



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Sixty-sixth session
13-19 May 2010
Incheon, Republic of Korea

**DATES, VENUE AND THEME TOPIC FOR THE SIXTY-SEVENTH SESSION
OF THE COMMISSION (2011)**

(Item 6 of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The present document contains information on the possible dates and venue of the sixty-seventh session of the Commission, to be held in 2011, and proposals for the theme topic for that session. The Commission may wish to provide its recommendations on these matters.

1. The present document contains suggestions made by the secretariat for the consideration of the Commission at its sixty-sixth session. The Commission may wish to consider the dates, venue and theme topic for its sixty-seventh session, to be held in 2011, and to provide guidance to the secretariat in this regard.

A. Dates and venue

2. Rule 1 of the rules of procedure of the Commission requires it to recommend the date and venue for its next session, subject to the approval of the Economic and Social Council and in consultation with the Secretary-General. In accordance with established practice, at each session the Commission recommends the convening of the next session in April or May of the following year. The actual dates and venue are then determined by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the members and the Chairperson of the Commission.

3. In addition, rule 1 of the rules of procedure states that sessions of the Commission shall ordinarily be held at the office of the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific, unless the Commission recommends otherwise.

* The late submission of the document was due to the time needed to seek input from member States.

B. Theme topic

4. The choice of a theme topic for the sixty-seventh session of the Commission should be made at the sixty-sixth session. A list of the theme topics of previous Commission sessions is contained in the annex to the present document.

5. The following two proposals are submitted for the consideration of the Commission:

(a) Beyond the crises: long-term perspectives on social protection and development in Asia and the Pacific;

(b) Towards regional integration: connectivity for inclusive and resilient development in Asia and the Pacific.

1. Beyond the crises: long-term perspectives on social protection and development

6. The various crises of recent years, in particular the economic crisis, have generated renewed interest in social protection as a tool to mitigate the impacts of shocks and help accelerate the recovery of the people most affected by such impacts. Much of that interest has focused on the risks and vulnerabilities that have emerged as a result of the crises and, consequently, current work on social protection has tended to be a reactive response, addressing the symptoms, rather than the root causes, of the problem. Aside from focusing on viable options for dealing with crisis-related risks and vulnerabilities, there is a need to address more structural problems, including social exclusion, chronic poverty and the entrenched inequalities that persist in the Asia-Pacific region.

7. In addition to targeting the specific conditions of diverse social groups, social protection must also influence deeper changes, i.e., it should target the structural elements that place those groups in a situation of vulnerability in the first place. Poverty and exclusion amplify the effects of crises, and social protection must therefore tackle both causes and symptoms. Furthermore, it is necessary to place social protection in the larger context of social development and institutional change.

8. In this context, social protection has great potential, still largely untapped, to support and enhance long-term development strategies. Well-designed social protection programmes and interventions can serve both as: (a) a defensive instrument to provide security against various threats and risks, especially for the most vulnerable; and (b) a functional component of development strategies aimed at enhancing economic and social development. For example, there is evidence that households that are adequately protected can better assess their risks and thus engage in profitable business opportunities that would not have been possible in the absence of social protection. There is also evidence that economies with well-designed social protection systems in place are able to recover more quickly from external shocks.

9. It has been several years since a theme topic for the Commission has focused on the social dimension of development. The Commission thus has an opportunity to engage in a substantive discourse on how social protection can have an impact on risks and vulnerabilities as well as on development, and thereby take a lead in shifting the current discourse to a longer-term perspective beyond the economic crisis.

10. The theme study would start by assessing some of the causes of exclusion, poverty and vulnerabilities. These could include spatial and geographical barriers, including remote rural or environmentally fragile areas; slums; limited or lack of access to education, employment opportunities and productive assets; identity-based forms of exclusion—ethnicity, religion, gender, age, physical ability or ill-health; and restrictive financial and legal systems. Such barriers would be examined not only as static conditions, but also as dynamic processes at the level of the individual, i.e., life-course changes, and at the level of communities and nations, i.e., demographic and economic transformations.

11. The main body of the study would focus on the design and implementation of effective social protection instruments aimed at overcoming and/or eliminating barriers while contributing to economic and social development. The study would draw upon lessons learned (good and bad) from the Asia-Pacific region. It would also tap into the experiences of other regions with a long history of social protection policies, such as Latin America. The study would review the variety of current policies and approaches and their impact on socio-economic development, taking into account variations in local conditions, target groups, areas of intervention and delivery mechanisms. These could include social assistance and social insurance programmes, service subsidies and conditional cash transfers. Issues examined would also include coverage, affordability, macroeconomic linkages and impacts and outcomes of social protection schemes. The study would also consider specific solutions for protecting informally employed persons, who make up the majority of employed persons in most developing countries.

