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Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

Summary

The present addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields contains resolutions and decisions adopted at the regular sessions of the regional commissions in the first half of 2008: the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held its sixty-fourth session in Bangkok, from 24 to 30 April 2008; the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union convened the first session of the Joint Annual Meetings of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy in Addis Ababa, from 31 March to 2 April 2008; the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia held its twenty-fifth session in Sana'a, from 26 to 29 May 2008. The thirty-second session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is to be held in Santo Domingo from 9 to 13 June 2008, and any resolutions and decisions emanating from that session that require action by the Council or are to be brought to its attention will be included in a subsequent addendum (E/2008/15/Add.2).

* E/2008/100.



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I. Matters calling for action by the Council

A. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

1. At its sixty-fourth session, held in Bangkok from 24 to 30 April 2008, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) approved the following draft resolution for adoption by the Council.

Restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting the adoption by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its sixty-fourth session, held in Bangkok from 24 to 30 April 2008, of the resolution on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission,

1. *Endorses* the resolution on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, as set out in annex I to the present resolution;

2. *Also endorses* the annexes to the resolution on the conference structure of the Commission; on issues to be addressed by the committees subsidiary to the Commission; and on the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, as set out in annexes II, III and IV to the present resolution.

Annex I

Resolution 64/1

Restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling its resolutions 143 (XXX) of 5 April 1974, 210 (XXXVI) of 29 March 1980, 262 (XLIII) of 30 April 1987, 47/3 of 10 April 1991, 48/2 of 23 April 1992, 51/3 of 1 May 1995, 52/1 of 24 April 1996 and 53/1 of 30 April 1997 on the conference structure of the Commission,

Recalling also its resolution 58/1 of 22 May 2002 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission, and in particular paragraph 7 thereof on the requirement for a review to be conducted at its sixty-third session,

Recalling further its resolution 61/1 of 18 May 2005 on the midterm review concerning the functioning of the conference structure of the Commission,

Recalling its resolution 63/3 of 23 May 2007 on the review of the conference structure of the Commission, and in particular paragraph 1, in which the Commission decided to defer the review of the conference structure of the Commission, including its thematic and sectoral priorities and subsidiary structure, to its sixty-fourth session,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 61/266 of 16 May 2007 on multilingualism, in particular paragraphs 4, 7, 9 and 11 thereof, as applicable to the Commission,

Noting the Commission's unique role as the most representative body for the Asian and Pacific region and its comprehensive mandate as the main economic and social development centre of the United Nations system for the Asian and Pacific region,

Noting also the importance of further cooperation between the Commission and subregional organizations, and the need to achieve synergies and build effective partnerships,

Taking note of the report on the external evaluation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: key findings and proposals for action¹ as well as the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the inspection of results-based management practices at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,²

Also taking note of the evaluations and recommendations of members and associate members concerning the outcomes of sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary structures held under the conference structure,

Having considered the report on the implementation of Commission resolutions 58/1, 61/1 and 63/3,³

Commending the initiatives of the Executive Secretary in facilitating an effective process of consultation among members and associate members on a comprehensive and thorough review of the conference structure of the Commission,

Underlining the fact that an effective conference structure requires a strengthened evaluation system, added transparency and enhanced communication with the member States,

1. *Decides* to revise its conference structure, with immediate effect, to conform to the pattern outlined in annex I to the present resolution;

2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to take into account the revision of the intergovernmental structure subsidiary to the Commission in the future programme of work and strategic framework of the organization;

3. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary, bearing in mind the goal of maximizing the impact of the United Nations in the field of economic and social development in the Asian and Pacific region, to reorganize the secretariat so as to enhance its capability to service the subsidiary structure of the Commission;

4. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to provide members and associate members with a preliminary assessment of the organizational and staffing implications of the revision of the intergovernmental structure subsidiary to the Commission within the next six months;

5. *Commends* the secretariat on the implementation of the resolutions and rules establishing language arrangements for the official and working languages of the Commission and urges the Executive Secretary to continue efforts to monitor closely the strict implementation, as applicable to the Commission, of General Assembly resolution 61/266;

¹ E/ESCAP/63/19.

² E/ESCAP/64/30.

³ E/ESCAP/64/19.

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

7. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its sixty-seventh session on the implementation of the present resolution, focusing in particular on whether the conference structure has served the purpose of improving efficiency and attracting higher and wider representation from members and associate members, which would serve as the basis for a midterm review of the functioning of the conference structure to be conducted during the sixty-seventh session;

8. *Decides* to conduct, at its sixty-ninth session, a review of its conference structure, including its subsidiary structure, taking into account the outcome of the midterm review referred to in paragraph 7 above, and requests the Executive Secretary to submit to the Commission at its sixty-ninth session a report analysing the functioning of the conference structure in order to facilitate the review.

Annex II

Conference structure of the Commission

I. The Commission

1. The Commission shall meet annually, with each session comprising a senior officials segment followed by a ministerial segment, for up to a maximum of seven working days to discuss and decide on important issues pertaining to inclusive and sustainable economic and social 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 sessions of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries and the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries shall be held for a maximum of one day each in alternate years, during the senior officials segment and shall have a status commensurate with the Committees of the Whole.

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

4. 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 three.

5. Without prejudice to rule 31 of the rules of procedure of the Commission, 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.

II. Subsidiary structure

6. The subsidiary structure of the Commission shall consist of the following eight committees:

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

7. The eight committees shall meet biennially, with four committees meeting each year, for a maximum duration of five days for each session.

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

- (a) Review and analyse regional trends;
- (b) Identify priorities and emerging issues and consult on regional approaches, taking into consideration subregional aspects;
- (c) Promote regional dialogue, including its 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 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 and United Nations and other international institutions at the regional and subregional levels.

9. 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.

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

- (a) Implementation of the relevant internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

- (b) Poverty reduction and sustainable development;
 - (c) Gender equality;
 - (d) Priority needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.
11. The specific issues to be addressed by each of the eight 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

12. Subject to the approval of the Commission, ad hoc ministerial conferences and other intergovernmental meetings may be organized on specific and cross-sectoral issues.
13. 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.
14. 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

15. 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. The Advisory Committee shall advise the Executive Secretary on the provisional agenda for the sessions of the Commission and committees subsidiary to the Commission, bearing in mind the need to ensure a results-oriented and focused agenda that is aligned with the development priorities of member States, in accordance with paragraph 5 of the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee.
16. The Advisory Committee may, if necessary, establish its own working groups for the consideration of specific issues.
17. The number of formal meetings of the Advisory Committee shall not exceed twelve per calendar year. Any additional meetings, formal or informal, will require the concurrence of the Advisory Committee and the Executive Secretary, and will not require documentation by the secretariat, unless otherwise requested on an exceptional basis by the Advisory Committee.
18. 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.

