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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Committee on Environment and Development

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Agenda item 10

Adoption of the report

Draft report

I. Matters calling for action by the commission or brought to its attention

1. The Committee recommends that the Commission endorse the Seoul Outcome, adopted at the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development on 20 October 2011, and recognize it as the consensus input of the Asia-Pacific region to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

Seoul Outcome

1. The participants of the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development met in Seoul, Republic of Korea on 19-20 October 2011.

2. Recognizing that the Asia and Pacific region is one of the most diverse regional groupings, characterized by high economic growth rates while being home to the largest number of the world's poor,

3. Further recognizing that the diverse range of States in the region, including but not limited to Small Island Developing States, high-mountain States and land-locked States, continues to face many special and particular vulnerabilities,

4. Reaffirming the principles contained in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development Agenda 21, as well as the instruments further adopted for the implementation of Agenda 21, in particular the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,

5. Also reaffirming that the main objective of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges,

6. The participants considered that the outcome of the Rio+20 conference should be: Based on the Rio Principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities Action-oriented Forward-looking Consensus-based Inclusive Supportive of global partnerships for sustainable development.

7. Participants agreed that a green economy has to be seen in the context of the overriding objectives of sustainable development and poverty eradication. The green economy approach should take into account the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in particular, in the context of the Rio Principles. In that regard:

It should:

- Promote sustained economic growth for poverty eradication
- Be one of the means to achieve and promote sustainable development
- Facilitate trade opportunities for all countries, in particular, developing countries
- Address the three pillars of sustainable development in a comprehensive, coordinated, synergetic and balanced manner
- Allow sufficient policy space and flexibility for governments to pursue sustainable development strategies, based on national circumstances and respective stages of development
- Promote the inclusion of vulnerable sections of society, women and youth
- Involve all stakeholders
- Facilitate technological innovation and transfer and promote access to green technologies at affordable costs
- Address the challenges of delivering a green economy in Small Island Developing States in particular, along with high-mountain and land-locked States
- Increase resilience to natural disasters.
- It should not be used as a pretext for green protectionism.

8. There is a need to reform and improve the institutional framework for sustainable development. The reforms should:

- Strengthen coherence and coordination
- Enhance implementation at all levels
- Strengthen governance in all three pillars
- Promote the spirit of multilateralism
- Improve balance and integration among the three pillars
- Promote institutional capacity-building at all levels
- Be aimed at enhancing the role of the United Nations at all levels, including regional and subregional levels.

9. The participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea, ESCAP, UNEP and ADB for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality.

2. Within the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, the Committee recognizes the need for development partners, including, in particular, developed countries, to support developing and least developed countries in their efforts to shift to a green economy, especially through new, additional, adequate and predictable financial resources, official development assistance, capacity-building, technology development and transfer, and rendering of financial support for green economy investments, including through special funds and other forms of support. The Committee recognizes that there is no “one size fits all” approach; every country has the sovereign right to adopt its own development paradigm.

3. The Committee takes note of the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth¹ and the Astana Green Bridge Initiative² and the projects being implemented under them by member States.

4. In further recognizing the role of ESCAP in promoting sustainable development, the Committee recommends that regional and subregional cooperation be continued and strengthened, including the development of networks and knowledge platforms to share views and best practices and policies to achieve sustainable development.

5. The Committee recommends that international and regional cooperation be strengthened in order to address existing barriers and to benefit from opportunities related to the development, dissemination and transfer of cleaner and lower emission technologies.

6. The Committee recommends that regional cooperation on issues of sustainable urban development be strengthened, taking into account national specificities and the needs of the countries of the region, and recommends that ESCAP continue its work on analysis of urbanization processes, capacity-building, in particular for urban local bodies, planning, innovative financing mechanisms, public-private partnerships and provision of data, as well as facilitate the sharing of best practices and lessons learned on urban development.

7. The Committee notes the outcome of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, held in Bangkok from 20 to 25 June 2011.³

8. The Committee recommends that the Commission welcome the offer of the Russian Federation to host the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum in Vladivostok in 2013 at the ministerial level and urges member States to actively participate in the preparatory process as well as in the Forum. The Committee invites member States to work closely with the secretariat in identifying their priorities for consideration at the Forum, including access to modern energy services, energy efficiency, new and renewable energy

¹ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *The Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2005* (ST/ESCAP/2379) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.F.31), Annex III.

² See E/ESCAP/67/8, Chap. I, Sect C.

³ See E/ESCAP/CED(2)/2.

resources, energy cooperation and trade, and regional and subregional energy connectivity.

9. The Committee recommends that the secretariat help member countries, at the regional and subregional levels, to share experiences, best practices and technologies in managing water resources. Integrated water resources management (IWRM) remains an option in balancing the water needs of the economic, social and environmental sectors.

II. Proceedings

A. Outcomes of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference)

10. The Committee had before it a document entitled Outcome of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference) (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/1).

