



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

Second Session of the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development

(Country chair: Kyrgyzstan, 21 October 2021)

REPORT

The second session of the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development (WG on ITSD) was jointly organized by UNECE and ESCAP, in a webinar format due to the COVID-19 situation and chaired by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on 21 October 2021.

Delegations from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan participated in the session along with representatives of the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats. Representatives from other international and regional organizations, as well as from business and academia, participated in the second session of the WG on ITSD. The list of participants of the session is included at Annex IV.

Opening of the session

Mr. Islambek Moidinov, State Secretary of the State Service of Intellectual Property (IP) and Innovation of the Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzpatent) welcomed participants to the session. Mr. Moidinov thanked UNECE and ESCAP for organizing both the session, as well as the preceding sub-regional SPECA workshop on innovation and technology for sustainable development and expressed thanks to all the experts presenting during these events. He also highlighted the importance of and called for an increase in sub-regional cooperation among the SPECA countries on innovation, including on digital economy, to ensure a resilient post-pandemic recovery and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Election of officers and adoption of the agenda

The WG elected Mr. Almaz Yktybaev, Head of International Relations Department, State Service of Intellectual Property (IP) and Innovation of the Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzpatent), as Chair of the session. Mr. Yktybaev highlighted the efforts of the two regional commissions in supporting SPECA countries to enhance their

innovation and technology policies and the importance of the work of the SPECA WG on ITSD in this regard, including through the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development.

The WG on ITSD adopted the agenda for its second session.

Outcomes of the Subregional Workshop on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development

The UNECE and ESCAP secretariats provided a summary of outcomes of the Subregional Workshop on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development held on 20-21 October 2021 in virtual format.

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

Review of the activities since the last session

Mr. Athey of UNECE and Ms. Karazhanova of ESCAP presented the update on the activities of the respective secretariats since the last session of the WG on ITSD held on 30 July 2020 in virtual mode.

UNECE activities included: i) publication of the UNECE Handbook on Business incubators for sustainable development in the SPECA subregion; ii) a subregional and seven national Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) gap analyses of SPECA countries completed and validated at a subregional webinar in November 2020; iii) meetings of a Task Force on a Roadmap for the Development of the Innovation Ecosystem in Kyrgyzstan until 2025 took place on 9 June 2021 and 8 September 2021, with UN Development Account (UNDA) support under the project 2023N “Strengthening innovation policies for SPECA countries in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”; iv) as follow up to the STI gap analyses, a discussion paper “Towards industrial policies to support technology upgrading for sustainable development in Central Asia” was developed, which formed the basis for the discussion paper of the session “Towards technological transformation of the SPECA countries”; v) a draft Action Plan of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development was discussed for consideration by the SPECA WG on ITSD.

ESCAP activities included: i) Training workshop series "ESCAP Web-Toolkit for Integrated Planning of Infrastructure Corridors ", conducted online for policymakers in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, conducted online on 17 and 21 May 2021; ii) National consultation meetings with government officials and experts from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (representatives from ministries, government agencies, public and private authorities, operators and nominated structures) on the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Action plan 2022-2026; iii) production of knowledge products on Infrastructure Corridor Series in two languages, namely on Part 1: In-depth Analysis of the Three Promising Infrastructure Corridors, Part 1: In-Depth Analysis of Three Promising Infrastructure Corridors; Part 2 on a Toolkit for Determining the Most

Promising Scenario for Infrastructure Corridor Development; and Part 3 on the Calculation Results for determining the most promising scenario for infrastructure corridor development; iv) the expert group meeting on “Digital connectivity and e-resilience for crisis preparedness (virtual meeting)”, 10 November 2020, and the launch of the online [E-resilience Monitoring Dashboard | ICT & DRR Gateway](#) developed (monitoring tool).

Adoption of the programme of work

Mr. Athey of UNECE and Ms. Karazhanova of ESCAP presented the updated Programme of Work of the WG on ITSD for October 2021-December 2023.

The WG adopted the updated Programme of Work (Annex III) and agreed that the details of the envisaged activities 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 ITSD and other business

The WG agreed to hold its next session in 2022 with the exact date and venue of the next session to be decided through consultations with the SPECA countries.

Adoption of decisions

The proposed draft decisions were adopted by the delegations of SPECA countries. The decisions of the session are attached to this report (Annex I).

