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Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/1. Restructuring the conference structure of the Commission to be fit for the evolving post-2015 development agenda

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling its resolutions 69/1 of 1 May 2013 in which it decided to conduct, at its seventy-first session, a review of the progress in implementation of the present resolution; and 70/11 of 8 August 2014 on implementing the outcome of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development,

Recalling also the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, entitled “The future we want”,¹ in particular paragraph 100 in which the Conference participants emphasized that regional and subregional organizations, including the United Nations regional commissions and their subregional offices, had a significant role to play in promoting a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their respective regions,

Acknowledging recent international meetings and conferences that featured issues related to sustainable development and the role of regional organizations, and noting with appreciation the successful holding and outcome of the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015, and adoption of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway² in September 2014 by the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Apia,

Bearing in mind the continuing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda taking place at the General Assembly, and recognizing the relevant meetings and conferences including the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held in New York from 26 June to 8 July 2015, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015 and the United Nations Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, to be held in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015 as a high-level plenary meeting at the seventieth session of the General Assembly,

Noting the Commission’s unique role as the most representative body in Asia and the Pacific and its comprehensive mandate as the main

¹ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

² General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex.

economic and social development centre of the United Nations development system in the region,

Recognizing the need for the Commission to adapt and respond to the evolving development challenges and opportunities within the Asia-Pacific region, and to be fit for purpose and in line with the evolving post-2015 development agenda,

Emphasizing, to that end, the importance of strengthening cooperation and coordination, and the need to create synergies within the United Nations development system at the global, regional and country levels in the Asia-Pacific region through enhanced collaboration between the secretariat and the funds, programmes, specialized agencies and other entities of the United Nations development system, as well as the need to build new partnerships within that system in line with General Assembly resolution 67/226 of 21 December 2012 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system,

Underlining that the effectiveness and efficiency of its conference structure benefits from engagement and communication between member States and the secretariat, as well as with major groups and other stakeholders, in accordance with its rules and procedures,

Commending the Executive Secretary on the initiatives taken to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the conference structure and to facilitate an effective process of consultation among members and associate members on a comprehensive and thorough review of the conference structure of the Commission,

Having considered the reports of the Executive Secretary on the implementation of resolution 69/1,^{3,4}

1. *Decides* to revise its conference structure with immediate effect in the following manner:

(a) Establish a committee on energy as a part of its subsidiary structure, meeting biennially;

(b) Reconstitute the Committee on Information and Communications Technology as the committee on information and communications technology, science, technology and innovation, meeting biennially;

(c) Reconstitute the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development as the committee on macroeconomic policy, poverty reduction and financing for development, meeting biennially;

³ E/ESCAP/71/33.

⁴ E/ESCAP/71/40.

2. *Also decides* that as a result of the reforms enumerated in the paragraph above, beginning in 2016, committee on information and communications technology, science, technology and innovation; Committee on Transport; Committee on Social Development; Committee on Statistics; and Committee on Environment and Development shall meet in the even years, and committee on macroeconomic policy, poverty reduction and financing for development; Committee on Trade and Investment; Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction and committee on energy shall meet in the odd years;

3. *Reaffirms* that the conference structure of the Commission shall conform to the pattern outlined in the annexes to this resolution;

4. *Requests* the Governing Council of each regional institution, at its next session, to consider the statute of the said regional institution to incorporate the following changes and to submit the revised statutes for the endorsement of the Commission at its seventy-second session:

(a) Abolish the technical committees of the regional institutions that have them;

(b) Ensure that the members of the Governing Councils are represented by the relevant line ministries;

(c) Consider that the regional institutions will be primarily funded by extrabudgetary resources;

(d) Ensure that regional institutions develop their capacities to assist member States in an efficient and effective manner;

(e) Encourage all members and associate members of ESCAP to make the necessary regular annual contributions, on a voluntary basis, which is essential to the operation of the regional institutions;

5. *Decides* to review the continued substantive relevance and financial viability of each regional institution every five years, with the start and timing of such reviews linked to the year of their establishment;

6. *Calls upon* all development partners, in particular the relevant organizations of the United Nations development system, to support the Commission in promoting sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region, through all appropriate mechanisms, including active participation in Commission sessions and enhanced cooperation on projects and policies;

7. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to continue to undertake systematic monitoring and evaluation of the conference structure and its link to the programme priorities of the Commission;

8. *Decides* to conduct a review of the reforms initiated through this resolution at its seventy-third session and requests the Executive Secretary to submit a report, which will serve as a basis for that review, on the implementation of these reforms and include recommendations on further adjustments to the conference structure, if necessary.

Annex I

Conference structure of the Commission

I. The Commission

1. The Commission shall meet annually under an overarching theme selected by member States, with each session comprising a senior officials segment of three days followed by a ministerial segment of two days, for a total of five working days, to discuss and decide on important issues pertaining to inclusive and sustainable development in the region, decide on the recommendations of its subsidiary bodies and of the Executive Secretary, review and endorse the proposed strategic framework and programme of work and take any other decisions required in conformity with its terms of reference.

2. The Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries shall be held for a maximum of one day during the senior officials segment, holding a status commensurate with the Committees of the Whole. A one-day preparatory meeting of the Special Body will be held prior to its regular session.

3. The Commission session may include a distinguished person's lecture and high-level representatives of United Nations agencies may be invited to participate in panel discussions held during the session, and corporate leaders and civil society organizations may be invited to participate in the session as appropriate, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Commission.

4. The Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, which convenes prior to the Commission session, shall be reconstituted as the Working Group on Draft Resolutions during the senior officials segment and shall have a status commensurate with the Committees of the Whole.

5. The number of simultaneous meetings of the Committees of the Whole, including their commensurate bodies, held during the senior officials segment of the annual session of the Commission shall not exceed two.

6. Draft resolutions shall reflect the substantive deliberations of member States; furthermore, without prejudice to rule 31 of its rules of procedure, members of the Commission intending to submit draft resolutions to the Commission are strongly encouraged to submit them to the Executive Secretary at least one month prior to the commencement of the session of the Commission in order to allow sufficient time for review by members and associate members of the Commission, and the Commission shall not consider draft resolutions submitted within one week of the first day of the Commission session.

7. The report of the Commission will be composed of the decisions and resolutions of the Commission. The draft record of proceedings of the Commission, prepared by the secretariat, will be circulated among members and associate members for comment within 15 days after the conclusion of the session. Members and associate members will be requested to provide comments within 15 days of receiving the draft record of proceedings. The secretariat's final record of proceedings of the Commission session will be issued within two months of the conclusion of the session, taking into account the relevant comments of members and associate members.

8. The Commission shall serve as the regional platform for integrating the sectoral streams of the Committees, with a view towards promoting sustainable development equitably through all of its three dimensions.

II. Subsidiary structure

9. The subsidiary structure of the Commission shall consist of the following nine committees:

- (a) Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development;
- (b) Committee on Trade and Investment;
- (c) Committee on Transport;
- (d) Committee on Environment and Development;
- (e) Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation;
- (f) Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction;
- (g) Committee on Social Development;
- (h) Committee on Statistics;
- (i) Committee on Energy.

10. The nine committees shall each meet biennially for a maximum duration of three days for each session, with joint plenary sessions between multiple committees to discuss cross-cutting issues, when possible and desirable.

11. The Commission may mandate a specific committee or multiple committees to meet in the gap year where a particular topic becomes an urgent issue for the region.

12. Within their respective areas of purview, the committees shall:

- (a) Review and analyse regional trends;
- (b) Identify, in consultation with member States, their priorities and emerging issues, and consult on regional approaches, taking into consideration subregional aspects;
- (c) Promote regional dialogue, including subregional synergies, and an exchange of experiences on policies and programmes;
- (d) Consider common regional positions as inputs to global processes and promote regional follow-up to their outcomes;

(e) Propose issues for consideration by the Commission as the basis for possible resolutions;

(f) Monitor the implementation of Commission resolutions;

(g) Promote a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges of the region, where appropriate, between Governments and civil society, the private sector, as well as the United Nations and other international organizations at the regional and subregional levels.

13. Further, within their respective areas of purview, the committees shall provide the secretariat, including its regional institutions, with guidance in reviewing the proposed strategic framework and programme of work.

14. The following areas shall be mainstreamed into the work of all committees:

(a) Implementation and monitoring the achievement of the relevant internationally agreed development goals;

(b) Poverty reduction and balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development;

(c) Gender equality;

(d) The priority needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

15. Representatives of civil society and the private sector may, upon consultation with member States, be invited to join the Committee sessions as appropriate, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Commission.

16. The specific issues to be addressed by each of the nine committees in carrying out the above functions are listed in annex II to the present resolution.

III. Ad hoc ministerial conferences and other intergovernmental meetings

17. Subject to the approval of the Commission, ad hoc ministerial conferences and other intergovernmental meetings may be organized on specific and cross-sectoral issues.

18. No more than six such ministerial conferences or other intergovernmental meetings may be held during a calendar year, and the total number of days shall not exceed twenty.

19. In those years when a ministerial conference or intergovernmental meeting is held covering issues normally discussed in a committee, the corresponding committee need not be convened.

IV. Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission

20. The functions of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission shall be in accordance with the terms of reference contained in annex III to the present resolution.

21. The Advisory Committee may, if necessary, establish its own working groups on consideration of specific issues.

22. The Advisory Committee shall meet with sufficient frequency both in formal and informal meetings on topical subjects, especially prior to the Commission session. The number of formal meetings of the Advisory Committee per calendar year shall not be less than six or more than twelve. Any additional meetings, formal or informal, will be held in consultation with the Advisory Committee and the Executive Secretary, and may not require documentation by the secretariat, unless otherwise requested by the Advisory Committee.

23. Should the need arise to seek the views of United Nations entities or other intergovernmental organizations on subjects of interest to the Advisory Committee, members of the Advisory Committee can, if consensus has been reached, request the secretariat to invite representatives of particular United Nations entities or other intergovernmental organizations to attend a subsequent session of the Advisory Committee.

24. The Advisory Committee shall periodically review the work of subregional offices and regional institutions, and actively follow up and report on the implementation of resolutions by member States. The secretariat shall facilitate the reporting on resolutions by preparing the requisite guidelines and templates.

V. Regional institutions under the auspices of the Commission

25. The following institutions under the auspices of the Commission shall continue to function as prescribed in their respective statutes and terms of reference:

- (a) Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology;
- (b) Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture;
- (c) Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific;
- (d) Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization;
- (e) Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development.

26. The Commission may constitute additional regional institutions that support the achievement of its strategic and programmatic objectives.

VI. General provisions

A. Rules of procedure

27. Unless otherwise specified by the Commission, the rules of procedure of the Commission, including those pertaining to the decision-making process, shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the committees.

B. Informal session

28. An informal session among the heads of delegations during the ministerial segment of each Commission session may be organized but shall not be institutionalized. The agenda for the informal session shall be decided by consensus and the annotated agenda shall reach members at least thirty days before the opening of the session to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the session. Simultaneous interpretation shall be provided.

Annex II

Issues to be addressed by committees subsidiary to the Commission

The issues listed below are the primary issues to be addressed by each committee. The Commission may adjust the list of issues for any committee at any time, as appropriate; the committees shall likewise retain the flexibility to address new or emerging issues brought to their attention by the secretariat, upon consultation with member States.

1. Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development:

(a) Experiences and practices in formulating and implementing macroeconomic policies to reduce poverty and inequalities, as well as to achieve sustainable and inclusive development;

(b) Regional economic development policies and options;

(c) Financing for development, including enhancing domestic fiscal resources; increasing social impact investment by the private sector; and accessing regional financing vehicles, arrangements and funds;

(d) Experiences and practices in developing regulations and institutions to deepen and strengthen the region's capital markets;

(e) Review of pro-poor economic growth policies, particularly in countries with special needs; and

(f) Policy options and programmes for reducing rural poverty, including those with a gender dimension, through the development of sustainable agriculture;

2. Committee on Trade and Investment:

(a) Regional cooperative mechanisms and agreements in trade and investment, including the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement;

(b) Policy options on trade, investment, and small- and medium-sized enterprise development; and

(c) Policy options and frameworks on trade facilitation.

3. Committee on Transport:

(a) Transport policy options and programmes, including the evolving post-2015 development agenda, and regional agreements and mandates;

(b) The Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway and other initiatives, including inter-island shipping and maritime transport promoted by the Commission for planning and financing integrated intermodal transport and logistics systems;

(c) Measures to improve road safety and the efficiency of transport operations and logistics;

- (d) Support for the accession and implementation of international transport agreements;
- (e) Harmonization of transport standards and documents;
- (f) Applications of new transport technologies, including intelligent transport systems;
- (g) Private sector participation for financing and maintaining infrastructure, including through public-private partnerships.

4. Committee on Environment and Development:

- (a) Policies and strategies for enhancing environmental sustainability of economic and social development, including climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- (b) Policies and strategies for sustainable management of natural resources including water; and
- (c) Policies and strategies for promoting inclusive and sustainable urban development.

5. Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation:

- (a) Integration of information and communications technology-related issues in development policies, plans and programmes;
- (b) Transfer and application of information and communications technology at the regional and subregional levels;
- (c) Information and communications technology, including space applications, for disaster risk reduction;
- (d) Development of human and institutional capacity in the use of information and communications technology and in the use of science and technology for innovation;
- (e) Policy options and strategies for enhancing cooperation on the generation of and access to science, technology and innovation for sustainable development, including regional mechanisms for technology transfer;
- (f) Mainstreaming of science, technology and innovation issues in development policies, strategies and plans.

6. Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction:

- (a) Policy options and strategies on multi-hazard disaster risk reduction and mitigation;
- (b) Regional cooperation mechanisms for disaster risk management, including space and other technical support systems; and
- (c) Multi-hazard assessment, preparedness, early warning and response to disaster risks.

7. Committee on Social Development:

- (a) Review the regional implementation of the internationally agreed goals and commitments on social development;
- (b) Assess population and development trends, including international migration and its impact on development;
- (c) Address issues of inequality and promote the social inclusion of youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and other vulnerable social groups;
- (d) Promote gender equality and women's empowerment; and
- (e) Strengthen social protection and health systems.

8. Committee on Statistics:

- (a) Ensure that by 2020 all countries in the region have the capability to provide a basic range of population, economic, social and environmental statistics;
- (b) Create a more adaptive and cost-effective information management environment for national statistical offices through stronger collaboration.

9. Committee on Energy:

- (a) Assist in the development of strategies towards attaining internationally agreed development goals concerning energy;
- (b) Promote policy dialogues and networking among member States to develop a regional cooperation framework to enhance energy security, with a view towards promoting greater use of sustainable energy resources, including universal access to energy services, improving energy efficiency and scaling up the use of renewable energy, particularly through data and policy analysis, information exchanges and best practices;
- (c) Identify policy options to strengthen intergovernmental frameworks to promote regional energy connectivity in order to develop a supportive mechanism for regional economic cooperation and integration;
- (d) Support the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum and other regional agreements and mandates including the evolving post-2015 development agenda, promoted by the Commission for regional cooperation for enhanced energy security and the sustainable use of energy;
- (e) Identify policy options, strategies, policy dialogues and knowledge platforms to promote access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all including renewable energy, energy efficiency, and advanced and cleaner fossil fuel technologies; and
- (f) Identify policies and strategies to promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technologies.

Annex III

Terms of reference of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission

The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission shall have the following functions:

(a) To strengthen close cooperation and consultation between the member States and the secretariat, including by providing advice and guidance to be taken into account by the Executive Secretary while undertaking the respective activities;

(b) To serve as a deliberative forum for substantive exchange of views and provide guidance on the formulation of the agenda of the Commission and in connection with economic and social developments that have an impact on the Asia-Pacific region;

(c) To advise and guide the Executive Secretary in drawing up proposals for the strategic framework, programme of work and theme topics for sessions of the Commission consistent with the guidance provided by the Commission;

(d) To receive, on a regular basis, information on the administrative and financial functioning of the Commission;

(e) To advise and guide the Executive Secretary in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Commission's programme of work and resource allocation;

(f) To review the draft calendar of meetings prior to its submission to the Commission at its annual session;

(g) To advise and guide the Executive Secretary on the provisional agenda for sessions of the Commission and committees subsidiary to the Commission, consistent with the need to ensure a results-oriented and focused agenda that is aligned with the developmental priorities of member States, as defined by them, as well as chapter II of its rules of procedure;

(h) To advise and guide the Executive Secretary on the identification of emerging economic and social issues and other relevant issues for incorporation into the provisional agendas and on the formulation of the annotated provisional agendas for Commission sessions;

(i) To be informed of collaboration and related arrangements between the secretariat and other international and regional organizations, in particular on long-term cooperation programmes and joint initiatives,

including those to be proposed by the Executive Secretary and conducted under the aegis of the Regional Coordination Mechanism;

(j) To carry out any other tasks entrusted to it by the Commission.

**Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

**71/2. Implementation of the Programme of Action
for the Least Developed Countries for the
Decade 2011-2020 in Asia and the Pacific**

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling the Istanbul Declaration⁵ and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020,⁶ which were adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/280 of 17 June 2011,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 69/231 of 19 December 2014 on the follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, in which the Assembly underlined that there would be two regional-level preparatory meetings, taking advantage of the biennial regional meetings already scheduled for 2015, one in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and the other in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Taking note of its resolution 70/3 of 8 August 2014 on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 in Asia and the Pacific, in which the kind gesture of the Government of Cambodia to host an Asia-Pacific regional high-level policy dialogue on the Istanbul Programme of Action for the least developed countries in early 2015 was noted with appreciation,

Recalling that the Commission in its resolution 70/3 requested the Executive Secretary, inter alia, to organize the Asia-Pacific regional high-level policy dialogue on the Istanbul Programme of Action for the least developed countries in early 2015,

⁵ *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011 (A/CONF.219/7), chap. I.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. II.

Expressing appreciation to the Government of Cambodia for hosting the High-level Policy Dialogue on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, in Siem Reap, Cambodia, from 4 to 6 March 2015, which adopted the Siem Reap Angkor Outcome Document,⁷ and the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the Regional Meeting on Financing Graduation Gaps of Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries in Dhaka from 28 to 30 October 2014, which provided a strong basis for the organization of the above-mentioned High-level Policy Dialogue,

Recognizing that while least developed countries have made some progress in achieving many of the goals and targets in the Programme of Action, they continue to face many challenges, such as pervasive poverty, serious structural impediments to growth, low levels of human development and high exposure to shocks and disasters, which are putting at risk the hard-won gains achieved so far,

Taking note with appreciation that the secretariat's publication *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2015* provides a timely and comprehensive review and analysis of the status, challenges and prospects of each of these countries, and targeted policy options to promote their inclusive growth and sustainable development,

1. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To transmit the Siem Reap Angkor Outcome Document as the input to the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, to be held in Antalya, Turkey, in June 2016;

(b) To prepare and publish the *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report* on an annual basis as one of the secretariat's publications and report the main findings and key messages of that report to the annual sessions of the Commission;

(c) To continue to assist Asia-Pacific least developed countries, in cooperation with other international entities and taking into account their respective mandates, in building their capacity to undertake appropriate policy responses to accelerate their structural transformation and to achieve other internationally agreed development goals, including the post-2015 development agenda, which is expected to be adopted at the United Nations Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda in September 2015;

(d) To submit to the Commission at its seventy-second session a report on the progress achieved in implementing the present resolution.

⁷ See E/ESCAP/71/3.

**Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

**71/3. Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked
Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024**

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 69/137 of 12 December 2014, in which the Assembly endorsed the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 that were adopted at the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, held in Vienna from 3 to 5 November 2014,

Recalling also its resolution 69/2 of 1 May 2013 on the final review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in the Asia-Pacific region,

Recognizing that the lack of territorial access to the sea, aggravated by remoteness from world markets and high transit costs, continues to impose serious constraints on the attainment of sustainable and inclusive development in landlocked developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region,

Recalling the overarching goal of the Vienna Programme of Action to address the special development needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries that arise from their landlockedness, remoteness and geographical constraints in a more coherent manner and thus contribute to an enhanced rate of sustainable and inclusive growth, which can contribute to the eradication of poverty by moving towards the goal of ending extreme poverty,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 64/214, in which the United Nations General Assembly welcomed the establishment of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, and resolution 69/137, in which the Assembly urged ratification of the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries;

Having considered the report on the secretariat's support for implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action,⁸

1. *Welcomes* the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024;

⁸ See E/ESCAP/71/2.

2. *Encourages* the Asian landlocked and transit developing countries, regional and subregional organizations and all other stakeholders to implement at all levels, in a coordinated, coherent and expeditious manner, the actions that have been agreed upon in the Vienna Programme of Action in its six priority areas, namely: fundamental transit policy issues; infrastructure development and maintenance; international trade and trade facilitation; regional integration and cooperation; structural economic transformation; and means of implementation;

3. *Invites* those landlocked developing countries that have not yet done so to accede to or to ratify, at their earliest convenience, the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries in order to bring the Think Tank into full operation, and invites the secretariat, the Office of the High Representative and other relevant bodies of the United Nations system, member States, including development partners, and relevant international and regional organizations to support the Think Tank so that it can undertake its role;

4. *Calls upon* member States to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action into their national and sectoral development strategies in order to ensure its effective implementation;

5. *Invites*, in light of paragraph 71 of the Vienna Programme of Action,⁹ the relevant organizations and bodies, including the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and regional development banks, among others the Asian Development Bank, to integrate the Vienna Programme of Action into their programmes of work, as appropriate within their respective mandates, and to support landlocked and transit developing countries in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in a well-coordinated and coherent manner;

6. *Urges* the development partners of the landlocked developing countries to provide targeted technical and financial support and to increase their investment in infrastructure development and maintenance, as appropriate;

7. *Invites* the private sector to contribute to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in their respective areas of competence and in line with the national priorities of the landlocked developing countries;

8. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action into the programme of work of the Commission, as appropriate and within its respective mandate, and submit annual analytical reports on the

⁹ General Assembly resolution 69/137, annex II.

implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, as called for in paragraph 75 of the Programme of Action, to the Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries;

(b) To provide all possible assistance to the Asia-Pacific landlocked developing countries in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action;

(c) To carry out relevant activities to ensure effective realization of the road map of the secretariat for implementing the Vienna Programme of Action as contained in document E/ESCAP/71/2;

(d) To report to the Commission at its seventy-second session on the progress made in implementation of the present resolution.