V. Existing regional institutions under the auspices of the Commission

19. 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 Secondary Crops Development in Asia and the Pacific;
- (c) Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific;
- (d) United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery;
- (e) Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development.

VI. General provisions

A. Rules of procedure

20. 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

21. 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 III

Issues to be addressed by the committees subsidiary to the Commission

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

- Experiences and practices in formulating and implementing macroeconomic policies to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable and inclusive development
- Regional economic development policies and options, including in the area of financing for development
- Strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, with a special focus on poverty reduction

- Pro-poor economic growth for increasing the income and employment of the poor
 - Progress towards graduation of the least developed countries through the mobilization of regional efforts to address poverty reduction and other identified concerns of countries with special needs⁴
 - Policy options and programmes for reducing rural poverty, including those with a gender dimension, through the sustainable development of secondary crops
2. Committee on Trade and Investment:
- Regional cooperative mechanisms and agreements in trade, investment and finance, including the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement
 - Policy options on trade and investment, enterprise development and finance
 - Policy options and strategies for sustainable economic growth and rural poverty reduction through agro-technology transfer and agro-based enterprise development
 - Technology transfer to address regional development challenges
3. Committee on Transport:
- Transport policy options and programmes, including those targeting the Millennium Development Goals
 - The Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway and other initiatives promoted by the Commission for planning international intermodal transport linkages
 - Measures to improve road safety and the efficiency of transport operations and logistics
 - Support for the accession and implementation of international transport agreements
4. Committee on Environment and Development:
- Integration of environmental sustainability in development policy
 - Policies and strategies for the use of sustainable planning and the use of water resources
 - Regional cooperation for enhanced energy security and the sustainable use of energy resources
5. Committee on Information and Communications Technology:
- Integration of information and communications technology (ICT)-related issues in development policies, plans and programmes
 - Transfer and application of ICT at the regional and subregional levels
 - Development of human and institutional capacity in the use of ICT
 - ICT applications for disaster risk reduction

⁴ The report of this Committee would be submitted to the Special Bodies on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries and on Pacific Island Developing Countries.

6. Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction:
 - Policy options and strategies on multi-hazard disaster risk reduction and mitigation
 - Regional cooperation mechanisms for disaster risk management, including space and other technical support systems
 - Multi-hazard assessment, preparedness, early warning and response to disaster risks
7. Committee on Social Development:
 - Implementation of internationally agreed commitments, including those agreed at the United Nations on social development, population, ageing, disability, youth and disadvantaged groups, gender equality and health
 - Policy options, strategies and good practices in social policy and protection
 - Social policies and financing aimed at building inclusive societies
8. Committee on Statistics:
 - Tracking key socio-economic and environmental trends in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region, especially progress towards the Millennium Development Goals
 - Identifying data requirements for economic, social and environmental analysis in accordance with internationally agreed standards and good practices
 - Capacity-building for national statistical offices in the ESCAP region to produce, disseminate and analyse data in accordance with internationally agreed standards and good practices

Annex IV

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) Maintain close cooperation and consultation between the members and the secretariat of the Commission;
- (b) Advise and assist the Executive Secretary in drawing up proposals for the strategic framework and programme of work, consistent with the guidance provided by the Commission;
- (c) Receive on a regular basis information on the administrative and financial functioning of the Commission, and assist and advise the Executive Secretary in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the programme of work of the Commission;

(d) Review the draft calendar of meetings prior to its submission to the Commission at its annual session;

(e) Advise the Executive Secretary on the provisional agenda for sessions of the Commission and committees subsidiary to the Commission, bearing in mind the need to ensure a results-oriented and focused agenda that is aligned with the development priorities of member States, as well as chapter II of its rules of procedure;

(f) Advise the Executive Secretary on the identification of emerging economic and social issues and other relevant issues for incorporation into the provisional agendas of the Commission sessions;

(g) Assist the secretariat in the formulation of the annotated provisional agenda for each session of the Commission before it is finalized;

(h) Carry out any other tasks to be entrusted to it by the Commission.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

2. At its twenty-fifth session, held in Sana'a, from 26 to 29 May 2008, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) approved the following draft resolution for adoption by the Council.

Draft resolution I

Admission of the Sudan as a member of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Council,

Taking into consideration paragraph 2 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1818 (LV) dated 9 August 1973 concerning the terms of reference of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which provides that members of the Commission* shall consist of the States Members of the United Nations situated in Western Asia which at present call on the services of the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut, and that future applications for membership by Member States shall be decided on by the Council upon the recommendation of the Commission,

Recalling that the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia do not cover the geographical location of countries which may become members thereof nor proscribe a member of one regional commission from being at the same time a member of another regional commission,

* The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia comprises the following 13 members: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Recalling also that most of the other regional commissions have as members countries that are not located in the region that they serve,

1. *Welcomes with satisfaction* the request by the Government of the Sudan that it be admitted to membership in the Commission;

2. *Approves* the admission of the Sudan as a member of the Commission.

II. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

A. Economic Commission for Africa

3. At the first session of the Joint Annual Meetings of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy in Addis Ababa, the Commission approved a ministerial statement, a declaration for the fiftieth anniversary of ECA, and several resolutions, which are hereunder brought to the attention of the Council.

Summary of the ministerial statement, 3 April 2008, Addis Ababa

4. The African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development congratulated [the Federal Democratic Republic of] Ethiopia on its 2000 Millennium celebration as part of African heritage, consistent with General Assembly resolution 61/270 and the Declaration of the January 2007 African Union Heads of State and Government, and also congratulated the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on its fiftieth anniversary and commended its dedication and many contributions to the social and economic development of Africa.

5. The Ministers recalled the outcomes of the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit, the 2002 United Nations Conference on Financing for Development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the 2005 World Summit, the 2005 United Nations High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development, and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance II (CAMEF II), and their statement at the conclusion of the fortieth session of the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development as important guideposts; and reaffirmed their commitment to the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme as the shared framework for development and global partnership.

