

PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECA PROJECT WORKING GROUPS

Implementation of the SPECA Work Plan for 2012-2013, adopted by the Governing Council at its sixth session on 11 November 2011 in Ashgabat, has proceeded according to schedule. Activities carried out by the six SPECA Project Working Groups since the last session of the Governing Council are summarized below.

I. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON WATER AND ENERGY RESOURCES

Dam safety in Central Asia: capacity-building and subregional cooperation

The project aiming to improve safety of dam operations in Central Asia started in 2006. There are two main results from the first phase of the project: (i) a model national law on safety of large hydraulic facilities, including dams, intended to be a base of national harmonized legal frameworks for dam safety; and (ii) a draft of the regional agreement on cooperation on dam safety, which stipulates, inter alia, exchange of information and notification of other countries in case of accidents with dams.

The second phase of the project was implemented during the period 2008-2011 with funding from Finland and the Russian Federation. The main results of the second phase include further negotiations and development of the draft regional agreement, input to the development of dam safety legislation in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well as joint training for experts in the region. A Technical Regulation for all five countries has been approved, and a safety review of the Kirov dam on the Talas river has been performed. Information about the project can be found on: <http://www.unece.org/env/water/damsafety.htm>. On the request of participating countries fundraising for a third phase is on-going.

Water, Environmental and Energy Information

The “Central Asian Regional Water Information Base” (CAREWIB) Project, funded by Switzerland, was launched in 2004. It is implemented by the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC-ICWC) in Tashkent in cooperation with UNECE and UNEP/Grid-Arendal. The project includes a Water Portal (www.cawater-info.net) that provides access to Central Asian water information, a bibliographic database of Land and Water Resources Use in the Aral Sea basin, lists of and links to donors active in the Aral Sea basin, databases for the Aral Sea basin, the Amudarya and the Syrdarya river basins, etc. The portal also hosts the websites of various projects. The project further includes the development of an Information System on Water and Land Resources in the region for experts and decision makers in the five Central Asian States. Phase 2 of the project started in the end of 2007.

In the second phase of the CAREWIB project, the focus has been on developing national water information systems. An evaluation of the project made by the Swiss donors is presently being discussed by the involved partners. The result of this discussion will be decisive on whether the project will be continued.

Development of Cooperation on the Chu and Talas Rivers

On 26 July 2006, the Kazakh-Kyrgyz Chu and Talas Rivers Commission was inaugurated with the support of UNECE and ESCAP. The establishment of the Commission created a mutually beneficial way for Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to share responsibility for water infrastructure used by both countries. Project support in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) - started in 2008 and ended in the end of 2011. This project, funded by Finland, has contributed to the further broadening of cooperation to improve the joint management of the Chu and Talas rivers, to include, among others, protection of ecosystems and stakeholder participation in the river management. Information about the work under the commission as well as the project results can be found on <http://www.chutalascommission.org/>.

Fund-raising and project development are on-going for continued support to the development of the commission.

Promoting cooperation to adapt to climate change in the Chu-Talas transboundary basin

The UNECE-UNDP project aims to improve the adaptive capacity of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, to support dialogue and cooperation on the needed steps to design an adaptation strategy in the transboundary context and thereby prevent controversy on the use of water resources. The vulnerability assessment has started; a draft structure for the assessment was elaborated and discussed. Climate and hydrological modelling is ongoing. In addition, a study on economic aspects of climate change adaptation has been initiated, with in-kind support of Finnish experts. A project meeting was held on 19-20 July 2012 in Almaty to discuss the progress, mainly regarding the modelling and vulnerability assessment, as well as the next steps in the project. The project progress was also presented and discussed at the third workshop on water and adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins under the UNECE Water Convention, held on 25-27 April 2012 in Geneva where several project representatives participated.

Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Water Resources Management in Central Asia

The Programme “Trans-boundary Water Management in Central Asia” was launched in 2008 by the Government of Germany. A Programme component “Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management” was implemented in 2009-2011 by the UNECE, with the goal to empower the countries of Central Asia to develop and implement mutually acceptable, long-term solutions to improve cooperation on transboundary water resources. Enhancing the regional dialogue and strengthening the capacity of regional institutions for water resources management were the major objectives.

Through the first component, Regional Institutions on Water Management, the countries of Central Asia were supported in analyzing the needs for reforms in the legal framework and overall institutional setting for transboundary water management, with a focus on the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS). The project facilitated the development of proposals for adaptation of mandates, objectives and responsibilities of regional water institutions.

