



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
 Committee on Social Development

Fourth session
 Bangkok, 28-30 March 2016

**Report of the Committee on Social Development on its
 fourth session**
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I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

Recommendations

1. For the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee underscores the importance of integrating the three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – of sustainable development.

2. The Committee notes a number of priority issues for action, including addressing inequalities, reducing poverty and enhancing social protection to build socioeconomic resilience, with particular reference to:

(a) Addressing unemployment and underemployment among youth, including by, inter alia, improving the match between the knowledge and skills of youth and labour market demands; creating more decent jobs; strengthening technical and vocational education and training programmes for youth; targeting out-of-school and vulnerable groups of youth; and promoting entrepreneurship among both young women and men;

(b) Placing gender equality and women’s empowerment at the centre of the policy agenda, in order to enhance women’s leadership and decision-making in all aspects of society and to increase women’s economic opportunities;

(c) Continuing implementation of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific to support the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities;

(d) Promoting and protecting the rights of older persons and the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, as the most relevant framework for action in this regard;

(e) Strengthening the linkages between international migration and development, including through more effective management of migration.

3. The Committee welcomes the intention of the secretariat to continue supporting member States in the above-mentioned areas, including through capacity development and knowledge-sharing, building partnerships with stakeholders, and serving as a key regional platform to enhance the social dimension of sustainable development.

II. Proceedings

A. Review of social development issues and challenges in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals

4. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Challenges in implementing the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals” (E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/1).

5. During an overview of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee’s attention was drawn to the vital issues of reducing inequalities within and between countries and the impact of demographic change.

6. Representatives of the following members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) made statements: Bangladesh; China; India; Japan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; and Russian Federation.

7. The Committee expressed appreciation for the high-quality background documentation submitted, which captured social development challenges in relation to sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. The Committee also expressed its appreciation for the timely and effective preparations for the session, an example that should be followed by other intergovernmental meetings convened by ESCAP.

8. Reflecting on social development and global development goals, several delegations highlighted the progress made in relation to reducing poverty and hunger, as well as child and maternal mortality, achieving gender parity in education and attaining universal health coverage. With regards to moving from the era of the Millennium Development Goals to that of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee identified priority issues for action, inter alia, inclusive growth, poverty reduction and socioeconomic resilience; universal social protection; gender equality; labour migration; disability-inclusive development; and disaster risk reduction and resilience. The Committee also identified particular development challenges related to climate change and HIV and AIDS and the importance of the collection, analysis and dissemination of timely, disaggregated data for effective monitoring and review.

9. During the consideration of means of addressing priority social development issues, and in the context of multi-year national development plans, the Committee underscored the significance of policies and legislation in which the three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – of sustainable development were integrated, including targeting of vulnerable groups of people. The importance of country-level ownership and leadership of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as multi-stakeholder partnership and cooperation spanning technical, technological and financial support, was emphasized.

10. Some delegations informed the Committee on actions needed to promote and protect the rights of older persons and highlighted the importance of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing as the most relevant framework for action in that regard.

11. Several delegations provided details of policies and programmes that were being implemented to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and thanked the secretariat for its valuable support to member States. The forthcoming midterm review of the Incheon Strategy was highlighted as an opportunity to review progress made in its implementation.

12. While considering measures critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee highlighted the importance of placing gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of the national policy agenda, towards enhancing women's leadership and decision-making in all aspects of society, increasing women's economic opportunities and improving access of women and girls to education and health services.

13. One delegation emphasized the importance of data-monitoring systems and the need to develop the statistical capacities of member States.

14. The delegation of China commended the results achieved as a result of the China-ESCAP Cooperation Programme in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment, ageing and disability and indicated that it would continue its strong support for the Commission's work in social development, particularly in assisting member States in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

15. The delegation of the Russian Federation emphasized the importance of the topic of international migration, as it was a key country of destination in the region. The delegation expressed satisfaction with progress made in respect to a project on international migration it funded and highlighted that the reports produced as a result of the project would be of interest to member States.

16. The delegation of Japan expressed its support for persons with disabilities in countries in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting over 20 years of cooperation with ESCAP in that area.

17. Statements were made by representatives of civil society-organizations.

B. Consideration of building institutional capacity and adopting innovative approaches to strengthen the social dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals

18. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Innovative approaches and modalities to enhance the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals” (E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/2).

19. During an overview of the aforementioned document, the secretariat enumerated key modalities for national implementation of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda, specifically national ownership and political will, institutional capacity, technology, partnership, finance and budgeting, and monitoring and review.

20. Representatives of the following ESCAP members made statements: Australia; Bangladesh; Fiji; Japan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; and Sri Lanka.

