



CHAPTER SIX THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP)

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This year, AMUN's simulations include the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), one of the five regional commissions of the Economic Social Council (ECOSOC). Participation in ESCAP includes one or two Representatives from each of the Member States currently on the Commission, as well as one or two member-delegations to represent the Associate Members (see list above). ESCAP will meet for all four days of the conference, and will report to a combined ECOSOC Plenary session on Tuesday afternoon.

ABOUT ESCAP

Established in Shanghai, China in 1974, ESCAP is the largest of ECOSOC's regional organizations in both the number of people and span of territory under its scope. The 62 members of ESCAP includes UN Member States in the region, nine ESCAP Associate Members, and four countries with a current or former presence in the region. The geographical range of the Commission stretches from Turkey in the west to the Pacific island nation of Kiribati in the east, and from the Russian Federation in the north to New Zealand in the south. ESCAP is the most comprehensive of the United Nations five regional commissions, and addresses regional development of the Asia-Pacific region for the United Nations.

PURVIEW OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

There are three main focuses of ESCAP's work in the region: poverty reduction; managing globalization; and tracking emerging social

issues. Within these areas, the Commission focuses on development issues that are best addressed through regional cooperation such as those that would benefit from regional or multi-country involvement. This includes issues that face the entire region or several countries, cross border issues, and sensitive or emerging issues that require further negotiation or advocacy. ESCAP also provides technical assistance to its members and monitors progress of, and provides advice to, countries pursuing the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Website: www.unescap.org/about/index.asp

ENERGY SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Access to affordable energy resources is vital in a globalized economy. As the Asia-Pacific region grows in terms of both population and size of their economy, the demand for energy will increase. The region has been challenged with developing greater energy security that is both accessible and sustainable. Although there is no internationally agreed-upon definition, it is generally understood that a country has energy security when it has sufficient systems in place to protect itself against shortages of fuel and other energy resources.

Global demand for energy is estimated to increase by 33 percent by 2035, with half of the demand expected to come from the Asia-Pacific region. Alternative and renewable sources of energy are important to sustainable energy development, yet the region's energy supply is



comprised of less than two percent renewable resources. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), 1.7 billion people in the Asia-Pacific region are still using traditional biomass as an energy source. The lack of access has caused increased poverty, spread of disease, child mortality, and reduced opportunities for women. The United Nations has worked extensively to promote sustainable development and energy security in resolutions, studies, and conferences. In 1992, the United Nations held the Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. From that conference, Agenda 21 was created to promote a global action plan for sustainable development.

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. During the Summit, world leaders developed the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation that focused on protecting and managing the natural resource base of social and economic development, eradicating poverty and changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption of energy. In 2005, Member States from the Asia-Pacific region adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific 2006-2010 and the Seoul Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth (Green Growth).

More recently, ESCAP has encouraged discussion between Member States on challenges the region faced concerning energy security and sustainable development. In 2008, ESCAP published a theme study entitled *Energy Security and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*. The study highlighted the need for comprehensive solutions on both the national and international levels as energy resources are unevenly distributed across the region. The study noted that the recent economic growth has created an exceptionally large energy demand than formerly expected, and the trend will continue in the future. In addition, many ESCAP Member States are heavily dependent on imported energy. Finally, the study also proposed the development of an Asian-Pacific sustainable energy security framework.

Moreover, the study suggested that a successful overall strategy for energy security and sustainable development in the region would need to: reduce the gap between energy demand and supply; improve energy efficiency and conservation by lowering energy and resource intensity; achieve the optimal energy mix; diversify sources of energy supply; invest in energy infrastructure development; shift to alternative and renewable sources of energy; encourage innovation and competition through research and development; reduce vulnerability to energy price fluctuations; and achieve good energy sector governance.

In December 2010, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2012 to be the Year of Sustainable Energy for All and encouraged all Member States to bring awareness to the urgency of energy issues as well as promote action at the local, national, regional and international levels. In 2012, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the Sustainable Energy for All initiative. The initiative is centered on three objectives: providing universal access to modern energy services; doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency; and doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. In June 2012, the United Nations hosted the Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which built on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

ESCAP's members will continue their efforts to secure sustainable sources of energy in the future. Currently, energy security issues are mainly addressed at the national level despite the regional demand. ESCAP has the opportunity to ensure energy security through regional energy cooperation. Additionally, ESCAP members will have to create a comprehensive and strategic energy solution that includes alternative energy supplies and environmentally friendly technology.

In September 2012, ESCAP will be part of the 3rd International Forum for Sustainable Development. In addition, in May 2013, ESCAP will host the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum (APEF 2013) in Vladivostok, Russian Federation to discuss regional cooperation for enhanced energy security as well as the sustainable use of energy.

Overall, it is important to view energy as a global commodity that cannot be discussed solely at the national level. Cooperation among Member States is a key component of accelerating sustainable development. Sustainable solutions must be found that provide more efficient and accessible energy resources in a way that is effective and sustainable thereby protecting resources and eco-systems for future generations and ensuring energy security.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include the following:

- What energy reserves does the Asia-Pacific region possess, and how will the region's geographical features affect the type of energy infrastructure that the region will require?
- Taking into account the conclusions of Rio+20, how can the region contribute to the international energy trade and management networks?
- What measures has ESCAP supported to promote greater energy security and sustainable development? What can the region do to further strengthen cooperation on developing sustainable energy sources?