The second component, International Water Law, involved building capacity on international water law and policy. It initiated a dialogue between the five states of Central Asia about the needs for stable legal frameworks for water management in Central Asia. This work was based upon existing frameworks such as the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact

Assessment in a Transboundary Context, the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, and other relevant international legal instruments in the area of water management.

The last component, Water Monitoring and Data Exchange, provided support to regional institutions and representatives of five Central Asian countries in strengthening water monitoring and improving data exchange, in close coordination with existing UNECE and other projects.

For more information see <http://www.unece.org/env/water/cadialogue/cadwelcome.html>. A second phase of the project will start in the end of 2012. This phase will focus on Regional Institutions on Water Cooperation, and International Water Law and IWRM.

Water quality in Central Asia

The United Nations Development Account has made funding available to UNECE for a project to improve cooperation and policy related to water quality in Central Asia. The project started in the beginning of 2009 and was concluded 30 September 2012. It has been implemented in collaboration with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC). The project has established common principles for measurement, exchange of information and joint assessment. The development of more efficient national policies, including the standards and principles applied in the regulation of environmentally harmful activities, has been another key aspect. As the water quality monitoring has seriously deteriorated since the early 1990s, support has been given to a basic monitoring network. The project has contributed to a more active discussion of water quality issues in the region and a regional plan for further development of cooperation in this area was presented during the Astana Ministerial Conference in September 2011.

Strengthening cooperation on transboundary watershed management between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin

The project supports Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the development of hydrology and environment cooperation in the upper Amu Darya Basin. The Ministry for Water and Energy and the National Environmental Protection Agency of Afghanistan and the Committee for Environmental Protection of Tajikistan and Tajik Hydromet are project partners. On the basis of existing bilateral agreements the two countries will strengthen their cooperation and information exchange.

The first meeting of Afghan and Tajik water and environment experts took place in Dushanbe from 27 to 29 March 2012 and it was agreed to establish cooperation to address pressing issues on the shared upper part of the Amu Darya River Basin. A bilateral working group will be set up to pursue further work, including joint hydrological monitoring and exchange of information on the shared river basin.

Regional study "Water Resources in Central Asia: Current Status, Problems and Perspectives of Use"

The study is prepared by ESCAP in collaboration with the Executive Committee of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea. The review covers the water resources in Central Asia on issues of development, shocks, resilience and well-being and is summarizing description of water issues, management and development to support sustainable investments in Central Asia and the socio-economic aspects of water management and responding the need to clarify an understanding of the link between water, energy, food and security with the prospect of inter-regional cooperation.

The review is intended to improve understanding issues of the joint use and protection of transboundary water resources, cooperation in the field of water relations between Central Asian countries, including issues related to environmental degradation, pollution, climate change and urbanization trends, as well as an overview of the national water policy and legal framework for regional cooperation. The review gives a set of recommendations to ESCAP to further contribute to the capacity-building in the region in a number of projects within IWRM, summarises the list of projects of ASBP-3 and provides a number of innovative solutions to address the issues of water-food-energy nexus.

Enhancing Energy Security through Regional Cooperation

ESCAP is implementing the project “Enhancing energy security through regional cooperation” funded by the Russian Federation that has the objective to support development of legal and regulatory frameworks to support energy efficiency and clean energy in North and Central Asia (NCA).

Among its outputs this project has development of the open online database of legal and regulatory documents on sustainable use of energy and renewable energy sources from the selected countries in North and Central Asia. The database currently contains approximately 1200 documents from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and reflects existing policy and regulatory framework for energy efficiency (EE) and renewable energy sources development in NCA. The database is developed to serve as an information tool for policy makers, researchers, project developers and potential investors and it can also be a useful capacity-building tool for exchange of experience and information on existing approaches to formulation of new policies and regulations between the countries, and there are plans for further expansion of database to cover more countries of the subregion.

The project is also preparing two studies: Comparative analysis of the policy and regulatory frameworks for the efficient use of energy and renewable energy deployment in the countries of North and Central Asia and Review of the current status and prospects of improving economic instruments for pricing of fuel and energy resources in the context of sustainable development in North and Central Asia. It is expected that their findings will be circulated by the end of 2012.

Third International Forum: Energy for Sustainable Development

The “Third International Forum: Energy for Sustainable Development. Capacity-building for energy efficiency and access to cleaner energy in Central Asia and neighbouring regions” was held at the IssykKul Lake in Kyrgyzstan on 12-14 September 2012. The Forum was organized jointly by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Global Environment Facility (GEF). Over 130 participants from 22 countries participated in the event. This Forum was a follow-up to the International Energy Efficiency Forums held in 2010 in Astana, Kazakhstan and in 2011 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

The Forum has adopted a joint resolution affirming the critical role of international cooperation in improving access to clean and efficient energy for sustainable and inclusive growth and stressing the importance of involvement of all the relevant stakeholders, such as governments, international organizations and financial institutions, private sector, etc.