21. During the consideration of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Committee identified the importance of targeting vulnerable groups of persons; gender equality and women’s empowerment; poverty and income inequality reduction; disability inclusiveness; natural disasters and humanitarian crises; and universal social protection.

22. The Committee was informed, by several delegations, of key modalities for successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the following: strengthened multi-stakeholder, multisectoral partnership and collaboration that would engage Governments, the United Nations system, civil society and the private sector; increased provision of financial resources for equitable social development, including through redistributive policies and programmes; and enhanced mechanisms to tackle corruption and inefficiencies in the implementation of development initiatives. In addition, the Committee noted the importance of a strong United Nations system which, at the regional level, included ESCAP serving as a platform for and working closely with other members of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism.

23. The Committee suggested areas where the secretariat would be well positioned to support member States in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including by building partnerships with stakeholders and serving as a key platform to facilitate development coordination. In addition, capacity development and knowledge-sharing and technological innovation through South-South cooperation were highlighted as areas in need of further support.

24. The delegation of the Republic of Korea expressed gratitude to the secretariat for its work in supporting a project on disability data collection for effective implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade for Persons with Disabilities and called upon member States to establish reliable and comparable baseline data to monitor the implementation of the Incheon Strategy.

25. One delegation asked a question as to how the social dimension of sustainable development had been incorporated into the draft regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific, to be discussed during the forthcoming Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, which will be held in Bangkok from 3 to 5 April 2016.

26. A consolidated statement was delivered on behalf of civil society organizations under agenda item 2 (b).

27. The round-table discussion on “how to reach those furthest behind first” comprised Mr. Nilesh Prakash, Chief Economic Planning Officer, Ministry of Finance, Fiji; Mr. Pradeep Yasaratne, Director of Social Services, Department of Social Services, Sri Lanka; Ms. Yoriko Yasukawa, Regional Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; and Ms. Kate Lappin, Regional Coordinator, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development. The round table was moderated by Ms. Jacqueline Paul, Social Affairs Officer of the Social Development Division of ESCAP.

28. The panellists of the round table focused their discussion on who were furthest behind, why they were furthest behind and the effective means by which they could be reached. The necessity of combining conventional ways of defining and measuring exclusion – such as national poverty lines, censuses and household surveys – with more nuanced measures that captured the multiple intersections of inequalities was emphasized. Some of the common causes of exclusion that were identified included inequalities in power, resources, human rights and opportunities, alongside political processes and decisions that perpetuated exclusion. A range of actions to reach the furthest behind were proposed. These included, inter alia, promotion of social protection, meaningful engagement of all development stakeholders and a judicious combination of universal and conditional approaches.

C. Consideration of regional trends regarding the transition from school to work

29. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Regional trends regarding education and employment, particularly the challenges arising from the transition from school to work” (E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/3).

30. In providing an overview of the document, the secretariat highlighted the challenges that youth in Asia and the Pacific faced in acquiring requisite skills and finding decent work, given the state and demands of modern labour markets. The secretariat also stressed the need for Governments to address such challenges through, inter alia, well-coordinated macroeconomic and employment policies and the introduction and strengthening of public employment support services such as active labour market programmes. To facilitate that process, the secretariat had introduced the ESCAP Youth Toolbox, an online resource that would serve as an interactive repository of experiences, good practices and training modules aimed at providing policymakers with a comprehensive knowledge platform for developing inclusive and responsive youth policies.

31. Representatives of the following ESCAP members made statements: Bangladesh; China; Fiji; India; Mongolia; Philippines; Russian Federation; and Sri Lanka.

32. In regard to the school-to-work transition, the Committee stressed the urgency of addressing unemployment and underemployment among youth, by, inter alia, improving the match between the knowledge and skills of youth and labour market demands, creating more decent jobs, strengthening technical and vocational education and training programmes for youth, targeting out-of-school and vulnerable groups of youth, and promoting entrepreneurship among both young women and young men. The need to utilize modern information and communications technology was also stressed. In that regard, the Committee commended the secretariat for the development of the Youth Toolbox.

33. One delegation mentioned the importance of labour market information and a qualifications reference framework.

34. Representatives of civil society organizations made statements.

35. The round-table discussion on “how to facilitate school-to-work transitions” involved the participation of Mr. Nielex Tupas, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer, National Youth Commission, Manila; Ms. Khongorzul Chagnaadorj, Director, Mongolian Youth Federation, Mongolia; Mr. Santosh Mehrotra, Professor of Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India; and Ms. Sue Vize, Regional Adviser for Social and Human Sciences, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Bangkok. The round table was moderated by Mr. David Lamotte, Deputy Regional Director, International Labour Organization (ILO), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

36. The round-table panellists addressed critical actions needed to ensure effective and efficient school-to-work transitions. Those actions included the following: enhancing financing, quality and private-sector involvement in vocational education and training to better align the knowledge and skills of young people with labour market demands; delivering apprenticeship and internship programmes for young people; ensuring multi-stakeholder engagement and cross-sector coordination; and providing public employment services that reached youth in both rural and urban areas.

