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

Second session

Bangkok, 9-11 November 2011

Annotated provisional agenda

The present document contains the provisional agenda for the second session of the Committee on Environment and Development (section I) and the annotations to the provisional agenda (section II).

I. Provisional agenda

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Outcome of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference).
5. Outcome of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum.
6. Trends and progress in the field of environment and development:
 - (a) Emerging and persistent issues in environmental sustainability;
 - (b) Emerging and persistent issues in energy security;
 - (c) Emerging and persistent issues in water resource management;
 - (d) Emerging and persistent issues in sustainable urban development;
 - (e) Progress in implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific.
7. Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme.
8. Consideration of draft resolutions, recommendations and decisions for submission to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session.
9. Other matters.
10. Adoption of the report.

II. Annotations

1. Opening of the session

Documentation

Tentative programme (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/INF/3)

Annotation

The programme for the opening of the session will be announced in due course.

2. Election of officers

Documentation

Provisional list of participants (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/INF/2)

Annotation

A chair, vice-chair(s) and rapporteur will be elected for the session.

3. Adoption of the agenda

Documentation

Annotated provisional agenda (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/L.1)

Annotation

The annotated provisional agenda will be considered and adopted by the Committee, subject to such changes as may be deemed necessary.

4. Outcome of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference)

Documentation

Outcome of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference) (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/1)

Annotation

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will be held from 4 to 6 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with a focus on: (a) a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and (b) the institutional framework for sustainable development. In order to support the organization of this global event and, in particular, to facilitate the formulation of the Asia-Pacific regional inputs reflecting issues pertinent specifically to the region, a Regional Preparatory Meeting will be held in Seoul on 19 and 20 October 2011. The Committee will be briefed on the outcome of the Regional Preparatory Meeting.

5. Outcome of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum

Documentation

Outcome of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/2)

Annotation

The Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum was organized by ESCAP and 30 partners from within and outside of the United Nations system and held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok from 22 to 24 June 2011, with associated events and field visits being held on 20, 21 and 25 June 2011. The Forum comprised three plenary panel discussions, five subregional focus group discussions, 19 breakout sessions of the Bazaar of Ideas and Practices, a documentary movie night, an exhibition of innovative practices and programmes, two field visits and 11 associated events and side events. Over 900 national and local government officials, private sector representatives, academics, civil society organizations and journalists participated at the Forum. In addition, local urban forums were held simultaneously in four cities in the region. The plenary discussions of the Forum were webcast and panellists answered “tweeted” questions from the local urban forums. Document E/ESCAP/CED(2)/2 will report on the proceedings of the Forum, particularly focusing on its conclusions and recommendations, and the secretariat will seek the Committee’s guidance on the role ESCAP should play in their implementation.

6. Trends and progress in the field of environment and development

(a) Emerging and persistent issues in environmental sustainability

Documentation

Emerging and persistent issues in environmental sustainability (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/3)

Annotation

While Asian and Pacific countries continue to face challenges to environmental sustainability, there is a growing recognition of the broader implications of environmental sustainability in the context of persistent socio-economic challenges, such as poverty reduction, food security, health and welfare, access to services, equitable mobility, consumption and production patterns, and disaster risk reduction. A number of policies and practices are emerging in national efforts to address these multiple and interlinked challenges in an integrated and inclusive manner.

The Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific adopted a ministerial declaration that, among other things, intended to create a socio-economic environment to drive the changes needed to foster and promote sustainable development. Document E/ESCAP/CED(2)/3 provides an overview of the environmental and socio-economic interactions mentioned above, as well as the emerging trend of applying enabling socio-economic policies and practices at the national level. The document thus provides the basis for further exchanges of relevant information and national experiences, and for defining the direction of future regional cooperation.

(b) Emerging and persistent issues in energy security

Documentation

Emerging and persistent issues in energy security (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/4)

Annotation

In its resolution 67/2 on promoting regional cooperation for enhanced energy security and the sustainable use of energy in Asia and the Pacific, the Commission requests the Executive Secretary to convene, in 2013, the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum at the ministerial level to discuss the progress achieved in the Asia-Pacific region in addressing the energy security challenges at the regional, national and household levels, and to facilitate continuous dialogue among member States with a view to enhancing energy security and working towards sustainable development. To address this request and respond to the issues and directions expressed in General Assembly resolution 65/151, in which the General Assembly declared 2012 the International Year for Sustainable Energy for All, an Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific will be held in Bangkok from 27 to 29 September 2011 with a view to advising the secretariat on the development of an appropriate agenda for the 2013 Asia-Pacific Energy Forum. Document E/ESCAP/CED(2)/4 reviews the status of, opportunities for and challenges to energy security and the sustainable use of energy in the region and reflects the process leading up to the Forum. The Committee may wish to review the document and provide its guidance on substantive and organizational issues.