11. The secretariat and the representative of the Republic of Korea presented the highlights of the document and the outcome of the Regional Preparatory meeting respectively.

12. Representatives from the following countries made statements on behalf of their delegations: India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Mongolia, Pakistan, Russian Federation and Thailand.

13. The Committee (China, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Mongolia, Russian Federation and Thailand) noted with appreciation the efforts of the secretariat for the organization of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development from 19 to 20 October 2011 in Seoul, Republic of Korea, as well as to the Government of the Republic of Korea for its hospitality and generous support. It also noted with satisfaction that the secretariat worked in partnership with UNEP, ADB, and other regional partners.

14. The Committee underscored the importance of the Seoul Outcome document which was developed, negotiated and agreed upon with consensus during the RPM. Based on the Seoul Outcome, the Committee asserted that the green economy approach is one means to achieve and promote sustainable development; has to be seen in the context of overriding objectives of sustainable development and poverty eradication; should take into account the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities in particular; should promote economic growth for poverty eradication; and should not be used as a trade barrier or green protectionism and thus, an impediment to development.

15. The Committee noted that many countries in the region have undertaken various steps in preparation for the UNCSD (Rio+20), including establishment of working groups, holding regional and global preparatory meetings, developing national strategies and studies, and providing inputs and comments to the “zero draft” of a Rio+20 Outcome document (Mongolia).

16. The Committee agreed, among others things, upon the need for strengthened integration of the three pillars and that reforms to the

institutional framework for sustainable development should be aimed at filling the gaps and strengthening governance in all the three pillars, improving integration among them at both political and operational levels.

17. The Committee called for an action-oriented, forward-looking, consensus-based, balanced and inclusive outcome document from Rio+20, which supports global partnerships for sustainable development, reaffirming the principles of solidarity and equity, and ensuring support to reduce developing countries vulnerabilities to financial, fuel and climate crisis.

18. In this regard, the Committee recognized that there is a need for developed countries to provide enabling resources, including technologies, in particular environmentally sound technologies, and predictable financing, knowledge sharing and capacity development.

19. The delegation from Thailand underlined that deliberations regarding the institutional framework on sustainable development in preparation for Rio+20 need to highlight the unique and important role of Regional Commissions as the regional platform for dialogue and policy setting, while the delegation from the Russian Federation noted with appreciation the joint efforts and unified positions of the Regional Commissions in the preparatory process. It was emphasized that the secretariat, as one of the Regional Commissions, had a unique role to play in norm-setting and analytical work for regional policy dialogue and in facilitating integration of the three pillars at the regional level. It was recognized that the secretariat is in a favourable position to support member States in assessing barriers and developing policies to move forward on the path to sustainable development.

20. The delegation from Thailand called upon the secretariat to work in close cooperation with other relevant organizations, including UNEP, UNDP, UNIDO and ADB, to identify development gaps and key barriers to achieving sustainable development in the region and assist countries in addressing the persistent challenges through the establishment of platforms for technical cooperation.

B. Presentation of the Outcomes of the Fifth Asia Pacific Urban Forum

21. The Committee had before it a note by the secretariat on the Outcome of the Fifth Asia Pacific Urban Forum (E/ESCAP/CED (2)/2 and E/ESCAP/CED (2)/2/Corr.1).

22. Representatives from the Russian Federation and Thailand made statements on behalf of their delegations.

23. The delegation from the Russia Federation requested that the secretariat provide information on how the recommendations from the Forum might impact the regular budget of the Commission. The delegation stressed the need for close coordination with the regional offices of UN-HABITAT to avoid duplication of work on urban issues, and in this context highly commended the collaborative effort undertaken by ESCAP in preparing the First State of Asian Cities Report 2010/2011 jointly with UN-HABITAT, UNEP and United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific (UCLG-ASPAC).

24. The delegation from the Russia Federation was also in favour of strengthening regional cooperation on issues of sustainable urban development, taking into account national specificities and the needs of the region's countries. In this context, the delegation found it important for ESCAP to continue its work analysing urbanization processes and regional trends as well as providing data on urban development.

25. The delegation from Thailand shared with the Committee the urbanization trends and decentralization policies in Thailand and noted the effects of the transition from an agricultural to an industrial/service economy as well as related alterations in resource and infrastructure needs, increased costs of living, urban sprawl and improper land use. The Committee was informed of Thailand's experiences with the recent floods and of its intention to develop a water management plan, to construct additional flood protection barriers and strictly enforce land use control for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders. Apart from direct government assistance, the delegation highlighted the large and positive roles of voluntary and community organizations during the disaster period.

