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Agenda item 2

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

77/1. Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recognizing that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is one of the greatest global challenges in the history of the United Nations, that it has triggered an unprecedented global health, social and economic crisis, hampering progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ and that recovery from the COVID-19 crisis provides an opportunity to build back better in Asia and the Pacific, including through multilateral and international cooperation at all levels,

Reaffirming its commitment to the spirit of unity, solidarity and multilateral cooperation, and expressing its commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism and its strong support for the central role of the United Nations system, including the World Health Organization, and resolving to pursue coordinated actions to effectively respond to global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and their consequences, and, in this regard, recalling General Assembly resolution 74/274 of 20 April 2020 on international cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19, resolution 74/306 of 11 September 2020 on a comprehensive and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic, resolution 74/307 of 11 September 2020, entitled “United response against global health threats: combating COVID-19”, and resolution 75/130 of 14 December 2020, entitled “Global health and foreign policy: strengthening health system resilience through affordable health care for all”, and World Health Assembly resolution 73.1 of 19 May 2020 on the global COVID-19 response,

Recognizing the role of extensive immunization against COVID-19 as a global public good for health in preventing, containing and stopping transmission in order to bring the pandemic to an end, and underlining the need to ensure universal and equitable access to safe, quality, efficacious, effective and affordable vaccines,

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

Recalling resolution 76/2 of 21 May 2020 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on regional cooperation to address the socioeconomic effects of pandemics and crises in Asia and the Pacific and Commission resolution 75/3 of 31 May 2019 on advancing partnerships within and across regions for the sustainable development of Asia and the Pacific,

Reaffirming the political declaration of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, entitled “Universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world”,² and recognizing the importance of nationally determined appropriate spending targets for quality investments in public health services,

Recalling the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 as a contribution to the Sendai Framework to build resilient health systems, with a view to ensuring more systematic cooperation, coherence and integration between disaster and health risk management,

Reiterating the importance of investing in inclusive national social protection systems that promote access to essential services, resources, human capital development and decent jobs, and welcoming the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific³ and its contributions to the prevention of poverty and vulnerability,

Acknowledging the need for persistent efforts to address the economic crisis and depression, begin economic recovery and minimize the negative effects on livelihoods, and recognizing that the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of ensuring the continued flow of essential goods and services and the movement of people, in accordance with appropriate public health recommendations, and the catalytic role that digital technologies can play in reducing the impact of the pandemic on economies and people’s well-being,

Recognizing the importance of advancing connectivity for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific and that the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of promoting regional connectivity,

Reaffirming the commitment to international cooperation in the creative economy which contributes to the achievement of the three dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and recalling General Assembly resolution 74/198 of 19 December 2019 on the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, 2021,

Acknowledging that micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and the tourism and creative sectors in the region have been severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, hindering the achievement of sustainable development, and encouraging members and associate members of the Commission to take measures and strengthen cooperation to facilitate recovery and build resilience,

Highlighting that the COVID-19 pandemic represents an urgent call to strengthen multilateral cooperation, recognizing, in this regard, the value of an integrated One Health approach that fosters cooperation between human health, animal health and plant health, as well as environmental and other relevant sectors, in close collaboration in particular with the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World

² General Assembly resolution 74/2.

³ ESCAP/CSD/2020/3, annex III.

Organization for Animal Health and the United Nations Environment Programme, emphasizing the links between a healthy environment, resilient human societies and sustainable economies, and recognizing the potential benefits for countries to transform their economies to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns,

Noting with concern that the pandemic and related global economic and commodity price shocks could significantly increase the number of countries in or at risk of debt distress, and deeply concerned about the impact of high debt levels on countries' abilities to withstand the impact of the COVID-19 shock and to invest in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Recognizing the important role of major groups and other stakeholders, especially health workers and other front-line and essential workers and volunteers, as well as the academic and scientific community and the private sector, in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences,

Recognizing also the importance of international cooperation at all levels, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, bearing in mind that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation, in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and reaffirming the role of the regional commissions in supporting North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives in harnessing the human and other resources of the relevant knowledge networks, partnerships, and technical and research capacity by exchanging experiences on best practices on relevant issues including the COVID-19 pandemic,

Recognizing further the importance of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change⁴ and that countries may seek to apply a climate- and environment-responsive approach to building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic,

Affirming that there are different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, to achieve sustainable development, inter alia, such as bioeconomy, circular economy and green economy,

Taking note of the theme study for the seventy-seventh session of the Commission,⁵ in which the secretariat presents research on building back better to put the region on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to build resilience to future pandemics and similar wide-scale crises,

1. *Calls upon* members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to put in place a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response to the COVID-19 pandemic, outlining both immediate and long-term actions and recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic has a disproportionately heavy impact on women and girls, persons with disabilities, older persons, youth and children, as well as the poor, vulnerable and marginalized segments of the population, with a view to sustainably strengthening their health systems and social care and support systems, and preparedness and response capacities, engaging with communities and collaborating with relevant stakeholders;

⁴ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

⁵ ESCAP/77/1.

