



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Social Development**Fifth session**

Bangkok, 28–30 November 2018

Report of the Committee on Social Development on its fifth session**I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention**

1. The following recommendations of the Committee on Social Development are brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for its consideration and possible action:

Recommendation 1

The Committee requests the secretariat to continue and strengthen support to member States through analysis, knowledge-sharing and technical assistance on the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, in particular in relation to social protection, women's empowerment, population dynamics and disability inclusion.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends strengthening regional cooperation on social protection, and encourages the secretariat, in coordination with relevant United Nations agencies, to explore and develop a modality for regional cooperation to support member States in this regard.

II. Proceedings**A. Strategies for leaving no one behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**
(Agenda item 2)

2. The Committee had before it the notes by the secretariat entitled "Strategies for advancing women's economic empowerment in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals" (ESCAP/CSD/2018/1) and "Leaving no one behind: supporting vulnerable groups in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (ESCAP/CSD/2018/2).

3. The Committee benefited from a panel discussion on strategies for leaving no one behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The panel comprised Mr. Monthian Buntan, Senator, National Legislative Assembly, Thai Parliament, and Member, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Ms. Yogita Swaroop, Economic Adviser, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, India; Ms. Reiko Hayashi, Director, Department of International Research and Cooperation, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, Japan; Ms. Ryce Chanchai, Programme Specialist, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); and Ms. Nenette Motus, Asia-Pacific Regional Director, International Organization for Migration.
4. The panel reviewed progress on and considered strategies for leaving no one behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It explored policy options for strengthening the social inclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in Asia and the Pacific, namely women, children, older persons, migrants and persons with disabilities. The panel identified social protection as an effective tool for empowering people. Lack of data and information gaps were highlighted as key barriers to identifying vulnerable groups that could hamper effective evidence-based policymaking. The panel noted the need for capacity-building and knowledge-sharing platforms to fill data gaps and develop more inclusive policies.
5. Representatives of the following members and associate members of the Commission made statements: Australia; Bangladesh; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Nepal; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; and Sri Lanka.
6. A representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) made a statement.
7. Representatives of Soroptimist International and World Enabled also made statements.
8. The Committee reaffirmed its commitment to leaving no one behind to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Several representatives emphasized their countries' commitment to collaboration at the regional level in order to build capacity and share knowledge on sustainable and inclusive development through a multisectoral approach in order to reach vulnerable groups. Highlighting the multidimensional nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, several representatives informed the Committee that high-level interministerial and/or multi-stakeholder mechanisms had been established in their countries to coordinate the implementation and monitoring of the Goals. One country representative highlighted the opportunity to leverage the synergies between various global and regional frameworks relating to vulnerable groups and the 2030 Agenda.
9. The Committee noted the progress on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment but also the remaining challenges. Several representatives informed the Committee of their countries' comprehensive legal and policy frameworks for further advancing women's empowerment. One country representative stressed the importance of gender-based budgeting as a powerful tool to mainstream gender at all stages of planning and budgeting in public administrations. Some country representatives noted gains made in increased representation of women in managerial positions and tertiary education. Progress had also been made to prevent violence against women and girls, protect them from violence and provide services to survivors of violence, such as through one-stop centres and special funds to enhance the safety and

security of women. One country representative highlighted the rights of the girl child, with examples of schemes to ensure education and a gender balance in the child sex ratio.

10. Several representatives shared information on their countries' national laws and policies to enable women's economic participation, including measures to achieve a work-life balance, extend maternity benefits, create safe and secure workplaces free from sexual harassment, provide vocational training, ensure credit and financial services for women entrepreneurs, and enable financial inclusion and banking opportunities. Incentives for companies to support women's economic participation had also been created in one country. Emphasis was further placed on enhancing women's political participation and increasing the number of women in government.

11. The Committee reaffirmed its commitment to the equal rights of persons with disabilities as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Several countries had enacted comprehensive legislation on the rights of persons with disabilities to guarantee their inclusion and empowerment, in alignment with the Convention and the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. To ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities, several countries had also introduced policies and programmes to enhance accessibility, mobility and vocational skills. Examples of initiatives to collect data and information on persons with disabilities were also presented.

12. Several representatives presented information on their countries' national strategies to address population ageing and highlighted the importance of promoting employment and income security among older persons, including through tax exemptions for older persons, providing health care and expanding existing social pension schemes. The importance of establishing comprehensive and multidimensional policy frameworks, guided by the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, to address the challenges of population ageing was also stressed. Initiatives to address dementia, reduce the burden on older persons and their families, promote long-term care of older persons, and use information and communication technology to facilitate older persons' access to health care were identified.

13. The central role of promoting the rights and participation of young people in sustainable development was highlighted by several country representatives. Particular emphasis was placed on reaping the benefits of the demographic dividend, promoting literacy, high-quality education and skills development, and expanding support for youth entering the labour market.

