



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Seventy-fifth session**

Bangkok, 27–31 May 2019

Account of proceedings**Agenda item 1****Opening of the session**

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) elected Mr. Damdin Tsogtbaatar (Mongolia) Chair of the seventy-fifth session on 27 May 2019, and he presided over the opening of the session. Video messages from Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General were played. The Executive Secretary delivered welcome remarks and a policy statement. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand delivered a special address. Statements were delivered by Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of Nauru, and Mr. Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia.

Agenda item 2**“Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”: general debate on the theme topic**

2. The Commission had before it the note by the secretariat entitled “Closing the gap: empowerment and inclusion in Asia and the Pacific” (ESCAP/75/1).

3. Representatives of the following members and associate members of the Commission made statements: Afghanistan; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; China; Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; Fiji; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Macao, China; Malaysia; Maldives; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Palau; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Tuvalu; United States of America; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam. Representatives from the European Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction also made statements.

Policy statement by the Executive Secretary

4. In her policy statement, the Executive Secretary reflected on the challenges and opportunities confronting the region. She noted the need to put people first and build a coherent response to population dynamics which were radically altering the societies and economies in the region. Strengthening sustainable connectivity could make the region resilient to international trade

tensions and deliver considerable economic benefits. She also noted the opportunity to join forces to combat environmental degradation, pollution and the mismanagement of natural resources, with particular attention to the oceans. The region would also need to urgently stop disaster risk from outpacing resilience. New technologies had the potential to accelerate the journey to transformed and resilient societies on many fronts and ESCAP had a role as a forum to exchange best practices to harness digital technology for sustainable development. She mentioned the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific as a framework which would continue to guide the secretariat's work.

5. The Executive Secretary further reflected on the opportunity for ESCAP to continue to remain fit for purpose through the reform of the United Nations development system and the midpoint review of the conference structure of the Commission. A coherent regional-level approach was becoming increasingly important to overcome challenges that transcend borders and to strengthen the means of implementation, such as financing for development, data and statistics. There was the opportunity for ESCAP to strengthen its partnership with subregional organizations to complement each other's work and to facilitate the exchange of best practices. She stressed her commitment to working closely with member States to achieve transformed and resilient societies in the region.

High-level panel discussion on the theme topic: “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”

6. The Executive Secretary gave introductory remarks and presented the main findings related to the theme study on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. A video on the theme topic was screened.

7. The eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, delivered a keynote address.

8. The Commission session benefited from a high-level panel discussion on the theme topic: “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. The panel was moderated by Ms. Suzanne Nam. The panellists were Ms. Ing Kantha Phavi, Cambodia; Ms. Mereseini Vuniwaqa, Fiji; Mr. Monthian Buntan, Thailand; Ms. Eun Mee Kim, Ewha Womans University; Mr. Bambang Susantono, Asian Development Bank; Mr. Phang Yew Kiat, Chong Sing Holdings FinTech Group Limited.

9. The panel reviewed policy options that promote the availability and accessibility of services for all and empower disadvantaged populations to use them, as well as challenges and opportunities for strengthening the inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, rural residents, older persons and migrants.

10. Ms. Phavi drew from the positive experiences of her country and noted that peace and stability were prerequisites for sustainable development. Poverty reduction had been an initial priority, including the identification of the most vulnerable groups; this had led to a focus on women-headed households, persons with disabilities and older persons, in both rural and urban areas. A major social protection scheme for all had been established in 2016, in which gender was mainstreamed to enhance access to health care and education, among others. There was a need to direct more attention to pregnant women and caring for older persons, given that the country was experiencing an ageing population. She stressed the significance of leaving no one behind

by ensuring inclusion and equity and focusing more on disaggregating data, undertaking gender analysis and budgeting, and economic empowerment.

11. Ms. Vuniwaqa outlined the need to identify the country's disadvantaged groups and to ensure that when Governments change, a platform exists to support the vulnerable, including their right to water, food, decent work and housing. Strong budgeting was required to reflect needs in different government agencies, and that was exemplified by Fiji's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was followed by an increase in the budget allocation for persons with disabilities. The country was mainstreaming gender issues in all government policies and had rolled out projects focusing especially on gender equality and empowerment, which led to a major scaling-up of access to basic services particularly for women. She highlighted the need to address the lack of disaggregated data and to strengthen national statistical offices so that the most vulnerable could benefit.

12. Mr. Buntan emphasized the importance of promoting policies that were concerned with accessibility for all, since universal design-based accessibility acted as a bridge to realizing inclusion, whether related to transport, public buildings, goods and services, the digital economy or wider technological issues. That idea made sense in the region, where population ageing was progressing and the number of persons with disabilities was increasing, and other groups, such as pregnant women, would also benefit. Furthermore, he underscored the importance of investing more in accessible infrastructure, given the economic growth and increase in investments in Asia and the Pacific. Disability-inclusive procurement policies were an effective way to promote accessibility and he supported the ongoing analytical work of the secretariat on the subject. With regard to civil society's role in promoting inclusion and empowerment, he emphasized that civil society organizations should be more aware of their rights, while being legally recognized as development partners by Governments, pointing to anti-discrimination laws which were needed to rectify any discrimination against different social groups.

13. Ms. Kim noted that policymakers needed to provide greater funds for social protection, while the private sector, civil society and academia should also be engaged. Scientific development was significant in achieving inclusiveness and equality, yet research and development was concentrated in developed countries and, thus, was lacking where it was most required. Most research and development was carried out by the private sector for private sector interests, and it was vital that public spending on research and development be increased to address interests that benefited those in greater need. Multiple disadvantages had an amplifying impact on inequality and leaders needed to commit to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and push the agenda forward.

14. Mr. Susantono explained that project preparation and implementation at the Asian Development Bank increasingly required greater participation of all stakeholders. Environmental dimensions were included in projects, as were social dimensions, in terms of their impact on society, with targets for such integration. He highlighted the positive impact of gender mainstreaming and how more than half of all projects included gender dimensions, adding that there was a need to increase investment in health, education and social protection in order to develop human capital. He stressed the need for coordination among all stakeholders and the development of institutional human resource capacity to sustain projects. The disruption of technological change would have the greatest impact on those with low skill levels, and they would require specific training, including technical and vocational, to help address skills mismatches.

15. Mr. Phang noted that technology could support efforts to achieve empowerment and equality. Segmentation was very important, and mobile wallets allowed for widespread microwealth management, including by means of deposits that were directed to low-risk domains with good returns. An online marketplace supported small- and medium-sized enterprises, including farmers who could reach out directly to consumers, which led to better returns and helped reduce food wastage. Big data analytics allowed small loans to be approved and deposited quickly. He concluded by highlighting the need to expand network coverage to ensure equal access and develop good frameworks for regulation that would both reduce criminality and allow the private sector to support the disadvantaged.

Country statements

16. The Commission welcomed the theme of the session, noting its relevance and alignment with the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the theme study, which it considered as very timely. Members and associate members reiterated their commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its call to leave no one behind.

17. The Commission recognized that although economic growth had delivered better living standards and significantly reduced poverty, high levels of poverty remained and inequalities were growing in many cases, including in middle-income countries. Economic growth was important but not a panacea and effective policies, legislative frameworks and strong institutions were required to ensure that economic growth and development were more inclusive and equitably benefited the poor and vulnerable sections of the society. Inequalities spanned all three dimensions of sustainable development and could be found across the region. Specific groups in society were particularly at risk of being left behind, such as persons with disabilities, older persons, members of ethnic minorities and people living in rural areas. Addressing inequality and ensuring inclusion through the empowerment of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities and women and girls, to access services was critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

18. To reduce inequalities, countries adopted long-term national development strategies that were aligned with the 2030 Agenda and ensured the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets into national plans. Several representatives highlighted actions taken across the three dimensions of sustainable development to reduce inequalities while ensuring empowerment and inclusion, in which services were provided to all members of society regardless of their age, gender, race or religion to fully realize their potential. Some representatives emphasized that economic and institutional reforms and enhancing participation in decision-making processes were key in that regard.

19. The Commission reiterated its commitment to advance gender equality and emphasized the role of the empowerment of women and girls as prerequisites for achieving the goals of national as well as global and subregional strategies, including the 2030 Agenda and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

20. The Commission was informed of progress regarding the empowerment of women, including bringing more women into leadership positions and enhancing women's participation in the labour force. The reduction of domestic and gender-based violence and the protection of the girl

child were also stressed as key strategies to achieve women's empowerment. Several achievements had been made in introducing national coordination mechanisms and implementing policies on gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting and gender frameworks across line ministries to promote a whole-of-government approach to gender equality.

21. Efforts to enhance women's economic empowerment included support for entrepreneurship through tax breaks, strengthening legislation and policies on maternity and paternity leave as well as other measures to alleviate the motherhood penalty, address the unmet need for family planning and support women's safe, orderly and regular labour migration. The role of women in peacemaking efforts was further emphasized by some countries.

22. Representatives reported on ongoing efforts to reduce poverty, including through targeted poverty alleviation programmes aimed at vulnerable groups who were unable to work, such as older persons and persons with disabilities. Efforts had been made to reduce economic poverty as well as multidimensional poverty. It was important to create decent work and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources as a means to reduce poverty, especially among women, persons with disabilities and young people. It was also important to improve skills development, adequate housing, family leave policies and access to basic social services. The Commission called on the private sector to play a role in ensuring decent job creation. Measures towards improved gender-responsive pathways for regular labour migration were highlighted, as was temporary protection for asylum-seekers and refugees.

23. The need for a rights-based approach to ensuring empowerment was emphasized. The importance of rights enshrined in national constitutions in supporting empowerment, inclusion and equality also was highlighted, both in relation to the general population and to specific groups, such as persons with disabilities. The influence of international human rights laws and rights-based strategies such as the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific were highlighted as helping to create an enabling environment for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

24. Social protection was recognized as a key tool for reducing inequalities, with several countries reporting on investments in strengthened social protection, including targeted and universal schemes, and reforms to ensure that social protection schemes reached disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in particular women and girls.

25. Investment in human capital, especially through health and education, was highlighted as both a right and an enabler of empowerment. The Commission was informed of successful measures to increase enrolment rates, in particular among girls, by ensuring free universal early childhood, primary and secondary education and support for tertiary education through, for example, stipends. Other efforts aimed to reform education systems to ensure quality and access, including through promoting innovation and inclusive practices, integrating non-traditional forms of education and guaranteeing education regardless of legal, economic, residence or other status. Further measures were highlighted, such as the inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream education system, early intervention programmes, scholarship programmes and investment in additional human and technical resources to enable school enrolment and completion for children with special needs.