During the plenary sessions and thematic workshops, the Forum explored a wide range of topics, including the key elements needed to support improvement in energy efficiency and access to cleaner energy in Central Asia and neighbouring countries, including formation of favourable policy, investment and market conditions. Experiences and good practices from Asia and Europe, as well as the examples of technological advances in energy efficiency, renewable and cleaner energy were shared and discussed.

Analysis of Advanced Technologies in Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy in the Framework of the Global Energy Efficiency 21 Project and Preparation of Recommendations on its Application with Special Emphasis on Central Asian Region

The project will assist the Governments and other stakeholders in Central Asian region to overcome barriers and introduce advanced technologies in energy efficiency (EE) and renewable energy (RE) to support low-carbon economic and environmental sustainable development. In particular, the project will assess the performance of the countries in the region against the 25 best practice guidelines identified by the IEA at the 2005 Gleneagles summit, identify the fundamental reasons, if any, why they fall short of best practice, and make substantive recommendations on steps to be taken to meet best practice.

At the first stage of the project implementation National Studies have been completed.

The National Studies provide an analysis of the following issues:

- Specific economic and energy conditions of Central Asian (CA) countries;
- National energy policy frameworks;
- End-uses of energy in each sector of the national economies;
- Most appropriate EE and RE technologies for each country;
- Barriers to investments in relevant advanced EE and RE technologies;
- The need of coordinated policy to harmonize national programmes in the field of EE and RE development;
- International cooperation in the CA region in EE and RE; and
- Role of EE and RE in assisting to resolve existing water/energy problems.

The outcomes of the four national studies were presented at the Third International Forum: Energy for Sustainable Development in September 2012 in Kyrgyzstan.

II. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON TRANSPORT AND BORDER CROSSING

The Project Working Group (PWG) on Transport and Border Crossing focuses on developing new, and extending existing, road and rail networks in the region, as well as addressing the specific problems of transit transport from, in and through SPECA member countries. It is also a privileged place to prepare for the final Review (2013) of the Almaty Declaration of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries.

The 17th session of the SPECA PWG-TBC was held on 6-7 June 2012 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The session was hosted by the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the lead SPECA country in the field of transport. Following the presentations and the deliberations of the meeting as well as the consideration of session's documents as stipulated in the Agenda of the 17th session of SPECA PWG-TBC, the Project Working Group arrived at the following conclusions and recommendations:

It took note of:

- the prioritized projects identified by the Euro Asian Transport Linkages (EATL) expert group of total cost of \$215 billion, on road, rail and inland waterways transport;
- the recommendations provided by the project on infrastructure, facilitation and policy;
- and the important studies performed by the expert group such as the comparison study of existing Euro-Asian maritime routes with selected rail ones and the identification of non – physical obstacles; and
- the PWG encouraged SPECA countries to support the continuation of the EATL project and actively participate to its initiatives such as the development of block trains in the region and the update of the comparison study.

The PWG considered the importance of dry ports because it was relevant and useful for trade and transport facilitation. It encouraged SPECA countries to support ESCAP on developing of Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports and actively participate in the ESCAP's ad hoc intergovernmental meeting on Dry Ports for its formulation and finalization.

The PWG invited those SPECA countries that have not yet done so to take measures towards accession, acceptance, approval or ratification of UNECE transport conventions and agreements especially the ones that deal with transport infrastructure (AGR, AGC, AGTC), road traffic and road signs and signal, border crossing facilitation and dangerous goods.

The PWG invited those SPECA countries that have not yet done so to take measures towards accession, acceptance, approval or ratification of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network.

The PWG took note of the handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings – A Trade and Transport Facilitation Perspective, jointly published by UNECE and OSCE. The PWG recognised the importance of the handbook as a tool for knowledge sharing and border crossings improvement and requested SPECA countries to review it, provide their own views and case studies and implement it as appropriate.

The PWG took note of the Guidelines on Establishing and Strengthening National Coordination Mechanisms for Trade and Transport Facilitation in the ESCAP Region published by ESCAP, and encouraged SPECA countries to review the guidelines, provide feedback to ESCAP and implement it as appropriate.

The PWG stressed the importance knowledge and sharing good practices and encouraged SPECA countries to strengthen national coordination mechanisms to review, assess, propose and take actions for the facilitation of international trade and transport. It encouraged SPECA countries to hold workshops on establishing and strengthening of national coordination mechanisms as means to remove barriers in cross-border and transit transport.

