies to support regional initiatives or processes, the outcomes are highly effective and successful, both in terms of impact and in terms of implementation. Good examples are the UN system joint efforts with ASEAN on the ASEAN-UN Summit, and the comprehensive and cohesive support to NEPAD and the AUC. The regional MDG reports are also good examples of joint UN efforts in cooperation with regional organizations to produce knowledge products for common action.

7. Due to their historic contribution to regionalism and institution-building in each of the respective regions, and because of their convening power, think tank and advocacy roles, regional coordination capabilities and position as regional “knowledge-brokers” and multidisciplinary knowledge hubs, the UN Regional Commissions are well placed, not only to support regional intergovernmental processes and actions, but also to strengthen UN inter-agency cooperation and coordination at the regional level. Member countries, through ECOSOC, have recognized such role and potential resulting in the mandate for the establishment of RCM (ECOSOC resolution 1998/46). However, the potential for this is yet to be widely tapped into by the UN system.

8. The Regional Commissions and the Regional Development Banks are often the only pan-regional development entities in their respective regions. On specific issues, the Regional Commissions
provide an overarching regional framework, which encompasses smaller subregional frameworks, and infuse them with universal norms and values. An example is the role played by Regional Commissions in the area of trade and connectivity and there is a large potential for this to be further developed. Therefore, the role of Regional Commissions in linking subregional cooperation efforts to a broader pan-regional cooperation framework needs to be emphasized.

9. More than 20 UN organizations that contributed to the study, including the UN Regional Commissions, agree that enhanced regional cooperation, not only among countries, but also among the UN system agencies working together with regional intergovernmental bodies, reaps many benefits in terms of, inter alia, enhanced policy coherence and programme effectiveness and efficiency; strengthened national and regional capabilities and leadership; enhanced aid effectiveness; enhanced visibility and impact; and reduced overhead costs. Despite the good examples mentioned in this report on UN system inter-agency collaboration and coordination, virtually all UN system agencies concur, that this is an area in need of improvement.

10. Collaboration appears to be deeper in some regions compared to others, depending on the evolution of the regional architecture. Within certain regions, some subregional organizations collaborate more extensively with UN organizations than others. This is on account of their wider coverage, as also perhaps stronger organization. This example can be seen in the Asia-Pacific, where ASEAN receives greater support from the UN system compared to other smaller groupings. However, paradoxically, it is the regional organizations which have the weaker support structure which need the support of the UN to a greater degree in order to achieve their objectives.

11. Some agencies/organizations have called for enhanced cooperation and collaboration by using the platforms provided by the UN Regional Commissions for increased information sharing, dialogue and participatory planning, periodic reviews and monitoring/assessment of ongoing work, identifying synergies with partner organizations and strengthening the institutional capacities of regional intergovernmental organizations.

12. The study also emphasizes that the degree of UN system collaboration with a wide spectrum of representatives from civil society, including youth groups and indigenous communities at the regional level, is an area that should be looked into and assessed more closely. In many instances these groups, through informal networking, dialogue and information sharing are driving the “new regionalism” on issues related to the UN objectives and core values very effectively. The recent “Arab Spring” movements are a case in point.
13. Key recommendations are made based upon the analysis and findings of the study. The recommendations are intended to strengthen the UN system’s capabilities at the regional level in order to enhance the support that it is giving on critical issues that were identified by this study as “drivers” of regionalism, and that converge with issues that figure prominently in the global agenda.

A number of substantive areas emerge from the analysis in the study, which would benefit from closer and coordinated collaboration between the UN system at the regional level and non-UN regional organizations. The recommendations, however, are focused on highlighting key elements of processes and organizational frameworks that need to be put in place, recognizing that the substantive areas for collaboration being identified in the study would need to be deepened and prioritized according to the regional needs and specificities. The CEB is invited to consider and endorse the recommendations below.

14. Recommendation 1. Regionalism as a building block for multilateralism

There is a need for the UN system to recognize the importance of regionalism, and its enormous potential as a building block for multilateralism. An increasingly assertive regional governance is emerging with significant implications on global governance. The rising importance of the regional dimension of development, and its critical role as a vital effective and efficient link between the global and national levels, has to be acknowledged and taken into account in all global development processes.

15. Recommendation 2. The need for a coherent regional strategy for development

A large number of UN and non-UN organizations, particularly the Regional Commissions, are working at the regional level. The value and impact of UN system engagement with regional organizations is best when efforts are coherent and strategically coordinated and fit into a larger comprehensive framework of collaboration with partner organizations. The UN system organizations working together in each region need to coordinate their interventions within an overarching collective strategy of engagement with the partner organizations and stakeholders, bearing in mind the specificities and priorities of each region. The Regional Commissions, the regional arms of the United Nations, with their convening power and their role as UN pan-regional intergovernmental platforms, have a central role to play in the development and implementation of such strategies.

16. Other recommendations listed below provide some common elements for the UN system to formulate such strategies in the respective regions:
• Undertake a region-specific stock-taking of engagement of the UN system with regional organizations and other relevant regional entities.
• Develop, in full consultation with the respective regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations, agreed medium-term capacity-building frameworks.
• Support regional integration efforts in a coherent manner, including through coordination and alignment of their work on harmonization of standards, rules and guidelines in the regions, and enhancing trade and investment flows within regional integration groupings.
• Ensure greater coherence and cohesiveness between the work of Regional Coordinating Mechanisms (RCMs) and Regional UNDG teams (erstwhile RDTs).
• Further develop the RCMs as vehicles for policy and programme coordination at both the level of heads of agencies and at senior officials’ level.
• Carry out reviews at regular intervals at the highest level, including summit level, between the UN system and regional organizations to review the progress made and identify new areas for collaboration.
• Leverage and enhance the convening power and capacity of the UN Regional Commissions as platforms for the entire UN system’s strategic involvement with member States.
• Promote stronger UN system involvement with civil society (including private sector) at the regional level.
Introduction

1. In the past two decades, there has been an acceleration in the regional integration and cooperation processes as well as a proliferation of regional agreements whose scope has widened far beyond the traditional areas of trade to cover other aspects such as investment, currency, competition policy, migration, labour regimes, the environment, corruption, good governance, terrorism, food security and health, among others. Not only has the number of regional organizations and agreements increased, but so has the depth and breadth of their content and scope. This rapid growth in regional and subregional cooperation, integration and institutions has come to be known as the “new regionalism”. This “new regionalism” has had a profound impact and has contributed to the evolution of the development architecture at the regional level.

2. This study intends to examine some of the issues that have driven and spearheaded the accelerated pace of regional developments, including the regional development architecture that is evolving as a result. It is hoped that the study will lead to a greater understanding of these processes in order to determine how the United Nations system, and in particular, the UN Regional Commissions,1 can better serve and support member States within this rapidly evolving context.

3. Currently, there is a high degree of presence and involvement of the UN system at the regional level. Historically, the UN, through its regional arms e.g., the Regional Commissions, was one of the pre-eminent driving forces of regionalism following the Second World War. Within that context, the question is how the UN system is currently responding to the rapidly evolving regional landscapes within the global context, and how it can enhance and strengthen its contribution and add value, including through more effectively bridging the regional, global and national dimensions?

4. Towards this end, firstly, the study will aim to view regionalism within the context of globalization, which has so profoundly changed the terms of engagement between countries through increased connectivity as a result of rapidly evolving communication technologies and the development of international regimes governing a broad range of issues including trade, environment and climate change and food security, among others. In this context, the role of regionalism as a bridge between the national and global spheres will be examined.

5. Secondly, the study will also illustrate how regionalism has contributed to strengthening respective national capabilities and increasing resiliency, including to
international shocks and emerging issues such as the recent food, fuel and financial crises. It will also show examples of how regional processes and institutions have informed and influenced responses of countries to these crises. The study will also briefly trace and illustrate how regionalism has evolved in each of the regions, with references to the contributions of the Regional Commissions to these processes.

6. Lastly, the study will look at the UN system’s involvement at the regional level and make some recommendations as to how the UN system can more effectively contribute and add value to a rapidly evolving context where regionalism has become increasingly relevant and useful to member States to achieve a number of objectives both at the national and global levels. For the purposes of this study “regionalism” comprises both regional and subregional institutions, initiatives, processes and movements. The new groupings and processes typically encompass smaller subregions, within larger regions. All of these subregional groupings, institutions and processes are analysed under the broad head of regionalism. For the ease of comparison and analysis, the regions are those covered by the UN Regional Commissions, namely: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and the ESCWA region.⁴
Chapter 1. 
Issues driving the growth of the “new regionalism” and evolution of the regional development architecture

1.1. Context

7. The process of globalization has accelerated in recent decades. Driven, inter alia, by the processes of technological change, migration, trade, innovation and connectivity, the world has been more tightly woven together. While in several countries, the positive impacts of globalization have been reaped in the form of rapid economic growth, globalization has also given rise to a range of challenging issues including rapid transmission of financial shocks, international crime and drug trafficking, increasingly volatile and turbulent international financial and product markets, issues of food and energy security, climate change, migration and widening income and social inequalities. There is a recognition that these issues could not be effectively dealt with except through coordinated global and regional action, requiring effective regional and global institutions, as well as governance mechanisms.

8. Partly as a response to these challenges, there has been a broadening of regional integration processes and many forms of intraregional cooperation. Many of the key policy actions and policy dialogues to address the impact of the multiple crises have been initiated at the regional and subregional levels. Much of this has been done by regional organizations and groupings which have evolved as important players in determining the development agenda at all levels. The regional dimension of development is now being recognized as being critical for an effective and coordinated response for addressing an ever-growing number of transboundary issues.

9. Historically, the concept of regionalism, in a formal sense, seems to have mainly developed after the Second World War, during the period 1945-1965, and against the backdrop of the creation of institutions like the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions. Some institutions having both political and economic objectives, which were set up, are the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organization of American States (OAS). This early period also saw the evolution of regional security alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Warsaw Pact, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and Australia, New Zealand and United States Pact (ANZUS). This was followed by the creation of institutions with the primary objective of achieving greater regional integration. Europe led the way with the creation of the European Community in the latter part of the 1950s, which inspired numerous similar proposals. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was
set up in 1963. The main drivers of this early phase of regionalism, whether in the security or economic spheres, were mainly related to security and the need to have a unified regional voice.³

10. A second phase of the creation of regional organizations can be traced to the period 1965-1985, involving mainly developing countries, which included the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Secretariat of Central American Economic Integration (SIECA), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the South African Development Community (SADC), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). While there was an underlying security focus to the creation of some of these organizations, they were also driven by motives of regional cooperation and self-sufficiency to deal with a changed global economic and security scenario.⁴

11. The current phase of the regionalism, also called the “new regionalism”, has evolved as a response to the increased pace of globalization. It is an effort to deal with the new environment where former alliance systems have weakened and the financial crises in Asia and Latin America have exposed serious gaps in the international economic governance and institutions. Countries have increasingly sought common ground through regional bodies, entities and institutions to increase their participation in the global economy and to reap the benefits, but also to shield themselves from its adverse effects. The “new regionalism” is characterized by a diversity of forms and organizations. Regionalism, in its original form, was State-driven, more formal and institutionalized. One of the most successful forms of this kind of regionalism is the European Union, with its focus on the creation of institutions and on norms and standards. However, in contrast, what has come to be known as the “new regionalism” is much more fluid and pragmatic, involving not only State actors but also a wide range of representatives from civil society, including the private sector, and is not as dependent on institutions but more on informal groupings and networking.⁵ With the signature of the Helsinki Final Act, the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was established in 1975. Following the fall of the Iron Curtain, this body, based on a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses political and security, economic and environmental and human dimensions of security, was turned into the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

12. “New regionalism” is mostly driven by issues, and less so by institutions. However, the existing regional institutions and organizations have served to facilitate the progression and evolution of this form of regionalism. Within each region, the process of regionalism and integration has been pursued through mechanisms which are most appropriate to that region—there is no uniform model, and regional action
complements and supports the policies of the nations within them. Another characteristic of the “new regionalism” is that it is more diverse and deeper in terms of the areas it seeks to cover, in particular issues related to human rights and the social sector. The organizations that were created during this period include the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). A few other organizations underwent change as well in order to address new challenges such as conflict prevention, human rights and democracy. An example of this change is the transformation of the OAU, which was created to fight colonialism and apartheid, to the African Union (AU) with the objective of unifying its member States politically, socially and economically, while promoting adherence by its members to democracy, human rights and good governance. Other organizations that underwent similar change are the EU, the OAS and the SADC.

1.2. Linkages between regionalism and multilateralism and the role of the UN system

13. Certain questions are posed by the evolution of regionalism and its current phase, which are of consequence: (i) how does regionalism relate to the multilateral sphere, is it complementary or supplementary to the process of multilateralism and the implementation of UN agreements, commitments and core values?; (ii) how can the UN system contribute to increasing the congruency and synergies between the global, regional and national spheres?; (iii) the value of regionalism as a goal in itself independent of its links to larger global processes; and (iv) the interface of regional integration processes with the WTO and the multilateral trading system.

14. The UN Charter, in Chapter VIII, acknowledges the importance of action at the regional level, although mainly in the context of maintaining peace and security. The links between peace and security, development and human rights are widely acknowledged. The creation of the UN Regional Commissions early in the life of the UN clearly shows an acknowledgement of the importance of economic regionalism.

15. The economic and financial crisis, which started in 2008, has exposed the inadequacy of the current arrangements and institutional structures at the global level in addressing a range of pressing development issues, including reducing global economic imbalances, reaching agreement on an equitable and fair multilateral trade framework, and making progress on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Regional institutions and arrangements can contribute to strengthening the existing architecture of global economic governance, as they are better placed to understand and respond to specific regional needs and demands. Their region-specific knowledge allows them to
tailor programmes and instruments to the needs of the countries in their respective regions, and to provide a unified regional voice to influence processes at the global level. A better understanding and utilization of the regional level as a vital link between the global and the national levels would help in translating overarching global frameworks in various developmental areas into effective implementation at the national level by adapting them to regional specificities. For example, the Regional Commissions are already serving as regional platforms for monitoring the implementation of global frameworks, including the Plan of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Beijing Platform for Action.

16. Thus, regionalism can supplement multilateralism by establishing greater coherence between the global and national levels, but this potential is far from being fully exploited. The UN system could strategically position itself to assist by facilitating the linkages between the domestic, regional and global dimensions. In this regard, the UN Regional Commissions provide the platforms to leverage UN support at the regional level, and increase its relevance and impact as they are important intergovernmental forums for policy dialogue and cooperation. They also act as platforms for the sharing of experiences and ideas at the regional level, and projecting a cohesive regional voice at the global level. The importance of regionalism in projecting a unified regional voice is highlighted in regions such as Africa, where individual countries from the region may not be represented in influential global processes such as the Group of Twenty (G-20). The viewpoint of Africa is conveyed through the African Union, supported by ECA and the AfDB.

17. Regionalism is of course to be valued on its own terms, beyond its linkages to globalism/multilateralism. Regionalism has often provided a basis for collective action on a range of issues, even in the absence of a global framework or policy. This form of regionalism sometimes acts as a catalyst for global policy frameworks. For example, the regional framework on decent work and social protection, developed by the EU in collaboration with the ILO, has formed the basis for these issues to be considered as part of global frameworks, including the MDGs. However, regional agreements and arrangements in areas such as finance may cope with limited financial shocks, but may need resources from outside the region to deal with systemic financial shocks.

1.3. Issues driving the process of the “new regionalism”

18. “New regionalism” has been driven by issues, and less so by institutions. This section provides an overview of some of the most salient issues driving the “new regionalism”. Regional organizations have found it useful to focus on a few critical economic and social issues in order to draw the full benefit of collective action. In many cases, cooperation in economic and social spheres has been
used as the main tools for achieving closer regional integration. These include, but are not limited to, issues such as trade, norms and standards, food security, cooperation in the area of environment and energy, disaster risk reduction and management, employment generation and social protection, improving connectivity as well as macroeconomic issues. Most of these initiatives are being supported by the UN system.

19. The issues driving regional cooperation and integration vary from region to region. For instance, existing regional programmes and initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) have increased countries’ knowledge and overall capabilities on issues related to the different crises and emerging issues, including food security, social protection systems and climate change. The Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region has come together to collaborate on a host of issues that pose common threats and challenges, including policy dialogue on macroeconomic issues in response to the global financial and economic crisis, commodities’ price volatility and food security; social protection programmes, migration, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, and climate change. Similarly, the Asia-Pacific region has been able to respond to recent global challenges arising from the financial crisis as well as the emerging issues such as migration and human trafficking in a collaborative and well coordinated manner through the regional institutions and initiatives that were in place. While the issues are more or less common to all regions, a few have been more dominant in some regions. Some of these substantive issues are explored below in an illustrative manner. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, as the issues driving the new regionalism are many and diverse.

a. Trade

20. Undisputedly, one of the main issues that historically has driven and that continues to drive regionalism is trade. However, as the “new regionalism” has evolved, regional integration agreements have also evolved over time to encompass a diverse assortment of other economic, environmental and social policies, which are not related directly to trade.

21. The regional integration strategies adopted by organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Andean Community (CAN) and the Central American Integration System (SICA), aimed to strengthen their member countries’ respective capabilities with a view to effectively compete in global trade through their economies of scale. At the outset, those strategies strived to be as congruent and consistent with the world trade regime as possible, and the focus was mainly on developing and expanding the regional markets. With the occurrence of the Latin American and Asian financial crises in the mid-1990s, countries in the respective regions had to reconsider their strategies and to strengthen their regional capabilities to protect themselves from circumstances brought about by globalization such as the
influx of volatile capital. The concept of the “new regionalism” emerged with a “deeper” form of integration where cooperation extends beyond the economic spheres to the social and environmental ones, and where regional “safety measures” to buffer external shocks, such as currency reserve alternatives (e.g., the Chiang Mai initiative) and macroeconomic policy coordination, are put in place. This form of regionalism is taking form throughout the five regions as a response to the recent global economic and financial crisis.