26. Schemes to promote universal health care and specific programmes to increase health coverage for women had resulted in effective reductions in infant mortality and maternal mortality. Representatives reported on specific measures for rural populations and the most marginalized groups to help close the gaps in health access between rural and urban areas.

27. Financial inclusion was a critical form of empowerment to reduce inequality and poverty, especially for women entrepreneurs and members of marginalized groups. Representatives reported on measures to ensure access to credit for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises through mobile financial services and biometric identity cards. Some representatives also reported on programmes to upgrade skills and training for jobseekers to reduce the economic vulnerability of women, girls, youth and persons with disabilities.

28. The importance of active and healthy ageing policies, including social protection for older persons, was highlighted, as well as policies to enhance work opportunities for older persons and empower older persons to take charge of their own health.

29. Partnerships, whole-of-society approaches and participation were important in ensuring empowerment, inclusiveness and equality. Representatives reported on how they had ensured that policies were developed and implemented through consultation and participation with civil society, citizens, the private sector and other stakeholders to ensure effectiveness and social cohesion. Several representatives noted the importance of decentralization in bringing service delivery closer to citizens and enabling their empowerment and participation. Several representatives also noted the importance of international partnerships between countries and United Nations agencies and highlighted the role of measures to promote South-South and triangular cooperation in supporting infrastructure development and capacity-building. Regional cooperation, including through regional and subregional integration processes, had a role in supporting equality, empowerment and inclusiveness. Some representatives also called on developed countries to support developing ones in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly through capacity-building, technology transfer, trade facilitation and access to financial resources.

30. Two representatives particularly emphasized the importance of peaceful environments and stability in the region to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, calling for continuous international assistance in that regard.

31. Public finances must be raised and used in a transparent and effective way to support equality, empowerment and inclusiveness. One representative highlighted the importance of fighting corruption as it undermined economic growth and weakened citizens' faith in the State.

32. To reduce income inequality and support vulnerable groups, several representatives highlighted the importance of progressive taxation and tax breaks for low-income workers.

33. The Commission recognized climate change as a fundamental threat to societies, economies and ecosystems and, thus, to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Noting that the impacts of climate change were most keenly felt by marginalized and vulnerable groups, support for the Geneva Pledge for Human Rights in Climate Action was urged by one representative. Another representative highlighted efforts to build the resilience of vulnerable groups, especially in urban areas.

34. The Commission emphasized the importance of improved regional cooperation and connectivity in raising productivity, employment and sustained inclusive economic growth, and it noted that ensuring a more open, inclusive and balanced regional and world economy is beneficial to all. The Commission further noted the importance of regional cooperation and integration to facilitate the development of connectivity, especially in landlocked developing countries, as well as the need to expand transport, energy, and information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure.

35. The Commission took note of the importance of partnerships to finance infrastructure projects through Governments engaging with the private sector, public-private partnerships and regional cooperation. In that regard, the representative of the Government of Australia announced a commitment to invest 2 billion Australian dollars to support vital infrastructure development in the Pacific region.

36. Some representatives highlighted the role of the Belt and Road Initiative in providing support to strengthened connectivity. The China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor was mentioned as one example of an effort to help to overcome development challenges and landlocked geographical locations and to decentralize economic gains. One representative emphasized the principle of extensive consultation, joint contributions and the shared benefits of cooperation with regard to the Belt and Road Initiative. The Commission was also informed of the decision by the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation to adhere to guidelines of open, green, clean, high-standard, people-centred and high-quality cooperation with regard to the Belt and Road Initiative. One country highlighted a nationwide campaign to create a barrier-free society for all, by enhancing access to the built environment, public transportation, and knowledge, information and communication services. One representative called for regional connectivity initiatives to be based on universally recognized international norms, good governance, transparency and equality, and to follow principles of financial responsibility and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

37. Several representatives from countries with special needs emphasized the specific needs that they faced in empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Small island developing States noted their specific challenges, such as small internal markets, narrow production bases and limited economies of scale, as well as high levels of vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. In response to the challenges of climate change, small island developing States called for a transformation towards resilient economies and societies, human rights-based approaches to climate change, and greater access to climate change financing.

38. Several representatives from least developed countries noted their forthcoming graduation to lower-middle income status, stressing that this represented significant progress but also brought challenges in ensuring continued support, especially given their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. Landlocked developing countries highlighted their ambition to move from being landlocked to land-linked through investment in connectivity to overcome difficulties in accessing international markets. In that regard, the Commission reiterated the importance of various United Nations programmes of actions in addressing challenges, including the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, and the Samoa Pathway for small island developing States.

39. Several representatives highlighted the important role of resilience to disasters and climate change impacts in securing development gains, especially in small developing economies. Several representatives noted the importance of disaster risk reduction, given that increased exposure and vulnerability in the region had unequal impacts on population groups such as older persons, women and persons with disabilities as well as rural and urban residents, and they emphasized the integration of disaster risk reduction in national development plans. Several representatives stressed the importance of regional cooperation in sharing best practices to promote effective and inclusive disaster risk reduction.

40. Several representatives emphasized initiatives undertaken to extend access to affordable and sustainable energy across all segments of the population as a means to foster economic growth as well as inclusion and empowerment of the most marginalized.

41. The Commission was informed by some representatives of their progress towards knowledge- and innovation-driven economies, which fostered new forms of growth and created new opportunities and challenges, and which required openness to ensure the dissemination of new technologies and innovations. It noted the role of science, technology and innovation in empowering people and accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Several representatives reported on initiatives to harness science, technology and innovation to support service delivery and ensure inclusive education. Members and associate members were invited to participate in the Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum scheduled to be held from 10 to 12 June 2019 in Tehran on the theme “Technology Start-ups for Sustainable Development”.

42. Several representatives reported on the ongoing preparations of their voluntary national reviews to be presented during the high-level political forum on sustainable development and expressed appreciation to the secretariat and the wider United Nations system for the support they received in that regard.

43. One representative expressed that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and, consequently, the transition of countries from one level of development to the next, was contingent upon the availability of adequate and timely resources, noting that it was critical to have effective institutions as well as quality statistics, data and information to support such a transition.

44. The Commission recognized the importance of promoting free and open trade and investment, including trade facilitation, for sustainable development and the need for capacity-building in that area. Various representatives stressed the need to uphold a stable, open, free and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system and to strengthen the World Trade Organization (WTO) to make it more relevant and effective to meet the diverse needs of its members.

45. The Commission noted the opinion of one representative that unilateral actions and protectionism caused great harm to the world economy and international order and benefited no one. The representative called for an early conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement and the pursuit of a free trade area in the Asia-Pacific region.

46. The Commission recognized the important contribution of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises to employment generation, innovation and inclusive development and was informed of the initiatives of various countries

and the European Union to develop and promote those enterprises, often with a focus on promoting youth and women's entrepreneurship, including through schemes that provide technical and financial support. The Commission noted the project on catalysing women's entrepreneurship, funded by the Government of Canada, that was implemented by ESCAP in various countries, including countries in the Pacific.

47. The Commission noted the importance of innovation-driven development and the development of a knowledge and digital economy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the initiatives of various countries to promote science, technology and innovation in that regard. In particular, the Commission noted that technology could disrupt ways of doing, thinking and living and it could be used to break "business as usual" habits. One representative called for continued and enhanced innovation and the application and dissemination of new technologies and expressed his country's opposition to the practice of abusing state power to suppress business innovation in other countries, to interfere with business and operations and distort global markets. He called for a fair, just and non-discriminatory environment for international science and technology cooperation and business innovation.

48. Several representatives highlighted their support for the role of ESCAP in fostering sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region, noting that it was the paramount forum for policy coordination and coherence, and that it could play a key role in sharing best practices and implementing the 2030 Agenda. The Commission was informed of the proposal to establish an interregional centre for the Sustainable Development Goals in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to provide support to Central Asia and Afghanistan. The Commission was informed of the recent opening of the Embassy of the Republic of Maldives in Thailand, which would support cooperation between the two countries as well as facilitate engagement with ESCAP.

49. Several representatives noted their support for the ongoing reform of the United Nations development system, including the reform of the resident coordinator system, and recognized that it could help increase effectiveness and support countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. They also noted the ongoing reforms of the regional bodies of the United Nations, including ESCAP.

50. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction noted the importance of resilience efforts, which during the recent Cyclone Fani in India, had prevented not only death but also long-term damage. The Special Representative emphasized the importance of paying attention to the needs of poor and marginalized groups and taking their needs into account, targeting the drivers of vulnerability and ensuring that reconstruction processes were transparent and fair. The Special Representative discussed the need for countries to adopt and implement disaster risk reduction strategies in order to protect and promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

51. The representative of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization emphasized the importance of regional economic cooperation with ESCAP to realize the potential for sustainable socioeconomic development, in particular on energy, trade and ICT. Transportation was highlighted as being of particular importance, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization would continue to implement the memorandum of understanding signed with ESCAP in developing the transport sector.

52. Memorandums of understanding were signed between the secretariat and the International Solar Alliance, the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, and the Multi-Global Navigation Satellite System Asia, and a statement of cooperation was signed with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

53. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the note by the secretariat entitled “Closing the gap: empowerment and inclusion in Asia and the Pacific”.

Agenda item 3

Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries

54. The Commission had before it the note by the secretariat entitled “Executive summary of the Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2019: Structural Transformation and its Role in Reducing Poverty” (ESCAP/75/2) and the note verbale dated 11 March 2019 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia addressed to the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/75/33).

55. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bhutan; China; India; Kazakhstan; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Myanmar; Pakistan; and Russian Federation. A representative of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) also made a statement.

56. The representative of Mongolia presented the outcome document of the Euro-Asian Regional Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024.

57. The High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States made a statement.

58. The Executive Secretary presented the key findings of the *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2019: Structural Transformation and its Role in Reducing Poverty*.

59. Mr. Kunal Sen, Director, United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research, delivered a keynote address in which he underscored the critical role of structural transformation in reducing poverty and inequality, addressing gender equity and creating decent jobs. Mr. Sen noted that the successful experiences of East Asia may be impossible to replicate in countries with special needs and suggested an alternate route to structural transformation that did not rely exclusively on manufacturing. Modern services, such as information technology services, could have desirable properties similar to manufacturing and were more climate friendly. Thus, countries may consider pursuing a more diversified and pragmatic approach to structural transformation to realize its full potential in reducing poverty and addressing inequality.

60. A high-level panel discussion was moderated by Mr. Bob Loughman, Vanuatu. The panellists included Mr. Dionisio da Costa Babo Soares, Timor-Leste; Mr. M.A. Mannan, Bangladesh; Ms. Mereseini Vuniwaqa, Fiji; and Mr. Min Bahadur Shahi, Nepal.

