Economic and Social Council

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Seventy-eighth session
Bangkok and online, 23–27 May 2022
Item 4 (i) of the provisional agenda*
**Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific:
information and communications technology, science,
technology and innovation**

Report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development on its sixteenth session
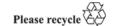
Summary

The Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development held its sixteenth session on 25 November 2021.

The Council reviewed the work of the Centre since its fifteenth session and expressed its appreciation for the Centre's contribution to strengthening the capacities of member States with regard to using digital technologies for sustainable development. It also reviewed the Centre's administrative and financial status.

The Council endorsed the Centre's 2022 workplan. It welcomed the ongoing needs assessment with regard to information and communications technology capacity-building in Asia and the Pacific and encouraged all member States to support and participate in the needs assessment exercise.

The Council expressed its appreciation to the host country, the Republic of Korea, for its continued funding support for the Centre and to other member States for their voluntary and in-kind contributions. It called on all member States to collaborate and support the Centre's programmes and activities for capacity-building with regard to digital technologies for sustainable development.

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* ESCAP/78/L.1/Rev.1.

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I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

1. The Governing Council expresses its appreciation to the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development for its contributions to strengthening human and institutional capacities in digital development in the region and for its continued implementation of capacity-building programmes despite the challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

2. The Council endorses the Centre's work plan for 2022 and invites all members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to collaborate with the Centre and support its work, including through voluntary and in-kind contributions.

II. Proceedings

A. Report on the administrative and financial status of the Centre
(Agenda item 2)

3. The Council had before it the report on the administrative and financial status of the Centre.

4. The Council was informed about the Centre's financial status, management and staffing capacity. A summary of operational funding was presented, including the institutional funding provided by the host country, the Republic of Korea, through the Incheon Metropolitan City and the Ministry of Science and Information and Communications Technology, as agreed under the Administrative and Financial Arrangement signed by ESCAP and the Republic of Korea for the period of 2021–2025.

5. Additional funding had been received from the Government of Canada to support the implementation of the ESCAP project entitled "Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship", of which the information and communications technology (ICT) capacity-building component was implemented by the Centre.

6. Over the reporting period, voluntary contributions had been received from Cambodia and Macao, China. The Council was informed that national partners continued to provide in-kind contributions, in the form of logistical, material and human resources, to support the implementation of the Centre's capacity-building activities and programmes.

7. The representative of the Republic of Korea expressed appreciation for the Centre's achievement in providing member States with much-needed capacity-building programmes and looked forward to the Government's continued support for the programmes and operation of the Centre. The representative encouraged other member States to provide funding and in-kind contributions to support the Centre's activities.

8. The representative of the Philippines expressed appreciation for the Centre's work. The Government of the Philippines would continue to provide in-kind contributions to support the delivery and promotion of the Centre's flagship programmes nationwide. It would support the localization of the training modules and the hosting of training-of-trainers programmes, consultative meetings and other training activities. The Department of Information and Communications Technology of the Philippines would

establish an ICT academy and digital transformation centres in several provinces, which would utilize the Centre's capacity-building resources.

9.   The representative of Cambodia informed the Council that the Government would provide in-kind contributions in the delivery of national training programmes.

10.   The representative of Sri Lanka congratulated the Centre for its accomplishments and renewed the Government's commitment to continuing its cooperation with the Centre through in-kind contributions and knowledge-sharing.

B.   Work of the Centre since the fifteenth session of the Governing Council
(Agenda item 3)

11.   The Council had before it the report on the work of the Centre since the fifteenth session. A presentation was given by the Director of the Centre.

12.   The Council was briefed on the Centre's completed activities under its three pillars of work: training, technical assistance and e-learning platforms. The Council was informed of progress in the implementation of its flagship programmes for policymakers and civil servants (Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders), women entrepreneurs (Women ICT Frontier Initiative) and students/youth (Primer Series on ICT for Development for Youth).

13.   The representative of Cambodia expressed appreciation to the Centre for carrying out activities despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

14.   The representative of the Russian Federation expressed his Government's full support for the Centre's efforts on ICT capacity development and appreciated the expansion of the Centre's work in North and Central Asia. He encouraged the Centre to strengthen the roll-out of its programmes in the subregion. The Government stood ready to provide in-kind contributions and assist the localization of knowledge products. The representative inquired about the Centre's progress on ICT certification and competency standards.

15.   The representative of the Philippines commended the Centre and its partners for their productive work, including training delivery, module updates and e-learning course production. The pandemic had accelerated the conduct of online training programmes, which allowed a wider array of stakeholders and beneficiaries to be reached.

16.   The representative of India acknowledged that the Centre's mandate and activities had become more relevant in the Asia-Pacific region in the current pandemic situation and in the era of global digital transformation. The Government was willing to continue its cooperation with the Centre to deliver effective services on a sustainable basis. It was important to build the capacities of stakeholders and share knowledge and good practices through training activities, e-learning and other knowledge products. The Digital India programme initiated by the Government could serve as a significant case study, and the experience gained in that regard could be of use to ICT for development efforts across the region. There were a number of examples of how digital technologies had been leveraged in the country during the pandemic but also in preparation for future challenges and crises.