6. Recalling the theme of the Joint Annual Meeting, "Meeting Africa's new development challenges in the 21st Century", the Ministers noted with subdued satisfaction that Africa's recent growth performance had been encouraging, even though its impact on poverty reduction and employment creation had been limited. There was therefore a need to implement strategies to achieve sustained, shared and broad-based growth in order to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and effectively to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Growth and employment

7. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to making employment creation an explicit and central objective of economic and social policies at the national, regional and continental levels, for sustainable growth and poverty alleviation. They recognized that scientific knowledge is a critical factor for growth, employment and poverty reduction and for the competitiveness of economies in the twenty-first century and said they would work closely with other sector Ministers to mobilize adequate resources to improve the quality and relevance of education, and to disseminate knowledge, science and technology, in order to develop and create new skills and capacities while building on existing capacities. They also recognized the important role the private sector could play in that regard.

8. The Ministers recognized the importance of improved natural resources management for growth and development in Africa, and said they would encourage the adoption of good governance principles in the extractive sector, and support the adoption and implementation of the recommendations of the review of the African natural resources sector undertaken at the last Big Table meeting, co-organized by ECA and the African Development Bank in February 2007, including the mainstreaming of natural resources governance into the African Peer Review Mechanism process.

9. The Ministers reiterated their recognition of the importance of statistics for growth and employment creation policies; applauded the efforts of the African Union Commission on the drafting of an African Charter on Statistics, and commended the efforts of the majority of their countries in participating in the 2010 Round Population Censuses. They committed themselves to collaborating with ECA, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank in all facets, including in the provision on a timely and regular basis, of national data to harmonize and promote statistics and statistics capacity-building in Africa.

10. Aware of the constraints of weak infrastructure in growth and employment, the Ministers recalled the decisions of the 2007 second African Ministerial Conference on Financing for Development held in Accra on the theme of energy and infrastructure and committed themselves to scaling-up investments in infrastructure, including the multiple modes of transport, to facilitate rapid growth and employment expansion.

11. Recognizing the deep interdependence of their countries with the rest of the world and aware that events in other parts of the world could present opportunities as well as challenges for growth and employment in the region, the Ministers requested ECA and the African Union Commission to undertake a study on the implications for Africa of a possible slowdown in the economy of the United States of America and the global sub-prime mortgage crisis and to present the outcome of the study at the next Conference.

12. Welcoming the new opportunities for accelerating economic growth and employment creation resulting from the rapid expansion of South-South cooperation, and welcoming the lessons on policy and fiscal space being provided by the successes of a number of countries in the South, the Ministers committed themselves to taking full advantage of opportunities provided by South-South cooperation.

Rising oil and food prices

13. The Ministers underscored the need for countries to pursue alternative sources of energy, in the light of the finite nature of gas and oil resources, and recalled the decision by Heads of State and Government to explore the creation of an African Oil Fund to provide assistance to low-income and African oil-importing countries.

14. The recent rapid increase in international food prices, which is possibly cyclical, could represent a structural shift with long-term implications, and poses a significant threat to Africa's growth, peace and security. At the same time, the Ministers noted that the rise in food prices presented opportunities for increased food production in some of their countries. They said they would explore appropriate policies and measures to mitigate the effects of rising food prices on living standards, especially for vulnerable groups, while harnessing opportunities for increased food production presented by that phenomenon.

15. In response to the increase in oil prices, the Ministers urged the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank to finalize as soon as possible, the feasibility study on the African Oil Fund and called upon continental institutions, such as the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank, to provide countries with platforms and networks for the sharing of experiences on natural resources management.

16. To address the escalating food prices, the Ministers committed themselves to taking vigorous measures to implement all the pillars of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme, with a view to achieving the structural transformation of the agricultural sector, as well as promoting intra-African trade and regional integration.

Governance and the capable State

17. The Ministers commended the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Chairperson of the African Union, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, for his very inspiring address and presentation on the imperative of good governance and the capable State as a prerequisite of an effective response to the challenges confronting the continent as it strove to achieve sustainable social and economic development.

18. Acknowledging the progress made on the continent in recent years on good governance, the Ministers noted with appreciation the commitment of African leaders to good governance, as clearly demonstrated by the increasing number of countries acceding to the African Peer Review Mechanism, and said they would explore ways to allocate sufficient resources to support the process, including providing for the implementation of the resulting national programme of action and its mainstreaming into budgetary processes and medium-term frameworks.

19. Recognizing the importance of decentralization for promoting good governance and economic growth, as well as the challenges to capacity-building posed by the decentralization of administrative structures, the Ministers indicated that they would undertake measures, including enhancing public sector financial management in decentralized structures, to minimize the risks to good governance and growth that could result from decentralization.

Legal empowerment of the poor

20. The Ministers commended the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa, for his presentation on the legal empowerment of the poor and took note of the recommendations of the Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor, recognizing that empowering the poor was central to economic development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and looked forward to the final report of the Commission to be submitted to the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government.

Millennium Development Goals

21. In commending the progress made thus far by some African countries towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the Ministers acknowledged that a number of countries had put in place and were implementing Millennium Development Goal-consistent national development plans or poverty-reduction strategies, but noted with concern that the majority of countries were still not on track in meeting all the Millennium Development Goals by the target date. The Ministers committed themselves to intensifying the implementation of national development plans or poverty-reduction strategies, optimize the use of available resources and mobilize additional resources to scale-up public sector investments, in order to reach the Goals by the target date.

22. The Ministers commended the United Nations Secretary-General for setting up the Africa Millennium Development Goals Steering Group and Working Group, and applauded the decision of the Heads of State and Government at the January 2008 African Union Assembly to endorse that initiative and to commit themselves to supporting it. The Ministers further commended the decisions of the United Nations Secretary-General to convene a High-Level Event on the Millennium Development Goals alongside the Africa's Development High-Level Meeting to be held in September 2008 to marshal additional support for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa and for promoting Africa's overall development, and committed themselves to being active stakeholders in those two high-level events.

23. The Ministers hailed and endorsed the new initiative of the United Nations to promote peer learning and experience sharing among Member States through the United Nations Economic and Social Council's annual ministerial review; they also welcomed and endorsed the efforts of the United Nations to advance the role of international cooperation for development through the newly established Economic and Social Council Development Cooperation Forum. The Ministers committed themselves to taking full advantage of the opportunities provided by those two initiatives and called upon ECA to support the convening of regional annual ministerial reviews and the active participation of Member States in both the regional and the Economic and Social Council global annual ministerial reviews.