61. In his opening remarks, Mr. Loughman welcomed the participants and briefly introduced the topic and shared experiences from Vanuatu.

62. Mr. Soares informed the Commission that Timor-Leste had already met the criteria for graduation from the least developed country category, but it had requested to defer its graduation. Timor-Leste was highly dependent on its natural resources but its services sector had already surpassed agriculture to become the largest sector for employment. He shared some experiences aimed at promoting structural transformation, such as the effective use of oil revenues to promote agricultural development and assist farmers. Timor-Leste was making efforts to promote diversification, especially through its private sector, and remittances were contributing to strengthening the country's development.

63. Mr. Mannan stated that poverty had been considerably reduced in Bangladesh, however, further efforts would be necessary to ensure the continuation of development progress. In the context of the graduation of Bangladesh from least developed country status in the medium-term, the loss of international support measures, such as preferential market access, could pose a significant challenge during the transition. That was especially relevant given the heightened uncertainty that had been observed in the global trading system. In that regard, it would be important to address vulnerability to external shocks, be they economic or of any other nature.

64. Ms. Vuniwaqa stated that in Fiji, women were more likely to be engaged in the informal sector than men. As informal employment increased the vulnerability of women, addressing it was a top policy priority of her Government. Besides tourism or the blue economy, other activities that represent an opportunity to reduce the vulnerability of women were to provide the possibility for them to engage in agricultural niche projects and green jobs. Bringing women into the formal sector was difficult due to geographical remoteness, particularly within the context of small island developing States. Some of the Government's efforts to empower and engage women in the formal economy included providing annual capacity development trainings that aimed to strengthen financial inclusion and enable tax registration. She highlighted an example of South-South cooperation with India to train women as solar engineers that had yielded good development outcomes.

65. Mr. Shahi stated that Nepal aimed to stimulate structural transformation in the timeframe of the country's 25-year development vision. Structural transformation would be prioritized through initiatives in agriculture and transportation, the promotion of foreign direct investments with a service centre for investors, and social development schemes such as education and health care that would make economic growth more inclusive.

66. The Commission expressed appreciation for the secretariat's successful completion of the Euro-Asian Regional Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 and took note of its outcome. Several representatives of transit countries reiterated their commitments to supporting landlocked developing countries in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action.

67. The Commission expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for supporting countries with special needs, in particular for the analytical work presented in the *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2019: Structural Transformation and its Role in Reducing Poverty*. The Commission acknowledged the importance and relevance of its theme to Asia-Pacific countries with special needs, its analysis and policy recommendations.

68. Despite significant progress, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in the region continued to face structural challenges. Graduating from the least developed country category should be smooth, sustainable and irreversible, and serve the purpose of enhancing resilience against economic vulnerabilities. In that context, the Commission requested the secretariat to continue providing capacity-building assistance to the policymakers of member States, by producing knowledge products and providing a platform for sharing information and exchanging experiences to ensure a smooth transition towards graduation.

69. The Commission highlighted the vulnerability of countries with special needs to climate change and natural disasters and called upon member States to increase preparedness and resilience to external shocks and natural disasters. One representative highlighted financial support provided to countries vulnerable to natural disasters to shift them to the trajectory of sustainable development. Another representative informed the Commission of grant assistance provided to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in the Pacific for disaster relief and to improve local skills for technology transfer within traditional and frontier sectors and especially in the blue economy.

70. The Commission underscored the importance of concerted efforts at the multilateral and regional levels to continue to support least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in successfully implementing their respective programmes of action for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

71. The Commission recognized the critical role of support measures provided to countries with special needs by member States. Such measures included preferential treatment for market access, aid for trade, investment support programmes, official development assistance and South-South cooperation, technological upgrading, stakeholder partnerships and e-commerce platforms. Some representatives noted the role of initiatives such as the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia and the Belt and Road Initiative in providing support to these countries. South-South cooperation for capacity-building was highlighted as a particularly valuable contribution.

72. The representative of UN-Habitat highlighted the need to address the challenges of water quality and sanitation and waste management, as well as developing participatory slum-upgrading strategies, as a prerequisite for the achievement of Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Reducing the proliferation of slums and tackling the issues of resource availability, land management and urban resilience, which were faced by countries with special needs, would require integrated efforts between Governments, United Nations bodies and other partners. Peer learning would be facilitated during the Fifth Pacific Urban Forum to be held in July 2019 and be co-organized by UN-Habitat, the Government of Fiji and other partners.

73. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the executive summary of the Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2019.

74. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission adopted resolution 75/1 on the implementation of the outcome of the Euro-Asian Regional Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024.

Agenda item 4

Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

75. The Commission had before it the note by the secretariat on the summary of progress in the implementation of Commission resolutions (ESCAP/75/3), the note by the secretariat on the summary of the meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission held in the period 2018–2019 (ESCAP/75/4), and the information document on the annual reports of international and intergovernmental organizations provided to the Commission (ESCAP/75/INF/1).

76. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission endorsed the matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention emanating from the meetings of its subsidiary bodies held in the period 2018–2019.

77. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the summary of progress in the implementation of Commission resolutions and the annual reports of international and intergovernmental organizations provided to the Commission.

Sub-item (a)

Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

78. In addition to the documents for consideration common to agenda item 4, the Commission had before it the report of the Sixth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (ESCAP/75/5).

79. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Nepal; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Samoa; and Viet Nam. A representative of the United Nations Volunteers made a statement.

80. The Chair of the Sixth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development presented the report of the Forum.

81. The Commission reiterated its commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It recognized limited success in the region in reducing inequalities, promoting decent work and inclusive economic growth due to structural barriers which were impeding inclusive and equitable development, and stressed the importance of empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality in order to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

82. The Commission emphasized that the Forum was the primary regional venue for the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and provided a regional platform for the exchange of knowledge and best practices, coordinating the implementation of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific and promoting overall regional cooperation and collaboration. The Forum also had a role in sharing experiences on the development of voluntary national reviews. The

secretariat had provided support to some member States in developing voluntary national reviews, including in the area of stakeholder engagement.

83. The Commission highlighted the role of the Forum in providing regional contributions to the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly and aligning national, regional and global action on the Sustainable Development Goals. One representative stressed the need to incorporate lessons from those global events to further strengthen the Forum.

84. Representatives shared their experiences in aligning national strategies, policies and actions plans with the Sustainable Development Goals, including by developing adequate and coordinated institutional mechanisms. They stressed the need to foster social and financial inclusion, and to adopt strategies targeting the poorest and most vulnerable groups, including women, children and people living with disabilities. They highlighted the need to promote participation and multi-stakeholder engagement, opportunities to strengthen the work of parliamentarians and the need to localize the Sustainable Development Goals. Some representatives identified the need for adequate financial resources. One representative emphasized the role of auditing bodies for ensuring accountable, effective and inclusive policies related to the Sustainable Development Goals. The representative of the United Nations Volunteers stressed the high potential of volunteers to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

85. Inclusion at the national level required strengthened monitoring and data collection systems and enhanced availability of disaggregated data. Further areas that required attention to ensure that no one was left behind included improved and more resilient infrastructure and connectivity, and access to basic services, modern energy, industrial development and innovation. Ongoing efforts on social protection, housing, education, nutrition, energy and closing gender gaps were highlighted. One representative underscored the important role of quality education, advanced science and technology, and sustainable agriculture.

86. Countries with special needs, including small island developing States and countries with low income, required specific support given their vulnerability, including to climate change.

87. The important role of regional cooperation was recognized as key to tackling the complex and multifaceted issues in Asia and the Pacific to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

88. The Commission called upon the secretariat to strengthen its collaboration and partnership within the United Nations system to best support its member States and to continue promoting regional collaboration, coordination and connectivity in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. One representative recommended that the secretariat should develop a plan of action and provide recommendations for better methodologies to support countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Another representative specified the need for increased and coordinated funding among development partners.

89. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission endorsed the report of the Sixth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

90. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission adopted resolution 75/2 on committing to strengthening the links between national, regional and global follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific and resolution 75/3 on advancing partnerships within and across regions for the sustainable development of Asia and the Pacific.

91. Subsequent to the adoption of resolution 75/3, the representative of the United States of America expressed her Government's disappointment at the opposition of some members to references highlighting the importance of respecting human rights while protecting sustainable development. She recalled the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993 and the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises (A/73/163).

Sub-item (b)
Social development

92. In addition to the documents for consideration common to agenda item 4, the Commission had before it the report of the Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development (ESCAP/75/6) and the report on the fifth session of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022 (ESCAP/75/7).

93. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; China; India; Pakistan; and Philippines.

94. The Chair of the fifth session of the Committee on Social Development presented on the report of the Committee.

95. The Chair of the Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development presented the report and the Chair's summary of the Midterm Review.

96. Many representatives reaffirmed their Governments' commitment to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development. Several representatives highlighted the importance of monitoring the implementation of the Declaration. One representative reported on the formation of a task team to monitor its implementation.

97. The Commission was informed of examples of successful efforts to reduce neonatal, infant and maternal mortality, increase life expectancy, protect older persons and reduce unwanted and adolescent fertility through the adoption and implementation of laws as well as the provision of health services, including youth-friendly services, comprehensive sexuality education and enhanced family planning to meet existing needs. The extensive engagement of community health workers and a presence at the grassroots level were acknowledged as being instrumental in supporting those processes. Other successes that were reported included progress toward universal immunization, improved sanitation, access to clean water, improved nutrition and educational empowerment. Gender inequalities had been addressed, but much work remained to be done, in particular with regard to secondary education. Nevertheless, further efforts were required to address diverse population and development concerns, including the multidimensional health needs of young people and the need for a life cycle approach to ageing. The

accessibility and expansion of comprehensive sexuality education was particularly highlighted as an important policy area.

98. One representative, while noting that the representative's country's economy significantly benefited from remittances of migrant workers, called for the recognition of human rights, including those related to sexual and reproductive health, of such workers in countries of destination.

99. The Commission noted with concern the large and growing divide among societies and communities and within and between countries in Asia and the Pacific. Women and girls, persons with disabilities, youth and older persons were identified as particularly vulnerable groups. Data gaps on vulnerable groups impeded the monitoring of regional progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

100. The Commission was informed of several examples of good practices to strengthen the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable and marginalized groups in societies and economies of Asia and the Pacific, particularly with respect to empowering women and girls and to ensuring development outcomes benefit persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. A strong national legal framework coupled with investments, including in social protection programmes, were highlighted as key for national action towards eradicating poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Broad-based partnerships as well as South-South and triangular cooperation were further emphasized.