(c) Emerging and persistent issues in water resources management

Documentation

Emerging and persistent issues in water resources management (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/5)

Annotation

As a result of increased population and rapid urbanization, there has been increased demand and competition for and a reallocation of water resources from predominantly agricultural uses to fulfil more urban and industrial needs. The pollution of water bodies and flash flood occurrences will continue to be among the critical and urgent issues faced by Asia and the Pacific, with more than 50 per cent of the region's population expected to live in towns and cities by 2025. Across the world, changes in weather patterns have increased the occurrences and intensities of extreme events of rain, floods, droughts and cyclones, which have already occurred in such countries as Australia, China, Myanmar and Pakistan. Many have attributed these changes to the impact of climate change. Document E/ESCAP/CED(2)/5 will examine why the implementation of integrated water resources management continues to be crucial in managing water resources holistically, taking into account the impact of rapid urbanization and climate change, which are reflected in changes in the hydrological cycle and water balance, leading to increased climate variability and intensities, which subsequently manifest in the form of extreme events of floods, droughts and a rise in sea level, ultimately increasing the salt levels in river deltas and lakes and further diminishing the availability of freshwater. The document will emphasize the growing concern that climate change could

result in devastating consequences with respect to water. The Committee may wish to advise the secretariat regarding its work on water resources management to minimize the impacts of climate change and associated disasters.

(d) Emerging and persistent issues in sustainable urban development

Documentation

Emerging and persistent issues in sustainable urban development (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/6)

Annotation

The scale and pace of urbanization in Asia and the Pacific is unprecedented. Cities and towns in the region are engines of economic growth and centres of its cultures and creativity, accounting for about 80 per cent of the region's gross domestic product. How the region's cities and towns develop and function will most likely shape the future of not just Asia and the Pacific but the whole world. In their drive to achieve economic development, countries in the region have tended to externalize environmental and social costs. As a result, urban centres in Asia and the Pacific now face interconnected challenges related to environmental sustainability, poverty and disparities, and increasing vulnerability to climate change and other natural and man-made disasters and crises.

Moving towards a more inclusive and sustainable future would mean that cities and towns in the region would become more eco-efficient and green, more equitable and inclusive, and more resilient to climate change and other disasters. Development gaps related to legal and fiscal frameworks, urban planning and design approaches, technologies, financing, and human and institutional capacities would need to be bridged through more integrated, participatory and adaptive approaches to urban governance and management. Document E/ESCAP/CED(2)/6 discusses some strategies that could achieve these goals and the role ESCAP could play in helping countries achieve inclusive and sustainable urban development. The Committee may wish to provide guidance on these strategies and on the role ESCAP should play in these areas.

(e) Progress in implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

Documentation

Progress in implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/7)

Annotation

The sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development for Asia and the Pacific was organized by ESCAP in cooperation with the Government of Kazakhstan and was held from 27 September to 2 October 2010 in Astana. The outcome documents included the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific,

2010, the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and Pacific 2011-2015 and the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative: Europe-Asia-Pacific Partnership for the Implementation of “Green Growth”. Document E/ESCAP/CED(2)/7 outlines the progress made in implementing these outcomes, highlights the actions being undertaken in the six key areas of Regional Implementation Plan, on which the member States agreed to work together during the next five years.

In addition, a representative of the Government of Kazakhstan will be invited to brief the Committee on the progress made in implementing the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative, including the proposed Europe-Asia-Pacific Partnership for the Implementation of “Green Growth”.

7. Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme

Under this agenda item, the Committee may wish to provide guidance on the focus of the short- and longer-term work of the secretariat in the area of environment and development, taking into account the programme direction and priorities outlined in the strategic framework for 2012-2013, as endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/244, and how the outcome of the Committee’s deliberations may be integrated into the planning of the strategic framework and programme of work for 2014-2015.

8. Consideration of draft resolutions, recommendations and decisions for submission to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session

Under this agenda item, member States may wish to circulate, in advance, proposals and/or texts of draft resolutions on priority issues relating to environment and development for consideration by the Commission at its sixty-eighth session.

9. Other matters

The Committee may raise any matter not covered under the items mentioned above.

10. Adoption of the report

Documentation

Draft report (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/L.2).

Annotation

The Committee will consider and adopt the report on its second session for submission to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session, in 2012.