22. Partly as a result of the stalemate of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Development Round of negotiations, some countries have increasingly sought to advance their own economic interests through numerous bilateral preferential trade agreements (PTAs). In the last two decades, the number of PTAs has increased more than four-fold, to around 300 active agreements today, however, the scope and coverage of many of the PTAs are limited in depth and coverage, and are mainly bilateral in nature. Though they may not strictly be considered as processes of “regionalism”, it is assumed that PTAs will grow in number and form an important part of the long-term architecture of international trade relations.

23. Strengthened regional cooperation among developing countries can help accelerate industrialization and structural change, and ease integration into the global economy. This is because composition of intraregional trade between developing countries tends to a higher proportion of high- and medium-skill and technology-intensive manufactures as compared to interregional trade. However, to achieve this, trade liberalization is not enough; active regional cooperation should also extend to areas of policy that strengthen the potential for growth and structural change, including monetary and financial arrangements, large infrastructure and knowledge-generation projects, and industrial policies.

24. The recent global financial and economic crisis has highlighted the need to strengthen international macroeconomic policy coordination and governance. The existing mechanisms of global economic governance have not been able to deal with the complex challenges of an increasingly interdependent world. The ineffectiveness of the current multilateral institutions in addressing new challenges has forced many regional organizations to initiate their own steps to deal with the global crises. In fact, the strongest and most coherent responses to the crises have been initiated at the regional level.

b. Macroeconomic and financial cooperation and regulation: example of the global economic and financial crisis

25. In February 2009, the Council of the European Union agreed on a European Economic Recovery Plan, equivalent to about 1.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the EU (a figure amounting to
around € 200 billion). The Plan provided a common framework for the efforts made by member States of the EU and the European Commission (EC), with a view to ensuring consistency and maximizing effectiveness. In this context, the European Central Bank and other central banks considerably reduced their interest rates, thereby supporting growth and contributing to financial stability.\(^9\)

26. In addition, the G-20\(^{10}\) process agreed to a number of significant measures— including an additional US$ 1.1 trillion for an International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme of support to restore credit, growth and jobs—at a summit on the economic and financial crisis that took place in London on 2 April 2009. The G-20 further recognized that regional action was critical to mitigate the crisis, and hence also agreed to support a substantial increase in lending of at least US$ 100 billion by the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), especially the regional development banks.\(^{11}\)

27. In the Asia-Pacific region, as an important step in regional cooperation to confront the global economic and financial crisis, the ASEAN+3\(^{12}\) Finance Ministers agreed in February 2009, to accelerate the implementation of a financial cooperation framework. The twofold framework is comprised of the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) established by the ASEAN+3 in 2000 as a network and the Asian Bond Markets Initiative (ABMI). The CMI is a network of bilateral currency swap arrangements, to: (a) address short-term liquidity difficulties in the region and; (b) supplement the existing financial arrangements. The February 2009 agreement by the ASEAN Finance Ministers paved the way for the conversion of the existing bilateral fund of US$ 80 billion to a multilateral pool of US$ 120 billion with 80 per cent of the new funds being provided by +3 countries with the remainder coming mainly from the more developed ASEAN economies. On 24 March 2010, the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM) Agreement, signed by ASEAN member States, China, Korea and Japan (ASEAN+3) and the Monetary Authority of Hong Kong, China, came into effect. With the core objectives of addressing balance of payment and short-term liquidity difficulties in the region, and supplementing the existing financial arrangements, CMIM will provide financial support through currency swap transactions among CMIM participants in times of liquidity need. The successful launch of the CMIM, together with an independent regional surveillance unit to be established demonstrates the efforts of ASEAN+3 members to further enhance regional capacity to safeguard against risks and challenges in the global economy. The Asia-Pacific region is gradually moving towards some elements of a regional financial architecture with the CMIM and the regional bond market development. However, with the combined foreign exchange reserves of $US 5 trillion, the region now has the ability to develop a more ambitious regional financial architecture.
The economic crisis and subsequent recovery have highlighted the importance of regional options to complement IMF facilities in order to combat global macroeconomic volatility.\textsuperscript{13}

28. In Africa, African Ministers and Governors of Central Banks set up a Committee of Ten to monitor developments, provide regular follow-up, advise Ministers and Governors on proposals that would contribute to the international discourse in relation to the economic impact of the financial crisis and mitigating measures. The Committee had a series of coordination meetings which helped to build an African consensus on the crisis and on how the international community could assist countries in the region to respond to it. Africa’s challenges with the current global financial architecture relate mainly to the lack of voice and effective representation in the decision-making bodies. This concern has been partly addressed in the G-20 Seoul Declaration which called for further reforms by January 2013 “aimed at enhancing the voice and representation of emerging market and developing countries, including the poorest”.\textsuperscript{14}

30. In response to the rising food prices, ASEAN member countries plan to formally establish a permanent ASEAN+3 rice reserve in October 2011, as a follow-up to their ongoing East Asia Emergency Rice Reserve Pilot Project.\textsuperscript{15} Another positive initiative is the agreement made by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in April 2007 to establish the SAARC Food Bank. It would maintain food reserves and support national as well as regional food security through collective action among member countries.

31. Even prior to the sharp spike in food prices in 2008, food security has been a major challenge for the African continent. Africa is home to 15 of the 16 countries where the prevalence of hunger exceeds 35 per cent.\textsuperscript{16} The AU, through its NEPAD programme, aims to increase both the amount and quality of food produced in the continent and, by doing so, make families more food-secure, exports more profitable, and improve social and political stability. The framework provided by the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) guides NEPAD’s agricultural programme. The Programme’s focus is on helping countries improve economic

c. Food security

29. The recent volatility in food prices and the continuing food price inflation in a number of countries have highlighted the importance of regional cooperation to ensure food security. The Asia-Pacific region is home to the largest number of food insecure people in the world, with important variations among the sub-regions and countries in the region. Economies in various parts of the region have seen their general food prices increase by as much as 35 per cent since 2009.\textsuperscript{14} In many countries in the region, food price inflation is a key political issue. As part of the combination of policies at all levels to address this challenge regional action is essential.
growth through agriculture-led development. CAADP is pushing for substantial changes in how agricultural business is conducted in Africa. These include realizing the CAADP agricultural goals while promoting agriculture as a priority for sustainable development. By May 2011, 26 countries had incorporated CAADP into their agricultural development plans.

32. Regional and subregional responses have been instrumental in dealing with the food crisis. At the regional level, the Africa Food Crisis Response (AFCR) initiative was established in 2008 with the aim to reduce poverty and malnutrition in the short term, and to ensure sustainable food security in the medium to longer term. To that end, the AFCR provided financial assistance to a number of countries such as Burundi, the Central African Republic, Comoros, Djibouti and Liberia. Many responses have also been initiated at the subregional level. For example, Ministers from ECCAS met in July 2008 and decided to commit US$ 200,000 per country in order to establish a regional fund for agricultural development in Central Africa. In West Africa, three subregional institutions decided to build synergies in response to the food crisis. These are ECOWAS, WAEMU and the “Comité permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel” (CILSS). ECOWAS, WAEMU and CILSS developed and adopted harmonized seed regulations as well as a regional food grain reserve. SADC announced the creation of a food reserve facility in 2008, and also launched its Seed Security Network to help improve food security throughout the subregion by supporting intraregional seed trade.

33. Arab countries import at least 50 per cent of the food calories they consume. As the largest net importers of cereal, Arab countries are more exposed than other countries to severe swings in agricultural commodity prices, and their vulnerability will probably be exacerbated in the coming years by strong population growth, low agricultural productivity and their dependence on global commodities markets. In order to address the current food crisis collectively, in April 2008, countries in the region, under the auspices of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), issued the Riyadh Declaration on promoting Arab cooperation to face the global food crisis. The Declaration calls for sound trade and investment schemes to boost food security in the short and long terms, including through foreign public-private partnerships and enhancing inter-Arab agricultural trade.

34. Aware that a more structured long-term response to address food price volatility is warranted to address the negative welfare effects on both poor urban and rural families, Latin American and Caribbean countries, with the support of ECLAC, FAO and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA), have been analysing joint policy responses to address the rise and volatility of food prices with emphasis on the subregional policy options such as the enhancement of the intraregional trade in food and agriculture. This has been done
through two intersectoral policy dialogues at the ministerial level, one for South America (Santiago, May 2011) and the other for Central America (San Salvador, June 2011).

d. Climate change and environmental issues

35. Climate change and environmental issues have emerged as a critical area for regional cooperation, especially in the context of the ongoing UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process and the forthcoming Rio+20 Conference. Cognizant of the ongoing processes at the global level, many regional organizations have mainstreamed the environment agenda into their frameworks, and significant work has been done in framing regional responses and actions. In Africa, ClimDev-Africa, a joint initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC), ECA and the African Development Bank (AfDB) has been undertaken in 2008. The programme, which is mandated by African Heads of Government, seeks to overcome the lack of necessary information, analysis and options required by policy and decision makers at all levels. The political leadership of ClimDev-Africa is provided by the AUC, who coordinates the continental policy response and global negotiations, while the ECA hosts the African Climate Policy Centre, which delivers on the policy component of the initiative.

36. In the LAC region, the Andean Community Environmental Agenda for 2006-2010 provides for the formulation and organization of the Andean Strategy on Climate Change, EACC and its corresponding Action Plan, which serve as a basis for subregional coordination on the priority themes of the countries and of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. Under the framework of the Central American Community (CAC), the Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), formed by the Council of Environment Ministers of Central America, agreed on a Regional Strategy on Climate Change. The Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre coordinates the Caribbean subregion’s response to climate change. Officially opened in August 2005, the Centre is the key node for information on climate change issues and on managing and adapting to climate change in the Caribbean. ECLAC has supported these initiatives with specialized data on the economic impact of climate change.

37. In the Asia-Pacific region, the Ministerial Conferences on Environment and Development, convened by ESCAP and held every five years, have provided a platform for the sharing of experiences and promoting cooperation at the regional level. An increasing number of member States are exploring how to “green” their development efforts. The green growth agenda promoted by ESCAP has been used in the region and has even been considered outside of the region. Kazakhstan, for example, has established itself as a leader in Central Asia and as a link between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.
in promoting green growth.

e. Disaster risk reduction

38. Disaster risk reduction has emerged as one of the critical areas for regional cooperation and joint action. Regional policies and programmes are of strategic relevance to reduce disaster risk and vulnerability and thus protect and enhance development gains. Regional action for disaster risk reduction has been driven by the necessities of securing better living conditions for the people that would be safe from the rising trends of disaster caused by natural hazards. There is increased awareness that the efforts of national governments alone would not be adequate to reduce the risks of disasters as some of the root causes of disasters are transnational in nature and can only be addressed in regional and global settings as well as through regional and global collaboration.

39. The Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) adopted in 2005, called upon the regional organizations to undertake the following five specific tasks within their mandates, priorities and resources: (a) promote regional programmes; (b) undertake and publish regional and subregional baseline assessments; (c) coordinate and publish periodic reviews on progress in the region and on impediments and support needs; (d) establish or strengthen existing specialized regional collaborative centres; and (e) support the development of regional mechanisms and capacities for the early warning to disasters. Important initiatives have been developed with the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and its regional offices in key areas, including sustainable development and climate change, water management, standards development, the preparation of a region-specific risk assessment report, monitoring the implementation of the HFA, the Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the support to countries in disaster risk assessments and the development of strategic national action plans (SNAPs).

40. In the Asia-Pacific region, which accounted for 86 per cent of deaths and 42 per cent of global economic losses from disasters during the last 30 years, many subregions have developed their own frameworks for disaster reduction. The South Asian countries adopted a Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management. The Pacific Island countries developed a regional framework for disaster risk reduction known as “An Investment for Sustainable Development in the Pacific Island Countries—Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management, A Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters”. The ASEAN countries went a step further by signing an Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response in July 2005.

f. Connectivity

41. The term connectivity is used to describe regional integration through linkages in transport, information and communications
technology, trade facilitation, harmonized norms and standards as well as improved infrastructure. In some form or other, this concept has provided the framework for different regions to undertake cooperation in diverse yet connected fields to ensure seamless flow of goods, services and people across borders. In the Asia-Pacific region, ASEAN leaders adopted the Master Plan on ASEAN connectivity, which calls for enhancing intraregional connectivity within ASEAN and its subregional grouping through enhanced trade, investment, tourism and development. In the ESCWA region, the concept of Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) is based on the fact that the transport sector, including land, sea and air modes, has a strategically significant role to play in fostering and sustaining the socio-economic development of countries in the region, and in promoting their integration, notably by enhancing flows of trade and tourists among them as well as between countries of the region and the rest of the world.

42. Harmonization of rules, norms and standards are drivers as well as tools for regional integration and improving connectivity. They facilitate and strengthen regional cooperation and integration. The EU has been a leader in the harmonization of rules, norms and standards, which have led to a strong and effective integration of its constituents. The UNECE’s work in developing norms and standards has contributed directly to European integration.

g. Social protection and other social issues
43. The impact of the multiple crises, especially on the most vulnerable populations has highlighted the importance of social protection and provision of basic services, especially for women who are particularly affected by weak or non-existent social protection systems. The EU has been addressing social protection and labour standards as an integral part of its work for a long time, but organizations such ASEAN have also given it due emphasis and integrated social protection as part of their programmes and policies. This is also true of a number of organizations in Africa, Latin America and the ESCWA region. In recent years, other social issues such as migration have also served as important foci of regional cooperation and integration. In the LAC region, the Inter-American Social Protection Network promotes exchange of experience on the formulation, implementation and impact of social protection and employment policies and measures at the hemispheric level. At the subregional level, the Central American Secretariat for Social Integration (SISCA) was set up to foster subregional cooperation and integration on social protection issues; while the Council for Social Development of UNASUR has chosen labour, social protection and social inclusion issues as its core concerns.

h. Health, including HIV and AIDS
44. HIV and AIDS is a serious developmental challenge,
especially in Africa. The enormous loss of life and the damage to family and social structures led many of the key regional organizations including the AU and regional economic communities to treat HIV and AIDS as a developmental challenge requiring the highest political commitment and multisectoral action. HIV has been integrated into the core agenda and action plans of a large number of regional organizations, especially in Africa and Asia and the Pacific including the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa, ASEAN and SAARC. Other issues such as cross-border health issues such as the recent pandemic of avian and human influenza have been concerns around which there has been strong regional cooperation in all regions, which has been fully synchronized and coordinated with global efforts.

1.4. Evolution of regionalism in each of the regions and the contribution of Regional Commissions

45. Regionalism has evolved differently given the specificities and particularities of each of the regions of the world. Similarly, Regional Commissions have contributed in different ways to the evolution of regionalism in each of the regions. This section provides an overview of this historic evolution and examines the contribution of the Regional Commissions, as pioneers of a UN system presence and their contribution to development efforts in the regions.

1.4.1. Africa

46. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established in 1963. Two of the primary objectives of the OAU were to promote the unity and solidarity of the African States to act as a collective voice and to eradicate all forms of colonialism. Within this context, the OAU had other objectives as well, such as promoting human rights, serving as a forum for the peaceful settlement of disputes among member States and raising the living standards of Africans. With this last aim in mind, member States of the OAU were interested in combining their economies into subregional markets that would ultimately form one Africa-wide economic union.

47. ECA was established in 1958 to accompany the decolonization efforts in the continent. It became the champion of regional integration since the mid-1960s proposing the division of Africa into regions for the purposes of economic development. Later, the Agreement establishing the AfDB, spearheaded by ECA, was adopted in August 1963, and the Bank began effective operations on 1 July 1966. The Bank’s major role is to contribute to the economic and social progress of its regional member countries—individually and collectively.

48. The Lagos Plan of Action was promoted by ECA, and adopted in 1980 by the OAU as a major step towards the goal of integration. It
envisaged five regional arrangements aimed at the creation of separate but convergent and over-arching integration agreements in three sub-Saharan regions. Together, these arrangements were expected to lead to an all-African common market by the year 2025. In 1991, the Lagos Plan of Action was followed by the Abuja Treaty, establishing the African Economic Community (AEC). The Abuja Treaty came into force in 1994 and it provided for the African Community to be set up through a gradual process, which would be achieved by coordination, harmonization and progressive integration of the activities of existing and future RECs in Africa. The RECs are regarded as the building blocks of the AEC.20

49. The implementation of the Abuja Treaty was designed as a process that would be accomplished in six stages over 34 years, i.e., by 2028. The first stage involves the strengthening of existing RECs and the creation of new ones where needed (five years), followed by stabilization of tariffs and other barriers to regional trade and strengthening of sectoral integration, particularly in the field of trade, agriculture, finance, transport and communication, industry and energy, as well as harmonization of the activities of the RECs over the next eight years. The third stage is the establishment of a free trade area and Customs Union at the level of each REC followed by coordination and harmonization of tariff and non-tariff systems among RECs, with a view to establishing a Continental Customs Union. The final stage envisages the establishment of an African Common Market and the adoption of common policies, and integration of all sectors, the establishment of an African Central Bank and a single African currency, the setting up of an African Economic and Monetary Union, and creating and electing the first Pan-African Parliament.

50. In July 1999, the OAU convened an extraordinary session of the Assembly and decided to create the African Union (AU) to supersede it, and as a means to expedite and deepen the process of economic and political integration in the continent. In 2002, the AU convened the First Assembly of the Heads of State of the African Union. The vision of the AU is that of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the region”. The AU’s objectives cover the range of issues originally addressed by the OAU. Their objectives address peace and security, territorial integrity, human rights, political and socio-economic integration, good governance, harmonization of policies, health, sustainable development and technological advancement, among others.

51. In addition to the REC’s formed under the auspices of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Abuja Treaty, another group of integration agreements developed outside the purview of the Lagos Plan of Action. These include the following: the Western African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) within the ambit of the ECOWAS and the Economic and
Monetary Union of Central Africa (CEMAC) within the proposed ECCAS region. Within the geographic area of East and South Africa, there are COMESA, SADC and the EAC.  

