



**SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA
(SPECA)**

**First Session of the SPECA Working Group
on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development**

(Country chair: Kazakhstan, 30 July 2020)

**DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE SPECA WG ON ITSD
FOR JULY 2020-DECEMBER 2021**

The activities to be carried out by the Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development (WG on ITSD) are demand-driven, focused on a limited number of priority topics and matched with available resources.

ACTIVITIES ENVISAGED FOR JULY 2020-DECEMBER 2021

1. Capacity-building on policy options and practical instruments to promote innovation and technology for sustainable development

Objectives:

To strengthen the national capacity of the SPECA countries to advance knowledge-based development by developing relevant substantive skills, increasing the organizational capacity of the institutions involved, promoting regional cooperation and fostering investment in modern infrastructure.

Rationale:

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Organization of a regional/subregional capacity-building event on innovation and technology for sustainable development, possibly in conjunction with the annual session of the WG on ITSD (tentatively envisaged for 2021);
- (ii) Participation of experts from SPECA countries in UNECE policy-oriented meetings and capacity-building events on promoting knowledge-based development for policymakers and practitioners; and

- (iii) Policy advisory services and other events promoting innovation and technology for sustainable development at the request of Governments of SPECA countries.

2. Implementation of the UNECE project on Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries

Objectives:

To increase the role of innovation in promoting further economic development of the SPECA countries.

Rationale:

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

Undertaking Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews and supporting implementation of policy recommendations in selected countries of the SPECA region (envisaged for 2020 and 2021).

3. Support to SPECA countries to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs

Objectives:

Policy advisory support to SPECA countries to stimulate the private and public sector innovation required to deliver the SDGs.

Rationale:

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Capacity building activities upon request from SPECA countries, for example on integrating innovation policies into national strategies for sustainable development and supporting participation of SPECA countries in wider UN initiatives in support of Agenda 2030; and
- (ii) Development of a SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development, identifying innovative joint initiatives between SPECA countries with potential to support delivery of Agenda 2030 within the sub-region.

4. Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative

Objectives:

To enhance regional cooperation and strengthen connectivity through implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative.

Rationale:

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of ESCAP extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from SPECA countries in the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee meetings;
- (ii) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from SPECA countries in subregional Steering Group meeting(s) of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway;
- (iii) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from SPECA countries to the Expert Group Meetings and Subregional Capacity Development Workshop (planned in Kazakhstan) and National workshops (planned in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan);
- (iv) Subregional and national reports on Fibre-optic cable co-deployment to explore fibre-optic route diversification capitalizing on opportunities created by infrastructure sharing and co-deployment;
- (ix) Study on Operation Models of Trans-Border Terrestrial Cable Networks for the Implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway to foster building of consensus on cross-border, cross-sectoral fibre optic co-deployment;

5. Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development

Objectives:

To enhance the capacities of policymakers, government officials and other relevant stakeholders to promote, adopt and utilize ICT for achieving national sustainable development goals.

Rationale:

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. The activities will be funded through the extrabudgetary resources of APCICT and co-funding mobilized through national and subregional partners.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Conduct capacity-building workshops on APCICT's flagship ICT for development programmes (e.g. training on Data-Driven Governance in Kazakhstan, tentative envisaged for last quarter of 2019);
- (ii) Development of localized versions of the APCICT training modules, targeted at SPECA countries;
- (iii) Provide advisory services to SPECA countries in areas related to ICT for socio-economic development, subject to funding and resource availability; and
- (iv) Conduct capacity-building workshops on the application of ICT tools for renewable energy resource assessments at the national level in SPECA countries, subject to funding and resource availability (APCTT).

6. Capacity development on the utilization of ICT and GIS for disaster risk reduction

Objectives:

Develop knowledge-based tools for disaster risk management and strengthen resilience into development policy and planning of SPECA countries.

Rationale:

The project contributes to the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in the Terms of Reference, in particular to objective of knowledge-based disaster risk reduction and management. Implementation will be financed from the ESCAP extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Assist SPECA countries to use decision making tools for drought monitoring and early warning;
- (ii) Organize the 2019 KOICA-ESCAP Fellowship Programme: capacity building on drought monitoring; and early warning by using geospatial information systems (GIS).
- (iii) ESCAP provides continued support on disaster risk reduction by promoting innovative technology applications including ICT and GIS.

7. Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia

Objectives:

Enhance the institutional capacity of Central Asian countries to integrate geospatial and statistical information.

Rationale:

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD to support drought management and land-related SDG challenges including disaster risk reduction as specified in its Terms of Reference.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Conduct assessment of country profile on drought monitoring and land accounts with a diagnostic tool and template (patterned after ESCAP's environment statistics diagnostic tool) to identify policy priorities, available information, data sources, stakeholders and institutional mechanisms necessary to develop or strengthen the land accounts.
- (ii) Organize an inception regional workshop and expert group meetings to discuss preliminary estimates of assessment on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia region, and assist capacity building on using the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and the framework for integration of the geospatial and statistical information;
- (iii) Organize policy forums to share key findings and methodologies to assess disaster-related SDGs implementations.

SUMMARY TABLE

Area of Activity	Lead Executive Agency	Timeframe
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Capacity-building on policy options and practical instruments to promote knowledge-based development	UNECE	July 2020-December 2021
Implementation of the UNECE project on Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries	UNECE	July 2020-December 2021
Support to SPECA countries to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs	UNECE	July 2020-December 2021
Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative	ESCAP	July 2020-December 2021
Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development	ESCAP	July 2020-December 2021
Capacity development on the utilization of ICT and GIS for disaster risk reduction	ESCAP	July 2020-December 2021
Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia	ESCAP	July 2020-December 2021