

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Committee on Poverty Reduction

Fourth session
12-14 December 2007
Bangkok

**PROGRAMME PLANNING AND EVALUATION: PERSPECTIVES ON “POVERTY
REDUCTION” AS A THEME FOR REGIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL DIALOGUE
ON POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT, STATISTICS AND DEVELOPMENT
OF PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES**

(Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

In May 2007, the Commission through resolution 63/3 decided to defer the review of its conference structure, including its thematic and sectoral priorities and subsidiary structure, to its sixty-fourth session. In that regard, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate an effective process of consultation among members and associate members on a comprehensive and thorough review of the conference structure of the Commission, and to report on the outcomes of those consultations to the Commission at its sixty-fourth session.

The present document lists key issues pertaining to the mandated review of the conference structure, and summarizes views on the functioning of the Committee on Poverty Reduction, as expressed through questionnaires completed by delegations attending its third session, held in 2006.

As an integral part of the mandated consultative process, the Committee is invited to provide perspectives on “poverty reduction” as a theme for regional intergovernmental dialogue on poverty and development, statistics and development of Pacific island countries and territories.

Background

1. The conference structure forms the basis for the functioning of ESCAP and is the main governance mechanism for ensuring that the work of the Commission reflects the needs and priorities of its membership (see annex).

2. The three thematic committees on poverty reduction, managing globalization and emerging social issues were established in 2002. In 2006, to ensure that key sectoral issues could be addressed effectively within a thematic framework, the sessions of the Committee on Managing Globalization were divided into two segments: Part I on trade and investment, and transport and tourism, and Part II on information, communication and space technology (ICST), and environment and sustainable development.

I. CURRENT REVIEW OF THE CONFERENCE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMISSION

3. In its resolution 63/3 of 23 May 2007, the Commission decided to defer the review of the conference structure of the Commission, including its thematic and sectoral priorities and subsidiary structure, to its sixty-fourth session. In that regard, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate an effective process of consultation among members and associate members on a comprehensive and thorough review of the conference structure of the Commission, and to report on the outcomes of those consultations to the Commission at its sixty-fourth session.

4. The adoption of resolution 63/3 was preceded by extensive consultations in the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission. From those consultations, it was felt that (a) unsatisfactory attendance from capitals, (b) unfocused agendas and (c) a lack of concrete outcomes from meetings were issues that were interlinked and would need to be addressed by member States in their review of the conference structure.

II. FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMITTEE ON POVERTY REDUCTION

5. At the third session of the Committee on Poverty Reduction, held in Bangkok in November-December 2006, evaluation questionnaires were circulated and completed by attending delegations.

6. Overall, the feedback was very positive with a majority of respondents indicating that the secretariat's substantive preparation and servicing was to a "great extent" effective in facilitating the Committee's deliberations.

7. Among the respondents, 44 per cent "fully agreed" and 56 per cent "partially agreed" that they benefited from the policy discussions during the Committee session; 78 per cent "fully agreed" that the secretariat's in-session interventions contributed to productive discussion, decision making and recommendations.

8. Delegations suggested improving future sessions of the Committee through (a) focusing the agenda on policies, programmes and projects having a significant impact on poverty reduction, and allowing for more detailed discussion on solutions and action plans; (b) considering separate coverage of issues pertaining to poverty reduction and statistics, respectively, including restoration of the Committee on Statistics; (c) ensuring greater participation of representatives from capitals; and (d) suggesting that Committee sessions be held back-to-back with other meetings, as a means to that end.

