

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Evaluation Title:	Strengthening capacities of SPECA countries for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals		
Period of Review:	June 2016 – December 2019		
Date of Evaluation Report:	28/08/2020		
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		11/12/2020	
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Recommendation 1:

Streamlining and improving the organization of the SPECA meetings:

- a. Rationalize on time, travel and ensuring continuity by trying to hold WG sessions, the Economic Forum and the Governing Council meetings together during four days, when feasible and demanded by the countries.
- b. Consider turning the Economic Forums, if the countries wish, into opportunities for more dynamic exchanges through round table formats instead of conference modality with little discussions.
- c. Rethink the format of reporting conclusions and recommendations from the various meetings. This could involve shortening documentation, revisiting recommendations stemming from the WGs and Economic Forums to make them more concrete, feasible and measurable.

Management Response:

UNECE partially accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- a. Noting that the final decision depends on SPECA participating countries, which are owners of the SPECA Programme as per the 2018 SPECA Evaluation and subsequent decisions of the Governing Council, ECE (the SPECA Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator) will negotiate with the hosting country and try to rationalize on time when organizing the annual events and Working Group meetings of SPECA, when it coordinates the SPECA events (every second year) and will suggest that to ESCAP, when ESCAP coordinates the support for SPECA.
- b. The ECE SPECA Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator will discuss with the hosting country ideas for making the annual Economic Forums more dynamic, with more discussions and round tables, when ECE is coordinating these Forums.
- c. The ECE SPECA Coordinator will send the evaluation report and its recommendations to the ECE focal points for the SPECA thematic working groups (TWGs) and request them to support streamlining the conclusions and recommendations coming out of each meeting, so that they are

concrete, feasible and measurable, bearing in mind that the final responsibility for this is with the SPECA countries, bearing in mind that these are decisions of the participating countries.

Timeline: November 2021

Recommendation 2:

Strengthening mechanisms for follow-up:

- a. Documents coming out of the various meetings should become live documents that have an action plan and a system for follow-up and not be simply uploaded on a static UN website.
- b. Considering ways to allow networking of experts, policy advising, discussions between TWGs, experts and national authorities by creating more online platforms. Constant and sustained dialogue can continue on specific issues through guided online discussions.
- c. The designation of a Secretariat by the countries could make the follow up to recommendations and decisions an on-going task, relieving from the responsibility of the UNECE and ESCAP substantive divisions.
- d. Accelerate the nomination of Focal Points for SPECA and for the TWGs.

Management Response:

UNECE partially accepts

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- a. The ECE SPECA Coordinator will send the evaluation report and its recommendations to the ECE focal points supporting the various TWGs, the Governing Council sessions and annual Forums and will work with them, the SPECA participating countries and the ESCAP counterparts on drafting conclusions that include really intended actions for the achievement of the recommended objectives.
- b. Furthermore, the SPECA Coordinator will discuss with the ECE focal points and relevant experts how to support the TWGs and networks of experts for a continuous collaboration throughout the year. This will include work through online platforms on topical issues that interest the countries.
- c. The ECE SPECA Coordinator requested ESCAP to ask the host country in 2020 (Kyrgyzstan) to include a discussion on the SPECA Secretariat on the agenda of the 15th session of the SPECA Governing Council on 20 November 2020.
- d. The ECE SPECA Coordinator will renew the call for nomination of focal points every year ECE is coordinating SPECA and raise the issue at the Governing Council sessions.

Timeline: November 2020 – November 2021

Recommendation 3:

Strengthening the work of the Thematic Working Groups:

- a. When next reviewing the ToRs of Working Groups, make them more targeted and focused on developing and implementing concrete outputs such as strategies with concrete action plans for their implementation.
- b. Encourage the WG on Gender and SDGs and the WG on Statistics to render more substantive and systematic support to the other TWGs.
- c. Reinforce the capacity of experts to be able to mainstream concerns of women's rights and the rights-based approach in the work of the TWGs and Economic Forums, based on input from the WG on Gender and SDGs.

Management Response:

UNECE partially accepts the recommendation.

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Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- a. The ECE SPECA Coordinator will send this recommendation to the ECE focal points for the WG on Sustainable Transport and the WG on Water, Energy and Environment and relevant counterparts in ESCAP with a request to continue support for the SPECA countries in developing strategies/ roadmaps in these areas. The ECE SPECA Coordinator will invite the ECE focal point for the WG on Gender and SDGs to suggest to the country representatives to develop a regional strategy in their respective areas.
- b. The SPECA Coordinator will invite the ECE and ESCAP focal points for the SPECA WG on Gender and SDGs to provide direct support to each WG on how they can achieve relevant SDGs.
- c. The ECE SPECA Coordinator will work with ECE's TWG focal points to invite host countries organizing TWG activities, annual Forums, and Governing Council sessions, to pay special attention to mainstreaming women's rights and the rights-based approach defined by the UN.

Timeline: November 2020 – November 2022

Recommendation 4:

Improving cooperation and coordination with other UN and international entities working in the SPECA region

- a. The UN Resident Coordinator System, as representative of the UN at the national level, could be formally enlisted for follow-up on the implementation of recommendations at the SPECA country level.
- b. Increase cooperation/harmonization between the two Regional Commissions in order to pool funding.
- c. Coordinate/cooperate more closely with other regional processes in order to share resources, studies, projects, etc.

Management Response:

UNECE partially accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- a. The SPECA Coordinator will liaise with his counterpart in ESCAP to advance the concept note on cooperation with the Resident Coordinator system in support of SPECA at the SPECA Governing Council and the Resident Coordinators.
- b. The ECE SPECA Coordinator will initiate discussions with his ESCAP counterpart on how to improve the efficiency of organizing the SPECA events to make the best use of increasingly scarce resources.
- c. The ECE SPECA Coordinator and TWG focal points, working with ESCAP and the SPECA countries will intensify contacts and build synergies with such organizations and regional initiatives as UNRCCA, UNDP, UNEP, WTO, CAREC/ADB, EAEU, EU, ECO, OECD, the Islamic Development Bank and others, who would be willing to cooperate with SPECA

Timeline: November 2020 – November 2021

Recommendation 5:

Reinforcing the sustainability of support to the SPECA process:

- a. Find a mechanism in order to sustain the operational cost of supporting the SPECA process, such as the organization of annual meetings in a more systematic and less ad hoc way. This could be done for example by either ensuring that any eventual Trust Fund has a budget for operational support, or through encouraging more systematic contribution from SPECA countries, or by pooling of resources between the two Regional Commissions and devoting it to the sole purpose of organizing the annual meetings of SPECA institutions.

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- b. Intensify efforts to ensure sustained funding to develop further projects/financing for the implementation of the Ashgabat Initiative; the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; the SPECA Innovation Strategy, the regional study on procedural and regulatory barriers to trade, an updated SDG scoping study, etc.

Management Response:

UNECE partially accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- a. Given that the establishment of a SPECA Fund fully depends on the will of the SPECA participating countries, ECE can only state that when and if established, it should include (a) budget for operational support for the SPECA process: the annual Forum, Governing Council and TWG meetings; and (b) funding for projects developed and implemented under the WGs. The ECE Coordinator and WG focal points will discuss with their ESCAP focal points how to pool resources in support of the organization of the annual SPECA events.
- b. The ECE SPECA Coordinator and WG focal points will enquire into the possibilities to raise funds for the implementation of concrete activities recommended in the Ashgabat Initiative; the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; the SPECA Innovation Strategy, the regional study on procedural and regulatory barriers to trade, and redoing the SDG scoping exercise.

Timeline: November 2020 – November 2024