The PWG encouraged the holding national workshops for implication of “Capacity-building for Control Authorities and Transport Operators to Improve Efficiency of Cross-Border Transport in Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries’ project in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It also encouraged SPECA countries to actively participating in the planning and organization of demonstration runs of transport operation along the selected corridors.

The PWG requested SPECA countries to support – and actively participate – the UNECE expert group’s work on Unified Railway Law and its position paper as well as the development by UNECE of an international rail convention that would facilitate railways development and eliminate the non-physical obstacles of railways operations.

The PWG reviewed the progress in the development of SPECA transport database and requested SPECA countries, UNECE and ESCAP to work on the harmonization of data requested and to SPECA countries provide data and information for updating of the SPECA transport database.

The PWG noted the potential benefit of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) modalities and encouraged SPECA countries to strengthen the training programmes for government officials and other relevant stakeholders by taking advantage of training materials on PPPs prepared by UNECE and ESCAP. In this respect, the PWG took note that UNECE established a PPP schemes centre of excellence on different topics including transport.

The PWG took note of UNECE SPECTRUM of road safety activities and of SPECA countries’ efforts to develop and implement national road safety strategies and action plans with goals and targets in line with the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety. It encouraged SPECA Countries to support ESCAP’s Road Safety Survey for future analysis of road safety issues to achieve overall objective of the ESCAP regional road safety for the Decade of Action for Road Safety. It also encouraged SPECA countries to take advantage of UNECE and ESCAP experience on developing national road safety strategies and action plans and request for technical assistance / capacity-building workshops as appropriate.

The PWG encouraged SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede all of the agreements relating to the transport of Dangerous Goods. The PWG agreed to establish some coordination mechanisms for the proper implementation / enforcement of international agreements related to Dangerous Goods and requested on UNECE to provide technical assistance / capacity-building workshops as appropriate. It noted that a Road Map on how to set up the administrative structures required for implementation of ADR was developed by the UNECE Working Party on The Transport of Dangerous Goods.

III. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON TRADE

During the period since the SPECA meetings in Ashgabat, October 2011, the SPECA Project Working Group on Trade continued the implementation of its Work Programme. The main focus remained on the Aid-for-Trade initiative, trade facilitation, and agricultural quality standards. Building synergies with various strategic partners, such as the Eurasian Economic Commission, CAREC, GIZ, WTO, UNIDO, UNDP and other agencies remains a priority. In more detail, the following activities were organized:

In collaboration with the Governments of the SPECA countries, UNECE, ESCAP, UNDP, ITFC, ITC, UNIDO, and other organizations continue to coordinate their work on trade-related assistance, developing further the SPECA Aid-for-Trade (Aft) initiative, and implementing the Baku Ministerial Declaration on Aid-for-Trade. The SPECA (Aft) Implementation and Monitoring Council was established. It will work in close cooperation with the PWG on Trade in the follow-up mechanism to the Baku Ministerial Meeting. The matrix of national and regional projects was also developed further, and now the SPECA countries are invited to review and make contributions to these matrices. The work on the SPECA Aid-for-Trade Initiative was presented at the Fourth

Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries in Almaty on 12 September 2012 and at various WTO Aid-for-Trade and other meetings.

The **sixth meeting of the SPECA Project Working Group on Trade** took place on 10 November 2011, in Ashgabat. The participants re-elected Tajikistan to chair the SPECA Project Working Group on Trade, and invited Turkmenistan to become the co-chair of the Group. After internal deliberations on the issue, the Government of Turkmenistan accepted the invitation, and is expected to assume its responsibilities at the seventh meeting of the Group in November 2012.

UNECE and ESCAP continued their support for trade facilitation in the region. Kazakhstan had initiated a second Conference on Trade Facilitation and the Single Window for the countries of the Customs Union and Central Asia, yet due to financial problems and changes in the management of the Kazakhstan State Customs Committee, the Conference was postponed, and may take place in a different country. The Crown Agents company continued implementing under tender from ADB its Single Window project in Kyrgyzstan, and this project was led by Valentina Mintah, a Crown Agents and UNCEFACT expert. Kazakhstan and Tajikistan issued tenders for building the Single Window system. An EU-funded project to develop the SW has been initiated, and a company has been hired under EU tender. The first phase of the Single Window project in Azerbaijan was finalized, and there are functioning Single Window modules at the borders of Azerbaijan. All these projects follow up on the UN Development Account projects in the region, notably the trade facilitation UNDA 5th tranche project in 2006-2009 and the 6th tranche UNDA project. In 2012, UNNext guidelines for Single Window project management, data harmonization, and developing an enabling legal environment were developed.

