



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)

REPORT

The ninth session of the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (WG on KBD) was jointly organized by UNECE and ESCAP at the invitation of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in Bishkek on 23 June 2017. In conjunction with the session, UNECE and ESCAP organized a Regional Workshop on “Making Innovation Work for the Sustainable Development Goals” in collaboration with the State Service of Intellectual Property and Innovation under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic “Kyrgyzpatent” in Bishkek on 22-23 June 2017.

Delegations from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan participated in the session along with representatives of the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats. Representatives from other United Nations member States, international and regional organizations, as well as the business and academic community also participated in the Regional Workshop and the ninth session of the WG on KBD. The List of participants of the ninth session of the SPECA WG on KBD and the Regional Workshop is attached (Annex I).

Opening of the session

Mr. Eldar Abakirov, Deputy Minister of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic, welcomed the participants to the session. Mr. Abakirov thanked UNECE and ESCAP for organizing the session, as well as the experts presenting during the Regional Workshop “Making innovation work for the SDGs”. He emphasised the theme of this Workshop as addressing the key policy challenge for Central Asia – how to deliver sustainable economic development. Innovation can help drive further improvements in living standards in the region, with eco-innovation having an important role to play in protecting the natural environment and addressing key global challenges including climate change, natural resource use, pollution and technological change. He also highlighted the importance of SDG9 to “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”.

Mr. Christopher Athey, UNECE Secretary to the WG on KBD and Economic Affairs Officer in the UNECE Innovative Policies Development Section, welcomed the ninth session and expressed his gratitude to the Deputy Minister for chairing this session of the SPECA WG on KBD and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic for their hospitality in hosting the ninth session of the SPECA WG on KBD and the Regional Workshop on “Making innovation work for the SDGs”. He thanked delegates and experts for their active participation and discussion during the Regional Workshop.

Mr. Jonathan Tsuen Yip Wong, Chief of Technology and Innovation Section in the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of ESCAP, welcomed delegates and experts to the session and highlighted the importance of the theme of the Regional Workshop on “Making innovation work for the SDGs” as we enter the implementation phase of the SDGs. Innovation has a crucial role to play both directly as highlighted by SDG9 but also across other SDGs as a key means of implementation, as highlighted by SDG17 to “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”. He thanked the delegates and experts for their inputs during a highly productive Regional Workshop.

Election of officers and adoption of the agenda

The WG elected Mr. Abakirov, Deputy Minister of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic, as Chairperson of the ninth session of the WG on KBD.

The WG on KBD adopted the agenda for its ninth session.

Outcomes of the Regional Workshop on “Making innovation work for the SDGs”

UNECE and ESCAP secretariats provided a summary of Outcomes of the Regional Workshop on “Making innovation work for the SDGs”, including presentation and discussion of the main conclusions and policy recommendations of the UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic welcomed the UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of the Kyrgyz Republic as an exercise that can make an important contribution to the national economic development agenda, including eco-innovation.

A summary of the Regional Workshop is included in Annex II.

Review of the activities of the WG on KBD since its last session

Mr. Tae Hyung Kim of the ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Section of ESCAP briefed delegates about projects on:

- Enhanced regional cooperation and capacity of geographic information systems for disaster risk reduction in Central Asia; and
- ICT connectivity and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS).

Mr. Jonathan Wong briefed delegates on the ESCAP project with the British Council on Promoting social enterprise and social impact investment for SDG progress in Asia and the Pacific, and presented relevant examples of good practice from SPECA countries.

Mr. Athey reported on activities carried out by UNECE and ESCAP since the eighth session of the SPECA WG on KBD in Almaty on 22 September 2016, and described the activities planned for the second half of 2017. The Progress report on the activities of the WG on KBD since the eighth session can be found at Annex III.

Delegates expressed their satisfaction with implementation of the Programme of Work for 2016-2017, and their interest in the activities planned for the second half of 2017.

Review of the Programme of Work of the WG on KBD for 2018-2019

Mr. Athey presented the draft Programme of Work of the WG on KBD for 2018-2019.

The WG adopted the Programme of Work and agreed that the details of the envisaged activities in the Programme of Work for 2018-2019 as adopted (Annex IV) could be further elaborated in consultation with the host countries of these future activities.

Date and venue of the next session of the WG on KBD

The WG agreed to hold its next session in 2018 and that the exact date and venue of the tenth session of the WG would be decided through consultations with the SPECA countries.

Other business

Representatives of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan emphasised the importance of eco-innovation and national capacities in ecological expertise in delivering sustainable economic development and achieving the SDGs. They also stressed the importance of an adequate legislative framework to ensure successful public-private partnerships (PPPs). These are two areas where greater capacity-building support would be useful.