14. The high levels of international migration in the region as well as rural-urban migration trends were also addressed. Some country representatives emphasized the need to better recognize the benefits of migration, including the important contribution of migrants to economic development, while stressing their vulnerability resulting from discrimination and exploitation and the need to safeguard their rights. Strategies to promote the rights of migrant workers included developing and revising instruments to promote safe, orderly and regular migration; strengthening social protection coverage for migrant workers and their families; and supporting the integration of returning migrant workers in their countries of origin.

15. The Committee noted that, in response to current and future development challenges, social protection was a powerful tool to break cycles of poverty, to protect vulnerable groups from falling into poverty and to promote inclusive development. Some representatives shared information on their countries'

national social protection programmes and policies to address the vulnerabilities of different population groups across the life-course. Some representatives informed the Committee of their countries' achievements in developing universal health coverage to guarantee equal access to quality and affordable health care for all as part of their efforts to reach those furthest behind.

16. A representative of UNFPA highlighted the critical interlinkages between women's economic empowerment and the achievement of sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as the costs of violence against women. UNFPA would continue to work closely with the Commission to support the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

17. Representatives of civil society organizations highlighted the benefits of investing in inclusive societies and environments. Investments in the education of the girl child contributed to economic development, and shifts in mindsets would be required to ensure girls' education and to discourage the practice of child marriage. Inclusive and accessible policies could have a multiplier effect on inclusive development by enabling vulnerable populations to become contributors to development solutions.

B. Strategies for strengthening social protection in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

(Agenda item 3)

18. The Committee had before it the note by the secretariat on social protection as a means for achieving the 2030 Agenda (ESCAP/CSD/2018/3).

19. The Committee benefited from a panel on strategies for strengthening social protection in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. The panel, moderated by Ms. Panudda Boonpala, Deputy Regional Director, International Labour Organization (ILO), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, comprised Dr. Pandup Tshering, Director General, Department of Medical Services, Ministry of Health, Bhutan; Ms. Chhat Lengchanchhaya, Director, Legal Affairs Department, General Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council, Cambodia; Ms. Vivi Yulaswati, Director, Social Protection and Welfare, Ministry of National Development Planning, Indonesia; and Ms. Gantsetseg Tsend-Ayush, Director, Department of Policy Implementation and Research, General Authority for Social Insurance, Mongolia.

20. The panel discussed country experiences in designing and implementing social protection strategies and programmes and stressed the importance of strong political commitment to close gaps with respect to the establishment of national social protection floors. Examples included the creation of a national social protection framework for harmonizing and strengthening existing schemes to provide coverage for all throughout the life cycle. The challenges for existing programmes to identify beneficiaries and ensure adequate benefit levels were also discussed. One panellist explained how her country was gradually increasing benefit coverage to reach all citizens, including workers in the informal sector. The importance of universal health coverage was also discussed as a critical instrument for people's well-being. The panel proposed closer regional cooperation on social protection to improve monitoring of target 1.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 1 and to share knowledge. Several possible modalities for stronger regional cooperation were put forward, including agreement on common principles and measures for assessing the impact of social protection schemes or the establishment of a technical group of experts.

21. Representatives of the following members and associate members made statements: Bangladesh; Cambodia; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; India; Nepal; Philippines; Russian Federation; and Sri Lanka.

22. A representative of ILO also made a statement.

23. The Committee reaffirmed the importance of social protection for reducing inequality and poverty, promoting economic growth and raising the standards of living. Several representatives gave concrete examples of how their countries' social protection systems had contributed to poverty reduction and towards improving health and education outcomes. The critical role of social protection in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals was also highlighted.

24. Several representatives presented information on their countries' social protection schemes and programmes, covering individuals in all stages of life. Among the programmes cited were cash transfer schemes for mothers, pregnant women and children. Several initiatives were aimed at persons with disabilities, which included providing disability benefits or unemployment allowances and adapting physical and information technology infrastructure to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Representatives also presented examples of social protection initiatives in their countries focusing on older persons, including universal pension schemes, cash transfer programmes, special health packages and the establishment of elderly care centres.

25. Several representatives shared their countries' challenges and problems in implementing targeted social protection programmes because of high inclusion and exclusion errors. Additional problems noted were fragmented and inefficient social protection systems, excessive administrative costs, unclear eligibility criteria, coverage gaps and inadequate benefit levels. Some country representatives also noted the challenges related to and the importance of expanding social protection to the informal sector.

26. The Committee was informed of the importance of universal health-care systems in reducing maternal and infant mortality rates and in raising life expectancy. One country representative spoke about a new policy aimed at providing access to affordable health care for all by prioritizing primary health care, particularly maternal and child health, and non-communicable diseases. Issues pertaining to financing health care were also discussed. Some country representatives noted the importance of ensuring universal health care in the context of ongoing demographic trends, climate change and the challenges associated with the high out-of-pocket health-care costs and unequal quality of health-care services.

27. Several representatives presented information on their countries' initiatives to improve education opportunities for children with disabilities, including by more effectively integrating them into mainstream schools, adapting curricula, establishing individual training plans and counselling centres, and training teachers. Some country representatives spoke about achievements in providing free and compulsory education, while others emphasized the implementation of school feeding programmes and scholarships to improve education outcomes. The use of new technologies for e-learning was also highlighted.