17.   The representative of Indonesia informed the Council that the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology had co-organized two ICT capacity-building training programmes with the Centre and that Indonesia had been actively conducting training under the digital talent scholarship initiative. He also expressed his Government's intention of continuing to cooperate with the Centre on module development and training activities.

18.   The representative of Maldives, attending as an observer, congratulated the Centre for its outreach, training and capacity-building activities during the pandemic. The representative expressed appreciation for the Centre's conduct of high-level briefings to support the country's digital transformation agenda, thanked the host country, the Republic of Korea, for its continued support for the Centre and looked forward to greater engagement with the Centre.

C.   Assessing information and communications technology capacity-building needs in Asia and the Pacific
(Agenda item 4)

19.   A presentation on the ongoing ICT landscape study and assessment of capacity-building needs in Asia and the Pacific was made by the Chief Executive Officer of LIRNEasia, an ICT technology policy and regulation think tank based in Colombo, which had been commissioned by the Centre to conduct the study. The study was intended to guide the Centre in identifying its strategic focus and positioning in the new digital era as well as in developing the most relevant capacity-building programmes in the future.

20.   The representative of Bangladesh congratulated the Council members and secretariat for continuing their activities and for overcoming the challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak. In light of the transformative changes brought on by the pandemic in various sectors, Bangladesh was engaged in the development of ICT-based human resources, the pursuit of an export-oriented information technology industry and the use of citizen-friendly technology. Multi-stakeholder initiatives played a pivotal role in expanding the Digital Bangladesh vision, reducing the digital divide and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The representative recognized the challenges related to ensuring inclusive digital transformation and development; noted the importance of fostering a data-driven culture through increased international cooperation; thanked the Centre for initiating the ICT for development needs assessment and study; and welcomed its preliminary results while reiterating the country's interest in ICT capacity-building for civil service institutions.

21.   The representative of the Philippines welcomed the preliminary results of the ICT for development landscape study, emphasizing its encompassing and inclusive methodologies. The study was expected to lead to a knowledge and skills framework on ICT for development for government officials, women, youth and other beneficiaries. The framework could serve as an input to the development and enhancement of modules and to monitoring and evaluation conducted by the Centre and its partners. In addition, the study was important in the design and implementation of a certification-based scheme for executives.

22.   The representative of India welcomed the preliminary results of the study, acknowledging the significant gap in capacity-building between the technical and policy levels. The Government intended to use the study's findings and recommendations in the implementation of Digital India.

23.   The Director of the Centre encouraged all Council members and observers to support and participate in the needs assessment exercise.

D.   2022 workplan
(Agenda item 5)

24.   The Director of the Centre presented the 2022 workplan.

25.   In 2022, the Centre would focus on providing more practical and impactful capacity-building programmes tailored to the needs of member States. It would further expand its footprint in the region, broaden its reach to all subregions, ensure that its services reached local governments and deepen support for member States through policy and advisory services. The Centre would work closely with national partners in customizing its programmes to fit national contexts and integrating them into partners' training curricula. New programmes and priorities would be identified on the basis of the ongoing landscape study and needs assessment and in alignment with ESCAP strategies and United Nations system-wide initiatives.

26.   The 2022 workplan was also aimed at strengthening the Centre's resource mobilization, expanding its pool of resource persons to support programme delivery and strengthening partnerships with international organizations and technology companies.

27.   The representative of the Republic of Korea noted the relevance of the Centre's planned modules and said that the Ministry of Science and Information and Communications Technology was prepared to join the Centre in co-organizing the launch of the upcoming module on frontier ICT for sustainable development in 2022.

28.   The representative of India expressed appreciation for the Centre's achievements, reiterated the Government's willingness to participate in the planned capacity-building programmes, commended the Centre for its engagement with the International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore and the Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam (Women's University) and welcomed further engagement with national partners and stakeholders.

29.   The representative of the Philippines welcomed the goals and plans of the Centre for 2022, noting that they added value to the Centre's programmes and objectives. The representative emphasized the need to continue integrating programmes into partner-led initiatives and further aligning programmes with ESCAP strategies, and commended the conduct of the one-on-one consultation meetings and the Centre's upcoming fellowship programme for digital leaders.

30.   The Council endorsed the Centre's workplan for 2022.

E.   Date of and venue for the seventeenth session of the Governing Council
(Agenda item 6)

31.   The secretariat, in consultation with the Council, would make the necessary arrangements for the organization of the seventeenth session, to be held in the fourth quarter of 2022.

F. Other matters
(Agenda item 7)

32. The Council was informed that the three-year term of the present membership (2018–2021), which had been extended by one year owing to the pandemic, would end in 2022. New elections would take place at the seventy-eighth session of the Commission, to be held in Bangkok from 23 to 27 May 2022.

