
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Seventy-fifth session

Bangkok, 27–31 May 2019

Items 4 (c) and (d) of the provisional agenda*

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

Environment and development

Disaster risk reduction

Annual reports of international and intergovernmental organizations provided to the Commission**

Summary

The present note contains overviews of the annual reports of the following international and intergovernmental organizations: the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia; the Mekong River Commission; the Typhoon Committee; and the Panel on Tropical Cyclones.

These organizations were established under the auspices of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to work on areas under their respective competence to support economic and social development in the region.

The Commission may wish to comment on the work of these organizations and take note of this document.

I. Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia

1. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia (CCOP) has carried out technical programmes and activities that focus on capacity building, knowledge sharing and technology transfer through a series of workshops, training courses, symposiums, working group meetings and expert visits. The activities carried out were in line with the CCOP Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 to cover four aspects as listed in Table 1, which summarizes the participation of CCOP member countries in its technical activities during 2018. All activities were open to all participants nominated by the permanent representatives of the member countries.

* ESCAP/75/L.1

** The present report is being issued without formal editing.

Table 1
Summary of CCOP member countries' participation in technical activities in 2018.

<i>Strategic goal</i>	<i>Number of activities</i>	<i>Number of participations</i>
Outreach	9	107
Cooperation and partnership	21	459
Knowledge enhancement and sharing	27	773
Data and information	5	118
Total	62	1 457

2. The outreach activities include CCOP deliverance of geoscience to the public through its participations in a number of important international meetings with a total of 107 participants. The cooperation and partnership activities of member countries, cooperating countries and organizations include 21 activities with 459 participants. The knowledge enhancement and sharing has the highest number of activities (27) and participants (773). Data and information include five activities with a total of 118 participants.

3. Topics of important activities in 2018 include, among others, mineral (unconventional: shale gas and oil) energy resources and sustainable development, geohazards (prediction and mitigation), groundwater (transboundary aquifer), geoheritage (geopark) and geoinformation sharing.

4. CCOP publications in 2018 include proceedings of the thematic session of the fifty-third CCOP Annual Session (Geoscience for the Society), a report of the CCOP-GSJ-GAI Groundwater Phase III, a CCOP book on best practices on mine rehabilitation and decommissioning plan in CCOP region, and the CCOP Annual Report 2018, which is available online at <http://ccop.asia/publication-details/93>.

II. Mekong River Commission

5. The Mekong River Commission continues to implement its core river basin management functions, including river monitoring, flood forecasting, basin-wide planning, and coordinating implementation of water utilization procedures for data sharing, consultation on major infrastructure projects on the Mekong mainstream, water quality monitoring and maintenance of river flows. One of the key highlights is the six-month prior consultation process on the proposed Pak Lay hydropower project which commenced in August 2018 involving transparent sharing of detailed information from the project to the public, independent assessment by experts of the MRC Secretariat, engaging with various stakeholders at the local, national and regional levels, after which they were deliberated on by senior representatives of the countries. The process is expected to result in an agreed statement by the MRC Joint Committee on measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse transboundary impacts of the project and preparation of a joint action plan to further engage in information sharing and joint monitoring.

6. The year 2018 also marked the midpoint in the implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and thereby saw a number of major reviews carried out for MRC operations, the progress of the Strategic Plan implementation itself, as well as decentralization of basin monitoring to member countries. The independent Mid Term Review wrote in their report: “There have been some impressive achievements in the first half of the Strategic Plan period in terms of outputs produced, including but not limited to, the Council Study, Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy, Mekong (Climate Change) Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan, improvements in implementing the Prior Consultation process with the Joint Committee Statement and Joint Action Plan for Pak Beng, Transboundary Environment Impact Assessment guidelines, and the update of the Preliminary Design Guidance for mainstream hydropower projects.” The independent Operational Review added: “significant achievements of the MRC in recent years... have increased the reputation and relevance of the organisation considerably as well as consolidating its standing as one of the premier River Basin Commissions worldwide”.

7. The MRC also has initiated and/or worked with a number of United Nations entities including ESCAP, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for Project Services, and the United Nations Environment Programme.

III. Typhoon Committee

8. The Typhoon Committee, an intergovernmental body under ESCAP and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), has evolved into a collaboration of 14 members: Cambodia; China; the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; Hong Kong, China; Japan; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Macao, China; Malaysia; the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore; Thailand; the United States; and Viet Nam. The Committee has been recognized as an outstanding regional body which has integrated the actions and plans of the meteorological, hydrological and disaster risk reduction components that contribute substantially to reduce the loss of lives and minimize social, economic and environmental impacts caused by typhoon-related disasters through enhanced regional collaboration.