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/4. Implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012 on the future we want,¹⁰ in which the Assembly called for the convening in 2014 of a third international conference on small island developing States, while recognizing the importance of coordinated, balanced and integrated actions to address the sustainable development challenges facing small island developing States,¹¹

Taking into account that member States emphasized that regional and subregional organizations, including the regional commissions and their subregional offices, have a significant role to play in promoting a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their respective regions,¹²

¹⁰ The annex of the resolution contains the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012.

¹¹ General Assembly resolution 66/288, para. 180.

¹² *Ibid.*, para. 100.

Recalling General Assembly resolution 69/15 of 14 November 2014 on the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway,¹³ which urged all parties to take concrete measures to expeditiously advance the sustainable development of small island developing States, including through the internationally agreed development goals, in order for them to eradicate poverty, build resilience and improve the quality of life, and which recognized the need to implement expeditiously, through genuine and durable partnerships, the global effort in support of the sustainable development of small island developing States through concrete, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented programmes,¹⁴

Recalling also that member States recognized that there is an urgent need to strengthen cooperation and enable strong, genuine and durable partnerships at the subnational, national, subregional, regional and international levels to enhance international cooperation and action to address the unique and particular vulnerabilities of small island developing States so as to ensure their sustainable development,¹⁵

Recalling further that member States called upon the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies to monitor the full implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Samoa Pathway), including through the monitoring frameworks of the regional commissions,¹⁶

Recalling the decision of member States to establish a universal, intergovernmental, high-level political forum to follow up on the implementation of sustainable development and the development agenda that is expected to be adopted at the United Nations Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda in September 2015,¹⁷

Recalling also that member States have invited the regional commissions to contribute to the work of the high-level political forum, including through annual regional meetings with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate,¹⁸

Having considered the report on the support of ESCAP for implementation of the Samoa Pathway for the sustainable development of small island developing States,¹⁹

1. *Expresses* its gratitude to the Government and the people of Samoa for hosting the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Apia from 1 to 4 September 2014, and for providing all the necessary support;

¹³ The annex of the resolution contains the outcome document of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, which was held in Apia from 1 to 4 September 2014.

¹⁴ General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex, para. 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 122.

¹⁷ General Assembly resolution 66/288, para. 84.

¹⁸ General Assembly resolution 67/290, para. 13.

¹⁹ See E/ESCAP/71/1/Rev.1.

2. *Encourages* all members and associate members of the Commission to support, both actively and effectively, the implementation of the Samoa Pathway, particularly by strengthening the means by which it is to be done, including through partnerships, financing, trade, technology, capacity-building and institutional support;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the relevant United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, regional and subregional organizations as well as non-governmental organizations, while recognizing the need for action in order to generate a tangible impact on the lives of Pacific people and communities:

(a) To assist Pacific island members and associate members, upon request, to enhance national capacities and institutions;

(b) To enhance the Pacific voice and representation in regional and global processes;

(c) To ensure the realization of a transformational strategy for the sustainable development of small island developing States by strengthening the role of the Commission in monitoring the follow-up to the Samoa Pathway and the evolving post-2015 development agenda;

4. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to continue to enhance the voice and participation of small islands developing States in the decision-making and norm-setting processes of the Commission, including through the conference structure, while recognizing the distinct geographic and other challenges that such States face in participating in intergovernmental processes;

5. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its seventy-third session on the progress in the implementation of the present resolution.



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Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/5. Implementing the outcome of the Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 68/279 of 30 June 2014, in which the Assembly, inter alia, invited the regional commissions, with the support of regional development banks and other relevant entities, to hold regional consultations, as appropriate, the outcome of which could serve as input to the preparations for the third International Conference on Financing for Development,²⁰

Recognizing the importance of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015, in delivering a robust financing framework for the post-2015 development agenda,

Recalling its Resolution 69/6 on implementation of the Tehran Declaration to promote public-private partnerships in infrastructure development in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development,

Recognizing also the remaining challenges as well as the significant progress made in implementing the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development in Asia and the Pacific,²¹

²⁰ Para. 19.

²¹ *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex. See also *Implementing the Monterrey Consensus in Asia and the Pacific: Issues, Challenges and Action* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.II.F.25) and United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Sustainable Development Financing: Perspectives from Asia and the Pacific* (ST/ESCAP/2716).

Recalling its past deliberations on the priorities and recommendations of the Asia-Pacific region with respect to financing for development,²²

Noting with appreciation the kind gesture of the Government of Indonesia for hosting the Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development in Jakarta on 29 and 30 April 2015, at which representatives of 35 members and associate members of ESCAP attended,

Recognizing that the Chair's summary²³ of the High-level Consultation contains a wide range of priorities and recommendations from the Asia-Pacific region that will serve as inputs into the preparatory process for the third International Conference on Financing for Development,

Taking note of its recent related initiatives, including the Asia-Pacific Outreach Meeting on Sustainable Development Financing, which was held in Jakarta on 10 and 11 June 2014, the Ministerial Panel on Asia-Pacific Perspectives on Sustainable Development and Development Financing, which was held in Bangkok on the occasion of the seventieth session of the Commission, and the ongoing work on enhancing regional economic cooperation and integration in accordance with Commission resolution 70/1 of 23 May 2014,

1. *Recognizes* the priorities and recommendations contained in the Chair's summary of the Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development, as the region's contribution to the preparations for the third International Conference on Financing for Development, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/279;

2. *Encourages* countries in Asia and the Pacific to actively take part in the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To transmit, as the region's input, the Chair's summary of the High-level Consultation to the organizers of the third International Conference on Financing for Development;

(b) To continue to mainstream financing for development into its programme of work, as appropriate and in accordance with its mandate;

(c) To provide all possible assistance to the member States in implementing the recommendations contained in the Chair's summary of the High-level Consultation;

(d) To report to the Commission at its seventy-second session on the progress made in implementing the present resolution.

²² See the outcome of the Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development, which was held in Jakarta from 2 to 4 August 2000. Available from www.un.org/Depts/rcnyo/newsletter/nl9/hilevel.htm.

²³ E/ESCAP/71/INF/8.

Annex

Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development

29-30 April 2015

Jakarta

Chair's summary*

1. The Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development was held from 29 to 30 April 2015. The consultation was co-hosted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Ministry of Finance of Indonesia, in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Asian Development Bank Institute, the United Nations Development Programme, the Government of the Russian Federation, and the Green Technology Center-Korea.

2. The Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development was attended by about 200 participants, including a vice-president, a former prime minister, two deputy prime ministers, and more than 50 ministers, deputy ministers, central bank governors, deputy governors and senior officials from almost 40 countries, representing ESCAP members and associate members. Representatives of international organizations, ADB and organizations in the United Nations system joined the consultation. Other entities and representatives of the private sector and civil society, as well as eminent experts, also participated in the event.

3. The consultation built on the Asia-Pacific Outreach Meeting on Sustainable Development Financing, which was held in Jakarta from 10 to 11 June 2014, and was also organized by ESCAP in partnership with the Ministry of Finance of Indonesia.

4. The consultation was inaugurated with a keynote address by the Finance Minister of Indonesia, Mr. Bambang P. S. Brodjonegoro. Ms. Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, laid out the context and core areas of focus of the consultation. Participants expressed their thanks to the Government of Indonesia for its hospitality and to ESCAP for its hard work.

5. This Chair's Summary will be submitted to the co-facilitators for the preparatory process of the International Conference on Financing for Development as input to the preparations for the third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will be held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015.

6. A clear message that from the consultation is that mobilizing financial resources for development is an integral part of the development agenda beyond 2015.

7. In their presentations, participants discussed approaches and modalities of different sources of financing, shared their national experiences on key issues of financing for development, and spelled out their expectations from the forthcoming Conference in Addis Ababa. Their insights provided concrete substance to the deliberations on financing for development in the Asia-Pacific region.

* The present annex is being issued without formal editing.

8. The consultation proposed tangible and actionable recommendations for mobilizing additional financial resources, improving financial capacities, and developing innovative instruments to support the emerging sustainable development goals in the region.

9. In that context, the following priorities were identified:

- Enhance and use domestic resource mobilization to invest in the social sectors in order to address social disparities and income inequalities, including those between genders.
- Ensure that the new financing for development framework contributes to raising living standards, creating decent jobs and empowering women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Enhance quality infrastructure investment, taking into account all aspects of economic, social and environmental sustainability.
- Ensure adequate financing for sustainable infrastructure connectivity to promote regional economic and social integration.
- Increase the effectiveness and efficiency of financial markets for channeling the vast pool of regional savings towards funding major infrastructure projects.
- Ensure that unmet official development assistance (ODA) commitments are fulfilled and that such assistance is deployed more strategically, prioritizing countries that need it the most, while ensuring that it is aligned with national development plans.
- Scale up climate finance at the national, regional and global levels, taking into account that the mobilization of resources for this purpose is new and additional to existing ODA commitments.
- Strengthen domestic regulatory policies and institutions and address systemic global issues to support a predictable, stable and resilient platform for finance.
- Address the special needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States by leveraging trade, foreign direct investment and access to and transfer of technology, as well as by building capacities, in alignment with the implementation plans of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of action (SAMOA) Pathway, and ensuring that adequate support is also provided to low income countries.

10. Within this priority framework, the sessions in the consultation developed the following recommendations:

- The Asia-Pacific economies have the potential to raise tax-to-GDP ratios. For that purpose, they could adopt tax policies and approaches to broaden tax bases, with regard to both individual and corporate income taxes wherever coverage is

limited, remove exemptions and loopholes, and improve administrative efficiency and collection.

- In order to mobilize additional public resources, it is important to improve the effectiveness and efficiency in the allocation of public expenditures and to reduce wasteful and unproductive expenditures. In addition, it was emphasized that public expenditure programmes need to be reoriented so that appropriate amounts of funds are allocated to social development, education, health care and food security.
- Budgeting needs to be made gender sensitive and implemented to mainstream gender considerations into the budgeting process.
- It is important to foster international cooperation in tax matters by dealing firmly with base erosion and profit shifting, and increasing global transparency and information exchanges. For that purpose, the region can enhance cooperation in tax matters by setting up an Asia-Pacific tax forum.
- Cities and subnational governments should be provided with appropriate incentives and capacity development to enable them to take a larger and more pro-active role in mobilizing and accessing resources for development. For that purpose, they may consider launching reforms of intergovernmental transfer systems, of property taxation so that tax bases reflect market valuations, and of service charges to encourage more efficient and sustainable resource use.
- The region must encourage institutional investors to deploy their liquidity towards the development of domestic capital markets. In addition, the region should consider adopting harmonized regulations and institutions for domestic capital markets to facilitate the trading of securities across countries, and to lay the groundwork for the development of a regional capital market at a later stage.
- To enable micro, small and medium size enterprises and small entrepreneurs to gain better access to finance, countries in the region could develop innovative instruments, such as hometown investment trust funds and diaspora bonds, promote financial education and set up credit bureaux.
- It is important to remove barriers to entrepreneurship, increase support for research and development, and foster cooperation, including among academia, industry, government, civil society and innovation laboratories, in order to encourage innovation. Such efforts can enable entrepreneurs, scientists and investors from the region to work together and compete in the global market place on the merits of their ideas and innovations.
- Public and private resources should be mobilized at a larger scale for infrastructure investment. The region has welcomed the capital enhancement of multilateral development banks and newly established infrastructure financing institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), for financing national and transboundary connectivity. The close

cooperation between new and existing multilateral development banks could play a critical role for the promotion of sustainable and resilient infrastructure in the region.

- Islamic finance, including non-bank financial intermediaries, has emerged as a critical source of funding for the region. In recent years, the capacities, infrastructure and regulatory environment of the Islamic finance industry have developed considerably in the Asia-Pacific region. Further exploiting and tapping this source will offer new opportunities of funding for development.
- ODA should be more strategically deployed, prioritizing countries that need it the most, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, contributing (i) to the building of capacities in areas such as domestic public finance and the development of capital markets and (ii) to the leveraging of other sources of funding, for instance, by helping countries in the preparation of bankable projects or contracts for public-private partnerships, including for quality infrastructure investments.
- Access to financing for development has been more complicated for the low income countries. The graduation of lower income countries has resulted in less access to external finance and lower concessional flows. The aid architecture needs to reflect the transition needs of low income countries in addition to supporting the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. ODA to those economies should focus on leveraging financial flows from capital markets and multilateral development banks.
- Private businesses in the region could bolster social-impact investing and venture philanthropy to fund education, health and environmental protection, particularly at the community level.
- A meaningful global climate deal in 2015 must entail credible public and private capital availability for the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific to help decarbonize their economies and build resilience in their communities. Delivering the existing target of \$100 billion in capitalization for the Green Climate Fund will be essential to support those efforts.
- Recognizing that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the main channel for addressing climate change, national frameworks for climate finance are also necessary. National frameworks for climate finance need to include financial support mechanisms to reduce risk and deliver acceptable investment returns on projects for the adoption of green technologies and the development of eco-friendly products. Mainstreaming climate considerations into national budgets and development plans is an important component of such frameworks.
- The region needs to enhance North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation and triangular development cooperation in

areas such as trade, investment, technology transfer, agriculture and rural development, gender equality and empowerment, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building and advisory services.

- It is important to properly resource national statistical offices, so that they can increase the collection, processing and publication of high quality, timely and reliable data in support of the development agenda beyond 2015. Equally important are the requirements of data users, which need more support to promote better planning, monitoring, accountability and data literacy.

11. The Asia-Pacific High-level Consultation on Financing for Development was chaired by Mr. Bambang P. S. Brodjonegoro, Minister of Finance of Indonesia, and co-chaired by Mr. Aisake Valu Eke, Minister of Finance of Tonga; Mr. Mahinda Samarasinghe, State Minister of Finance of Sri Lanka; Mr. Wayne Swan, MP and former Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer of Australia; Mr. Ly Thuch, Senior Minister of Cambodia; Tom Murdoch, Minister of Finance of Kiribati; and Mr. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General and Minister for Finance of Fiji.

12. The following countries were represented in the consultation: Afghanistan; Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Federated States of Micronesia; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Islamic Republic of Iran; Japan; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Mongolia; Myanmar; Norway; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Samoa; Sri Lanka; Switzerland; Tajikistan; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Tuvalu; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and Uzbekistan. The Cook Islands, an associate member of ESCAP, was also represented in the consultation.

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/6 Maritime transport connectivity for sustainable development

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources, as well as other related instruments,

Recalling also the outcome document, entitled "The future we want", of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held

in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, in which the Conference noted that transport and mobility are central to sustainable development, and committed to protect and restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems and to maintain their biodiversity, enabling their conservation and sustainable use for present and future generations, and to effectively apply, in accordance with international law, an ecosystem approach and a precautionary approach to the management of activities having an impact on the marine environment, to deliver on all three dimensions of sustainable development,

Recognizing that maritime transport connectivity is vital to the achievement of sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region,

Recognizing also that oceans and coasts provide valuable resources and services to support human populations, particularly coastal communities that depend heavily on them, and that the sustainable use of marine living resources will enhance global food security and contribute towards poverty reduction for present and future generations,

Recognizing further that many ecologically and biologically rich and fragile marine areas need management measures and safeguards to avoid negative environmental impacts from maritime transport activities,

Recalling the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, adopted by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2009,

Recalling also its resolution 70/7 of 8 August 2014 on implementation of the Suva Declaration on Improving Maritime Transport and Related Services in the Pacific and its resolution 68/4 of 23 May 2012 on implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016),

Recognizing that regional connectivity plays an important role in promoting inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific, and that maritime transport is an essential factor in supporting the post-2015 development agenda expected to be adopted at the United Nations Summit in September 2015, and understanding that there are still significant gaps in transport infrastructure connectivity and that there is a need for better linkages from land-based and air-based transport networks to the region's maritime ports,

Recognizing also the importance of maritime connectivity in poverty alleviation as it facilitates trade and access to health services, education, employment, markets and other social and economic opportunities,

Recalling the report¹ of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, in particular goal 14 on conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development,

¹ A/68/970.

Acknowledging that illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing remains a serious threat to sustainable development in many countries of the Asia-Pacific region,

1. *Urges* countries in the Asia-Pacific region to strengthen cooperation on maritime transport connectivity in order to facilitate the achievement of sustainable development;

2. *Encourages* countries in the region to make further efforts in combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources and marine ecosystems, and to underline the importance of regional and global efforts and cooperation to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To include maritime connectivity in the programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 and its Regional Action Programme (2017-2021), as appropriate, to be presented to the Ministerial Conference on Transport at its third session in 2016;

(b) To further strengthen ways of cooperation to enhance capacities at the national and regional levels in building intermodal transport for the Asia-Pacific region, in particular maritime transport;

(c) To collaborate with relevant United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, regional and subregional organizations and other relevant stakeholders to make necessary efforts in maritime cooperation in achieving sustainable development;

(d) To report to the Commission at its seventy-second session on the implementation of the present resolution.

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/7. Adoption of the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Encouraged by the successful regional cooperation that led to the entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network,²⁴

²⁴ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2596, No. 46171.

Noting the recent trends in member countries to expand their railway infrastructure, in particular through the upgrade of existing lines or construction of new ones to neighbouring countries,

Recognizing that the growing volume of intraregional and Eurasian transport can be further supported by facilitation of international railway transport through removal of non-physical barriers,

Recalling Commission resolution 66/4 of 19 May 2010 on the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and resolution 68/4 of 23 May 2012 on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), and the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport,

Recalling also the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024,²⁵ which reaffirms the importance of railway transport for landlocked developing countries for their integration into regional and global markets,

Recognizing the crucial importance of railway transport in the development of an integrated intermodal transport system to strengthen regional connectivity and promote sustainable and inclusive economic and social development of countries in the Asia-Pacific region,

Noting with appreciation the regional initiatives aimed at developing transport connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, inter alia, the Joint Project on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages, the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (Belt and Road Initiative) and the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure,

Noting that the distances separating the main points of departure and arrival, both domestically and internationally, are sufficiently great to justify the economic viability of railways,

Stressing the need to reduce the environmental impact of the transport sector and recognizing that railway transport is energy-efficient and causes limited emissions of greenhouse gases,

Reaffirming our commitment to the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, and the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia,

Noting the recommendation of the Committee on Transport at its fourth session held in Bangkok from 15 to 17 October 2014, that a draft resolution on a “regional cooperation framework for the facilitation of international railway transport” be submitted to the Commission for adoption at its seventy-first session in 2015,

1. *Adopts* the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport, as contained in the annex to the present resolution;

²⁵ General Assembly resolution 69/137, annex II.

2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To accord priority to the implementation of the Regional Cooperation Framework by assisting members and associate members in their efforts to realize the vision of a sustainable integrated intermodal transport and logistics system;

(b) To ensure effective coordination with other United Nations and multilateral agencies, as well as with subregional organizations, in the implementation of the Regional Cooperation Framework;

(c) To ensure the secretariat's cooperation with the relevant regional initiatives aimed at developing transport connectivity, inter alia, the Joint Project on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages, the Belt and Road Initiative and the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure, as well as other regional corridors, with a view to contributing to the ongoing programmes of the secretariat on transport and prioritizing transport connectivity in the development agenda;

(d) To facilitate the sharing of experiences and good practices on the facilitation of international railway transport, including monitoring progress made in implementing the Regional Cooperation Framework;

(e) To urge member States that have not already done so to become parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network;

(f) To collaborate effectively with international and regional financing institutions, multilateral and bilateral donors and private sector investors and international organizations to mobilize further financial and technical support for the wider development and facilitation of railway transport along the Trans-Asian Railway Network;

3. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its seventy-third session on the progress made in implementing the present resolution.

Annex

Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport

Growing intraregional trade, on the one hand, and increasing concerns about energy security and the adverse effects of transport on the environment, on the other, has made the countries of the Asia-Pacific region more appreciative of the role of railways as an efficient, safe and environmentally sound mode of transport. The entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network in 2009 signalled the readiness of member countries to cooperate on railway projects of international importance and work together on the development of efficient railway transport corridors to serve growing intraregional trade.

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development — “The future we want” — emphasized that sustainable transport is central to sustainable development and thus high on the agenda of global development. This has provided a renewed impetus to develop environmentally sound railway transport, which is efficient, competitive and complementary to other modes of transport.

Despite the region’s continued increase in containerized trade and the inherent advantages of railway transport to efficiently carry large volumes of goods over long distances, most railway operators in the region have failed to capitalize on the increase in international trade in all but a limited way. In particular, despite the launch of a number of international container block-train services, they are still struggling to establish themselves as an efficient alternative to either shipping or long-haul road transport in the eyes of many shippers.

A number of reasons explain this situation. Some are endemic to railways, while others are external and beyond their control. Internally, railway operators in the region are often not geared up for quick responses in identifying new opportunities and defining related intermodal services. Externally, international railway transport remains difficult both in the region and between Asia and Europe due to numerous non-physical barriers, particularly at border crossings, which cause excessive delays, high costs and uncertainties in the entire transport process.

Typical non-physical barriers include regulatory issues that relate to the control measures of various agencies, such as Customs, which take a significant amount of time for train operations. There are also legal issues that underlie the legal and contractual basis among countries and various stakeholders in railway transport. The different legal regimes need to be unified or at least harmonized. Technical and operational issues involving standards and specifications for rolling stock, signalling systems, data exchange, repair, maintenance and use of railway infrastructure, and break of gauge also need to be addressed to promote cross-border railway transport operations.

There will be a need to simplify, standardize and further harmonize technical and operational requirements among member countries; these will need action at government level.

Legal and technical issues were partly addressed by member countries of two important international railway organizations,²⁶ but substantial differences on these issues still persist between these organizations. Also, there are many countries in Asia that are not a member of any international railway organization. In addition, regulatory issues require further streamlining so that they do not impede railway operations. Safe, secure, efficient and smooth railway transport needs common and coordinated facilitation measures among member countries in the region.