Closing of the session

The Chair of the session thanked the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats for their support to the organization of these important events. He thanked delegates and experts for their active participation in the work of the second virtual session of the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development.

Delegates thanked the Government of Kyrgyzstan for chairing the session and the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats for the excellent organization of the virtual session.

ANNEX I

DECISIONS OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE SPECA WG ON ITSD

1. The Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development (WG on ITSD) noted with satisfaction the discussions and country presentations of its second virtual session, a summary of which will be included in annex to the Report of this session.
2. The WG reviewed the activities carried out since its 1st session and expressed its appreciation of the usefulness of these activities for the SPECA countries. Delegates noted with satisfaction the activities carried out by United Nations ESCAP and ECE secretariats within the framework of the WG.
3. The WG welcomed the background paper “Towards Technological Transformation of the SPECA Countries: The Innovation Imperative for Sustainable Development” that could form the basis for an official publication to guide new approaches to innovation policy for transition.
4. The WG highlighted the importance of continuing to enhance seamless digital connectivity. The WG welcomed the inclusion of related initiatives, under the *Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Action Plan for 2022-2026*, which is under preparation. The WG requested ESCAP, in cooperation with the *International Think Tank for Land Locked Developing Countries (ITLLDC)*, to continue establishing multisectoral partnerships to secure investments and welcomed the work undertaken by secretariat on developing (i) a single information platform with automation and simulation modules for determining compatibility, economic efficiency, and identifying infrastructure projects that lend themselves to ICT deployment for smart corridors; (ii) an e-resilience monitoring dashboard, and an associated e-resilience readiness index for last mile digital foresight planning scenarios by 2030.
5. The WG expressed its appreciation for the presentation on the draft Action Plan for implementing the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development. The WG welcomed the proposal to submit the draft Action Plan for consideration at the next session of the SPECA Governing Council as a practical tool to achieve the objectives of the Strategy.
6. The WG welcomed progress in implementing the UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Uzbekistan, building on the experience of previous reviews of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The WG highlighted the importance of extrabudgetary and in-kind support for the continued implementation of this series of national reviews.

7. To ensure effective post-pandemic management, the WG proposed the establishment of a digital institutional framework and welcomed the initiative of Kazakhstan and ESCAP in setting up the Digital Solutions Centre for Sustainable Development (DSC SD), which is aimed at creating foundations for an inclusive digital economy in SPECA countries. The WG appreciated the research undertaken by Kazakhstan and ESCAP experts on the subject and requested the secretariat to facilitate the delivery of a roadmap on setting up the DSC SD with an action plan to support digital transformation in the SPECA countries for sustainable development.

8. The WG welcomed the initiative to carry out an innovation policy benchmarking exercise in the SPECA countries, subject to availability of extrabudgetary resources, building on the experience of the pilot UNECE Innovation Policy Outlook recently carried out in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus.

9. The WG welcomed the initiative on supporting innovative high-growth enterprises in the SPECA subregion, building on the experience of the UNECE handbook and training series on “Supporting Innovative High-Growth Enterprises in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus”.

10. The WG welcomed the recently issued handbook “Business incubators for sustainable development in the SPECA subregion” as a useful guide for further capacity building activities and policy development.

11. The WG adopted its Programme of Work for October 2021 - December 2023.

12. The WG agreed to hold its next session in 2022 and that the exact date and venue will be decided through consultations with the SPECA countries.

13. The WG expressed its sincere gratitude to the representative of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic for acting as Chairperson of this virtual 2nd session of the SPECA WG on ITSD.

14. The WG expressed its appreciation to the secretariats of UNECE and ESCAP for their efforts in organizing the virtual session of the WG, and for their active work in supporting the activities of the WG on ITSD.