In February 2012, UNECE and UNCTAD organized a seminar on the Single Window and data exchange in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, working with the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations of Uzbekistan and UNDP. The seminar followed up on the capacity-building activities in 2008-2009, which led to drafting an Action Plan for the establishment of a Single Window in the country. UNECE prepared a publication with the materials of the seminar, to be published by UNDP. On 1 April 2012 Uzbekistan launched a first phase of the system.

The Interparliamentary Assembly of EurAsEC and UNECE continued their close cooperation on identifying the legal impediments to trade facilitation, the Single Window and data harmonization and e-commerce, with a view to harmonize the related legislation in the EurAsEC Member States in the area of trade procedures, e-commerce and information exchange. A joint publication was issued on that matter.

On the occasion of the UN Global conference on information exchange in international supply chains UNECE and ESCAP organized the UNNEXT workshop for Single Window project management and implementation in December 2011, in Geneva. The workshop was supported by GIZ and ADB and focused on best managerial practice and exchange of experience of implementers from Central Asia and other regions of the world. A Business Process Analysis was carried out in Kazakhstan, and presented as a good practice to other countries. UNECE and ESCAP provided capacity-building under the UNNext project at two seminars, organized by GIZ in Dushanbe: a seminar on Data Harmonization in June 2012, and a regional conference for Single Window implementers in Central Asia, which developed further the ideas of regional cooperation in data exchange in Central Asia. UNECE provided capacity-building at three training courses of the OSCE Border Management College in Dushanbe.

UNCTAD and UNECE presented a joint project on a simplified Customs transit data exchange between Afghanistan and its SPECA neighbours at several events, including the 5th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan in March 2012. Several development partners, Tajikistan and Afghanistan expressed interest in implementing this project.

In the area of agricultural quality standards, Tajikistan started participating in the UNECE work on these issues. They submitted draft texts for new standards for quince and persimmon for consideration by the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables of UNECE Working Party 7 on Agricultural Quality Standards. One expert received training at the workshop for seed potato growers and inspectors, jointly held by UNECE and the Lorkh Institute for potato cultivation.

The UNECE Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division assists its Member States in the development of sustainable real estate markets and land management systems. Good governance in this sector has acquired new importance in the aftermath of the global crisis in the real estate market. The SPECA countries have benefited from that work for years and now UNECE is organizing activities in the region. In April 2013, the UNECE Working Party on Land Administration will organize, in cooperation with the Government of Kyrgyzstan and the World Bank, several events in Kyrgyzstan. These include the eighth session of the Working Party, a workshop on land registration, a roundtable discussion to generate dialogue on improving Kyrgyz real estate markets and, subject to funding availability, a study trip to rural Kyrgyzstan to learn about the challenges of land management in that area.

In August 2012, Tajikistan acceded to the New York Convention on Commercial Arbitration, thus becoming the last SPECA country to accede to this UN Convention. At its 6th meeting in Ashgabat, the SPECA PWG on Trade had recommended to the countries to accede to the UNCITRAL e-Commerce Convention. However, not a single SPECA country has yet acceded to this Convention.

IV. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON STATISTICS

The 7th meeting of the SPECA Project Working Group on Statistics (PWGS) took place in IssykKul, Kyrgyzstan on 27-30 August 2012. It was attended by heads and/or deputy heads of national statistical agencies of the following SPECA countries: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as the Chairman of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), and the deputy heads of respectively the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) and of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Representatives from the World Bank, Statistics Norway and Iceland also participated in the meeting. The meeting was sponsored by the EFTA.

The objective of the SPECA PWGS is to strengthen the statistical capacity of member countries of the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) to produce statistical information in order to monitor demographic, social and economic progress and the regional integration of their economies. It aims particularly to implement international standards and guidelines for enhancing the capacity of the SPECA member countries to produce internationally comparable and reliable data. Particular attention is paid to promoting the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, which provide the basis for a sound legal and institutional framework for national statistical systems.

The purpose of the 7th meeting of the SPECA PWGS was to discuss, in the context of the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA 2008), recent initiatives and

approaches, and share good practice in enhancing the coordination of national statistical systems and streamlining statistical production processes, with a major focus on the production of integrated economic statistics. The meeting allowed participants to exchange information in the perspective of the High-level Seminar on Modernizing Statistical Production and Services, co-organised by UNECE and ROSSTAT (St. Petersburg, 3-5 October 2012).

During the meeting, participants emphasized the importance of the PWGS in identifying needs, prioritizing activities and coordinating national and regional capacity-building programmes. But once again addressed some issues concerning the scarce financial and human resources allocated through the SPECA programme to the implementation and follow-up of these projects. Participant agreed that the PWGS is an ideal platform for the coordination of technical cooperation activities in the SPECA region and adopted with some minor amendments the new PWGS Terms of Reference that reinforce this specific activity of the group.