26. The delegation from Thailand also noted that the discussions and recommendations for actions from the Asia Pacific Urban Forum were very useful and should be implemented to promote sustainable urban development in the region, and particularly requested the secretariat to prioritize three areas of work. Firstly, to develop criteria and standards for city classification such as 'sustainable city', 'eco-city', and 'green industrial city' to provide a guideline for benchmarking sustainable urban development at regional and subregional levels; secondly, to develop databases and networks at regional and subregional levels that would include urban and rural population statistics, and economic, social and physical data, including environment and geo-climatic data; and thirdly, to hold a symposium on urban climate change among member States in order to exchange experiences and best practices towards achieving sustainable city development.

C. Trends and progress in the field of environment and development

27. The documents under this agenda item were introduced by the Director of the Environment and Development Division of the secretariat before the deliberation of the delegates.

Emerging and persistent issues in environmental sustainability

28. The Committee had before it the note by the secretariat on the item (E/ESCAP/CED (2)/3).

29. Representatives of the following countries made statements on behalf of their delegations: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Russian Federation and Thailand.

30. The Committee noted that the current high economic growth rate could not be sustained because the region continued to face global challenges, such as climate change, energy and food crises, and water shortages. The Committee also noted that poverty eradication and inclusive growth remained the overriding priority for sustainable development in the region. Hundreds of millions of people in the region still lived in poverty and lacked access to basic services. That required sustained growth and the need to expand energy access and provide decent job opportunities. In that regard, the Committee

emphasized the need for a balanced weighing of all three pillars of sustainable development.

31. The Committee noted that population growth, water scarcity, desertification, the food crisis and climate change were exerting increasing pressure on the region's carrying capacity and posing a great challenge for developing countries, especially, the least developed ones. Environmental degradation had exacerbated poverty, undermined development gains and threatened livelihoods.

32. The Committee highlighted the importance for developed countries to reduce their unsustainable patterns of consumption and the resulting ecological footprint and to release ecological space for developing countries to achieve equitable and sustainable growth.

33. The Committee discussed the adverse impacts of climate change, which it viewed as one of the most serious threats to sustainable development in the region. In particular, concern was expressed regarding the impact on agriculture, which still formed the backbone of some developing countries, especially least developed countries. It was emphasized that addressing climate change required adaptation and disaster risk reduction to be institutionalized and integrated into sectoral policy planning and implementation, including those policies related to transport, energy, water, communications and social infrastructure. It required the models of low carbon development and green growth to be developed and pursued.

34. The Committee noted that Asia and the Pacific was the fastest growing region in the world and that the manufacturing sector, one of the most resource-intensive, was growing steadily. That would place increased stress on the environment and would require enhanced natural resource management, increased resource efficiency and conservation of energy, water and materials.

35. The Committee was informed that initiatives related to payment for ecosystem services (PES) and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) had promoted resource efficiency while enhancing economic growth. One delegation requested the secretariat to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences regarding PES.

36. The Committee recognized that the green economy and green growth approaches should be one of the means of achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication. It highlighted the urgency for countries in the region to shift to a green economy and consider low carbon green growth models. In that regard, two delegations expressed appreciation for the efforts of the secretariat in providing support to member States through the green growth capacity development programme and for the development of the low carbon green growth roadmap and encouraged the secretariat to continue assisting member States in developing relevant policies tailored to their unique national circumstances and in respect to their common but differentiated responsibilities.

37. At the same time, the Committee expressed the view that any understanding of a green economy should take into account the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility, and that emphasis should be placed on making enabling resources – both financial and technological – available to developing countries. In particular, lack of access to new technologies, owing to financial and/or intellectual property right

(IPR) restrictions, might limit the ability of developing countries to graduate to a green economy model.

38. The representative of Bangladesh informed the Committee that his Government had taken a number of steps to respond to the adverse impacts of climate change. They included investments in disaster risk reduction as well as the integration of climate change management into Bangladesh's Vision 2021 and its Sixth Five-Year Plan, and the creation of a Climate Change Unit.

39. Cambodia had developed a National Green Growth Roadmap and established a National Green Growth Secretariat and Inter-ministerial Working Group and was in the process of developing a master plan for implementing the Roadmap and establishing a National Committee on Green Growth.

40. The representative of Japan informed the Committee that his Government would organize the East Asia Low Carbon Growth Partnership Dialogue and hold it in Tokyo in April 2012, to share practices and knowledge and contribute to diffusing low-carbon growth models in the region.

41. The representative of the Republic of Korea informed the Committee that her Government had launched the East Asia Climate Partnership in 2008 and allocated \$200 million for regional cooperation for five years. She also informed the Committee that the Global Green Growth Institute had been established in 2010.

42. The representative of Nepal informed the Committee that his Government would be organizing an international conference of mountainous countries on climate change, to be held in April 2012, as part of the Mountain Initiative for Climate Change,⁴ which had been announced at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC.⁵

43. The Committee was informed that the Philippines was mainstreaming climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in local planning and that the National Development Authority had recently issued guidelines in that regard.

44. The Committee was also informed that the Russian Federation had recently adopted a legislative act to strengthen the legal and institutional basis

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