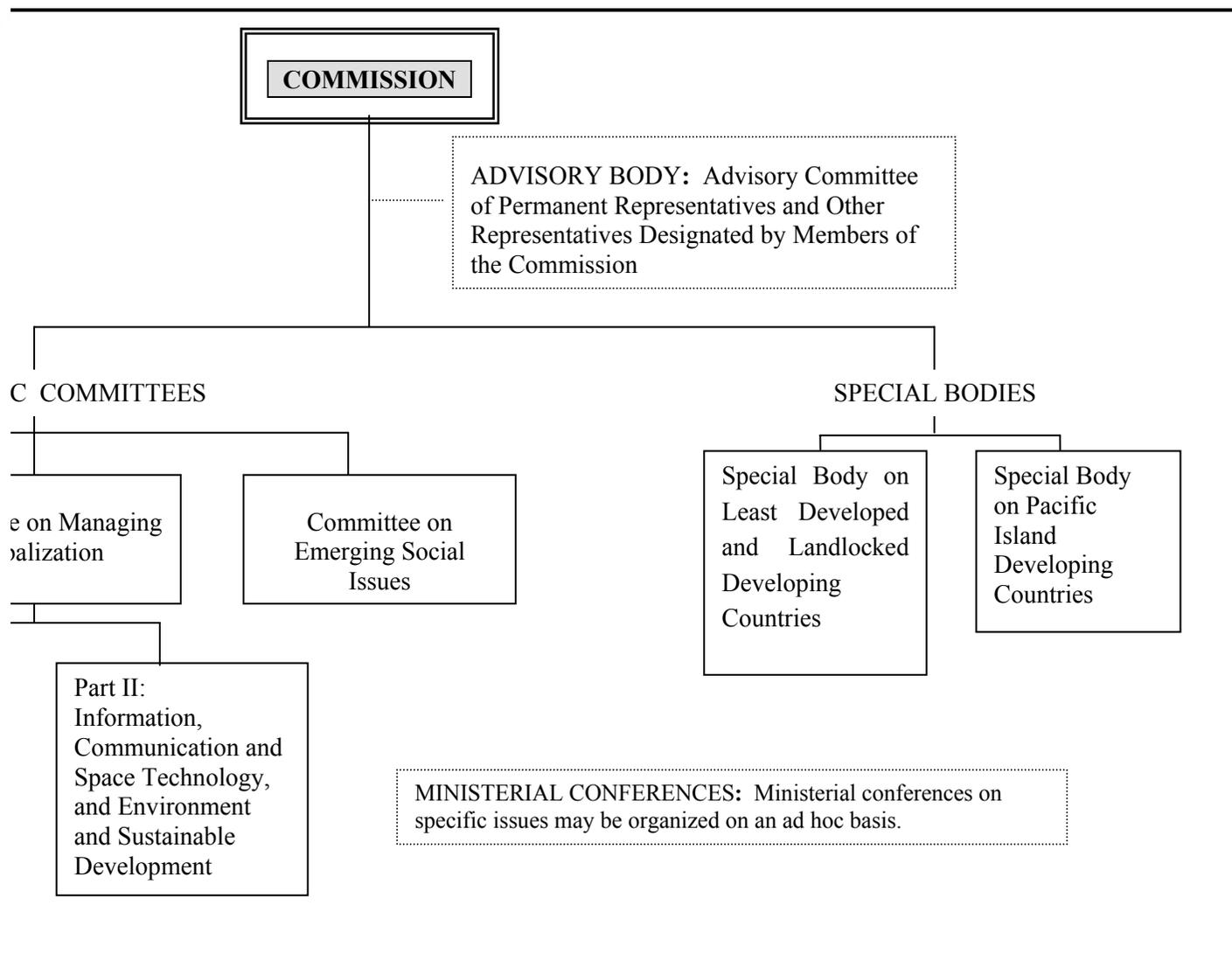
III. CONCLUSION

9. It is essential that ESCAP continue reform to enhance the relevance and impact of its work in terms of concrete outcomes that benefit member States. In that regard, the Committee is invited to provide its perspectives on poverty reduction as a theme for regional intergovernmental dialogue on poverty and development, statistics and the development of Pacific island countries and territories, with particular emphasis on its effectiveness in terms of (a) sharing experiences on poverty and development, statistics and the development of Pacific island countries and territories; (b) providing the secretariat with guidance on implementing related segments of the programme of work; and (c) recommending to the Commission any future work on poverty and the development, statistics and development of Pacific island countries and territories.

10. Further, bearing in mind the ongoing consultations to review the entire conference structure of ESCAP, the Committee may wish to deliberate on modalities to (a) better reflect the needs and priorities of member States in the agenda of future sessions of the Committee, possibly through sharpening the focus of the thematic areas; (b) ensure more interactive exchanges and in-depth discussions at future sessions of the Committee; and (c) strengthen the contribution of the Committee to the sessions of the Commission.

11. In addition to views expressed by the Committee, individual delegations are invited to provide further ideas and suggestions through the evaluation survey questionnaire, which has been circulated to all delegations. The completed questionnaires will be collected by the secretariat at the end of the Committee session.

Annex
CONFERENCE STRUCTURE OF ESCAP*



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roduced through resolution 61/1 of 18 May 2005 on the mid-term review concerning the functioning of the conference structure