Simplification, standardization and harmonization take a significant time to accomplish. Early action is needed by member countries and their development partners under a common framework.

The Regional Cooperation Framework may be used by member States and their development partners in harmonizing requirements for international railway transport across the region, with the ultimate objective of having a regional agreement on the facilitation of international railway transport.

The Regional Cooperation Framework identifies four fundamental issues in the facilitation of international railway transport and 11 areas for cooperation among member countries and their development partners to further promote and support international railway transport in the region. Section C of the present Framework comprises a note to further elaborate the fundamental issues and areas for cooperation.

A. Fundamental issues for the facilitation of international railway transport

1. Standards for railway infrastructure, facilities and equipment

Description of the issue

Safe and efficient operation of cross-border railways requires a high level of standardization of railway infrastructure, facilities and equipment. Currently, they are not standardized among countries and this causes difficulties in cross-border railway transport. Apart from different track gauges, differences exist in braking systems, axle loads, signalling systems, coupling systems and electric power voltage. This prevents efficient and smooth cross-border train operations.

Target

Common, minimum technical standards for railway infrastructure, facilities and equipment in international railway transport to facilitate railway transport in the region.

Process

The Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation may be entrusted to study and recommend minimum technical

²⁶ Two international organizations in rail transport are the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways and the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail.

standards for international railway transport for subsequent adoption by the member countries and phased implementation.

Furthermore, numerous railway research facilities exist in member countries. It is suggested that one such research facility in each subregion could be identified to take the lead in supporting the standardization of technical and operational requirements for cross-border railway transport in collaboration with the countries in the subregion and international organizations.

Member countries may also undertake studies and organize regional/subregional seminars and workshops, involving all stakeholders, to identify gaps between the existing railway systems and standards. Based on them, national plans may be formulated to incorporate the relevant standards in their railway systems in a phased manner.

2. Break-of-gauge

Description of issue

The main railway lines in the Trans-Asian Railway network incorporate five different track gauges, namely 1,676 mm, 1,520 mm, 1,435 mm, 1,067 mm and 1,000 mm. Different track gauges prevent the smooth movement of rolling stock across borders. It is often considered as a physical obstacle to the smooth flow of traffic. In fact, it is also an issue of transport facilitation. Long delays for passengers and freight transport have been observed at border crossings with break-of-gauge. In part, delays are caused by the trans-loading of goods or a bogie change at border crossings and partly by inordinate delays in the organization of trans-shipments.

Target

A significant reduction in the time spent on overcoming a break-of-gauge at a border interchange station by developing, inter alia, streamlined operating procedures.

Process

A number of technical solutions exist to deal with break-of-gauge. These solutions include trans-shipment, bogie changing, use of wagons with variable-gauge bogies, provision of dual gauge and conversion of different track gauges to a single gauge standard:

(a) Trans-shipment/transfer is the transfer of freight by manual or mechanical means from wagons of one gauge to wagons of another directly or indirectly through platform, yard, storage or warehouse; the transfer of passengers from one train to another train;

(b) Bogie changing is the operation by which wagons are lifted on a set of jacks, bogies of one gauge rolled out and bogies of the other gauge rolled in;

(c) Use of wagons with variable-gauge bogies enables wagons to be pulled along a special transition track at reduced speed. During the process, the distance between wheels is adjusted from one track gauge to another;

(d) Provision of two different track gauges is made on a single-track foundation through the insertion of a third rail (or sometimes a fourth rail to obtain the so-called “composite gauge”);

(e) Conversion of tracks of different gauges to a single-gauge standard is to build or rebuild tracks in the same standard.

The use of the solutions (a), (d) and (e) is foreseen for both passenger and freight transport. The solutions (b) and (c) are mainly used for passenger transport.

While continuity of gauge along all the routes of the Trans-Asian Railway network would be ideal, a break-of-gauge does not constitute an impassable barrier to efficient services. In fact, it has been observed that the time for passenger passport control is longer than the time taken for bogie change at some border crossings.

With a few exceptions, break-of-gauge occurs mostly at border crossings where trains are required to stop for a range of operational motives, such as a change of locomotives, change of crew, a technical inspection for the acceptance of wagons, a safety inspection for dangerous goods, and the requirements of certain control agencies, such as Customs, immigration and security checks and sanitary inspection. Well-designed facilities and well-organized procedures can allow for trans-shipment to take place within the time allocated for these other operations. A streamlined operating procedure may be developed for the border interchange stations detailing the expected time for each mandated operation and indicating operations that can be carried out in parallel so that the overall time to complete border-crossing formalities and deal with break-of-gauge is minimized.

The streamlined operating procedure can be in two parts: one that is general and applicable to all border interchange stations and one that can be tailored to the requirements of individual border crossings. In addition, it is suggested that member countries keep themselves abreast of the latest developments to make trans-shipments more efficient.

3. Different legal regimes for railway transport contracts

Description of the issue

Unlike air or maritime transport,²⁷ there is no single intergovernmental organization for railway transport. Two major international organizations for railway transport, the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways and the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail, developed different sets of legal documents for railway transport. A consignment note is an essential legal document for railway transport. The two main railway consignment notes are: SMGS for members of the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways and CIM for the members of the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail.

²⁷ In the same way as the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization regulate for air and maritime transport, respectively.

Railway transport among countries that have the same legal arrangements does not present so many obstacles as when it is between countries with different legal regimes. To overcome the challenges of re-consignment a common CIM/SMGS consignment note was introduced in 2006. The common CIM/SMGS consignment note is building a bridge between the different legal regimes of CIM and SMGS that intends to remove this obstacle. Behind each CIM/SMGS consignment note, there is a contractual link between those involved in the CIM or SMGS regions between the consignor of the goods, the carrier and the consignee. In this way, the common CIM/SMGS consignment note provides greater legal certainty.

It was reported that more than half of the international traffic necessitating re-issuance of documents under either SMGS or CIM was made using the common consignment note. So far, seven Parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network are using the common consignment note. In addition, China started trial use of it for transport of goods to Europe in 2012.

Target

Alignment of the different consignment notes currently being used in railway transport on a common consignment note so as to facilitate international railway transport.

Process

With the increase in Euro-Asian traffic, it is expected that the use of the common consignment note will increase among the member countries of the two international organizations. Other Parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network may not be using the common consignment note before joining either of the two organizations, or their railway lines are not connected with the member countries of the two organizations at present.

However, as can be seen from the trend in the development of international railway transport among countries not using the common consignment note, their railway lines will be linked to the entire regional network and international railway transport will increase in the short to medium term. These countries may consider gradually aligning their consignment notes on the common consignment note to improve documentation and avoid possible difficulties in the future.

4. Coordination of regulatory controls and inspections at border-interchange stations

Description of issue

Border crossing times can be substantially reduced if customs and other formalities required for train operations can be completed expeditiously. Normally, trains have to undergo Customs controls and inspections, security checks, immigration clearance and sanitary inspection at border crossings. In addition, a change of locomotive or crew, a technical inspection of wagons or, in the case of dangerous goods, a safety inspection is required at interchange stations.

These operations are potential sources of delays and if left uncoordinated could compound them. Therefore, there is a need for cooperation among the agencies at the interchange stations, including railway operators, on the necessary inspections and controls for the smooth cross-border operation of trains.

Target

A high degree of coordination among border agencies is encouraged so as to reduce delays.

Process

Standard times can be established for various operations at each border point where inspections take place and some of the operations can be carried out simultaneously. For example, at the interchange stations with no break-of-gauge and no change in consignment note, Customs controls should be undertaken within the time needed for other essential operations, such as a change of locomotive.

By standardizing and completing the required and unrelated operations in parallel, overall time for clearances at the border can be substantially reduced. This will increase predictability and reliability of freight train services, which is crucial for customers.

Furthermore, Customs authorities face challenges regarding the inspection of container trains. Here, X-ray machines or mobile scanners can be used for first-stage inspections and if physical examinations are required, such containers can be shifted to an examination area.

With the use of pre-arrival intimation, risk management systems and new technologies, such as electronic seals, it is possible for the control authorities to identify the containers/wagons they want to inspect in advance and therefore prevent inordinate delays at border crossings.

Normally, the Customs controls on goods may be undertaken either at the point of origin or destination; only exceptionally are they carried out on goods in transit and only then when there is reliable intelligence to do justify such action. For passenger trains, it is good practice to also undertake Customs checks on board trains.

B. Areas for cooperation among the member countries for the facilitation of international railway transport

1. Participation in international railway organizations

The two international railway organizations play a key role in coordination and organization of international railway transport among countries in Asia and Europe. As can be seen from the international railway traffic in the region, the member countries of the two organizations have significantly higher traffic volume than other countries. Both organizations coordinate railway laws, operating rules and key transport documents. Additionally, the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways also coordinates policy, transit tariff, wagon use, train timetables, and safety and technical standards for infrastructure and rolling stock.

With increasing regional integration and intraregional trade as well as environmental awareness, railways will be used more for international transport. When the entire regional railway network is complete, railways will be used on a large scale for international transport. However, operational systems for railways cannot be established in a short period of time. Countries need to gradually harmonize their technical standards, transport documents, operating rules, tariff structures and rules for wagon exchanges.

Among the 28 member countries of the Trans-Asian Railway network, 13²⁸ are members of the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways and 6 members of the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail, including 3 with dual membership. Twelve countries are not members of either organization. Non-members of the international railway organizations need to participate in the activities of such organizations as soon as possible and to capitalize on the experience of others in developing international railway transport and gradually to prepare themselves for future regional and interregional operations.

When the countries consider participation in the activities of the international railway organizations, a number of key factors may need to be considered, such as: demand for transport from countries that are members of these organizations; neighbouring countries' membership of these organizations; and the future potential for operations on the large regional network.

The countries for accession to the conventions can be guided by their economic interests in developing international railway transport. Countries may undertake a study in order to make a decision on accession to these organizations. They may also consider joining both organizations if such a study so indicates. Some ESCAP member States are already members of both the organizations.

2. Formulation of subregional and bilateral agreements on the facilitation of railway transport

While participation in international organizations/conventions is desirable for promoting railway transport, the role of bilateral and subregional agreements in furthering international railway transport is equally important. These agreements can be stepping stones for countries to expand their railway transport from national to subregional and regional levels depending on the development of trade and transport. A number of such agreements are already in existence. For example, in South Asia and South-East Asia where most countries are not members of any major international railway organization, the institutional arrangements for cross-border railway transport are mostly formalized by means of bilateral agreements.

However, the contents and issues covered in bilateral agreements vary widely. To ensure consistency, a model bilateral/subregional agreement covering essential requirements to facilitate railway transport can be developed by ESCAP and shared with member countries on the basis of

²⁸ Additionally, Afghanistan, an ESCAP member, recently joined the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways.

which they can plan, develop and implement such agreements to support railway transport in the region.

3. Cooperation to standardize cross-border railway operations

Due to stringent technical specifications for railway operations, such as for gauge, axle load, rolling stock and related rules of operation, the essential features of railway transport are not amenable to flexibility. This calls for a high degree of coordination and cooperation among countries for efficient cross-border railway transport. International experience also suggests that cross-border railway transport demands a high degree of standardization for various aspects of railway operations.

Most countries in the region have developed their railway systems independently and consequently acquired a motley collection of rolling stock and varied operational systems. This makes the task of interoperability even more challenging.

Developing railway systems in line with international standards is the best way forward for cross-border railway operations. In this way, member countries can gain immensely from their involvement in the activities of international organizations working to develop international railway transport.

The essential specifications/standards for cross-border railway transport can be formalized by way of memorandums of understanding and/or bilateral or multilateral agreements. Member countries may also consider forming a network of experts in railway transport for Asia and the Pacific to share knowledge, learn from good practices, and discuss common challenges in the standardization of railway operations in the region.

4. Use of advance passenger/cargo information system(s)

Train delays at border crossings are mostly caused by the significant amount of time required by control authorities, such as Customs, immigration and quarantine, to process and clear documents and inspect goods. According to a survey carried out by the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways, 34.5 per cent of time at border crossings was spent on formalities and 11 per cent correcting badly translated documents. Such unnecessary delays can be substantially reduced with the use of advance passenger/cargo information systems.

Advance passenger/cargo information systems have been employed in international air and maritime transport for years. However, use of such systems is limited in international railway transport. Their use can be an important step for railways in developing efficient international transport in order to compete with other modes of transport.

Adoption of common standards for sharing information is crucially important in applying advance passenger/cargo information systems in countries. International organizations, together with member countries, may assist in developing such standards and testing their application in some countries. The compatibility of standards with those for maritime transport should also be considered in order to facilitate maritime-railway intermodal transport and utilize fully the advantages of both modes of transport.

5. Arrangements for the exchange of wagons

One of the potential ways of increasing international railway transport in the region is to have an arrangement for the exchange of wagons among railway operators. The contents of various bilateral agreements on railway cooperation in existence reveal that provisions on the exchange of wagons are an integral part of these agreements. The issues covered include detention charges, wagon deficiencies, liabilities in the case of accident, and the operation of wagons.

With this in mind, a common contract on the use of wagons in national and international transport can serve as a basis for the standardization of various conditions that can make wagons interoperable on different networks. Such a contract could cover the requirements for technical admission and maintenance of wagons, the obligations and rights of accepting railways, including the right of refusal, the procedure for ascertainment and handling of damage to wagons while in the custody of an accepting railway and provisions for liability for damage or loss to wagons.

Such a multilateral contractual framework can obviate the need for parties to negotiate numerous bilateral agreements for the exchange of wagons, while providing for interoperability.

Moreover, this will increase the availability of wagons for international freight movements as well as encourage private wagon manufacturers to augment the supply of wagons. Already some countries in the region have arrangements to encourage private players through schemes, such as wagon leasing schemes, which are designed to develop the wagon leasing market by encouraging third-party leasing of wagons.

6. Use of new technologies in train operations as well as in container tracking

International freight is growing rapidly and is estimated to quadruple by 2050.²⁹ Handling such an increase in cargo, both effectively and efficiently, poses enormous challenges for railway transport operators and logistics service providers and makes it imperative for them to use new and extant technologies in such operations. Satellite positioning systems, radio frequency identification, cellular communication systems and other information and communications technologies (ICT) are already being used in various railway operations and need to be encouraged through innovative and cost-effective solutions for efficient cross-border railway operations.

Furthermore, the latest development in ICT, such as cloud computing, big data and analytics, software development and interoperable systems, and the declining cost of telecommunications have the potential to further increase the efficiency of railway freight transport.

As an example, the proper sequencing of wagons is essential for the effective delivery of cargo; the incorrect order could lead to coupling and decoupling operations wasting time and resources in order to correct the configuration of trains. It can also create problems for customers in tracking their cargo and is especially challenging for time-sensitive cargo.

²⁹ <http://internationaltransportforum.org/Press/PDFs/2015-01-27-Outlook2015.pdf>.

To properly sequence the wagons during trans-shipment or at intermodal terminals, solutions have been developed whereby a radio frequency identification chip is embedded in the railway wagon so that it can transmit its location to a reader that supplies the information to a central database. This centralized information about the location of railway wagons provides real-time information and decision support to railway yard employees and managers. The automatic sequencing of wagons reduces costly transport mistakes and, in addition, once the wagon is tagged the railway manager can log the information in the system, confirm the train's route and provide a precise time for the arrival of the wagon.

This is one example in which the use of technology can reduce the time taken for train sequencing and increase the predictability of the supply chain. Similarly, tracing and tracking of containers by train operators helps them schedule container block trains, increase asset utilization, and reduce dwell time and overheads.

7. Developing human resources for cross-border railway operations

Visas for crews and drivers. The cross-border movement of trains also requires the railway employees of one country to travel to another country. Establishing simplified visa procedures, especially for crews and drivers, will ensure certainty about their availability and help railway managers plan in order to guarantee the reliability of train schedules. One-year multiple entry visas on a reciprocal basis have been suggested as a possible solution, as provided for in many bilateral agreements.

Training for railway employees. A common system of training for drivers — with a common set of rules and regulations — could facilitate the interoperability of drivers. Mutually recognized authorization/certification may be issued by national railways and be acceptable to other railways in the region based on pre-agreed common training of drivers. This will ensure that the driver is aware of the operational route, including speed restrictions, signalling systems and emergency procedures.

Regulations on the conditions of service and facilities for railway employees serving on cross-border routes. These will include stipulating minimum working hours, minimum rest periods and the availability of crew rest rooms.

8. Establishment of logistics centres/dry ports and maintenance hubs at or near border interchange stations, particularly along railway freight corridors

When compared with road, in most cases railway transport has a high terminal cost, although it offers lower costs over longer distances. It also provides enhanced security in transit as containers transported by railway are less susceptible to theft.

Therefore, for development of international railway freight transport it has been suggested to develop logistics centres/dry ports near border interchange stations. Such centres can help consolidate less-than-container-load cargo and take full advantage of the low costs that railway transport provides. In addition, depending on the volume of traffic, the necessary

arrangements for joint controls, including inspections, can be contemplated at these dry ports/logistics centres.

Development of maintenance hubs near border interchange stations can reduce delays due to the breakdown of rolling stock and the waiting times for spares or replacements. This will be especially useful in cases where there is a break-of-gauge at a border crossing.

Member countries may undertake feasibility studies in order to assess the potential of developing dry ports/logistics centres and maintenance hubs at border interchange stations.

9. Simplification of the intermodal interface of railways with maritime, air and road transport

The facilitation of international railway transport should not, and indeed cannot, be seen as successful in isolation of other modes of transport. Increasingly, railway transport will become integrated with other modes of transport and therefore there will be a requirement to simplify and further streamline intermodal interfaces at gateway ports.

This is of special importance to landlocked developing countries, as experience suggests that substantial time is spent on completing formalities at ports before trains can start their journey. At ports, the formalities for cargo carried by railways need to be streamlined and simplified so that the time spent on them is minimized. It will help increase the reliability of train operations and optimum utilization of rolling stock. In addition, direct railway connections from gateway ports to the hinterlands are encouraged to reduce overall transport times.

It is suggested that member countries may undertake specific studies on the intermodal interfaces with volumes of high traffic to identify bottlenecks and recommend further measures that may be implemented to reduce unwarranted delays for railway transport.

10. Promotion of the corridor approach in the facilitation of international railway transport

Across the globe, most international railway transport occurs along specific railway corridors. Therefore, many organizations and their member States have developed railway corridors to promote international railway transport.

Since railway transport has stringent operational and technical requirements, more cooperation is required among the countries for successful cross-border operation of trains; the corridor approach can bring all stakeholders together to facilitate railway transport. This will increase the reliability of railway freight operations, which is a major determinant in freight customers' choice of mode of transport.

Based on the substantial work already done in this regard, member countries could identify priority corridors and set up the necessary institutions to operationalize them. Demonstration runs along the corridor(s) can help identify major non-physical barriers and accordingly action plans can be made to address the bottlenecks.

11. Work towards paperless railway freight transport

Paper documents pose costly and serious limitations for the development of railway freight transport. Given the fast-paced developments in ICT, railways cannot afford to lag behind. Development of cross-border paperless railway freight can increase the speed and reliability of railway transport by the rapid exchange of information and by avoiding duplication, repeated data entry and related errors. Some countries in the region have developed online freight operations systems, featuring a range of facilities.

Member countries could enhance their understanding of paperless systems for railway freight transport by sharing regional experiences. To further promote paperless railway freight transport, ESCAP, in collaboration with other organizations, can serve as a forum for sharing good practices and providing support to develop the necessary institutional arrangements for sharing information electronically.

C. Note on the fundamental issues and areas for cooperation in the Regional Cooperation Framework

This note contains information about the work being done by various organizations³⁰ to support the common targets, processes and areas for cooperation indicated in the Regional Cooperation Framework.

1. Fundamental issues for the facilitation of international railway transport

a. Standards for railway infrastructure, facilities and equipment

The International Union of Railways plays an important role in railway standardization. Already, a number of Parties to the Trans-Asian Railway network are members of the International Union of Railways. The International Union of Railways established a standardization platform in 2010 with the aim of developing international railway standards for the “standardization clusters” dedicated to specific business cases. Participation in the activities of the International Union of Railways may assist member countries in moving towards standardization of railway infrastructure and rolling stock for cross-border railway operations.

The Organisation for Co-operation between Railways also plays an important role in railway standardization: its commission on infrastructure and rolling stock develops leaflets dealing with technical aspects of railways in the field of rolling stock, dimensions and gauges, track and engineering structures, power supplies and traction, etc. Activities are carried out by the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways/European Railway Agency contact group on a comparative analysis of the technical parameters of 1,520/1,524 mm and 1,435 mm railway systems, which allows interaction between member countries of the European Union and those of the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways. In addition, there are a number of leaflets developed in cooperation with the International Union of Railways. The Organisation for Co-operation between Railways and the International Union of Railways

³⁰ The organizations indicated here are only indicative and not exhaustive.

have established a joint group to develop voluntary international railway standards for the 1,520 mm railway cluster.

b. Break-of-gauge

Recently, the joint Organisation for Co-operation between Railways/International Union of Railways group on automatic gauge changeover systems has developed technical standards for such systems together with a cost-benefit analysis. The governing bodies of both organizations adopted these documents in 2014. Member countries may refer to these standards while finalizing their preferred options for dealing with break-of-gauge.

The ESCAP Efficient Cross-border Transport Models³¹ summarize a number of good practices in organizing efficient trans-shipment at border crossings with break-of-gauge. Based on the concepts of the models, countries may streamline their formalities and procedures for crossing borders.

Another ESCAP transport facilitation tool, the Model on Integrated Controls at Border Crossings,³² may help countries reduce control times through streamlined information flows and the combined use of new technologies, while enhancing the effectiveness of control measures.

c. Different legal regimes for railway transport contracts

Member countries may wish to become Parties to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Control of Goods (1982), annex 9 of which deals with the facilitation of border crossing procedures for international rail freight. Thirteen ESCAP member countries are already parties to the Convention.

The ESCAP Model on Integrated Controls at Border Crossings provides a tool to enhance coordination and cooperation among control agencies using the concept of border-crossing management information systems. Deployment of such systems at border crossings would minimize the physical inspection of goods while maintaining a high degree of effective control.

2. Areas for cooperation among the member countries for the facilitation of international railway transport

a. Formulation of subregional and bilateral agreements on the facilitation of railway transport

Member countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization have entered in to the Transit Transport Framework Agreement. Annex III of the Agreement provides for the minimum technical characteristics of the railway transport to be used by the transit traffic.

Similarly, Protocol 6 on Railways Border and Interchange Stations to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Framework

³¹ www.unescap.org/resources/efficient-cross-border-transport-models.

³² www.unescap.org/resources/model-integrated-controls-border-crossings.

Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit provides for cooperation among the railways of ASEAN countries.

In South Asia, member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation are in the process of finalizing a regional railway agreement with the main objective of strengthening regional connectivity over land, which will promote regional economic integration.

Coupled with membership of international organizations, these agreements provide a practical way for countries to expand cross-border railway transport.

b. Use of new technologies in train operations as well as in container tracking

The ESCAP Secure Cross-border Transport Model³³ provides a standard conceptual design of electronic vehicle tracking systems for cross-border transport with satellite positioning systems, electronic seals and ICT platforms, as well as inter-country institutional arrangements. The concept can also be applied to international railway transport.

The railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran use satellite positioning systems to track containers to ensure their smooth movement.

c. Development of human resources for cross-border railway operations

Railway training institutes in the region. The International Union of Railways is developing the Asian Network of Rail Training Centres for the exchange of best practices and the benchmarking of activities. Currently, the Asian Institute of Transport Development provides capacity-building training, including for railway employees of various countries in the region.

d. Simplification of the intermodal interface of railways with maritime, air and road transport

The International Rail Transport Committee plays an important role in issues of multimodal transportation. It has established a Multimodality Committee with the aim of simplifying transfer from one mode of transport to another in the logistics chain, in terms of both administrative and legal procedures.

e. Promotion of the corridor approach in the facilitation of international railway transport

For example, the Economic Cooperation Organization identified 5 railway corridors, the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways developed 13 and the European Commission also established numerous ones to increase the competitiveness of railway transport and encourage a modal shift.

Due to the immense economic potential of European-Asian transport corridors, the International Union of Railways has already started to develop international railway standards for rail freight corridors under its

³³ www.unescap.org/resources/secure-cross-border-transport-model.

standardization platform. Moreover, its global team of experts is working on ways to operationalize international transport corridors. This document was adopted by the General Assembly of the International Union of Railways in December 2014. Experts from railway companies and different international organizations such as the Economic Commission for Europe, the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways, the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail, the International Rail Transport Committee, the Coordinating Council on Trans-Siberian Transportation, the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations and the International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport took part in its development. The document could serve as a guide for member countries in the development and operation of railway corridors.

f. Work towards paperless railway freight transport

At the international level efforts are also being made to develop paperless rail freight transport.

A joint project by the International Union of Railways and the International Rail Transport Committee on eRail Freight has developed an electronic consignment note message where the latter organization has provided content definition and RAILDATA has provided the technical design. In order to ensure seamless and easy implementation of the new common consignment note, the International Rail Transport Committee and the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways have developed a “Manual for the CIM/SMGS Consignment Note”, which is regularly updated.

Recently, the International Rail Transport Committee, together with technical experts, prepared a new updated version of these legal functional and technical specifications for the e-consignment note CIM/SMGS, which was published in October 2013; it can be downloaded from www.cit-rail.org. The e-consignment note CIM/SMGS has been operationalized through technical, functional and legal specifications.

In addition, major European railway undertakings have developed a central information exchange system called the Open Railway Freight EDI User System.³⁴ The railway undertaking enters data into the system and from there electronic consignment notes can be accessed by the stakeholders along the route. It is no longer required to collect consignment or wagon note information at the borders.

³⁴ www.raildata.coop/ORFEUS.htm.



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Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/8. Strengthening intraregional and interregional connectivity in Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Noting that while intraregional and interregional connectivity generates new growth, fosters a new competitive edge and plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable development, it remains an unfinished agenda,

Affirming that connectivity should be strengthened in a comprehensive, integrated and systematic way in the key areas of policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people connections, while making strenuous joint efforts to enhance policy consultation and coordination among member States on the basis of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation,

Recognizing that it has played a pioneering historical role in advancing regional cooperation in building connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region, and the significant fundamental work that has been done under its leadership in this area,

Recognizing also that the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports and the Regional Strategic Framework on the Facilitation of International Road Transport can function as the building blocks for enhancing Asia-Pacific cooperation on regional connectivity,

Recalling the consensus and deliverables agreed upon at its seventieth session on the theme of “Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity”, and noting with appreciation that significant work has been

done in advancing the connectivity agenda in the region since its previous session,

Recalling also its resolution 66/4 of 19 May 2010 on the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia, resolution 68/4 of 23 May 2012 on implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), and the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport, and resolution 70/1 of 23 May 2014 on the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific,

Acknowledging the valuable role of international and regional organizations and cooperation mechanisms, which contribute to intraregional and interregional connectivity,

Acknowledging also the outcomes in the field of strengthening regional connectivity that were achieved at the Dialogue on Strengthening Connectivity Partnership during the 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, held in Beijing, the ASEAN and related summits, held in Nay Pyi Taw, the 5th Greater Mekong Subregion Summit, held in Bangkok, and the Leaders' Meeting on the sixtieth anniversary of the Asian-African Conference, held in Jakarta and Bandung, Indonesia,

Recognizing the importance and value of new financing mechanisms to complement existing international institutions for promoting connectivity and infrastructure development in the region and the world,

1. *Resolves* to continue efforts to enhance regional connectivity and strengthen cooperation and coordination in their development strategies and plans in the fields of land, river, sea and air transport, energy and information and communications technology infrastructure, harmonization of relevant laws, regulations, policies and standards, trade facilitation, financial integration and people-to-people exchanges;

2. *Agrees* to strengthen its efforts in performing fully its unique role in pooling resources, enhancing policy research, formulating top-level designs and advancing cooperation, on the basis of past successful experience and its comparative advantage in advancing work on connectivity;

3. *Encourages* members and associate members to implement measures and initiatives with a view to strengthening intraregional and interregional connectivity, taking into consideration their respective conditions, advantages and needs;

4. *Endorses* the initiative to develop an integrated intermodal transport and logistics system based on the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway and dry port networks, which would help sustain regional connectivity and improve transport efficiency;

5. *Calls upon* member States to take appropriate actions to accede, ratify and fully implement the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the

Asian Highway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports;

6. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To accord priority to developing comprehensive and seamless connectivity of the region, with a focus on the development of maritime, rail, road, air and intermodal/multimodal transport, and to provide the necessary support for the harmonization of laws, regulations, standards and documents relating to regional connectivity;

(b) To enhance efforts to assist members and associate members in their need for infrastructure financing with a view to strengthening connectivity, inter alia, through coordinating with the existing and new multilateral development banks on financing options and opportunities;

(c) To actively participate in cooperation among members and associate members for effective implementation of relevant initiatives, including the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the Global Infrastructure Initiative, the APEC Connectivity Blueprint for 2015-2025, and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, including through providing intellectual support, policy advice and capacity-building assistance;

(d) To consult with members and associate members as well as other relevant organizations in order to establish an institutional mechanism to support interregional transport connectivity between Asia and Europe, with the aim of introducing appropriate recommendations into the Regional Action Programme (2017-2021), which is to be submitted to the Ministerial Conference on Transport, to be held in 2016;

(e) To build or strengthen partnerships between ESCAP and other relevant regional and subregional institutions and cooperation mechanisms in order to promote interregional and intraregional connectivity;

7. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission on progress in the implementation of the present resolution at its seventy-third session.

**Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

**71/9. Strengthening cooperation on sustainable
management of water resources in Asia and the
Pacific**

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling paragraph 119 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled “The future we

want”, in which the Conference recognized that water was at the core of sustainable development and was closely linked to a number of key global challenges,³⁵

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 69/215 of 19 December 2014 on the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005-2015 and further efforts to achieve the sustainable development of water resources, in which the Assembly encouraged Member States, the Secretariat, organizations of the United Nations system through their coordination mechanisms, including UN-Water, and major groups to accelerate their efforts to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals,

Noting the sustainable development goal proposed by the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all,

Noting also its resolution 69/8 of 1 May 2013 on enhancing knowledge-sharing and cooperation in integrated water resources management in Asia and the Pacific,

Noting further that the Ministerial Declaration of the 7th World Water Forum supported the inclusion of one dedicated water goal and water-related targets in the post-2015 development agenda, which is expected to be adopted at the United Nations Summit in September 2015 and recognizing that transboundary water cooperation, based on win-win solutions, can contribute to sound management of the transboundary waters among riparian countries, and to sustainable development,

Reaffirming the role of multilateral, regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and funds, bilateral arrangements, United Nations programmes, and other international organizations in fostering dialogue and supporting cooperation in the field of integrated management of transboundary water resources, underlining that they have an important role to play in the efforts to implement the evolving post-2015 development agenda,

1. *Invites* members and associate members, donor countries, multilateral financial institutions, relevant agencies and organizations of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental and regional organizations to continue their efforts within their respective mandates to support joint projects and programmes on sustainable management of water resources in Asia and the Pacific;

2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To use existing regional platforms for the dissemination of knowledge and exchange of experiences, including those on the use of new financing mechanisms and good practices in intergovernmental cooperation on sustainable management of water resources;

(b) To continue consultations with members and associate members upon their request, and in coordination with relevant international

³⁵ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

organizations, including multilateral financial institutions, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental, regional and subregional organizations, and relevant programmes and bilateral arrangements, on the development and implementation of projects supporting regional cooperation on sustainable management of transboundary water resources within their respective mandates;

(c) To report back to the Commission at its seventy-third session on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/10. Strengthening regional information and communications technology connectivity through the Asia-Pacific information superhighway

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Inspired by the global commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and sustainable information society,³⁶

Recognizing that information and communications technologies have the potential to provide new solutions to foster social and economic development towards an informed and knowledgeable society,

Recalling its resolution 69/10 of 1 May 2013 on promoting regional information and communications technology connectivity and building knowledge-networked societies in Asia and the Pacific, in particular the reaffirmation of the regional commitment to strengthening regional cooperation in information and communications technologies for development,

Recalling also its resolution 70/1 of 23 May 2014 on implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific, wherein members and associate members resolved to work together to pursue the development of seamless

³⁶ See the Declaration of Principles adopted at the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003, para. 1 (A/C.2/59/3, annex).

connectivity across the region in the areas of transport, energy and information and communications technologies,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 69/204 of 19 December 2014, in which the Assembly expressed concerns regarding the digital divide in access to information and communications technologies and broadband connectivity among countries at different levels of development, emphasizing the special challenges faced in the area of broadband connectivity by developing countries, including the least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 69/137 of 12 December 2014, in which the Assembly endorsed the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, calling on the international community to support efforts by landlocked developing countries to develop their information and communications technology sectors,

Recognizing that landlocked developing countries lag behind other developing countries in terms of their telecommunications structure, including broadband Internet access, which can play a crucial role in boosting competitiveness of enterprises, facilitating international trade, increasing connectivity and fostering social and economic development,

Recognizing also that, given the vast landmass and diversity of the Asia-Pacific region, both land-based and sea-based fibre-optic cable networks play a critical role in developing a seamless regional information space, as various configurations and models of information and communications technology infrastructure deployment are viable,

Noting the ongoing development of the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway to improve the telecommunications connectivity between Asia and Europe and the support expressed by Member States for the project in General Assembly resolutions 64/186 of 21 December 2009, 67/194 of 21 December 2012 and 67/298 of 4 September 2013,

Recognizing that improved connectivity among Member States through well-developed infrastructure can be used effectively for environmental protection and disaster risk reduction, management and response, thereby protecting precious lives and the environment while contributing to the improvement of economic growth and living standards,

Underscoring the need to promote cross-sectoral collaboration to harness synergies, notably across the information and communications technology, energy and transport infrastructures,

Expressing appreciation for the creation of the regional map on land-based information and communications technology infrastructure

developed in partnership with the International Telecommunication Union and the secretariat,

Taking note of the report of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology on its fourth session,³⁷

1. *Endorses* the recommendations by the Committee on Information and Communications Technology:

(a) To establish an open-ended working group on the Asia-Pacific information superhighway, to develop principles and norms, as well as a master plan, covering both the policy and technical aspects of the Asia-Pacific information superhighway;

(b) That consideration be given to amending the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network so as to include co-habitation, as outlined in the outcomes of the Manila, Almaty and Paro expert consultations and that issues related to such amendments be dealt with through future meetings of the working groups on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, as established under the respective agreements;

2. *Encourages* members and associate members to support the implementation of the above recommendations;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To promote the sharing of experiences, good practices and lessons learned in information and communications technology for disaster risk reduction, management and response, and building e-resilience;

(b) To provide the necessary support through, inter alia, the subregional offices, to facilitate the work of the open-ended working group on the Asia-Pacific information superhighway;

(c) To continue the fact-finding initiatives and analysis on the Asia-Pacific information superhighway, including by enhancing its maps, through partnerships with the International Telecommunication Union and regional policy research institutions;

(d) To continue working on the Asia-Pacific information superhighway in collaboration with international and regional partners, including the International Telecommunication Union, the World Bank, the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity, the Trans-Eurasian Information Superhighway and the Asian Development Bank;

(e) To promote, in collaboration with national, regional and international development partners, civil society and the private sector, the exchange of best practices and experiences and knowledge related to the development of information and communications technology infrastructure,

³⁷ E/ESCAP/71/18.

including in-depth analysis of the policy and regulatory barriers that may impede efforts to synchronize the deployment of infrastructure across the region in a seamless manner;

(f) To explore further ways to harness cross-sectoral synergies, including through the review of best practices to recommend solutions to leverage synergies among information and communications technology, energy and transport infrastructures across the region, including for the co-deployment of fibre along infrastructures;

(g) To report to the Commission at its seventy-third session on the implementation of the present resolution.

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/11. Establishment of the Asian and Pacific centre for the development of disaster information management

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling its resolution 67/4 of 25 May 2011 and its decision therein to initiate the process for the establishment of the Asian and Pacific centre for the development of disaster information management (hereinafter, the “centre”) in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in which it invited all members and associate members to participate actively in the process of developing the programmes of the centre and to support the centre’s activities and requested the Executive Secretary to support the process for the establishment of the centre and to include in the secretariat’s evaluation plan an evaluation of the activities, the need for, and benefit of, establishing the centre as a subsidiary body of the Commission, for the development of disaster information management,

Recalling also its resolutions 69/12 of 1 May 2013 on enhancing regional cooperation for building resilience to disasters in Asia and the Pacific; 70/2 of 23 May 2014 on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific; and 70/13 of 8 August 2014 on regional cooperation for building resilience to disasters in Asia and the Pacific,

Remembering the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”,³⁸ in particular the outcomes related to disaster risk reduction and the role of the regional commissions in supporting member States and the development agenda,

Reaffirming the Yogyakarta Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and the Pacific 2012 adopted at the Fifth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from 22 to 25 October 2012, which called on disaster risk reduction stakeholders, among other things, to enhance and support regional cooperation mechanisms and centres on disaster information management,

Reiterating the importance of the Sixth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Bangkok from 23 to 26 June 2014, and reaffirming the Bangkok Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and the Pacific 2014, which called on Governments and other stakeholders, including the United Nations system, to support the implementation of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, in particular the Asia-Pacific regional post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction implementation plan and the priority actions stated in the Bangkok Declaration,

Bearing in mind the outcome document of the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015, and adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, in particular its seventh global target, which states “substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030”,

Recognizing the important contribution of disaster information management in disaster risk reduction and building resilience to disasters, as well as to inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific,

Emphasizing the significance of giving disaster risk reduction due consideration in the post-2015 development agenda, expected to be adopted at the United Nations Summit in September 2015,

Recognizing the demand for disaster information services in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as the request for promotion of regional cooperation mechanisms and knowledge-sharing arrangements to improve different aspects of disaster risk management, such as multi-hazard assessment, disaster preparedness, and early warnings and responses to disasters,

³⁸ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

Recognizing also the importance of institutional and technical capacity development in disaster information management in the countries and organizations of the region and in achieving the objectives and expected results of disaster risk reduction and management more effectively,

Expressing appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its generous offer to host the centre and to bear its institutional, programmatic and operational costs for five years, up to 50 million United States dollars,

Recognizing that the main objective of the centre would be to reduce the risks, losses and damages resulting from natural hazards by developing the capacities and capabilities of the countries and organizations of the region and strengthening regional cooperation on information sharing and management of disaster risk reduction, and that the centre would commence its functions and programmes with a focus on the more vulnerable subregions of Asia and the Pacific,

Taking note of the report³⁹ on the evaluation pursuant to resolution 67/4 on the establishment of the centre and the evaluation⁴⁰ undertaken by an independent evaluation team, which concluded that there was a need to establish a regional centre to support vulnerable member States in bridging their disaster information management gaps and which recognized the significant steps made by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in laying the foundations for the centre's operations,

1. *Endorses* the recommendations contained in the above-mentioned evaluation;
2. *Decides* to establish the centre as a regional institution of the Commission, which will contribute to the ESCAP programme of work in the area of information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction, while being funded through voluntary contributions from the host government, including up to a limit of 50 million United States dollars during its first five years of operations;
3. *Adopts* the statute of the centre, the text of which is annexed to the present resolution, as the basis for its operations;
4. *Encourages* the United Nations and other international organizations and agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations in the relevant fields, to provide support to the centre and cooperate in achieving its objectives and the implementation of its work programme;
5. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

³⁹ See E/ESCAP/71/34.

⁴⁰ See E/ESCAP/71/INF/6.

(a) To take all the necessary measures to ensure that the centre is established promptly, including the conclusion of a headquarters agreement between the host country and the United Nations;

(b) To report on the progress made in implementation of this resolution to the seventy-second session of the Commission;

6. *Decides* to assess the performance of the centre, on the basis of the findings of an independent, comprehensive review at its seventy-sixth session, and to determine continuation of operations of the centre as a regional institution of the Commission thereafter.

Annex

Statute of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management

Establishment

1. The Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (hereinafter referred to as “the Centre”), established in XXX, and accorded the legal status of a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (hereinafter referred to as “the Commission”) pursuant to Commission resolutions XXX, shall continue in existence under the same title and under the terms of the present statute.
2. Participation in capacity development activities of the Centre is open to all members and associate members of the Commission.
3. The Centre has the status of a subsidiary body of the Commission.

Objectives

4. To reduce human losses and material damages and the negative impact of natural hazards through enhancement of disaster information management in the Asian and Pacific region.
5. To strengthen the capabilities and capacities of countries and regional organizations in the fields of disaster information management and disaster risk reduction and implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the evolving post-2015 development agenda.
6. To contribute to the enhancement of regional cooperation and coordination among countries and organizations in the region in the field of disaster information management aiming at socioeconomic development of nations and achieving internationally agreed development goals, particularly those related to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the evolving post-2015 development agenda.

Functions

7. To provide disaster information management services to member States and national and regional institutions in the fields of disaster prevention and risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery with a focus on disaster monitoring and early warning.
8. To provide technical and advisory support and services on disaster information policies, strategies and systems to member States and organizations in the region.
9. To facilitate access to regional and global disaster information and data sources through the creation of appropriate standards, frameworks and mechanisms and development of regional programmes, such as the establishment of a regional disaster database.

10. To develop the capacities of developing countries and regional organizations to transform the regional and global disaster data and information to applicable outcomes and products at the national and local levels by strengthening and mobilizing the required resources and benefiting from all available possibilities and initiatives, such as public-private partnerships.

11. To create and promote complementary cooperation among subregional disaster management centres and mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific region to exchange disaster data, information and knowledge by filling the existing gaps and by creating appropriate regional cooperation frameworks and protocols, such as the establishment of a regional disaster information management network with a focus on multi-hazard disaster monitoring and early warning.

12. To develop disaster information management tools and mechanisms, such as publications and virtual networks.

13. To act as a regional platform for disaster information for exchange of expertise, experiences and knowledge and to provide technical services and support to member States and disaster management institutions in the various fields of disaster management and risk reduction by benefiting from other available programmes and initiatives, such as North-South and South-South cooperation, and other regional organizations and Commission institutions.

14. To facilitate or conduct surveys and research and to provide specialized training services on new tools, techniques and standards to improve disaster information management and to fill the existing gaps in disaster information supply chains at the national and regional levels.

15. To facilitate or conduct specialized surveys on the assessment of needs and capacities, challenges and opportunities in the area of disaster information management to support disaster management policymakers and managers at the national and regional levels when and where required.

16. To facilitate or conduct specialized studies and provide scientific and applied services in the development of disaster risk reduction measures and programmes and implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the evolving post-2015 development agenda.

Products and services

17. Capacity development in disaster information management: training and technical support.

18. Information support and analytical works on hazard, vulnerability, exposure and risk assessment at the regional/subregional levels.

19. Communications and publications:

- Development of and support to regional and subregional disaster information networks

- Supporting local and national capacity development initiatives and programmes in disaster information management
- Providing information services for disaster risk management priorities

Scope

20. The Centre is to commence its activities with a focus on the more vulnerable subregions of Asia and the Pacific, including South-East Asia, South and South-West Asia as well as North and Central Asia, in the first phase of its operations due to the priority of these subregions in disaster risk reduction and management cooperation, and may eventually cover all the Asian and Pacific region.

21. The Centre is to apply a multi-hazard approach in its planning and activities with a focus on earthquake, tsunamis, floods, cyclones/typhoons and drought as the main hazards of the region.

22. The Centre is to include all phases and sectors of disaster management and risk reduction before, during and after the occurrence of disasters.

23. The focus of the programmes and activities of the proposed Centre is:

(a) To provide capacity development in the area of disaster information management;

(b) To provide technical assistance and supplementary information services during major disasters that require regional and international assistance through promotion of complementary cooperation with other relevant organizations and institutions.

Status and organization

24. The Centre shall have a Governing Council (hereinafter referred to as “the Council”), a Director and staff. The Commission shall keep separate accounts for the Centre.

