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Economic and Social Council

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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Eighty-first session
Agenda item 2
Current and emerging policy issues for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on 25 April 2025

81/1. Advancing the sustainable development of middle-income countries in Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",

Recalling also its resolution 78/1 of 27 May 2022 entitled "Bangkok Declaration Commemorating the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: a Common Agenda to Advance Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific",

Welcoming the convening of the Summit of the Future on 22 and 23 September 2024 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, at which General Assembly resolution 79/1 entitled "The Pact for the Future" and its annexes were adopted,

Recalling the outcomes of all the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields, including the outcomes of the international conferences on development cooperation with middle-income countries,

Recalling also General Assembly resolutions 70/215 of 22 December 2015, 72/230 of 20 December 2017, 74/231 of 19 December 2019, 76/215 of 17 December 2021 and 78/162 of 19 December 2023 on development cooperation with middle-income countries,

Recognizing that connectivity through sustainable and resilient infrastructure, with a focus on affordable, inclusive and equitable access for all, contributes to the sustainable development of middle-income countries,

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Noting that the General Assembly has stressed that middle-income countries continue to face challenges related to, inter alia, job creation, natural resource management, reliance on primary commodity exports, the adverse effects of disaster risks and climate change, high levels of external debt and the volatility of exchange rates and capital flows,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolutions 71/243 of 21 December 2016, 75/233 of 21 December 2020 and 79/226 of 19 December 2024 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in which the Assembly recognized that middle-income countries still faced specific challenges,

Noting that, over the past 15 years, 29 low-income countries have transitioned to middle-income country status, reflecting the sustained economic growth achieved in most parts of the developing world,

Noting also that, despite notable progress in reducing poverty levels in both absolute and relative terms, poverty remains a problem in many middle-income countries, as they are still home to 62 per cent of the world's people living in poverty,

Noting with concern that some particularly vulnerable countries may not be able to access sufficient affordable financing to meet their needs and that they require assistance that best addresses the opportunities and challenges presented by the diverse circumstances of middle-income countries,

Noting the expected establishment of an independent high-level expert group by the Secretary-General and, following the completion of its work, the initiation of a United Nations-led intergovernmental process on measures that complement and go beyond gross domestic product, in close consultation with Member States and relevant stakeholders, including the Statistical Commission, acknowledging the potential for the development of measures of progress on sustainable development that complement or go beyond gross domestic product to improve the support provided by the United Nations development system to programme countries,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on development cooperation with middle-income countries,[1] which contains information on the ongoing work of the other regional commissions, among other United Nations bodies, on middle-income countries,

Noting that the General Assembly has encouraged all United Nations entities, funds and programmes to further develop specific strategies to engage and provide tailored support to middle-income countries, including for leveraging and mobilizing finance for sustainable development,

Recognizing that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has ongoing initiatives across its programme of work relevant to middle-income countries,

1. *Calls upon* its members and associate members to continue to collaborate to support developing countries in their sustainable development efforts, taking into account measures that complement and go beyond per capita income, such as vulnerability, when extending support to middle-income countries;

[1] A/78/224.

2. *Also calls upon* its members and associate members to continue to share best practices with middle-income countries in a manner that helps to address their specific challenges while mindful of their diversity and specific needs, including their need for support in leveraging partnerships and financing;

3. *Welcomes* the support being provided by middle-income countries, particularly to the least developed countries, including through South-South and triangular cooperation, while stressing that South-South cooperation is a complement to, and not a substitute for, North-South cooperation, and in this regard calls upon the United Nations development system to continue its ongoing efforts to collaborate and mainstream support to South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in the spirit of global solidarity;

4. *Notes* that multilateral development banks could bring forward actions within their mandates to support developing countries, in particular vulnerable countries, including middle-income countries, in their development efforts;[2]

5. *Welcomes* the offer of the Government of the Philippines to host a high-level conference on middle-income countries in Asia and the Pacific, to be held on 28 and 29 April 2025 and to be organized with the support of the secretariat and other partners, as a platform to facilitate contributions towards a possible strategic plan of action on middle-income countries;

6. *Requests* the Executive Secretary, within existing mandates and resources, supplemented by voluntary contributions as necessary:

(a) To promote regional cooperation and dialogue to address the specific challenges, concerns and needs of countries such as middle-income countries, including on issues related to the process of graduating to a higher income status, through the programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, as applicable;

(b) To continue to provide analysis and context-specific capacity-building support on issues relevant to middle-income countries in Asia and the Pacific, such as South-South cooperation, resource mobilization, including financing for development, measures that complement or go beyond gross domestic product and other issues, without duplicating efforts, and to submit its findings to the relevant committees subsidiary to the Commission;

(c) To take into account the work done by the other regional commissions on middle-income countries, as applicable;

(d) To report to the Commission at its eighty-third session on progress made in implementing the present resolution.

9th plenary meeting
25 April 2025

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[2] See also General Assembly resolution 79/233, annex, para. 17.