



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

**Ninth Session of the SPECA Working Group
on Knowledge-Based Development**

(Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 23 June 2017)

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE WG ON KBD**

This report contains activities organized by the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats either within the framework of the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (WG on KBD), or addressing topics within its thematic areas that were held since the eighth session of the SPECA WG on KBD in Almaty, Kazakhstan, 22 September 2016. These activities are in line with the Programme of Work of the WG for 2016-2017, which was adopted at the seventh session. UNECE and ESCAP secretariats carried out the following capacity-building activities for the SPECA countries:

Implementation of the UNECE project “Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews”

- Within the framework of this project, *Innovation Performance Reviews of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and other CIS countries* have been completed. Reports are available in English and Russian. The Review process and structure has been updated to reflect the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the reviews becoming Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews.
- Within the framework of the preparation of the *Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Kyrgyzstan*, the preparatory mission to Bishkek for the Review was carried out in December 2016 by UNECE secretariat and the fact-finding mission to Bishkek was carried out in April 2017 with participation of a team of international and local experts. Ongoing preparation of the Innovation for Sustainable

Development Review of Kyrgyzstan will be discussed during the *International Conference “Making innovation work for the SDGs”* in Bishkek on 22-23 June 2017.

Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative

- ESCAP and UNECE co-organized the *Regional Workshop on Resilient ICT Connectivity for the Knowledge Economy, SDGs and the WSIS Goals*, 20-22 September, 2016 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The meeting addressed the topics of digital divide within the SPECA countries, natural hazards and their effects on knowledge-based development, ICT for disaster risk reduction, World Summit for Information Society (WSIS) Action Line implementation, including presentations by ITU WSIS Prize Winners, and ICT capacity development in SPECA countries by APCICT. Finally, the AP-IS Master Plan and the Regional Cooperation Framework Document for AP-IS were introduced, together with the update on the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation, which held its inaugural session on 5-7 October, 2016, in Bangkok, Thailand.
- The inaugural session of the *Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation*, on 5-7 October 2016, Bangkok, Thailand were attended by high-level officials, such as the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand as well as representatives from the SPECA region. The Committee endorsed the AP-IS Master Plan and Regional Cooperation Framework Document for the implementation of the initiative. Other topics covered by the Committee included the regional review of WSIS action line implementation and e-resilience.
- Based on the feedback and discussions at the above-mentioned SPECA meeting, ESCAP finalized a study titled *Building a Resilient Digital Economy: Fostering SMEs in Central Asia* which discussed natural disasters that affect SPECA countries, with particular emphasis on their effects on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and how resilient ICTs (e-resilience) can promote inclusive and sustainable digital economy for the achievement of the SDGs. ESCAP’s Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative, which aims to promote seamless regional broadband connectivity across the Asia-Pacific region, was highlighted as a way forward.
- ESCAP carried out a study titled *The Belt and Road Initiative and the Role of ESCAP*, which examined China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), including ICTs as a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The study examined the existing fiber-optic

corridors and their capacity, and identified missing links in the cross-border fiber-optic routes in the SPECA countries.

- In preparation for the High-Level Dialogue on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration (RECI) for Enhancing Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP carried out a subregional study of *North and Central Asia as a Transit Hub: Potential, Challenges and the Way Forward*; and a regional study, *Enhancing Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific*, which called for enhancing regional ICT connectivity through RECI, which could offer enormous potential in generating trade, growth and employment, improving social outcomes and managing environmental risks and shared vulnerabilities.

Activities within the framework of the ESCAP - APCICT

- CIS Sub-Regional Workshop Training of Trainers on “Women ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI)” was organized in Bishkek, 24-26 April 2017.
- Kyrgyzstan National Launch of WIFI was organized in Bishkek, 27 April 2017.
- Localization of WIFI training modules in Russian were completed.
- A session on “Women ICT Frontier Initiative: ICT Enabled Women Entrepreneurship” was organized at the Second Regional Central Asia Research and Education Network (CAREN) Conference in Bishkek, 26 April 2017.
- High Level Briefing on “the Primer Series on ICTD for Youth” was organized in Bishkek, 27 April 2017.

Representatives of the SPECA countries participated in the following events:

- Eighth session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships, Geneva, Switzerland, 20 - 21 October 2016.
- World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and Inter-agency Working Group on ICT Meeting, Bangkok, Thailand, 4 October, 2016.
- Expert Group Meeting on Digital Connectivity for Sustainable Development, Bangkok, Thailand, 3-4 October, 2016.
- First session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technologies, Science, Technology and Innovation, Bangkok, Thailand, 5-7 October, 2016.
- APCICT/ESCAP Consultation Meeting on “Women ICT Frontier Initiative National Implementation”, 5-7 October 2016.
- Start-up Nations - Innovative Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development, Geneva, Switzerland, 2 November 2016.

- Ninth session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies and its Substantive segment on “Impact Investing - Financing Innovation for Sustainable Development”, Geneva, Switzerland, 3 - 4 November 2016.
 - APCICT/ESCAP Training of Trainers on “Women ICT Frontier Initiative”, Phnom Penh, 19-21 December 2016.
 - APCICT/ESCAP National Launch of “Women ICT Frontier Initiative in Cambodia”, Phnom Penh, 22 December 2016.
 - APCICT/ESCAP High Level Briefing on “the Primer Series on ICTD for Youth”, Phnom Penh 23 December 2016.
 - Eleventh session of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships with its high-level substantive segment on “Impact Investing – Financing Innovation and People-First PPPs for Sustainable Development”, Geneva, Switzerland, 20 - 22 March 2017.
 - High-Level Dialogue on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration for Enhancing Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand, 20-21 April, 2017.
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