



## UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)

### Fifth Session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development

(Baku, Azerbaijan, 4 December 2013)

## REPORT

The fifth session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (PWG on KBD), jointly organized by ESCAP and UNECE and hosted by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was held in Baku on 4 December 2013. In conjunction with the session, ESCAP organized an Expert Consultation on the Asian Information Superhighway and Regional Connectivity in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Baku on 3 and 4 December 2013.

Representatives of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as observers from India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Republic of Korea, participated in the session along with representatives of UNECE and ESCAP. A representative of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation also participated as an observer. The List of participants of the fifth session of the SPECA PWG on KBD is attached (Annex I).

### Opening of the session

Mr. Nariman Hajiyev, representing the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, welcomed the participants of the session. Mr. Hajiyev expressed appreciation to ESCAP and UNECE for organizing the session and highlighted the important role of the PWG on KBD, which serves as a forum for discussion on issues related to knowledge-based development among SPECA countries. The PWG on KBD promotes and supports policies on knowledge-based development, facilitates cooperation between SPECA countries and other regional initiatives, and coordinates capacity-building and institutional strengthening activities.

On behalf of ESCAP, Mr. Nikolay Pomoshchnikov, Head of the ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia (SONCA) and the Joint ESCAP-UNECE SPECA Office, welcomed participants to the fifth session of the SPECA PWG on KBD and expressed his appreciation to the Government of the Republic of

Azerbaijan for hosting the session. He also thanked UNECE for its support in co-organizing the fifth session and emphasized that both regional commissions are firmly committed to strengthening the capacity of SPECA countries in the area of knowledge-based development, including information and communication technologies. Mr. Pomoshchnikov noted that knowledge-based development will spur innovation, enhance productivity, and facilitate stronger integration with regional and global economies. In this regard, he noted that the Asian Information Superhighway initiative plays an important role in assisting governments, including SPECA countries, in their efforts to enhance broadband connectivity and the knowledge-based economy. He also noted the important contributions of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development, and encouraged SPECA countries to work towards building an inclusive, knowledge-based society.

Mr. Christopher Athey, UNECE Secretary to the PWG on KBD and Economic Affairs Officer in the UNECE Economic Cooperation, Trade, and Land Management Division, welcomed the fifth session and expressed his thanks to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for their hospitality in hosting this important event. He also thanked ESCAP for taking the lead in organizing the fifth session, as well as the Expert Consultation on the Asian Information Superhighway and Regional Connectivity. The Expert Consultation addressed a subject of great relevance to UNECE activities in the region, with access to information being a key driver of innovation and knowledge-based development, and a role for PPP in providing the necessary infrastructure. This highlights the value of the joint working between United Nations Regional Commissions exemplified by the SPECA PWG on KBD, where work can be mutually reinforcing. He stressed the fact that the UNECE is committed to support the PWG by providing secretariat support and contributing to capacity-building activities for the benefit of SPECA countries in areas covered by this PWG, including Innovation Performance Reviews. He also extended his gratitude to the Government of the Russian Federation and to the Eurasian Development Bank for their extrabudgetary support, which makes it possible to implement many of the activities of the PWG.

### **Election of officers and adoption of the agenda**

The PWG elected Mr. Nariman Hajiyev, representing the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as Chairperson of the fifth session of the PWG on KBD. Following this, the PWG adopted the agenda of the fifth session of the PWG on KBD.

### **Outcome of the 2013 SPECA Economic Forum “Inclusive and Sustainable Development through Regional Cooperation” and the eighth session of the SPECA Governing Council**

Mr. Pomoshchnikov and Mr. Athey provided a summary of the 2013 SPECA Economic Forum on “Inclusive and Sustainable Development through Regional

Cooperation”, as well as the eighth session of the SPECA Governing Council held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in November 2013.

### **Review of programme implementation**

Mr. Dominic Leong, ESCAP Secretary to the PWG on KBD and Associate Economic Affairs Officer of the ESCAP Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, and Mr. Athey reported on activities carried out since the seventh session of the SPECA Governing Council in Bangkok, Thailand, 28 November 2012 (Annex II). The 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 25 November 2011.