52. As a response to the marginalization and vulnerability of the African continent, not only in terms of trade and economic growth, but also in terms of insufficient or inadequate health services (e.g., to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic and high rates of maternal and infant mortality), education, employment opportunities for youth and women’s empowerment, NEPAD was born. NEPAD was adopted by African Heads of State and Government of the OAU in 2001 and was ratified by the AU in 2002 to address Africa’s development problems within a new paradigm. NEPAD’s main objectives are to reduce poverty, put Africa on a sustainable development path, halt the marginalization of Africa and empower women. In November 2003, the NEPAD was also endorsed by the UN General Assembly. The aim was to secure approval for the official endorsement of NEPAD as the framework, around which the international community, including the UN system, should focus its efforts for Africa’s development. In 2010, the AU Assembly decided to integrate the NEPAD into the structures and processes of the AU. This included the establishment of the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) as a technical body of the AU to replace the NEPAD secretariat. 

53. ECA has been facilitating regional integration in Africa by providing analytical and normative leadership for the promotion of regional integration and regional approaches. It promotes the adoption of region-wide norms and standards in areas ranging from transport, environment, trade facilitation and border crossing. Over the period 2006-2010, it produced a series of reports entitled “Assessment of Regional Integration in Africa” (ARIA) in collaboration with the AUC and the AfDB. Among its findings, the reports indicate that one of the greatest challenges to regional integration in Africa is rationalizing and harmonizing the many regional integration processes and initiatives in existence, in particular the RECs. In order to address the issue of multiplicity of RECs and overlapping memberships, the AU Summit held in 2006 decided to place a moratorium on recognition of new RECs. A majority of regional economic communities are in the second stage of integration processes, well within the framework of the Abuja Treaty. However, overlapping mandates and objective, duplicated integration policies, and the multiple memberships by the African countries appear to be slowing integration, reducing the regional economic communities’ effectiveness, and stretching limited financial resources. Another shortcoming is the poor implementation of agreed programmes at the national level, and insufficient continental coordination. For rationalization to be effective and successful, all the regional economic communities need to follow a well articulated framework that ensures congruence and convergence towards full integration of
the continent. To do so, they should follow several guiding principles, including aligning their vision with the African Union (AU) and the NEPAD. Rationalization cannot be carried out if the aims and objectives of the regional economic communities are not aligned with the vision of the AU and the NEPAD.23

1.4.2. The Asia-Pacific region

54. After the Second World War, the prospects for regionalism were extremely narrow in the Asia-Pacific region because of political reasons related to the outcomes of the war. In addition to this, many countries were still subject to colonialism and had not obtained their independence. However, countries in the region were desperately in need of support from the international community, and from each other, as many of them were ravaged by the effects of war and ridden with poverty and hunger. The Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) was created by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1947 to assist in post-war economic reconstruction. In 1974, the Commission emerged anew as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). In 1954, ECAFE proposed the establishment of a development bank that would do at the regional level what the World Bank was doing at the global level, and passed a resolution on the establishment of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1966.24

55. The political tensions arising from the Cold War and the Viet Nam War still impeded progress towards regional integration and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Nonetheless, a few like-minded countries in Southeast Asia that had recently gained independence and wanted to concentrate on nation-building efforts and to support each other in this endeavor, created ASEAN. The ASEAN is a geo-political and economic organization of 10 countries located in Southeast Asia, which was formed in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Since then, membership has expanded to include Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam. Its objectives include the acceleration of economic growth, social progress, cultural development among its members, the protection of peace and stability of the region and to provide opportunities for member countries to discuss differences peacefully. The ASEAN Community is comprised of three pillars, namely the ASEAN Political Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. Each pillar has its own blueprint and together with the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Strategic Framework and the IAI Work Plan Phase II (2009-2015) form the Roadmap for the ASEAN Community. The ASEAN Charter entered into force on 15 December 2008 and it serves as a firm foundation for the ASEAN Community by providing legal status and institutional framework. It also codifies ASEAN norms, rules and values; sets clear targets for ASEAN; and presents accountability and compliance.

56. In 1971, the countries of the Pacific,
along with Australia and New Zealand, founded what is now the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) which has 20 members. In South Asia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka joined together to form SAARC in 1985. Afghanistan joined the organization in 2005. Also in 1985, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was formed as an intergovernmental regional organization with Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan and Turkey as members for the purpose of promoting economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the member States. In 1992, ECO expanded to include seven new members, namely: the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan. APEC was established in 1989 to promote free trade and economic cooperation throughout the broader Asia-Pacific region. In 1997, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand, later joined by Bhutan and Nepal, established what is now called the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). The regional dynamics further evolved in the early 2000s with the establishment of the SCO in 2001 as an intergovernmental organization by China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

ESCAP has also helped form a number of other regional organizations. Over the years, it established regional institutions that took over some of its work. ESCAP created a series of economic and social development institutions which were merged in 1981 to create the Asian and Pacific Development Centre, located in Kuala Lumpur—an autonomous institution engaged in policy research, training and advocacy. Other organizations established under the auspices of ESCAP include the Asian Clearing Union in 1973, the Asian Re-Insurance Corporation in 1979, as well as a series of organizations in the 1960s and 1970s to support producers of primary commodities. Other important milestones have been the establishment of the Mekong River Commission in 1957, the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) in 1972, and the Committee for Coordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas (CCOP) in 1985.

In the area of natural disasters, ESCAP joined with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in setting up a Typhoon Committee in 1968, initially with seven members, located in Bangkok. Over the years, the Typhoon Committee, which is now located in Quezon City in the Philippines, has become recognized for its strong spirit of cooperation and the way it has applied meteorological and hydrological sciences to disaster prevention and preparedness. Subsequent to the establishment of the Typhoon Committee, ESCAP joined WMO in 1971 to establish the Panel on Tropical Cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. Since then the eight members of the Panel have expanded their cooperation to

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flood and storm surge forecasting. In recent years, ESCAP supported the establishment of the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES), an intergovernmental institution owned and managed by its member States for the generation and application of early warning information. RIMES was established on 30 April 2009, and operates from its regional early warning center located at the campus of the Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand.

59. In the area of disability, ESCAP helped to establish the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD) in Bangkok in 2002 as an outcome of the ESCAP-initiated first Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002). APCD promotes the empowerment of persons with disabilities and the creation of a barrier-free society for all in Asia and the Pacific. With regard to institutions active in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development, a regional research and training institute, was established by ESCAP in Tehran in 1975.

60. ESCAP has played a leading role in facilitating regional agreements and establishing frameworks for regional cooperation in various sectors and thematic areas. The First Agreement on Trade Negotiations among Developing Member Countries of ESCAP, which came to be known as the "Bangkok Agreement", was signed in July 1975. In 2004, this evolved into the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), a preferential trading arrangement open to all ESCAP developing members and associate members. APTA currently includes Bangladesh, China, India, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka, and a number of other members have expressed an interest in joining. On transport, ESCAP facilitated the development of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network which entered into force in July 2005, as well as the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans Asian Railway Network, which entered into force in June 2009. It is currently developing a third intergovernmental agreement on dry ports to complement the highway and railway agreements. Furthermore, ESCAP provided technical assistance for the development and implementation of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Cross Border Transport Agreement under the auspices of the ADB’s GMS programme.

61. ESCAP continues to promote regional cooperation and collective action to build shared prosperity, social equity and sustainability in Asia and the Pacific. The Commission functions as a regional centre for rigorous analysis and statistics, sharing development policies and practices and innovative solutions, and building regional and subregional consensus, norms and standards, on a range of economic, social and environmental issues, based on United Nations values. In recent years, in the post-crisis scenario, ESCAP has developed, expanded and promoted an agenda for social
equity to ensure that governments invest in their people through social policies and social protection while the recovery takes hold. It has also developed a coordinated voice for the Least Developed and the Landlocked Developing Countries of the region.

62. Asia’s approach has been pragmatic and flexible. It has followed a bottom-up process that supports subregional cooperation initiatives through a multitrack approach, reflecting the diversity and heterogeneity of the region. This approach, which has been sometimes described as “gradual”, has allowed both developing and developed economies to participate in building a broader and unified architecture. Asian integration is supported by a dense web of overlapping regional and subregional institutions that are largely intergovernmental and focus on specific functional goals. So far, the existing institutions and arrangements have served the region well. But the progress of regionalism has remained uneven across subregions and thematic sectors. East Asia is more extensively integrated than South Asia, Central Asia, or the Pacific. As a result, across the region there is serious rethinking and discussion on the institutional framework needed to lock in the realized gains and support the next steps for enhanced regional cooperation and integration.

1.4.3. Europe

63. The EU is a unique economic and political partnership between 27 European countries. It has delivered half a century of peace, stability and prosperity, helped raise living standards, launched a single European currency, and is progressively building a single Europe-wide market in which people, goods, services, and capital move among member States as freely as within one country. The EU has been a successful model and “trendsetter” for regional integration in the world. Despite the present debt crisis, it has achieved the “deepest” form of regional integration so far including setting common standards on social and environmental issues.

64. The EU was created in the aftermath of the Second World War. The first steps were to foster economic cooperation: countries that trade with one another are economically interdependent and will thus avoid conflict. Since then, the union has developed into a huge single market with the Euro as its common currency. What began as a purely economic union has evolved into an organization spanning all areas, from development aid to environmental policy. The EU actively promotes human rights and democracy and has the most ambitious emission reduction targets for fighting climate change in the world. Thanks to the abolition of border controls between EU countries, it is now possible for people to travel freely within most of the EU. It has also become much easier to live, study and work in another EU country.

65. The contribution of UNECE to regionalism in Europe is in promoting pan-European and transatlantic economic integration and...
facilitating greater cooperation among its 56 member States. The principal attributes of the UNECE are the ability to convene experts to address an issue, within its specific area of expertise, to facilitate a dialogue that leads to common understanding or agreed positions and the development of common regulations and standards, and thereby to provide services to member States. Institution-building derives from the dissemination function and the application of the norms, standards, best practices, or other lessons learned, thus building a coherent regional economic space.

66. UNECE contributed to post-conflict confidence-building in South-East Europe after 1995 by supporting functional economic and environmental cooperation; it provided expertise and institutional support to the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), the Stability Pact for South-East Europe and the Regional Cooperation Council. This contribution was based on the expertise, legal norms and standards and best practice recommendations of UNECE.

67. The activities of UNECE in providing legal norms, standards and best practice recommendations have assisted many of the former transition economies in transforming their economies from centrally planned to socially oriented market economies. The UNECE’s instruments and projects continue to support the process of implementation of the acquis communautaire in the candidates for membership in the EU. For example, the Environmental Performance Reviews carried out by ECE, such as recently in Montenegro and Serbia, as well as projects on transboundary water management and long-range transboundary air pollution are helping the countries of the Western Balkans comply with European norms for the protection of the environment. The UNECE has been one of the organizations providing substantive support to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA); this group has had a revolving membership that has served as an antechamber for EU accession for all of the central and eastern European members of the EU. An amended and revised version of the Agreement was signed in 2006, and currently includes all countries of the Western Balkans and Moldova.

68. The UNECE working with ESCAP has played an important role in promoting cooperation in Central Asia by creating in 1998 the UN Special Programme for the Economies in Central Asia (SPECA). SPECA offers a neutral UN umbrella to discuss strategic issues of regional cooperation. SPECA Economic Forums have provided an opportunity to address both intraregional trade and investment and cooperation with their main economic neighbours in the region including the Russian Federation and the European Union. These strategic discussions have also covered broader aspects of regional economic cooperation, including its role in the stabilization and development of Afghanistan. SPECA has created six project-working groups to promote regional cooperation; which include: transport and border crossing, water and energy resources, knowledge-based
development, statistics, trade and gender. In addition to strengthening and modernizing existing institutions, the UNECE is offering assistance within the SPECA framework regarding legal harmonization. The UNECE also leads international efforts to strengthen and modernize the legal basis of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea—an umbrella organization dealing with the joint management of shared water resources and coordinating efforts to overcome the consequences of the environmental catastrophe of the Aral Sea. Increasingly, the UNECE cooperates with subregional organizations of South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia—such as BSEC, RCC, CIS or the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) or the Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. The UNECE established a particularly strong cooperation with the OSCE, notably in the economic and environmental areas.

69. At the pan-European level, the “Environment for Europe” (EfE) process is a unique partnership of member States within the ECE region, organizations of the United Nations system represented in the region, other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, the private sector and other major groups. Its ministerial conferences which take place every 3-4 years provide a high-level platform for stakeholders to discuss, decide and join efforts in addressing environmental priorities across the 56 countries of the ECE region. At the same time, the process focuses on helping countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and of South-Eastern Europe to raise their environmental standards towards a common regional standard. The Seventh Ministerial Conference in this process in Astana/Kazakhstan in September 2011 with its focus on the sustainable management of water and on greening the economy has shaped the contribution from the region to the forthcoming Rio+20 Conference.

1.4.4. Latin America and the Caribbean

70. Latin America began its trajectory towards integration after the Second World War. Early regionalism in Latin America originated from purely economic reasons that became manifest in the form of free trade agreements such as the Latin America Free Trade Association—LAFTA (1960), the Central American Common Market or CACM (1960), the Caribbean Free Trade Association—CARIFTA (1968) and the Cartagena Agreement (1969). The main goal of the Cartagena Agreement (Andean Group), the Central American Common Market and CARICOM (1973) was the establishment of a common market, through the creation of a Customs Union. These treaties pursued long-term development goals based on industrialization and productive complimentarity among member States. The limited scope of domestic markets and the need to increase employment opportunities to match demographic growth drove Latin America to look for options for economic and social well-being through regional cooperation. Disparate economic and development models
of countries in the region impeded progress in terms of the depth of integration that was originally envisioned by these common market agreements.

71. ECLAC (established in 1948), played a critical role in framing a systematic and coherent approach to Latin American development and regional integration. ECLAC has provided the philosophy and the thought behind the process of regionalism in Latin America. It developed the well-known “Latin American Structuralism” theory, building a truly integrated concept of development, which was based on strengthening industrialization and promoting full employment. The increase in productivity and wages would contribute to income distribution and to overcome long-term structural poverty. To supplement this, ECLAC proposed an export strategy for manufactured goods through regional integration. The purpose of trade liberalization in the region was to overcome the limitations of national markets through the use of economies of scale. However, the evolution of Latin American integration was somewhat impaired by the lack of true commitment from the governments of the region regarding the adoption of harmonized macroeconomic policies.

72. LAFTA was created by the 1960 Treaty of Montevideo by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. In 1980, LAFTA reorganized into the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI). LAFTA brought many new positive changes to Latin America. With LAFTA in place, existing productive capacity could be used more fully to supply regional needs, industries could reduce costs as a result of potential economies through expanded output and regional specialization, and attraction to new investment occurred as a result of the regional market area.

73. The second wave of regionalism in Latin America began in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The US joined APEC in 1989, and NAFTA between the US, Canada and Mexico was signed in 1994. In 1990, this was taken a step further with the introduction of the Americas Initiative by USA, proposing a scale free trade area. From that moment onwards, North-South interregional agreements became one of the most characteristic elements of the new stage of Latin American regionalism. The second phase was founded on the concept of “open regionalism” derived from a theory of neo-structuralism developed by ECLAC in the early 1990s. Regional integration was promoted as a “building block” for a free and competitive market.

74. In the following years, several other agreements have been signed: the Group of Three (G-3) between Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela (1989), MERCOSUR between Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay (1991), the transformation of the Andean Group into the Andean Community (1997), and the transformation of CARICOM (2002) into the Caribbean Community, including the CARICOM single market economy. This
collection of integration schemes shared some common characteristics including: wider product coverage and “depth” of the agreements, liberalization of foreign direct investment (FDI); enhanced participation of the private sector and; above all, striving to achieve compatibility between a reasonable protection of the integrated market and the efficient insertion in the international markets.

75. In the political arena, the Rio Group was created in 1986 in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro by means of the Declaration of Rio de Janeiro, signed by Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela (the members of the Contadora Group and the Contadora Support Group). The Rio Group does not have a secretariat nor a permanent body, and instead relies on yearly summits of Heads of States. More recently, after the onslaught of the global economic and financial crisis, there has been general consensus concerning the fact that the neo-liberal reforms inspired by the Washington Consensus did not succeed in driving Latin America towards accelerated growth and sustainable development. Additionally, during the period of rapid market liberalization promoted by the Washington Consensus, Latin America had little leverage in the multilateral negotiations of the WTO to make them more socially and environmentally oriented.

76. In response, in 2004, the Brazilian Government proposed the creation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), which focuses on the creation of a new regional production platform, abandoning the emphasis given to mere trade liberalization. UNASUR is an intergovernmental union integrating two existing custom unions: MERCOSUR and the Andean Community of Nations, as part of a continuing process of South American integration. It is modeled after the EU. One of the initiatives of UNASUR is the creation of a single market, beginning with the elimination of tariffs for non-sensitive products by 2014, and for sensitive products by 2019. The process is to be developed upon the progressive convergence of the procedures pre-existing MERCOSUR and the Andean Community subregional economic blocs. But the UNASUR initiative extends to other areas beyond trade and financial integration to address issues that include: the world drug problem, infrastructure and planning, education, culture, science, technology and innovation, social development, defense, energy, health and the settlement of disputes. Undoubtedly, UNASUR is one of the most ambitious integration initiatives and, as such, constitutes a landmark in the evolution of regionalism in the Americas, and ECLAC is providing technical support to the different initiatives put forward by its secretariat.

77. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), originally the Caribbean Community and Common Market, was established by the Treaty of Chaguaramas which came into effect on 1 August 1973. The first four signatories were Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. The
Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is now an organization of 15 Caribbean nations and dependencies. CARICOM’s main purposes are to promote economic integration and cooperation among its members, to ensure that the benefits of integration are equitably shared, and to coordinate foreign policy. Its major activities involve coordinating economic policies and development planning; devising and instituting special projects for the less-developed countries within its jurisdiction; operating as a regional single market for many of its members; and handling regional trade disputes. The first summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CLACS) will be held in December 2011, with the aim to further advance and foster a single forum for comprehensive dialogue and cooperation between all Latin American and Caribbean States. This will supersede the Rio Group and the process of the Unity Summit of Latin America and the Caribbean which had been established in February 2010.

