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## Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

### Preparatory Meeting of the Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries

Bangkok, 3 August 2014

## Concept note

### I. Introduction

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) will organize a one-day preparatory meeting of the Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand on 3 August 2014.

### II. Background

The Commission, in its sixty-ninth session, adopted Resolution 69/1 on a conference structure of the Commission for the inclusive and sustainable development of Asia and the Pacific, which decided that the sessions of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries and the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries would be held jointly for a maximum of one day during the senior officials segment and would have a status commensurate with the Committees of the Whole. The Resolution also decided that a one-day preparatory meeting of the Special Body will be held immediately before the beginning of the Commission session.

### III. Development issues to be addressed

The objective of the preparatory meeting is to review and discuss development issues relevant to the Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries and to provide recommendations to inform the deliberations of the Special Body.

#### (a) Preparations for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, Samoa, 2014

##### Documentation

Summary of preparations for the Pacific Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (E/ESCAP/70/1)

Small island developing States face unique challenges in pursuing sustainable development as a result of their small size, long distances from

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markets and the immediate threat from climate change. The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States will be held in Apia from 1 to 4 September 2014. The Conference will seek a renewed political commitment to assist small islands developing States in overcoming their unique challenges and identify priority areas for future action. Representatives of Pacific small islands developing States met in July 2013 to articulate their challenges and priorities in achieving sustainable development. The outcomes of this meeting, along with the outcomes of meetings held in 2013 in the Caribbean and Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea regions and an interregional meeting of small island developing States held in Barbados, will form the basis for discussions at the 2014 international meeting on small island developing States. This preparatory process, together with the unique challenges facing small islands developing States, is outlined in the document.

**(b) Sustainable management of oceans for sustainable development and poverty eradication**

**Documentation**

Sustainable management of oceans and seas for sustainable development and poverty eradication in Pacific island developing States (E/ESCAP/70/2)

Pacific small island developing States have continued to reinforce the importance of the sustainable management of oceans and marine resources to their economies as a fundamental component of food security and for the maintenance of biodiversity. For these States, green economy policies focus heavily on the sustainability of the Pacific Ocean and its resources. In its resolution 69/17, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report detailing the manner in which the secretariat can support member States in the sustainable management of oceans and seas for sustainable development and poverty eradication to the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries at the seventieth session of the Commission. A summary of this report is given in the document.

**(c) Development issues relevant to least developed countries**

**Documentation**

Summary of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 in the Asia-Pacific Region (E/ESCAP/70/3)

In May 2011, the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries adopted the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (the Istanbul Programme of Action). The overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action is to overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the least developed country category. The aim of the Istanbul Programme of Action is to enable half the number of least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020 with a strong focus on developing their productive capacities. The programme contains 8 priority areas for action by the least developed countries and their development partners. The Commission, in its resolution 68/2 on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 in the Asia-Pacific region, urged the

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countries of the region and international and regional organizations to accelerate the implementation, as appropriate, of the recommendations contained in the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Regional Road Map for Implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action in the Asian and Pacific Region from 2011 to 2020.<sup>1</sup> The status report on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, especially in the 8 priority areas of the programme is provided in the document.

**Briefing by UN-OHRLLS on the “Outcome of the Ministerial Meeting on New Partnership for Productive Capacity Building in the Least Developed Countries, Cotonou, Benin”**

**(d) Development issues relevant to landlocked developing countries**

**Documentation**

Summary of the status of implementation of the Vientiane Consensus (E/ESCAP/70/4)

Although significant progress has been made in several areas of the Almaty Programme of Action,<sup>2</sup> landlocked developing countries continue to face major challenges and development gaps. Lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness and high transit costs continue to impose serious constraints to their development. Additional border crossings substantially increase the total expenses for the transport services. The economic performance of landlocked developing countries reflects the direct and indirect impact of their geographical situation. Many landlocked developing countries are among the poorest countries and their economies are typically heavily dependent on a very limited number of primary resources. The Commission, in its resolution 69/2 on the final review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in the Asia-Pacific region, requested the countries of the region and international and regional organizations to endorse the Vientiane Consensus<sup>3</sup> and urgently consider the implementation, as appropriate, of the recommendations contained therein. The status of implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action is provided in the document.

**(e) The perspectives of Asia-Pacific least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries in the context of the development agenda beyond 2015**

**Documentation**

The perspectives of Asia-Pacific least developed, landlocked developing countries and Pacific island developing countries in the context of the development agenda beyond 2015 (E/ESCAP/70/30)

While progress on the Millennium Development Goals has thus far been mixed for the region as a whole, it has been less satisfactory for the

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<sup>1</sup> See E/ESCAP/68/23.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003 (A/CONF.202/3), annex I.*

<sup>3</sup> See E/ESCAP/69/1, annex.

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group of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and several of the small island developing States of the region. Thus, for this group as a whole, the successes achieved by the region on many Millennium Development Goals have not been replicated: in addition to the poor performance in maternal and child health that the region as a whole faces, these countries are also lagging in providing quality primary schooling for all; thus, they are unlikely to meet targets for primary enrolment or completion or for gender parity in higher education. The development momentum that the Millennium Development Goals generated has led to significant improvements in these countries, however, and the Goals were therefore critical for them. That momentum will be lost if a new programme of international action is undertaken after the initial Millennium Development Goals period comes to a close in 2015.

The progress made and the challenges encountered in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the region's least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and several of the small island developing States is discussed in the document submitted by the secretariat, which also highlights the global and regional processes in framing the development agenda beyond 2015 and distils the perspectives of the region's least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States on the development agenda beyond 2015.

#### **IV. Expected outcome**

The preparatory meeting of the Special Body - which will be held one day prior to the Special Body session - will have extensive discussion on all documents and issues to be brought to the attention of the Special Body. A brief summary of key recommendations will be presented by the Chair of the preparatory meeting to the Special Body for its consideration and adoption as its report to the Commission.

#### **V. Participants**

The participants of the preparatory meeting of the Special Body would include senior officials of ESCAP member States and associate member States, and representatives of the UN secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes, and other development partners, and international and regional organizations.

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