In order to support the development of national statistical capacities in the SPECA region, UNECE, in cooperation with other national and international donors, organized in 2012, advisory missions and training workshops in response to specific request in all relevant statistical areas, such as economic and business statistics, MDG indicators, demographic and social statistics, gender statistics, migration statistics, environment and sustainable development statistics. This will be achieved by promoting the exchange at subregional level of national good practices, undertaking benchmark studies and stimulating the establishment of an active network of experts.

In 2012, a Global Assessment of the national statistical system of Tajikistan was conducted with the objective to reviewing the compliance of national statistics with international standards and methodologies, including the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It was agreed by the Tajik statistical authorities and the World Bank that the 5-year development plan to improve national statistics should be adapted in order to incorporate the recommendations formulated in the Global Assessment report.

V. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON KNOWLEDGE-BASED DEVELOPMENT

This progress report contains activities carried out/to be carried out by the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats within the framework of the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (PWG on KBD), or addressing topics within its thematic areas held since the sixth session of the SPECA Governing Council in November 2011. These activities are in line with the Programme of Work of the PWG for 2012-2013 which was adopted at the fourth session of the PWG on KBD, held in Baku on 24 November 2011.

The UNECE and ESCAP secretariats carried out/will carry the following capacity-building activities in SPECA member countries:

- UNECE International Conference on Knowledge-based Development and Innovative Entrepreneurship, Baku, 24-25 November 2011.
- Third meeting of the UNECE Expert Group on Public-Private Partnerships for CIS countries, Baku, 25 November 2011.
- Implementation of the *UNECE project “Innovation Performance Reviews”*. Within this project, the UNECE secretariat organized a Multi-stakeholder Policy Meeting on the

main outcomes of the Innovation Performance Review of Kazakhstan, Geneva, 30 November 2011. The *Innovation Performance Review of Kazakhstan* was prepared as a United Nations publication (ECE/CECI/14) and issued in April 2012. *The follow-up field-based workshop on the Innovation Performance Review of Kazakhstan* will be held in October 2012 in Kazakhstan.

- Session on Intellectual Property and Economic Growth at the 5th Astana Economic Forum, Astana, Kazakhstan, 22- 24 May 2012.
- UNECE Seminar on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy and Legal Issues for the Heads of Ministries and Agencies of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, 13-14 June 2012.
- Implementation of the *UNECE project “PPP Readiness Assessments in Selected Countries of Central Asia”*. *The fact-finding mission for undertaking the PPP Readiness Assessment in Kyrgyzstan* took place in Bishkek on 10-14 September 2012. *The fact-finding consultations for undertaking the PPP Readiness Assessment in Tajikistan* were held in Dushanbe on 24-28 September 2012.
- International Conference “The Role and Importance of Small Business in the Implementation of Social and Economic Policy in Uzbekistan”, Tashkent, 12-14 September 2012.
- Implementation of the *UNDA project “Building the capacity of SPECA countries to adopt and apply innovative green technologies for climate change adaptation”*. Within this project, *the Joint National Seminar and Stakeholder Meeting* will be held in Bishkek on 7-9 November 2012.
- Session on Gender Aspects of Innovative Entrepreneurship at the 3rd UNECE Forum of Women Entrepreneurs “Building partnerships to close the entrepreneurship gender gaps in the UNECE region”, Baku, 14-15 November 2012.

In order to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of relevant stakeholders in government and academia to utilize ICTs for achieving national development goals, the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (UN-APCICT/ESCAP) has carried out/will carry out a number of ICT for development (ICTD) capacity-building activities in SPECA-member countries:

- (i) In 2012, Russian-language versions of two new training Modules were finalized as part of APCICT’s flagship ICTD capacity-building programme, the ‘Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders’ (Academy): Academy Module 9, ‘ICT for Disaster Risk Management’ and Module 10, ‘ICT, Climate Change and Green Growth’. Both Disaster Risk Management as well as Climate Change are of strong relevance to SPECA member countries.
- (ii) In partnership with the ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia (UN SONCA), a Subregional Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop on Academy Modules 9 and 10 was organized in Almaty, Kazakhstan from 5-8 June 2012. 16 participants from Central Asian countries including 6 SPECA member countries,

namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attended the workshop, which was conducted in Russian language. The workshop helped to strengthen the pool of national resource persons capable of delivering training on Modules 9 and 10.