101. The Commission was informed of recent national policies and programmes on promoting women's equal participation in decision-making, improving gender parity in primary and secondary education as well as eliminating violence against women and girls. Several representatives shared their Governments' experience in supporting women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, including through enhanced access to financial services, loans and microcredit, and technology-enabled solutions. Progress had been made in reducing maternal and infant mortality, providing better health and education facilities for women, increasing reproductive health choices and lowering the fertility rate.

102. A number of representatives underlined the importance of the 25-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and underscored their commitment to actively participate in the Asia-Pacific regional review process and the high-level meeting to be convened by ESCAP in November 2019.

103. The Commission was informed of country experiences in building an inclusive society and promoting equal opportunity for persons with disabilities by enacting a comprehensive disability-specific law, implementing various initiatives to advance empowerment and participation of persons with disabilities, as well as collecting reliable and comparable data on disability.

104. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the work of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, which made further contributions to promoting disability inclusion and mainstreaming in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, the importance of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific and the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy, were highlighted as useful tools for guiding policy measures on disability-inclusive development.

105. A number of representatives reiterated their commitment to reducing inequality. Many shared the view that social protection was an effective tool for alleviating poverty and addressing inequality and was, therefore, a core priority area of their Governments.

106. Some representatives shared recent developments in their social protection policy frameworks and strategies for more inclusive and effective social protection systems so that no one would be left behind. Some countries had increased their social protection budgets and had included social protection objectives in their national poverty alleviation programmes. Other representatives highlighted specific social protection programmes, such as cash transfer schemes for pregnant and lactating women, the expansion of public health care, the launch of universal health coverage initiatives and the improvement of national registries to reach the poorest more effectively. A few representatives also expressed their intention to further strengthen their social protection systems, particularly for the most vulnerable groups.

107. Several representatives highlighted steps to improve access to affordable and quality education.

108. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission endorsed the report of the Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development and took note of the Chair's summary contained in annex II.

109. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the report on the fifth session of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.

Sub-item (c)

Environment and development

110. In addition to the documents for consideration common to agenda item 4, the Commission had before it the report of the Governing Council of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization on its fourteenth session (ESCAP/75/8) and the note by the secretariat entitled "Taking action to combat climate change and its impacts: how empowerment leads to sustainable outcomes" (ESCAP/75/9).

111. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; Bhutan; China; Fiji; Japan; Pakistan; Russian Federation; and Thailand. A representative of the Mekong River Commission also delivered a statement.

112. The Chair of the fifth session of the Committee on Environment and Development presented on the report of the Committee.

113. The Chair of the fourteenth session of the Governing Council of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization presented the report of the Governing Council.

114. The Commission noted the environmental crisis faced by Asia and the Pacific that threatened the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including in the areas of climate change, degradation of the ocean's health, marine litter, unsustainable use of natural resources and low resource efficiency, air pollution as well as waste, including in urban areas.

115. The Committee on Environment and Development was the primary forum for engaging stakeholders and creating partnerships to address regional environmental threats and the Committee had a role in harmonizing the environmental policies of member States at the regional and subnational levels, fostering knowledge-sharing on best practices and monitoring regional trends on the environment.

116. The Commission expressed support for the proposal of the Committee on Environment and Development at its fifth session to create a resource-efficiency platform for Asia and the Pacific to promote resource efficiency and a circular economy in the region, while avoiding duplication with existing mechanisms.

117. The Commission highlighted climate change as an area of work that should be enhanced in the subprogramme, given the extreme vulnerabilities of some countries in the region to climate change and to the associated risk of natural disasters. The Commission stressed the need to support developing countries and those with the least capacity to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change and related risks of natural disasters through the provision of finance, capacity-building and support for expediting institutional reforms. One representative requested ESCAP to continue supporting forums and platforms for the sharing of experiences and information on empowering local communities to tackle climate change. Another representative highlighted the important roles of energy, transport, town planning and shifting to climate-resilient agriculture.

118. The Commission highlighted the importance of focusing on oceans and requested members and associate members to continue the momentum on the implementation of resolution 73/5 on the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, in particular by facilitating regional inputs for that Conference which will be held in Portugal in 2020.

119. The Commission was informed of the need to focus on air pollution as a key priority for the region. The North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation was cited as a good example for cross-border collaboration and it was noted that combating air pollution needed such cross-border efforts.

120. One representative noted that, as the United Nations was moving towards an annual budgetary cycle, it was important to keep the subprogramme on environment and development as it contained strategic issues such as sustainable use of natural resources, biodiversity, sustainable urbanization and sustainable consumption and production.

121. One representative highlighted that the region was still facing socioeconomic challenges including poverty, weaknesses in the agricultural value chain and degradation of the natural resource base. In that context, the representative of China expressed appreciation for the activities carried out by the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization, as a subsidiary body of ESCAP, and underscored the financial and in-kind support provided by China for the operations of the Centre as its host country.

122. The Commission was informed that two memorandums of agreement were signed between ESCAP and the State Administration for Market Regulation of China, the Italian National Agency for Agricultural Mechanization and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China,

which were expected to facilitate cooperation in relation to the programmes of the Centre.

123. The representative of Japan noted his country's continued cooperation with the Asian and Pacific Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery initiative led by the Centre. Another representative expressed appreciation for the support provided by the Centre in developing three testing codes for agricultural machinery under that initiative.

124. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission endorsed the report of the Governing Council of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization on its fourteenth session and took note of the note by the secretariat entitled "Taking action to combat climate change and its impacts: how empowerment leads to sustainable outcomes".

125. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission adopted resolution 75/4 on strengthening regional cooperation to tackle air pollution challenges in Asia and the Pacific.

Sub-item (d)
Disaster risk reduction

126. In addition to the documents for consideration common to agenda item 4, the Commission had before it the report of the Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific on its third session (ESCAP/75/10), the Ministerial Declaration on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/75/10/Add.1), the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018–2030) (ESCAP/75/10/Add.2), the report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management on its third session (ESCAP/75/11), the note by the secretariat on addressing disaster resilience through digital and geospatial innovations (ESCAP/75/12) and the note verbale dated 23 April 2019 from the Embassy of Mongolia addressed to the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/75/34).

127. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; China; India; Japan; Pakistan; Philippines; and Thailand.

128. The Commission recognized the importance of advancing the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, and welcomed the efforts taken in that regard. Space science, technology and geospatial information applications had an important role in building resilience and reducing disaster risk, providing accurate monitoring and early warning, facilitating effective response and damage assessment towards achieving the goals and targets of these global frameworks and the Commission expressed appreciation for the outcomes of the Third Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

129. The Commission highlighted the implementation of country-led initiatives and efforts at national and subnational levels, including the effective use of space technology and geospatial information, the review of national disaster management plans, mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and climate change considerations into spatial development plans and building codes, data disaggregation and the development of parametric insurance and resilient infrastructure.

130. The Commission recognized the importance of improving early warning systems to reduce casualties and damage caused by natural hazards. Monitoring and early warning in conjunction with strong legal frameworks, accessible evacuation shelters and other preparedness measures played a role in the success of Bangladesh and India in significantly reducing deaths related to floods and tropical cyclones. The recent success in minimizing the casualties in Bangladesh and India from Cyclone Fani demonstrated the dividends of investments in strengthening early warning systems and regional cooperation through the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones. There were opportunities to develop the capacity of member countries in severe weather forecasting systems to strengthen early warning systems through the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre for Tropical Cyclones Over North Indian Ocean in New Delhi.

131. The Commission expressed its continued commitment to strengthen regional cooperation for space and geospatial information-sharing and applications, and to increase capacity-building, improve tropical monitoring, forecasting and warning services through training, and support collaboration among regional and international organizations, mechanisms and initiatives, such as the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the World Meteorological Organization, the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, Sentinel Asia and Space Applications for Environment.

132. The Commission was informed of country-led initiatives on space and geospatial information applications for disaster risk management and noted with appreciation the contributions offered by several member States for the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018–2030). The Government of China supported the ESCAP Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning and the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development and the Commission expressed appreciation for the offer of the Government of China to contribute and share experiences on several operational systems. The Commission also expressed appreciation for support provided by the Government of India on sharing space-derived data for accurate forecasting of extreme weather events and enhancing technical cooperation and capacity-building through the Indian Space Research Organization. The Commission was further informed of support from the Government of Japan, through the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, for sharing the outcomes of initiatives of countries and their experiences and geospatial information for disaster risk management, climate change and environmental monitoring.

133. The Commission recognized its active role and actions in promoting regional cooperation in early warning systems, space applications and the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018–2030).

134. The representative of Pakistan expressed appreciation for the activities of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management and offered to host the fourth session of its Governing Council in 2019.

135. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission endorsed the report of the Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific on its third session and the report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management on its third session and took note of the note

by the secretariat on addressing disaster resilience through digital and geospatial innovations.

136. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission adopted resolution 75/5 on the implementation of the Ulaanbaatar Declaration of the 2018 Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and resolution 75/6 on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, and the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018–2030).

137. Subsequent to the adoption of resolution 75/5, the representative of the United States reiterated her Government's views on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and noted that her Government had been a strong supporter of disaster risk reduction initiatives designed to reduce the loss of life and the socioeconomic impacts of disasters.

Sub-item (e)
Energy

138. In addition to the documents for consideration common to agenda item 4, the Commission had before it the note by the secretariat entitled “Universal access to energy in Asia and the Pacific: evidence-based strategies to achieve empowerment, inclusiveness and equality through Sustainable Development Goal 7” (ESCAP/75/13).

139. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; China; India; Indonesia; Pakistan; Republic of Korea; and Russian Federation.

140. The Commission recognized access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy as an important factor impacting quality of life and economic development within the region. Increasing energy access would contribute to the reduction of inequality and poverty by positively affecting productivity, economic development, livelihood, health, education, and food and water security.

141. The Commission noted the role of member States in developing policies and actions that were in line with meeting the Sustainable Development Goal target on energy access. The Commission was informed of the progress being made nationally and regionally in providing universal access to electricity. For example, the recent achievement in India of electrifying every village in the country and the continuing efforts to electrify every household. Another representative informed the Commission that grid extensions were not an economically feasible option for expanding electricity access across the country.

142. Regarding access to clean fuels and technologies, one representative informed the Commission that clean cooking technology was a blind spot in energy policy. The representative shared some of the schemes and programmes in place aimed at reducing dependence on traditional biomass cooking, such as improved cooking stoves, household biogas plants and the use of liquefied petroleum gas.

143. The Commission recognized the value of renewable energy in ensuring greater energy security, improving energy access and enhancing employment opportunities. Representatives noted a number of targets and policies aimed at increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix, improving the

investment climate for renewables and facilitating the transition to sustainable energy. Some of the examples included the operationalization of a utility-scale solar power plant and increasing renewable energy capacity as well as intra-State transmission schemes and waste-to-electricity projects.