The representative of Afghanistan noted the importance of innovation policies for supporting long-term strategies for sustainable development and requested further support in strengthening science, technology and innovation (STI) policies for

delivering the SDGs, with particular emphasis on disaster risk reduction. ESCAP secretariat agreed to investigate further options to provide such support, including through the ESCAP project on evidence-based STI policies.

Delegates thanked the Government of Kyrgyzstan for its warm hospitality and the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats for the excellent organization of the SPECA events in Bishkek.

Adoption of decisions

The proposed draft decisions were adopted by the delegations of SPECA countries. The decisions of the ninth session of the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development are attached to this report (Annex V).

Closing of the session

Mr. Ralph Heinrich, Chief of the Innovative Policies Development Section of the UNECE and Mr. Jonathan Wong of ESCAP expressed sincere gratitude, on behalf of the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats, to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic for the excellent organization and hospitality extended to the participants of the Regional Workshop and the ninth session of the SPECA WG on KBD. They also expressed their appreciation to all delegates from SPECA countries for their support and active participation in these events.

Mr. Tae Hyung Kim, ESCAP, highlighted the importance of applications of advanced technologies and statistical data including geospatial data to assess and monitor the progress of SDG implementation. He informed the delegates that ESCAP has initiated a new project for development of geospatial guidelines and indicators to measure and monitor the progress of disaster-related SDG implementation, in particular focusing on future applications of the indicators in Central Asia countries as a pilot.

A representative of the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic thanked the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats for their support to the organization of these important events. The representative expressed gratitude to all delegates and experts for their active participation in the work of the 2017 session of the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development and the Regional Workshop on "Making innovation work for the SDGs".

**Regional Workshop
“Making innovation work for the SDGs”
and
Ninth session of the SPECA Working Group on
Knowledge-based Development**

(Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 22-23 June 2017)

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ANNEX II

Regional Workshop on “Making Innovation Work for the SDGs”

(Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 22-23 June 2017)

SUMMARY

Session I: Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is in the process of aligning its national development strategies with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Government has recognized innovation and knowledge-based development as policy priorities and has recently adopted a series of new legal documents in this area. Considerable efforts are also being made to develop statistical indicators and to collect the corresponding data as a basis for evidence-based policymaking, monitoring and review. Still, the National Innovation System as a whole is at an early stage of development. The Innovation for Sustainable Development Review assesses the current state of the system, its governance, institutions, policies, and performance against international good practices and provides recommendations to the Government on how to further improve its innovation policies with a view to contributing to the country's sustainable development priorities.

There are national specificities that innovation policies must reflect in order to build an effective national innovation system. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, this context includes being a small and relatively open economy that is in rapid transition. This increases the importance of international linkages and collaboration, as well as readiness to absorb and apply knowledge developed abroad.

While very high transport costs are a challenge for imports and exports, this also increases the payoff from economic specialization in higher value outputs that are less cost sensitive. Membership of the Eurasian Economic Union, building on long-standing linkages with CIS countries and a position on historical trading routes and the One Belt One Road initiative all present opportunities for specialization within international value chains. While integration into international value chains is at present marginal, limited but increasing FDI suggests some positive development. Nonetheless, a poor business environment is significantly hampering private sector development, in particular SMEs. Improving the business environment should be a policy priority because new enterprises have a critical role to play in driving innovation. Infrastructure, in particular transport, energy and communications, remains one of the most significant economic challenges, both for enterprise development in general, and for the participation of Kyrgyz firms in international value chains. Adoption of international quality standards would also improve export competitiveness.

Expenditure on R&D, at around 0.1% of GDP, remains so marginal that a range of complementary policy tools will be needed to improve innovation performance in a way that has a significant positive impact on the national economy. While there are islands of excellence in terms of individual private enterprises that have innovated successfully, skills and capacity constraints mean that there is often limited integration with and investment in local supply chains. Public support to such companies' innovation activities should be strengthened. In order to ensure that such support adequately addresses actual needs, the business sector should be involved in the formulation of innovation and science and technology policy, e.g. through foresight exercises. Until now, the main channel of economic modernization and technological upgrading has been the private sector adopting and adapting knowledge, most notably through imports of embodied knowledge in machinery and equipment and through software development. Increasingly, there will be a need to move to higher-level models of knowledge-based development, including increased private sector intramural R&D and collaboration with academia. In this regard, policy support could be focused on sectors where some comparative advantage already exists and where there is significant potential for integrating into regional and global value chains, including textiles, food processing, agricultural technologies or tourism. Public procurement could play a significant role in generating additional demand for locally developed innovations, for example in the ICT sector.

At the level of the National Innovation System, there should be measures not just to establish missing components, but also to establish missing connections and improve coordination, which are equally crucial for system level outcomes and do not always require significant financial investment.

