UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME
FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)

Subregional Workshop on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development with a focus on Digital Public Services for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in North and Central Asia

and

Fifth Session of the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development

26-28 June 2024, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Tentative Programme

In cooperation with the State Agency of Intellectual Property and Innovation under the Cabinet of Ministers (Kyrgyzpatent), the Ministry of Digital Development and the Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic
1. Background

Subregional Workshop on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development with a focus on Digital Public Services for SMEs in North and Central Asia

The ESCAP secretariat, with support from the Russian Federation, started implementing a two-year project in 2024 on “Strengthening policies and regulatory frameworks of digital public services for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in North and Central Asia in support of the Asia Pacific Information Superhighway (APIS) Action Plan 2022-2026”. The aim of the project is to strengthen the existing policies and regulatory framework of digitally enabled public services and platforms in NCA countries for the benefit of SMEs, tailored to the needs of women entrepreneurs and businesses to digitalize their business models and processes, and to create new digital platforms (See Annex 1 project brief).

Under the framework of the project, the first subregional workshop will first discuss a survey questionnaire on SME needs, including gender-sensitive entrepreneurship and disability inclusion perspectives and the preliminary findings from the first draft study of the project. Second, it will seek input from target countries for the second study. Third, it will calibrate capacity development needs to guide capacity building plans. As a result of this workshop, the project team will complete the report and scope the next steps of the project intervention areas.

SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development

The SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development (WG on ITSD) is a subsidiary body under the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), composed of senior policymakers, researchers, decision-makers, and other stakeholders in innovation and technology from the seven participating SPECA countries, namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The SPECA WG on ITSD provides a platform to discuss and forge cooperation on innovation and technology solutions, especially from the perspective of policy, governance, and knowledge-based development. Especially relevant to the SPECA WG on ITSD are the SDGs directly related to the development of innovation and technology (in particular, SDGs 8, 9, 13 and 17).

The SPECA WG on ITSD looks, inter alia, at:

- ICT for development;
- Promotion of innovation and innovative technology applications;
- Promotion of transfer and commercialization of innovative technologies; and
- Development of effective infrastructure for innovation support and financing, including through PPPs1.

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1 Based on the updated Terms of Reference, available at: https://unece.org/DAM/SPECA/documents/gc/session14/IX_ToR_SPECA_WG_on_ITSD_English.pdf
2. Objectives

**Subregional Workshop**

1) Assess the digital public services and digital platforms for SMEs in North and Central Asia and beyond;
2) Identify customized priority demands in the region, and
3) Outline shared deliverables to enable digital public services and digital platforms for the digitalization of SMEs business models and processes.

**SPECA WG on ITSD**

1) Assess the achievements and initiatives during the period 2023-2024 and the plan for 2024-2025, including the ESCAP resolution 79/10 on the Action Plan 2022-2026 of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative and the *Action Plan* of the *SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development* as approved by the 16th session of the SPECA Governing Council in Tashkent on 19 November 2021.
2) Inform the WG on the outcome of the ESCAP Commission as adopted by the respective Resolution 80/1 on Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.
3) Provide guidance for the implementation of the proposed plan 2024-2025.

3. Delegates and Participants

**Subregional Workshop**

The participants of the subregional workshop include policymakers, representatives of academia, and public and private sector institutions, involved in policies and initiatives in innovation and technology.

Participants (by invitation only):
- Representatives of SPECA Member States
- Government officials and experts
- Experts of international organisations
- ESCAP and UNECE secretariats

**SPECA WG on ITSD**

The participants of the SPECA WG on ITSD are nominated by the Governments of the SPECA countries, representing senior public officials involved in the formulation and implementation of national innovation policies and policies and programmes related to digital connectivity and technology development.

4. Organizer: ESCAP (Bangkok) and UNECE (Geneva)

In collaboration with the State Agency of Intellectual Property and Innovation under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzpatent), and the Ministry of Digital Development of the Kyrgyz Republic.
5. **Language:** English and Russian with simultaneous interpretation.

6. **Contact persons at ESCAP and UNECE:**

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