144. The International Solar Alliance was identified as a unique initiative to promote solar energy globally. The International Solar Alliance had made efforts to reduce the cost of finance and the cost of technology and to mobilize the additional investment needed to deploy large-scale solar installations.

145. The Commission was informed of the improvements in energy efficiency made in the Asia-Pacific region over the last five years. Representatives spoke about the partnerships, policy initiatives and domestic energy-efficiency targets contributing to the reduction of energy intensity.

146. The Commission was informed of initiatives to decarbonize the transport sector through the increase of biodiesel in the fuel mix and the implementation of policies aimed at accelerating the widespread use of electric vehicles for road transport.

147. The Commission noted that coal, oil and natural gas continued to play an important role in the region's energy mix, and representatives spoke about initiatives to increase the supply of conventional fuels and to intensify exploration activities to identify fossil fuel resources. One representative informed the Commission of actions taken to phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and redirect the funds to the health, education and infrastructure sectors.

148. The Commission recognized the role of regional interconnectivity in ensuring energy security. One representative noted the importance of implementing the outcomes of the Second Asian and Pacific Energy Forum in accordance with Commission resolution 74/9. The Commission noted the work of the Expert Working Group on Energy Connectivity and its commitment to developing a road map on energy interconnectivity.

149. Despite advances in energy transformation, increases in energy generation and progress towards universal energy access in recent years, representatives identified challenges to and gaps in reaching some of the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 7. The following areas were identified as barriers to implementing the action plan for Sustainable Development Goal 7: technical and financial constraints, inadequate investment in energy infrastructure, inadequate integration of electricity grids supplied by conventional and renewable energy, and inadequate research and development into energy efficiency.

150. The Commission recognized the voluntary contribution of resources from the Government of the Russian Federation for technical assistance to support members in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal on energy, as well as its continued support for the Asia Pacific Energy Portal, a website providing energy statistics, policies and energy infrastructure data.

151. The rapid development of the energy sector and economies in the Asia-Pacific region required constant attention in order to respond adequately and in a timely manner to energy challenges and to adopt necessary measures to maintain cooperation in the region. The Commission recognized the value of cooperation both regionally and globally, and representatives stated their interest in mutually beneficial cooperation and the sharing of experiences and best practices with regard to energy.

152. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the note by the secretariat entitled “Universal access to energy in Asia and the Pacific: evidence-based strategies to achieve empowerment, inclusiveness and equality through Sustainable Development Goal 7”.

Sub-item (f)
Transport

153. In addition to the documents for consideration common to agenda item 4, the Commission had before it the note by the secretariat on sustainable transport as an engine for greater empowerment, inclusiveness and equality in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/75/14).

154. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; China; India; Kazakhstan; Pakistan; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

155. The Chair of the fifth session of the Committee on Transport presented on the report of the Committee.

156. The Commission stressed the important role of transport connectivity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular with respect to landlocked developing countries. In line with the theme topic of the session, the Commission recognized the positive impacts of transport in enhancing inclusive development and reducing inequality, notably by improving accessibility and quality of life.

157. The Commission recalled the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference on Transport held in Moscow in December 2016, including the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021), reiterated that strengthened transport connectivity had the potential to foster regional economic cooperation and integration, and recognized the important role of the secretariat in promoting and improving regional transport connectivity.

158. The Commission recognized that the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway Network, the Trans-Asian Railway Network and Dry Ports were major building blocks in the realization of the vision of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system for the region. The Commission also acknowledged the potential of the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network in enhancing trade and economic relationships among ESCAP members and encouraged parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network to consider accession to the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network.

159. The Commission was apprised of various regional, subregional and national initiatives aimed at enhancing regional transport infrastructure and operational connectivity.

160. In the area of road transport, the Commission took note of member States’ efforts to further enhance international road transport connectivity, including the implementation of projects to further expand the Asian Highway network and the negotiation and implementation of motor vehicle agreements aimed at addressing the non-physical barriers to international road transport such as the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicles Agreement; the India-Myanmar-Thailand Motor Vehicles Agreement; and the Bay of Bengal

Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation Motor Vehicle Agreement.

161. Despite the progress made, more efforts were needed to enhance operational transport connectivity through the harmonization of rules and regulations for international road transport, further liberalization of traffic rights for cross-border road transport and specific measures aimed at reducing negative externalities of transport operations, notably in the area of road safety. In that context, the Commission noted the request for support for member States through knowledge transfer and capacity-building activities, in particular in areas pertaining to the international legal regime for the facilitation of cross-border road transport.

162. With regard to railway transport, the Commission welcomed member States' initiatives to increase the volume of cross-border and transit rail transport and to establish efficient railway networks through (a) the expansion and modernization of railways, including those along the Trans-Asian Railway network; (b) the development of an intercity railway network; (c) the improvement of connections between seaports and railways; (d) the construction of dedicated railway freight corridors; and (e) the commercialization of railway corridors.

163. The Commission reaffirmed the importance of the harmonization of rules and regulations for international railway transport to enhance technical, operational and legal interoperability and noted the request for the development of guidelines or a policy framework as well as capacity-building activities for efficient cross border railway transport to ensure continued progress in the area of railway transport.

164. The Commission further recognized the important role of dry ports in achieving seamless transport connectivity and highlighted the need to further facilitate multimodal transport. In that context, the Commission was informed of the implementation of the projects to strengthen the institutional framework for dry port development in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam, as well as the projects to enhance the efficiency of intermodal transport operations in Asia, financed by the Governments of the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, respectively, and took note of the planned activities aimed at improving the international legal framework for multimodal transport.

165. With regard to maritime connectivity, the Commission noted the progress made by a number of member States in increasing the efficiency of maritime transport and expanding and modernizing port infrastructure and recognized the need to continue improving the regional maritime navigation system to address the growing concerns over maritime safety.

166. The Commission welcomed the measures aimed at developing rail and waterborne transport, noting that they represented a regional effort to enhance the sustainability of freight transport by strengthening the intermodal and integrated approach to regional transport connectivity. In that context, the Commission acknowledged efforts to decarbonize transport systems through measures which increased the share of rail in freight and passenger transport.

167. The Commission noted the rapid increase in the volume of goods transported between Asia and Europe by land and underscored the need to enhance Euro-Asian transport linkages to reduce transit time and the cost of interregional freight. The Commission noted the interregional dialogue on transport connectivity between Asia and Europe, including the outcome of the

dedicated expert group meeting held in Bangkok in January 2019, and expressed support for the secretariat's further work to enhance interregional coordination on transport between Asia and Europe.

168. The Commission underscored the need for safe, efficient, inclusive and green transport systems to ensure sustainable development and recognized that innovative and modern technologies, including intelligent transport systems, could play an important role in achieving that aim. The Commission was apprised of efforts to deploy intelligent transport system applications in the region, such as passenger information and automatic toll collection systems.

169. The Commission expressed serious concern over the economic and social impact of road traffic crashes and emphasized the need for effective policies to improve road safety. The Commission reaffirmed that the updated Regional Road Safety Goals and Targets for Asia and the Pacific 2016–2020, adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Transport, was a useful guideline for member States to achieve the road safety-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund.

170. The Commission was apprised of road safety initiatives being implemented by member States, including the creation and implementation of national road safety programmes, the establishment of road safety councils and committees at national and local levels, and the implementation of black spot surveys to improve road infrastructure safety. The Commission also noted the requests for assistance in developing accident data analysis and management systems, facilitating accession to the Convention on Road Traffic and the Convention on Road Signs and Signals, and building technical capacity to improve road safety through the sharing of best practices.

171. The secretariat would organize the 2020 Asia-Pacific sustainable urban transport meeting with support from the Government of the Russian Federation as a follow-up to the outcomes of the High-level International Conference “City and Transport: Safety, Efficiency, and Sustainability”, held in Khabarovsk, Russian Federation, on 4 and 5 September 2017.

172. The Commission highlighted the need to strengthen the technical capacities of transport officials and noted the request for support for member States in that area through transport education and research programmes on sustainable transport development.

173. The Commission acknowledged the generous financial contributions of the Governments of China, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation to support the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021), and welcomed their commitment to continuing such support.

174. The representative of China extended an invitation to the second Global Conference on Sustainable Transport, to be held in Beijing in May 2020.

175. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the note by the secretariat on sustainable transport as an engine for greater empowerment, inclusiveness and equality in Asia and the Pacific.

Sub-item (g)**Macroeconomic policy, poverty reduction and financing for development**

176. In addition to the documents for consideration common to agenda item 4, the Commission had before it the note by the secretariat on thinking beyond economic growth to empower people, take care of the planet and pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (ESCAP/75/15).

177. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; China; India; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; and Philippines.

178. The Commission called for strengthened cooperation in the area of public-private partnerships and infrastructure financing through experience-sharing and capacity-building activities. The Commission also reaffirmed the secretariat's role in capacity-building and policy support to aid member States in their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

179. While many countries had experienced strong growth in the region, it had not translated into sufficient reduction in poverty and inequality. In order to mainstream the progress of marginalized groups, countries needed to develop effective policies, legislative frameworks and strong institutions. In that regard, the Commission recognized the efforts of several member States to align their national planning and investment programmes with medium-term fiscal strategies and the 2030 Agenda and to estimate the additional investment required for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

180. The Commission emphasized the need for monetary and fiscal policies that supported inclusive growth while ensuring macroeconomic stability and maintaining fiscal discipline. The Commission highlighted the importance of improving public expenditure efficiency and revenue collection to preserve fiscal resources in order to fund the expansion of social services and infrastructure investment while keeping government debt at manageable levels.

181. On the expenditure side of fiscal policy, the Commission highlighted that investing in people by enhancing access to education, skills training, health care and social protection was critical to reducing poverty and building human capital. The Commission also stressed the importance of investing in infrastructure and in the planet, noting that the latter could deliver co-benefits, as shown by increases in agricultural productivity made possible by improved water management.

182. On the revenue side of fiscal policy, the Commission recognized the importance of tax revenues and a solid fiscal base for the effective pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Commission took note of recent comprehensive tax reforms by member States to rationalize tax systems and strengthen public revenues, which aimed at improving the efficiency of tax collection, formalizing the informal economy, and making taxes more equitable, simple and effective. Special tax credit arrangements could be used to promote essential investments, such as in infrastructure, and the Commission highlighted the potential of new technologies, such as biometric-based identification systems, to significantly improve the delivery of public benefits and transfers.

