



Fourth North and Central Asian Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

“Human Well-being and the SDGs: Recovering after the COVID-19 crisis”

SESSION #6: STRENGTHENING SUPPLY CHAINS AND CONNECTIVITY THROUGH REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Virtual Meeting Format 4 Sep 2020 (14:00-15:30, Almaty time (UTC+6))

CONCEPT NOTE

Date: 4 Sep 2020	Organizer: ESCAP
Time: 14:00-15:30 (UTC+6)	Session Focal Points: - Ms. Dinara Azhigaliyeva, ESCAP (main); Mr. Bekhzod Rakhmatov
Language: Russian - English (simultaneous interpretation)	Webpage Link: - https://unescap.un.org/events/2020NCA_SDG Participants Registration: - bit.ly/2020NCA_SDG

Context

2020 has brought humanity face-to-face with the COVID-19 pandemic which poses a worldwide challenge of reconsidering current and previous development strategies. It is now imperative to come up with a new approach, which will take into consideration the lessons North and Central Asian (NCA)¹ countries learned in dealing with the pandemic. Simultaneously, it should allow the countries to construct more resilient governance systems, which will be less vulnerable to flux brought about by external shocks, and which will enable mid-to-long term socio-economic recovery and development that is sustainable, inclusive, and resilient by nature in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

This session will focus on discussing the role and importance of regional and sub-regional cooperation and partnership and ways to make it effective in strengthening NCA's resilient connectivity and integration into global and regional supply chains. After an introductory ESCAP presentation framing the session's discussion, the panel discussion will focus on the following two clusters of issues:

(i) **Trade and transport connectivity and the future of supply chains in North and Central Asia:** The COVID-19 pandemic exposed major limitations and vulnerabilities of the existing supply chains, prompting reassessment of the longer term business strategies on stock maintenance, diversification of supplies, re-shoring or near-shoring production and many other strategic decisions. In addition, the reduced demand for commodities and corresponding price fall put the commodity export dependent countries, like several countries in North and Central Asia, at higher risk of losing their position in the global value chains. Trade and transport costs, as well as the resilience and reliability of freight operations, will play a key role in reshaping the geography of trade and international supply chains. This will be a key challenge for North and Central Asia, where the COVID-19-related border controls amplified the pre-existing connectivity challenges, resulting from the road-centric connectivity and the relatively low level of digitalization and facilitation of cross-border transport and trade operations.² The discussions will explore how international

¹ Defined as per ESCAP: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

² ESCAP, Freight transport and COVID-19 in North and Central Asia: Changing the connectivity paradigm, 7 July 2020.

trade and transport sectors have been impacted by the pandemic in the subregion and necessary strategies to maximize the prospects for socio-economic recovery and long-term sustainable development for the region.

Furthermore, as demonstrated in the latest ESCAP report on the Digital Trade and Trade Facilitation in NCA (2019), the subregion was lagging behind the Asian average in implementation of the measures related to gender equality in trade even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The various measures imposed to contain the pandemic have disproportionately adversely affected women both through the supply and demand shocks. Therefore, in formulating exit strategies a special effort must be given to include measures in trade and transport facilitation addressing this differentiated impact.

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals) and SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment as a cross-cutting theme for all SDGs. With trade, foreign investment and remittances, all projected to decline by between 30 and 45% across the globe in 2020, international, institutional, and sectoral partnerships are indispensable to achieve resilient recovery and long term development away from the damages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Session Objectives

The session aims to produce an overview of current sub-regional cooperation in NCA in dealing with the challenges and opportunities related to potential reconfiguration of supply chain and connectivity landscape. The session will provide member states and other stakeholders in the subregion a platform for discussion and understanding of ways to build back better after the crisis. Its main messages will feed into the 2021 sessions of the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

Agenda

Time	Activity
14:00-14:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome and Introduction to Session 6, Ms. Azhar Jaimurzina Ducrest, Chief, Transport Facilitation and Logistics Section, Transport Division, ESCAP (3 min) Presentation - Setting the stage, Ms. Mia Mikic, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP (7 min)
14:10-15:25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel discussion with representatives from regional organizations and finance institutions, followed by Q&A (75 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Andrey Panteleev, Head, Economic Policy Strategies Section, Macroeconomic Policy Department, Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) SCO [tbc] Mrs. Bayan Adilbekova, ECO Secretariat, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Mr. Leonid Efimov, Head, International Cooperation Division, Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) Ms. Shelly Hsieh, Strategy and Policy Officer, Strategy, Policy and Budget Department, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Mr. David Morris, Vice-Chair, Executive Council, ESNB; Director, David Morris projects, Ltd. Ms. Yelena Vassilevskaya, Deputy Director for Project Management and Training, Kazakhstan Freight Forwarders Association (KFFA)
15:25-15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of the discussions and closing (5 min)

Session Documents:

- ESCAP Policy Brief, “Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic: Coping with the ‘new normal’ in supply chains”, 4 August 2020, <https://www.unescap.org/resources/beyond-covid-19-pandemic-coping-new-normal-supply-chains>
- ESCAP Policy Brief, “Freight transport and COVID-19 in North and Central Asia: Changing the connectivity paradigm”, 7 July 2020, <https://www.unescap.org/resources/freight-transport-and-covid-19-north-and-central-asia-changing-connectivity-paradigm>
- ESCAP Policy Brief, “Policy Responses to Covid-19: Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific”, 24 April 2020, <https://www.unescap.org/resources/policy-reponses-covid-19-transport-connectivity-asia-and-pacific>