25. The Centre is located in Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran.

26. The activities of the Centre shall be in line with relevant policy decisions adopted by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission. The Centre shall be subject to the financial and staff regulations and rules of the United Nations and the applicable administrative instructions.

Governing Council

27. The Centre shall have a Governing Council consisting of a representative designated by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and eight representatives nominated by other members and associate members of the Commission. The members and associate members to be elected by the Commission shall be elected for a period of three years, but

shall be eligible for re-election. The Executive Secretary of the Commission or his/her representative shall attend meetings of the Council.

28. The Director of the Centre shall serve as Secretary of the Council.

29. Representatives of: (a) States that are not members of the Council; (b) United Nations bodies and specialized and related agencies; and (c) such other organizations as the Council may deem appropriate, as well as experts in fields of interest to the Council, may be invited by the Executive Secretary to attend meetings of the Council.

30. The Council shall meet at least once a year and shall adopt its own rules of procedure. Sessions of the Council shall be convened by the Executive Secretary of the Commission, who may propose special sessions of the Council at his/her own initiative and shall convene special sessions at the request of a majority of the Council members.

31. A quorum for meetings of the Council shall be a majority of its members.

32. The nine representatives constituting the Council, under paragraph 27 of the present statute, shall have one vote each. Decisions and recommendations of the Council shall be made by consensus or, when this is not possible, by a majority of the members present and voting.

33. The Council shall, at each regular session, elect a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, who shall hold office until the next regular session of the Council. The Chairperson or, in his/her absence, the Vice-Chairperson shall preside at meetings of the Council. If the Chairperson is unable to serve for the full term for which he/she has been elected, the Vice-Chairperson shall act as Chairperson for the remainder of that term.

34. The Council shall review the administrative and financial status of the Centre and the implementation of its programme of work. The Executive Secretary of the Commission shall submit an annual report, as adopted by the Council, to the Commission at its annual sessions.

35. The Council shall review and endorse annual and long-term workplans consistent with the programme of work.

Director and staff

36. The Centre shall have a Director and staff, who shall be Commission staff members appointed under the appropriate United Nations regulations, rules and administrative instructions. The Council shall be invited to nominate candidates for the position of Director, once the vacancy is announced, and provide advice, as appropriate. Other members and associate members of the Commission may also submit nominations for the post. All appointments shall be for a fixed duration and shall be limited to service with the Centre.

37. The Director shall be responsible to the Executive Secretary of the Commission for the administration of the Centre, the preparation of annual and long-term workplans and the implementation of the programme of work.

Resources of the Centre

38. All members and associate members of the Commission should be encouraged to make a regular annual contribution to the operations of the Centre. The United Nations shall administer a joint contribution trust fund for the Centre, in which these contributions shall be deposited and utilized solely for the activities of the Centre, subject to paragraph 40 of the present statute.

39. United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and other entities should also be encouraged to make voluntary contributions to the operations of the Centre. The United Nations shall maintain separate trust funds for voluntary contributions for technical cooperation projects or other extraordinary voluntary contributions for activities of the Centre.

40. The financial resources of the Centre shall be administered in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

Amendments

41. Amendments to the present statute shall be adopted by means of a resolution of the Commission.

Matters not covered by the present statute

42. In the event of any procedural matter arising that is not covered by the present statute or rules of procedure adopted by the Governing Council under paragraph 30 of this statute, the pertinent part of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific shall apply.

Entry into force

43. The present statute shall enter into force on the date of its adoption by the Commission.

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/12. Strengthening regional mechanisms for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Reaffirming the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled “The future we want”,⁴¹ in particular the decisions related to disaster risk reduction and the role of regional commissions in supporting member States and the development agenda,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 67/209 of 21 December 2012 on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in which the Assembly requested the regional commissions, within their mandates, to support the efforts of Member States to achieve disaster risk reduction as part of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters,⁴²

Noting with appreciation the successful organization and outcomes of the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, and expressing deep appreciation to the people and Government of Japan for hosting the conference in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015,

Reaffirming the commitment of member States to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 as a guide for enhancing the efforts of the international community in addressing disaster risk reduction and building resilience to disasters,

Taking note of the targets of the Sendai Framework and its four priority areas for action, including at the regional level, namely understanding disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to “build back better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction,

Noting that the Sendai Framework recognized the importance of science and technology for facilitating a science-policy interface for effective decision-making in disaster risk reduction, and the need to enhance the access of developing countries to technology, science and innovation through regional cooperation mechanisms, with a particular focus on building the capacity of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States,

Reiterating the importance of promoting the understanding of hazards and to strengthen early warning systems for tsunami to protect the lives of people through awareness-raising of precautionary measures and dissemination of good practices and lessons learned from traditional knowledge, such as the “Inamura-no-hi” or the anecdote of the burning of harvested rice sheaves in Japan on 4 and 5 November 1854, which saved the lives of village inhabitants from a large tsunami through quick information dissemination and evacuation actions,

⁴¹ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

⁴² A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

Recalling General Assembly resolution 69/245 of 29 December 2014 on oceans and the law of the sea, in which the Assembly welcomed the progress made towards the establishment of regional and national tsunami warning and mitigation systems and stressed the need for continued efforts in developing mitigation and preparedness measures for natural disasters, particularly tsunami events caused by earthquakes,

Taking note of the priorities expressed in the 2014 SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, including the need to build the resilience of small island developing States, a distinct group of countries that are disproportionately affected by disasters,⁴³

Recognizing that Asia and the Pacific is the most disaster-prone region and noting that the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development had agreed that building resilience to natural disasters was an urgent regional priority to avoid reversal of development gains and that regional and international cooperation were highlighted as crucial for strengthening Governments' efforts in reducing disaster risks and building resilience,

Expressing appreciation to the secretariat for its efforts to assist member States in addressing disaster risks in Asia and the Pacific through policy analysis, regional advisory services and capacity-building initiatives,

Recognizing that the Commission's Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries has significantly strengthened regional mechanisms for multi-hazard risk reduction and enhanced the early warning capacity of member States, and noting that the needs for additional support remain significant, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States,

Reaffirming its commitment to Commission resolutions 69/12 of 1 May 2013 on enhancing regional cooperation for building resilience to disasters in Asia and the Pacific, 69/11 of 1 May 2013 on the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action for Applications of Space Technology and Geographic Information Systems for Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainable Development, 2012-2017, 70/2 of 23 May 2014 on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific and 70/13 of 8 August 2014 on regional cooperation for building resilience to disasters in Asia and the Pacific,

1. *Invites* members and associate members to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and address disaster risk reduction and the building of resilience to disasters with a renewed sense of urgency in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and, as appropriate, to integrate it into policies, plans,

⁴³ General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex.

programmes and budgets at all levels and to consider it within the relevant frameworks;

2. *Recognizes* that North-South cooperation, complemented by South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, play important roles in addressing disaster risk reduction and building resilience, and encourages the international community to continue such efforts and also to use all the existing regional mechanisms and centres of excellence;

3. *Invites* members and associate members, in coordination with relevant international organizations, the private sector and civil society, as appropriate:

(a) To promote people-centred, multi-hazard and multisectoral policies and practices for disaster prevention and disaster risk reduction based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure, hazard characteristics and the environment;

(b) To mainstream and integrate disaster risk reduction within and across all sectors at all levels and promote risk-sensitive public investment and eco-system based approaches to enhance economic, social and environmental resilience;

(c) To consider contributing financial support to the Commission's Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries to strengthen people-centred multi-hazard early warning systems;

(d) To raise awareness of precautionary measures against tsunamis through possible establishment of the World Tsunami Day;

(e) To attach priority to promoting information and communications technology and space applications for effective disaster risk management to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Asia and the Pacific;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To accord priority to the implementation of the Sendai Framework by strengthening the role and capacity of the secretariat in the area of information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction for the provision of policy recommendations, regional guidelines, technical assistance and advisory services to developing countries, particularly those that are at high risk and have low capacity;

(b) To coordinate with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and other relevant United Nations organizations and stakeholders to help member States to monitor and report on progress in their implementation of the Sendai Framework in conjunction with the sustainable development monitoring and accountability framework,

including through the development of a basic range of disaster-related statistics;

(c) To establish formal linkages between the Commission's interdisciplinary and intergovernmental platforms with regional platforms on disaster risk reduction in order to promote the integration of disaster risk reduction and the building of resilience into policies, plans, programmes and budgets at all sectors and levels of Government aimed at achieving sustainable development and poverty reduction goals;

(d) To guide actions at the regional level through agreed regional and subregional strategies and mechanisms to strengthen disaster risk modelling, assessment, mapping, monitoring and multi-hazard early warning systems of common and transboundary disasters, particularly those related to hydrometeorological issues, by deepening existing regional cooperation mechanisms such as the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee, the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones and the Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning, as well as by extending regional cooperation for floods, glacial lake outburst floods and landslides;

(e) Through the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism: (i) to implement a "One United Nations" approach to promote coherence of instruments and tools relevant to disaster risk reduction across the United Nations system and relevant regional organizations; (ii) to strengthen the Association of Southeast Asian Nations-United Nations Strategic Plan of Cooperation on Disaster Management for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; and (iii) to extend such approaches of cooperation to other subregional organizations, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific;

(f) To assist developing countries in Asia and the Pacific to gain from advances in science, technology and innovations, in particular with regard to applications of space technology and geographic information systems, by increasing access to and use of geospatial information and space-derived data, products and services, and strengthening disaster risk modelling, monitoring and impact assessment;

(g) To work with the Advisory Council of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries to further strengthen the Trust Fund and expand its geographic scope to include Pacific small island developing States;

5. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its seventy-third session on progress in the implementation of the present resolution.

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/13. Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,⁴⁴ adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and the outcomes of subsequent reviews,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/18 of 24 July 2013 on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women,

Recalling further its resolution 66/9 of 19 May 2010 on the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its regional and global outcomes in the Asia-Pacific region,

Welcoming the adoption of the political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-ninth session,

Noting with appreciation the efforts of the Executive Secretary to further mainstream gender throughout the operations and programme of work of the Commission in accordance with the United Nations System-wide Action Plan for Implementation of the CEB Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women,

Noting with appreciation also the successful outcome of the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review, which was held in Bangkok from 17 to 20 November 2014,⁴⁵

1. *Endorses* the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, as contained in the annex to the present resolution;

⁴⁴ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

⁴⁵ See ^{E/ESCAP/71/22}.

2. *Decides* to hold a high-level intergovernmental conference in 2019 to review the progress made in the further implementation of the Platform for Action and in the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To strengthen the role of the Commission in supporting members and associate members in implementing the Platform for Action and the Ministerial Declaration;

(b) To provide members and associate members, upon request, with capacity development assistance in support of their efforts to realize their commitments to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through: (i) strengthening institutions; (ii) increasing financing; (iii) enhancing accountability; and (iv) forging stronger partnerships;

(c) To promote knowledge-sharing among members and associate members through such means as an online resource facility for accessing information, data and training materials across the spectrum of issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment;

(d) To continue efforts to ensure the effective mainstreaming of gender into the operations and programme of work of the Commission;

(e) To continue to promote greater synergies among United Nations entities in the region through leadership of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism to further develop strategies and plans aimed at the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(f) To conduct, in 2018, a regional review of progress in implementing the Platform for Action and the Ministerial Declaration, in preparation for the high-level intergovernmental conference mentioned in paragraph 2;

(g) To report to the Commission at its seventy-fifth session on progress in implementing the present resolution.

Annex

Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

I. Preamble

1. *We, the Ministers and representatives of members and associate members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, assembled at the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review, held in Bangkok from 17 to 20 November 2014,*

2. *Reaffirming* the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,⁴⁶ adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and the outcomes of subsequent reviews, in particular that the advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are matters of human rights and a condition for social justice and therefore should not be seen only as women's issues, and that gender equality, the full realization of women's and girls' human rights and the empowerment of women and girls are prerequisites for inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development and just societies that accord personal, political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security to all peoples,

3. *Reaffirming also* the central importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁴⁷ for realizing substantive equality between all women and men in Asia and the Pacific by ensuring the implementation of measures to address discrimination against women and girls in all its forms and the equal access and opportunities of women and men in private, political and public life, encompassing education, health, marriage and family relations, nationality, property rights, employment, legislation and economic and social life,

4. *Reaffirming further* the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁴⁸ the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,⁴⁹ the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,⁵⁰ and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as other international instruments relating to human rights, which are deemed to be universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and of the equal rights of men and women in their diversity and emphasizing the responsibilities of all States to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of any kind,

⁴⁶ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution I, annexes I and II.

⁴⁷ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378; and United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2131, No. 20378.

⁴⁸ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

⁴⁹ General Assembly resolution 48/104.

⁵⁰ A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

such as sex, gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, marital status, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, birth, disability, HIV and AIDS, as well as occupational, migrant, legal or other status,

5. *Recalling*, where appropriate, the international covenants and conventions promoting the equal rights of all women and men, particularly the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,⁵¹ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,⁵² the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,⁵³ the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,⁵⁴ the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families⁵⁵ and International Labour Organization Convention No. 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers,

6. *Recalling also* the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁵⁶ and the arising obligation to respect and ensure the rights of girls without discrimination of any kind,

7. *Recalling further* the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples⁵⁷ and the requirement to take effective measures to ensure the continuing improvement of the economic and social conditions of indigenous women and girls, and full protection from all forms of discrimination and violence,

8. *Recalling* the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol,⁵⁸ which devotes an article to the rights of women and girls with disabilities,

9. *Recalling also* the commitments of General Assembly resolutions 48/108, 49/161, 51/69, S-23/2, S-23/3, 55/71, 58/147, 59/167, 60/1, 62/134, 64/145, 66/128, 66/129, 66/130, 66/216, 66/288, 67/144, 67/148, 67/226, 68/137, 68/139, 68/146, 68/191 and 68/227 to realizing the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women,

10. *Recalling further* Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1612 (2005), 1820 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2117 (2013) and 2122 (2013), on women, peace and security, and the importance of ensuring the protection, rights and well-being of women and girls in all phases of conflict and in post-conflict settings, the equal participation of

⁵¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 660, No. 9464.

⁵² General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI).

⁵³ See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex; United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 999, No. 14668; and General Assembly resolution 63/117, annex.

⁵⁴ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1465, No. 24841.

⁵⁵ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2220, No. 39481.

⁵⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531; United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2173, No. 27531; and United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2171, No. 27531.

⁵⁷ General Assembly resolution 61/295, annex.

⁵⁸ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2515, No. 44910; and United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2518, No. 44910.

women in conflict prevention and resolution, and in reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts, the inclusion of female ex-combatants in disarmament and demobilization programmes, the prosecution of those who commit crimes against women and girls and the requirement for reparations commensurate with the crimes inflicted on women and girls,

11. *Recognizing* that climate change and related impact have a range of implications felt most acutely by segments of the population already vulnerable owing to geography, sex, gender, indigenous or minority status, or disability,

12. *Noting* the outcomes of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which urged States to tackle critical remaining challenges to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through a transformative and comprehensive approach and called for gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights of women and girls to be reflected as a stand-alone goal and to be integrated in the targets and indicators of all goals of any new development framework,

13. *Acknowledging* regional commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific,⁵⁹ the Bangkok Declaration for Beijing+15,⁶⁰ the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific⁶¹ and Commission resolutions 157 (XXXI), 203 (XXXVI), 249 (XLII), 46/6, 51/7, 52/3, 53/2, 57/3, 61/10, 66/9, 67/9 and 69/13,

14. *Noting* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region,⁶² the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children in ASEAN,⁶³ the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution,⁶⁴ the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia,⁶⁵ the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration,⁶⁶ the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2015),⁶⁷ and the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005 to 2015,⁶⁸

⁵⁹ E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.1.

⁶⁰ E/ESCAP/66/14 and Corr.1 and 2.

⁶¹ Commission resolution 69/13, annex, appendix 1.

⁶² Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Jakarta, 30 June 2004.

⁶³ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Bandar Seri Begawan, 9 October 2013.

⁶⁴ South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Kathmandu, 5 January 2002.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Pacific Islands Forum, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 30 August 2012.

⁶⁷ www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Pacific%20Regional%20Action%20Plan%20on%20Women%20Peace%20and%20Security%20Final%20and%20Approved.pdf.

⁶⁸ Second Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Women, Nadi, Fiji, 20 August 2004.

15. *Taking note* of the diversity of women and recognizing that gender-based discrimination occurs in and of itself and that it is often linked to other forms of inequality related to such factors as age, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, disability, class, social origin or occupation, as well as migrant, legal or other status, and that the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination can compound experiences of injustice, social marginalization and oppression,
16. *Recalling* that women engaged in the defence of human rights must be protected and that Governments have a duty to guarantee the full enjoyment of all rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by women working peacefully in a personal or organizational capacity for the promotion and protection of human rights,
17. *Noting* that non-governmental organizations, women's organizations and centres for women's studies, feminist groups and women academics have played a catalytic role in the promotion of the human rights of women through grass-roots activities, networking and advocacy and need encouragement, support and access to information from Governments in order to carry out these activities,
18. *Affirming* that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is fundamental to achieving human rights and for equitable, gender-responsive, inclusive and sustainable development for the benefit of all persons and societies,
19. *Recognizing* the diversity of women in all societies and that the most disadvantaged women are in need of specific measures to improve their status and access to productive resources,
20. *Reaffirming* the critical and equal role of women and men in the family, a basic unit of society, and the consequent importance of promoting the well-being of both families and societies; and, as such, acknowledging that the upbringing of children requires the shared responsibility of parents, women and men, and society as a whole and that maternity, motherhood and parenting must not be a basis for discrimination nor restrict the full participation of women in society,
21. *Recognizing* the contribution of families to sustainable development, including the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals for all women and girls, and that gender equality and women's empowerment improve the well-being of both families and societies, and, as such, stress the need for elaborating and implementing family policies aimed at achieving gender equality and women's empowerment and shared responsibilities between women and men in the family, and at enhancing the full participation of women in society, while being aware that in different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist, as contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,
22. *Recognizing also* that, since 1995, significant progress has been made in Asia and the Pacific towards the realization of equality between women and men, girls and boys, across the multiple sectors and domains of individual, social, political and economic life,

23. *Acknowledging* that, despite the existence of multiple international and regional instruments for the promotion of equality between women and men, and notwithstanding the advances that have been made towards equality, discrimination and prejudice against and oppression of women and girls persists,

24. *Acknowledging also* that the goals set and commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action have not been fully achieved and implemented across all 12 critical areas of concern, namely poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, the economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, the media, the environment and the girl child,

25. *Affirming* that full attainment of the goals, objectives and actions set out in the Beijing Platform for Action requires strengthening and reforming institutions, increasing financing, bolstering monitoring and evaluation, enhancing accountability, forging stronger partnerships and strengthening regional cooperation, also considering the differential situation of Asia-Pacific States, in particular the vulnerabilities faced by small island developing States and other countries at risk from climate change,

II. Renewing political commitment

26. *Reaffirm* our commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the recommendations arising from subsequent reviews and lessons learned, and thereby commit to address the remaining implementation gaps and to address new and emerging challenges to and opportunities for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific;

27. *Condemn* all forms of discrimination against diverse groups of women and girls and commit to strengthening action and investment in addressing the multiple and overlapping forms of gender inequality, disempowerment and discrimination;

28. *Commit* to creating an enabling environment to empower and substantively improve the situation and status of all women and girls by addressing the social determinants and root causes of gender inequality, violence and discrimination, including through measures that expand the rights and opportunities of women and girls and measures that remove barriers to their full participation in social, economic and political life in accordance with, among others, the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as appropriate;

29. *Also commit* to initiating, developing, strengthening, monitoring, reforming, implementing and evaluating legislation, strategies, policies, programmes, rules and regulations, and budgets that support the empowerment of women and girls and the achievement of gender equality across Asia and the Pacific, encompassing all 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action, along with emerging issues and challenges;

III. Consolidating gains in the Asia-Pacific region

30. *Recognize*, in recommitting to the objectives and actions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, that gains have been made in realizing gender equality and the empowerment of diverse groups of women and girls and that challenges remain in eliminating all forms of direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls, noting in particular the 12 critical areas of concern and challenges that have emerged since 1995;⁶⁹

Women and poverty

31. *Note with appreciation* overall reductions in the proportion of women and girls living in extreme poverty and improvements in food security for women and girls across Asia and the Pacific, related to, among other factors, the implementation of social protection measures, including employment, education and livelihood schemes that target women, and the introduction and enforcement of legislation that targets women and paves the way for equal rights, in accordance with national legislation, to inheritance for women and men and for girls and boys;

32. *Express concern*, however, at the persistent feminization of poverty, with an increase in the absolute number of individual women and girls living in hardship and surviving on \$1.25-\$2.00 per day and women and girls facing discrimination in and exclusion from ownership, equal and shared control, and management, of land and other assets and access to economic resources, particularly in rural, remote, geographically isolated, hard-to-reach and depressed areas and among diverse and vulnerable groups of women and girls, including migrant women, indigenous women, women and girls with disabilities, widowed women and women heads of households, single women, divorced women, internally displaced women and girls and older women;

Education and training of women

33. *Acknowledge* significant progress in relation to primary school enrolment rates, which have reached gender parity in virtually all countries in Asia and the Pacific. We also acknowledge efforts across the region to increase the enrolment and retention of girls and women in secondary and tertiary education, and to increase rates of female literacy and participation in vocational training and career tracking;

34. *Express concern*, however, that, despite such gains, girls are more likely to be out of school than boys at the secondary level, females are less likely than males to continue their formal education and are more likely to be illiterate, and subject streaming on the basis of gender stereotypes persists, as does the reinforcement of discriminatory and prejudicial gender stereotypes in teaching curricula, among teachers and in textbooks, noting that the advancement of women and girls' education is not leading to improved economic outcomes;

Women and health

⁶⁹ The basis of section III is findings from preliminary analysis of information provided by Governments through the Asia-Pacific regional survey of progress in implementation of the Platform for Action and through their national review reports.