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E/ESCAP/CTI(2)/3

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A/CONF.151/26 - Rio Declaration On Environment And Development

A/CONF.199/20 - Johannesburg Plan of Implementation Outcome Document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

ADDITIONAL WEB RESOURCES

www.ieej.or.jp/aperc/ – Asia Pacific Energy Research Centre

www.sustainableenergyforall.org – Sustainable Energy For All Initiative

www.un.org/esa/dsd/ – United Nations Division for Sustainable Development

www.unescap.org/esd/ – United Nations ESCAP - Environment and Development Division

www.unccd2012.org – United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

www.un.org/millenniumgoals/ – Millennium Development Goals

DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH SYSTEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF ENHANCING ECONOMIC GROWTH TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Economic growth and the development of health are interdependent and strongly correlated. As the economy grows, the resources for health systems increase, poverty decreases, and quality of life significantly improves. As health systems progress, labor productivity increases, leading to higher household incomes and improved educational outcomes. Therefore, improving health systems is not only a consequence of economic growth, but a critical component of eradicating poverty and improving the overall quality of life.

In recent decades, the Asia and Pacific region experienced major economic and social transformation. Between 1988 and 2005, the annual rate of growth in the region's developing countries was twice the world average. Although significant economic growth helped the region make progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the health-related MDGs continue to be an area of concern.

Economic growth conceals the large gap between and within countries in the region regarding the level of development and overall health status. For the least developed countries in the region, the levels of poverty, hunger and malnutrition are alarming. The Asia and Pacific region continues to have a major share of the world's malnourished children and the number of individuals living on less than a dollar a day. With the deadline for meeting the eight MDGs looming, the success of health-related MDGs (improving children's health, improving maternal health, and combating HIV and AIDS) depends heavily upon the abilities of Asian and the Pacific countries to extend health-care into less developed areas. Developing countries in the region still have high levels of poverty, under-5 mortality, malnutrition and maternal mortality, in addition to a lack of access to clean water and sanitation

Recently, healthcare has become more widely available in some countries. In Japan, citizens are able to receive care regardless of their economic standing through universal health coverage. In Cambodia, a hybrid system has emerged where care is provided through international non-profits which have been hired by the Cambodian government to manage its national healthcare system. The countries that have implemented comprehensive universal healthcare systems have managed to reduce the financial burden on their populations, reducing poverty levels.

Currently in Southeast Asia, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are responsible for 7.9 million deaths each year—approximately 55 percent of the total deaths in that region each year. Without changes to health policy in Southeast Asia, a 21 percent increase in the number of deaths due to non-communicable diseases is predicted over the next 10 years. The majority of those dying of NCDs are younger than 60 and almost entirely members of the workforce. To reduce the number of deaths and increase the size of the workforce, better healthcare systems are necessary.

In addition to the region's rapid economic growth, the Asia and Pacific also has the most rapidly aging population in the world. According to a recent study by the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately eight percent of Southeast Asia is currently 60 years or older. That percentage is expected to increase to 12 percent by 2025, and increase again to 20 percent by 2050. The changing demands of the aging population causes other challenges as the costs of health care for the elderly increase. These demographics make the case for a comprehensive health care system in the region even stronger.

In an effort to develop comprehensive health systems in the context of economic development, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) made this the theme of their sixty-third session in 2007. The Commission developed the Regional Road Map to 2015 to provide a framework to reach the poverty reduction and health related MDGs. The Regional Road Map focused on analysis of key policy issues and highlighted priority areas for policy



intervention. The assessment was prepared in a partnership between ESCAP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

During the sixty-third session, ESCAP assessed the multiple linkages between health systems development, economic growth and achieving the MDGs. The Commission recommended strengthening the current infrastructure of health systems, analyzing functioning health systems, and establishing a regional mechanism for financing health systems. Additionally, the Commission emphasized the need for strengthening regional cooperation to cope with the huge disparities of economic growth in the region.

At the General Assembly High-level Plenary meeting in September 2010, Member States, including leaders of Asia and the Pacific, renewed their commitment to achieving the MDGs by 2015. The meeting particularly stressed promoting economic growth and universal access to comprehensive health systems. Member States also expressed an interest in strengthening public-private partnerships for health-care service delivery and developing new and affordable technologies, vaccines, and medicines needed for developing countries.

Despite these recent efforts, health systems and economic growth challenges continue to be major obstacles in achieving the MDGs. Health is a fundamental tool for reducing poverty and creating sustainable economic growth. Financial investments, effective policies, and cooperation are required at the national and regional levels for the development of health systems in Asia and the Pacific region.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include the following:

- How can the Asia and Pacific region decrease the significant economic growth gap between and within countries?
- How might the demands of the aging population affect the economy and the development of health systems?
- What other special regional consideration should be addressed by the Commission?
- What can be done to promote the accessibility and use of modern medicines and treatments in rural regions?

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www.unescap.org – The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific