

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Seventy-eighth session

Bangkok and online, 23–27 May 2022

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

Review of the 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 information document 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 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 the present document.

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

1. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has been established under the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) since 1966. In 1991, the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has become an independent intergovernmental organization. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia promotes capacity building, technology transfer, exchange of information and institutional linkages for sustainable resource development, management of geoinformation, geohazard mitigation and protection of the environment.

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

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

2. Starting from January 2021, the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has introduced a new strategic plan (2021–2025) with a vision “To be a leading intergovernmental Geoscience Organization for sustainable development in East and Southeast Asia”. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has worked towards its mission “To work together on advancing geoscience for better lives on a future earth”, in line with the goals of internationally agreed development goals and agreements, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and the Paris Agreement, through: the application of geoscience knowledge and provision of technical solutions, provision of advice and geoinformation for economic development and sustainable management of the national resources and environment; adapting to digital transformation in geoscience for future earth; and the promotion of education, capability building and outreach. The organization also promotes young geoscientists and equal gender issue.

3. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia now has a total of 16 member countries including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia also has 14 cooperating countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America); and 17 cooperating organizations located around the world. The activities of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia cover a wide range of geoscience with the priority including geohazards, geodata and information, mineral resources, groundwater resources, urban geology, energy resources, environmental geology and climate change, geoheritage for sustainable geology, geoscience education and geological survey. It is important to note that ‘renewable energy’ has become the top priority among its cooperating countries, and this may have a great impact on the future development of the region.

4. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has carried out the technical programmes and activities based on its previous strategic plan that focuses on capacity building, knowledge sharing and technology transfer, through a series of workshops, training courses, symposiums, working group meetings and expert visits. A total of 48 training/workshop activities were carried out in 2021. Most activities were conducted online due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. All activities were open to all participants nominated by the Permanent Representatives of the member countries. Despite the prohibition on travelling, the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia has taken the advantage of using information technology and online communication to keep its cooperation and partnerships among its member countries through various programmes and activities. Some of the highlights that support the Sustainable Development Goals in the East and Southeast Asia region include:

(a) The programme in cooperation with China and the Republic of Korea on ‘Urban Geology’ for the Sustainable Cities in the region for the sharing of smart Integrated Solution System Technology in response to cities’ complex geological hazards and disasters;

(b) A project with the Republic of Korea on ‘Vulnerability assessment to climate change of groundwater system in Greater Mekong Subregion and comparative study of groundwater-dependent ecosystem’;

(c) Multilateral activities on mineral resource sustainable management with a focus on critical and strategic minerals with the Economic Commission for Europe, China-Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Mining Cooperation Forum, ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Minerals, etc.;

(d) Capacity-building activities hosted by Korea Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources; Geological Survey of Japan; and China Geological Survey.

More information about the activities of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia can be found at: <https://ccop.asia/about-annual>.

II. Mekong River Commission

5. The Mekong River Commission is an intergovernmental organization for regional dialogue and cooperation in the Lower Mekong River Basin, established in 1995 based on the Mekong Agreement between Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam. The organization serves as a regional platform for water diplomacy and a knowledge hub of water resources management for the sustainable development of the region.

6. Despite the challenges caused by COVID-19 in 2021, the Mekong River Commission accelerated the implementation of the Mekong River Commission Strategic Plan 2021–2025 through the Multi-Year Work Plan 2021–2022 to progress the achievement of planned activities and indicators. Key achievements made in 2021 are as follows.

7. In the area of cooperation and partnership, the Mekong River Commission successfully secured the funding commitment from member countries and development partners for implementation the Mekong River Commission Strategic Plan 2021–2025 as well as strengthened the cooperation with ASEAN in conducting the first inaugural ASEAN–Mekong River Commission Water Security Dialogue Meeting. The meeting had tabled three thematic solutions related to policy, technology, and partnership to help countries in the Mekong Basin and ASEAN address existential water security challenges in the region. To promote the implementation of the Basin Development Strategy 2021–2030, the Mekong River Commission has also initiated/or worked with other regional frameworks, river basin organizations and others, particularly in the environs of improving flood and drought forecasting and monitoring, riverine plastics monitoring, irrigation and drought management. Similarly, the Joint Study between the Mekong River Commission and Lancang Mekong Cooperation was approved for the implementation to get the comprehensive explanation on climate and hydrological patterns of the whole river basin.

8. Further highlights included the finalization of the Joint Environment Monitoring pilots report which aims to generate and share reliable and scientific data and information through an established basin-wide Joint Environment Monitoring Programme on site-specific (trans-boundary) issues.

9. The year 2021 also marked as the first year in implementation of the Mekong River Commission Multi-Year Work Plan 2021–2022 was rolled out instead of the Annual Work Plan. The Multi-Year Work Plan provides detailed operational plan including strategic priorities, indicators, outcomes, outputs, activities, tasks and budgets on the two years basic for implementing the Mekong River Commission Strategic Plan 2021–2025. This Multi-Year Work Plan helps the Mekong River Commission to prioritize group of activities that need to be kicked off and implemented prior to other arrangements; and give opportunities for the Mekong River Commission to plan realistic budgets in realising the prioritize activities in an effective and efficient manners.

10. Rapid economic and population growth in the Lower Mekong Basin and the resulting increase in power demand are met for the most part by hydropower. Hydropower stations generate clean electricity, but the dams alter flow along stretches of the river, which affects water quality and quantity, sediment movements and the habitats of aquatic organisms. The twenty-eighth Mekong River Commission Council Meeting had approved the updated Sustainable Hydropower Development Strategy 2021 for the Lower Mekong Basin to address the future challenges of hydropower developments on the Mekong River. Furthermore, the meeting approved the updated Rules of Procedures for the Mekong River Commission Council and Joint Committee to enhance transparency and effective decision making and efficient collaboration of the Mekong River Commission.

11. The twenty-eighth Mekong River Commission Council Meeting highly appreciated the leadership of Mr. An Pich Hatda of Cambodia, whose term as the second riparian Chief Executive Officer of the Mekong River Commission Secretariat had officially ended. The meeting also welcomed the appointment of Mr. Anoulak Kittikhoun of the Lao People's Democratic Republic as the third riparian Chief Executive Officer of the Mekong River Commission Secretariat for the 2022–2024 tenure.

More information about the activities of the Mekong River Commission can be found at: www.mrcmekong.org/publications/governance/annual-reports/.

III. Typhoon Committee

12. The ESCAP/World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Typhoon Committee is an intergovernmental body organized under the joint auspices of ESCAP and WMO in 1968 in order to promote and coordinate the planning and implementation of measures required for minimizing the loss of life and material damage caused by typhoons in Asia and the Pacific. The Committee has evolved into a collaboration of 14 members: Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Hong Kong, China; Japan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Macao, China; Malaysia; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Singapore; Thailand; United States of America; and Viet Nam. The Committee develops activities under three substantive components: meteorology, hydrology, and disaster risk reduction, as well as in training and research. The mission of the Committee is to reduce the loss of lives and minimize social, economic and environmental impacts caused by typhoon-related disasters through integrated and enhanced regional collaboration.

13. In 2021, due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation around the world, some activities of the Committee have been affected. However, under the efforts of all Members, Advisory Working Group, working groups, and the Typhoon Committee Secretariat, the Committee has implemented the decisions of the fifty-third session of the Committee smoothly and carried out a mission to reduce the loss of lives and minimize social, economic, and environmental impacts by typhoon-related disasters. The sixteenth Integrated Workshop of the Committee was held online on 2 and 3 December 2021. The main theme of the workshop was “Strengthening Impact-based Forecasting for Improving the Capacity of Typhoon-related Disaster Risk Reduction”. Five Members (China, Japan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America) and the ESCAP secretariat gave technical presentations on their on-going efforts to develop impact-based forecast and warning services. All the fourteen Committee Members reported their tropical cyclone related activities.

14. The Committee has initiated to renew the current Strategic Plan which was approved at the forty-ninth session of the Committee held on 21–24 February 2017 in Yokohama, Japan. The drafting team led by the United States of America has made great efforts and contributions. The final draft has been approved at the fifty-fourth session of the Committee. The fifty-third session of the Committee supported the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Typhoon Collaborative Research Center in Shanghai, China, contributing to the Committee research activities, and requested to establish a joint task team composed of China and interested Committee Members to develop a pilot project under the Center and an agreement on technical cooperation between the Committee and the Center in accordance with paragraph 104 of the final report of the fifty-third session of the Committee. The final drafts of these documents have been approved at the fifty-fourth session of the Committee. The opening ceremony of the Asia-Pacific Typhoon Collaborative Research Center was held on 1 December 2021 in Shanghai, China.

More information about the activities of the Committee can be found at: www.typhooncommittee.org/tc-annual-session/.

IV. Panel on Tropical Cyclones

15. The WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones is an intergovernmental regional body jointly established by WMO and ESCAP in 1972 to promote collaboration for addressing the impacts of tropical cyclones. It has been recognized as an important regional cooperation mechanism that integrates the actions and plans of the meteorology, hydrology, capacity development and disaster risk reduction components to reduce the impacts of tropical cyclone-related disasters. The Panel is composed of 13 members: Bangladesh, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

16. The forty-eighth session of the Panel was held online and hosted by the United Arab Emirates on 20, 21, and 23 September 2021. The session was attended by 61 participants from the thirteen Members of the Panel, and representatives from the ESCAP and WMO secretariats, and an observer from the Gulf Cooperation Council. The session reviewed the past tropical cyclone season (2020–2021), and representatives from Member States presented their experiences of tropical cyclones in 2020 and 2021. In 2020, there were nine cyclonic storms and depressions formed over the North Indian Ocean the number of cyclones, slightly less than twelve in normal years. This includes Super Cyclonic Storm Amphan in May and Severe Cyclonic Storm Nisarga in

June. In 2021 (until September), four cyclonic storms and depressions were formed.

17. At the session, the Panel Members discussed follow up actions of the forty-seventh session, including promotion of impact-based forecasting, training for improving tropical cyclone forecasting skills and competencies including storm surge and wave forecasting by the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre in New Delhi, and addressing climate change impact on tropical cyclones. ESCAP and WMO have collaborated closely to support the Panel Members to enhance their capacity for impact-based forecasting and warning services and building resilience to natural hazards. The session also reviewed amendments of its operational plan and report of the Task Team on the Panel on Tropical Cyclones structure and working mechanisms.

18. The Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre has provided to Panel Members fortnight tropical weather outlook for some years. The Panel expressed appreciation to the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre and the Indian Meteorological Department at large in this regard. It also reiterated the importance of tropical cyclone seasonal forecasting in the national disaster mitigation plans of the Panel Members, and early preparation and arrangements for the United Nations humanitarian activities. The Panel requested the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre to further examine the technical feasibility and readiness in providing tropical cyclone seasonal forecasting to benefit the Panel Members as soon as possible. The Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre agreed to do so as soon as possible after further scientific and technical studies.

19. During the forty-eighth session of the Panel, it discussed its internal matters, mainly focused on optimization of the Panel in terms of functional structure thereunder and its working mechanisms in order to improve the Panel's technical areas with efficiency and effectiveness. The Panel appreciated the effort and hard work by the Task Team established during the forty-seventh session of the Panel. The Panel requested the Task Team to continue to work for formulating a comprehensive proposal on the sub-structures of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones and their terms of references and working procedures for approval by future plenary of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones when ready.

More information about the activities of the Panel can be found at: <https://community.wmo.int/tropical-cyclone-programme-final-reports-meetings>.