183. The Commission was informed of recent country initiatives and policies to strengthen South-South cooperation. Such initiatives included the establishment of a development fund dedicated to least developed countries,

landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, strengthening national development cooperation policies to enhance the efficiency of mobilizing and utilizing external resources, and the establishment of the Green Finance Task Force to plan the development and financing of green infrastructure projects, as well as to expand access to green financial instruments.

184. The Commission highlighted the critical role of financial inclusion in supporting development, reducing inequality and enhancing the well-being of society, and it took note of recent initiatives by member States to facilitate access to financial products such as credit and insurance. The Commission noted the importance of making Governments more responsive to the needs of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in order to facilitate their access to digital finance tools, such as peer-to-peer lending, equity crowdfunding, merchant and e-commerce finance, and invoice finance. In that regard, the Commission highlighted mobile banking as a success story not only in facilitating financial inclusion but also in bridging the technological divide. Policies aimed at enhancing access to education and social protection for marginalized and underprivileged groups in society could boost social and financial inclusion, and the Commission highlighted the importance of enhancing women's access to financial services within national financial inclusion strategies.

185. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the note by the secretariat on thinking beyond economic growth to empower people, take care of the planet and pursue the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sub-item (h)

Trade and investment

186. In addition to the documents for consideration common to agenda item 4, the Commission had before it the report of the 5th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation (ESCAP/75/16) and the note by the secretariat on growing challenges for trade and investment (ESCAP/75/17).

187. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; China; India; Japan; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; and Russian Federation.

188. The Chair of the sixth session of the Committee on Trade and Investment presented on the report of the Committee.

189. The Commission recognized the importance of trade and investment for sustainable development and the need to design appropriate trade and foreign direct investment policies to mobilize resources for sectors that provided the greatest benefits in terms of sustainable development. One representative informed the Commission that his country was currently working on the creation of a comprehensive trade policy and had already signed some regional free and preferential trade agreements, while others were in process. Those initiatives would help his country liberalize trade in support of the Sustainable Development Goals by creating opportunities in export-led industries.

190. The Commission noted with concern global trade tensions and uncertainties, including the trend of rising trade protectionism. Some representatives stressed the need to uphold a rule-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system and strengthen and reform

WTO in a transparent manner to make it more relevant and effective in order to meet the interests and concerns of developing members, including the specific trade challenges of countries graduating from the least developed countries category.

191. The Commission noted the opinion of two representatives that unilateral actions towards trade protectionism and politically motivated trade sanctions caused great harm to the world economy and international order and would generate no winners. One representative called on ESCAP to uphold and promote the principles of international cooperation and multilateralism, for an early conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, and for pursuing a free trade area in the Asia-Pacific region.

192. The Commission emphasized the importance of transparency with respect to non-tariff measures in order to bring down the costs involved in compliance with non-tariff measures for all stakeholders.

193. The Commission, recognizing the wide digital divide in the region, noted the need for capacity-building initiatives, the creation of digital infrastructure and the facilitation of trading of products of least developed countries through e-commerce platforms. One representative thanked the secretariat for assistance in drafting e-commerce legislation.

194. The Commission was informed of the efforts of various member States to improve the ease and lower the cost of doing business, including reducing red tape, ensuring quality infrastructure and logistics, including automation and electronic data exchange, ensuring predictability and efficiency in production, providing incentives to new sectors, establishing special economic zones for local and foreign investment, and providing financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises. In that context, one representative called for effective public-private partnerships to improve the business climate and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

195. One representative informed the Commission of important regional cooperation initiatives involving his country, including the Eurasian Economic Union and the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Russian Federation, that helped to integrate Siberia into the wider Asian and Pacific region.

196. The Commission was informed of the commitment of one member State to continue cooperation with other countries of the region towards implementation and expansion of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and early conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement.

197. Several representatives spoke about the importance of trade facilitation for enhanced trade and investment and economic growth as well as of related agreements such as the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of WTO and the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. Various member States were implementing the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and had either signed or were taking steps towards accession to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. One representative called on other member States to accede to or ratify the Framework Agreement as soon as possible.

198. The next Asia-Pacific Business Forum would be hosted by Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby on 20 and 21 June 2019 and all ESCAP members and associate members were invited to attend.

199. One representative spoke about the need for the creation of political will through partnerships at meetings of the Group of Seven and the Group of 20, United Nations high-level meetings or other meetings to promote innovative financing mechanisms, such as impact investment, blended finance and international solidarity levy, and that continued consideration of that issue at the international level was needed.

200. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the report of the 5th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation and the note by the secretariat on growing challenges for trade and investment.

Sub-item (i)

Information and communications technology, science, technology and innovation

201. In addition to the documents for consideration common to agenda item 4, the Commission had before it the report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development on its thirteenth session (ESCAP/75/18), the report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology on its fourteenth session (ESCAP/75/19), the note by the secretariat on digital connectivity and the digital economy (ESCAP/75/20), the Master Plan for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway, 2019–2022 (ESCAP/75/INF/5), and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Regional Cooperation Framework Document, 2019–2022 (ESCAP/75/INF/6).

202. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; Bhutan; China; India; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Sri Lanka; and Thailand.

203. The Vice-Chair of the second session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation presented on the report of the Committee.

204. The Chair of the fourteenth session of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology presented the report of the Governing Council.

205. The Commission recognized that information and communications technology, science, technology and innovation were key means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and vital to preparing for the fourth industrial revolution, digital transformation and economic growth in all industries.

206. Regional cooperation on emerging technologies, knowledge-sharing, exchange of best practices and capacity-building to formulate science, technology and innovation policies were needed, and the Commission highlighted the need to work on new metrics and indicators for measuring science, technology and innovation performance.

207. The Commission noted interregional and intraregional disparities in human capital, particularly among women, insufficient economic resources and restricted access to new technologies, which often impeded the full realization of the technological potential of developing countries. If not addressed urgently, the growing digital divide could further deepen the social and economic inequalities in Asia and the Pacific. One representative welcomed the Innovation Challenge Fund which focused on supporting

women entrepreneurs by promoting access to finance for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises with technology-enabled solutions.

208. Broadband Internet enhanced access to useful information on education and health, as well as e-commerce and government services, leading to improvement in the well-being of individuals, communities and peoples. Developing ICT backbone infrastructure was key to digital transformation.

209. The Commission noted the continuing importance of a regional cooperation platform on promoting ICT connectivity, including, for example, the timely implementation of the Master Plan for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Regional Cooperation Framework Document, for sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and improving the quality of lives through various means such as enabling policies, national digital programmes and infrastructure sharing. One representative requested the secretariat to accelerate the development of Asia-Pacific information superhighway subregional projects and associated research on co-deployment, broadband connectivity and Internet traffic management, among others.

210. The Commission noted the importance of ICT technical skills and statistics for monitoring progress while maximizing the opportunities presented by the digital economy.

211. The implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative could focus on conducting detailed feasibility studies in key areas such as cross-border connectivity, ICT network resilience to natural disasters, cyber security, the digital divide, including its gendered aspects, financing mechanisms and co-deployment.

212. Several representatives emphasized the importance of building and strengthening human and institutional capacities for the use of ICT to leverage digital technologies for inclusive and sustainable development. They also stressed the important role of the regional institutions, namely the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology and the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development, in regional cooperation, expert exchange, knowledge-sharing and research on digital economy.

213. The Commission expressed its appreciation of and support for the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology, stressing the importance of the Centre's capacity-building work on science, technology and innovation policy, the diffusion and transfer of new technologies, promoting knowledge-sharing and facilitating regional cooperation.

214. One representative expressed appreciation for the Centre's support for developing a national technology request database which would facilitate transfer of technology to the cottage and small industry as well as for the organization of a regional workshop to enhance the capacity of stakeholders in technology transfer and commercialization.

215. The representative of the host country of the Centre said the Centre was considered a prestigious regional institution which provided important support to member States to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The representative expressed satisfaction with regard to hosting the Centre for the past 42 years and announced the host country's continued support by pledging an increase of its annual voluntary financial contributions to \$400,000 per year from the current level of \$200,000 per year. The representative encouraged

other member States to increase their voluntary contributions to a level in line with the Governing Council decision of 2009.

216. The representative of the host country of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development recognized the contribution of the Centre with respect to its capacity development work in the region and the flagship training programmes for policymakers, women and youth. The representative also welcomed the Centre's efforts to strengthen policymakers' capacity in the areas of data-driven governance, information security and privacy in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Information and Communication Technology.

217. The representative reaffirmed the host country's continued financial and operational support to the Centre and called for strengthening partnership with member States to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

218. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission endorsed the report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development on its thirteenth session and the report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology on its fourteenth session, and took note of the note by the secretariat on digital connectivity and the digital economy.

219. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission adopted resolution 75/7 on advancing the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative through regional cooperation and resolution 75/8 on advancing science, technology and innovation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

Sub-item (j) Statistics

220. In addition to the documents for consideration common to agenda item 4, the Commission had before it the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind (ESCAP/75/4/Add.1), the report of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its fourteenth session (ESCAP/75/21), the report on the work of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/75/22), and the note by the secretariat entitled "Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: challenges and emerging solutions in Asia and the Pacific" (ESCAP/75/23).

221. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: India; Japan; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Russian Federation; Samoa; and Thailand.

222. The Chair of the sixth session of the Committee on Statistics presented on the report of the Committee.

223. The Commission stressed the importance of high quality, timely and reliable official statistics to monitor the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and for strengthening evidence-based policymaking. The Commission welcomed the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind. The Declaration would help to garner political support to strengthen investment in national statistical systems to produce high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated statistics for evidence-based policymaking.

224. The Commission took note of the initiatives of member States to identify data gaps and enhance data coverage and accessibility. They included providing access to databases of official statistics, integrating innovative data into official statistics, mainstreaming administrative data with official statistics and the development of a national strategy on statistics to ensure required data was available to users and policymakers. One representative stressed the continuing support of development partners in the area of big data initiatives to derive official statistics from innovative sources.

225. Several member States had made progress in the implementation of civil registration-based identification and the production of vital statistics. The Commission noted the preparations and commitments made by member States in preparation for the midpoint of the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, 2015–2024, and the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

226. The Commission expressed appreciation for the secretariat’s capacity-building work for the production and dissemination of official statistics, environment and natural resource statistics, Sustainable Development Goal monitoring and reporting, and advocacy for strengthened national statistical systems for evidence-based decision-making.

227. The secretariat was congratulated on the *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2019* and on the Asia-Pacific SDG Gateway as an accessible and user-friendly tool to showcase progress towards the 2030 Agenda at national, subregional and regional levels. They provided evidence of prevailing data gaps in the region and the importance of strengthened national statistical systems.

228. One representative thanked the secretariat for support to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and expressed interest in knowledge- and experience-sharing activities. The representative stressed the importance of the continued support from development partners for capacity-building activities to address data gaps with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals.

229. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the secretariat’s work in implementing the tool “Every policy is connected” (EPIC), by facilitating dialogue between policymakers, users and data producers. Several Governments had made progress in using the tool to identify issues that required policy action and matching target beneficiaries with relevant disaggregated data and statistics.

230. The Commission also expressed its appreciation for the work of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific for capacity-building with official statisticians through a variety of training programmes tailored to individual country needs to produce high-quality statistics. The Commission recognized the Institute’s contribution to developing the requisite skills set with regard to the Committee on Statistics and the document entitled “Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community” and stressed the importance of continuing that support for national statistical capacity development.

231. The representative of the host country of the Institute requested that the secretariat fill the vacant lecturer posts at the requested level to ensure the effective implementation of the Institute’s programme of work. The representative expressed the host country’s appreciation for the work of the

Institute as the secretariat of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific, ensuring partnership among the training institutions and information-sharing and coordinating training activities in the region. The representative also expressed the host country's continued support for implementing the programme of the Institute.

232. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission endorsed the report of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific on its fourteenth session and took note of the note by the secretariat entitled "Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: challenges and emerging solutions in Asia and the Pacific" (ESCAP/75/23).

233. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the report on the work of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific and approved the list of Regional Steering Group members for the second period (2020–2024).

234. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission adopted resolution 75/9 on the implementation of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind.

Agenda item 5

Subregional perspectives on the theme topic: "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality"

235. The Commission had before it the report of the Governing Council of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia on its thirteenth session (ESCAP/75/24) and the note by the secretariat on subregional perspectives on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/75/25).

236. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; Bhutan; Fiji; India; Kazakhstan; Nepal; Pakistan; Samoa; and Tuvalu.

237. The Executive Secretary gave introductory remarks before a dialogue among representatives of the following subregional organizations and groupings: Ms. Usana Berananda, on behalf of Thailand as Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations; Mr. Pankaj Hazarika, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation; Mr. Dionisio da Costa Babo Soares, on behalf of Group of Seven Plus; Mr. Tuguldur Baajikhuu, Greater Tumen Initiative; Mr. Sione Tekiteki, Pacific Islands Forum secretariat; Mr. Vladimir Potapenko, Shanghai Cooperation Organization; Mr. Chanchal Sarkar, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation; and Mr. Lee Jong-heon, Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat.

238. The panellists highlighted the diverse development context across the subregions, each of which had a distinct set of challenges and priorities for cooperation. In South-East Asia, the emphasis was on delivering on the priority areas of complementarity between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda in view of the need to bridge development gaps between member States and better address cross-cutting issues such as connectivity and climate change. For the Pacific, realizing the Blue Pacific initiative and addressing the challenges of climate change, disaster risks and deteriorating ocean health were identified as priority issues. For North-East Asia, a long-term vision of promoting seamless trade and transport across borders was deemed important, while for South Asia, emphasis was placed on facilitating trade growth and investment, improving

data and statistics and building the capacity of countries graduating from the least developed countries category. For the members of the Group of Seven Plus, conflict resolution and partnerships for peacebuilding and fragility assessment were key priorities.

239. The panellists also called upon ESCAP to continue to offer a platform to discuss possible cooperation among member States, their organizations and groupings, and the United Nations. They also requested that ESCAP provide opportunities for brainstorming, information-sharing, peer learning and capacity-building in the activities of their organizations and the United Nations in order to promote synergy and reduce duplication. The panellists welcomed the secretariat's efforts to promote dialogue for cooperation between the subregional organizations and groupings and invited the secretariat to continue providing technical assistance, producing theme studies based on the subregions' priorities and facilitating dialogues among and within subregions.

240. Ms. Berananda noted that the synergies between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda were highlighted in the Complementarities Initiative, and a related report identified five priority areas for cooperation: poverty eradication; infrastructure and connectivity; sustainable management of natural resources; sustainable consumption and production; and resilience. ASEAN planned to launch the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue in Bangkok in November 2019. She shared the willingness of ASEAN to share its experiences with other subregional organizations, including through the new Centre with the secretariat's support.

241. Mr. Soares stated that unless the members of the Group of Seven Plus were able to address conflict, poverty, natural disaster, challenges for peace keeping and military-humanitarian development issues, meeting the Sustainable Development Goals would be impossible as the Group also had lagged in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Mr. Soares said that the Group had benefitted from its engagement with the United Nations, as some of the conflicts were resolved, elections were held successfully and democratic governments were formed. He noted the importance of statistics and that the lack of data was another challenge for countries preparing to create evidence-based policies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. He invited ESCAP and other regional forums to assist the Group of Seven Plus through the exchange of best practices and by providing tailor-made capacity-building programmes.

242. Mr. Tekiteki spoke about the recent visit of the Secretary-General to the Pacific and about the issues of climate change, oceans and social inclusion as key priorities of the Pacific subregion. The aim of the Blue Pacific initiative was to recognize the potential and wealth of oceans, and he emphasized the need for stronger cooperation and commitment to address the key threats posed by climate change and unsustainable and illegal fisheries practice. Mr. Tekiteki noted key subregional efforts such as the Boe Declaration on Regional Security, in which climate change was recognized as the key security concern of the Pacific. He suggested closer cooperation between ESCAP and subregional organizations and among subregional organizations to deal with climate change, disaster risk reduction, and the sustainable management and use of the oceans. Mr. Tekiteki also characterized the Pacific subregion as congested, with many international, regional and subregional organizations pursuing programme funding and discrete organizational agendas. He also stressed the need for coherence and coordination in the Pacific, where the administrations were small with constrained capacities, and where the inability of development partners to coordinate and undertake joint efforts imposed a

significant burden on member States. In moving forward, they needed to also start looking into joint agreements on challenges, priorities and delivery mechanisms between regional and subregional commissions and organizations.

243. Mr. Baajikhoo highlighted the significance of intergovernmental coordination for improving regional transport corridors, including cross-border infrastructure, and harmonizing regulatory systems for freer movement of goods and people. Subregional cooperation bodies could come up with structures for facilitating and developing seamless linkages between subregional corridors that served as a platform to advance efforts in harmonizing regulatory systems. He also emphasized the benefit of replicating good subregional processes and practices in other subregions and the importance of ESCAP in bringing subregional organizations together to facilitate such dialogue. He also expressed his expectation for more institutionalized and comprehensive cooperation between ESCAP and the Greater Tumen Initiative for harnessing complementarities.

244. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation facilitated cooperation in trade, agriculture, rural development, environment and climate change, connectivity and other important issues. Mr. Sarkar expressed concern that while the subregion was the fastest growing in Asia and the Pacific, its share of global poverty was very high and economic growth had not created enough employment opportunities. He emphasized the important role of statistics in helping countries to formulate evidence-based policy as well as evaluate their performance of various indicators. Mr. Sarkar reiterated that ESCAP had a key role to play in bringing the subregional organizations into one platform. He stressed the importance of exchanging information among various regional organizations and requested ESCAP to include that type of event in its work plan. Another area where ESCAP could assist was the capacity-building of subregional institutions, given their diverse nature and memberships. Research, exchange programmes and cooperation on new and emerging areas could be attempted through a project-based approach.

245. Mr. Lee expressed concerns about protectionism and “slowbalization,” a new phenomenon of shrinking capital flow and global value chains that was replacing globalization. He highlighted the importance of maintaining regional economic governance by increasing inter-connectivity within and between regions. He underlined the role of ESCAP in building a connecting bridge by organizing subregional dialogues that would provide opportunities for representatives of subregional organizations and stakeholders to discuss the future vision of the Asian and Pacific region.

246. Mr. Hazarika pointed out that the members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation were working on 14 sectors for cooperation, including trade, investment, technology, energy, human development, tourism and transport. His organization was working towards signing a memorandum of understanding with ESCAP. Subregional organizations with a cooperation mechanism like the one between ASEAN and the United Nations would be more effective to advance work on the Sustainable Development Goals. He recommended that ESCAP should conduct a comprehensive study on the regional organizations to see if the intended objectives of their master plans, agreements and frameworks were achieved and to share with all the recommendations as to how the synergies between various regional organizations could be developed.

247. Mr. Potapenko emphasized the importance of regional economic cooperation and integration for shared prosperity for the member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, especially in the landlocked developing countries in the Central Asian region. He highlighted several initiatives of the Organization, including the Agreement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States on the Facilitation of International Road Transport. He invited ESCAP to carry out joint projects, including the development of a railway transport agreement, with the Organization.

248. The Commission acknowledged the contributions of the secretariat and its subregional offices to the facilitation of regional and subregional dialogues and knowledge-sharing. One representative noted the relevance of regional and subregional forums for addressing region-specific and subregional issues that might require collective action – such as trade, fiscal policies, technology, migration and climate change – and the Commission’s role in strengthening system-wide reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level in line with the reform of the United Nations development system.

249. The Commission noted that, considering South Asia’s large population and overall contribution to the global gross domestic product, the 2030 Agenda could not be implemented without the countries in the subregion achieving the Sustainable Development Goal targets. Representatives shared experiences in the application of tools to measure national progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which could be shared with other countries in the region. The Commission further welcomed opportunities to share best practices and knowledge between subregions in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, particularly in the case of countries graduating from the least developed countries category.

250. The Commission emphasized the threats of climate change to Pacific small island developing States and the need to build resilience, improve disaster risk reduction, and enhance the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources. The Commission also emphasized the need to strengthen data collection and national statistics and to develop genuine and strategic regional partnerships for the promotion of green growth, renewable energy, disaster risk reduction and disaster recovery.

251. The Commission reiterated the commitments to strengthening subregional cooperation and called on the secretariat to continue providing technical assistance to subregional organizations and promoting opportunities for peer learning and knowledge-sharing across subregions.

252. The Commission was informed of the activities of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia and a plan to establish a secretariat for the Programme to facilitate regional cooperation and integration in the North and Central Asia subregion.

253. The Pacific faced a unique challenge as it was a vast oceanic region with high transportation and communications costs, small and fragmented populations and economies, and increasing vulnerabilities to global economic shocks and climate-related disasters. A stronger focus was needed on risk and resilience when designing strategies for financing development and building adaptive capacities. Opportunities in green growth, renewable energy, fisheries, tourism and niche agriculture were highlighted. Also highlighted was the need to take advantage of advances in ICT and connectivity, including sustainable transport, to enable more economic opportunities, equality and empowerment, in particular with respect to gender, youth, education, health, disability and culture.

254. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission endorsed the report of the Governing Council of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia on its thirteenth session and took note of the note by the secretariat on subregional perspectives on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality in Asia and the Pacific.