The PWG on KBD acknowledged with satisfaction the important contributions of the capacity building activities implemented during the reporting period.

Delegates agreed that the PWG on KBD is a useful platform for the exchange of experiences and best practices, as well as capacity-building in such areas as ICT for development, broadband infrastructure, innovative development, knowledge-based disaster risk management, the financing of innovation and public-private partnerships, and supported further work in these areas.

### **Adoption of the Programme of Work for 2014-2015 of the SPECA PWG on KBD**

Mr. Leong and Mr. Athey made proposals on the possible structure of the Programme of Work for 2014-2015 of the PWG on KBD and on activities to be included in the programme of work.

Delegates considered the proposed programme of work to be highly relevant to the needs of their countries, and supported the activities listed in the Programme of Work for 2014-2015.

Representatives of Azerbaijan expressed their appreciation to UNECE and ESCAP for the activities implemented during the period 2012-2013, as well as for the envisaged activities under the Programme of Work for 2014-2015, and urged strengthened cooperation amongst all SPECA countries. It emphasized that programme activities should be prioritized to benefit all SPECA countries, including Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, and that countries should work together to strengthen initiatives within the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

The Republic of Azerbaijan also highlighted the importance of the Trans-Eurasian Information Superhighway (TASIM) project for knowledge-based development in SPECA countries. The PWG on KBD welcomed the recent positive developments in the TASIM project, in particular the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding among operators aimed at creating a transnational fiber-optic backbone between Europe and Asia.

The PWG adopted the Programme of Work for 2014-2015 as the basis for its work in the next biennium (Annex III). The PWG agreed that the details of the envisaged activities in the programme of work could be further elaborated in consultation with the host countries of these future activities.

Delegates were invited to contact the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats within 30 days if they had any further comments on the Programme of Work for 2014-2015.

### **Date and venue of the next session of the SPECA PWG on KBD**

The PWG agreed to hold its next session in 2014 and that the exact date and venue of the sixth session of the PWG will be decided through consultations with the SPECA countries.

### **Other business**

Draft decisions, conclusions and recommendations were distributed among the delegations of the SPECA countries.

Representatives of Azerbaijan requested an amendment to the draft decisions and the delegates adopted the decisions by consensus. The Decisions of the fifth session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development are attached to this report (Annex IV).

### **Closing of the session**

Mr. Pomoshchnikov expressed satisfaction with the results of the session and reiterated the important role of the SPECA PWG on KBD as a platform to share experiences and discuss ICT and knowledge-based development issues in the region. He emphasized the important role of broadband connectivity in enhancing economic prosperity and higher levels of innovation, and encouraged SPECA countries to use the SPECA platform to further strengthen its relations with neighbouring countries.

Mr. Athey and Mr. Pomoshchnikov expressed gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting this important event and the hospitality extended to its participants. They also expressed sincere appreciation to all delegates from SPECA countries for their active participation and cooperation, which contributed to the success of the session.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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## **REVIEW OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION BY THE SPECA PWG ON KBD**

This progress report contains activities carried out/to be carried out by the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats either within the framework of the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (PWG on KBD), or addressing topics within its thematic areas that were held since the seventh session of the SPECA Governing Council in Bangkok, Thailand, 28 November 2012.

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 countries:

- ***Implementation of the project “Building the capacity of SPECA countries to adopt and apply innovative green technologies for climate change adaptation”***, funded by the United Nations Development Account. Within the framework of this project, the National Seminar and the Stakeholder Meeting on Promotion and Financing of Innovative Green Technologies were held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 15-17 May 2013 and the Joint National Seminar and Stakeholder Meeting on Promotion and Financing of Innovative Green Technologies was held in Astana, Kazakhstan on 23-25 October 2013. The final event of the project “Regional Meeting on Promotion and Financing of Innovative Green Technologies” was organized by UNECE as the Expert Segment of the 2013 SPECA Economic Forum “Inclusive and Sustainable Development through Economic Cooperation” in Almaty, Kazakhstan, 19-20 November 2013.
- ***Implementation of the UNECE project “Innovation Performance Reviews”***. Within the framework of this project, an event to support the implementation of the recommendations of the Innovation Performance Review of Kazakhstan was held in Astana, Kazakhstan on 19 April 2013.
- ***Implementation of the UNECE project “PPP Readiness Assessments in Countries of Central Asia”***. A Seminar on the PPP Readiness Assessment of Tajikistan took place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on 17-18 September 2013. Final reports of the PPP Readiness Assessments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been finalized. Russian versions of these reports are currently being prepared.
- ESCAP High-level Policy Dialogue “***Macroeconomic Policies for Sustainable and Resilient Growth in North and Central Asia***”, in collaboration with National Bank of Kazakhstan, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, 27-28 August 2013.