1.4.5. The ESCWA region

78. The Arab World refers to Arabic-speaking countries stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the West to the Arabian Sea in the East, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the North to the Horn of Africa in the Indian Ocean in the South. The League of Arab States (LAS) was formed in 1945 with the main goal of drawing “closer the relations between member States and coordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries”. The initial six members of the LAS were: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria. The LAS currently has 22 members and four observers.

79. Through institutions such as the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization and the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League’s Council of Arab Economic Unity, the LAS facilitates political, economic, cultural, scientific and social programmes designed to promote the interests of the Arab world. It has served as a forum for the member States to coordinate their policy positions, to deliberate on matters of common concern, to settle some Arab disputes, and to limit conflicts such as the 1958 Lebanon crisis. The League has served as a platform for the drafting and conclusion of many landmark documents promoting economic integration. One example is the Joint Arab Economic Action Charter which sets out the principles for economic activities in the region.

80. Conflicts and political turmoil in the region led the LAS to focus much of its efforts on political matters rather than an active pursuit of a regional integration agenda among its member States. However, several promising major economic projects are set to be completed in the near future, including extensions to the Arab Gas Pipeline.

81. In May 1981, the leaders of the United Arab Emirates, the State of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman,
the State of Qatar and the State of Kuwait reached a cooperative framework joining the six States to effect coordination, integration and inter-connection among the member States in all fields in order to achieve unity, thus forming the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The Charter of the GCC states that the basic objectives are to effect coordination, integration and inter-connection between member States in all fields, strengthening ties between their peoples, formulating similar regulations in various fields such as economy, finance, trade, customs, tourism, legislation, administration, as well as fostering scientific and technical progress in industry, mining, agriculture, water and animal resources, establishing scientific research centres, setting up joint ventures, and encouraging cooperation of the private sector.

82. The Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) is a pan-Arab free trade area that came into existence in 1997, founded by 14 countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates). In 2009, Algeria joined GAFTA as the eighteenth member State. GAFTA has a high income, population and area, and has significant resources available, and is expected to render 95 per cent of all Arab products free of customs duty within the subregion.

83. The Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) was established on 9 August 1973. The purpose of setting up the Commission was to raise the level of economic activity in ESCWA member countries and strengthen cooperation among them. It was also intended to meet the need of the countries in Western Asia for the services of a regional economic commission to promote the development efforts in the region. In recognition of the social component of its work, the Commission was entrusted with new responsibilities and became the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). ESCWA currently comprises 14 countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. ESCWA has long been engaged in regional work and has developed strong partnerships with UN and non-UN entities.

84. The League of Arab States has been ESCWA’s primary partner in promoting a regional approach in these areas. The new regional architecture in the ESCWA region involves social, economic and political dimensions. They have wide-ranging impacts on the management of natural resources and trade in the region and security relations among countries and its ties to other regions. Various initiatives and cooperation agreements that aim to strengthen and substantiate the new regional architecture have been undertaken. They include the establishment of the Arab Ministerial Water Council to serve the Arab region in the field of water resources and the Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity to serve the Arab region in the field of electricity,
all under the auspices of the League of Arab States (LAS). Similar initiatives were undertaken through the establishment of the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) and the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET) to support Governments in the region in capacity-building activities to improve the performance of water-related ministries in the ESCWA region.

85. In 1999, ESCWA’s member States adopted a declaration on the development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq known as ITSAM. The concept of ITSAM is based on the fact that the transport sector, including land, sea and air modes, has a strategically significant role to play in fostering and sustaining the socio-economic development of the ESCWA countries and in promoting their integration, notably by enhancing flows of trade and tourists among them and between countries of the region and the rest of the world. The most important components of ITSAM are: (a) the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq; (b) the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq; (c) the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Maritime Transport in the Arab Mashreq; (d) national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade; (e) road safety; (f) multimodal transport in the Arab Mashreq; (g) ITSAM Methodological Framework; and (h) the related geographical information system.

86. Taking into consideration that maritime transport plays an important role in strengthening intraregional and foreign trade, promotes the economic and social integration of the ESCWA region and the Arab region in general, ESCWA initiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of Cooperation on Maritime Transport in the Arab Mashreq that entered into force on 4 September 2006, and has been joined by 10 members namely Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

87. Ongoing socio-political changes in the region have not yet set their course and might yield different results than those that were initially targeted by those who initiated them, due to the multitude of socio-political forces at play from within and outside the region. The transition to democracy will require adequate debate on rights-based approaches to development and civil society participation in this process. The region would benefit from a coherent and comprehensive political vision on socio-economic development emanating from the region itself with ownership from all stakeholders, where regional cooperation is seen as a key strategy for for realizing sustainable development. This would strengthen the ability of regional organizations to collaborate on a common platform.
Chapter 2.

United Nations system engagement and cooperation with the regional organizations and processes

88. In addition to the Regional Commissions, an average of some 30 UN funds, programmes and agencies are operating at the regional level, with varied normative and operational country support. Each region also has a significant and growing number of non-UN regional and subregional organizations of a political/security or economic and financial nature, including the regional development banks, as well as research institutions and civil society organizations.

89. Indeed, the multiplication of both UN and non-UN organizations within each region of the world calls for a reflection on the way regional cooperation could be reviewed and adjusted, both in institutional and operational terms. Increased coherence and efficiency at the regional level would benefit all countries in the same region, and provide greater support to their own national efforts.

90. The UN system has a unique role in guiding these regional processes in such a way that they uphold universal values, principles and goals to which the international community has committed, such as democracy, peace, human rights, social justice and equity. The UN Regional Commissions have been functioning as regional arms of the UN in their respective regions, and are an integral part of their regional institutional landscape. Despite being organized differently to cater to the specific needs and priorities of the regions which they serve, all the Regional Commissions share key objectives aiming to foster economic integration at the subregional and regional levels, to promote the regional implementation of internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to support regional development by contributing to bridge economic, social and environmental gaps among their member countries and subregions.

91. Regional Commissions use the following modalities in implementing their programme of work: (a) providing evidence-based analysis to support discussions and dialogue; (b) using their convening authority to bring together experts and policymakers to address regional issues; (c). advocating substantive and political support for key initiatives; (d) ensuring regional coordination, through the Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCMs), bringing together UN and other regional development partners to coordinate efforts in thematic areas; and (e) knowledge-sharing and networking by building capacity and sharing experiences across region, in areas such as statistics, economic and social analysis and trends.
92. This chapter intends to illustrate the current nature, depth and structure of engagement of the UN system at the regional level with the regional organizations and other regional actors in the area of development, particularly in view of the fact that non-UN regional processes and institutions have grown in number and importance. The regional development architecture is rapidly evolving and it is necessary to take stock of whether the UN system is keeping pace with this development. This chapter will also explore opportunities for greater coherence and synergy in cooperation between UN and non-UN regional organizations by enhanced and more effective use of existing structures for coordination and cooperation, and through better utilization of complementarities among UN agencies, regional intergovernmental bodies and other regional actors.

93. This chapter is based on responses by UN system agencies, including the UN Regional Commissions to a questionnaire for the study. The questionnaire was sent to the Executive Heads of UN organizations, and also circulated through the CEB and HLCP secretariat to all members. It was also circulated through the RCMs. The questionnaire is included as an annex to this study.

94. The questionnaire was intended to gather information about the type of engagement of UN system agencies at the regional level and to obtain recommendations from the agencies on how to improve cooperation and coordination within this sphere. A total of 24 responses were received from the following agencies (listed in alphabetical order): FAO, IAEA, IFAD, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UN-DESA, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNISDR UNODC, UNWOMEN, UNWTO, UPU, WB, WFP, WHO, WIPO and WTO. Some of the responses contain information from certain regions. While information may not have been received from all agencies and from all regions, there is a very large body of representative information available, covering a wide variety of sectors for a thorough analysis to be made.

95. From an analysis of the responses received, it is clear that there is considerable interaction and collaboration between the UN system at the regional level and non-UN regional organizations and processes. The cooperation extends across a multitude of sectors in the economic, social and environmental spheres which include; food security and agriculture, energy, health, trade, and macroeconomic policy coordination and disaster risk reduction and management. The modality of cooperation ranges from formal structures including joint secretariats, Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), project- and issue-based support to informal unwritten agreements. The nature of support provided is in the form of technical assistance and advisory services as well as capacity-building. The analysis of the responses is grouped under the following key headings: (i) Institutional structures for cooperation; (ii)
Substantive areas of cooperation covered and key outcomes achieved; and (iii) Mechanisms for coordination among UN organizations at the regional level.

2.1. Institutional structures for cooperation

96. Under this section, a brief review is provided of the institutional structures for cooperation between the key regional organizations and the UN in each region, including the main forums for consultations and review. The substantive areas of support provided and the key outcomes are covered in section 2.2.

2.1.1. Africa

97. In Africa, the structure for cooperation at the regional level between the principal non-UN regional entity, the AU and the UN is well defined. ECA’s long-standing cooperation with the AUC and AfDB has been further strengthened in recent years with the revitalization of the AUC-ECA-AfDB Joint Secretariat in 2010, which provides the main framework for collaboration among the three premier African institutions. Since 2006, the three regional institutions have continued to strengthen their partnership across the board through active dialogue and consultations as well as undertaking joint programmes and activities in various development fields of common interest within the framework of the Joint Secretariat;

98. Beyond their work within the Joint Secretariat, both ECA and AUC have also continued to collaborate in jointly organizing major meetings and events such as the African Development Forum; the annual session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and the biannual session of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry (CAMI), to bring more coherence to the consideration of issues on Africa’s development agenda. The African Development Forum brings together all stakeholders, particularly the civil society and private sector, to dwell on major development policy issues and challenges facing the continent. Organized by AUC with the technical assistance of ECA and UNIDO, the CAMI Conference is a pan-African response to a coordinated approach to promoting sustainable industrial development. In the past three years, CAMI has developed the Africa Union Action Plan for the Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa (AIDA) endorsed by the AU Heads of States Summit in 2008 whose theme was dedicated to “Africa’s Industrialization”. Similarly, ECA and AfDB have continued to expand the scope of their collaboration beyond the work in the Joint Secretariat to include joint studies on specific issues of mutual interest, including the organization of joint meetings such as the African Economic Conference.

99. ECA, AfDB and AUC have also continued to collaborate in jointly organizing major meetings and events to promote private sector participation such as the Pan-African Investment Forum and the first AUC Conference of Energy Ministers in Africa, as
well as Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) conference/workshop in the development of infrastructure, in particular energy sector and public service delivery. This has resulted in the creation of a “Working Group on PPPs in Africa” consisting of major international development partners and private sector organizations to create synergies, avoid duplications and coordinate future initiatives and work programmes.

100. The second tier of intergovernmental organizations in Africa with which ECA collaborates is formed by the regional economic communities (RECs) at the subregional level. The RECs are the main pillars of subregional cooperation and integration in Africa. Besides being instrumental in the establishment of some of the RECs, ECA has developed an extensive programme of collaboration with many of them to foster subregional integration and development on a wide range of issues. ECA’s substantive support to the RECs is channelled through the multi-year programme of cooperation (MYPs) agreed between the ECA subregional offices (SROs) and the main RECs in the respective subregions in support of specific subregional priorities and programmes.

101. In addition to the bilateral cooperation described above, ECA also works closely with other UN agencies in the context of the Regional Coordination Mechanisms of UN agencies working in Africa in support of the African Union and its NEPAD programme (RCM-Africa). Following the adoption of the NEPAD programme by African leaders in 2001, UN organizations working in Africa have carried out their support activities through a cluster arrangement, working closely with the African Union Commission, the RECs and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency—all of them beneficiaries, who have become part and parcel of the mechanism, which initially started as a UN affair. Nine clusters have been established to facilitate inter-agency coordination in support of the various priorities of NEPAD. Numerous reviews have moved the mechanism from its initial concentration on strengthening processes to focusing on results. The "Delivering as One" concept has gained increased acceptance, with agencies rethinking their way of working to move towards a collective approach and to provide support in the context of the RCM. Clusters, to varying degrees, have aligned their activities with the priorities of the African Union (AU) and its NEPAD programme, and with the priorities of the AU sectoral ministerial bodies. Likewise, clusters have intensified their efforts to interact more regularly and establish business plans to embark on inter-agency joint programming and joint implementation of specific projects, including providing technical and capacity-building support, undertaking advocacy, policy analysis, consensus building, and normative and analytical studies to assist with priority setting—these being the areas of focus of the AU and its NEPAD programme. In 2006, ECA established a
special unit to provide technical assistance to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in the continent.

102. Strengthening of regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies is also being supported by the UN system through the Ten Year Capacity-Building Framework, ensuring a coordinated and broad complementary effort by the UN system in building the capacity of the AUC in various areas, including peace and security. In addition, ECA’s subregional offices have been re-organized and their programme of work and capacity aligned to meet the needs of the different RECs.

103. In addition, a number of agencies and UN organizations have MoUs and agreements for providing support to regional organizations in Africa. As per information available through the questionnaire, FAO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNICEF, UNIDO, WFP, IMO, ITU, IAEA, WIPO work with a wide range of regional actors including the EAC, IGAD, ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA, ECCAS and UEMAO. The areas of cooperation and outcomes achieved are explored in the sections below. While the list is not exhaustive, it indicates a wide range of cooperation between the UN and non-UN regional entities in Africa. The modality of collaboration varies from the establishment of Joint Secretariats (e.g., ECA-AUC-AfDB), MoUs and agreements to project-based collaboration.

2.1.2. Asia-Pacific
104. In the Asia-Pacific, ASEAN has collaborated with the UN almost from its inception. The highest forum for review of collaboration between ASEAN and the UN is the ASEAN-UN Summit. Three such Summits have been held so far. ESCAP, in a partnership with RCM members and ASEAN, produced the publication, "Striving Together: ASEAN and the UN", as a combined UN contribution to the third Summit in 2010. The publication took stock of ASEAN’s progress with regional integration, the support provided to it by UN agencies over the years, and opportunities to deepen cooperation between the two organizations in the years ahead. The outcomes of third ASEAN-UN Summit led to further strengthening of the coordination mechanism between ASEAN and the UN, including steps for: (1) exchange of experiences and best practices through a series of ASEAN-UN seminars, workshops and training activities on issues such as preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacebuilding; (2) the preparation and implementation of a joint "ASEAN-UN Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management 2011-2015", as called for in the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-UN Collaboration in Disaster Management adopted by the Summit; and (3) cooperation to support the implementation of Work Plan II of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity.

105. The UN and ASEAN signed an MoU in 2007 providing for regular consultations on matters of strategic importance and pledging
to intensify cooperation on a wide range of issues including regional peace and stability and the Millennium Development Goals. This overarching MoU provides the broad umbrella under which a number of UN organizations and specialized agencies provide support to ASEAN on a bilateral basis. These include FAO on agriculture and food security, ILO on labour standards and social security, UNESCO on education, communication and information, UNDP (MDGs, Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, Crime prevention, HIV), UNICEF (Education and child rights), UNIDO (Private sector development, SME development, clusters and networks), UNODC (Drug Trafficking, Drug Abuse and Crime Prevention) and UNAIDS (HIV). Bilateral cooperation between ESCAP and ASEAN extends to the areas of disaster preparedness and early warning, trade, economic and finance, transport, environment sustainability and climate change, gender equality, food security, health systems, HIV/AIDS, international migration, MDG monitoring and review. IMO has a bilateral MoU with ASEAN, based on which it addresses issues on maritime safety, security and protection of marine environment. In 2009, UNISDR signed a 5-year tripartite MoU with ASEAN and the World Bank to support the implementation of HFA and AADMER.

107. ESCAP, UNDP and other UN agencies provide support to the programmes of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in Noumea, New Caledonia and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) in Suva, Fiji. One of the key outcomes is the development of a comprehensive UNDAF for the Pacific to ensure that UN support to the subregion is coherent and coordinated. ESCAP has also developed regional frameworks in a number of areas, which serve as the reference points for regional organizations to develop their own strategies and programmes. Examples include the Green Growth Strategy in the area of environment and the Biwako Millennium Framework in the area of Disability.

2.1.3. Europe

108. The collaboration between the UNECE and the EU has a long history, particularly in the areas of transport of dangerous goods, harmonization of vehicle regulations, unified rules and enforcement of driving time and poverty alleviation, extension services and youth entrepreneurship through memorandum of understandings. UNCTAD is developing a comprehensive multi-year (2011-2015) investment work programme with ASEAN to help realize the objectives and key investment provisions of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint and the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement. ESCAP supports the implementation of subregional frameworks of SAARC in areas such as environment, health and population, rural development, gender and transport.

106. FAO, UNDP, UNIDO and UNODC provide technical assistance to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in a range of developmental spheres which include food security, energy and
rest time of professional drivers in road freight and passenger transport and in border-crossing facilitation. In the area of trade, the UNECE collaborates with the OECD (on the development, interpretation and harmonized application of agricultural quality standards), the Codex secretariats (in the area of agricultural quality standards), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (to promote Aid for Trade in Central Asia through the Aid for Trade Roadmap for SPECA Initiative Steering Group). Within the context of the MoU between the secretariat of the OSCE and the secretariat of the UNECE signed in 2004, the UNECE supports the review of implementation of OSCE commitments in the economic and environmental dimension, including in the field of energy, in accordance with its expertise and resource availability.

109. The ILO has cooperated with the EU since 1958, through formal cooperation agreements covering both internal and external policies and activities that are relevant to the ILO mandate framed by the ILO Decent Work Agenda and promoting fair globalization. Cooperation with the Council of Europe mainly concentrates on social security.

110. Cooperation between the European Union and the World Bank involves high-level policy dialogue and coordination on global issues. Partnership extends to all EU institutions including the European Investment Bank and, increasingly, the European Parliament (through advocacy on development issues through the Development Council and the Presidencies) and the European Parliament (through attendance at key committee meetings).