28. The Committee stressed the need for greater regional cooperation on social protection. One country representative expressed support for a regional framework on social protection, stating that the region would benefit from a

common understanding of how to interpret and measure progress towards achieving target 1.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 1.

29. A representative called upon countries to strengthen cooperation on social protection, with a view to closing existing social protection gaps. The representative referred to the various possible modalities for regional cooperation that had been discussed under agenda item 3. The representative also pointed to existing frameworks of cooperation on social protection, including the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation 2012 (No. 202) and the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection, and concluded that it was an opportune moment for the Asia-Pacific region to embark on a similar initiative.

C. Report on progress of the Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development and the Regional Framework for Action on HIV and AIDS beyond 2015
(Agenda item 4)

30. The Committee had before it the note by the secretariat on progress towards the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the key actions for its further implementation and the recommendations of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development (ESCAP/APPC/2018/1).

31. The Committee took note of the outcomes of the Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development.

32. The Chair of the Midterm Review of the Regional Framework for Action on HIV and AIDS beyond 2015 informed the Committee of the outcome of that meeting.

D. Consideration of future programme focus of the subprogramme on social development
(Agenda item 5)

33. The Committee had before it the information document on the preparation of the draft programme of work for 2020 (ESCAP/CSD/2018/INF/1).

34. The secretariat gave presentations on the programme planning and budgeting of the United Nations and on the programme of work of the subprogramme on social development for the period 2018–2019.

E. Consideration of possible draft resolutions for submission to the Commission at its seventy-fifth session
(Agenda item 6)

35. No draft resolutions were proposed by the Committee for submission to the Commission.

F. Other matters
(Agenda item 7)

36. No other matters were discussed by the Committee.

G. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifth session
(Agenda item 8)

37. The Committee adopted the present report on 30 November 2018.

III. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

38. The Committee held its fifth session in Bangkok from 28 to 30 November 2018. The session was opened by Dr. Piyasakol Sakolsatayadorn, Minister of Public Health, Thailand. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP made a statement.

39. The Committee benefited from real-time English captioning service, which was utilized for the first time by an ESCAP Committee.

B. Attendance

40. The Committee session was attended by representatives of the following members and associate members: Afghanistan; Australia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Macao, China; Mongolia; Nepal; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Thailand; and Turkey.

41. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds attended: ILO; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; and UNFPA.

42. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other entities attended: ASEAN Autism Network; Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; Foundation of Asia-Pacific Centre on Disability; International Presentation Association; Soroptimist International; The Redemptorist Foundation for People with Disabilities; World Enabled; World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry; and Youth Peer Education Network Asia Pacific.

C. Election of officers

43. The Committee elected the following officers:

Chair: Mr. Chantum Chea (Cambodia)

Vice-Chairs: Mr. Maddhu Sudan Burlakoti (Nepal)
Ms. Ji-hyun Park (Republic of Korea)

D. Agenda

44. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session:
 - (a) Opening statements;
 - (b) Election of officers;
 - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
2. Strategies for leaving no one behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. Strategies for strengthening social protection in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

4. Report on progress of the Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development and the Regional Framework for Action on HIV and AIDS beyond 2015.
5. Consideration of future programme focus of the subprogramme on social development.
6. Consideration of possible draft resolutions for submission to the Commission at its seventy-fifth session.
7. Other matters.
8. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifth session.
9. Closing of the session.

E. Other events

45. The following seminars, side events and special sessions were held in conjunction with the Committee session:

- (a) 28 November 2018, launch of the report: *Social Outlook for Asia and the Pacific: Poorly Protected* and related exhibition;
- (b) 29 November 2018, side event on closing the gaps, social protection and poverty in Asia and the Pacific, co-hosted with ILO;
- (c) 29 November 2018, exhibitions: “Poverty Lines” and “100 years of ILO Work in Social Protection”, co-hosted with Mr. Stefen Chow, Ms. Lin Huiyi and ILO;
- (d) 30 November 2018, workshop on the right to social protection, from traditional disability welfare to social inclusion.

Annex**List of documents**

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
ESCAP/CSD/2018/1	Strategies for advancing women's economic empowerment in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals	2
ESCAP/CSD/2018/2	Leaving no one behind: supporting vulnerable groups in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	2
ESCAP/CSD/2018/3	Social protection as a means for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	3
ESCAP/CSD/2018/4	Report of the Committee on Social Development on its fifth session	
ESCAP/APPC/2018/1	Progress towards the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the key actions for its further implementation and the recommendations of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development	4
<i>Working paper</i>		
ESCAP/APPC/2018/WP.1	Draft Chair's summary of the Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development	4
<i>Limited series</i>		
ESCAP/CSD/2018/L.1/Rev.1	Annotated provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/CSD/2018/L.2	Draft report	8
<i>Information series</i>		
ESCAP/CSD/2018/INF/1	Preparation of the draft programme of work for 2020	5
<i>Information available online</i>		
https://www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/committee-social-development-fifth-session	Information for participants	
https://www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/committee-social-development-fifth-session	List of participants	
https://www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/committee-social-development-fifth-session	Tentative programme	