The Almaty policy dialogue provided a platform for Ministers of Finance, Governors of Central Banks, high-level policymakers, eminent experts and diverse stakeholders from across the region to address the challenges of growth, stability, diversification and jobs, and take a fresh look at how macroeconomic policy tools could better serve national development agendas. At the same time, it explored challenges and opportunities in regional infrastructure development, economic diversification, and cooperation with the rest of Asia, including in the context of enhancing the productive capacity and connectivity of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

- ESCAP/APCICT contribution to a training workshop on "Information and Communications Technologies for Development (ICTD) for Youth" and "Social Media for Development" organized by Tashkent University of Information Technologies (TUIT), Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 27-28 February 2013.
- ESCAP/APCICT contribution to the localization into Turkmen of Information and Communications Technologies for Development (ICT4D) training modules for government officials, undertaken by the Supreme Counsel of Science and Technologies under the President of Turkmenistan, June 2013.
- ESCAP/APCICT co-organized an e-Leadership International Conference, in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Open Society Institute (OSI), Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 5 June 2013.
- ESCAP/APCICT training workshop on the use of ICT in disaster risk management, climate change and green growth, co-organized with UNDP on 7-8 June 2013, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
- ESCAP/APCICT national workshop on ICT4D for government officials and youth, co-organized in partnership with the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation and the Association of Internet Service Providers of Tajikistan in Romit, Tajikistan, 20-23 August 2013.
- Specialists of hydrometeorological services from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and other CIS countries attended a subregional meeting and two subregional training workshops, organized in cooperation with the Russian Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring (Roshydromet), on 23-25 July 2013 at Issyk-Kul lake, Kyrgyzstan, and on 8-10 October 2013 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The participants presented national reports containing overviews of their: legal and regulatory frameworks in the field of DRR; early warning systems; interaction with hydrometeorological neighbouring countries; the challenges of hydrometeorological services; and national strategies for Disaster Risk Reduction. The meeting also included presentations of new technologies for processing operational hydrometeorological information. At both trainings participants improved their knowledge and gained new skills, working with

software, designed for processing operational hydrometeorological information.

- Implementation of the ESCAP project *“Expanding connectivity of North and Central Asia with the Asia-Pacific region through the development of ICT infrastructure and networks”*. Map of the fibre-optic backbone network in Asia and the Pacific, including North and Central Asia, launched in Bangkok, Thailand, 18 November 2013. In-depth study on the terrestrial broadband infrastructure in SPECA countries and expert consultation on the Asian Information Superhighway and Regional Connectivity, Baku, Azerbaijan, 3-4 December 2013.

Representatives of the SPECA countries participated in the following events:

- Seventh session of the UNECE Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration, Geneva, Switzerland, 5-7 December 2012.
- International Conference “Master Class on PPPs in CIS countries: Towards best practices, Moscow, Russian Federation, 11-12 December 2012.
- Fifth session of the Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships, Geneva, Switzerland, 5-6 February 2013.
- Contribution to the High-level Segment of the 65th session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on 9-11 April 2013 in Geneva, on the topic “Economic developments and challenges in the ECE region: the role of innovation in creating a dynamic and competitive economy”.
- International Conference “Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Making Things Work Better”, Dubrovnik, Croatia, 23-24 May 2013.
- Workshop “Defining Excellence in PPPs: Meeting of the International PPP Specialist Centers”, Geneva, Switzerland, 25 June 2013.
- International Conference “Sustainable Growth through Long-term Investments”, Moscow, Russian Federation, 17-18 July 2013.
- Sixth session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies, Geneva, Switzerland, 10-11 October 2013.
- High-level Capacity-building Workshop on Public-Private Partnerships for CIS Countries, Moscow, Russian Federation, 22 October 2013.
- ESCAP Intergovernmental 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.