33. The Council was informed that the elections would be conducted in Bangkok and voting would either be done by proxy, should a small number of delegations be unable to fly in, or would be arranged in multiple locations, should a significant number of delegations be unable to attend the elections in Bangkok. The Secretary of the Commission would share the information with all member States accordingly.

G. Adoption of the report of the Governing Council on its sixteenth session
(Agenda item 8)

34. The Council adopted the present report on 17 December 2021.

III. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

35. The sixteenth session of the Council was held online on 25 November 2021.

36. A statement was made by the Executive Secretary. In her remarks, she reiterated the commitment of ESCAP to leveraging science, technology and innovation for sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. Information and communications technology, in particular, played an important role, as it had become the main driver for regional development, integration and cooperation. Digital transformation, which had been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, remained uneven in the region, with persisting gaps in ICT infrastructure and connectivity as well as deep divides in human and institutional capacities for digital development. She underscored the relevance of the Centre's mission and expressed the hope that the Council's deliberations would help to strengthen the delivery and impact of the Centre's work in the region.

37. The Director of the Centre thanked the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Council members for their continued support over their three-year term. He also thanked the session observers for their participation and welcomed closer collaboration with them in the future. The Director expressed appreciation to the host country, the Republic of Korea, and other donors for their funding and in-kind contributions, which helped to ensure the sustainability of the Centre's programmes.

B. Attendance

38. The session was attended by representatives of the nine members of the Council: Bangladesh; Cambodia; India; Indonesia; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; and Thailand.

39.   Representatives of the following members and associate members of the Commission attended as observers: Armenia; Azerbaijan; China; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Maldives; United States of America; and Viet Nam.

40.   A representative of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific Information and Communications Technology Working Group also attended as an observer.

C.   Election of officers

41.   The Council elected the following officers:

Chair: Mr. Meas Po (Cambodia)

Vice-Chair: Mr. Mahinda Bandara Herath (Sri Lanka)

D.   Agenda

42.   The Council adopted the following agenda:

1.   Opening of the session:

(a)   Opening statements;

(b)   Election of officers;

(c)   Adoption of the agenda.

2.   Report on the administrative and financial status of the Centre.

3.   Work of the Centre since the fifteenth session of the Governing Council.

4.   Assessing information and communications technology capacity-building needs in Asia and the Pacific.

5.   2022 workplan.

6.   Date of and venue for the seventeenth session of the Governing Council.

7.   Other matters.

8.   Adoption of the report of the Governing Council on its sixteenth session.

Annex I

List of documents

Symbol	Title	Agenda item
General series		
	Report on the administrative and financial status of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development	2
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Annex II

Financial statement of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development for the year ended 31 December 2021

(United States dollars)

Income	
Contributions	1 666 376
Interest income	24 956
Total income	**1 691 332**
Less: Expenditure	(1 539 188)
Net income over expenditure	**152 144**
Fund balance as at 1 January 2021	4 202 187
Refunds to donors	-
Fund balance as at 31 December 2021	**4 354 331**[a]

[a] The balance amount is earmarked for future programmatic and operational activities of the Centre.

Annex III

Financial statement of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development for the year ended 31 December 2021, by project component

(United States dollars)

	Incheon Metropolitan City and Ministry of Science and ICT	Joint contribution and other projects	Total
Income			
Contributions	1 617 281	49 095	1 666 376
Interest income	23 649	1 307	24 956
Total income	**1 640 930**	**50 402**	**1 691 332**
Less: Expenditure	(1 529 578)	(9 610)	(1 539 188)
Net income over expenditure	**111 352**	**40 792**	**152 144**
Fund balance as at 1 January 2021	3 825 268	376 919	4 202 187
Refunds to donors/fund transfer	-	-	-
Fund balance as at 31 December 2021	**3 936 620**	**417 711**	**4 354 331**[a]

[a] The balance amount is earmarked for future programmatic and operational activities of the Centre.

Annex IV

Cash contributions to the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development received for the year ended 31 December 2021
(United States dollars)

Country/area	Year ended 31 December 2021	Year ended 31 December 2020
1. Incheon Metropolitan City and Ministry of Science and ICT		
Republic of Korea (Incheon Metropolitan City)	782 980	799 980
Republic of Korea (Ministry of Science and ICT)	834 301	626 483
Subtotal	**1 617 281**	**1 426 463**
2. Korea International Cooperation Agency project		
Republic of Korea (Korea International Cooperation Agency)	-	-
Subtotal	**-**	**-**
3. Other technical cooperation projects		
Bangladesh	-	20 000
Cambodia	2 000	2 000
Macao, China	5 000	5 000
Republic of Korea (Ministry of Science and ICT)	42 095	45 973
Subtotal	**49 095**	**72 973**
Total	**1 666 376**	**1 499 436**

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