2. *Emphasizes* the key leadership role of the World Health Organization and the fundamental role of the United Nations system in catalysing and coordinating the comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic for the international community, ensuring universal and equitable distribution of vaccines and their accessibility and affordability, particularly in developing countries and least developed countries, and the role of extensive immunization as a global public good;

3. *Encourages* members and associate members to strengthen health resilience, including by accelerating efforts towards the achievement of universal health coverage by 2030, enabling people to access affordable and quality healthcare, to ensure healthy lives, and promoting well-being for all throughout the life course as well as by enhancing the health aspects of disaster risk reduction and response to health crises, while taking note of the International Health Regulations (2005)⁶ and the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework and other relevant initiatives, as appropriate;

4. *Calls upon* members and associate members to promote multilateral and international cooperation and the international trading systems, including multilateral trading systems with the World Trade Organization at their core, as well as regional, bilateral and other trading systems;

5. *Also calls upon* members and associate members to take measures to ensure a sustained socioeconomic recovery, and, where applicable, locally driven development approaches, supporting resilient, inclusive and sustainable development in support of the goals and objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

6. *Calls upon* member States, who have the primary responsibility to counter discrimination and hate speech, and all relevant actors, including political and religious leaders, to promote inclusion and unity in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to strongly condemn hate speech and prevent, speak out and take strong action against racism, intolerance, xenophobia, violence and discrimination, in all its forms;

7. *Encourages* all member States to cooperate in closing connectivity gaps, strengthening digital connectivity, and promoting the digital economy, sustainable and disaster resilient infrastructure and investment, and to enhance regional supply chain connectivity and diversification, as well as to facilitate recovery and to ensure resilient connectivity during crises;

8. *Calls upon* member States to leverage digital technologies for the response to COVID-19, including for addressing its socioeconomic impact, paying particular attention to digital inclusion, patient empowerment, data privacy and security, legal and ethical issues, and the protection of personal data;

9. *Encourages* members and associate members to adopt a climate- and environment-responsive approach to COVID-19 recovery efforts and policies in support of the goals and objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognizing the need to immediately curb greenhouse gas emissions and achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns in line with applicable State commitments to the Paris Agreement⁷ and aligned with

⁶ World Health Assembly resolution 58.3.

⁷ See FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21, annex.

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic;

10. *Also encourages* members and associate members to leverage the regional platform to facilitate North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, including by promoting exchanges of good practices, knowledge and experiences, enhancing greater voluntary access to information and innovation on mutually agreed terms, and aligning available resources with the needs between providers and users of North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, and calls upon donors to intensify their efforts to fulfil their respective official development assistance commitments;

11. *Welcomes* the steps taken by the Group of 20 and the Paris Club to provide a time-bound suspension of debt service payments for the poorest countries and by international financial institutions to provide liquidity and other support measures to ease the debt burden of developing countries, and encourages all relevant actors, including private and commercial creditors, to address risks of debt vulnerabilities, through existing channels, in developing countries due to the pandemic;

12. *Calls upon* member States to design recovery strategies based on risk-informed, sustainable financing policies, supported by integrated national financing frameworks as per the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,⁸ to reprioritize the policies necessary to address the economic crisis and depression, begin economic recovery and minimize the negative effects on livelihoods, including the consideration of targeted measures for poverty eradication, social protection for workers, increased access to finance and capacity-building for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, financial inclusion mechanisms, strong fiscal stimulus packages and supportive monetary policies, and calls upon donors and other stakeholders to support countries that lack the capacity to implement such measures, in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as low- and middle-income countries;

13. *Invites* members and associate members to share experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with regard to building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic through inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery strategies and investments aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

14. *Encourages* member States to work regionally and interregionally with the view to build back better, aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and with the support of the Executive Secretary, as appropriate, and in cooperation with other concerned United Nations bodies and relevant stakeholders by, inter alia:

(a) Promoting discussions on the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030,⁹ including by taking note of the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework and other relevant regional and subregional frameworks and initiatives, by convening a thematic meeting in conjunction with the seventh session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction and reporting

⁸ General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex.

⁹ General Assembly resolution 69/283, annex II.

on its outcomes at that session of the Committee, with a view to strengthening post-COVID-19 resilience and disaster preparedness in the region;

(b) Promoting COVID-19 recovery strategies and policies at the national level in support of the goals and objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, inter alia, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, as appropriate, including by harnessing the benefits of the different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country, as appropriate, in line with national circumstances and priorities, as well as by sharing experiences, best practices and locally driven development approaches;

(c) Further enhancing national social protection systems, including through the implementation of the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific;

(d) Furthering regional cooperation on trade and investment, tourism and creative economy, connectivity and energy and promoting the digital economy, including through the Commission's regional cooperation mechanisms, frameworks and agreements;

(e) Enabling all countries to have universal, equitable, timely access to quality, safe, efficacious and affordable diagnosis, therapeutics, medicines, vaccines and essential health technologies, and their components, as well as equipment, for the COVID-19 response;

15. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to assist member States, upon request, in further enhancing national social protection systems, including through the implementation of the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific;

16. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to facilitate the implementation of the present resolution and to report to the Commission at its seventy-eighth session on progress thereon.

*7th plenary meeting
29 April 2021*