37. Further importance was attached to addressing the gender dimensions of technical vocational education and training programmes, including by expanding options for girls and young women beyond traditional sectors, ensuring that technical vocational education and training programmes equipped female and male youth with both generalist and specialist skills, promoting entrepreneurship among young people and addressing the needs of out-of-school youth.

D. Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme

38. The Committee took note of the presentation on the strategic framework and the programme of work for 2018-2019.

E. Consideration of draft resolutions for submission to the Commission at its seventy-second session

39. No draft resolutions were proposed by the Committee for consideration.

F. Other matters

40. No other matters were discussed by the Committee.

G. Adoption of the report

41. The Committee adopted the report on 30 March 2016 for submission to the Commission at its seventy-second session.

III. Organization**A. Opening, duration and organization of the session**

42. The Committee held its fourth session in Bangkok from 28 to 30 March 2016.

43. Opening statements were delivered by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP; Police General Adul Saengsingkaew, Minister of Social Development and Human Security, Thailand; and Mr. Santosh Mehrotra, Professor of Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India.

B. Attendance

44. The Committee session was attended by representatives of the following members of ESCAP: Australia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Mongolia; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Turkey; Turkmenistan; and Tuvalu.

45. The Committee session was attended by representatives of the following United Nations bodies: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Human Settlements Programme and UNFPA.

46. The Committee session was attended by the following specialized agencies and related organizations of the United Nations: ILO; UNESCO; and World Health Organization.

47. The Committee session was attended by the following intergovernmental organizations: Colombo Plan secretariat and International Organization for Migration.

48. The following non-governmental organizations attended the Committee session: AIESEC International; ASEAN Youth Leaders' Association; Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health; Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability; Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development; Asia-Pacific Peace and Development Service Alliance; Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women; Asia Pacific Women with Disabilities United; Asian Youth Council; Fiji Women's Rights Movement; Global Peace Foundation; Indian Committee of Youth Organizations; Institute for Youth Development; International HIV/AIDS Alliance; International Planned Parenthood Federation; Marie Stopes International Myanmar; Migrant Forum in Asia; Mongolian Youth Federation; National Forum of Women with Disabilities; United Nations Youth, Nepal; YouthLEAD; and Youth Peer Education Network.

49. Other entities for which representatives attended the Committee session were as follows: Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime; and Jawaharlal Nehru University.

C. Election of officers

50. The Committee elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. Jesus Lorenzo Mateo (Philippines)
Vice-Chair:	Ms. Roksana Khan (Bangladesh)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Saman Udawatta (Sri Lanka)

D. Agenda

51. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session:
 - (a) Opening statements;
 - (b) Election of officers;
 - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
2. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific:
 - (a) Review of social development issues and challenges in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals;
 - (b) Consideration of building institutional capacity and adopting innovative approaches to strengthen the social dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. Consideration of regional trends regarding the transition from school to work.
4. Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme.
5. Consideration of draft resolutions for submission to the Commission at its seventy-second session.
6. Other matters.
7. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fourth session.
8. Closing of the session.

E. Side events

52. The publication *Switched On: Youth at the Heart of Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific* was launched on 28 March 2016 by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP; Ms. Tomoko Nishimoto, Assistant Director-General and Regional Director, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; and Ms. Ploycarat Nana, Member, Youth Advisory Group, Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism/United Nations Development Group Thematic Working Group on Youth. The Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth delivered a video message on the occasion. The launch was moderated by Mr. Marco Roncarati, Social Affairs Officer, ESCAP.

53. A side event on addressing the role of civil registration and vital statistics for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals was organized by the secretariat on 30 March 2016, with the participation of the following panellists: Ms. Afrooz Kaviani Johnson, Child Protection Consultant, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office; Mr. Christophe Lefranc, Technical Advisor on Population and Development (Census and Data), UNFPA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; Mr. Jonathan Marskell, Project Specialist (Civil Registration), Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime; Mr. Nicholas Oakeshott, Regional Protection Officer (Statelessness), UNHCR Regional Coordinator's Office. The side event was moderated by the Director of the Statistics Division of ESCAP.

Annex

List of documents

<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>Document title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/1	Challenges in implementing the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals	2 (a)
E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/2	Innovative approaches and modalities to enhance the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals	2 (b)
E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/3	Regional trends regarding education and employment, particularly the challenges arising from the transition from school to work	3
<i>Limited series</i>		
E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/L.1	Annotated provisional agenda	1 (c)
E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/L.2	Draft report	7
<i>Information series</i>		
E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/INF/1	Information for participants	
E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/INF/2	List of participants	
E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/INF/3	Tentative programme	