9. In 2018, the members of the Committee were impacted by 28 named tropical cyclones – called typhoons, which were formed in the western North Pacific and the South China Sea. This number was above the climatological average of 25.6. In addition, tropical cyclone Hector from the eastern North Pacific crossed the International Date Line and moved into the western Pacific. It was one of the most long-lived tropical cyclones which crossed the three basins of the Pacific in recent years. There were 10 tropical cyclones which made landfall over China in the year. Mangkhut (1822) was the most powerful tropical cyclone (45 m/s and 955 hPa) which impacted several countries, namely the Philippines; China; Hong Kong, China; Macao, China and Viet Nam. Japan was hit by five tropical cyclones in the year and Jebi was the most devastating. The Philippines and Viet Nam were impacted by six and four tropical cyclones, respectively.

10. The fifty-first session of the Committee was organized from 26 February to 1 March 2019 in Guangzhou, China. About 180 meteorologists from the Committee’s members, government officials and representatives from international organizations discussed how to improve typhoon monitoring and forecasting in the Asia-Pacific region. The Guangdong provincial meteorological service received the Dr. Kintanar Award from the Committee at the opening ceremony for its outstanding work in typhoon forecasting and

disaster mitigation. While Committee develops activities under three substantive components – meteorology, hydrology and disaster risk reduction, as well as in training and research – the annual operating plans are discussed and agreed upon at the annual sessions to implement the joint work programme activities. The Committee also reviewed the progress of the three substantive components and took note of the lessons learnt from the 2018 typhoons. Based on the deliberations, the annual operating plans for 2019 with new plans related to forecasting the effects of typhoons were discussed and finalized at the meeting. The annual operating plans include the second phase of the synergized operating procedures project, supported by the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries, focused on a long-term multi-hazard approach with the Committee and member States. The strategic plan of the Committee from 2017 to 2021, which is aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, guides the working groups. It also helps to align future activities including annual operating plans. The Committee contributes to disaster preparedness and resilience-building through advances in emerging technologies and modelling systems. Technological advancements contribute to improvements in end-to-end early warning systems empowering communities at risk. Greater reach of end-to-end early warning system also ensures inclusiveness through disaster reduction and resilience, especially targeting vulnerable communities in high-risk developing countries.

More information about the activities of the Committee can be found at: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/report-typhoon-committee-march-2019>.

IV. Panel on Tropical Cyclones

11. The WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones is an inter-governmental regional body jointly established by WMO and ESCAP in 1972. The Panel has been recognized as an important regional body which has integrated the actions and plans of the meteorological, hydrological and disaster risk reduction components that contribute substantially to reduce the loss of lives and minimize social, economic and environmental impacts caused by tropical cyclone-related disasters through enhanced regional collaboration.

12. In 2018, 14 cyclonic disturbances formed over the north Indian Ocean, with seven cyclones, namely cyclonic storm Sagar (16-20 May), extremely severe cyclonic storm Mekunu (21-27 May) over the Arabian Sea, and cyclonic storm Daye (19-22 September) over the Bay of Bengal, very severe cyclonic storm Luban (6-15 October) over Arabian Sea, very severe cyclonic storm Title (8-13 October), very severe cyclonic storm Gaja (10-19 November) and severe cyclonic storm Phethai (13-18 December) over the Bay of Bengal. The Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre (RSMC)-Tropical Cyclones in New Delhi monitored, predicted and provided advisories to the Panel member countries for effective management of these cyclones. The early warning and advisories issued by the RSMC was appreciated by disaster management agencies, the Panel member countries and global agencies. For capacity building as in previous years, the RSMC conducted a two-week training programme during July 2018 for the cyclone forecasters from the member countries of the Panel and the Typhoon Committee.

13. The forty-fifth session of the Panel was held in Muscat from 23-27 September 2018. At the session, the Panel accepted new members the United Arab Emirates, Iran (the Islamic Republic of), Saudi Arabia and Qatar, increasing its membership to 13 from 9. It was recognized that the intensification of tropical cyclones in the Arabian Sea is increasingly impacting

these countries and regional cooperation under the Panel was acknowledged as a viable intergovernmental platform for joint responses and enhanced preparedness through more effective and well-coordinated early warning systems. While the Panel develops activities under three substantive components, meteorology, hydrology, and disaster risk reduction, as well as in training and research, the annual operating plans and coordinated technical plan are discussed and agreed upon at the annual sessions to implement the joint work programme activities. The Panel reviewed the progress of the three substantive components through the working groups on meteorology, hydrology and disaster risk reduction, and training and research, and took note of the lessons learnt from the tropical cyclones occurring in 2017 and 2018. The Panel also recognized the needs for speedy implementation of the synergized standard operating procedures for coastal multi-hazards early warning system – the second part of the training mission and identified focal points in the pilot countries for its implementation at the national level. The Panel welcomed the initiative of an independent evaluation, taken up jointly by ESCAP and WMO, and pledged its support to respond to the consultant’s questionnaires. The Panel contributes to disaster preparedness and resilience-building through advances in emerging technologies and modelling systems. Technological advancements contribute to improvements in end-to-end early warning systems empowering communities at risk. Greater reach of end-to-end early warning system also ensures inclusiveness through disaster reduction and resilience, especially targeting vulnerable communities in high-risk developing countries.

More information about the activities of the Panel can be found at: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/report-panel-tropical-cyclones-march-2019>.