35. *Acknowledge* the substantial reductions in the maternal mortality ratio in Asia and the Pacific, which has declined by almost 62 per cent in the last two decades, and note increases in female life expectancy at birth, calorie intake and the provision of health services, including those pertaining to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights;

36. *Note with concern*, however, that the overall incidence of maternal mortality in the region remains high, including among adolescents; that there is limited access to skilled birth attendants, prenatal and postnatal care, family planning services and information, and emergency obstetric and newborn care; and that inadequate management of complications arising from unsafe abortion continue to contribute to a significant proportion of maternal deaths, and that significant differentials persist in maternal mortality ratios in countries in the region. We also note the need for greater progress in relation to the respect, promotion and protection of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for all, including access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, access to age-appropriate, comprehensive evidence-based education for human sexuality, and the removal of legal, structural, economic and social barriers, including considering the review and repeal of laws that punish women and girls who have undergone abortions. We further note the need to end child, early and forced marriage and unwanted pregnancies among women and girls in the region. We further note the need to halt the rise in new HIV infections among women and girls by addressing the sociocultural, economic and legal factors that contribute to vulnerability to infection, to strengthen awareness on HIV and to expand coverage of measures to prevent and treat HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, through scaling-up nationally driven, sustainable and comprehensive responses to achieve broad multisectoral coverage for prevention, treatment, care and support, with the full and active participation of people living with HIV, key populations and civil society, while ensuring confidentiality and informed consent. We also note the rise in non-communicable diseases among women and girls, and the need to ensure that universal health services are accessible to all women and girls, regardless of their age, occupation, country of origin, socioeconomic, disability or other status;

Violence against women

37. *Applaud* the introduction of new and comprehensive legislation, policies, action plans and initiatives in many countries in the region to prevent violence against women and girls, to protect women and girls from multiple forms of violence, to provide a range of multisectoral services and support for survivors of violence and to prosecute perpetrators of violence;

38. *Express deep concern*, however, at the unacceptably high rates of all forms of violence against women and girls in the region, including sexual, gender-based, intimate-partner and ICT-related violence, among others; at the non-enforcement of laws, discriminatory legal provisions, delays and gender insensitivity in law enforcement; at the impunity experienced by some perpetrators of violence against women and girls; and at the targeting of specific groups of women, including single women, older women, indigenous women, vulnerable women, migrant women, widowed women, impoverished women, women and girls with disabilities, women living with HIV and AIDS, and sexually exploited women and girls; and at the

particular forms of violence against women and girls, including female infanticide, honour crimes, child, early and forced marriage and labour, trafficking in women and girls, beating and killing of women accused of sorcery, dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation and other harmful practices;

Women and armed conflict

39. *Acknowledge* efforts across the region to address the differential impact of armed conflict on women and girls, compared with men and boys, including nuclear testing and unexploded ordnances, and to reinforce the important and positive role of women in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts, in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and in the development and implementation of subregional and national action plans on women, peace and security, including conflict resolution and peacebuilding awareness-raising, education programmes, the provision of services to women and girls affected by armed conflict and long-term holistic support to and rehabilitation of women who have experienced armed conflict;

40. *Also acknowledge* that rape and sexual violence during armed conflict and war is a serious human rights violation, which has negative and long-term physical and psychological consequences on women and their families, and we note that women remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions in armed conflict, transition and post-conflict situations and stress the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the need to increase their role in decision-making, including in reconstruction and rebuilding efforts and stress the importance of the participation and involvement of women in peace and security and increasing the role of women in this area. We also note that the vast majority of countries in the Asia-Pacific region have not developed normative frameworks to ensure the protection of women and girls in times of armed conflict and in post-conflict settings, their participation in armed conflict resolution and prevention, and peacebuilding, the prosecution of perpetrators of human rights abuses against women and girls, including sexual violence, extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances, the provision of relief, reparations and recovery in long-term programmes, initiating gender-sensitive policies for female-headed households, including the reintegration of female ex-combatants, and the provision of restorative justice to combat impunity;

Women and the economy

41. *Note with appreciation* the development of programmes and initiatives to promote non-discrimination, and equal rights, opportunity and treatment of women and men in the world of work, including the introduction and strengthening of legislation addressing equal pay for work of equal or comparable value, maternity entitlements, equal access to and ownership of land, property and other assets, protection from harassment and support for vocational training and women's entrepreneurship, as well as the introduction of incentives to increase women's active participation in the labour force to promote sustained economic growth. We also recognize the efforts made across the region to strengthen the legal and policy

frameworks that govern migration and seek to protect migrant women workers and members of their families and women workers in the informal economy. We also recognize the need to provide convenient access to loans and other services of private lending institutions;

42. *Express concern*, however, that the economic participation, especially formal and decent employment, of women remains disproportionately low in many parts of the region and has remained between 62 and 65 per cent of male employment since the early 1990s. Women continue to bear primary responsibility for unpaid work, particularly domestic and caregiving work, and comprise the majority of temporary, low-paid and low-skilled and informal workers in the region, often working without any form of social and legal protection. We note that there is an urgent need to value, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work by prioritizing universal social protection policies. We further note the lack of basic labour rights, including the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. We note the enduring gender pay gap, vertical and horizontal segregation and the barriers that women face in accessing, owning and controlling property and financial assets. We also note that migrant women, particularly those who are undocumented, remain vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and that there is an urgent need to establish and strengthen institutional frameworks and mechanisms designed to eliminate demand for trafficking and for effective protection and empowerment of migrant women workers in countries of origin, transit and destination. In promoting women's economic empowerment, we recognize the need to strengthen efforts to achieve equal employment opportunities, to support women entrepreneurs, to increase the representation of women in leadership positions in the private sector, to support work-life balance and to address restrictive gender stereotypes, to strengthen efforts to achieve equal employment opportunities that enable women to realize their full potential and to achieve their career and family aspirations, such that diverse groups of women are able to realize their rights and full potential;

Women in power and decision-making

43. *Welcome and encourage* progress in increasing the representation of women in public governance bodies through, among others, temporary special measures, such as gender targets that have resulted in greater numbers of women parliamentarians and senior public servants in Asia-Pacific countries, along with affirmative action measures in the public and private sectors that seek to redress institutional discrimination, including at the local level;

44. *Observe* with concern, however, that the regional proportion of female parliamentarians remains lower than the global average, and that gains in female representation in national parliaments have not led to substantial increases in female representation among decision-makers in local and corporate governance;

Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

45. *Commend* the countries in the Asia-Pacific region for establishing stand-alone national machineries for the advancement of women and girls. We acknowledge and reinforce their central role in advancing the goal of

gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly when mobilized to support multisectoral, whole-of-government approaches to address the root causes of discrimination and gender inequality;

46. *Recognize*, however, the need to strengthen the leadership, mandates and status of national machineries for the advancement of women within our government structures, accompanied by increased human, financial and technical resources to support our commitment to achieving gender equality and ensure the realization of human rights of women and men, girls and boys, so that they may fully and freely exercise all of their human rights. We also recognize that the responsibility for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is shared by all government institutions and thus there is a need to generate political will, raise awareness and resources, develop capacity and establish institutional mechanisms, and evaluation strategies, where necessary, to mainstream gender equality in the work of all government ministries, departments and offices from the national to the local level;

Human rights of women

47. *Applaud* the almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the countries in Asia and the Pacific in support of human rights for all women and girls, and note both national legislative measures to protect and promote equal rights for women and men and initiatives to increase the legal literacy of all women and girls;

48. *Are alarmed*, however, by the continued violation of the rights, including reproductive rights, of women and girls, and of defenders of the human rights of women and girls, in Asia and the Pacific, evident in the prevalence of violence against women and girls, discriminatory practices within judicial and law enforcement systems and persistent discrimination and gender stereotyping, which reinforce the subjugation of women and restricts their ability to fully and freely engage in all aspects of social, political and economic life. We reiterate the importance of considering universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol and the need to introduce and/or strengthen national legislation, in accordance with the state party obligations under the Convention, where appropriate. We also encourage consideration of the ratification and effective implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime⁷⁰ and its Protocols, particularly the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children⁷¹ and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;⁷²

Women and the media

⁷⁰ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2225, No. 39574.

⁷¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2237, No. 39574.

⁷² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2220, No. 39481.

49. *Note* that measures have been taken to foster equitable access to and use of information, communication channels, media and information and communications technology (ICT), including education and training programmes, and media programmes that address the needs, concerns and interests of women and girls, and promote balanced and non-stereotypical portrayals of them. Associated with those measures, we further note that more women and girls are being empowered through “connection”, which supports their right to freedom of expression and to challenge gender stereotypes, share opinions and ideas, build knowledge and access information. We also note the increasing media and digital literacy of women and girls, which is critical to their being full and active agents in social and public life;

50. *Express concern*, however, that women and girls continue to have less access than do men and boys to media and ICT, to hold fewer decision-making positions in the fields of media and ICT and to have less influence in the governance and development of media and ICT. Women continue to be subjected to harassment, stalking and violence online and to be in receipt of messages and images that reinforce oppressive and prejudicial gender stereotypes. We note that Internet and mobile phone service providers have an important responsibility in ensuring the safety and privacy of women and girls. We are also concerned that, despite advances made, the media, at times, promotes discriminatory, degrading stereotypical portrayals and portrayals of negative practices of women that are detrimental to the rights, interests and empowerment of women;

Women and the environment

51. *Note with grave concern* the significant gap between the aggregate effect of mitigation pledges by parties in terms of global emissions of greenhouse gases by 2020, and aggregate emission pathways consistent with having a likely chance of holding the increase in global average temperatures below 2°C or 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels;

52. *Are encouraged*, nevertheless, by international, national and regional initiatives and commitments to address the disproportionate and slow onset of the impact of natural disasters and climate change on women and girls, to promote the mainstreaming of gender in policies on disaster risk reduction and sustainable development and to support the equal access and control of men and women to clean and renewable energy sources, safe drinking water and sanitation, and technologies in a region that is particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change and disasters, resulting in increased displacement, cross-border migration, relocation and forced human mobility;

53. *Express concern*, however, that women continue to face disproportionate barriers to the equitable ownership, control of and access to natural resources and land. We are also concerned about the impact of the actions of extractive industries and multinational corporations on women’s rights to land and natural resources. Moreover, the environmental knowledge and skills of women, including indigenous and rural women, are often disregarded, and women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making bodies that design, implement and evaluate environmental policies and programmes, including those related to climate change, disaster risk

reduction and management. We reaffirm the need for more extensive mainstreaming of gender, including the equitable consideration of the needs and vulnerabilities of women and men, girls and boys, in relation to climate change and natural disasters. We encourage concrete global efforts to address the impact on women and girls of climate change and disasters, including protecting them from abuse, exploitation and displacement, taking into consideration the fundamental rights of women and girls;

The girl child

54. *Commend* the countries in Asia and the Pacific for their universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their participation in associated initiatives for developing and strengthening legal frameworks for the protection of the rights of girls and boys and for fostering the holistic development of each child. We also note progress in such areas as the reduction of the infant and under-5 child mortality rates, malnutrition and teenage pregnancies and progress in ending impunity for harmful practices against girls;

55. *Are deeply concerned*, however, about the continued violation of the rights of the girl child, child-sex ratio imbalance, the prevalence of child, early and forced marriage, and teenage pregnancies in some parts of the region and the greater value attached to boys than to girls, as evident in the preference for sons, female infanticide, higher rates of malnutrition among girls than boys, lower rates of school attendance of girls, and the trafficking and serious exploitation of the girl child, including for labour exploitation, child labour or sexual exploitation. We recognize the need to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services to girls;

56. *Recognize* the urgent need to provide universal access to comprehensive youth-friendly health services, including youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, non-communicable diseases education, as well as age-appropriate comprehensive evidence-based education on human sexuality, which is essential for women to be able to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health, to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and child, early and forced marriages. We recognize also the urgent need to remove legal, regulatory and social barriers to youth-friendly services;

IV. Moving forward: measures to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the era beyond 2015

57. *Commit*, in recognizing the gains that have been made towards achieving the goal of gender equality, along with persistent and newly emerging challenges, in reaffirming the necessity of achieving the strategic objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for the full achievement of human rights and equitable, inclusive and sustainable development for all persons, and in building upon and strengthening policies, legislation, strategies, programmes and actions that have effectively contributed to the advancement of gender equality, and taking into account national priorities and circumstances, to the following:

Strengthening institutions

(a) To strengthen our public institutions to remedy the structural and underlying causes of gender inequality, particularly to strengthen the capacity of parliaments to promote gender-responsive legislation that would support full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action and to strengthen the human and financial capacity of our national machineries for the advancement of women to work in cooperation with other State organs to fully and effectively implement the Platform for Action;

(b) To remove legal and policy barriers and take positive measures to change discriminatory social norms and attitudes concerning women's decision-making and autonomy in all aspects of their lives, including health, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, family life, finances, education and employment, and to ensure access of women and girls to justice and legal redress;

(c) To bolster the status and mandate of our national machineries for the promotion of gender equality, the protection of women's rights and the advancement of women, in accordance with national circumstances, which, if not established as separate ministries, can be located within a central policy-coordinating ministry or agency;

(d) To finance our national machineries for the advancement of women to fully and effectively realize their mandates, taking into account national circumstances;

(e) To develop the capacity of our national machineries for gender equality and the advancement of women such that there are adequate and appropriate staffing, and technical and financial resources;

(f) To institutionalize gender mainstreaming throughout all public institutions, including Governments and parliaments, by establishing accountability mechanisms and measures for mainstreaming gender, and integrating gender equality into the design, implementation and evaluation of policies, legislation, programmes, plans, public expenditure processes and other measures;

(g) To incorporate the diverse needs and circumstances of all women and girls into gender-responsive policies and programming, from the national to the local level, including the intersectionality of gender and disability;

(h) To pursue all measures for increasing the participation and leadership of women and adolescent girls in accordance with national legislation in decision-making positions, with the aim of achieving their full and equal participation with men at all levels of Government;

(i) To increase awareness of gender, gender-equality, women's human rights and women's empowerment issues among policymakers and public servants in all State institutions in order to strengthen political commitment and capacity to address, in a coordinated and convergent

manner across all sectors, the root causes of gender inequality and the specific needs and interests of women and girls, inclusive of the elimination of all forms of discrimination;

(j) To stress the strengthening of other accountability mechanisms beyond the national women's machinery, such as human rights commissions and ombudsmen, which can enhance the effectiveness of the national women's machinery through coordination with other monitoring institutions;

(k) To strengthen coordination and achieve synergies across government ministries and agencies that are responsible for the implementation of the Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other relevant international instruments that address gender concerns;

Increasing financing

(l) To finance multisectoral measures for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, reflective of the renewed commitment to fully implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific, and towards this end ensure appropriate levels of resources to the United Nations system, and in particular UN-Women, so as to enable them to support such implementation;

(m) To avoid duplication and optimize the scarce resources by coordination on programmes on gender equality and the empowerment of women with the programmes on the rights of women and girls with disabilities and the girl child;

(n) To explore possibilities to establish and strengthen mechanisms for multi-year and targeted financing of initiatives addressing the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action;

(o) To enhance and diversify the sources of financing for the achievement of gender equality, women's human rights and the empowerment of women and girls, including through domestic resource mobilization, official development assistance, taxation of financial transactions, private sector investment and the engagement of philanthropic foundations;

(p) To encourage gender analysis of macroeconomic policies and trade agreements to make sure that they do not perpetuate gender inequalities, and do offer equal opportunities for women and men;

(q) To implement, oversee and evaluate effective gender-responsive planning and budgeting to promote efficient, effective and equitable public sector budgetary spending;

(r) To develop dedicated funding mechanisms and/or programmes to support the work and to enhance the capacities of organizations that support the leadership development and full participation of women in all levels of decision-making and across all sectors;

(s) To encourage international financial institutions to review and revise policies, procedures and staffing to ensure that investments and programmes benefit women and thus contribute to sustainable development, and encourage the Bretton Woods institutions, the United Nations, as well as its funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, to establish regular and substantive dialogue, including dialogue at the field level, for more efficient and effective coordination of their assistance in order to strengthen the effectiveness of their programmes for the benefit of women and their families;

(t) To encourage the private sector to further contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the advancement of women and girls, inclusive of the promotion of the participation of women in the private sector;

(u) To develop and strengthen mechanisms and tools for results-based tracking of financial allocations and expenditure for the achievement of gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women and girls, inclusive of gender audits, gender reviews and the publishing of information on public sector expenditure and public-private investments;

Enhancing accountability

(v) To create and strengthen accountability systems for full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action in national policymaking, planning and public expenditure, along with commitments pertaining to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the gender-related goals of the global development agenda beyond 2015;

(w) To enhance reporting and information sharing between government institutions and with parliament, civil society and public and private sectors in support of local and national coordination, transparency and accountability for gender-equality results;

(x) To enhance efforts towards releasing government budgets as public documents that are transparent and accessible to all citizens and support the engagement of civil society and women's organizations in tracking and monitoring government budgets and budgetary outcomes;

(y) To support the engagement of women, women's and young women's organizations and other civil society actors in national and local decision-making bodies and processes for promoting women's rights and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

(z) To strengthen national statistical offices and systems to produce, analyse and disseminate reliable and comparable gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other relevant categories, in a timely manner, through increased financial and technical investment, and strengthen the capacity of policymakers to interpret and use available data for evidence-based policy, programming and planning decisions and to monitor progress in the implementation of the Platform for Action;

(aa) To integrate a gender perspective into the production and dissemination of official statistics, including with the support of multilateral and bilateral development agencies at the request of national Governments, guided by the core set of gender indicators recommended by the Statistical Commission;⁷³

(bb) To establish nationally appropriate, measurable targets and indicators, taking into consideration international and regional agreements on gender statistics, to review and assess the application of our renewed commitment to fully and effectively implement the Platform for Action;

(cc) To develop and strengthen participatory and inclusive monitoring, evaluation and reporting on progress and results in the implementation of the Platform for Action, encompassing policies, strategies, resource allocations and programmes for gender equality at the national and local levels;

(dd) To strengthen the communication of gender equality policies and programmes in formats and languages accessible for diverse groups of women and girls, with a wide range of levels of ability and literacy;

Forging stronger partnerships

(ee) To create and strengthen inclusive and mutually accountable partnerships for the full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action at the regional, national and local levels, engaging Governments, parliaments, the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, educational and research institutions, the private sector, organizations of employers and workers, the media and other relevant actors;

(ff) To strengthen coordination and consultation mechanisms with civil society groups, including women's organizations, on key policy, programme and budget issues, and enhance the role and contribution of civil society in the design, implementation and evaluation of measures pertaining to the Platform for Action and gender-equality results;

(gg) To strengthen the engagement of the private sector, including through public-private partnerships, in the full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action;

⁷³ See E/CN.3/2013/10.

(hh) To encourage and support the United Nations in delivering as one, inclusive of regional coordination mechanisms, for the development and delivery of programmes, technical support, capacity-building and other measures for the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender-equality results and to strengthen UN-Women's role in leading, coordinating and promoting accountability of the United Nations system for gender equality and women's empowerment;

(ii) To support and scale up North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation as a strategic means of strengthening partnerships through which the sharing of knowledge and information, the development of capacity and the implementation of programmes and projects can enhance effective implementation of the Platform for Action;

(jj) To strengthen communication, coordination and cooperation among diverse government entities aimed at enhancing the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in development programmes and in gender equality policies and programmes;

Strengthening regional cooperation

58. *Request* the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, in cooperation, as appropriate, with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and other concerned United Nations entities:

(a) To accord priority, in the programme of work of the secretariat, to the full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action and the present Declaration;

(b) To strengthen regional and subregional dialogue and cooperation between members and associate members of the Commission to support multisectoral policies, strategies, programmes and best practices in coordinated and consultative implementation of the Platform for Action;

(c) To provide ESCAP members and associate members with support, upon request, in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the present Declaration at the regional and national levels;

(d) To facilitate regional cooperation, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation and the sharing of best practices among member States in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the recommendations arising from subsequent reviews, including the recommendations contained in the present Declaration;

(e) To ensure, through the Regional Coordination Mechanism, the integration of the outcomes of the Conference in the regional development agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Group;

(f) To strengthen coordination with regional civil society through, inter alia, the regional civil society engagement mechanism;

(g) To convene a regional intergovernmental conference in 2019 to review regional progress by ESCAP members and associate members in the further implementation of the Platform for Action and in the implementation of the present Declaration;

(h) To submit the outcome of the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review to the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, as the Asia-Pacific regional input;

(i) To submit the outcome of the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its seventy-first session for its consideration;

59. *Urge*, as the global community is crafting the new development agenda beyond 2015, all States and all other stakeholders to urgently tackle the critical remaining challenges to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through a transformative and comprehensive approach, and for gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls to be reflected as a stand-alone goal and to be integrated through the targets and indicators into the goals of any new development framework, based on the results of the negotiations of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71/14. Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, 2015-2024

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Reaffirming the human right of everyone to be recognized everywhere as a person before the law, which is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁷⁴

Recalling the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,⁷⁵ the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁷⁶ the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of

⁷⁴ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

⁷⁵ See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

⁷⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

Their Families,⁷⁷ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,⁷⁸ which stipulate that States Parties should register all children immediately after birth without discrimination,

Recalling also its resolution 69/15 of 1 May 2013 on implementing the outcome of the High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and its resolution 67/12 of 25 May 2011 on the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific,

Welcoming the commitments made at the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which was held in Bangkok from 24 to 28 November 2014, including the declaration of the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, 2015-2024,

Noting with satisfaction the high-level, multisectoral and collaborative participation by member States in the above-mentioned Conference and its preparatory process,

Expressing its appreciation to the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific for effectively overseeing the substantive preparations for the Conference,

Expressing also its appreciation to the co-organizers of the Conference and other development partners for their significant contributions to the Conference and its preparatory process, and for the close collaboration that they demonstrated, which serves as a good example of how development partners can work together across mandates to address multidimensional development challenges while at the same time increasing their collective impact,

Appreciating the growing momentum around civil registration and vital statistics, including the progress achieved through regional initiatives in Africa, Latin America and the Eastern Mediterranean,

Having considered the report of the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific,⁷⁹

1. *Endorses* the Ministerial Declaration to “Get Every One in the Picture” in Asia and the Pacific, and the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, as contained in the annex to the present resolution;

⁷⁷ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2220, No. 39481.

