

Summary Assessment

Third session of the Committee on Social Development

Bangkok
18-20 August 2014

I. Introduction

The 3rd session of the Committee on Social Development was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 18-20 August 2014.

A questionnaire assessing the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee session was distributed to delegates of ESCAP members and associate members. The total number of submitted individual questionnaires was 30. The overall response rate is therefore 50% (N=30/60). The present assessment was prepared on the basis of these questionnaire responses.

In line with the secretariat's efforts to reduce the use of paper and move towards paper smart meetings, an online version of the questionnaire was offered alongside the traditional paper version.

The main purpose of this assessment is to support the secretariat's ongoing efforts to improve its servicing of Committee sessions.

II. Attendance

The Committee session was attended by 37% (N=23/62) of ESCAP members and associate members, with a total number of 60 participants. The Committee session was also attended by 48 participants from other entities.

More than half of delegations were headed by officials from the respective Capital (52%, N=12/23) – one of which at ministerial level (8%) – whereas the remaining 48% (N=11/23) were represented through their embassies in Bangkok.

In 2008, the Committee saw the attendance of 40% of the members and associate members, a number that decreased to 37% in 2010, and remained at 37% in 2013. This indicates a trend of slightly decreasing attendance of members and associate members.

Comments provided by participants to CSD3 included the suggestion to explore ways of encouraging more participation and engagement from governments, in particular from LLDCs, LDCs and SIDS.

III. Relevance of the session

Respondents **overwhelmingly felt that the session was relevant to the needs of the region**. As presented with the aggregate ratings¹ in Table 1, there was high agreement among respondents that the agenda items reflected the thematic focus of the third session of the Committee on Social Development (88), the focus having been on inequalities in the Asia-Pacific region, including gender inequality. Respondents also largely agreed that the agenda items reflected the social development trends and issues of the Asian and Pacific region (86), and that they addressed the needs and priorities of their respective countries (81).

Table 1

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The agenda items reflected the thematic focus of the third session of the Committee on Social Development, being inequalities in the Asia-Pacific region, including gender inequality.	88
The agenda items reflected the social development trends/issues of the Asian and Pacific region.	86
The agenda items addressed the needs and priorities of my country/territory.	81

According to the comments received on the relevance of the session the majority of government participants considered the conference to be highly relevant and useful, particularly with respect to preparations for the ‘Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review’ (17-20 November 2015)

¹ The scores presented in this report are indices calculated according to the below formula, (actual value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses) / (maximum value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses). This allows transforming a raw variable, e. g. x , into a unit-free index between 0 and 1, and for the different indices to be added together. Min (x) and max (x) are the lowest and highest values the variable x can attain, respectively.

$$x\text{-index} = \frac{x - \min(x)}{\max(x) - \min(x)}$$

IV. Effectiveness of the session

Overall, as can be seen from Table 2, respondents found the session to have been **very effective in identifying priority areas and emerging issues in the Asia-Pacific region in relation to inequalities, including gender inequality** (85), in promoting dialogue on regional and subregional approaches (84), and in promoting a collaborative approach to addressing the challenge of rising inequalities (83). The **session documents were found to be of high quality, concise, and stating the issues clearly** (87).

Furthermore, respondents also found the session to be very effective in achieving its four objectives, i. e.: reviewing social development trends and challenges in the context of a development agenda beyond 2015, with particular focus on rising inequalities (85); serving as a preparatory body for the “Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing +20 Review” (85); providing feedback on the zero draft of the outcome document for the Beijing +20 Review Conference (17-20 November 2014) (86); and considering the secretariat’s planned outputs for the 2016-2017 work programme (85).

Table 2

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The Committee session effectively identified priority areas and emerging issues in the Asia-Pacific region in relation to inequalities, including gender inequality.	85
The Committee session successfully promoted dialogue on regional and subregional approaches to addressing the challenge of rising inequalities, including gender inequality.	84
The Committee session effectively promoted a collaborative approach to addressing the challenge of rising inequalities, including gender inequality, at the regional and subregional levels.	83
The session documents were of high quality, concise, and clearly state the issues.	87
The Committee session effectively reviewed social development trends and challenges in the context of a development agenda beyond 2015, with particular focus on rising inequalities.	85
The Committee session effectively served as a preparatory body for the “Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review”.	85
The Committee session effectively provided feedback on the zero draft of the outcome document for the Beijing+20 Review Conference (17-20 November 2014).	86

The Committee session effectively considered the secretariat’s planned outputs for the 2016-2017 work programme.	85
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With regard to the effectiveness of the session, comments from government delegations indicated that the meeting was very effective. Some comments highlighted the need to circulate the zero draft outcome document earlier and to engage government delegations more fully in sessions.

V. Efficiency of the organizational aspects of the session

The **efficiency of the organizational aspects of the Committee session was rated exceedingly positively**, as shown in Table 3. In particular, respondents felt that the time available for the discussion of applicable agenda items during the meeting was adequate (90), and that the secretariat’s servicing of the session was efficient (89). Respondents also indicated that the organization of work prior and in between the Committee session’s agenda items enabled the session to proceed efficiently (88), and that the communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the session were effective (86).

Table 3

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The time available for discussion of applicable agenda items during the meeting was adequate.	90
The servicing of the meeting by the secretariat was efficient.	89
The communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the meeting were effective.	86
The organization of work prior and in between the Committee session’s agenda items enabled the session to proceed efficiently.	88

According to comments received, the majority of government participants considered the conference to be efficient and successful. Some delegations noted that it would be helpful to reflect changes to the zero draft document on screen.

VI. Highlights of the Committee session and aspects that could have been enhanced

According to respondents, the highlights of the Committee session were the excellent moderation, the interactive and accommodating discussion, the efficient review and consensus, and the fact that the session was attended by a core of member State and civil society representatives.

Respondents felt that the session could have benefited from greater sharing of experiences and best practices from country specific, individual and other relevant organizations; solicitation of responses and negotiation on the floor; and greater participation of governments.

VII. Conclusion

Overall, in conclusion, responding delegates felt that the 3rd session of the Committee on Social Development was highly successful.

To summarize the main trends highlighted above, the session was overwhelmingly seen as relevant to the needs of the region, and effective at promoting dialogue and collaboration. The moderation and ensuing interactive discussion were noted very positively. The session documents were found to be of particularly high quality and clarity. The efficiency of the session received exceedingly high ratings, in particular the time available for discussion of applicable agenda items during the meeting, and the servicing of the session by the secretariat.