Long-term financing of health

24. While commending the expansion of access to treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS from 100,000 in 2003 to 1.3 million in 2006, the Ministers noted with concern the necessity for long-term sustainable financing of and investment in health created by that epidemic and other diseases, including tuberculosis and malaria. The Ministers said they would undertake, in concert with sector colleagues, to explore mechanisms to expand treatment access for people with HIV and AIDS

and intensify efforts to stem the further spread of that epidemic and of other related infectious diseases and malaria.

Financing for development

25. Taking note of the forthcoming global review of the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development⁵ to be held in Doha in November 2008, the Ministers appreciated the importance of the review for efforts to mobilize additional resources to scale-up public and private sector investments and accelerate progress towards growth and development objectives. They underscored the need for the region to prepare for and participate actively in the forthcoming review and pledged to do so.

Mobilizing domestic financial resources

26. Recognizing the critical role of domestic resource mobilization for sustainable growth and development, the Ministers committed themselves to scaling-up efforts to mobilize domestic savings, strengthen financial systems, stem capital flight, promote the Pan-African stock exchange and reduce the transaction costs of remittances; and pledged to explore appropriate measures to ensure the channelling of domestic resources into productive investments.

Promoting international trade

27. In pointing out that trade capacity-building was critical to enhancing Africa's ability to take advantage of potential opportunities created in the multilateral trading system, the Ministers said they had reviewed progress in the implementation of the Aid-for-Trade initiative and were concerned by the slow rate of progress; they said they would undertake measures to ensure that their countries benefited fully from the initiative.

Increasing international financial and technical cooperation

28. The Ministers commended the increase in flows of official development assistance to the continent from traditional as well as new/emerging development partners, but noted that the recent increase in official development assistance was due to debt relief and humanitarian assistance and hence did not reflect additional resources for development financing. The Ministers called upon development partners to fulfil their commitments to improving aid effectiveness as expressed in the 2005 Paris Declaration, and also called upon the African Union Commission and ECA to continue to assist countries in preparing for the global review of the Monterrey Consensus.

External debt

29. While acknowledging the positive impact of debt relief on Africa's debt burden, the Ministers remained concerned that debt levels are still too high and continue to pose a challenge to the continent's ability to finance its development agenda. They noted the difficulties faced by non-Highly-Indebted Poor Countries Initiative countries in meeting their debt obligations, and mobilizing resources to

⁵ *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.

finance their development programmes and meeting the Millennium Development Goals, and called for more flexibility in the eligibility criteria for debt relief. Worried by the wide interval between Highly-Indebted Poor Countries Initiative decision and completion points in recent times, the Ministers called upon creditors to review downwards the conditions for accessing debt relief in order to shorten the time-to-completion point.

30. For many African countries, debt remains a dominant mechanism for financing public sector investments, promoting diversification of production structures and ensuring broad-based growth. But in order to maximize the contribution of debt, the Ministers said they would improve debt and public-sector financial management capacities and systems, and examine ways to improve prudence in the management of the full set of resources, reduce the importance of debt in their fiscal profiles by improving and strengthening their Inland Revenue systems, and broaden and deepen the tax base of their economies. The Ministers requested ECA, the African Union Commission and other relevant international organizations to facilitate peer learning and sharing of experiences on debt management.

Systemic issues

31. The Ministers recognized the importance of enhancing coherence, governance and consistency in international monetary, financial and trading systems, and called upon the international community to increase Africa's voice in the governance of international institutions that make decisions that affect Africa's economies.

Climate change

32. Climate change presents both opportunities and challenges to sustainable development on the African continent. Particularly concerned with the phenomena of desertification and deforestation, the Ministers reaffirmed commitment to effectively integrate and implement climate-change adaptation and mitigation strategies into national and regional development frameworks, and stressed the need to support efforts to build capacities in their countries in that area, including the capacity to access such funding mechanisms as the Clean Development Mechanism and Adaptation Fund and to take advantage of new trading opportunities, including carbon trading.

33. The Ministers called upon the African Union Commission, in collaboration with ECA and the African Development Bank, to support a consultative process of Africa's preparation for effective participation in the implementation of the Bali Road Map of multilateral negotiations for a post-2012 global climate agreement.

34. The Ministers welcomed and endorsed the ECA initiative to establish the African Climate Policy Centre to serve as the policy arm of the Clim-Dev Africa programme and urged the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank to take necessary action for the effective implementation of the programme.

35. In line with the decision of Heads of State and Government at their summit meeting in reference to drought, the Ministers called on ECA to strengthen its support to and partnership with the African Centre of Meteorological Applications to Development.

Imperative of regional integration

36. Reaffirming the importance of regional integration for advancing Africa's development agenda and undertaking measures to accelerate progress through the African Union's NEPAD programme and other initiatives, including the rationalization of the regional economic communities, the Ministers will also scale-up efforts to promote regional infrastructure development and intra-African trade. They will intensify efforts to speed up the necessary additional regional institutions in order to mobilize the necessary resources for financing of regional integration projects and programmes, and will further undertake to promote macroeconomic convergence in the regional economic communities.

Summary of the Declaration for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Economic Commission for Africa

37. The Ministers, on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Economic Commission for Africa, declared that since its establishment half a century ago, the Commission had had a history of significant achievements in the discharge of its mandate of promoting the economic and social development of its member States, fostering regional integration, and promoting international cooperation for Africa's development.

38. Acknowledging that ECA had continually responded effectively to the demands of its member States in a changing regional and global environment, and reaffirming the continued substantive relevance of the ECA mandate, as well as their commitment to support and strengthen its effective implementation, the Ministers seized the opportunity of the Golden Jubilee commemoration to express gratitude to all the men and women who had worked, and continued to work, to implement the mandate of the Commission.

39. The Ministers acknowledged that for 50 years, ECA had closely partnered with the countries of the region as they had struggled to overcome structural handicaps, transform their economies and promote African ownership of the regional development agenda, and that the efforts of ECA had led to the establishment of significant new regional integration initiatives, frameworks and institutions, and new initiatives to address the continent's social and economic challenges. The Commission had played a vital role in formulating and advocating African common positions in global policymaking, as well as the articulation of new approaches for partnerships with the international community.

40. Guided by the glaring reality that much more progress was needed to uplift the living standards of the people of Africa and for Africa to "claim the 21st Century", the Ministers fully endorsed the ECA Golden Jubilee perspective that it was now necessary to collectively pause and reflect on whether the development trajectory was on the right path, as they considered Africa's future role in the global economy.

