



---

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

Bangkok, 21 May 2020

Item 9 of the provisional agenda\*

**Dates and venue of and theme topic for the seventy-seventh session of the Commission (2021)****Dates and venue of and theme topic for the seventy-seventh session of the Commission (2021)****Note by the secretariat\*\****Summary*

The present document contains information on the proposed dates and venue of the seventy-seventh session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which is to be held in 2021, and a proposal for a theme topic for that session.

The Commission may wish to take a decision on these matters.

**I. Introduction**

1. The present document contains suggestions made by the secretariat for the consideration of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) at its seventy-sixth session, including the dates and venue of and theme topic for its seventy-seventh session, to be held in 2021.

**II. Dates and venue**

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

---

\* ESCAP/76/L.1/Rev.1.

\*\* The present note was submitted late owing to the need to take into account the views of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, which were expressed at its formal and informal meetings, including on 30 April 2020.

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

4. It is proposed that the seventy-seventh session be held in Bangkok from 26 to 30 April 2021, taking into account major meetings and holidays during April and May 2021 that could have an impact on both the servicing of and participation in the session.

### **III. Theme topic**

5. The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, at its 387th session, held on 19 March 2020, and at its informal meetings held on 7, 22 and 30 April 2020, considered a proposal for a theme topic for the seventy-seventh session of the Commission and an outline of issues to be covered in the proposed theme study. A description of the proposed theme topic of “Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific” and an outline of the proposed theme study are provided below.

#### **Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific**

6. Regional cooperation and greater connectivity among the countries of Asia and the Pacific have been key drivers of the region’s development. Yet the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has revealed countries’ vulnerability to large-scale disruptive events. Outbreaks of severe acute respiratory syndrome in 2003, influenza A (H1N1) in 2009 and Middle East respiratory syndrome in 2015, while not comparable in scale or risk complexities, provide examples of how regional cooperation has supported effective responses in some countries.

7. In the proposed theme study, consideration will be given to the role of regional cooperation and connectivity in preparing countries to meet the next crisis from a position of strength. The study will include a stock-taking of the adverse social impacts (such as on health, education and food security) and economic impacts (such as on productive activity, employment, revenues and profits, and financial market volatility) of the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific and the world; the uneven impacts the pandemic has had on vulnerable individuals and households that are already on the brink of poverty; and how these impacts may widen inequality and lead many to become entrenched in absolute poverty beyond 2030.

8. The study will be focused on a number of areas for regional cooperation, including the following:

(a) Ensuring that economic recovery, facilitated through concerted action with regard to expansionary fiscal and monetary measures and in particular debt sustainability, is sustained over time and in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international agreements;

(b) Restoring and building resilience in supply chains through regional and subregional coordination and the promotion of trade, transport and digital connectivity, including through existing mechanisms, agreements and ESCAP initiatives;

(c) Protecting people, especially the most vulnerable, including through the innovative use of technologies, social protection policies and modalities, and mechanisms for supporting small and medium-sized enterprises;

and by promoting the better availability of data, including geospatial data, and statistics such as civil registration and vital statistics systems;

(d) Protecting and restoring ecosystems as a means of building resilience to future pandemics and building back better, including through cooperation on air pollution, climate change and biodiversity conservation.

9. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, there are limits to a hazard-by-hazard, siloed and fragmented approach to risk management. The study will include an exploration of how building resilience linked to the four areas identified above can be achieved through regional cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships rooted in the 2030 Agenda.

10. In the study, consideration will also be given to ways of leveraging subregional cooperation for scaled-up actions at the regional level, building on existing regional mechanisms, agreements and ESCAP initiatives, as well as measures taken by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its dialogue partners and by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, for example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

11. Building back better through regional cooperation and strengthening key areas of connectivity can help efforts in Asia-Pacific countries to refine, extend and enhance understanding and management of the large-scale systemic risks unleashed by different crises.

#### **IV. Previous theme topics**

12. For reference, a list of the theme topics of previous Commission sessions is contained in the annex to the present document.

#### **V. Issues for consideration by the Commission**

13. The Commission may wish to consider the dates and venue of its seventy-seventh session, to be held in 2021, and to provide the secretariat with guidance in this regard.

14. The Commission may also wish to consider the proposed theme topic of “Building back better after crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific” and the outline of the proposed theme study.

**Annex****List of theme topics of previous Commission sessions**

<i>Session<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme topic</i>
40	1984	Technology for development
41	1985	Technology for development
42	1986	Human resources development
43	1987	Human resources development
44	1988	Human resources development
45	1989	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
46	1990	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
47	1991	Industrial restructuring in Asia and the Pacific, in particular with a view to strengthening regional cooperation
48	1992	Regional economic cooperation in the ESCAP region: prospects, priorities and policy options
49	1993	Expansion of investment and intraregional trade as a vehicle for enhancing regional economic cooperation and development
50	1994	Infrastructure development as key to economic growth and regional economic cooperation
51	1995	Strengthening of regional cooperation in human resources development with special reference to the social implications of sustainable economic growth in Asia and the Pacific
52	1996	Sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Asia and the Pacific
53	1997	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: opportunities and challenges for ESCAP
54	1998	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: status of and prospects for social development
55	1999	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: information technology, globalization, economic security and development
56	2000	Development through globalization and partnership in the twenty-first century: an Asia-Pacific perspective for integrating developing countries and economies in transition into the international trading system on a fair and equitable basis
57	2001	Balanced development of urban and rural areas and regions within the countries of Asia and the Pacific
58	2002	Sustainable social development in a period of rapid globalization: challenges, opportunities and policy options
59	2003	Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region
60	2004	Meeting the challenges in an era of globalization by strengthening regional development cooperation
61	2005	Implementing the Monterrey Consensus in the Asian and Pacific region: achieving coherence and consistency

<i>Session<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme topic</i>
62	2006	Enhancing regional cooperation in infrastructure development, including that related to disaster management
63	2007	Development of health systems in the context of enhancing economic growth towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific
64	2008	Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific
65	2009	Towards sustainable agriculture and food security in the Asia-Pacific region
66	2010	Addressing challenges in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: promoting a stable and supportive financial system; and green growth or environmentally sustainable economic growth, including through technology and financing
67	2011	Beyond the crises: long-term perspectives on social protection and development in Asia and the Pacific
68	2012	Enhancing regional economic integration in Asia and the Pacific
69	2013	Opportunities to build resilience to natural disasters and major economic crises
70	2014	Regional connectivity for shared prosperity
71	2015	Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation
72	2016	Science, technology and innovation for sustainable development
73	2017	Regional cooperation for sustainable energy
74	2018	Inequality in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
75	2019	Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality
76	2020	Promoting economic, social and environmental cooperation on oceans for sustainable development

<sup>a</sup> From the fortieth to the seventy-sixth session.