- (iii) Provincial level ICTD training of officials will be conducted in Tajikistan in 2012 utilizing the Tajik language version of the Academy Modules 1-8 already launched in 2011. These modules cover areas such as the linkage between ICTs and development, e-Government Applications, ICT Project Management, etc.
- (iv) Under its flagship ICTD capacity-building programme for university students titled, 'Turning Today's Youth into Tomorrow's Leaders', APCICT conducted 2 national-level TOT workshops for university professors and administrators utilizing the Centre's new ICTD knowledge resource, the 'Primer Series on ICTD for Youth' (Primer Series). The first workshop was conducted in Baku, Azerbaijan from 8-10 February, 2012 for 32 participants from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The workshop served to build the pool of local resource persons and champions for the Primer Series.
- (v) APCICT organized a TOT workshop for the Primer Series from 5-7 June 2012 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. 41 participants from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan participated in the workshop.
- (vi) APCICT provided regional e-government experts to lead 2 training sessions organized by the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan from 17-21 September 2012 in Astana, Kazakhstan.
- (vii) Following the subregional TOT workshop for Academy Modules 9 and 10, several national workshops are expected to take place to strengthen the capacity of government officials to utilize ICTs to address the threats of disasters and climate change. In Tajikistan, training sessions are planned with the Ministry of Emergency Situations and the Committee on the Environment.

ESCAP planned activities on building knowledge-networked societies in SPECA countries:

- ESCAP is planning a study on closing the regional connectivity gaps in the broadband Internet networks of SPECA countries. The study will determine the missing links in terms of both intra-subregional connectivity and connectivity of the SPECA countries with the overall Asia-Pacific region. The analysis and results of the study will be shared with relevant stakeholders in SPECA countries in order to develop concrete recommendations for building national, regional and trans-regional connectivity in Central Asia.
- The Asia Pacific Gateway for Disaster Risk Management and Development, ESCAP's web portal dedicated to mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development processes, plans to increase its focus on SPECA countries by creating an inventory of hazard, vulnerability and risk assessments for SPECA countries. ESCAP will also increase the number of documents on the Gateway that are available in Russian language.

- ESCAP has initiated a partnership with ITU in which a regional mapping exercise of the current and planned terrestrial fibre-optic cables in Asia-Pacific, including the SPECA countries, will be conducted. ESCAP and ITU recognize the unique connectivity challenges faced by the land-locked SPECA countries and will develop a comprehensive map of the subregion that outlines the terrestrial cables, as well as the critical fibre-optic landing points.

Representatives of the SPECA member countries participated/will take part in the following events:

- Multi-stakeholder Meeting on the UNECE Public-Private Partnerships Initiative, Geneva, 1 December 2011.
- PPP Days 2012, Geneva, 21-24 February 2012.
- Special Capacity-building/Policy Dialogue Segment at the occasion of the fourth session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships, Geneva, 24 February 2012.
- UNECE Applied Policy Seminar “Policies for Innovation in the 21st Century: Building Strategies for Regions of Innovation”, Geneva, 12-13 April 2012.
- UNECE International Policy-oriented Conference "Promoting competition as a driver of innovation, with particular consideration of intellectual property aspects", Geneva, 21-22 June 2012.
- Seventh session of the UNECE Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration, Geneva, 5-7 December 2012.
- Multi-stakeholder Meeting on the UNECE Public-Private Partnerships Initiative, Geneva, 5 December 2012.
- 4th Partners Meeting of the ‘Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders’, Incheon, Republic of Korea, 6-9 November 2012.
- 1st Partners Meeting of the ‘Primer Series on ICTD for Youth’, Incheon, Republic of Korea, 6-9 November 2012.
- ESCAP Expert Group Meeting on Geo-referenced Disaster Risk Management Information System in Asia-Pacific Region, Bangkok, 15-17 February 2012.
- ESCAP Regional Workshop on Geo-referenced Disaster Risk Management Information System for South and South-West Asia, and Central Asia, Kathmandu, 10-12 July 2012.
- ESCAP 16th session of the Intergovernmental Consultative Committee on Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP), Bangkok, 17-18 December 2012.

- ESCAP Inter-governmental Meeting on Asia-Pacific Years of Action for Applications of Space Technology and the Geographic Information System for Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainable Development, 2012-2017, Bangkok, 18-20 December 2012.

VI. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON GENDER AND ECONOMY

The Governing Council of the SPECA officially established the Project Working Group (PWG) on Gender and Economy at its meeting in June 2006, Baku, Azerbaijan. The PWG on Gender and Economy is jointly supported by UNECE and ESCAP.