41. The Ministers reiterated that cooperation and integration were key to accelerating Africa's development and improving the well-being of present and future generations and would lay a cornerstone for political stability and durable peace in all parts of the region; acknowledged the important role ECA must continue to play in helping to address Africa's socio-economic challenges and advance the integration agenda; renewed support to the repositioned Commission as an essential forum to effectively meet the changing needs of its member States; emphasized the

need to do more to harness regional resources to meet Africa's development priorities; and pledged to fully support ECA as it worked to scale-up activities across the board to achieve results in the two pillars of its new strategic orientation, namely, promoting regional integration in support of the African Union vision and priorities; and meeting Africa's special needs and emerging global challenges.

Financing for development

42. The Ministers called upon African countries to accelerate efforts to boost domestic resource mobilization, create appropriate domestic conditions for investment, take measures to stem and reverse capital flight, and lay a more solid foundation for high and sustained economic growth; and requested Africa's development partners to make the Aid-for-Trade initiative operational and to ensure that it is not used as a basis to obtain concessions from African countries in the ongoing Doha Round of trade negotiations. The Ministers encouraged donors to adopt more flexible eligibility criteria in financing for development in the context of least developed countries and for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiatives so as to enable non-Highly Indebted Poor Countries among the African countries to address their debt problems effectively; and urged donors to scale-up efforts to fulfil the commitments and pledges made to African countries on increasing the quantity and quality of aid, as reflected in the Monterrey Consensus, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the G-8 Africa Action Plan, and the declaration of the 2005 G-8 Gleneagles Summit.

43. The Ministers called for increased representation and powers for African countries in decision-making structures and processes of international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Bank for International Settlements; commended the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission for the research and technical support provided to African countries in the area of financing for development; and appealed to member States and their representatives at United Nations Headquarters to actively participate in preparatory meetings and workshops on implementation and reviews of the Monterrey Consensus.

Climate change and development in Africa

44. The Conference of Ministers welcomed and endorsed the establishment of the African Climate Policy Centre which had the objective of providing policy guidance to member countries and urged ECA to take the necessary action for its immediate operationalization; requested ECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank to take the necessary measures for the effective implementation of Clim-Dev Africa through relevant national, subregional and regional institutions; and further requested ECA and its proposed African Climate Policy Centre to provide the necessary support to and strengthen its partnership with the African Centre of Meteorological Applications to Development.

Science with Africa: strengthening research and development, and innovation for Africa's socio-economic development

45. The Conference of Ministers commended the leadership of ECA and the African Union Commission for undertaking the timely and major event, namely the Science with Africa Conference and its far-reaching impact for strengthening the

African scientific community; urged African Governments to take the necessary steps in harnessing innovation, research and development activities to address development challenges, by increasing national budgetary allocations for research and development activities within the context of enhancing economic productivity and fostering innovation in national economies; encouraged African economic operators and higher education and research institutions to jointly support innovation, research and development activities within the context of enhancing economic development and productivity; invited the African Union Commission and ECA, in collaboration with the United Nations science and technology cluster, the African Development Bank and other international partners, to establish an African cluster for science and technology to foster the coordinated implementation of the Science with Africa Conference outcomes and recommendations as a mechanism to support the implementation of the African Union and its NEPAD Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action as well as the science and technology activities outlined in the ECA Business Plan and the ECA work programme and priorities for the biennium 2008-2009 and beyond.

46. The Ministers also called upon Africa's development partners to provide the necessary support to ensure the implementation of recommendations; and requested the Executive Secretary of ECA and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to take the necessary measures to implement the recommendations of the Conference, including facilitating partnership arrangements between Governments, the economic operators and civil society, assisted by research institutions and to report thereon at the next meeting of the Joint Conference.

Proposed Strategic Framework/Biennial Programme Plan for the period 2010-2011

47. The Conference of Ministers endorsed the proposed strategic framework/biennial programme plan of ECA for the biennium 2010-2011, taking into account the discussion and related observations made at the present meeting.

Special Meeting of the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning

48. The Conference of Ministers endorsed the findings and recommendations of the external review, in particular those on the urgent need to reposition the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP); reaffirmed that the mandate and mission of the Institute remain relevant and stressed that it should strengthen its cooperation with other United Nations institutes and national, regional and international training institutions; reaffirmed the importance of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the training and research agenda in Africa, on the basis of consistent and effective results-based management, and on a division of labour among the major regional organizations and other training and research institutions on the continent; and mandated the Executive Secretary of ECA, in his capacity as Chairman of the Governing Council, to take all the necessary measures to reposition IDEP, assuming direct responsibility for the management of the Institute, the revitalization of its deliberative organs, particularly the Governing Council and the Scientific Board, the updating of its statutes and the preparation of a programme budget over a transitional period of 12 months.

49. The Ministers urged the member States to commit themselves more clearly in the process of repositioning IDEP, particularly by providing substantial support and participating in the activities of the Institute and contributing financially to its budget; and requested the Executive Secretary of ECA, in consultation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Governing Council, to make proposals for alleviating the financial difficulties of the Institute, and to report thereon to the Conference at its next session.

African Charter on Statistics

50. The Conference of Ministers took note of the draft Charter and accepted in principle its objectives, aims and professional principles; requested the African Union Commission, in collaboration with members of the African statistical system, to further consult legal experts on the draft and to submit the revised draft Charter to the Executive Council of the African Union as requested by the Executive Council in its decision EXCL/DEC 330 (X) and to take all the measures necessary, working in cooperation with ECA, the African Development Bank and all members of the African statistical system, to finalize the studies on the mechanisms for implementing the charter and creating the fund for statistical development in Africa.

Millennium Development Goals

51. The Conference of Ministers took note of the decision of the United Nations to promote peer learning on and scale-up the contribution of international cooperation to efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals through the establishment of the Economic and Social Council annual ministerial review and the development cooperation forum and urged member States to actively participate in these forums; further took note of the resolution of the Accra Summit directing the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank to report on an annual basis to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, on the region's progress towards the targets of the Millennium Development Goals; and requested ECA and the African Union Commission as much as possible to use updated national data in the Millennium Development Goal report and, in this connection, called upon Member States to make their national data available on a timely basis to the ECA African Centre for Statistics, the African Union Commission Statistics Unit, and the Statistics Department of the African Development Bank.