111. There is also considerable cooperation between the UNECE and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC). In 2007, the UNECE, ESCAP and EurAsEC signed a memorandum of understanding with the objective of promoting effective cooperation between these organizations in support of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in EurAsEC member countries and implementation of activities under the framework of the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). Also in 2007, the UNECE and the EurAsEC Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (IPA) signed a Cooperation Agreement focused, in particular, on assisting in the harmonization of a draft legislation developed under the aegis of IPA with relevant ECE legal instruments. In 2010, the UNECE and the Eurasian Development Bank signed a MoU to cooperate in promoting regional economic integration and work together towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the interests of the countries in the Eurasian region.

112. Technical cooperation between the UNECE and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) is based on a Cooperation Agreement in the areas of development of entrepreneurship and SMEs,
transport, and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). UNECE’s cooperation with the Central European Initiative (CEI) is based on a MoU covering the areas of agricultural standards, enterprise development, energy efficiency, real estate and investment promotion.

2.1.4. Latin America and the Caribbean

113. In the LAC region, ECLAC provides support to a number of regional organizations, including MERCOSUR, CARICOM, UNASUR, CCAD, the Rio Group and the Summit of Latin American and Caribbean States (CALC) whose convergence process into the Community of LAC States (CELAC) is expected to crystallize in 2012, SICA and the Andean Community through a range of MoUs and cooperation agreements. Many of these organizations are supported by the intellectual and operative capacities of ECLAC, to advance their own institutional objectives of being regional actors. A concrete example is the cooperation between ECLAC and the Summit of Latin American and Caribbean States (CALC) for the elaboration of a work document and discussion of “Opportunities for Convergence and Regional Cooperation” presented at the Cancun Summit in 2010 in Mexico.

114. ECLAC focuses on promotion of consensuses, agreements in the modality of general frameworks, which can have more flexibility in implementation and monitoring of results. The fact that these agreements are not binding in character, have not been an obstacle for the countries, which use these frameworks and report on their actions to fulfil their commitments. Two concrete examples are: (i) the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, created in 2009 within the framework of the Regional Conference on Women for Latin America and the Caribbean (a subsidiary body of ECLAC); and (ii) more recently, the Regional Broadband Observatory, created in 2011. These allow follow-up from a regional perspective in two areas which are currently very relevant for public policy in the LAC countries: gender equality and women’s empowerment and the advancement of the technologies of information and the dissemination and access to the Internet.

115. ECLAC is also promoting an ambitious new agenda for the region which is outlined in its document “Time for equality, closing gaps opening trails” prepared for the occasion of ECLAC’s thirty-third Commission Session. As per this new agenda, it proposes State and political action to harmonize democracy with equality; promotes leaps in productivity and environmental sustainability, inclusive markets and active citizenship; and generates the necessary social covenants in Latin America and the Caribbean.

116. Among other agencies working in the region, IAEA works with CARICOM, ACS and IICA, the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE), and PAHO through project-based agreements and MoUs, and it provides
support on environmental management and developing a Latin American Energy and Economy database. The WB partners with a number of organizations including the IDB, OAS, ECLAC, the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), CARICOM, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), SICA, the Central American Economic Integration System (SIECA), the Secretariat for Central American Social Integration (SISCA) and CEPREDENAC. Cooperation extends over a diverse range of areas outlined in the Country Partnership Study for each country. In addition, the WB is mainstreaming Disaster Risk Management (DRM) considerations into the national development plans in its work with countries across LAC. Where there is WB financing involved, it is usually structured in the form of agreements—loan or grant. FAO has provided technical support in the preparation of a Regional Policy for Food and Nutrition Security (RPFNS) in the LAC region to ensure that the regional food production, processing, distribution, marketing and trade, and food safety and agricultural public health system is capable of providing safe, adequate, nutritious and affordable food for the subregion's inhabitants at all times. It is also playing a key role in resource mobilization to support the implementation of the RPFNS policy. Specific outcomes of the cooperation include joint analysis of key issues of food security and agricultural and economic development aiming at action tailored to the needs and requirements of the subregions. ECLAC and FAO are discussing the possibility of restoring the joint unit of agricultural development through assigning FAO staff to work with ECLAC.

117. IFAD collaborates with MERCOSUR to strengthen agriculture policies, while ITU interacts with regional and subregional organizations in a public-private partnership environment to keep into account the priorities of the region on telecommunication and information society. UNDP works with CARICOM, OAS, UNASUR, SICA, CAF and MERCOSUR through agreements in the fields of environment, disaster response, fiscal and macroeconomic policy. UNESCO participates in the commission of MERCOSUR for Human Rights. UNICEF works with CARICOM, MERCOSUR, OAS, OEI, ORAS, SICA and UNASUR based on a common understanding of key thematic issues such as birth registration, HIV/AIDS and child protection, among others. UNODC reports on a broad area of cooperation initiatives on crime prevention and drug trafficking in the Latin American and Caribbean region through joint initiatives with the Central American Integration System (SICA), CARICOM, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the OAS and the Inter-American Development Bank. UNCTAD is working with UNASUR to drive reform of the existing international monetary and financial system and the creation of the Presidential Commission for a New Regional Financial Architecture and Banco del Sur. UNCTAD is delivering a series of technical support studies and activities on the design
of new regional financial arrangements appropriate to the challenges of the changing global economy.

2.1.5. ESCWA Region

118. ESCWA and the League of Arab States have a strong partnership. The first MoU with LAS was signed in 1983 when ESCWA was then the Economic Commission for Western Asia. As such, the MoU with LAS reflects a strong emphasis on issues of trade and economic development. Over the years, however, cooperation with LAS has mushroomed and encompasses all substantive areas covered by ESCWA.

119. ESCWA and LAS have jointly come to the conclusion that a new framework for their cooperation in the region is needed. As a result, the two organizations are working jointly on an Action Plan structured around a set of “core areas” for collaboration: statistical coordination; economic development; trade policy and facilitation; transport; sustainable development; enhancing capacity for climate change adaptation; youth and population issues; and MDGs. In addition, the Action Plan will include activities to be supported by the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), as well as substantive coordination in preparation for regional or global meetings and events.

120. In tune with recent events in the region, ESCWA has adopted a new approach to its analytical work and publications with a specific regional outlook. A set of flagship publications have been planned with regional lens, which include (i) The Arab Region 2025, which will forecast and analyse current and future trends for the region in economic, social, political and cultural areas; (ii) Transitions to Democracy, which looks into the nature of political changes in Arab countries and analyses the lessons learned from political transitions in other areas of the world to draw conclusions and best practices on the policy options available to ensure effective and sustainable transitions to democracy; (iii) Arab Regional Integration, which analyses the potential areas and characteristics of integration be they social, economic, cultural or political and assessing their prospective impact on the long-term development of the region; and (iv) a joint publication with other Regional Commissions on Beyond the MDGs: A Future United Nations Development Agenda.

121. To address the ongoing socio-political changes in the region, ESCWA has established a partnership with LAS in the area of participatory development. This includes capacity-building in local and participatory development, which enables participants from countries in the region to acquire skills on participatory development approaches. ESCWA is also supporting LAS member countries in targeting youth as a socio-demographic group in development processes, as many Arab States still face structural and institutional challenges in formulating and implementing effective youth development policies.
122. UNICEF has an MoU with the LAS with the objective of promoting and protecting the rights of children in the region. It focuses on advancing children’s rights in the Arab world and identifies joint activities, in the areas of education, child protection, and communications for development, HIV/AIDS and Health, amongst others. FAO, UNIDO, IAEA, ITU, UNESCO and WIPO also report MoUs for collaboration with LAS, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab Maghreb Union and the Islamic Conference in the areas of food security, communications, energy, culture and intellectual property.

2.2. **Substantive areas of collaboration between UN and non-UN entities at the regional level and outcomes achieved**

123. The UN system has been collaborating with non-UN regional organizations and processes in a number of substantive areas in the economic, social and environmental spheres. This collaboration has taken the shape of advocacy, technical assistance, capacity-building and sharing of good practices. The section below provides some illustrative examples of the collaboration between the UN system and non-UN regional organizations and presents some of the key outcomes achieved.

2.2.1. **Trade and macroeconomic policy**

124. The WTO, the World Bank, UNCTAD and the Regional Commissions report collaboration with a wide range of regional organizations under this broad heading. The WTO reports that it works closely with a broad range of regional organizations. The joint work takes place in the framework of the ongoing Doha negotiations, especially with regional organizations in Africa, its training and technical-assistance related activities and in the area of Regional Trade Agreements (RTA) and Trade Policy Reviews (TPR). Another important part of WTO’s collaboration with the regional organizations is in the context of the Aid-for-Trade Initiative which was launched at the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference in 2005. As part of many of its activities, the WTO works hand-in-hand with the UN Regional Commissions. WTO also contributes to analysis of trade policies of its members through the Trade Policy Review and Regional Trade Agreements areas is across continents in collaboration with organizations such as EFTA, EU, CEFTA, ASEAN, ESCAP, EAC, COMESA, ECOWAS, SADC, SACU, WEAMU, CEEAC, GCC, ALADI, MERCOSUR, OECS, CARICOM, SIECA, Andean Community and IADB.

125. UNCTAD works extensively on trade and development-related issues through its flagship research-related publications and dissemination activities. For example, through the Enhanced Integrated Framework programme, UNCTAD collaborates closely with many regional organizations (including COMESA and AfDB) in its effort to mainstream trade into national development strategies, to raise awareness at the domestic level and to reinforce capacity to trade. UNCTAD
has worked with several African regional organizations including the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the West African Institute for Financial and Economic Management (WAIFEM) in the areas of regional integration, trade and development, South-South cooperation, industrial development, and domestic resource mobilization. It also works closely with a number of regional organizations in Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean.

126. The World Bank (Europe and Central Asia Office) has developed several partnerships with EU institutions (including the EC, the EU Council, the European Parliament and the European Investment Bank), the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) and its affiliate, the Eurasian Anti-Crisis Fund and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). There is an MoU between the World Bank and EDB which outlines activities for collaboration. These include WB’s assistance in developing the capacity of EDB as an international development finance institution and possible areas of parallel co-financing. Cooperation between the European Union and the World Bank also involves high-level policy dialogue and coordination on global issues. Since the year 2008, the finance ministers of the Americas meet every year to conduct a dialogue on the potential for economic integration and regional cooperation. At their fourth meeting held in Calgary, Canada in March 2011, the ministers discussed the strategic importance of integration in the wake of the financial crisis and benefits from investments in regional integration projects, on the basis of a policy document prepared by ECLAC, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank.

127. The African Trade Policy Centre was set up by ECA in 2003 to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of African Governments to formulate and implement sound trade policies and participate more effectively in trade negotiations at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. ESCAP functions as the secretariat of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), a preferential trading arrangement and provides secretariat support to the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT), which is an open regional network of research and academic institutions with a shared interest in addressing international trade and investment policy and facilitation measures. UNECE has fostered regional cooperation by supporting regional trade liberalization and the formation of more integrated regional markets.

128. Some of the key outcomes reported by WB involve convergence and coherence in driving country-level assistance, whereas WTO highlights increases in the awareness and understanding of regional and multilateral trade issues and increased capacity to reflect the local dimensions of key issues. Key outcomes reported by ECA include enhanced African capacity to develop technical trade proposals and increased coordination and
harmonization of regional and subregional trade positions. UNCTAD reports outcomes in the form of increased impact of its activities in the regions, and enhanced knowledge of the regional dimension through its research and policy recommendations.

2.2.2. Environment, climate change and sustainable development

129. The UN system has been actively supporting member States in the pursuit of sustainable development objectives. UNEP provides support to regional organizations, including the AUC, NEPAD, the African Development Bank, ASEAN, the South Pacific Region Environment Programme, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Organization of American States, CARICOM, the Andean Community, the Andean Development Corporation, the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Environment for Europe process and the European Union. In pursuing these efforts, UNEP largely collaborates with the Regional Commissions.

130. UNEP serves also as the secretariat of numerous multilateral agreements such as: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs); the CITES Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna; the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean Sea Barcelona Convention; and the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region.

131. The World Bank serves as the secretariat for the Global Environmental Facility which provides financing for sustainable development objectives around the following focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants. The GEF also serves as financial mechanism for the following conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The GEF, although not linked formally to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (MP), supports implementation of the Protocol in countries with economies in transition.

132. All the Regional Commissions have been promoting developing environmentally sustainable economic agendas as a path for development in their respective regions. For example, ESCAP promotes green growth, sustainable urbanization, energy security and water resources, and is at the forefront of Asia-Pacific's sustainable and green future. ESCAP also works with UNEP, ILO and UNIDO
in the framework of green growth and green economy, green jobs and green industry. The UN system has been supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts of member States, including through dedicated RCM working groups in most regions.

2.2.3. Food security

133. This is an area of extensive collaboration between regional organizations and the UN system. FAO, WFP and IFAD have reported strong cooperation in this area mainly from the Asia-Pacific, African, ESCWA and Latin American regions, with agreements, MoUs and project-based cooperation reported with as many as 30 regional and subregional organizations. The collaboration has covered activities and projects on food security, sustainable agriculture, rural development, fisheries and forests.

134. Regarding benefits and outcomes, FAO indicates that it has led to strengthened national institutional capacities for the sustainable development, sound management of fisheries, sustainable forest management and sustainable land management; strengthened national institutional capacities to address food security in the region in promoting sustainable conservation, use and management of island biodiversity and fragile ecosystems. It has also contributed to strengthened institutional capacity of the regional economic organizations (ASEAN and SAARC) to promote self-help mechanism of member countries for formulating and implementing various regional/subregional programmes/projects in tackling subregional issues impacting agricultural development. IFAD states that collaboration has led to strengthening of regional farmer’s associations for promoting policies focused on alleviating rural poverty and facilitating a more cohesive response by the farmer’s organizations to regional agricultural policies. WFP (Africa) reports enhanced communications and knowledge exchange between WFP and regional agencies on food and nutrition security priorities, plans and programmes and support for food security and vulnerability information systems and to identify and prioritize data gaps and further partnership/synergy opportunities.

135. FAO and the Regional Commissions have also been cooperating closely in providing support to regional frameworks on food security. Joint analysis and policy briefs are being undertaken between FAO and some of the Regional Commissions. Setting up joint implementing structures is also under consideration. For example, ESCAP, FAO and the ADB have formed a partnership to develop and execute the Regional Implementation Plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, which works through the newly established Steering Group for Agricultural Statistics to help improve agricultural statistics in the region and promotes the integration of agricultural statistics into national statistical systems.

2.2.4. Health, including HIV and AIDS

136. All six WHO Regional Offices (ROs)
have indicated established relationships with regional organizations. In addition to policy dialogue, WHO/ROs have developed working relations with the regional organizations in order to adopt intersectoral approaches to address the economic and social determinants of health. Common issues, identified in all of the regions, addressed in a collaborative manner with regional organizations included: food safety and nutrition; risk factors related to non-communicable diseases; drug and health technology regulations; human resource and health workforce regulations; environmental health; health and climate change; the animal-human interface for infectious diseases; and coordination for the proper implementation of the International Health Regulations. Nonetheless, collaborating on joint studies or analysis with Regional organizations regarding a number of key topics on the global health and development agenda has been identified as a potential area of improvement for all WHO/ROs.

137. All WHO/ROs have indicated also important collaborative relationships with the UN Regional Commissions notably regarding the monitoring of the MDGs and the writing of MDG progress reports, including the submission of key contributions to the 2010 MDG Regional Reports. Similarly, all WHO/ROs are working with the Regional Commissions to harmonize data and health statistics, and in the production of disaggregated health data by sex and ethnic group. There is a recognition, however, that the potential for a broader collaboration with the UN Regional Commissions is yet to be tapped into including for joint studies and analysis of: health financing; health economics; ICT for health (eHealth); innovation and intellectual property; trade and access to essential medicines and technologies; among others. WHO/ROs and the Regional Commissions can also work together to follow up on key recommendations that emerge from UN General Assembly Special Sessions or High-level Meetings related to health issues such as HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases, encouraging a multisectoral approach to public policies and interventions. Reaching out through the respective platforms and constituencies of the Regional Commissions and WHO can assist in this regard.

138. Significant collaboration is reported by UNICEF, UNAIDS and UNDP in mainstreaming health issues including HIV within the frameworks of regional organizations. Cooperation is particularly strong in Asia and the Pacific and in Africa. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF reports collaboration with CARICOM, MERCOSUR, OAS, OEI, ORAS, SICA and UNASUR on issues such as birth registration, HIV/AIDS and child protection. In Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF cooperates with ASEAN, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), PIFS, SPC, ADB and ECPAT on child rights and child protection.

139. UNAIDS works with a wide range of regional organizations in Africa to support a more strategic and evidence-based
approach to develop a truly regional strategy that supports and complements the global response to AIDS. This includes technical support for developing regional strategic information and planning on AIDS as well as providing guidance to regional organizations such as ECCAS and ECOWAS for developing their functional institutional framework on HIV and the workplace HIV policy. In the Asia-Pacific region, cooperation between ASEAN and UNAIDS on HIV and AIDS is guided by the priorities identified in the Second ASEAN-UN Summit in 2005 formalized under a five-year Cooperation Agreement. Among the priorities highlighted are support in scaling up prevention for vulnerable populations; obtaining greater resources for HIV prevention, treatment and care; and integrating HIV into development plans.

140. ESCAP, in cooperation with UNAIDS, UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC and other concerned entities, is supporting Governments in their efforts to identify and remove legal and policy barriers to universal access as well as promoting dialogue between health and other sectors, including justice, law and order, drug control and social protection.

141. Collaboration between UNDP and ASEAN and SAARC extends to areas such as promoting migrants’ right to health care and HIV treatment, greater empowerment and involvement of people living with HIV, development of the first SAARC Regional Strategy on HIV and AIDS 2006-2010 (extended until 2012) as well as its implementation and monitoring. UNDP also assists SAARC to achieve outcomes on countering stigma and discrimination for people living with HIV and scaling up interventions for vulnerable groups focusing on cross-border issues.