There was a discussion around how best to reform the research and scientific sectors. While there is a need to consolidate fragmented capacities, drastic reforms could result in further loss of capability. What is needed is increased investment from current very low levels of R&D, together with thorough consultation on what constitutes "critical mass" in specific research fields, and how best to achieve this in each field through gradualist reform with frequent progress checks. Legal barriers to commercialization of academic results are currently being addressed, but there is also a need to build skills and capabilities. While there have been high levels of investment in education, this is in the context of very strong demands from a young and growing population, and there must now be measures to both improve quality and boost international linkages in the sector.

There was also a discussion on the financing of innovation at the enterprise level. On the one hand, some surveys suggest that financing is not currently among the major constraints of enterprises, in part due to Kyrgyzstan's relatively well developed microfinance sector. On the other hand, developing financing mechanisms and intermediaries tailored to the specific needs of new firms at the early stage of the innovation cycle, such as business angels and venture capital, requires time and therefore should receive policy support so that adequate financing will be available as other obstacles to innovative entrepreneurship are being removed and the number

of new innovative companies in need of financing increases. This is an area where commercial banks are not well equipped to operate effectively due to high levels of risk, as well as the need for a proactive investment management approach.

Session II: Regional insights on making innovation work for the SDGs

During Session II delegates discussed how innovation can be harnessed to deliver the sustainable development agenda. Delivery of Agenda 2030 must be tackled jointly at the global, regional and national levels. Countries define their priorities among the 17 SDGs for implementation at the national level, as reflected in National Sustainable Development Strategies. Mechanisms exist to link these different levels of delivery. One of the key features linking national and global levels is the process of Voluntary National Reviews taking place annually as part of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, where countries present their National Sustainable Development Strategies. This gives scope for policy learning between countries, and can also enable sharing experiences on measurement of progress under Agenda 2030. Three SPECA countries are undergoing this process in 2017.

The delegation of Tajikistan briefed delegates on preparation for and national experience under the Voluntary National Review process taking place in 2017, including the National Development Strategy to 2030, and the inclusion of the SDGs in this strategy. There was a discussion of key challenges and opportunities, including next steps. The delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic shared the national experience of integrating the SDGs into the national and sectoral level policy framework, including measurement and reporting on progress. UNDP in the Kyrgyz Republic briefed delegates on their support to development of the national SDG monitoring system in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Session II also provided the opportunity for national statements by country representatives on recent developments of relevance to knowledge-based development. The delegation of Afghanistan briefed delegates on the role of knowledge-based development in disaster management at the national level, as well as the contribution to the international agenda. The delegation of Azerbaijan briefed delegates on progress on knowledge-based development at the national level.

Session III: Innovation, Disasters and SDGs in Asia and the Pacific

In Session III, the 4th Industrial Revolution was discussed as one of the main strategies to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs), because of its expected potential to promote sustainable growth and improved quality of life through increased manufacturing productivity. The participants noted that the emerging conceptual framework of the 4th Industrial Revolution can be promoted by transforming current socio-economic structures and paradigms from labour-intensive and low-value added production systems towards a more knowledge-based economic platform. The transformation includes promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns, diversification and integration of diverse products and services, and active applications of science, technologies and data.

In order to enhance current capacities in urban flooding and more broadly, disaster risk management, several applications of innovative technologies and designs were presented; such projects being the Low Impact Development (LID) project for storm water management in cities, the project on integrated rainwater, storm water and wastewater management in the Philippines, and a pilot project on wind generators during disasters. All of which are currently underway and should be given due consideration for their ability to help cities mitigate disaster risk.

Session IV: Social enterprise and impact investment for sustainable development

Presentations were made on the role of Governments in fostering social enterprise and impact investment for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) progress. The partnership between UN ESCAP and the British Council was also highlighted. It was emphasised that several member States in the region are in the process of developing and implementing social enterprise and impact investment policies and strategies. The concept of social entrepreneurship has been gathering momentum in the region with the growing recognition that the three dimensions of sustainable development will be key in achieving the SDGs. A social enterprise can be defined as an organization committed to explicitly including social and/or environmental returns as part of its core business while seeking a profit or return on investment. The concept of impact investment as a tool to finance the SDGs has also been gathering momentum in the region given its focus on investing to generate social and environmental value, as well as financial return. An offer of support was extended to member States looking to implement policies and strategies on this agenda.

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 were 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 was 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Expert Group Meeting on Digital Connectivity for Sustainable Development, Bangkok, Thailand, 3-4 October, 2016.
- World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and Inter-agency Working Group on ICT Meeting, Bangkok, Thailand, 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.
- 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.
- High-Level Dialogue on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration for Enhancing Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand, 20-21 April, 2017.

**PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE SPECA WG ON KBD
FOR 2018-2019**

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

ACTIVITIES ENVISAGED FOR 2018-2019

1. Capacity-building 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, promoting regional cooperation and fostering investment in modern infrastructure.

Rationale:

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on KBD 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 knowledge-based development, possibly in conjunction with the annual session of the WG on KBD (tentatively envisaged for 2019);
- (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 knowledge-based 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 KBD 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 2018 and 2019).

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 KBD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

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.

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 KBD 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 Meeting;
- (iv) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from SPECA countries to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway online communities; and
- (v) A study on trans-border terrestrial cable networks, including mechanisms for telecom operators to construct and operate trans-border terrestrial cables jointly, to enhance the quality and efficiency of international transmission.

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 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; and
- (v) 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 for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation

Objectives:

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

Rationale:

The project contributes to the objectives of the WG 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 the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP);
- (ii) Conduct activities on measuring resilience; and
- (iii) ESCAP provides continued support on DRR and climate change adaptation in the context of the Ministerial Regional Conference on disaster risk reduction.

7. Support to SPECA countries to monitor and report the progress of disaster-related SDGs implementation

Objectives:

Develop statistical geospatial guidelines to monitor and report gaps and progress of disaster-related SDGs implementation in the SPECA region.

Rationale:

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on KBD to support disaster risk management as specified in its Terms of Reference.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Establish an advisory working group, consisting of around six to eight experts from UN entities, regional organizations, and governments of concerned countries, with the aims to develop draft statistical geospatial guidelines; and
- (ii) Organize expert group meetings, workshops and advisory service meetings to enhance knowledge and capacity of SPECA countries in using statistical and geospatial data.

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	2018-2019
Implementation of the UNECE project on Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries	UNECE	2018-2019
Support to SPECA countries to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs	UNECE	2018-2019
Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative	ESCAP	2018-2019
Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development	ESCAP	2018-2019
Capacity development on the utilization of ICT for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation	ESCAP	2018-2019
Development of statistical geospatial guidelines for monitoring and reporting of disaster-related SDGs implementation	ESCAP	2018-2019

ANNEX V

**DECISIONS
OF THE NINTH SESSION OF THE SPECA WG ON KBD**

1. The Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (WG on KBD) noted with satisfaction the outcomes of the Regional Workshop “Making innovation work for the SDGs”.
2. The WG noted the usefulness of the policy recommendations of the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Kyrgyzstan. The WG welcomed the lively discussion which took place during Session I of the Regional Workshop, to be included as a summary in Annex II of the Report of this session. The WG requested the main points of this important discussion be reflected in the content and policy recommendations of the final version of the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Kyrgyzstan. The WG appreciated the value of the work of the UNECE secretariat in carrying out these Reviews in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and asked them to consider the possibility of continuing this activity in other SPECA countries.
3. The WG took note of the progress made by SPECA countries in integrating innovation policies into their sustainable development strategies. This area could present interesting opportunities for subregional cooperation.
4. The WG noted that since May 2017, ESCAP has started a new project, which aims to develop statistical geospatial guidelines and indicators to support Central Asian countries in assessing, monitoring and reporting on the implementation progress of disaster-related SDGs. In addition, the WG noted that ESCAP would be organizing the capacity development workshop in September 2017 to implement risk-sensitive sustainable development strategies in support of related sustainable development goals and targets in North and Central Asia.
6. The WG took note of the activities presented by ESCAP secretariat on fostering social enterprise and impact investment for sustainable development and noted the offer of ESCAP support to countries to develop policies and strategies to further these agendas.
7. The WG took note of the review of the activities of the WG on KBD since its last session. Delegates noted with satisfaction the activities carried out within the framework of the WG. In particular, the WG took note of the activities presented by ESCAP secretariat on supporting the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative, in particular, regarding how resilient ICT connectivity contributes to knowledge economy in the subregion. The WG additionally noted the work of UNECE on impact investment since its last session, and its value to SPECA countries.

8. The WG took note of the presentations on the draft Programme of Work of the WG on KBD for 2018-2019 by the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats. The WG emphasized the relevance of the proposed activities to the knowledge-based development of the SPECA countries.
 9. The WG on KBD adopted its Programme of Work for 2018-2019.
 10. The WG underlined the importance of partnerships with all stakeholders at the national and international levels. In this regard, the Group recommended that national representatives actively involve relevant stakeholders in the WG activities.
 11. The WG agreed to hold its tenth session in 2018 and that the exact date and venue will be decided through consultations with the SPECA countries.
 12. The WG expressed its sincere gratitude to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic for the excellent organization of the meetings and the hospitality offered to participants.
 13. The WG expressed its appreciation to the secretariats of UNECE and ESCAP for their efforts in organizing these events, and their active work to support the activities of the WG on KBD.
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