ANNEX II

Summary of the Regional Workshop on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development

(Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 20-21 October 2021, virtual modality)

During his opening, Mr. Zharasul Abduraimov, Deputy Minister of Economy and Commerce of Kyrgyzstan, stressed the importance of promotion and strengthening of innovations and technological development as priority area for the Government of Kyrgyzstan and the SPECA sub-region as a whole. Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE, in his turn highlighted the importance of the work and discussions under the SPECA WG on ITSD, in particular with regards to the Action Plan of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development to ensure that innovation is effectively in SPECA subregion as means to tackle economic, social and environmental development challenges and to ensure resilient and sustainable post-COVID recovery and regional integration. Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk, Director, Economic Cooperation and Trade, UNECE, highlighted the potential of the circular economy for accelerating progress of the subregion on UN Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 and the crucial role of innovation and technologies to accompany this transition. She also called SPECA countries to consider co-operation on innovation for circular economy transition, including through the Action Plan of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development, and under the UNECE initiatives, such as the recent UN Development Account project on Accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the UNECE region. Closing this session, Mr. Tae Hyung Kim, Chief, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) & Development Section (IDS), ESCAP, pointed to the importance of the narrowing of digital gap in the SPECA sub-region and stepping up digital transition of SPECA countries. He also stressed on the potential offered by the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) to promote digital society and inclusiveness and the role of multi-stakeholder collaboration in this process.

In the second session of the workshop, Mr. Christopher Athey, Economic Affairs Officer, Innovative Policies Development Section (IPDS), UNECE, briefed the participants on the context of the adoption of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development, the establishment of the WG on ITSD, and thanked Kyrgyzpatent for the excellent cooperation and the suggestion to host the second session of the WG. Mr. Mario Apostolov, Regional Adviser, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, UNECE, has informed about the plans to establish the SPECA Fund to facilitate SPECA countries cooperation on subregional priorities, as well as the potential establishment of the SPECA Secretariat (to be discussed at the next session of the SPECA Governing Council on 19 November 2021 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan). Mr. Rumen Dobrinsky, Director for Strategy, European Alliance for Innovation, closed this session outlining key objectives of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development and the means of its implementation.

In session 3, dedicated to the discussion of the Action Plan of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development, Mr. Rumen Dobrinsky, Director for Strategy, European Alliance for Innovation presented the draft document, in particular, suggested measures, timelines for implementation, monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and detailed on the proposed pilot initiatives. His presentation was followed by interventions from the representatives of the SPECA countries. All countries have expressed their support to the implementation of the proposed Action Plan and highlighted its usefulness for the promotion of innovation and technologies in the sub-region as well as the knowledge-based development of SPECA countries.

Ms. Shakhlo Turdikulova, Deputy Minister of Innovative Development, Uzbekistan, in her speech outlined several proposals for the addition to the Action Plan, namely i) enlarge and scale up annual Uzbek International Week of Innovative Ideas (Innovic.UZ) to the level of all SPECA countries with potential participation in virtual mode; ii) establish pilot initiative aimed at supporting the young researchers across SPECA countries; iii) develop a SPECA Road Map on digitalisation identifying potential areas for sub-regional cooperation.

Mr. Toyly Myalikov, Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy, Turkmenistan, highlighted the relevance of the proposed Action Plan under the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development for the national developmental priorities of Turkmenistan and expressed readiness of the Government to support and be actively involved in the implementation of the envisaged pilot initiatives.

Mr. Fariz Guliev, Member of the Executive Board of the Innovations Agency, Azerbaijan, in his turn stressed on the importance of ensuring that government intervention when it comes to innovative development is effective, targeted and complementary and the role sub-regional cooperation can play in boosting the innovative development processes for the benefit of all SPECA countries.

Mr. Meirbek Mukatov, Director of Strategic Planning Division, Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry, Kazakhstan, highlighted the importance of SPECA cooperation on digital economy and informed about the efforts of the Government of Kazakhstan in this area (e.g. 700 services are offered to citizens with 85% of them available online) performed based on the data-driven and people-centred public policy approach. He also stressed on the relevance of the establishment of the Digital Solutions Centre for Sustainable Development (DSC for SD) in Central Asia by ESCAP and Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan as an important potential player in the subregion for the implementation of the Action Plan of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AT-IS) project for 2022-2026. Mr. Mukatov also expressed his gratitude to the ESCAP Secretariat for analysis on tackling digital divide for sustainable and inclusive post-pandemic recovery and pointed to further efforts needed to mobilize sufficient resources for the DSC for SD to play catalysing role in innovation in the subregion.