⁷⁸ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2515, No. 44910.

⁷⁹ E/ESCAP/71/27.

2. *Declares accordingly* the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, 2015-2024 in order to realize the shared vision that, by 2024, all people in the region will benefit from universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems that facilitate the realization of their rights and support good governance, health and development;

3. *Urges* member States to make every effort to implement the Ministerial Declaration in accordance with national needs, following the guidance provided by the goals, targets, key principles and implementation steps contained in the Regional Action Framework;

4. *Decides* to hold a midterm review of progress in 2020 and final review of progress in 2025, as timetabled in the Regional Action Framework;

5. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To accord priority to the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration and Regional Action Framework;

(b) To continue collaborating closely with relevant donors and other development partners to assist country actions by strengthening technical support available at the national, subregional and regional levels, facilitating regional and interregional cooperation, undertaking advocacy campaigns and helping countries to mobilize resources and access financing options;

(c) To actively promote a holistic approach to civil registration and vital statistics as these systems have a critical role in achieving inclusive and people-centred development, particularly in achieving the post-2015 development agenda, which is expected to be adopted at the United Nations Summit in September 2015, including by exploring means to strengthen collaboration and coordination among development partners at all levels;

(d) To support the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific in performing its oversight and strategic guidance functions for the Regional Action Framework and custodianship of the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade;

(e) To report to the Commission on progress in implementation of the present resolution at its seventy-second, seventy-sixth and eighty-first sessions, in accordance with the reviews timetabled in the Regional Action Framework.

Annex

A. Ministerial Declaration to “Get Every One in the Picture” in Asia and the Pacific

We, the ministers and representatives of members and associate members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific assembled at the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok, from 24 to 28 November 2014,

1. *Reaffirming* the human right of everyone to be recognized everywhere as a person before the law, which is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁸⁰
2. *Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,⁸¹ the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁸² the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families,⁸³ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,⁸⁴ which stipulate that States Parties should register all children immediately after birth without discrimination, as invoked by resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, the most recent being General Assembly resolution 66/141 of 19 December 2011, and Human Rights Council resolution 22/7 of 21 March 2013,
3. *Also recalling* the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages,⁸⁵ which stipulates that States Parties should ensure that all marriages are registered in an appropriate official register by the competent authority,
4. *Further recalling* General Assembly resolution 68/261 of 29 January 2014, which endorsed the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and General Assembly resolution 64/267 of 3 June 2010, which acknowledged that reliable and timely statistics and indicators measuring a country’s progress are an indispensable basis for informed policy decision-making and for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals at the national, regional and international levels, on the understanding that this extends to other internationally agreed development goals and to monitoring at the subnational level,
5. *Recalling* World Health Assembly resolution WHA67.14 of 24 May 2014, in which member States were urged, in the context of the development agenda beyond 2015, to recognize the importance of accountability by strengthening of civil registration and vital statistics and health information systems, which can be used for monitoring health equity

⁸⁰ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

⁸¹ See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

⁸² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

⁸³ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2220, No. 39481.

⁸⁴ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2515, No. 44910.

⁸⁵ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 521, No. 7525.

by providing disaggregated data that do not reveal information about individuals,

6. *Also recalling* Commission resolutions 67/12 of 25 May 2011 and 69/15 of 1 May 2013, which recognize the importance of civil registration and vital statistics for measuring aid effectiveness and raising the visibility of and improving policy focus on the most vulnerable groups,

7. *Welcoming* World Health Assembly resolution WHA67.10 of 24 May 2014, endorsing “Every newborn: an action plan to end preventable deaths”, particularly the strategic objective that every newborn needs to be registered, and newborn and maternal deaths and stillbirths need to be counted,

8. *Also welcoming* the conclusion on civil registration of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees of 17 October 2013,⁸⁶ which noted the importance of civil registration and documentation for the protection of refugees and that the lack of civil registration and related documentation makes persons vulnerable to statelessness and associated protection risks,

9. *Recognizing* that civil registration is the continuous, permanent, compulsory, and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events in people’s lives in accordance with the national law, including births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages, divorces, adoptions, legitimations and recognitions,

10. *Also recognizing* that civil registration and vital statistics systems are, depending on national laws and administrative arrangements, typically the shared responsibility of multiple ministries and government agencies, such as the ministries of the interior, justice, home affairs and health, national statistics offices, and local and provincial governments,

11. *Affirming* that universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems have a critical role in achieving inclusive, equitable and people-centred development, including the following:

(a) Providing documents and a permanent record for individuals to establish their legal identity, civil status and family relationships, and subsequently promoting social protection and inclusion by facilitating access to essential services, such as education and health care, among others;

(b) Enabling good governance and strengthened public administration through greater political participation and accountability, and facilitating public service delivery by providing a basis for national population databases, national identity programmes and e-governance;

(c) Providing vital statistics on the demographics and health of the population and other information that offer an evidence base for

⁸⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Conclusion on civil registration*, No. 111 (LXIV) – 2013, EXCOM Conclusions, 17 October 2013.

policymaking at local, provincial and national levels, including preventative and targeted interventions for addressing social, economic and health inequities, especially among hard-to-reach and marginalized populations;

(d) Assisting the implementation of universal health coverage and providing the most reliable data to monitor and address the causes of mortality, including providing an evidence base for measures to improve newborn, infant and maternal health;

(e) Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through the provision of documents to prove family relations and civil status, and the production of age-, sex- and geographically disaggregated statistics;

(f) Preventing and reducing the risk of statelessness, human trafficking, child and early marriage, child labour etc., as well as promoting durable solutions for refugees, including by documenting links to the country of origin;

(g) Offering information for humanitarian planning, disaster risk reduction and management, and aiding the response to disasters,

12. *Deeply concerned* that an estimated 135 million children under 5 years of age in the region have not had their birth registered and that millions of other vital events are not registered,⁸⁷

13. *Alarmed* that the majority of countries in the region do not possess universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems that meet relevant international standards and recommendations,⁸⁸

14. *Convinced* that a comprehensive and integrated approach to improving civil registration and vital statistics, involving all relevant stakeholders and incorporating civil registration and vital statistics into relevant national development plans, is the most effective and sustainable way to develop and improve civil registration and vital statistics systems,

15. *Recognizing* the need to address disparities in the civil registration coverage of hard-to-reach and marginalized populations, including people living in rural, remote, isolated or border areas, minorities, indigenous people, migrants, non-citizens, asylum seekers, refugees, stateless people, and people without documentation,

16. *Also recognizing* the need for special attention to build national capacities related to death registration and determining causes of death,

⁸⁷ This figure is an estimate provided by the United Nations Children’s Fund, *Every Child’s Birth Right: Inequities and Trends in Birth Registration* (New York, 2013).

⁸⁸ According to self-assessments conducted by 47 (out of a total of 62) ESCAP members and associate members during the period between 2010 and 2013 using a rapid assessment tool developed by the University of Queensland and the World Health Organization, 36 possessed civil registration and vital statistics systems that were categorized as “dysfunctional”, “weak” or “functional but inadequate”.

including medical certification of death and coding causes of death according to the International Classification of Diseases, verbal autopsy and training of health workers,

17. *Underscoring* that the functioning of civil registration and vital statistics systems should be guided by the United Nations' Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System⁸⁹ and production of vital statistics undertaken in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics,

18. *Emphasizing* that, when universal, civil registration is the best source of vital statistics, and that, while household surveys have considerable value, they cannot replicate the strengths of civil registration as a data source, namely universality in coverage, permanence, continuity, archiving of records and cost-effectiveness over time, and are thus not a long-term substitute for civil registration and vital statistics systems,

19. *Recognizing* the important role and added value of international, regional and subregional organizations and initiatives to support the development and improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in countries through advocacy, technical assistance, capacity-building, dissemination of information, research, innovation, and facilitation of the exchange of knowledge and best practices,⁹⁰

20. *Also recognizing* that non-governmental organizations, civil society, professional associations, media and the private sector, including those involved in public-private partnerships, can also play a significant role in supporting the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics, in accordance with national priorities and strategies,

21. *Believing* that monitoring and accountability, including the setting of national targets for elements of civil registration and vital statistics, can expedite the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems,

22. *Appreciating* the efforts already made by members and associate members to improve their civil registration and vital statistics systems,

23. *Also appreciating* the ongoing support provided by development partners as part of the regional initiative to improve civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific, including recent efforts to strengthen financing for civil registration and vital statistics improvement activities at national, regional and global levels,

24. *Recognizing* the valuable role of subregional programmes to improve civil registration and vital statistics and in the implementation of the present Declaration, particularly for addressing unique subregional challenges,

⁸⁹ *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System: Revision 3* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XVII.10). Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Such as the first International Identity Management Conference, held from 23 to 25 September 2014 in Seoul, which recognized that civil registration is a basis for civil identification of individuals and that an organic link between civil registration and identity management is critical.

25. *Acknowledging* that the establishment of a regional network of civil registrars would facilitate information sharing and peer-to-peer technical support to realize universal civil registration,

26. *Welcoming* the growing momentum around civil registration and vital statistics, including the progress achieved through initiatives in developing countries in Asia and the Pacific and other regions, including Africa, Latin America and the Eastern Mediterranean,

27. *Applauding* the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific for its efforts in overseeing the preparations for the Ministerial Conference and the development of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific,

28. *Expressing appreciation* to the co-organizers of the Ministerial Conference and to Thailand as the host Government,

29. *Proclaim* our shared vision that, by 2024, all people in Asia and the Pacific will benefit from universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems that facilitate the realization of their rights and support good governance, health and development;

30. *Affirm* that the realization of our shared vision depends on achieving the following goals:

(a) Goal 1: Universal civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events;

(b) Goal 2: All individuals are provided with legal documentation of civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events, as necessary, in order to claim identity, civil status and ensuing rights;

(c) Goal 3: Accurate, complete and timely vital statistics (including on causes of death), based on registration records, are produced and disseminated;

31. *Declare* the years 2015 to 2024 to be the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade for Asia and the Pacific to achieve our shared vision;

32. *Endorse* the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, so as to accelerate and focus the efforts of Governments and development partners and, thereby, to achieve our shared vision;

33. *Commit* to the implementation of the Regional Action Framework so that the shared vision, goals and national targets can be achieved through comprehensive, integrated and concerted efforts by all relevant stakeholders in the following action areas:

(a) Political commitment;

(b) Public engagement, participation and generating demand;

(c) Coordination;

(d) Policies, legislation and implementation of regulations;

- (e) Infrastructure and resources;
- (f) Operational procedures, practices and innovations;
- (g) Production, dissemination and use of vital statistics;

34. *Also commit*, by the end of 2015, to establish an effective and sustainable national civil registration and vital statistics coordination mechanism, develop a national improvement strategy, including monitoring and evaluation, set national targets for 2024 and initiate the other implementation steps of the Regional Action Framework;

35. *Resolve* to give particular attention and take measures to reduce all barriers to civil registration and to ensure the registration of vital events among hard-to-reach and marginalized populations and to build national capacities related to death registration and ascertaining causes of death;

36. *Call upon* development partners to provide technical and financial assistance to countries in a coordinated manner that is conducive to a comprehensive and integrated approach to improving civil registration and vital statistics;

37. *Invite* all concerned development partners, including the following, to join and contribute to the regional partnership supporting the implementation of the Regional Action Framework:

(a) Subregional organizations, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Organization, and initiatives, such as the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (2011-2014) under the auspices of the Brisbane Accord Group, to promote subregional cooperation for the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics;

(b) Development cooperation agencies, to strengthen the effectiveness of their plans and programmes on civil registration and vital statistics and related areas of development assistance in line with national policies and priorities;

(c) Bilateral and multilateral development agencies, banks and other financial institutions, such as the World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank, to harness their technical and financial resources for supporting the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics;

(d) The United Nations system, including programmes, funds and specialized agencies, to jointly deliver support for improving civil registration and vital statistics, including through effective use of existing mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels, such as the United Nations Development Group, country teams, and disaster and emergency planning and response teams;

(e) Non-governmental and civil society organizations, to support Governments and foster continuous responsiveness to the aspirations and needs of all people, including hard-to-reach and marginalized populations;

(f) The private sector, to promote innovation and strengthen efforts to form public-private partnerships;

(g) Academic and research institutions and professional societies, to collect, develop and disseminate best practices, innovation and technical resources;

38. *Designate* oversight for the Regional Action Framework and custodianship of the Decade to the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific reporting through the Commission;

39. *Call upon* members, associate members and development partners to support the further development of an Asian and Pacific regional network of civil registrars, and, in particular, its contribution to the implementation of the Regional Action Framework;

40. *Encourage* members and associate members to advocate for the inclusion of civil registration and vital statistics in the development agenda beyond 2015;

41. *Recommend* that the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems be included in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks;

42. *Request* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To accord priority to supporting members and associate members in the full, effective and sustainable implementation of the present Declaration and Regional Action Framework, in cooperation with other concerned entities;

(b) To provide secretariat support for the implementation of the Regional Action Framework;

(c) To oversee regional reviews of progress in implementing the Regional Action Framework in 2020 and 2025;

(d) To mainstream the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems into the work of the secretariat;

(e) To continue engagement with development partners to ensure the ongoing, coordinated and effective operation of the regional partnership;

(f) To submit the outcome of this Ministerial Conference to the Commission at its seventy-first session.

B. Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

I. Introduction

1. Through Commission resolution 69/15, countries in Asia and the Pacific requested that further regional action be taken to support the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems. The

Regional Action Framework responds to that request as a catalyst for Governments and development partners to focus and accelerate their efforts to realize a shared vision and the three CRVS goals outlined in this document during the proposed civil registration and vital statistics decade for Asia and the Pacific (2015 to 2024).

2. The Regional Action Framework facilitates collaborative action at local, provincial, national and international levels by enabling multiple stakeholders to align and prioritize their efforts, as well as to monitor progress towards achieving shared results.

3. Guided by the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific,⁹¹ the development of the Regional Action Framework benefited from comprehensive consultations with countries and development partners during 2014. It builds on and offers a practical means for implementing the Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.⁹²

4. CRVS is defined as the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording and production of vital statistics on the occurrence and characteristics of vital events in accordance with national laws, rules, regulations and policies from time to time in force, including births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages, divorces, adoptions, legitimations and recognitions.⁹³

A. Shared vision, goals and action areas

5. The shared vision is that, by 2024, all people in Asia and the Pacific will benefit from universal and responsive CRVS systems that facilitate the realization of their rights and support good governance, health and development.

6. The goals and targets of the Regional Action Framework offer measurable outcomes that reflect progress towards achievement of the shared vision during the course of the decade 2015 to 2024. They recognize core human rights principles of progressive realization, non-regression, non-discrimination and equity, which apply to all countries and areas.

7. The three goals are:

(a) **Goal 1:** Universal civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events;

⁹¹ The Regional Steering Group was established in September 2013 pursuant to Commission resolution 69/15, comprising a balance of representatives of the Governments from the five subregions of the Commission and the civil registration, health and statistics sectors, as well as representatives of regional organizations with mandates to support the improvement of CRVS systems in the region.

⁹² As endorsed by Commission resolution 69/15.

⁹³ *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System: Revision 3* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XVII.10). Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>.

(b) **Goal 2:** All individuals are provided with legal documentation of civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events, as necessary, to claim identity, civil status and ensuing rights;

(c) **Goal 3:** Accurate, complete and timely vital statistics (including on causes of death) are produced based on registration records and are disseminated.

8. The realization of the shared vision depends on coordinated and concerted efforts to develop and enhance the capacities of members and associate members in seven action areas, which are:

- (a) Political commitment;
- (b) Public engagement, participation and generation of demand;
- (c) Coordination;
- (d) Policies, legislation and implementation of regulations;
- (e) Infrastructure and resources;
- (f) Operational procedures, practices and innovations;
- (g) Production, dissemination and use of vital statistics.

B. Key principles

9. The six key principles for implementing the Regional Action Framework are:

(a) **Countries take the lead.** Activities under the Regional Action Framework should be driven by country demand and address the needs identified in the comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy, if one exists;

(b) **A stepwise approach.** The Regional Action Framework harnesses existing strengths of members and associate members, and facilitates incremental, feasible and sustainable improvements that are supported by ongoing monitoring and evaluation;

(c) **Flexibility and responsiveness.** Recognizing that there is no single blueprint for improving CRVS systems in every setting, the Regional Action Framework offers action areas as a broad basis for the activities of Government and development partners with flexibility to accommodate the particular circumstances of each member and associate member;

(d) **Building on local expertise.** In recognition of national and regional diversities, the Regional Action Framework leverages local knowledge and expertise for CRVS improvement;

(e) **Consistency with international human rights and legal principles, and national law.** The Regional Action Framework is consistent with relevant international frameworks, including article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁹⁴ and article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,^{95, 96} as well as the principles of universality and non-

⁹⁴ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

⁹⁵ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

⁹⁶ Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states "... a child means

discrimination. The Regional Action Framework should be applied consistently with the existing national law, rules and regulations;

(f) **Coordination and alignment.** The Regional Action Framework is a platform to facilitate harmonization and avoid duplication of activities of local, provincial, national, regional and international stakeholders, including subregional initiatives,⁹⁷ for augmented impact in countries.

II. Goals and targets

10. The three goals of the Regional Action Framework address the three essential outputs of CRVS systems: the civil registration of vital events, which is a precursor to the other two goals; the provision to individuals and families of legal documentation as evidence of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events; and the production and dissemination of vital statistics based on civil registration records.

11. The targets are designed to enable monitoring and evaluation in ways that are objective, efficient, technically sound and time bound during the decade 2015 to 2024.

12. Members and associate members set their own national target value for each target (either the percentage or the year, depending on the target) based on their ambition and capacity, and in accordance with their comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy, if one exists.

13. Geographic location, gender, religion or ethnicity should not be barriers to civil registration. Many countries experience substantially lower civil registration coverage rates among certain population groups, geographic areas and administrative subdivisions. Members and associate members are thus encouraged to set separate national targets, where appropriate, for civil registration coverage, provision of legal documentation and vital statistics for these subgroups, including hard-to-reach and marginalized populations.-These targets should be supported by specific activities, ideally as part of a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy, to address the inequalities related to CRVS that these subgroups experience.

14. Disaggregated data enable Governments and development partners to continuously monitor civil registration coverage and the provision of legal documentation and vital statistics among all population groups, and facilitate targeted actions to specific groups. Therefore, when members and associate members report on progress in implementing the Regional Action Framework, they are encouraged to provide data that can be disaggregated by age, sex and geographic area or administrative subdivision, as well as by other relevant subgroups.

every human being below the age of eighteen years unless[,] under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”.

⁹⁷ For example, the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan and initiatives of the World Health Organization, including the Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Regional Strategy on Strengthening the Role of the Health Sector in Improving CRVS in South-East Asia.

15. The civil registration of marriages, divorces and adoptions has profound development implications, such as contributing to gender equality and addressing issues related to marriage before the legal age. Each marriage, divorce or adoption registration has the potential to have drastic impacts on the lives of the individuals concerned. Members and associate members are encouraged to make additional commitments with appropriate national targets for the civil registration coverage, provision of legal documentation and vital statistics on marriages, divorces and adoptions.

A. Goal 1: Universal civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events

16. Goal 1 is an expression of the internationally accepted principle of the universal coverage of civil registration. The CRVS system should register all vital events occurring in the territory and jurisdiction of the country or area, including among hard-to-reach and marginalized populations.

17. The focus on universality and equity implies that, in countries where there are significant variations in civil registration coverage by geography or level of social and economic development, it may be necessary to establish special procedures for civil registration. These may include incentives and measures to alleviate barriers to civil registration, such as gender disparities, distance, costs and cultural factors, and may involve utilizing existing infrastructure or public services, including social workers and community health workers, for notifying civil registration authorities of vital events.

18. Civil registration records should contain, for each vital event, the minimum information for judicial and administrative purposes as recommended by the United Nations.⁹⁸

19. Every death should have a medically certified cause associated with it. For statistical purposes, special measures, such as verbal autopsy, may be needed to ensure that all deaths are associated with a defined cause of death, especially in settings where many deaths occur outside of health facilities and without attention from a medical practitioner.

20. The targets for goal 1 are:

1.A By 2024, at least ... per cent of births in the territory and jurisdiction in the given year are registered.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System: Revision 3* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XVII.10), annex I. Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>.

⁹⁹ Given that Member States endorsed, at the sixty-seventh World Health Assembly, “Every Newborn: An Action Plan to End Preventable Deaths” (World Health Organization (Geneva, 2014), annex 1), which contains the strategic objective that “every newborn needs to be registered, and newborn and maternal deaths and stillbirths need to be counted”, members and associate members should aim to register every birth within 28 days of occurrence, and reflect this in their national target for target 1.A.

1.B By 2024, at least ... per cent of children under 5 years old in the territory and jurisdiction have had their birth registered.

1.C By 2024, at least ... per cent of all individuals in the territory and jurisdiction have had their birth registered.

1.D By 2024, at least ... per cent of all deaths that take place in the territory and jurisdiction in the given year are registered.

1.E By 2024, at least ... per cent of all deaths recorded by the health sector in the territory and jurisdiction in the given year have a medically certified cause of death recorded using the international form of the death certificate.

21. Members and associate members are encouraged, where appropriate, to add national targets for the civil registration of other vital events, such as marriages, divorces and adoptions.

B. Goal 2: All individuals are provided with legal documentation of civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events, as necessary, to claim identity, civil status and ensuing rights

22. Goal 2 reflects that CRVS systems provide legal documentation of civil registration to individuals and families for legal and administrative purposes. Legal documentation is strongly linked with a broad range of rights and activities, in particular legal identity. This goal addresses the distinction between the civil registration of a vital event and the possession of formal proof that it took place, in the form of legal documentation.