142. In Africa, the Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance is a UN system-wide initiative launched in February 2003 to complement the vital work on transmission and prevention being done by UN and other agencies in a rigorous agenda that charts the way forward on HIV/AIDS in Africa. The Commission, chaired by ECA, provides a platform to examine the epidemic in all its aspects and to study its likely future implications.

2.2.5. Social security, employment generation, labour standards and poverty alleviation

143. The ILO and the Regional Commissions work extensively with the regional organizations in the area of social protection and employment generation policies. ILO works with the EU, EBRD, ASEAN and the ADB on international labour standards, wages and inequalities, social security, industrial relations, working conditions, labour administration and labour inspection, migration, skills needs forecasting, the green economy and green jobs. Key benefits and outcomes include greater support for regional integration, development of instruments for measurement of progress on social security, labour standards and migrant rights. The theme study of the 2011 Commission session
144. UNDP works with a wide range of players in Africa and in Asia-Pacific on poverty alleviation and inclusive governance. Key outcomes generated in Africa include support to policy and/or strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring related to trade, private sector development, gender and women’s empowerment, youth employment and labour market information systems, HIV/AIDS, and aid effectiveness, as well as the production of knowledge products. In Asia-Pacific, key outcomes include the production of regional poverty profiles and regional poverty reduction strategies.

145. In the area of trade policy and gender equality, UNCTAD has established cooperation links with the UN Regional Commissions and other UN entities with the aim to enhance the use of trade policy as an instrument for inclusive development and poverty alleviation. UNCTAD is also a member of the LAC inter-agency Task Force on Women’s Economic Empowerment established in 2011, and led by ECLAC.

2.2.6. Disaster risk reduction and management

146. Disaster risk reduction and management is a growing area of collaboration between the UN system and regional organizations given the increased incidence of natural disasters in all regions. Agencies such as UNISDR, the WB and the UNDP report extensive support to the efforts of regional organizations in this regard. The regional frameworks that deal with Disaster Risk Reduction, developed by the Regional Commissions such as ESCAP and ECLAC, deserve mention. ECLAC has pioneered the use of Damage and Loss Assessment (DALA) methodologies which have been adopted in all regions, including through an interregional collaboration project involving all the Regional Commissions supported by the World Bank. The UN Regional Commissions play a critical role in leading the United Nations sustainable development work at the regional level, including in the area of disaster risk reduction. The mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in the sustainable development programme of the United Nations is seen as an imperative by some agencies.
147. Regional cooperation in disaster risk management in Asia-Pacific has been driven by two major events: the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004 and the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in 2005. Accordingly, a number of regional and subregional frameworks for cooperation have emerged over the past few years, including the SAARC Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management, the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) and the Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action (RFA). In the area of disaster risk reduction, ESCAP works closely with UNISDR in supporting the organization of the biennial Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management. ESCAP manages a Tsunami Trust Fund, which addresses recurrent natural disasters such as tsunamis. It continues to support the regional intergovernmental Typhoon Committee and the Tropical Cyclone Panel, which attempt to work closely with 14 member States to coordinate efforts to mitigate impacts and risks of cyclones and typhoons.

148. UNISDR works with more than 20 IGOs at the regional level and focuses on providing technical assistance to the IGO secretariats and member States for mainstreaming the Disaster Risk Reduction into regional policies and programmes and supporting policy development, coordination and implementation of DRR related programmes. Cooperation is based on a structured agreement or an MoU. With some regional partners, the cooperation is based on regular coordination meetings and a coordinated plan of action. Key outcomes achieved include strengthened capacity for DRR of selected member States; enhanced cost-effectiveness of regional and national initiatives in DRR and CCA and implementation of the regional disaster risk management frameworks for action. UNISDR also works closely with the World Bank and other partners to support IGOs, regional platforms and regional disaster risk reduction activities and promote the consistency and coherence between national, regional and global platforms on DRR.

149. UNDP and WB have also worked extensively in disaster risk reduction. UNDP (Africa and Asia-Pacific) has crisis prevention at the core of its cooperation agenda with regional organizations. Key outcomes include development of national disaster loss databases, in collaboration with UNISDR, in member countries with an aim to build capacity and a shared understanding of disaster risks and of mitigation measures; a common framework for Post-Disaster Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction in Asia; and implementing a regional urban risk reduction programme to address the needs of intermediate and emerging cities in South Asia. The World Bank (LAC) highlights the development of the Central American
Probabilistic Risk Assessment (CAPRA), an initiative that seeks to enhance disaster risk understanding in the Central American region.

2.2.7. Industrial development and energy

150. The organizations reporting cooperation under this head are UNIDO, IAEA, UNDP and the Regional Commissions. UNIDO has developed a significant portfolio of activities with regional and/or subregional intergovernmental organizations in all the regions. The areas of the cooperation include trade capacity-building standards, private sector development; youth and women’s entrepreneurship, industrial modernization; investment and technology promotion; industrial statistics; food safety and security; green economy and green industry; energy efficiency and renewable energy; climate change and environmental management. With regard to outcomes and benefits of cooperation at the regional level, UNIDO refers to enhanced regional capacity in intra- and inter-regional trade; appropriate enabling environment for private sector development; and establishment of environmental and energy programmes at the regional level.

151. In the LAC region, IAEA works with CARICOM, ACS, IICA (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture), the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE), and the Pan American Health Organization. In the ESCWA region, it works with the Gulf Cooperation Council and in Asia and the Pacific with ICARDA, ACSAD and SESAME. In Africa, it works with the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (ACNE) and the African Energy Commission (AFREC). Key outcomes include feasibility studies for introducing nuclear power to produce electricity and desalinate water, capacity-building in related areas of energy planning, regulatory infrastructures and human resources, improved cooperation and coordination in respect to sustainable energy development and promotion of regional cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In addition, the IAEA also supports member States in Asia-Pacific and in Europe. 152. Regional Commissions, including ESCAP, ECE and ECLAC have been promoting regional cooperation in the field of energy and developing regional frameworks for energy efficiency and promotion of renewable energy.

2.2.8. Connectivity

153. The term “connectivity” is used to describe regional integration through linkages in transport, information and communications technology, trade facilitation as well as improved infrastructure. The Regional Commissions have played a key role in supporting regional and interregional frameworks aimed at improved regional integration through increased connectivity. ITU plays a key role in promoting ICT connectivity. In Africa, ITU works towards the harmonization of policies and regulatory frameworks that facilitate regional market integration; development of model ICT laws and regulations; development of harmonized
regional spectrum bands plans; and the respective transposition of laws in each country. In LAC, ITU interacts with regional and subregional organizations in a public-private partnership environment to keep into account the priorities of the region on telecommunication, information society, standardization, broadcasting, satellite, disaster management and relief, cybersecurity, accessibility and provides assistance to its members in this field.

154. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Governments from Latin America adopted in November 2010 the Regional Action Plan, eLAC2015, aimed at making access to the information and knowledge society a universal right, promoting regional integration and coordinating global targets with the needs and priorities of the region. Given the potential of broadband in regional integration, especially in the context of the UNASUR, ECLAC established in May 2011 the Regional Broadband Observatory (ORBA) to help in the identification of challenges in infrastructure integration and connectivity. ECLAC provides technical support to the Council of Ministers of Infrastructure and Planning of UNASUR in the formulation and monitoring of the Strategic Action Plan for 2012-2022 of the Regional Infrastructure Integration Initiative of South America (IIRSA) and to the Mesoamerica Project (formerly Plan Puebla Panama) in the areas of transport and infrastructure to promote cooperation and integration among Mexico, Central America, Colombia and the Dominican Republic.

155. In Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP is implementing activities in support of the development of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system in Asia-Pacific, through partnerships with international transport associations and regional and subregional organizations. In the area of infrastructure development, most subregional organizations have used ESCAP’s regional transport networks as the basis for their own transport programmes, particularly the Asian Highway (AH) Network, which now connects all landlocked countries of the region. Attention is now focused on the development of intermodal facilities which link these networks including maritime and dry ports; the upgrading of infrastructure and completion of missing links along the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR); and facilitation of transport particularly in the land transport sector. ESCAP has promoted investment in the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, both amongst multilateral funding agencies as well as the private sector. ESCAP is also helping countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) in developing enabling policies for trade and investment in the IT sector, while also studying the effects of different trade and investment policy reform measures aimed at promoting greater use of IT and encouraging greater trade in IT products and services in the GMS countries.

156. To ensure seamless connections throughout Europe, including access to markets, ECE coordinates work on a Trans-European network for motorways (TEM) and
rail (TER) in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe in 25 Member countries concerned. Central to this work is the TEM and TER Master Plan which sets out the priority infrastructure needs, the backbone networks and a realistic investment plan to develop them. The Master Plan has identified the backbone road and rail networks in those countries and presented a realistic investment strategy to gradually develop these networks. Its revision, which has just been completed has prioritized as many as 485 projects with an aggregate estimated cost of EUR 188 billion. The implementation of such an investment plan will contribute to the economic growth of the countries concerned and to the well being of their populations, as well as assisting in the integration and harmonization of transport within Europe and beyond. ECE is also supporting the development of the pan-European transport infrastructure (which requires identification of transport routes, harmonization of national legislation and simplification of border procedures) through a Euro-Asian Transport Links project in cooperation with ESCAP. ECE has identified: (i) the main Euro-Asian inland transport routes; (ii) the main physical and non-physical obstacles, including the need to harmonize transport legislation based on UNECE conventions/EU legislation; and (iii) specific projects, which have been evaluated and prioritized.

157. As discussed previously, ESCWA is promoting the concept of an Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq known as (ITSAM), which includes agreements on integrating roads, railways and maritime transport in the subregion.

2.2.9. Millenium Development Goals (MDGs)

158. The review of the progress made on MDGs is an area where the UN system has fully come together at the regional level, and collaborated with the regional organizations, in producing seminal reviews, which have ownership of all stakeholders, and serve as the reference points for measuring progress against the MDGs. In all the regions, regional MDG reports are produced as joint efforts of the UN system at the regional level, using the RCM as the vehicle for cooperation. In almost all cases, close collaboration is also established with key non-UN regional players to ensure their contribution and ownership. For example, in Africa, the MDG report is a joint effort of ECA, AfDB, AUC and UNDP. In Asia-Pacific the regional MDG report is a joint publication of ESCAP, ADB and UNDP, and contributed to by the entire UN system. The MDG report in the Arab region is a joint effort of the RCM coordinated by ESCWA in collaboration with LAS. In Latin America and Europe, the regional MDG reports are joint outputs of the RCM led by ECLAC and ECE, respectively.

2.2.10. Education, culture and innovation

159. UNESCO and UNICEF have reported collaboration with non-UN regional entities
in the area of education and culture. Some examples of cooperation by UNESCO include (i) cooperation with the AU in support of achieving the goals of the Plan of Action of AU’s second decade of education in Africa; (ii) with ASEAN, UNESCO has engaged in the area of education in high-level policy dialogues on education, health and poverty, and MDG partnerships with other UN agencies. UNESCO’s regional office for Montevideo cooperates with MERCOSUR, including through participation in the Commission of MERCOSUR for Human Rights.

160. In the context of its Dialogue among Civilization activities, UNESCO has collaborated with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALESCO), the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures, and the League of Arab States, with the aim of moving away from the declarative approach to dialogue among cultures, towards a more proactive definition of concrete, results-oriented actions. Key outcomes include enhanced opportunities for regional integration and coherence of work; increased coordination of programmatic action, including avoidance of duplication and overlap; enhanced programmatic impact through joint forces (multiplier effect); increased visibility and outreach; improved operational effectiveness and enhanced knowledge-sharing, exchange of information and good practices.

161. WIPO works with regional and subregional organizations in all the regions in the areas which include building capacity and raising awareness in the area of intellectual property (IP); determining strategies to use IP for economic development; building respect for IP; technology transfer policies and management of IP institutions and human resources development. The outcomes of such cooperation include enhanced capacity to formulate IP policy, modern IP legislation in accordance with national requirements and international standards; strengthened subregional cooperation in the field of IP among countries; and better understanding of IP issues and impact assessments.

2.2.11. Governance and crime prevention

162. In the area of governance, UNDP supports the peace and security agenda of the AU, including support to the South Sudan process and to the small arms and light weapons (SALW) initiatives of the RECs. It also supports participation and inclusive governance, with emphasis on public administration reform and electoral support. It provides technical and substantive support to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) along with the ECA. It also produces knowledge products such as the Africa Governance Report.

163. UNODC notes that challenges related to crime and drugs should be prominent in development efforts and that crime prevention considerations should influence
most aspects of development assistance. Key priority areas of cooperation between AUC and UNODC are effective continental, regional and national policy formulation and coordination in the domains of drug control and crime prevention; enhancing collaboration, shared responsibility and harmonized action to address drug trafficking, organized crime, corruption, terrorism, small arms related violence and crimes within the community; building institutional capacity for law enforcement, criminal justice and forensic service systems; mainstreaming drug and crime concerns into development strategies; and regional and national capacity-building and training to enhance prevention and care of substance abuse and related HIV/AIDS.

164. UNODC also reports on cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS) on the Regional Programme on Drug Control, Drug Prevention and Criminal Justice reform in the Arab States 2011-2015. The main purpose of the Regional Programme is to support the efforts of member States in the Arab region to respond to evolving threats by promoting the rule of law and sustainable development. UNODC also notes cooperation with the Arab Initiative to Combat Human Trafficking, and with joint anti-corruption strategies with the SADC and ECOWAS in Africa. UNODC reports on a broad area of cooperation initiatives on crime prevention and drug trafficking in the Latin American and Caribbean region through joint initiatives with the Central American Integration System (SICA), CARICOM, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the OAS, the Inter-American Development Bank and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and ASEAN.

2.2.12. Gender equality and empowerment of women

165. In the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women, UN Women works closely with the Regional Commissions to promote and assist national institutions in the monitoring and implementation of global commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women also works within the context of the Regional Coordination Mechanism where it chairs or co-chairs the gender clusters where they exist. As part of the UNDG Regional Teams, UN Women often leads specific task teams or joint initiatives to advance a coherent approach to gender equality and the empowerment of women, and supports UNDG Regional Teams in engaging more systematically for mobilizing technical expertise for UN Country Teams (UNCTs). UN Women also works with the Regional Commissions in support of the Secretary-General’s UNiTE to end violence against women campaign at the regional level. Cooperation between the entities that merged into UN Women and regional organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean (CARICOM) and Africa (AU, ECOWAS, ICGLR, SADC) has demonstrated the role that such organizations play as catalysts for promoting gender equality and women’s human rights in their subregions. To better support the work
on gender equality and the empowerment of women at the regional level, UN Women has initiated a review and analysis of its regional architecture and functions in order to inform the structuring of its field presence.

2.2.13. Other issues
166. In the area of tourism, the UNWTO works with a wide range of regional organizations in the African, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and the ESCWA regions, to promote tourism as a contributor to sustainable and equitable economic growth. The cooperation is implemented through MOUs and agreements in some cases, and is project-based in case of others. The support provided to regional organizations has resulted in capacity building of a wide range of stakeholders and increased knowledge transfer. UNWTO also leads nine UN agencies and programmes to coordinate their tourism-related work under the United Nations Steering Committee on Tourism for Development (SCTD), which builds on the strengths and expertise of its different members to support countries, in particular least developed and developing, in the area of tourism for sustainable development.

167. The implementation plan of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) is based on a regional approach. The organisation works closely with a number of regional or sub-regional organisations, in particular with the “UPU Restricted Unions” (currently 16 in number), which are regional or sub-regional intergovernmental organizations established by the UPU member countries, or by their postal designated operators. In addition UPU also works with CARICOM, ECO, AU, COMESA, ECOWAS, SADC and EAC. Some of the key outcomes achieved include improved quality of postal services, postal reform, streamlined fund transfers and deployment of the “Train post” e-learning platform.

2.3. Mechanisms for coordination among UN organizations at the regional level

168. There are two primary mechanisms for coordination among the UN organizations and agencies operating at the regional level. The Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) which is chaired by the Regional Commissions and the Regional UNDG teams (chaired by UNDP). The two mechanisms are complementary in nature. Established by ECOSOC in 1998, the RCM provides the highest-level vehicle of coordination of UN agencies within the regions for providing policy coherence and improving coordination among the work programmes of the organizations of the UN system. The RCMs in different regions have on average a membership of 30 UN and affiliated entities, including the Regional Development Banks and the World Bank. The RCMs have been the main platform for the joint interaction of the UN system with the non-UN regional organizations and processes. Not only have the RCMs become the vehicle for delivery of joint analytical products in support of regional frameworks, but in the case of ESCWA and
ECA, the main regional organizations have become co-chairs of the RCMs along with the UN (LAS and AUC, respectively).

169. The main functions of the RCM include: (a) providing a high-level policy forum to exchanging views on major strategic developments and challenges faced by the regions and its subregions; (b) promoting UN system policy coherence in response to identified regional priorities and initiatives; (c) devising coherent regional policy responses to selected global priorities, and providing regional perspectives to the global level on such issues; (d) providing the forum for exchange of best practices and lessons learned and for inter-agency analysis and elaboration of inter-agency normative and analytical frameworks in response to the identified focus and priority issues above; (e) promoting UN system interaction with non-UN regional and subregional organizations (e.g., RCM/Africa with AU and NEPAD; RCM/ AP with ASEAN; RCM/ESCWA with LAS, RCM/LAC with OAS, etc); (f) promoting policy coherence and joint programming in support of regional and subregional integration efforts and initiatives (e.g., RCM/Africa in support of NEPAD; RCM/Africa/Subregions in support of RECs; RCM/AP in support of ASEAN agenda; RCM/LAC Unity Summit, etc.).