Ms. Aisuluu Mustapakulova, Head of Division for Innovations, State Service of Intellectual Property (IP) and Innovation of the Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzpatent) informed that Kyrgyzpatent has been increasing prioritising the development of innovation and startup ecosystem in the country which led to the establishment of 11 business incubators on the basis of Universities, of the Innovation Center and the startup competition Startup Kyrgyzstan. She also thanked the UNECE Secretariat for the support on development of the Roadmap of Innovation Ecosystem Development of Kyrgyzstan until 2025 and the guidance on business incubators provided through the dedicated UNECE handbook, while also expressing the resolve to continue cooperation in this area.

Mr. Anvar Kodirov, Director of the Center for Innovative Development of Science and New Technologies, National Academy of Sciences, Tajikistan, highlighted the importance the Government of Tajikistan attaches to innovation and science development and confirmed the readiness of its institution to cooperate under the proposed Action Plan.

Mr. Jonathan Wong, Chief, Technology and Innovation Section, ESCAP, stressed on the importance of keeping the Action Plan inclusive, i.e. aiming at alleviating poverty and improving

lives of vulnerable segments of the population, an ensure mission-oriented policy action to accelerate sustainable development in the SPECA subregion.

In addition, Dulguun Enkhsaikhan, Director of Operations, International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries (ITLLDC), Mongolia, highlighted the importance of building smart transport and ICT infrastructure to enhance connectivity of the SPECA countries and thus accelerate the post-pandemic recovery and sustainable development across the region. Mr. Almaz Yktybayev, Head of International Relations Department, State Service of Intellectual Property (IP) and Innovation of the Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzpatent), also suggested to consider cooperation in the area of development of creative industries and of STEM education under the Action Plan of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development.

Finally, Mr. Christopher Athey, Economic Affairs Officer, Innovative Policies Development Section (IPDS), UNECE, closed this session stressing that the suggestions for the Action Plan expressed by the SPECA countries' representatives would be considered for the final document which would be submitted for the endorsement by the SPECA Governing Council on 19 November 2021.

In session 4 dedicated to the innovative technology applications for the SDGs, Mr. Tae Hyung Kim, Chief, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) & Development Section (IDS), ESCAP, presented the updates on the AP-IS Action Plan 2022-2026. Mr. Kim quoted the SG's "Our Common Agenda" and the 12 commitments, drawing upon the issues of digital divide and the urban-rural divide on internet speed, and linked the innovation with digital connectivity and the common issues of ASEAN Master Plan 2025. Mr. Kim informed the participants about the upcoming 5th Session of the AP-IS Steering Committee on 25 November 2021, the 4th Session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology, and Innovation (CICTSTI) to be held in August 2022; UN Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Digital Cooperation, to be held in December 2022, in Seoul, the Republic of Korea. He highlighted the five ESCAP entry points which include: (i) regional Economic Cooperation and Integration: co-deployment of infrastructures (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia), simulator for integrated infrastructure corridors, and e-resilience monitoring dashboard; (ii) regulatory sandboxes for innovation: Bangladesh, Kazakhstan and Maldives, (iii) bridging urban-rural divides starting in 2022: Bangladesh, People's Democratic Republic of Laos and Thailand, (iv) Korea-funded project on the Internet exchange points in CLVT and the Pacific region; (v) China-funded project on supporting the AP-IS Action Plan 2022-2026.

Ms. Aida Karazhanova, Economic Affairs Officer and Mr. Zorikto Gomboin, consultant, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) & Development Section (IDS), ESCAP launched the E-resilience Monitoring Dashboard for Digital Foresight Planning, detailed on the country profiles and explained the framework and the methodology on the e-resilience monitoring scoring for countries of Central Asia. During discussions, Ms. Ayazhan Mukatova, Mr. Amir Abdyshev, Ms. Lyaila Kenzhina - experts from Zerde National Infocommunication Holding (JSC), Kazakhstan, proposed to consider a unified innovation policy for Central Asian countries for business, academia, and the government. They also expressed the resolve of Zerde National Infocommunication Holding to provide support in collection and analysis of data on e-resilience and digitalization, bringing to the attention the following: (i) the Dashboard should not be considered as a tool for countries' comparison, but rather as an analytical tool to help identifying strengths and weaknesses, exchange knowledge and information, and strengthen digital cooperation between SPECA countries; (ii) the need to work on improving the indicators that are part of the Dashboard and creating the database of ready-made directly applicable solutions for

countries; (iii) the importance of considering the needs of vulnerable people under the E-Resilience Dashboard. Mr. Zorikto Gomboin, when responding to comments on methodology, pointed to further need to streamline data entering processes to facilitate the automatization and the continued work to ensure that the methodology behind the tool is simple and understandable for use.