23. Legal documentation of civil registration is obtained through paper or electronic certificates or certified copies of registration records that prove the occurrence and characteristics of a vital event. Governments should specify the method of issuing legal documentation for the first time, for replacements and for corrections, and take necessary measures to eliminate discrimination, deter corruption, fraud and forgery, and protect the privacy of individuals and families.

24. Achieving this goal requires that legal documentation should be readily accessible to the appropriate individuals. Aside from physical access, this includes no or low fees for providing the legal documentation and short waiting time between the civil registration of a vital event and the provision of the legal documentation.

25. In order to mitigate risks of discrimination, legal documentation should contain just the minimum set of information required for legal and administrative purposes as the national legal framework dictates. The targets of goal 2 describe the minimum information that should be included on birth and death certificates, according to international standards and recommendations.

26. The targets for goal 2 are:

2.A By 2024, at least ... per cent of all births registered in the territory and jurisdiction are accompanied with the issuance of an official

birth certificate that includes, as a minimum, the individual's name, sex, date and place of birth, and name of parent(s) where known.

2.B By 2024, at least ... per cent of all deaths registered in the territory and jurisdiction in the given year are accompanied with the issuance of an official death certificate which includes, as a minimum, the deceased's name, date of death, sex, and age.

27. Members and associate members are encouraged, where appropriate, to add national targets for the provision of legal documentation of civil registration of other vital events, such as marriages, divorces and adoptions.

C. Goal 3: Accurate, complete and timely vital statistics (including on causes of death) are produced based on registration records and are disseminated

28. Goal 3 highlights the critical importance of civil registration being linked to the production and quality assurance of vital statistics on the occurrence and characteristics of vital events.

29. For many Governments, the routine generation of accurate complete and timely statistics on births, deaths and causes of death will require medium-term strategic and prioritized investment to improve civil registration and the national statistical system. There is thus a need to work progressively towards this goal. In the interim, the need for data to track progress towards improved health outcomes and broader development goals can be met using alternative sources, including censuses, household surveys and sample registration methods. While each method has some advantages, none is able to replicate the key strengths of civil registration as a source, namely universality in coverage, permanence and continuity, and archiving of records.

30. In countries and areas where it is legislated that all births and deaths should be recorded by the ministry of health, the data collected should be seen as a possible valid administrative data source of vital statistics. However, there should be systems in place to ensure that the data are shared with the civil registry and national statistical system.

31. The production of vital statistics should allow for key disaggregation, namely by age, sex, geographic area, administrative subdivisions, other subgroups and characteristics of the vital event, such as cause of death, using the International Classification of Diseases (ICD).

32. The production of vital statistics should be in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.¹⁰⁰

33. The targets for goal 3 are:

3.A By ... (year), annual nationally representative statistics on births – disaggregated by age of mother, sex of child, geographic area and administrative subdivision – are produced from registration records or other valid administrative data sources.

¹⁰⁰ General Assembly resolution 68/261 of 29 January 2014.

3.B By ... (year), annual nationally representative statistics on deaths – disaggregated by age, sex, cause of death defined by ICD (latest version as appropriate), geographic area and administrative subdivision – are produced from registration records or other valid administrative data sources.

3.C By 2024, at least ... per cent of deaths occurring in health facilities or with the attention of a medical practitioner have an underlying cause of death code derived from the medical certificate according to the standards defined by ICD (latest version as appropriate).

3.D By 2024, the proportion of deaths coded to ill-defined codes will have been reduced by ... per cent compared with the baseline year.¹⁰¹

3.E By 2024, at least ... per cent of deaths taking place outside of a health facility and without the attention of a medical practitioner have their underlying cause of death code determined through verbal autopsy in line with international standards.

3.F By ... (year), key summary tabulations of vital statistics on births and deaths using registration records as the primary source, are made available in the public domain in electronic format annually, and within one calendar year.

3.G By ... (year), key summary tabulations of vital statistics on causes of death using registration records as the primary source, are made available in the public domain in electronic format annually, and within two calendar years.

3.H By ... (year), an accurate, complete and timely vital statistics report for the previous two years, using registration records as the primary source, is made available in the public domain.

34. Members and associate members are encouraged, where appropriate, to add national targets for the production and dissemination of vital statistics on other vital events, such as on marriages, divorces and adoptions.

III. Action areas

35. The action areas serve as a basis for Governments and development partners to focus and organize efforts towards developing, implementing and supporting comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategies, including delineating the responsibilities of involved stakeholders.

36. The action areas also facilitate structured reporting on activities and progress by Governments and development partners, which will enable enhanced knowledge-sharing, regional cooperation and learning, and the identification of opportunities for collaboration. If members and associate members have adopted an alternative approach for a comprehensive

¹⁰¹ The classification of “ill-defined” will depend on the code set adopted by the country, including the version of ICD being used and the level of detail being applied.

multisectoral national CRVS strategy, it should be ensured that all seven action areas are covered in some manner.

37. The features of a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy will depend on the administrative, legal, social, cultural and political structures within national and subnational contexts, and on available or attainable infrastructure and resources. However, progress towards achieving the three goals of the Regional Action Framework will for most countries require efforts in all of the action areas.

38. Examples of activities that can be undertaken in each of the action areas are annexed to this document. The examples are illustrative only and may be highly relevant to some countries but not to others.

A. Political commitment

39. Sustained political commitment is crucial for the development and continuous functioning of CRVS systems. Political commitment can galvanize all stakeholders and levels of society around efforts to improve CRVS systems, and enable CRVS improvement to be embedded into national development plans. Furthermore, political commitment is critical for ensuring that CRVS systems are adequately resourced and are designed to be inclusive and responsive.

40. Political commitment at the highest levels plays an essential role in ensuring that relevant government stakeholders effectively take on their roles and responsibilities, and unify around a single comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy. It is imperative that all levels of government are engaged in the process of establishing political commitment and development of a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy.

B. Public engagement, participation and generating demand

41. Improving the coverage of civil registration requires individuals and families to know the value of declaring vital events to relevant authorities and to be willing to do so. Universal and responsive CRVS systems are thus dependent on relationships of mutual trust and accountability between authorities and the public, and should be organized and managed in ways that are respectful of cultural and behavioural sensitivities.

42. Public engagement, participation and demand generation involves enhancing public awareness of the importance of declaring vital events and the value of vital statistics, and efforts to remove barriers to registration at all levels. Often, health, education and other public services, as well as the media, social workers and civil society, play a crucial role in providing information about the value of CRVS and encouraging the public to register vital events.

C. Coordination

43. Since there are so many institutions involved in and benefiting from CRVS, effective coordination is a prerequisite for universal and responsive CRVS systems. Coordination must take place among all relevant

responsible stakeholders in countries at all levels of government, among development partners and between Governments and development partners.

44. Within countries, effective coordination among different local, provincial and national stakeholders involved in reporting, recording and registering the occurrence of vital events is essential, particularly for preventing duplication of functions and information and for facilitating the effective use of registration records for statistical purposes. It is therefore imperative that a national CRVS coordination mechanism, such as a national committee or board, functions well and comprises all sectors, including the civil registration authorities, provincial and local governments, the health and education sectors, the statistics authorities and civil society.

D. Policies, legislation and implementation of regulations

45. A sound legal framework provides the basis for a universal and responsive CRVS system. Reviewing and updating of relevant legislation, regulations and policies is often a first step and common priority in a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy. It is especially important that the legal framework for CRVS does not create discriminatory barriers to civil registration.

46. The legislation or regulations should provide definitions of vital events. The legal framework should make the civil registration of vital events compulsory and define the functions, duties and responsibilities of civil registration authorities and of those who are obliged to register, thus helping to ensure the completeness of registration and to improve the accuracy of information held in civil records. In accordance with international standards, birth registration should be free of charge or a low fee should be charged to the family for late registration. Incentives should be offered to families for timely civil registration.

47. The legal framework should protect the confidentiality of personal data and ensure that data can be securely shared between approved departments, as necessary, for quality assurance and to produce the required vital statistics. The legal framework should ensure the quality, timeliness and completeness of the vital statistics produced in compliance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and should contain provisions for the CRVS system.

E. Infrastructure and resources

48. Registration points should be within a reasonable distance for the whole population, or measures, such as digital registration options, need to be undertaken to facilitate civil registration in remote areas on a routine basis, including for hard-to-reach and marginalized populations.

49. In terms of human resources, CRVS systems depend on a sufficient number of qualified staff. Governments need to consider mechanisms for career development and appreciation, as well as ongoing training to enhance the skills of and retain staff. Special efforts should be made to develop and retain key technical skills, such as training for physicians to accurately determine and record immediate and underlying causes of death,

as well as capacity-building of officials to be able to establish, maintain and monitor CRVS systems.

50. Sufficient and sustainable investments are essential to enable incremental improvements in CRVS systems in areas of human resources, infrastructure, equipment and supplies.

F. Operational procedures, practices and innovations

51. Whereas the existence of a sound legal and institutional framework is central to a universal and responsive CRVS system, by itself it is insufficient. Attention must also be paid to ensure that those frameworks are effectively and consistently applied through the design and implementation of operational procedures and practices.

52. Operational procedures must be designed and implemented so as to ensure the essential function of civil registration in providing legal documentation that can help to establish legal identity, civil status, family relationships, nationality and ensuing rights. Similarly, they should facilitate the transmission of data to approved departments for the production of vital statistics.

53. Digital collection, maintenance and dissemination of data as part of a CRVS system, including online civil registration and service delivery, is a likely long-term ambition of members and associate members since it can support efficient public service delivery and e-government. In addition, advances in technology simplify and reduce the cost of secure storage and protection of civil registration archives from natural disasters, war and cyberattacks. Innovations and the application of information and communications technology, including mobile technology, can also facilitate the civil registration of vital events in areas that are remote or otherwise isolated. However, innovations and technology are effective only when applied within a sound legal and institutional framework, with appropriate operational procedures and practices in place and consistently applied.

G. Production, dissemination and use of vital statistics

54. The administrative data from civil registration, when universal, is the preferred source of vital statistics in terms of accuracy, completeness and timeliness. An advantage of vital statistics based on civil registration is that they can be disaggregated to smaller sections and areas of the population, for example administrative subdivisions. Furthermore, advances in technology and methodology have made it increasingly feasible to overcome technical and logistical challenges related to compiling, ensuring the quality of, analysing and disseminating complete and reliable information on vital events.

55. Governments may need to adopt a phased approach to using civil registration records as a source of vital statistics by ensuring that information on currently registered vital events is compiled in a way to allow the production of vital statistics. Even if civil registration is known to be incomplete and confined to certain areas of the country, for example urban areas, the information should nonetheless be compiled and analysed alongside vital statistics from other sources. In the longer term, the aim is to

produce complete, nationally representative statistics using civil registration as the main source.

56. Vital statistics should be made available to key users and in the public domain within a reasonable time frame. Metadata, including information on the content, context and limitation of the statistics, should be provided to users to increase their understanding of the data.

IV. Implementation of the Regional Action Framework

A. Governance

57. The Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific will be responsible for providing regional oversight and guidance for the implementation of the Regional Action Framework, including acting as custodian for the decade 2015 to 2024.

58. The Regional Steering Group shall be responsible for facilitating synergies between the Regional Action Framework and other ongoing initiatives to improve CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific.

59. The Regional Steering Group shall be serviced by the ESCAP secretariat.

60. Where subregional initiatives exist to improve CRVS, coordination will occur in conjunction with and through appropriate and mandated governance bodies overseeing such initiatives. For example, in the Pacific islands, coordination will continue through the Brisbane Accord Group and the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (2011-2014), which is under the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy 2011-2020.

61. Within countries, the implementation of the Regional Action Framework shall be overseen by the national CRVS coordination mechanism. Development partners operating within national contexts are encouraged to establish working groups to coordinate activities among themselves and with the Government.

B. Implementation steps

62. Implementation of the Regional Action Framework requires members and associate members to undertake the following steps, if they have not done so already:

(a) Establish an effective and sustainable national CRVS coordination mechanism comprising all relevant stakeholders;

(b) Conduct a standards-based comprehensive assessment of CRVS in their territory,¹⁰² which is inclusive of all relevant stakeholders, for the purpose of identifying gaps and making recommendations that will

¹⁰² Using a tool such as *Improving the Quality and Use of Birth, Death and Cause-of-death Information: Guidance for a Standards-based Review of Country Practices* (World Health Organization and the University of Queensland Health Information Systems Knowledge Hub, 2010).

be the foundation of a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy;

(c) Set the national target value for each target, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, and report these to the ESCAP secretariat,

(d) Develop and implement a plan for monitoring and reporting on achievement of the targets, including on reporting to the ESCAP secretariat;

(e) Assess inequalities related to CRVS experienced by subgroups of the population, including among hard-to-reach and marginalized populations and particular geographic areas and administrative subdivisions, and, where appropriate, set national targets to address those inequalities;

(f) Develop and implement a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy, aligned, where appropriate, with the action areas of the Regional Action Framework, with political commitment, adequate funding, and a clear delineation of responsibilities for stakeholders to establish accountability for the implementation;

(g) Assign a national focal point within the Government that is responsible for coordinating with the ESCAP secretariat and development partners;

(h) Through the national focal point, report relevant information to the ESCAP secretariat or subregional body, as appropriate, in accordance with the reporting structure for the Regional Action Framework.

C. Reporting and regional reviews

Table

Key dates for reporting and reviewing progress on implementing the Regional Action Framework

Year	Activity
2015	Members and associate members submit baseline report to the secretariat
2016	Regional baseline analysis
2019	Members and associate members submit midterm report to the secretariat
2020	Midterm regional review conducted
2024	Members and associate members submit final report to the secretariat
2025	Final regional review conducted

63. In order to facilitate reliable monitoring while respecting the need for flexibility to national circumstances, the reporting structure of the Regional Action Framework is as follows:

(a) **Baseline report.** By the end of 2015, members and associate members, through the designated national focal point, will submit to the ESCAP secretariat:

- (i) Most recent nationally representative baseline data for each target;
- (ii) The national target value for each target;
- (iii) A progress report on CRVS improvement activities;
- (iv) The report of any comprehensive assessment conducted in the country, where available;
- (v) Any national CRVS strategy, where available;

(b) **Midterm report.** By the end of 2019, members and associate members, through the designated national focal point, will submit to the ESCAP secretariat:

- (i) Nationally representative data measuring progress towards each target, where available;
- (ii) A progress report on CRVS improvement activities;
- (iii) The report of any comprehensive assessment conducted in the country, where available;
- (iv) Any national CRVS strategy, where available;

(c) **Final report.** By the end of 2024, members and associate members, through the designated national focal point, will submit to the ESCAP secretariat:

- (i) Nationally representative data measuring progress towards each target, where available;
- (ii) A progress update report on CRVS improvement activities;
- (iii) The report of any comprehensive assessment conducted in the country, where available;
- (iv) Any national CRVS strategy, where available.

64. For the purposes of tracking progress and compiling information about CRVS improvement activities that could be constructive to share across the region and with other regions, members and associate members should submit progress reports to the secretariat in the years mentioned above, detailing activities undertaken under each.

65. On a voluntary basis, members and associate members may submit reports and information in other years either on an ad hoc basis or upon request of the secretariat or the Regional Steering Group.

66. The progress reports on CRVS improvement activities should preferably be arranged along the lines of the action areas or the form of any template decided by the Regional Steering Group. Definitions of vital events and key terms used should be provided as a part of the progress reports.

67. In order to prevent duplication, members and associate members with existing similar progress reporting structures may provide their reports arranged as those structures allow, for example as part of their national CRVS strategy or for other international initiatives, as is the case for the Pacific islands under the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (2011-2014).

68. In the years immediately following the three reporting years, the secretariat and development partners, in collaboration with the Regional Steering Group, will synthesize the country reports into a report on regional progress towards achieving the targets set by members and associate members, and publish the result as an overview report of the status of CRVS in the Asia-Pacific region.

69. To support monitoring of the Regional Action Framework, the secretariat and the regional partnership, in consultation with the Regional Steering Group, will develop and make available relevant definitions and guidelines for the collection and processing of monitoring information.

D. Regional partnership and secretariat

70. International, regional, subregional, national and local development partners, including international organizations, non-governmental and civil society organizations, academia and professional societies, have a key role to play in supporting members and associate members to realize the shared vision. The implementation of the Regional Action Framework can include advocacy, technical assistance, capacity-building, dissemination of information, application of information and communications technology, research, innovation and facilitation of the exchange of knowledge and best practices in the region.

71. The regional partnership of organizations supporting the implementation of the Regional Action Framework will provide their support in accordance with the key principles. In particular, assistance shall be conducive to a comprehensive and integrated approach to improving CRVS, and delivered in a coordinated and harmonized manner that is aligned with the priorities set by members and associate members through their comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategies. Where subregional or other related CRVS initiatives exist, all involved stakeholders have a mutual obligation to ensure coordination.

72. National civil registration authorities are central to successful implementation of the Regional Action Framework, particularly realization of goals 1 and 2. Recognizing this important role, the regional partnership will, subject to the availability of resources, support the establishment and functioning of a regional network of civil registrars to facilitate information sharing and peer-to-peer technical support, as well as documenting and sharing knowledge and lessons learned.

73. The ESCAP secretariat shall contribute to the implementation of the Regional Action Framework through its regional convening and norm-setting role, facilitating coordination, servicing the Regional Steering Group and overseeing the regional reviews.

Annex

Examples of activities in each action area

A. Political commitment

- (a) Issuing a high-level declaration on the importance of CRVS for all individuals;
- (b) Developing a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy detailing budget and commitments required for implementation;
- (c) Ensuring that a national CRVS coordination mechanism reports to the highest level of government and includes representation of all levels of government involved in the CRVS system.

B. Public engagement, participation and generating demand

- (a) Undertaking national campaigns or drives to encourage individuals and families to declare and register vital events;
- (b) Undertaking national and subnational advocacy and outreach specifically directed to hard-to-reach and marginalized population groups;
- (c) Identifying and removing barriers to registration, in particular those that impede access by persons from marginalized groups;
- (d) Undertaking advocacy on the benefits of vital statistics and sponsoring vital statistics as a theme for national statistics day;
- (e) Reviewing incentives and penalties in relation to the civil registration of vital events and considering ways to make these more effective and avoid unintended effects and adverse impact on the realization of rights, such as access to health and education;
- (f) Including representatives of civil society, such as communities and non-governmental organizations, on national CRVS coordination mechanisms.

C. Coordination

- (a) Establishing a representative and functioning multisectoral mechanism responsible for CRVS coordination, such as a national committee or board;
- (b) Assigning the national CRVS coordination mechanism with the task of overseeing the implementation of a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy and liaising with development partners;
- (c) Ensuring linkages between CRVS improvement efforts and relevant national development plans.

D. Policies, legislation and implementation of regulations

- (a) Reviewing and amending legislation, policies and regulations in adherence with international standards, as described by the United Nations, in order to ensure access to registration for all

without discrimination;

(b) Reviewing and amending policies, legislation and regulations in order to ensure that registration of births and deaths is free of charge or with a low fee for late registration;

(c) Reviewing and amending policies, legislation and regulations to protect the confidentiality of personal data in civil registration records;

(d) Putting measures in place to protect the integrity of civil registration records and prevent fraudulent registration of vital events;

(e) Reviewing and amending policies, legislation and regulations pertaining to the certification of deaths, ensuring that they are aligned with international standards as defined by the World Health Organization;

(f) Ensuring uniform implementation of regulations across the jurisdiction.

E. Infrastructure and resources

(a) Analysing business processes within CRVS systems with a view to identifying options for enhanced cost-effectiveness as well as resource gaps;

(b) Allocating adequate national financial resources for the implementation of national comprehensive CRVS strategies;

(c) Introducing measures to ensure availability of registration infrastructure, staffing, and equipment and supplies;

(d) Investigating the appropriateness of public-private partnerships to address infrastructure gaps;

(e) Training registration staff in correct registration and certification procedures and practices, possibly through online qualification systems along with periodic retraining;

(f) Providing staff in the national statistical system with training on using administrative data to produce statistics;

(g) Introducing courses in medical schools and continuing training for physicians in certification of causes of death and for statistical clerks in ICD coding procedures.

F. Operational procedures, practices and innovations

(a) Reviewing and adapting registration forms and procedures to align with international standards for legal and statistical purposes;

(b) Implementing measures to ensure the quality and integrity of legal documentation emanating from the civil registration system;

(c) Implementing actions to safeguard confidentiality and security of registration information and records;

(d) Introducing operational procedures to ensure that unregistered children are not deprived of access to rights and services;

- (e) Introducing innovations to increase access to registration, such as mobile registration and use of information technology for registration and maintaining civil registration records;
- (f) Conducting thorough technical analysis and risk assessment to establish how digital technologies can best be used to support CRVS processes in a scalable and sustainable way, and ensuring that mitigation strategies are in place when there are possible threats to the rights of individuals, such as privacy;
- (g) Introducing procedures to build and maintain skills of statistical clerks and related personnel for ICD-compliant coding of causes of death and use of automated coding techniques;
- (h) Enhancing the capacity of the civil registration system to produce and deliver certificates to the public in a timely and efficient manner;
- (i) Harnessing the capacity of hospitals, health centres, religious institutions and schools to contribute to civil registration since they can play significant roles in registering vital events;
- (j) Enhancing national capacities to ensure the safe and secure long-term management and archiving of legal records;
- (k) Implementing measures to register the vital events of residents who are temporarily abroad and in a position to access consular facilities;
- (l) Implementing special measures to register currently unregistered populations, for example through facilitating late birth registration.

G. Production, dissemination and use of vital statistics

- (a) Providing ongoing training for statisticians in the production, dissemination and analysis of vital statistics;
- (b) Introducing quality assurance frameworks for the production of vital statistics derived from civil registration;
- (c) Promoting the use of vital statistics to support decisions in areas of social, economic and health policy, and monitoring progress towards national and internationally agreed development goals;
- (d) Integrating CRVS improvement into the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, if one exists;
- (e) Introducing operational procedures including a data release calendar;
- (f) Using information technology for the speedy compilation, analysis and publication of vital statistics derived from civil registration;
- (g) Taking measures to make vital statistics readily accessible to users, including through issuing summaries and policy briefs, and publishing vital statistics on the Web.