The main objective of the PWG's activities is to mobilize women's potential for economic growth and to contribute towards reaching gender equality and women's empowerment in the member countries. Economic policies that generate growth need to reflect a gender dimension in order to enhance women's economic opportunity and ensure that women become an agent of change for their economies. Along with gender-sensitive employment policies support to establishing an enabling environment for developing SMEs and entrepreneurship is an important part of mobilizing women's economic potential in the SPECA region.

In line with its Terms of Reference, the PWG: (i) raises awareness, that gender equality is a smart choice for economic policy, through policy oriented research, exchanges good practices and preparation of policy guidelines and recommendations; (ii) develops pilot projects in selected areas (in particular gender-sensitive SMEs policies and gender budgets); and (iii) promotes cross-sectional linkages and synergies with other relevant areas of SPECA activities, such as statistics, trade, and information and communication technologies.

The Working Group on Gender and Economy will meet on 15 November 2012 in Baku, Azerbaijan following the Third UNECE Forum of Women Entrepreneurs. In addition to reviewing activities over the period 2011-2012, the group will share examples of gender-sensitive economic policies in Central Asia, identify priorities, discuss project proposals for new activities and agree on a work plan for 2013-2014.

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT UNDER THE 2011-2012 WORK PLAN

Sharing Experience and Knowledge on the Economics of Gender

An important form of exchange of information and sharing good practices among women entrepreneurs, supporting institutions and women's business associations are the interactive discussions at the *Roundtables in the areas of the economics of gender in Central Asia*. Two Roundtables were organized on key issues such as what gender-sensitive policies are and why they are needed; specificities in the design and implementation of these policies in the countries in Central Asia, gender differences in the perceptions of entrepreneurs in rural and urban areas, in different economic sectors and of different age. These Roundtables took place in December 2011 and May 2012, in Haifa, Israel during the workshops for women entrepreneurs in Central Asia in (see the part on Capacity-building below).

Capacity-building activities to support women entrepreneurs in the SPECA region

In line with the work plan for 2011-2012, UNECE gender continue the cooperation with the Centre for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel and the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre, in organizing biannual international training workshops on

“Support systems for women entrepreneurs at national and local levels”, 23 April – 10 May 2012, and on “Women entrepreneurs and information communication technologies” (7-20 December 2011). The next workshop of training women entrepreneurs on information and communication technologies will take place on 4-20 December 2012.

The capacity-building workshops are targeted mainly at women entrepreneurs from Central Asia, but participants include also government officials from various institutions dealing directly with entrepreneurship activities. In such a way, the groups could exchange good practices from the public and private sectors within the region and develop project proposals for various businesses based on the knowledge they have received during the workshops. In addition to developing project proposals, the participants are provided support, guidance and managerial tools on the use of new technologies in the management of small businesses. The workshops further addressed government institutions in charge of small and medium-sized enterprise development at national and local levels, women’s business associations and other civil society organizations to build their capacity to strengthen the support environment for women entrepreneurs. The workshops provided the participants with knowledge and skills to analyze the role of managers and ICTs in small business management, have widened their knowledge of support systems for small-scale entrepreneurs as a tool for regional and local development, of how to get support and set up a company, including technological incubators. Participants got acquainted with support systems in Israel, incubators, they discussed the position of women entrepreneurs at times of rapid global change and revised the role of rural tourism as an income generator. To date, over 300 professional women have participated in these trainings.

Third UNECE Forum of Women Entrepreneurs

The UNECE Gender and Economy Programme and the Economic Cooperation and Integration Division in cooperation with the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan is jointly organizing the Third Regional Forum of Women Entrepreneurs in the UNECE region on 14-15 November 2012 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The Forum is under the heading: “*Building partnerships to close the entrepreneurship gender gaps in the ECE region*” and its objective is to provide a platform for a broad exchange of practical experiences and lessons learned among policymakers, business community (female and male entrepreneurs) and academia, as well as other stakeholders on good practices and policies of promoting women’s entrepreneurship development and narrowing the gap between the scopes of women’s and men’s entrepreneurial activities in the UNECE region.

The Forum addresses issues in the following key areas, including regional and subregional specificities:

- Promoting women’s entrepreneurship through policies, strategies and programmes;
- Strengthening networks among women entrepreneurs at national, regional and global levels;
- Financing women entrepreneurs;
- Innovative entrepreneurship and gender sensitive policies; and
- Developing women entrepreneurship in rural areas.

With the three thematic sessions of the Forum, special attention is given to women entrepreneurs in SPECA countries covering different challenges to women entrepreneurship at regional and country level, as well as problems faced by innovation-based enterprises. With a view to ensuring broad

possibilities of exchange of information, learning and networking each session includes presentations by both leading international and national experts.