- ESCAP/APCICT Regional Training of Trainers Workshop on 'Social Media for Development', Incheon, Republic of Korea, 20-23 May 2013.
- ESCAP expert consultation on the Asian Information Superhighway and Regional Connectivity, Manila, Philippines, 24-25 September 2013.
- High-level Policy Dialogue Preparatory to the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Integration, which was organized by ESCAP in Bangkok, Thailand, 20-22 August 2013.
- Second Preparatory Consultation for the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration, organized by ESCAP in Bangkok, Thailand, 13-14 November 2013.

## **PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE SPECA PWG ON KBD FOR 2014-2015**

The activities to be carried out by the Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (PWG on KBD) are demand-driven, focused on a limited number of priority topics and matched with available resources.

### **ACTIVITIES ENVISAGED FOR 2014-2015**

#### **1. Capacity-building activities on policy options and practical instruments to promote knowledge-based 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 and promoting regional cooperation.

##### **Rationale:**

The project is in line with the objectives of the PWG on KBD, as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation will be financed from the UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

##### **Proposed activities:**

- (i) Organization of a regional/subregional capacity-building event on knowledge-based development, possibly in conjunction with the annual session of the PWG on KBD (tentatively envisaged for 2014);
- (ii) Participation of experts from SPECA countries in UNECE policy-oriented meetings and capacity-building events on promoting knowledge-based development (Geneva, Switzerland and other locations); and
- (iii) Policy advisory services and other events promoting knowledge-based development at the request of Governments of SPECA countries, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary funding.

## **2. Capacity-building on ICT policy for promoting innovation-based competitiveness and development**

### **Objectives:**

To empower senior decision makers with relevant ICT policy knowledge and expertise in promoting innovation-based competitiveness and development.

### **Rationale:**

The project is in line with the objectives of the PWG on KBD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation will be financed from the UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

### **Proposed activities:**

Organization of a national/regional capacity-building event on ICT policy and regulatory frameworks for promoting innovation-based competitiveness and development (upon request).

## **3. Implementation of the UNECE project on innovation performance 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 PWG on KBD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation will be financed from the UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

### **Proposed activities:**

Undertaking Innovation Performance Reviews in selected countries of the SPECA region (envisaged for 2014 and 2015).

#### **4. Implementation of the ESCAP project on expanding connectivity of North and Central Asia with the Asia-Pacific region through the development of ICT infrastructure**

##### **Objectives:**

To strengthen the capacity of SPECA countries by developing a knowledge base of the challenges and opportunities related to developing ICT infrastructure in the region.

##### **Rationale:**

The project is in line with the objectives of the PWG on KBD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation will be financed from the ESCAP extrabudgetary funds.

##### **Proposed activities:**

- (i) Organization of a regional consultation on broadband infrastructure and regional connectivity (2014);
- (ii) Continued development of a detailed map of the regional fibre-optic backbone network in North and Central Asia (2014-2015);
- (iii) Participation of experts from SPECA countries in ESCAP meetings and capacity-building events (Bangkok, Thailand and other locations);

#### **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 socio-economic development goals.

##### **Rationale:**

The project is in line with the objectives of the PWG on KBD 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.

(ii) Development of localized versions of the APCICT training modules, targeted at SPECA countries.

(iii) Conduct subregional training-of-trainers workshops. These workshops aim to strengthen the pool of national resource persons capable of delivering the various training modules.

(iv) Provide advisory services to SPECA countries in areas related to ICT for socio-economic development, subject to funding and resource availability.

