

Summary Assessment

Fourth session of the Committee on Trade and Investment Bangkok 4-6 November 2015

I. Introduction

The fourth session of the Committee on Trade and Investment was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 4 to 6 November 2015.

A questionnaire assessing the relevance, effectiveness and quality of the meeting was distributed to each delegation of ESCAP members and associate members. Completed questionnaires were received from 12 of the 26 members and associate members in attendance. The overall response rate is therefore 46% (N=12/26). The present assessment was prepared on the basis of these questionnaire responses.

In line with the secretariat's efforts to move toward paper smart meetings, an online version of the questionnaire was offered alongside the 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 42% (N=26/62) of all ESCAP members and associate members, with 74 individual participants. The Committee session was also attended by 61 participants representing non-ESCAP members and associate members, UN entities, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

More than half of delegations were headed by officials from the respective Capital (65%, N=17/26), whereas the remaining 35% (N=9/26) were represented through their embassies in Bangkok.

As for the attendance rates in previous years, the Committee saw the attendance of 37% of the members and associate members in 2009, a number that increased to 49% in 2011, and slightly increased again to 50% in 2013.

Comments on what could have been done to encourage greater engagement from delegations at this meeting included the following (verbatim):

- Our delegation is on the periphery of the region, and we have not participated to the prior meeting. But we are accelerating FTA and EPA negotiations with the region countries and will have greater engagement for next meetings.
- If the same Committee members could be retained for the next Committee meetings, it would provide continuity and there would be more engagement.
- The secretariat should continue provide member states/delegations the summary of each item to keep track for the next meeting.

III. Methodology

For each statement below, an index between 100 and 0 is given, whereby, at a value of 100, all respondents strongly agree with the statement, and, at a value of 0, all respondents strongly disagree. The formula¹ we have used is based on the same principles as the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Human Development Index² (HDI).

IV. Relevance of the session

Respondents overwhelmingly felt that the Committee session was relevant to the needs of the region. As presented with the aggregate ratings in Table 1, there was widespread agreement that the agenda items reflected the development trends and issues of the Asian and Pacific region (92). The respondents also felt that the agenda items reflected the needs and priorities of their respective countries (75).

Table 1

EVALUATED STATEMENT	INDEX (0-100)
The agenda items reflected the development trends/issues of the Asian and Pacific region.	92
The agenda items addressed the needs and priorities of my country/territory.	75

V. Effectiveness of the session

Overall, as can be seen from Table 2, respondents found the session to be extremely effective in highlighting regional development trends and issues (90). Respondents also found the session to be very effective in identifying priority areas and emerging issues in

¹ Index = actual value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses / maximum value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses

² More can be found at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2013_en_technotes.pdf

the region (83), and promoting a collaborative approach to addressing the trade and investment development challenges at the regional and subregional levels (81). The session was also seen as effective in promoting dialogue on regional and subregional approaches, albeit a little less so (75).

In general, respondents felt the session was to some extent effective in addressing gender-related issues in the field of trade and investment (66).

Furthermore, the session documents were found to be of very good quality, concise, and stating the issues clearly (83).

Table 2

EVALUATED STATEMENT	INDEX (0-100)
The Committee session effectively highlighted regional development trends and issues.	90
The Committee session effectively identified priority areas and emerging issues in the region.	83
The Committee session effectively promoted dialogue on regional and subregional approaches.	75
The Committee session effectively addressed gender-related issues in the field of trade and investment.	66
The Committee session effectively promoted a collaborative approach to addressing the trade and investment development challenges at the regional and subregional levels.	81
The session documents were of high quality, concise, and clearly stated the issues.	83

VI. Efficiency of the organizational aspects of the session

The overall efficiency of the organizational aspects of the Committee session was rated very positively, as shown in Table 3. Respondents felt that the time available for discussion during the meeting was adequate (88), that the servicing by the secretariat was efficient and effective (88), and that the organization of work prior and in between Committee sessions enabled the session to proceed efficiently (85). Respondents also indicated that the communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the meeting were effective (81).

The comments received regarding the meeting efficiency were generally positive: in particular, the role of the director in supporting the Chair was clear and efficient. Room

for improvement was noted as follows: it was suggested that the documents, particularly, the programme should have been distributed to participants in advance, and that the draft report should have been distributed earlier on the last day. It was also suggested that it would have been better if there had been an opportunity to discuss on relevant agenda items at the ACPR session before the Committee session.

Table 3

EVALUATED STATEMENT	INDEX (0-100)
The time available for discussion during the meeting was adequate.	88
The servicing by the secretariat was efficient and effective.	88
The communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the meeting were effective.	81
The organization of work prior and in between Committee sessions enabled the session to proceed efficiently.	85

VII. Other comments

According to respondents, the most successful aspects of the Committee session included (verbatim):

- Brief introduction on the report-2015 and activities of the units were successful and useful.
- All delegates had the opportunity to learn, participate and contribute to the meeting.
- Presentation and discussions.
- The Asia Pacific Trade and Investment report was very well done and presented.
- The launch of the trade investment report.
- Very useful report launched - Trade and Investment Report 2015 - particularly the data on services trade. Congratulations on an excellent piece of work.
- The collective of statements from member states on the issues of Asia-Pacific trade and investment ranging from all aspect of the economy, including industry and agriculture and services.

There were also some suggestions on aspects that could have been improved (verbatim):

- More cases and experiences could have been discussed.
- Distribution of papers to be done prior to the meeting so we can read (especially new delegates) in order to contribute meaningfully.

VIII. Conclusion

Overall, in conclusion, responding delegates felt that the 4th session of the Committee on Trade and Investment was successful.

To summarize the main trends highlighted above, the session was overwhelmingly seen as relevant to the needs of the region, and extremely effective in highlighting regional development trends and issues. The issue of addressing gender in the field of trade and investment may warrant some attention in future sessions with a view to further improving its effectiveness rating. The efficiency of the session received particularly positive feedback, especially the servicing of the session by the secretariat and the time available for discussion during the session.