170. Recognizing the importance and value added of the regional dimension to its work, the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) in 2009 decided to invite the Regional Commissions, as conveners of the RCM, to bring to the deliberations of the HLCP any emerging interregional issue meriting consideration at the global level; and to bring to the deliberations of the RCM, those global issues that the HLCP may wish to pursue at the regional level. This linkage led to the creation of working groups in areas such as gender and climate change within the RCMs in some regions, to ensure better alignment with the priorities of the HLCP.

171. Complementing the RCMs are the UNDG Regional Teams (the former Regional Directors’ Team, or RDTs), which were initiated in 2005 to support UN Country Teams. The central role of the UNDG Regional Teams is to provide leadership, strategic guidance and support to Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams (RCs/UNCTs) for the achievement of country-level results. The functions of UNDG Regional Teams, identified through the M&A Framework with detailed actions to implement them through an Implementation Plan, include (a) provision of coherent technical support to Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs); (b) quality assurance of UNDAF/UN programme; (c) performance management; and (d) “Trouble shooting” in difficult country situations, dispute resolution, etc. The report of an independent consultant reviewing the implementation of these functions by UNDG Regional Teams is under consideration.

172. RCMs and UNDG Regional Teams can support and strengthen each other’s work through a two-way interaction. For example, the outcome of the policy coherence work
of the RCMs can be conveyed to UNDG Regional Teams to inform their country-level actions; and the respective elements of regional and subregional frameworks can be integrated into UNDAFs in support of country development agendas. The UNDG Regional Teams can bring national policy experiences to the RCMs from which lessons can be drawn. These lessons can feed new normative/analytical work, and lead to enhanced policy convergence at the regional level. This is an area with a great potential for improvement.

A recent independent review report on the monitoring and accountability system in UNDG recommended that the core functions of the UNDG Regional Teams should be reiterated to the UNCTs and to the members of the UNDG Regional Teams. A clear focus on delivering the core functions could contribute in bringing forward the complementarities between the two mechanisms.

2.4. Engagement with civil society and the private sector

173. Not many UN agencies have provided information on their engagement with civil society and the private sector. IFAD reports that it works indirectly with a number of regional and subregional organizations by supporting engagement by regional farmers organizations (RFOs) in the intergovernmental policy processes of these organizations. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) indicates that membership of ITU gives governments, private organizations and intergovernmental organizations a unique opportunity to engage with the mission of enabling and fostering growth and sustained development of communication networks and services, and to facilitate universal access so that people anywhere can participate in and benefit from the emerging information society without discrimination. ESCWA has been exploring the establishment of a Civil Society Advisory Board at the recommendation of the 2009 RCM. Recent events in the Arab world make it more of a necessity for ESCWA to engage with civil society not simply as beneficiaries but as partners. Crucially, the Civil Society Advisory Board will consist of regional networks of civil society and not of national organizations. UNISDR has established a Private Advisory Group which developed a Statement of Commitment by the Private Sector for Disaster Prevention, Resilience and Risk Reduction, as the basis for engagement of the private sector for Disaster Risk Reduction. UNISDR together with the Group will promote signatories by the private sector to the Commitment. UNEP engages in a constant dialogue with regional associations of the private sector in the context of green economy concept, resource efficiency, sustainable consumption and production.

174. As part of its work to promote civil society, ECA has launched a website for the African Centre for Civil Society (ACCS). The resource/knowledge base and information sharing website collects, organizes, catalogues, presents and disseminates information obtained through various ways pertaining to CSOs. ECA also conducts
capacity building programmes for member States and regional institutions to mainstream civil society participation in mediation, peacebuilding, conflict resolution and civic engagement.

175. In terms of engagement with the private sector, a number of organizations such as UNIDO, UNDP, the Regional Commissions, ITU and WIPO among others, work closely with private sector organizations and industry federation to promote regional objectives. ESCAP organizes the Asia-Pacific Business Forum which is held annually in conjunction with the Commission session. Up to 400 senior government officials, business executives and representatives from civil society meet to consider social and economic issues and their implications for the region. Another regional framework initiative in this area was the Business Advisory Council (BAC), which was set up in 2004 by ESCAP to promote cooperation between ESCAP and the private sector. The African Development Forum (ADF), organized by ECA, brings together all stakeholders, particularly the civil society and the private sector, to dwell on major development policy issues and challenges facing the continent. ECA in collaboration with AUC, AfDB, IFC and the World Bank has exerted efforts to promote the participation and role of the private sector in particular, in the areas of infrastructure development and provision of public services. Recent work includes the Pan Africa Investment Forum and the PPP Workshop in the Energy Sector in Africa. ESCWA has recently set up a Civil Society Advisory Body to enhance its engagement with civil society representatives in its region. UNIDO has developed the Africa Investment Promotion Agency Network (AfriPANet) as a regional programme to provide African Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) with a common platform to discuss and design investment promotion strategies. Under the supervision of AUC, UNIDO, FAO and IFAD have developed the African Agribusiness and Agro-Industry Development Initiative (3ADI), with the goal of highly productive and profitable agricultural value chains, and thus to accelerate the development of agribusiness and agro-industries sectors that ensure value-addition to Africa’s agricultural products.

176. The ILO approach to the formulation of standards and policies dealing with labour matters is based on the principle of tripartism—i.e., dialogue and cooperation between governments, employers and workers. This tripartite approach to the adoption of labour standards makes the ILO unique in the United Nations system, and ensures that they have broad support from all ILO constituents.
Chapter 3.
Key findings and recommendations

3.1. Key findings

177. From the analysis in the preceding chapters and the responses to the questionnaire, there seems to be a great degree of commonality between the identified regional and global issues, as well as regional and global agendas for dealing with these issues at the national level. Issues identified through this study as “drivers of regionalism” were very similar to the issues identified by the CEB in 2009 as priorities to address the global economic and financial crisis. These issues include finance; trade; employment; production and aggregate demand; environment; food security; social services; empowerment and protection of people; humanitarian, security and social stability; and international cooperation for development.

178. The synergies between the global and regional agendas are a very clear indication of the need and the importance for the UN system to work coherently and effectively horizontally at the regional level, as well as vertically with the global and national levels. The CEB recognized this in 2009, when it acknowledged that “a significant number of responses can most effectively be undertaken at the regional level integrating the regional dimension is, therefore, essential”. The World Summit Outcome document (2005) calls for a “stronger relationship between the UN and regional and subregional organizations, pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter”. Though Chapter VIII focuses on peace and security, the interlinkages between peace and security and development are widely recognized.

179. The analysis in chapters 1 and 2 indicates that there is a significant degree of engagement of UN organizations with the regional intergovernmental bodies and entities, and that the UN is able to provide them with valuable support in a number of substantive areas. The responses received to the study point to more than 150 different MoUs, agreements or other structures for collaboration with more than 30 different organizations in all regions. The evidence suggests that whenever there is a high degree of collaboration between UN system agencies to support regional initiatives or processes, the outcomes are highly effective and successful, both in terms of impact and in terms of implementation. Good examples of this are the UN system joint efforts with ASEAN on the ASEAN-UN Summit, and the comprehensive and cohesive support to NEPAD and the AUC. The regional MDG reports are also good examples of joint UN efforts in cooperation with regional organizations to produce knowledge products for common action.

180. Due to their historic contribution to
that enhanced regional cooperation, not only among countries, but also among the UN system agencies working together with regional intergovernmental bodies, reaps many benefits in terms of, inter alia, enhanced policy coherence and programme effectiveness and efficiency; strengthened national and regional capabilities and leadership; enhanced aid effectiveness; enhanced visibility and impact; and reduced overhead costs. Despite the good examples mentioned in this report on UN system inter-agency collaboration and coordination, virtually all UN system agencies concur, that this is an area in need of improvement.

183. Collaboration appears to be deeper in some regions compared to others, depending on the evolution of the regional architecture. Within regions, some subregional organizations collaborate more extensively with UN organizations compared to others. This is on account of their wider coverage, as also perhaps stronger organization. This example could be seen in Asia-Pacific, where ASEAN receives a greater range of support by the UN system compared to other smaller groupings. However, paradoxically, it is the regional organizations which have the weaker support structure which need the support of the UN to a greater degree to achieve their objectives.

184. Some agencies/organizations have called for enhanced cooperation and collaboration by using the platforms provided by the UN Regional Commissions.

181. The Regional Commissions and the Regional Development Banks are often the only pan-regional development entities. On specific issues, the Regional Commissions provide an overarching regional framework which encompasses smaller subregional frameworks, and infuse them with universal norms and values. An example is the role played by Regional Commissions in the area of trade and connectivity. There is a large potential for this to be developed further. Therefore, the role of Regional Commissions in linking subregional cooperation efforts to a broader pan-regional cooperation framework needs to be emphasized.

182. Almost all the UN organizations that responded to the questionnaire, including the UN Regional Commissions, agree
for increased information sharing, dialogue and participatory planning, periodic reviews and monitoring/assessment of ongoing work, identifying synergies with partner organizations and strengthening the institutional capacities of regional intergovernmental organizations.

185. Geographical distances and financial constraints have also been often cited as impediments to satisfactory inter-agency collaboration and coordination. The various UN organizations have regional hubs in different locations within the same region, thus making close collaboration more difficult. Modern technology may, to some extent, alleviate this drawback. However, location in the same place would be preferred for close collaboration and coherence.

186. While the questionnaire did not specifically address this topic, many UN system organizations referred to their involvement and collaboration with civil society, including research centers and think tanks, community organizations, labour associations, academia and businesses, but the extent or modalities of their collaboration were not specified. The degree of UN system collaboration with a wide spectrum of representatives from civil society, including youth groups and indigenous communities at the regional level is an area that should be looked into and assessed more closely. In many instances these groups, through informal networking, dialogue and information sharing are driving the “new regionalism” on issues related to the UN objectives and core values very effectively. The recent “Arab Spring” movements are a case in point.

Drawn from these findings are the following recommendations:

3.2. Recommendations

187. These recommendations are intended to strengthen the UN system’s capabilities at the regional level in order to enhance the support that it is giving on critical issues that were identified by this study as “drivers” of regionalism, and that converge with issues that figure prominently in the global agenda. A number of substantive areas emerge from the analysis in the preceding chapters, which would benefit from closer and coordinated collaboration between the UN system at the regional level and non-UN regional organizations. However, the recommendations made below are intended to highlight key elements of processes and organizational frameworks that need to be put in place, with the substantive areas for collaboration being identified taking into account regional needs and specificities. The CEB is invited to consider and endorse the recommendations below.

188. Recommendation 1. Regionalism as a building block for multilateralism

There is a need for the UN system to recognize the importance of regionalism and its enormous potential as a building block for multilateralism. An increasingly assertive regional governance is emerging with
important implications on global governance. The growing importance of the regional dimension of development, and its critical role as a vital effective and efficient link between the global and national levels, has to be acknowledged and taken into account in all global development processes.

189. **Recommendation 2. The need for a coherent regional strategy for development**

A large number of UN and non-UN organizations, including the Regional Commissions, are working at the regional level. The value and impact of the UN system engagement with regional organizations is best when efforts are coherent and strategically coordinated and fit into a larger comprehensive framework of collaboration with partner organizations. The UN system organizations working together in each region need to coordinate their interventions within an overarching collective strategy of engagement with the partner organizations and stakeholders, bearing in mind the specificities and priorities of each region. The Regional Commissions, the regional arms of the United Nations, with their convening power and their role as UN pan-regional intergovernmental platforms, have a central role to play in the development and implementation of such strategies. The recommendations below provide some common elements for the formulation of such strategies.

190. **Recommendation 3. Undertake a region-specific stocktaking of engagement**

The present study is one of the first steps taken by the UN system to consolidate information on the support being provided by the UN system at the regional level. A stocktaking of activities of different organizations in support of regional organizations and processes is a logical first step in preparing a coherent and coordinated strategy for effective engagement with such organizations. A noteworthy effort in this direction is the document entitled “Striving together” prepared by the RCM (Asia-Pacific) for the ASEAN-UN Summit in 2010. It outlines in detail the support extended to ASEAN by the entire UN system for implementing its Charter and action plans, and suggests ways to enhance such support. This type of analysis could be undertaken to cover relevant regional entities in each region. This kind of stocktaking would serve both as a means to share information between UN system entities, as well as reveal opportunities for synergy and partnerships.

191. **Recommendation 4. The UN system organizations working at the regional level should develop, in full consultation with the respective regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations, agreed medium-term capacity-building frameworks.**

The stocktaking and reviews should feed into a coherent and coordinated regional framework for guiding UN system support to regional organizations. This could be done
separately for each subregional/regional organization or as a group. For example, in Africa, strengthening of regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies is already being supported by the UN system through the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Framework, ensuring a coordinated and broad complementary effort by the UN system in building the capacity of the AUC in various areas, including peace and security. In addition, ECA’s subregional offices are supporting the main RECs in the respective subregions, through the implementation of multi-year cooperation agreements in support of specific subregional priorities and programmes. In West Asia, ESCWA and the League of Arab States are working jointly on an Action Plan structured around a set of “core areas” for collaboration. The RCMs, could be used as the platforms for developing, implementing and monitoring such action plans.

192. **Recommendation 5.** The UN system needs to support regional integration efforts in a coherent manner, including through coordination and alignment of their work on harmonization of standards, rules and guidelines in the regions.

The UN system, including the UN Regional Commissions have been providing support on standardizing norms, rules, agreements and mechanisms that facilitate regional integration. They also have contributed to promoting connectivity through analysis about the necessary investments in physical infrastructure like border roads, rails, dry ports, power grids, transport corridors and institutions to promote trade and other types of cross-border interaction. However, this support has been scattered and not very coherent. Taking note of the importance of the harmonization of standards, rules and guidelines as a means of facilitating regional integration, the UN system at large could do more in coordinating and aligning their support to the regional organizations by developing norms and standards in their respective fields of knowledge and expertise. This is a supporting recommendation to Recommendation 4 on developing effective frameworks for supporting the work of regional organizations.

193. **Recommendation 6.** Ensure greater coherence and cohesiveness between the work of Regional Coordinating Mechanisms (RCMs) and Regional UNDG teams (erstwhile RDTs).

The functions and complementarities of the RCMs vis-à-vis the regional UNDG teams have been clearly outlined, and the areas of synergy have been identified (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3). For example, the outcome of the policy coherence work of the RCMs, including regional and subregional frameworks can be conveyed to regional UNDG teams to inform their country-level actions; whereas the country-level experience can inform the regional discussions on policies. A good start has been made by scheduling the meetings of the two mechanisms back-to-back in all
regions to ensure complementarities and to allow outcomes of one to feed into the other. However, there is a considerable scope for closer cooperation in this regard. Engagement and commitment at the highest level between the RCMs and regional UNDG teams would go a long way in ensuring policy coherence and improving coordination among the work programmes of UN organizations at the regional level.

194. **Recommendation 7.** Develop further the RCMs as vehicles for policy and programme coordination at both the level of Heads of agencies and senior officials’ level.

Most RCMs work at two tiers: a higher executive-level tier and a working-level tier (working groups or clusters). In their focus on critical issues to the region and requiring coordinated and coherent action by the UN system, involvement of the UN organizations’ Executive Heads whose issues are most pertinent on the regional agenda, together with the ongoing commitment of Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions and respective Heads of non-UN partner organizations, would provide additional impetus in moving the regional agenda forward. Engagement of senior officials from UN organizations’ headquarters in key policy meetings of respective working groups/clusters could further contribute to promoting coherence and linkages between the global and regional levels.

195. **Recommendation 8.** Reviews should be carried out at regular intervals at the highest level, including summit level, between the UN system and regional organizations to review the progress made and identify new areas for collaboration. The implementations of cooperation agreements and MoUs need to be closely monitored if they are to make progress and bear concrete outcomes. Such cooperation could be reviewed at the highest level with the concerned regional/subregional organizations. Summit level meetings could be held at intervals of five years, for example, with the UN at the margins of the regular summit meetings of these organizations. This would provide the political and strategic direction to the collaboration and maintain the required momentum for effective engagement. An example of this kind of review is the ASEAN-UN Summit which is held every five years and attended by the Secretary-General. Preparation for such summit-level reviews could be made by more regular reviews between the UN and regional organizations, as is the case in most regions through the RCMs. In some regions, regional organizations such as AUC and LAS are co-chairs of RCMs. This practice could also be adopted in other regions, if found suitable or appropriate.

196. **Recommendation 9.** Leverage and enhance the convening power and capacity of the UN Regional Commissions as platforms for the entire UN system’s strategic involvement with member States.

The specific sectoral and technical skills and
knowledge possessed by UN organizations are complemented by multidisciplinary skills of Regional Commissions in the areas of macroeconomic policy and finance, trade, norms and standards, sustainable development and social issues. These complementarities can be leveraged in two ways. Firstly, in the form of joint analytical products that provide commonly agreed analytical basis for action with member States at the national and regional levels (for instance, joint publications and policy briefs on social security and employment are produced by ILO and ECLAC). Strengthening the statistical capabilities of the Regional Commissions to provide, with partner organizations, a stronger basis for peer learning and benchmarking would be critical in this regard. Similarly, the Regional Commissions could be further encouraged to partner more closely with think tanks and academic institutions of regional focus in order to infuse fresh new thinking and ideas to deal with emerging and urgent issues specific to their regions. Secondly, the convening power and intergovernmental platforms offered by Regional Commissions could be better harnessed by the UN system at large to highlight key issues within the mandates of other UN organizations and agencies. This is already being done in some Regional Commissions, where specialized agencies are partnering with the Commissions in organizing specific sessions of the Commission, but could be further expanded. The convening power of the Regional Commissions could also be used to allow the UN system to take early steps at the regional level to address urgent and emerging issues such as the movements towards democracy and food price inflation. This would require the UN system to display greater agility and flexibility to respond in a timely fashion to emerging crises and opportunities.

