

DECISIONS OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE SPECA WORKING GROUP ON INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (WG ON ITSD)

1. The Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development (WG on ITSD) noted with satisfaction the discussions and country presentations of its virtual session, a summary of which is included in the annex and at the event page.
2. The WG reviewed the activities carried out by United Nations ESCAP and ECE secretariats within the framework of the WG since its 11th session and expressed its appreciation of the usefulness of these activities for the SPECA countries
3. The WG recommended to continue enhancing seamless digital connectivity and monitoring of e-resilience under the 2019-2022 Master Plan of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative that should guide the next phase in 2022-2024. The WG requested ESCAP to develop a single information platform with automation and simulation modules on determining compatibility, economic efficiency, and identification of infrastructure projects that lend themselves to ICT deployment for smart corridors.
4. The WG proposed to develop a framework for the post-pandemic recovery period, which may build upon the ESCAP toolkit on e-resilience from a pandemic management perspective and agreed to develop a common work plan for digital transformation in the SPECA countries and an associated e-resilience readiness index for better crisis preparedness in future.
5. The WG noted that with climate-related extreme events on the rise, there was a need to develop capacity on the utilization of ICT, GIS and geospatial data innovations for disaster risk reduction. In this regard, there was a need to enhance the institutional capacity of Central Asian countries to integrate geospatial and statistical information with a focus on slow onset disasters, notably drought monitoring and the development of land accounts in Central Asia
6. The WG took note of the presentation on the methodology for undertaking national STI gap assessments of each SPECA country and outline of the final report for the SPECA subregion. The WG stressed the importance of these assessments to identify key STI issues of common interest for all SPECA countries. The WG recommended wide dissemination of the outcomes of these studies to help the SPECA countries develop action plans to implement the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development. The final study will also outline a way forward for the SPECA countries in terms of innovation policy to promote sustainable development, including recommendations to support a sustainable post Covid-19 recovery and the transition to a circular economy

7. The WG welcomed the initiative to carry out a UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Uzbekistan, subject to availability of extrabudgetary resources, building on the experience of previous reviews of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

7. The WG adopted its updated Programme of Work for the second half of 2020 and 2021 and recommended more active involvement of the private sector in the implementation of goals and objectives.

8. The WG agreed to hold its next session in 2021 and that the exact date and venue will be decided through consultations with the SPECA countries.

9. The WG expressed its sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for being Chair of this virtual 12th session of the SPECA WG on ITSD and requested the Chair to inform the Governing Council of SPECA of this outcome.

10. The WG expressed its appreciation to the secretariats of ESCAP and ECE for their efforts in organizing virtual session of the WG in exceptional circumstances, and their active work to support the activities of the WG on ITSD.