Mr. Vadim Kaptur, consultant, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) & Development Section (IDS), ESCAP and Mr. Talaipek Makeev, expert, International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries (ITLLDC) presented on co-deployment of infrastructure for integrated corridor development. They highlighted the progress and proposals for future, seeking partnerships with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, ITLLDC, and shared the commitments from the core group of designers on the follow up work. Ms. Aida Sharsheeva, Independent Expert on Digital Transformation, Kyrgyzstan, has brought to the attention the Digital CASA project carried out in Kyrgyzstan by the World Bank already containing the indicators on regional cooperation (ex. with Kazakhstan and Tajikistan) in broadband internet deployment and the potential to build on these indicators for ESCAP work. Ms. Aida Karazhanova highlighted the ongoing involvement of the WB representative in ESCAP activities (e.g. capacity building workshops) and the need to coordinate the actions on co-deployment further.

Ms. Hyangsuk Seong, Programme Management officer, the United Nations Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT), highlighted the capacity-building, technical assistance activities and e-learning and knowledge sharing platforms related to the AP-IS Action Plan. She also informed that the training modules on “ICT for Ageing population” and “Frontier ICTs for government leaders” would be available in 2022, and that projects on catalyzing women’s entrepreneurship, including ICT training for women in 6 countries, were under way.

Mr. Siopo Vakataki Ofa, Economic Affairs Officer, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) & Development Section (IDS), ESCAP, detailed on the way to promote efficient Internet traffic management through Internet Exchange Point (IXP). Mr. Ofa stressed on the lessons learnt from the Pacific that could be useful for the SPECA sub-region, namely: (i) the critical role of political support if Governments are interested in connecting to a “subregional’ IXP; (ii) active engagement and support of other stakeholders, including regulators and internet service providers; (iii) agreement by all parties on an operational model for establishing an IXP; (iv) analytical research into the opportunities and challenges of establishing and IXP. Mr. Askar Tazhiyev, consultant, ESCAP, presented the outcomes of his research on the development of Central Asia-as-a-platform Strategy and his inputs to the strategy on the development of the Digital Solutions Center for Sustainable Development (DSC for SD) in Central Asia by ESCAP and Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan. Mr. Sayan Birimzhan, CEO Eurasian Environmental Fund, Astana International Financial Center (AIFC), informed that AIFC is ready to support the initiative on setting up DSC for SD for Central Asia and proposed projects, such as blockchain-based platform for “green obligations and carbon units”, ecological and technological audit, GreenTech solutions etc. He also pointed to the possibility to fund future DSC projects through Eurasian Ecological Fund. In the closing, the moderator thanked all the speakers and discussants and proposed to continue the follow-up offline and to present the outcomes to the next session of the SPECA Governing Council and the SPECA Economic Forum.

ANNEX III

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

ACTIVITIES ENVISAGED FOR OCTOBER 2021- DECEMBER 2023

1. Capacity-building on policy options and practical instruments to promote innovation and technology for sustainable 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 ITSD 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 innovation and technology for sustainable development, possibly in conjunction with an annual session of the WG on ITSD;
- (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 innovation and technology for sustainable development at the request of Governments of SPECA countries on priority topics, e.g. business incubators, accelerators and innovative high-growth enterprises.

2. Implementation of UNECE 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 ITSD 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 capacity building support to implementation of policy recommendations in selected countries of the SPECA region (envisaged for 2021-2023).

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

Proposed activities:

- (i) 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; and
- (ii) Adoption and implementation of an Action Plan for the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development, identifying innovative joint initiatives between SPECA countries with potential to support delivery of Agenda 2030 within the sub-region and including support to innovation policy benchmarking among the SPECA countries.

4. Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Action Plan 2022-2026**Objectives:**

Strengthening institutions to enhance regional cooperation and strengthen connectivity through implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway action plan 2022-2026.