## **6. Institutional capacity-building for regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation**

### **Objectives:**

To foster the development of mechanisms to facilitate greater cooperation between SPECA countries, in the area of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

### **Rationale:**

The project contributes to the objectives of the PWG on KBD 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) Advocate the establishment of an instrument for regional cooperation that can utilize existing intergovernmental platforms.

(ii) Support an institution for regional cooperation oriented towards the need for disaster risk reduction in SPECA countries, such as the Central Asia Center for Disaster Risk Reduction and Response (Almaty Center), and build the capacity of the institution to perform this task.

(iii) Undertake capacity building in early 2014 as a basis for the development of a programme of action for the institution.



## **7. Capacity development on the utilization of ICT for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation**

### **Objectives:**

Develop the Asia-Pacific Gateway for Disaster Risk Management and Development as a knowledge-based tool for disaster risk management, and build resilience into development policy and planning of SPECA countries.

### **Rationale:**

The project contributes to the objectives of the PWG on KBD 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 access cooperation mechanisms such as RESAP and RIMES.
- (ii) Support the development of the Asia-Pacific Gateway for Disaster Risk Management and Development as a key knowledge-based tool for SPECA countries, including content development in the Russian language.
- (iii) Conduct activities on measuring resilience.

**SUMMARY TABLE**

<b>KNOWLEDGE-BASED DEVELOPMENT</b>		
<b>Area of Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Budget</b>
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 in policy options and practical instruments for promoting knowledge-based development	2014-2015	UNECE extrabudgetary funds
Capacity-building on ICT policy for promoting innovation-based competitiveness and development	2014-2015	UNECE extrabudgetary funds
Implementation of the UNECE project on innovation performance reviews of selected countries	2014-2015	UNECE extrabudgetary funds
Implementation of the ESCAP project on expanding connectivity of North and Central Asia with the Asia-Pacific region through the development of ICT infrastructure	2014-2015	ESCAP extrabudgetary funds
Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development	2014-2015	ESCAP extrabudgetary funds
Institutional capacity-building for regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation	2014-2015	ESCAP extrabudgetary funds
Capacity development on the utilization of ICT for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation	2014-2015	ESCAP extrabudgetary funds

## DECISIONS OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE SPECA PWG ON KBD

1. The Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (PWG) noted with appreciation the outcomes of the Expert Consultation on the Asian Information Superhighway and Regional Connectivity, and the importance of this subject for the knowledge-based development of SPECA countries.
2. The PWG emphasized the relevance of the Joint Statement of the 2013 SPECA Economic Forum for SPECA countries, in particular the importance of regional aspects of Rio+20 and the post-2015 development agenda. The PWG welcomed the progress made with the implementation of the project "Building the capacity of SPECA countries to adopt and apply innovative green technologies for climate change adaptation".
3. The PWG took note of the Review of Programme Implementation in 2012 and 2013. Delegates noted with satisfaction the activities carried out within the framework of the PWG since the seventh session of the SPECA Governing Council.
4. The PWG took note of the presentations on the Programme of Work of the SPECA PWG in KBD for 2014-2015 by the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats. It emphasized the relevance of the proposed activities to the knowledge-based development of the SPECA countries.
5. The PWG adopted the Programme of Work of the SPECA PWG on KBD for 2014-2015.
6. The PWG welcomed a decision by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan to establish a Specialist Centre on PPPs in the ICT sector in Baku as part of the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence. This centre will promote PPP international best practices in ICT, to the benefit of the region and the international community.
7. The PWG welcomed recent positive developments in the Trans-Eurasian Information Superhighway (TASIM) project, in particular the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding among operators aimed at creating a transnational fiber-optic backbone between Europe and Asia.
8. The PWG underlined the importance of partnerships with all national and international stakeholders. In this regard, it recommended that national representatives actively involve relevant stakeholders in the PWG activities.
9. The PWG agreed to hold its next session in 2014 and that the exact date and venue of the sixth session of the PWG will be decided through consultations with the SPECA countries.

10. The PWG expressed its sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the excellent organization of the meetings and the hospitality offered to participants.

11. The PWG expressed its appreciation to the secretariats of ESCAP and UNECE for their efforts in organizing these events, and their active work to support the activities of the PWG.

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