

Summary Assessment

Committee on Trade and Investment Seventh session 27-29 January 2021

I. Introduction

The seventh session of the Committee on Trade and Investment took place on 27-29 January 2021 as a virtual meeting due to ongoing COVID-19 related travel restrictions in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

An online questionnaire assessing the relevance, effectiveness and quality of the meeting was conducted.¹ The main purpose of the assessment is to support the secretariat's ongoing efforts to improve its servicing of the session.

The Committee session discussed the review of recent trends and developments in trade and investment in Asia and the Pacific, including the impact of rising protectionism and the COVID-19 pandemic; promoting inward and outward foreign direct investment in the post-COVID-19 era; and the work of the secretariat and associated results and future focus pertaining to trade and investment under the subprogramme on trade, investment and innovation.

II. Attendance

The seventh session of the Committee on Trade and Investment was attended by 73 per cent of all ESCAP members and associate members (45 of 62) with 2 participants at the ministerial level. In total, there were 161 registered participants, of whom 66 were female (41 per cent). A number of other entities participated, including United Nations bodies and agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. From these entities, there were 16 participants of whom 3 were female (18.7 per cent). Therefore, the total number of participants from both governments and other entities is 178 individuals and the total number of female participants is 69 (38.8 per cent).

III. Respondent's Profile

A total of 25 individual respondents from 20 member countries provided feedback to the questionnaire. However, 22 completed and 3 partially completed the questionnaire. Information contained in this assessment will therefore only considered the completed feedback of the 22 respondents. Of these 22 respondents, 13 respondents are male, 9 are female. All respondents represent the government.

¹ The rating scale is 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

Respondent countries by subregional

SEA	SSWA
Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Maldives, Sri Lanka
ENEA	Pacific
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu
NCA	Others
Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan	-

IV. Relevance

Overall, respondents agreed that the agenda items reflected the present development trends and issues in the Asia-Pacific region; and that the issues discussed were useful for their government/organization. The respondents gave a slightly lower rating on discussing relevant gender issues as pertaining to the meeting objectives.

Please rate your agreement of the following statements	Ratings
The issues discussed reflected the present development trends/issues in the Asia-Pacific region.	Average: 4.3
The issues discussed were useful for my government/organization.	Average: 4.4
The meeting discussed relevant gender issues as pertaining to the meeting objectives.	Average: 3.8

V. Effectiveness

The respondents agreed that the meeting effectively enhanced their knowledge of the issues discussed; promoted regional cooperation, and cooperation and collaboration among participants; enough time was available for discussion; and the meeting documents and presentations were of high quality, concise and clear.

Please rate your agreement of the following statements	Ratings
The meeting effectively enhanced my knowledge of the issues discussed	Average: 4.4

The meeting effectively promoted regional cooperation, and cooperation and collaboration among participants	Average: 4.3
Enough time was available for discussion	Average: 4.2
The meeting documents and presentations were of high quality, concise & clear	Average: 4.3

VI. Efficiency

Generally, the respondents rated positively on the efficiency of the meeting, in particular, they highly agreed that the meeting was organized in a timely manner and according to the programme.

Please rate your agreement of the following statements	Ratings
I am satisfied with the administrative and logistical arrangement of the meeting	Average: 4.2
The meeting was organized in a timely manner and according to the programme	Average: 4.7
The communications from ESCAP to the member States on the preparation for the meeting were effective	Average: 4.5
The duration of the meeting was appropriate	Average: 4.4

VII. Performance of the virtual tool

Overall, the respondents were satisfied with the technology.

Please rate your agreement of the following statements	Ratings
The virtual platform was easy to use	Average: 4
I was able to hear others clearly (audio quality)	Average: 4.4
I was able to see other clearly (video quality)	Average: 4.2
The duration of the virtual meeting was appropriate	Average: 4.4
Interaction tools (raise hands, live polls, Q&A, etc.) were used effectively	Average: 4.2
Adequate technical support from ESCAP was provided prior to and during the meeting	Average: 4.4

VIII. Results achieved

The results achieved through this meeting indicated by respondents included:

- Better understanding of existing situation and becoming familiar with trade policies of other member countries;
- Increase the knowledge on the trends and opportunities in the region;
- Enabling and strengthening regional and global economic cooperation, collaboration and integration through digitalization infrastructure and transformation.
- The meeting obviously gives us a reflection of trade and investment scenario worldwide with special reference of UNESCAP member states with reflection of Covid-19 affects. It is highly appreciated to do such kind of arrangement from UNESCAP now and later on.
- Reaffirming commitments to regional cooperation on trade and investment for sustainable development. Managing the administrative affairs of ESCAP. Setting up the future endeavors for better regional cooperation.
- Meeting created good knowledge about ongoing economic trends in Asia-Pacific region. It gave possibilities for countries to share their experience in fighting against Covid-19 pandemic.
- Investment promotion policy coordination and updating
- Better understanding of how to navigate trade and investment through current world affairs. I do not know if that was fully achieved.
- excellent
- Particularly important is the commitment of all the countries towards engaging and pledging more intensively. More intensive regional cooperation and coordination of actions in economic policies, in particular in trade and foreign direct investment policies.
- Overview and effective recommendations of Member states on trade and investment issues
- A global pandemic that has recognized the importance of digitalization should be developed further. ESCAP should provide support to member states to enhance collaboration on reducing trade barriers underpinning digital trade.
- Able to understand the current status of trade in the world and the region. The discussion on the post covid development agenda was useful.

IX. Comments and suggestions

The respondents provided comments and suggestions for improvement of future sessions:

- Propose to organize specific events to increase knowledge on international trade among the ESCAP member states
- Definitely, need some more time for governments especially of LDCs to adjust themselves to such new technologies for virtual interfaces, use of digital infrastructures, newly created instruments of long-distance interactions, needs proper internet connections, etc. Therefore, it is necessarily important to provide some more capacity buildings for Government entities and senior staff of LDCs in the Asia and Pacific region.
- Please make sure that the link is provided at a time to each delegate. Besides, before every meeting it is needed to remind the participants at least one hour prior through email.
- Providing capacity building and preferential treatment to LDCs such as Afghanistan
- Documents were not received ahead of time so that did not help at all.
- Please grant access for one delegate in one account.
- Need to make the meeting more participating.

X. Conclusion

Overall, delegations agreed that the seventh session of the Committee on Trade and Investment was well organized and fruitful. The session was generally relevant to promote regional cooperation and multilateralism in the area of trade and investment, in particular in the area of digital trade. The efficiency and effectiveness of the session also received positive feedback, in particular, the organization of the session was conducted in a timely manner and according to the programme. More attention could be paid to gender related issues.