52. The Ministers called upon Africa's development partners to fulfil their commitments to scale-up official development assistance to Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; called upon African countries to meet their own commitments to increase budget allocation to Millennium Development Goal-sensitive sectors, in particular meeting the 10 per cent allocation to agriculture as agreed under the African Union Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme and the 15 per cent budget allocation to health as agreed in the Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and other related infectious diseases; took note of the presentation on the legal empowerment of the poor and looked forward to its finalization and submission to the African Union Assembly; took note with satisfaction of the efforts of ECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, to promote peer learning and experience sharing on the Millennium Development Goals through the African Learning Group on Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals; and commended ECA for

developing the Millennium Development Goal mapper and urged member States to explore its use in Millennium Development Goal reporting and planning.

Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa

53. The Conference of Ministers urged the African Union Commission, in collaboration with ECA and the regional economic communities to continue advancing the regional integration agenda forward; called upon African member States to put more efforts in critical areas, such as infrastructure development and also requests existing subregional development banks to play a major role in funding infrastructure projects; further called upon the African Union Commission for speedy establishment of the pan-African financial institutions, particularly the African Investment Bank in order to mobilize the necessary resources for financing of regional integration projects and programme; commended the proposal of the secretariat to establish an observatory for regional integration in Africa as a platform for sharing knowledge and best practices on regional integration; further commended the joint publication by ECA and the African Union of the report on *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*; and called upon member States and regional economic communities to demonstrate ownership by providing data and related information for its publication.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

54. At its sixty-fourth session, held in Bangkok from 24 to 30 April 2008, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) adopted nine resolutions and two decisions, which are hereunder brought to the attention of the Council.

Regional cooperation in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters in Asia and the Pacific

55. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) urged the countries of the region and international and regional organizations to implement the Delhi Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia, adopted at the second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in New Delhi on 7 and 8 November 2007; and encouraged countries in the Asian and Pacific region to host the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction once every two years on a rotational basis. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to strengthen the role and capacity of ESCAP in the area of disaster risk reduction, and also to take effective measures to facilitate, in cooperation with relevant United Nations entities, the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters⁶ in the region and the recommendations of the first and second Asian ministerial conferences on disaster risk reduction, within the framework of the programme of work of ESCAP; to work closely with the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in particular the regional office for Asia and the Pacific, in supporting the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the region, including the organization of the biennial Asian Ministerial

⁶ A/CONF.2006/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction; and to report to the Commission at its sixty-fifth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Promoting renewables for energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

56. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific called upon all members and associate members, as appropriate, to cooperate proactively in the development of various renewable energy technologies through the sharing of policy and technological experiences; and to encourage and participate actively in subregional, regional and intraregional initiatives in the areas of capacity-building, renewable energy demonstration projects and public-private partnerships, so as to promote renewable energy technologies by improving their reliability through technical advances and their affordability by making them commercially viable. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to coordinate with the multilateral funding agencies with a view to enhancing financial and technology flows for the development and deployment of new and renewable energy technologies in developing countries; to facilitate synergies with regional groupings, such as the Economic Cooperation Organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to promote the development of renewable energy technologies proactively by establishing links with the Commission; to establish an institutional cooperation mechanism with the active engagement of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology and expert research institutions; and to increase participation in public-private partnerships and initiatives that are designed to expand the use of renewable technologies through innovative policy options and practical measures, such as the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership, the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century, the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, the International Biofuels Forum and the Global Bioenergy Partnership; and to submit to the Commission at its sixty-seventh session a report on the progress made in implementing the resolution.

Implementation of the Seoul Declaration on Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific

57. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific urged members and associate members, as appropriate, to consider placing high priority in national development agendas on infrastructure development, promoting the role of public-private partnerships in infrastructure development at the regional, subregional, national and subnational levels; to review and assess their public-private partnership, sectoral and other relevant policy frameworks and action plans for infrastructure development; and to actively engage in regional cooperation initiatives. The Commission requested United Nations bodies and the specialized agencies, international financial institutions and other organizations, bilateral donors and the relevant offices of the United Nations Secretariat to provide further technical assistance, to support national and regional capacity-building and to facilitate the sharing of experiences related to public-private partnerships in infrastructure development; and requested the Executive Secretary, in close

collaboration with donor countries and development partners, to assist members and associate members in meeting infrastructure development challenges through regional and interregional cooperation in the development of public-private partnerships, the organization of meetings and regional networking arrangements aimed at promoting the exchange of experiences and information, provision of capacity-building programmes, and technical support, and to report to the Commission at its sixty-ninth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Establishment of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport

58. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific decided to establish the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport as a regional mechanism within the framework of the conference structure of the Commission; and requested the Executive Secretary to convene the first session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport in 2009 and subsequently on a regular basis, with the first session deciding its frequency; to coordinate the convening of the forum with the Committee on Transport; to ensure that a regional policy-oriented agenda is placed before the forum, addressing transport infrastructure, transit policy, facilitation, logistics, interregional and international transport linkages, financing and safety issues, as well as their economic, environmental and social sustainability; to encourage members and associate members to host sessions of the forum; and to report to the Commission at its sixty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific region

59. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific welcomed the efforts of countries in the region, especially the developing countries, that have made progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, while remaining concerned about the fact that a large number of countries in the region continue to face major challenges, and encouraged countries in the region to make further efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, expressing its appreciation for the existing regional partnership on the Millennium Development Goals. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary, within her mandate and in close coordination with member States and United Nations entities and multilateral financial institutions, to continue, among other things, to reinforce regional partnerships on the Millennium Development Goals; to assess progress made towards achieving all Goals and targets in the ESCAP region and to transmit a progress assessment to the Economic and Social Council, in particular to its annual ministerial review, for its consideration; to assist countries in the region in achieving the Goals, in particular the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Pacific island developing countries; and to submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Financing for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific region

60. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific recognized that several modalities can be followed to ensure resource flows to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as outlined in the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development⁵ to the off-track countries;

and urged the developed countries that had not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national product to least developed countries, and encouraged developing countries to build on the progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help achieve development goals and targets. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to explore the feasibility of establishing a regional Millennium Development Goal resource facility; to contribute to the possible review of the Economic and Social Council's existing mechanisms and take action, where appropriate, to ensure the effective review and implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields; and to report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Regional implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific

61. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific called upon all members and associate members to develop and implement inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based policies on disability in line with the recommendations contained in the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five; to mainstream the perspective of persons with disabilities in development initiatives, including in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; and to review the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five on a regular basis in preparation for the high-level intergovernmental meeting to be held in 2012. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to assist members and associate members in building their capacity to implement the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five, in order to ensure the incorporation of a rights-based approach to disability into their policies and programmes; to improve the accessibility of the facilities and services of ESCAP for persons with disabilities; to continue strengthening the partnership between ESCAP and the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability; to convene a high-level intergovernmental meeting to review the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five in 2012, the concluding year of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012; and to submit to the Commission at its sixty-sixth session, including to the relevant committee, a report on the progress achieved in implementing the resolution.