Rationale:

The activities are in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD 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 implementation of the action plan 2022-2026 of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway platform (AP-IS);
- (ii) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from SPECA countries in the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee meetings on 25 November 2021 and in 2022-2023;
- (iii) Participation in the discussions and meetings on establishment of the Digital Solutions Center for Sustainable Development (DSC SD) in Central Asia including the development of the roadmap for DSC SD;
- (iv) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials, and private sector) from SPECA countries to the Expert Group Meetings and Subregional Capacity Development Workshop (planned in Kazakhstan) and National workshops;
- (v) Partnership development to support fibre-optic cable co-deployment capitalizing on opportunities created by infrastructure sharing and co-deployment;
- (vi) Facilitation of mobilisation of investment for Operation Models of Trans-Border Terrestrial Cable Networks for the Implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway to foster building of consensus on cross-border, cross-sectoral fibre optic co-deployment;
- (vii) Monitoring of implementation of the AP-IS action plan 2022-2026.

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 ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. The activities will be funded through the extrabudgetary resources of APCICT and APCTT and co-funding mobilized through national and subregional partners. Implementation is subject to the availability of APCICT and APCTT funds.

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) Provide advisory services to SPECA countries in areas related to ICT for socio-economic development, subject to funding and resource availability; and
- (iv) 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 and geospatial information for disaster risk reduction

Objectives:

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

Rationale:

The project contributes to the objectives of the WG on ITSD 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 use tailored operational tools and geospatial information platform for drought monitoring and early warning.
- (ii) ESCAP provides continued support on disaster risk reduction by promoting innovative technology applications including ICT and geospatial information.
- (iii) Support SPECA countries, upon request, to enhance capacity on forest fire monitoring through applications of geospatial information.

7. Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia

Objectives:

Enhance the institutional capacity of Central Asian countries to integrate geospatial and statistical information.

Rationale:

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD to support drought management and land-related SDG challenges including disaster risk reduction as specified in its Terms of Reference.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Conduct assessment of country profile on drought monitoring and land accounts with a diagnostic tool and template (patterned after ESCAP's environment statistics diagnostic tool) to identify policy priorities, available information, data

sources, stakeholders and institutional mechanisms necessary to develop or strengthen the land accounts.

- (ii) Organize an inception regional workshop and expert group meetings to discuss preliminary estimates of assessment on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia region, and assist capacity building on using the System of Environmental- Economic Accounting (SEEA) and the framework for integration of the geospatial and statistical information.
- (iii) Organize high level policy meeting in February 2022 to share key findings and methodologies to assess land use- related SDGs implementations.

8. Capacity Development to reduce and mitigate disaster risks in endorheic (inland) water basins in Central Asia

Objectives:

Strengthen disaster risk reduction and management for the Aral Basin in Central Asia through analytics, sharing of best practices, and regional cooperation efforts

Rationale:

Understanding the risk drivers of water-related disasters in inland water-basins including the impacts of climate change through advances in earth observation, digital elevation modeling, geospatial techniques and high-resolution climate modeling can support development of regional cooperation processes that could significantly address the Aral Sea catastrophe from multi-sectoral risk management perspectives.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Prepare a literature review, risk modeling, assessing the latest scientific evidence on the Aral Sea Crisis using a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach.
- (ii) Prepare an integrated risk assessment of the Basin using the latest advances in hydrological modelling, digital elevation modelling and socio-economic modelling to demonstrate the impact of the Aral Sea Crisis on economies and populations.
- (iii) Organize a capacity development workshop on preventing and mitigating natural disaster of endorheic (inland) water basins and prepare an outcome report to submit to the ESCAP Commission at its seventy-eight session.

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	October 2021-December 2023
Implementation of the UNECE project on Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries	UNECE	October 2021-December 2023
Support to SPECA countries to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs	UNECE	October 2021-December 2023
Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway action plan 2022-2026	ESCAP	October 2021-December 2023
Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development and on e-resilience	ESCAP	October 2021-December 2023
Capacity development on the utilization of ICT and GIS for disaster risk reduction	ESCAP	October 2021-December 2023
Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia	ESCAP	October 2021-December 2023
Capacity Development to reduce and mitigate disaster risks in endorheic (inland) water basins in Central Asia	ESCAP	October 2021-December 2023

ANNEX IV

**Second Session of the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development (WG on ITSD)
and
Sub-regional SPECA Workshop on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development
(webinar)**

20-21 October 2021

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

AZERBAIJAN

Ms. Gulmina Malikzade, Specialist, Digital Economy Department, Center for Analysis and Coordination of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan, Baku.

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