12. Finally, the study would consider the enabling environment needed for ensuring effective social protection programmes and interventions, in particular in terms of institutional arrangements and regulatory and legal systems, as well as mechanisms for empowering people, including the strengthening of rights-based frameworks. Thus, it would examine how to incorporate such approaches into coherent social policies that provide not only short-term remedial actions, but also long-term capacities to build more resilient, inclusive and sustainable societies in the region. Aside from providing policy options and promoting greater regional cooperation among ESCAP member States, the outcome of the Commission's deliberations would also guide the future long-term direction of the secretariat's social development programme.

2. Towards regional integration: connectivity for inclusive and resilient development

13. The succession of energy, food and financial/economic crises in the second half of the decade, combined with mounting environmental and climate change concerns, has called into question some of the fundamental assumptions underlying the Asia-Pacific region's development outlook and strategy, in particular the extent to which regional markets can be developed to complement traditional markets in the West and sustain future growth. Changes in the making now involve a deepening of the interdependence of the countries of the region, both to revive growth and to engender a higher degree of coalescence in the region's interaction with the global community in addressing economic and social imbalances. Strengthening regional connectivity is critical if these changes are to be accomplished as we move towards regional integration.

14. Over the past decade, cross-border trade and investment among Asia-Pacific countries has grown significantly. The more advanced economies have shifted their traditional labour-intensive manufacturing activities to the developing and least

developed economies, and refocused their own efforts to invest in knowledge-based economies driven by advanced technologies and services. This process, together with increased trade between member States, has accelerated the recovery from the global financial/economic crisis. In spite of its uneven progression among different subregions, the pace of economic integration is accelerating, facilitated by growing trade (for example, commodities), improved infrastructure and financial and informational interconnections through the greater use of information and communications technology. As a consequence and in parallel, social integration is taking place through enhanced labour mobility and tourism, allowing for the more fluid movement of peoples, ideas and cultures across borders.

15. A study on this theme could take stock of the status of connectivity in various subregions with a view to identifying gaps and opportunities, first, among countries within each subregion and, secondly, among the subregions. Key indicators of connectivity—in economic, social and infrastructural terms—will be developed and an analysis will be carried out on points of convergence and divergence in national/subregional strategies and policies to strengthen connectivity. These will include strategies to enhance capacities to improve efficiencies in terms of existing interconnections and the development of new connections. Emerging strategies, widening intraregional trade and investment and building cooperation in the area of technology transfer will be taken into account in outlining a broad regional road map for connectivity that would enhance regional integration.

Annex

List of theme topics of Commission sessions (Fortieth through sixty-sixth)

<i>Session</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme topic</i>
40	1984	Technology for development
41	1985	Technology for development
42	1986	Human resources development
43	1987	Human resources development
44	1988	Human resources development
45	1989	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
46	1990	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
47	1991	Industrial restructuring in Asia and the Pacific, in particular with a view to strengthening regional cooperation
48	1992	Regional economic cooperation in the ESCAP region: prospects, priorities and policy options
49	1993	Expansion of investment and intraregional trade as a vehicle for enhancing regional economic cooperation and development
50	1994	Infrastructure development as key to economic growth and regional economic cooperation
51	1995	Strengthening of regional cooperation in human resources development with special reference to the social implications of sustainable economic growth in Asia and the Pacific
52	1996	Sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Asia and the Pacific
53	1997	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: opportunities and challenges for ESCAP
54	1998	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: status of and prospects for social development
55	1999	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: information technology, globalization, economic security and development
56	2000	Development through globalization and partnership in the twenty-first century: an Asia-Pacific perspective for integrating developing countries and economies in transition into the international trading system on a fair and equitable basis
57	2001	Balanced development of urban and rural areas and regions within the countries of Asia and the Pacific

<i>Session</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme topic</i>
58	2002	Sustainable social development in a period of rapid globalization: challenges, opportunities and policy options
59	2003	Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region
60	2004	Meeting the challenges in an era of globalization by strengthening regional development cooperation
61	2005	Implementing the Monterrey Consensus in the Asian and Pacific region: achieving coherence and consistency
62	2006	Enhancing regional cooperation in infrastructure development, including that related to disaster management
63	2007	Development of health systems in the context of enhancing economic growth towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific
64	2008	Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific
65	2009	Towards sustainable agriculture and food security in the Asia-Pacific region
66	2010	Addressing challenges in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: promoting a stable and supportive financial system; and green growth or environmentally sustainable economic growth, including through technology and financing

.