Midpoint review of the implementation of the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference

62. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific requested the Executive Secretary to assist members and associate members in building their capacity to integrate population factors into development planning; to conduct analytical studies, compile and disseminate relevant demographic and population-related information and data with a view to identifying key demographic trends and emerging issues in the Asian and Pacific region; to convene an expert group meeting in 2008 to review the implementation of the Plan of Action on Population and

Poverty⁷ adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference; and to submit a progress report on the implementation of the resolution to the Commission at its sixty-fifth session and a final report to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session.

Review of the operational details of the feasibility study for the establishment of an Asian and Pacific Centre for Information, Communication and Space Technology-enabled Disaster Management

63. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific invited the Islamic Republic of Iran to review the operational details of the proposal, to clarify the implications, if any, of such changes on the scope, functions and value-added products and services to be offered, along with timelines for scheduling the introduction of those activities, and to submit them to the Commission at its sixty-fifth session. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to provide the Islamic Republic of Iran with technical assistance, if required, in the review of the operational details of the proposal.

Dates, venue and theme topic for the sixty-fifth session of the Commission

64. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific decided that its sixty-fifth session would be held in Bangkok in April and May 2009, bearing in mind the celebration of two national holidays in Thailand in the first two weeks of April and a number of other national holidays in countries of the region at the end of April and in the first 10 days of May, and that the theme topic for its sixty-fifth session would be “sustainable agriculture and food security”.

Deferment of consideration of the draft resolution on the establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Information, Communication and Space Technology-enabled Disaster Management

65. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific decided to defer consideration of the draft resolution sponsored by the Islamic Republic of Iran, entitled “Establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Information, Communication and Space Technology-enabled Disaster Management”,⁸ to its sixty-fifth session.

C. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

66. At its twenty-fifth session, held in Sana’a, from 26 to 29 May 2008, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted several resolutions, which are hereunder brought to the attention of the Council.

Addressing climate change issues in the Arab region

67. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia requested the secretariat to prepare an assessment of the vulnerability to climate change of economic and social development in the region, with particular emphasis on fresh

⁷ “Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference: Report and Plan of Action on Population and Poverty” (Asian Population Studies Series, No. 159 (ST/ESCAP/2264)) (New York, 2003).

⁸ E/ESCAP/64/L.10.

water resources; encouraged member countries actively to support and participate in the preparation of the aforementioned vulnerability assessment, including by providing facilities and information; requested the secretariat to take the measures necessary to increase awareness of climate change, in respect of adjusting to and alleviating its impact, and to work with member country Governments and initiate dialogue over the relevant recommendations, and to develop an Arab framework action plan on climate change, in partnership with the League of Arab States, the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for West Asia and other relevant regional organizations; and requested the Executive Secretary to make available through the regular budget the resources necessary to implement those activities and to report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session on the findings and recommendations arising from the assessment and any additional action taken in that regard.

Mitigating the impact on development of conflict, occupation and instability in member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

68. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia welcomed the establishment in ESCWA of the development subprogramme on the mitigation of the impact of conflict and occupation and called upon member countries to intensify efforts to enhance institutional capacities to respond to the challenges associated with conflict and occupation and support conflict or occupation-afflicted countries in overcoming socio-economic and political challenges. The Commission requested the ESCWA secretariat to intensify its efforts to raise awareness of the potential impact of conflict and instability on development; to build on successful ESCWA interventions in conflict or occupation-afflicted countries through the development and interchange of best practice and adaptation thereof for the use of other member countries; to contribute to the capacity-building of Government officials, focusing on management skills and strategy planning; to continue its efforts to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to finance the implementation of capacity-building and other activities; and to enhance partnerships with relevant local, regional and international organizations. The Commission invited member countries and donors to support ESCWA in its endeavours to mitigate the impact of conflict and instability and the socio-economic ramifications thereof and requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session on the progress achieved in implementing the resolution.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia member country compliance with international standards for enhancing national statistical systems

69. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia requested member countries to take all the measures necessary in order to produce high-quality official statistics that can be used in international comparisons, by applying international classifications, concepts and standards and activating statistical institutions; to adopt the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and take action to apply them; to complete the design and implementation of national strategies for statistical development, in accordance with the general orientations issued by Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21); to empower the statistical machinery to publish data in a timely fashion by adhering to the conditions of the General Data Dissemination System that was issued by the International Monetary Fund; and to enhance the position of the national statistical

machinery within the national institutional structure and strengthen the structural factors that are connected to the legislative framework and regulatory arrangements in accordance with the Handbook of Statistical Organization that was issued by the United Nations in 2004.

70. The Commission requested the secretariat to hold training workshops on international classifications, concepts and standards; to support member countries in adopting and undertaking to apply the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and in designing and implementing national strategies for statistical development; and to encourage member countries to participate in and adhere to the General Data Dissemination System and the Special Data Dissemination Standard of the International Monetary Fund. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to follow up the above recommendations and submit a report thereon to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Establishment of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia regional technology centre

71. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia requested the secretariat to finalize hosting arrangements; to coordinate with member countries over the establishment of a board of governors; to take the necessary measures to draft administrative regulations for the centre in preparation for approval by the board of governors; and to set up within ESCWA a multidisciplinary team to support and monitor progress in the operationalization of the centre, to be funded by extrabudgetary resources; and requested the Executive Secretary to report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Integrated social policy

72. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia encouraged member countries to initiate national consultative dialogue aimed at adopting an integrated social policy approach and appealed to them to adopt a participatory approach through encouraging partnership between Government institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of social policies; encouraged member countries to adopt and institutionalize integrated social policy and seek harmony and balance between economic priorities and social outcomes; and requested member countries to formulate national youth policies as part of their integrated social policy and national development plans and programmes.