197. **Recommendation 10. Promote stronger UN system involvement with civil society (including the private sector) at the regional level**

The degree of UN system collaboration with a wide spectrum of representatives from civil society, including the private sector, youth groups, indigenous communities, think tanks, research centres, academia and the private sector at the regional level is an area that should be looked into and assessed more closely. Examples of ongoing efforts in this regard include the African Development Forum and the Asia-Pacific Business Forum (see *Chapter 2, Section 2.4*). In many instances these groups, through informal networking, dialogue and information sharing are driving the “new regionalism” on issues related to the UN objectives and core values very effectively. Thus, a stronger UN system involvement with civil society should be promoted.
Endnotes

1 There are five UN Regional Commissions, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) based in Geneva, Switzerland; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) based in Bangkok, Thailand; the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) based in Santiago, Chile; and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) based in Beirut, Lebanon.

2 ESCWA currently comprises 14 Arab States.

3 See “Regionalism in World Politics: Past and Present” by Louise Fawcett published in International Studies Quarterly (2008), Publisher: GARNET Network of Excellence.

4 Idem.

5 For characteristics of the “New Regionalism”, see “The New Regionalism—Inventing Governance Structures for the Early Twenty-First Century” by Allan Wallis, Associate Professor of Public Policy, University of Colorado.

6 See “Global economic governance and development”. Draft SG report for submission to sixty-sixth session of the GA.


8 WTO, World Trade Report 2011: The preferential trade agreements: from co-existence to coherence.


10 G-20 is made up of the finance ministers and central bank Governors of 19 countries and the EU.


12 ASEAN+3 consists of the 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Nations plus Japan, China and South Korea.

13 ESCAP: Economic and Social Survey, 2011.

14 ESCAP: Economic and Social Survey, 2011.

15 Idem, p. 33.

16 FAO, Crop Prospects and Food Situation, April 2009.


18 FAO, Regional Integration and Food Security in Developing Countries, chapter 6, 2003.

19 Idem.

20 The AUC recognizes 8 RECS as pillars of the AEC, e.g. Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD), Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), South African Development Community (SADC) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

21 Idem.

22 See GA resolution A/RES/57/7.

23 Idem, p. xxii.

24 First Parliament of Asia, Sixty Years of ESCAP, p. 63.


26 Idem.

27 Idem.

28 Idem.

29 Idem.

30 UNU-CRIS WP-2010/8: Contribution of Regional Economic Commission to regional integration-case of ECLAC

31 Idem, p. 15.

32 Idem.

33 Idem.

34 Idem, p. 25.

35 Expansions of the acronyms are available in the list of acronyms at the end of this study.

36 Drawn from RegCom Paper: Regional Level: Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and Regional Directors’ Teams (RDTs): Functions and Complementarities, April 2010.

37 See chapter 3.


39 Idem.

References


ECA (2010). Assessing Regional Integration in Africa IV: Enhancing Intra-African Trade,


Responses by CEB member organizations to study questionnaire: www.un.org/regionalcommissions/studyreponses.html


UN Regional Commissions (2010). System-wide Coherence at the Regional Level: Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and Regional Director’s Team (RDTs): Functions and


Annexes 1-5
Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to present you the study on "The Regional Dimension of Development and the UN System" sponsored by the UN regional Commissions. The study will be considered as part of the agenda of the upcoming CEB Fall Session (NY, 28-29 October 2011).

You may recall during the last CEB meeting in Nairobi (1-2 April 2011), the Board was informed about the intention by the Regional Commissions to introduce to the CEB fall session the outcome of this independent-led study. The discussion that preceded in the HLCP spring session (NY, 3-4 March 2011) emphasized the importance for the UN system to reflect on its repositioning and its interaction with the new regional dynamics, bearing in mind the growing regionalism and role of regional institutions, including the Regional Commissions, as critical building blocks in enhanced global governance arrangements and global-regional nexus, as well as in making critical links to the country level (Report of the 21st Session of HLCP, CEB/2011/4). In its latest fall session (NY, 15-16 September), the HLCP was briefed on key findings of the study through a progress report submitted to the twenty-second session (CEB/2011/HLCP-XXII/INF-2). The Committee agreed to enlist the study on the agenda of the upcoming CEB fall session.

In her letter to you dated 6 May 2011, my colleague Ms Alicia Barcena, in her capacity as Coordinator of the Regional Commissions, had conveyed to you the terms of reference and a questionnaire for the study. On behalf of the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions, I would like to express our deep thanks and appreciation for the inputs provided to the study by members of CEB. The challenge has been to grasp all the rich material and synthesize it into a brief report as set out in the Terms of Reference for the study. It has in particular been a challenge to capture key issues without being too region specific, and to represent the wealth of material sent by more than twenty organizations in response to the questionnaire. This material of over 200 pages is in itself a rich source of information to use in the follow up to the study in the further work of the Regional Commissions and the full UN/CEB system. Therefore, we will proceed to share all inputs received with CEB members through a dedicated webpage, unless we hear any views to the contrary.

/...

To: Executive Heads of the UN system organizations
The study underlines how regionalism can be further harnessed in addressing issues ranging from trade, macroeconomic cooperation, employment and food security to climate change, the spread of disease and the growing connectivity made possible by dramatic advances in information and communications technology. This elaborate and in-depth substantive work will have to be developed at the regional level where the UN system organizations working together in each region need to coordinate their interventions within an overarching collective strategy of engagement with the partner organizations and stakeholders, bearing in mind regional priorities and specificity. This is more urgent in view of the significant degree of engagement of UN organizations at the regional level indicated by the study, including through more than 150 different MOUs, agreements and other structures of collaboration with more than 30 different organizations in all regions. In capturing such rich fabric of collaboration, the study could only be illustrative and not complete. The recommendations, therefore, are focused on highlighting key elements of processes and organizational frameworks that need to be put in place to facilitate such substantive engagement in the regions.

Clearly the study has only been able to scratch the surface and reveal the vast potential for further work to develop the regional dimension of development. It is however abundantly clear that a new regional development architecture is evolving rapidly that needs to be understood, supported and partnered with to promote sustainable economic, social, ecological and political development. This is of particular importance in this present era of globalization characterized by instability, unpredictability and volatility. Since more and more issues cannot be dealt with effectively at the national level alone, the sub-regional and regional levels are more and more seen as providing the technical and political arenas for the collaboration, analysis, advice and best practices to be developed. The trend is in all regions.

My colleagues the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions and I are grateful to the United Nations Secretary-General for his foreword to the study. In his foreword, the Secretary-General welcomes the report and its concrete recommendations on how the United Nations system in general and its Regional Commissions in particular can engage more deeply and effectively with regional and sub-regional organizations. I hope you will find these recommendations useful and that you would be able to endorse them during the upcoming CEB session. Clearly, the introduction of this study to the CEB and the desired endorsement of its recommendations is only a beginning of a process at the global and regional levels that would hopefully allow the CEB in future sessions and each Regional Coordination Mechanism to dedicate a more in-depth discussion on the growing regionalism and the respective repositioning of the UN system. My colleagues and I are committed to leveraging the assets and capacity of the Regional Commissions in collaboration with UN system organizations to support this growing regionalism and infuse it with universal norms and values. I trust we can count on your support in this endeavour.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Rima Khalaf
Executive Secretary
Dear Colleague,

During the last CEB meeting in Nairobi (1-2 April 2011), I informed the Board about the intention by the Regional Commissions to introduce to the upcoming CEB Fall Session (NY, 28-29 October 2011) the outcome of an independent study sponsored by the Commissions on the regional dimension for development and the UN system. As emphasized by Mr. Achim Steiner, Chair of the CEB/HLCP, and in the report of the HLCP he introduced to the Board in Nairobi, a technical meeting of the HLCP held in Santiago de Chile (January 2011) to reflect on sustainable globalization had witnessed a rich discussion with the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions on regionalism.

The discussion that followed in the HLCP spring session (NY, 3-4 March 2011) emphasized the importance for the UN system to reflect on its repositioning and its interaction with the new regional dynamics, bearing in mind the growing regionalism and role of regional institutions, including the Regional Commissions, as critical building blocks in enhanced global governance arrangements and global-regional nexus, as well as in making critical links to the country level (Report of the 21st Session of HLCP, CEB/2011/4).

The regional dimension of development is now recognized as being critical for an effective and coordinated response to an ever-growing number of trans-boundary challenges. With the regional development architecture evolving rapidly, this is an opportune time for the UN system, in particular the Regional Commissions, to reposition itself to engage more effectively with regional processes. With this in mind, the Regional Commissions have initiated a study to identify ways in which, the UN system in general and the Regional Commissions in particular, could engage more deeply and more effectively with the policy frameworks and initiatives developed by regional and subregional organizations, and provide enhanced and coherent support for such initiatives and regional priorities. The terms of reference and a short background note on the study are attached (Annexes A and B).

To: Executive Heads of the UN system organizations
Mr. Lennart Bage, the former President of IFAD and previous Chair of CEB/HLCP has kindly agreed to act as a consultant for the preparation of the study. We hope that the study will be a welcome contribution to the CEB/HLCP led process of developing issues and policy options for coherence across the multilateral system in moving towards a fairer, greener and more sustainable globalization.

To facilitate the preparation of the study, I am also pleased to attach for your organization’s response a short questionnaire seeking information on the current extent and nature of engagement between your organization and regional intergovernmental organizations (Annexure C). It would be highly appreciated if the response to the questionnaire is sent to Mr. Lennart Bage at lennart.bage@gmail.com with a copy to Mr. Amr Nour at nour@un.org preferably no later than 27 May 2011. The responses will be of great help for the consultant to understand and document the current nature of engagement of the UN system with various regional organizations and in attaining the objective of the study. Your kind engagement in this regard would be highly appreciated.

I am also soliciting a meeting with you for Mr. Bage to benefit from your own personal insights on the issues of the study. Our Regional Commissions’ New York Office will be following up with your office on this matter in due course.

I thank you for your kind cooperation in this matter which I trust will bring another constructive contribution to the broader CEB reform efforts and thinking, notably in relation to the regional work of the UN.

Sincerely,

Alicia Barcena
Executive Secretary
The Regional Dimension of Development and the UN System

Study initiated and sponsored by the Regional Commissions

Terms of Reference

Background:

The inexorable process of globalization has accelerated in recent decades. Driven, inter alia, by the processes of technological change, migration, innovation and connectivity, the world has been more tightly woven together. While the positive impacts of globalization have been reaped in the form of rapid economic growth, globalization has also given rise to a range of issues including rapid transmission of financial shocks, international crime and drug trafficking, increasingly volatile and turbulent international financial and product markets, issues of food and energy security and widening income and social inequalities in many countries. Increasing globalization has thus, given rise to a broadening range of issues that cannot be dealt with effectively except through coordinated global and regional action.

Partly as a response to these challenges, there has been a broadening of regional integration processes and many forms of intra-regional cooperation. Many of the key policy actions and policy dialogues to address the impact of the multiple crises were initiated at the regional and subregional levels. Much of this was done by regional organizations and groupings which have evolved as important players in determining the development agenda at all levels. The regional dimension of development is now being recognized as being critical for an effective and coordinated response for addressing an ever-growing number of transboundary issues.

The UN system as a whole and the regional commissions in particular, has a major role to play in making these processes more equitable, sustainable and inclusive. The UN system also has a unique role in orientating these regional processes in such a way that they uphold universal values, principles and goals to which the international community has committed, such as democracy, peace, human rights, social justice and equity. Advocacy and action is required to prevent countries and regions from adopting counter-productive policies based on protectionism and xenophobia.

The Regional Commissions have been functioning as regional arms of the United Nations in their respective regions, and are an integral part of their regional institutional landscape. Despite being organized differently to cater to the specific needs and priorities of the regions which they serve, all the Regional Commissions share key objectives aiming to foster economic integration at the subregional and regional levels, to promote the regional implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and to support regional sustainable development by contributing to bridging economic, social and environmental gaps among their member countries and subregions. In addition to the Regional Commissions, an average of some 30 UN Funds, Programmes and Specialized Agencies are operating at the regional level, with varied normative and operational country support focus in different sectors. Each region also has a significant number of non-UN regional and subregional organizations of a political/security or economic and financial nature, including the regional development banks, as well as research institutions and civil society organizations.
The multiplicity of organizations at the regional level calls for effective institutional arrangements which would ensure effective complementarities. The Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCM) convened by the Regional Commissions, and the Regional Directors’ teams (recently referred to as UNDG regional teams) function as coordinating bodies with complimentary mandates. The former largely focus on promoting policy coherence and regional and sub-regional programming, while the latter mainly focus on operational support to UN country teams. Steps have also been taken in recent years to institutionalize the linkage of the HLCP with the RCMs as a means of enhancing policy coordination between global and regional levels.

With the regional development architecture evolving rapidly, this is an opportune time for the UN system, in particular the Regional Commissions, to reposition itself to engage more effectively with regional processes, as well as feed into the policy frameworks and initiatives developed by regional and subregional organizations. By contributing to the repositioning of the UN system at the regional level, it is hoped that this would be a welcomed contribution to the CEB/HLCP led process of developing issues and policy options for coherence across the multilateral system in moving towards a fairer, greener and more sustainable globalization.

Objective:

The objective of the study is to provide strategic and practical recommendations for the United Nations system, in particular the Regional Commissions, for improved and value-added engagement with regional processes, including through enhanced and coherent support of regional and subregional initiatives and priorities.

Tasks:

Building on existing relevant documentation and ongoing efforts to improve coherence at the regional level, and working in close collaboration with the Regional Commissions, the consultant will:
1. Document major issues driving the growth of a new regionalism, drawing upon examples in selected areas including trade and investment; macroeconomic, financial and monetary policy coordination; and regional connectivity including transport. Analyze the evolution of regional cooperation mechanisms and integration processes and institutions in the different regions, including those in response to global crises.

2. Analyze and document examples of current UN system engagement (in particular the regional commissions) and cooperation with such regional processes, and some of the outcomes achieved as a result of such cooperation. In doing so, the effort would be to highlight the gaps and potential areas for further improving cooperation with regional organizations and processes, and the strategies and modalities which would make such engagement more productive.

3. Provide recommendations for deeper, more effective and coordinated engagement of the UN system, in particular the Regional Commissions, with the regional development processes in support of regional and sub-regional priorities while promoting universal values, principles and goals. The recommendations would take into account the multidisciplinary focus of the Regional Commissions and their position as repositories of analytical capacity, convening power and
legitimacy in policy recommendations, to highlight their specific and central role in such enhanced cooperation and engagement with the emerging regional structures and member States at the regional level. The study would also analyze and elaborate how the Regional Commissions can integrate, leverage, catalyze – and in essence boost the value of the UN system as a whole to member states at the regional level by using their coordination role as regional arms of the UN.

Expected output:

The final output of the consultant’s work will be a brief strategic report approximately (35 – 40 pages) and providing clear proposals and recommendations.

Time Frame:
Study to be finalized for submission to CEB Fall Session of 2011

Methodology:
- Conduct a desk review of relevant documentation;
- Conduct interviews in person and/or tele/video conferences with regional commissions, regional offices of UN agencies, non-UN regional partners and key member States.
- Conduct meetings and discussions with eminent persons including with selected executive heads of UN and Specialized Agencies for input and to validate findings.
- A survey/questionnaire, mainly to assist in task 2 above, to be circulated through the HLCP/CEB secretariat and the RCM.

Backstopping:
ECLAC, as current coordinator, and RCNYO will liaise with the Consultant to coordinate the work, in consultation with other Regional Commissions.
Background Note

The Regional Dimension of Development and the UN System
- A study commissioned jointly by the UN Regional Commissions

The inexorable process of globalization has accelerated in recent decades. Driven, *inter alia*, by the processes of technological change, migration, innovation and connectivity, the world has been more tightly woven together. While the positive impacts of globalization have been reaped in the form of rapid economic growth, globalization has also given rise to a range of issues including rapid transmission of financial shocks, international crime and drug trafficking, increasingly volatile and turbulent international financial and product markets, issues of food and energy security and widening income and social inequalities. These issues cannot be effectively dealt with except through coordinated global and regional action, and require effective regional and global governance mechanisms.

Partly as a response to these challenges, there has been a broadening of regional integration processes and many forms of intra-regional cooperation. Many of the key policy actions and policy dialogues to address the impact of the multiple crises were initiated at the regional and subregional levels. Much of this has been done by regional organizations and groupings which have evolved as important players in determining the development agenda at all levels. The regional dimension of development is now being recognized as being critical for an effective and coordinated response for addressing an ever-growing number of transboundary issues.

With the regional development architecture evolving rapidly, this is an opportune time for the UN system, in particular the Regional Commissions, to reposition itself to engage more effectively with regional processes. Therefore, the Regional Commissions have come together to undertake a study, which would identify ways in which the UN system, and the Regional Commissions in particular, could engage more deeply and more effectively with the policy frameworks and initiatives developed by regional and subregional organizations.

The study will document the rise of the most salient and effective regional integration and cooperation mechanisms in different regions, and draw upon selected examples, particularly in the areas of trade and investment; macroeconomic, financial and monetary policy coordination; and regional connectivity including transport. It will provide recommendations for the UN system, in particular the Regional Commissions, for enhanced and coherent support of regional and sub-regional initiatives and priorities.

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The Regional Dimension of Development and the UN System
-A study commissioned by the UN Regional Commissions
-(see background note for more information)

Questionnaire

1. Does your organization work with regional or sub-regional intergovernmental organizations and processes (for example, ASEAN, UNASUR, CARICOM, LAS, AU, ECOWAS etc.)? If yes, please list the organizations concerned.

2. Please explain the nature and areas of cooperation between your organization and regional intergovernmental organizations?

   Please provide details.

3. Is the cooperation in terms of a structured agreement or an MOU (if yes, please provide copy if convenient)?

4. What are the benefits and outcomes of such cooperation? Kindly indicate any specific products resulting from such cooperation.

5. Can this cooperation be improved? If so, how?

6. Can this cooperation improve or benefit by working with other UN system organizations or the Regional Commissions? If so, how?

Responses by CEB member organizations to study questionnaire available at:
www.un.org/regionalcommissions/studyresponses.html
The Regional Dimension of Development and the UN System
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