Agenda item 6
Management issues

255. The Executive Secretary made an introductory statement on management issues.

Sub-item (a)
Proposed programme plan for 2020

256. The Commission had before it the proposed programme plan for 2020 (ESCAP/75/26) and the supplementary information on the programme plan and performance information (ESCAP/75/INF/2).

257. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission endorsed the proposed programme plan for 2020 and took note of the supplementary information on the programme plan and performance information.

258. Subsequent to the endorsement of the proposed programme plan for 2020, the representative of the United States of America stated that her Government joined the consensus on the proposed programme plan for 2020 but had concerns about some projects and partnerships. She encouraged the secretariat to consult early, extensively and transparently with member States in the plan's implementation. Moreover, her Government supported a clearer articulation of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. With respect to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, she stated that her Government did not support the initiative and reiterated her Government's position on acting in its sovereign interest, including on trade matters. She also shared her Government's view on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which should recognize national policies and priorities and must respect and be without prejudice to the independent mandates of other processes and institutions.

259. The representative of India informed the Commission that her Government joined the consensus on the proposed programme plan for 2020 and would submit its views on the proposed programme plan to the secretariat.

Sub-item (b)
Programme changes for the biennium 2018–2019

260. The Commission had before it the note by the secretariat on programme changes for the biennium 2018–2019 (ESCAP/75/27).

261. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission endorsed the proposed programme changes for the biennium 2018–2019.

Sub-item (c)**Overview of partnerships, extrabudgetary contributions and capacity development**

262. The Commission had before it the note by the secretariat on the overview of partnerships, extrabudgetary contributions and capacity development (ESCAP/75/28).

263. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; India; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; and Thailand.

264. The Commission noted that the total cash contributions received by ESCAP in 2018 for technical cooperation work amounted to \$27.4 million, of which \$17.5 million came from bilateral donors, which remained the main extrabudgetary source of funding.

265. The representative of Bangladesh expressed support for the secretariat's programmes and activities and expressed the intention of the Government of Bangladesh to continue contributing funds for ESCAP regional institutions and to consider an increase in contributions.

266. The representative of Cambodia noted the vital role of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in promoting sustainability through agro-ecological practices, agricultural conservation and regional cooperation in the area of agricultural mechanization. The representative also noted that his country had contributed to and hosted several of the Centre's events and expressed his Government's commitment to supporting the work of the regional institutions of ESCAP, including the Centre, through in-kind and budgetary contributions.

267. The representative of the Republic of Korea noted that her Government had been strongly supporting the work of ESCAP and was one of its major donors both in cash and in-kind contributions. Her Government intended to make a contribution in 2019 in a similar amount to that contributed in 2018.

268. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the note by the secretariat on the overview of partnerships, extrabudgetary contributions and capacity development and expressed its appreciation for the pledges amounting to approximately \$5.7 million for 2019 from members and associate members: Brunei Darussalam; China; India; Indonesia; Japan; Macao, China; and Thailand.

Sub-item (d)**Report on the evaluation of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology**

269. The Commission had before it the report on the evaluation of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (ESCAP/75/29) and information document on the evaluation of the Centre (ESCAP/75/INF/3).

270. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: China; India; and United States of America.

271. The representatives of India welcomed the finding that the mandate of the Centre remained relevant in the context of the ongoing reform of ESCAP and the 2030 Agenda. The Government of India had supported the Centre for the past 40 years and had been making voluntary contributions to ESCAP. The

representatives expressed their Government's commitment to supporting the Centre in order to enable it to deliver effective services to members and associate members on a sustainable basis. Their Government would increase its annual voluntary contributions to \$400,000, from \$200,000, to strengthen the Centre and to create a comfortable financial resource base so that it could deliver various capacity development programmes in the Asia-Pacific region. The enhanced annual institutional support would allow the Centre to function more efficiently with a greater focus on transferring, disseminating and diffusing emerging and environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms and in delivering sound capacity development and technical cooperation work.

272. The representatives of India also noted that the evaluation report specifically mentioned the accomplishments of the Centre that had been useful or made an impact in the member countries in the region. The representatives drew the attention of the Commission to recommendation 3 of the evaluation report, in which the members of the Governing Council of the Centre were called upon to implement its 2009 decision urging member States to increase their voluntary annual contribution to \$30,000 from developing countries and to \$7,000 from least developed countries. The representatives of India also sought the support of the secretariat in finalizing the future road map for utilizing the additional budget outlay within the framework of the host country agreement and reiterated their Government's position that strengthening the staff and resources of the Centre should not constitute a deviation from or violation to the host country agreement. The representatives of India also sought the support of the secretariat in securing increased voluntary contributions not only from member States but also from other sources.

273. Citing the evaluation of the Centre, the representative of China expressed serious concerns about the Centre's financial sustainability and called attention to the finding in the evaluation report that the number of staff of the Centre had been reduced from 14 to 6 over the past 40 years and asked about the rationale behind the reduction, and specifically whether it was due to efforts to increase efficiency or other constraints. The representative of China requested the secretariat to clarify whether a six-member staff and the increase in annual contributions from the Government of India to \$400,000 would be sufficient to support the operation of the Centre. Resources of the regional institutions should be supported by extrabudgetary contributions, as stipulated in the statute of the Centre as revised in Commission resolution 72/3.

274. In response, the secretariat referred to decision 5 of the report of the Governing Council of the Centre, and stated that the Council had requested that the secretariat continue to engage in bilateral discussions with the Government of India to amicably resolve the issue of the host country agreement and funding required for internationally recruited staff. In the decision, the Council had also requested that the secretariat report on the results of the discussion to the Council at its fifteenth session.

275. The representative of China expressed the view that the Centre faced a serious problem as the Centre did not have any international professional staff and the additional contributions from the Government of India could only sustain the management cost of the Centre. The Government of China was a member of the Governing Council, and he emphasized the role of the Centre in promoting transfer of technology. It was in the interest of all members of ESCAP to ensure the Centre remained financially viable.

276. The representatives of India recalled the fourteenth session of the Governing Council, at which the Council finalized its report for submission to the Commission. The representatives also reiterated that in decision 5 of the Council, it requested the secretariat and the Government of the host country to continue discussing the issue bilaterally and to report to the Council at its next session. The representatives further recalled a stakeholder survey in which 80 per cent of respondents from member countries reported that the Centre was sustainable at its current level of human and financial resources. Further, emphasizing the importance of the work of the Centre, the representatives recalled their Government's announcement, under agenda item 6 (c), to increase its annual voluntary contributions to the Centre to \$400,000.

277. With regard to the findings of the evaluation report, the representatives of India pointed out that the Council itself only took note of that report. The representatives of India also noted that the internationally recruited professional staff post, at the P-5 level, was withdrawn due to a shortage of funds and pointed out that, as per the host country agreement, internationally recruited professional staff were to be funded through extrabudgetary resources, which did not fall under the purview of the Government of the host country. The representatives requested member States to make voluntary contributions to the Centre given the importance of its work.

278. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the report on the evaluation of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology and of the evaluation of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology.

Agenda item 7

Midpoint review of the conference structure of the Commission

279. The Commission had before it the note by the secretariat on the midpoint review of the conference structure of the Commission in implementation of resolution 73/1 (ESCAP/75/30) and the Chair's summary of discussions (ESCAP/75/INF/4).

280. The representative of Pakistan made a statement.

281. The representative of Pakistan noted the importance of reviewing the conference structure of the Commission to keep it aligned with changing realities. Recalling the extensive informal discussions among member States on that issue in the months leading up to the session, he expressed his Government's support for an incremental approach to the review process and its readiness to actively participate in the process.

282. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the note by the secretariat on the midpoint review of the conference structure of the Commission in implementation of resolution 73/1 and the Chair's summary of discussions.

283. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission decided, as a general principle and without prejudice to rule 13 of its rules of procedure, that its Chair would rotate among the five subregions of the Commission.¹

¹ The five subregions of the Commission, as outlined in document A/62/708, are East and North-East Asia; North and Central Asia; South and South-West Asia; South-East Asia; and the Pacific.

284. Also at its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission, recognizing the need for the Commission to adapt and respond to the evolving development challenges and opportunities within the Asia-Pacific region, and to be fit for purpose in line with the 2030 Agenda, decided to establish an open-ended working group to further consider issues pertinent to the review of the conference structure of the Commission, as provided for by its resolutions 71/1 and 73/1, and requested the working group to report to the Commission at its seventy-sixth session on its findings and recommendations, without prejudice to the final review of the conference structure, to be conducted at the seventy-eighth session of the Commission. The Commission also requested the Executive Secretary to make appropriate arrangements and to provide necessary and requested information to support the deliberations of the open-ended working group on the review of the conference structure of the Commission.

Agenda item 8
Activities of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission

285. The Commission had before it the report of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission (ESCAP/75/31).

286. The representative of Bangladesh made a statement.

287. The Permanent Representative of India to ESCAP presented the report of the Advisory Committee on behalf of the members of the Advisory Committee.

288. The representative of Bangladesh noted that the Advisory Committee was a useful platform for member States to exchange views with the secretariat and expressed the hope that it would play a more active role in the future.

289. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission took note of the report of the Advisory Committee.

Agenda item 9
Dates and venue of and theme topic for the seventy-sixth session of the Commission (2020)

290. The Commission had before it the note by the secretariat on the dates and venue of and theme topic for the seventy-sixth session of the Commission (2020) (ESCAP/75/32).

291. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission decided that its seventy-sixth session would be held in Bangkok from 18 to 22 May 2020. The Commission also decided that the theme topic for its seventy-sixth session would be “Promoting economic, social and environmental cooperation on oceans for sustainable development”.

292. The representative of Japan noted that his Government organized the Pacific Island Leaders Meeting every three years and that in the past the dates for that meeting and those of the Commission session had been coordinated to facilitate the participation of Pacific island representatives at both meetings. He noted that the next Pacific Island Leaders Meeting would be held in 2021 and called for this to be taken into account when deciding the dates for the seventy-seventh session of the Commission.

Agenda item 10**Other matters****Election of the members of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management**

293. In addition to the host country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Commission elected the following members and associate members to the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management for the period from 2019 to 2022: Bangladesh; Cambodia; Fiji; India; Macao, China; Mongolia; Pakistan; and Turkey.

Election of the members of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific

294. In addition to the host country, Japan, the Commission elected the following countries to the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific for the period from 2019 to 2022: Bangladesh; China; India; Mongolia; Pakistan; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

Agenda item 11**Adoption of the report of the Commission**

295. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 31 May 2019, the Commission unanimously adopted the report on its seventy-fifth session (ESCAP/75/35).