73. The Commission requested the secretariat to build upon the experience of promoting integrated social policy in Bahrain, Egypt, the Sudan and Yemen and to intensify its endeavours in advocating and enhancing the capacity of member countries to formulate and adopt an integrated social policy approach, through developing and promoting this approach among member country decision makers and assisting member countries in implementing the internationally agreed plans of action and recommendations, including the Millennium Development Goals and World Programme of Action for Youth priority areas. The Commission requested the ESCWA Committee on Social Development to monitor progress in implementing the resolution and facilitate information and knowledge-sharing by member

countries; and requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the progress made in implementing the resolution to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Gender statistics for equality and empowerment

74. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia called upon member countries to adopt the set of indicators in the Arab Gender Issues and Indicators Framework as a common set of indicators, and to produce the statistics related to those indicators for use in the monitoring and evaluation of strategic policies and workplans in areas related to gender; called upon member countries also to develop a mechanism for the collection, dissemination and analysis of gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data by rural, urban and age information for the formulation of gender-related and gender-sensitive policies and programmes; and encouraged member countries to formulate and implement training programmes to mainstream gender issues and statistics into their statistical systems, with a view to sensitizing data producers and users to the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment.

75. The Commission called upon the secretariat to provide technical support to member countries in the form of advisory services and workshops, and assist member countries in integrating a gender perspective into national policies for the development of statistics and national statistical system plans of action; requested the secretariat to work with member countries in developing a detailed gender database to act as a gender-mainstreaming observatory in all sectors; and called upon the secretariat to mainstream gender statistics, as appropriate, into its programmes and outputs. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Strengthening statistical capacities for evidence-based policymaking

76. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia approved the recommendation of the Statistical Committee that ESCWA region NSO capacity-building needs of national statistical offices be periodically assessed in order to monitor progress; and urged member countries to produce Millennium Development Goal indicators, in particular those related to poverty, education and health, using surveys and other relevant sources, and to adopt the Common Set of Core Information and Communications Technology Indicators issued by the Global Partnership on Measuring Information and Communications Technology for Development, and make available the data related to those indicators for use in the drafting, evaluation and review of strategic policies and workplans in areas of priority for the development of an information society in the region.

77. The Commission stressed the need to strengthen impartiality of national statistical offices in order to produce objective data and urged member countries to exchange experience and information for best practice; commended the support given by Oman to the Task Force on Population and Housing Censuses and the activities that it has undertaken for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses; and called upon member countries to accelerate implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts. The Commission requested the secretariat to assist member countries in building their capacity to unify concepts and definitions and carry out multi-purpose family surveys and improve their administrative records

at the national level through holding workshops and providing technical services; to prepare and submit to the ESCWA Statistical Committee periodic reports on progress made in the development of statistical activities of national statistical offices, based on ESCWA region of national statistical offices capacity-building needs assessments; to facilitate, through its official web page on the Internet and the provision of technical consultancy, the interchange between member countries of experience and knowledge; and to increase its efforts to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to support various activities, including those of the Task Force on Population and Housing Censuses, and implement the 2010 Population and Housing Census Programme.

Establishing an Arabic language centre at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

78. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, cognizant of the project document presented to Senior Officials segment of the twenty-fifth ESCWA session concerning the establishment of an Arabic language centre at ESCWA, to be involved in the coordination of Arabic terminology, organization of training sessions and building of cooperative relationships with translation institutes and universities, in accordance with the details set forth in the project document, in coordination with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Services, encouraged continued cooperation with ESCWA by the focal points designated by member countries for the project; and requested the Executive Secretary to explore ways and means to fund the project from extrabudgetary resources and to follow up on the implementation of the resolution and submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Supporting the comprehensive development efforts of Yemen

79. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia commented on the comprehensive development efforts exerted by the Government of Yemen that are aimed at eradicating poverty and meeting economic and social needs with the extensive involvement of civil society and the professional, academic and political social sectors; and recommended that the Commission provide more support of all types to Yemen, with a view to achieving the activities and efforts that are undertaken as part of comprehensive development and national efforts to realize the Millennium Development Goals.

Call for regional action to accelerate implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Western Asia

80. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia adopted the draft final communiqué that was issued by the Consultative Preparatory Meeting for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development held in Doha on 29 and 30 April 2008; affirmed the need for developing countries, including ESCWA member countries, to be more involved in the management of the global financial, monetary and trade system; called upon member countries to continue to support regional integration, including through increased interregional investment and trade, and also to support small and medium-sized enterprises and make available the financial resources necessary to create new youth employment opportunities; further called upon member countries to continue efforts to eradicate financial and administrative corruption, thereby enhancing opportunities to increase investment,

and to make use of available domestic financial resources; and requested member countries to exert greater efforts to increase their share of foreign direct investment.

81. The Commission requested the developed donor countries to honour their undertakings and increase official development assistance in order to assist in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, without placing any conditions on such assistance that could have a negative impact on the capacities of beneficiary countries; affirmed the need for member countries to make an effective contribution at the highest possible level to the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus; requested the ESCWA secretariat to strengthen cooperation with the relevant regional and international organizations and with the other United Nations regional commissions on Monterrey Consensus-related issues, with a view to supporting the position of the developing countries with respect to the formulation of international rules; called upon the ESCWA secretariat to follow up the outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and support member countries in studying and analysing new issues, to support member country efforts to build institutional capacities; and requested the Executive Secretary to report on the progress made in implementing the resolution to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Frequency of the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies

82. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia decided to defer consideration of the relevant recommendations of the Committees on Energy and on Social Development, and of the Statistical Committee and the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region; called upon the secretariat to carry out an in-depth evaluation of the intergovernmental structure of ESCWA in the light of both programme priority, as identified by member countries and ongoing United Nations reforms, and to support, closely monitor and assess the contribution of the Technical Committee; and expressed its appreciation for the sharing of lessons learned from the evaluation of the intergovernmental sessions held during the period 2004-2007.

83. The Commission invited member Governments to review their internal distribution channels for ESCWA session documents, solicit feedback from the ministries or offices concerned on how distribution channels could be further improved and share the outcome of those reviews with the secretariat; requested the secretariat to improve and continually update the ESCWA website, with the aim of providing easy access to the archives of intergovernmental session documents, including reports; activate the member country official focal points identified by those countries; and decided to review the outcome of the in-depth evaluation at the twenty-sixth session.