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PROGRAMME PLANNING AND MONITORING

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**REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK
FOR 2008-2009 AND HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME
OF WORK FOR 2010-2011**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The present document summarizes the progress in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2008-2009 and provides a preliminary assessment of the achievements of the biennium under subprogramme 4, Trade and investment. Key activities planned for the biennium 2010-2011 are also highlighted. The Committee may wish to provide the secretariat with guidance on facilitating preparatory work for the implementation of the proposed work programme for 2010-2011.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction.....	2
I. REVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009: SUBPROGRAMME 4, TRADE AND INVESTMENT	2
II. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2010-2011	10

* The late submission of the present document is due to processing delays in the clearance system of the secretariat.

Introduction

1. The present document reviews the progress in the programme of work for the biennium 2008-2009 in respect of subprogramme 4, Trade and investment. It also provides an assessment of the achievements to date under the subprogramme (section I) and highlights key activities planned for the biennium 2010-2011 (section II). The Committee may wish to consider and review the achievements of the biennium 2008-2009 and provide guidance on the implementation of planned activities for the biennium 2010-2011.

I. REVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009: SUBPROGRAMME 4, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

A. Progress of implementation

2. Subprogramme 4, Trade and investment of the programme of work for the biennium 2008-2009 is approaching completion. The objective, expected accomplishments, results, key activities and lessons learned are summarized in the table below.

<p>Objective of the Organization: To achieve a more equitable distribution of benefits from the globalization process through increased trade and investment in support of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals</p>
<p><i>Expected accomplishment (a):</i> Increased national capacity to effectively negotiate, conclude and implement multilateral and other trade agreements supporting the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.</p>
<p><i>Indicators of achievement:</i></p> <p>(a) (i) Increased number of member countries making progress towards becoming members of regional and multilateral trade agreements (e.g. the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization)</p> <p>(ii) Percentage of officials and others benefiting from ESCAP activities who indicate that they can use or have used knowledge and skills to negotiate agreements and formulate and implement trade policies</p>
<p><i>Results:</i></p> <p>Indicator (i):</p> <p>Through the effective services of the secretariat, in close cooperation with members, the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) entered into a new phase of trade negotiations. The fourth round tariff negotiations, aimed at further widening product coverage and deepening tariff cuts, are marching towards a conclusion. More importantly, in addition to the traditional area of tariff concessions, APTA members initiated the information exchange of non-tariff measures, and are close to finalizing negotiations on three framework agreements on trade facilitation, trade in services, and investment. In terms of membership expansion, through the facilitation of the secretariat, APTA members established contact with nine target members (Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Viet Nam) at the ministerial level, and are actively engaged in developing new members through various channels and platforms. Through the organization of a series of subregional and national seminars, the secretariat successfully presented APTA and its benefits to prospective members in Central Asia,</p>

North Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific. The dedicated service of the secretariat continued to receive appreciation from APTA members. Mongolia and Papua New Guinea in particular have expressed sincere interest in joining APTA and are currently taking measures to start formal accession procedures.

Through the Technical Assistance Programme of ESCAP and the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Macao Regional Knowledge Hub (MARKHUB) project and projects funded by the European Commission (EC) for the least developed countries, all ESCAP member countries have increased their understanding of multilateral trade agreements, and countries currently in accession have made progress in their accession negotiations. Other countries have used their knowledge in advancing their interests and concerns in negotiating new multilateral commitments in the current Doha negotiations.

Indicator (ii):

During the period January 2008 to September 2009, over 900 people were trained on trade-related issues. Feedback from participants in the above-mentioned activities continues to be encouraging, with 90 per cent of the respondents to the end-of-seminar/workshop questionnaires indicating that they are able to use the knowledge and skills acquired to better negotiate agreements and formulate/implement trade policies.

Key activities:

1. Regional technical assistance activities, including the WTO/ESCAP Technical Assistance Programme: During the period January 2008 to September 2009, the secretariat strengthened cooperation with key partners, such as WTO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in strengthening the capacity of ESCAP members and associate members to negotiate, conclude and implement trade agreements effectively at various levels. In total, there were eight seminars and workshops organized in this period.

2. LDC Trade Capacity Development Programme: Two EC-funded projects to help Bhutan accede to WTO and to help Nepal implement its WTO commitments have been undertaken. The Bhutan project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2009. Activities under the projects include training workshops, strengthening WTO reference centres, university outreach programmes, and advisory services (e.g. on notification for Nepal and sanitary and phytosanitary measures for Bhutan).

3. Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT): The year 2008 also witnessed significant progress for ARTNeT. Initiated in 2004, ARTNeT now has 27 research institutions and 4 core partners (International Development Research Centre, WTO, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNCTAD). From January 2008 to June 2009, a total of 6 policy briefs, 19 working papers and 2 alerts on emerging trade issues in the region were issued. In addition to various research team meetings, five capacity-building workshops were held. Finally, several meetings were held with policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders to review the research findings.

4. Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Agreements Database (APTIAD): APTIAD entered a new development phase in 2008 by building analytical tools for measuring the trade performance of existing and potential trade agreements in the region, in addition to increasing the amount of descriptive information about the agreements. As of July 2009, the database covered 151 agreements and contained over 20 trade indicators, including interactive indices and a pre-calculated set of indicators. Upon completion of the first phase of the development of the database, which emphasized the descriptive information of the regional trade agreements and bilateral trade agreements BTAs of ESCAP members, the secretariat entered the second phase of the development of the database in 2008, which is focused on building analytical tools for

measuring the trade performance of the existing and potential trade agreements of the region. One component of the database, Interactive Trade Indicators, was updated to include 2007 trade data.

5. Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA): As the secretariat of APTA, the oldest regional trading arrangement in the Asia-Pacific region, ESCAP continued its dedicated service to the Agreement, and successfully organized six sessions of the Standing Committee during the period January 2008 to September 2009.

With regard to the expansion of APTA membership, the secretariat played a key role in facilitating the establishment of contact between APTA members and nine prospective members (Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Viet Nam) at the ministerial level, and in promoting APTA membership expansion through various channels and platforms, such as the UNCTAD XII Conference, bilateral consultation visits, and meetings organized by ESCAP. To familiarize more potential members with APTA, the secretariat took the initiative to organize a series of national/subregional seminars on the benefits of APTA membership for prospective member countries, i.e. for countries in Central Asia and South-East and East Asian countries, and held national seminars for Cambodia, Mongolia and Papua New Guinea.

Under the sponsorship of the Government of the Republic of Korea, the secretariat commissioned three studies on the specific benefits of APTA membership for 9 selected prospective member countries (Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam), which have contributed to promoting the interest of prospective members of APTA. The secretariat has also prepared a study on the analysis and incidence of non-tariff measures of APTA members on intra-APTA trade.

6. Analytical work on trade and investment in the region: For the purpose of enhancing the understanding of policymakers and other stakeholders regarding trade and investment development in the region, and of enhancing their capacity to formulate and implement sound policies, the secretariat also strengthened its analytical work since January 2008 and prepared a practical policy guide entitled “Navigating out of the crisis: a trade-led recovery” (April 2009) as well as the *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2009*, with the theme of trade-led recovery and beyond, for consideration by the Committee at its first session. Two other publications were issued in this period: (a) *Unveiling Protectionism: Regional Responses to Remaining Barriers in the Textiles and Clothing Trade* (2008), and (b) *Emerging Trade Issues for Policymakers in Developing Countries in Asia and the Pacific, Studies in Trade and Investment No. 64* (2008).

Lessons learned:

Activities organized during the biennium revealed the following important lessons: (a) cooperation with global and regional organizations should be continued to create synergies and make optimal use of scarce resources; (b) the involvement of policymakers, the business sector and civil society is crucial in maximizing the impact of the activities of ESCAP, and translating knowledge and experience into concrete pro-development trade policies, regulations and standards; (c) normative and analytical work should be strengthened and closely linked to operational activities to better serve the priority needs of member countries; (d) to further promote the evolution of APTA in a manner that deepens trade and investment integration and cooperation in the region, the secretariat needs to be strengthened; (e) training activities should allow sufficient time for the interaction of participants and the sharing of experiences from the region; (f) knowledge sharing and knowledge management are essential to leverage limited resources and achieve results in the most efficient way; and (g) follow-ups and follow-through actions should be strengthened to ensure the long-term impact of ESCAP activities.

Expected accomplishment (b): Increased capacity and regional cooperation to develop and implement trade efficiency policies and programmes to promote international competitiveness

Indicators of achievement:

- (b) (i) Percentage of officials and others benefiting from ESCAP activities who indicate that they can use or have used knowledge and skills to develop and implement trade efficiency policies and programmes
- (ii) Increased number of users of ESCAP on-line trade information services for strengthened regional cooperation

Results:

About 350 representatives from government trade agencies, including ministries of trade, customs, quarantine administration, border agencies, trade promotion agencies, trade and customs service providers, the private sector and research institutions, have participated in the events. Overall, more than 90 per cent of the participants were satisfied with the activities, including the content, the topics selected, and the usefulness of the exchange of information and experiences. For example, the evaluation of the regional policy forum on trade facilitation and SMEs in times of crisis (China, 2009) shows that 95.8 per cent of the participants rated the quality of the event as “excellent” or “good”, 91.6 per cent believed that the exchange of information was useful, 91.6 per cent rated the knowledge content as “excellent” or “good”, and 100 per cent rated the skills/knowledge mix as “excellent” or “good”.

In the area of trade information, the number of users and E-TISNET subscribers has increased, and the target number of users and subscribers was met before the end of the biennium. At present, the number of E-TISNET subscribers has increased from 842 to a total of 1,036, an increase of 194 subscribers. This number is comprised of 589 email and 447 online subscribers.

Key activities:

With regard to expected accomplishment (b), the secretariat has organized various events since January 2008, including: two regional expert group meetings to address trade and transport facilitation for export competitiveness (China, 2008), and promote global and regional trade through trade facilitation (Thailand, 2009); three subregional seminars, which were organized under the United Nations Development Account fifth tranche project, with a focus on the adoption of electronic trade documents (Kyrgyzstan, 2008); the implementation of the single window system (Azerbaijan, 2008); and the improvement of border management in Central Asia (Tajikistan, 2009). Under the Development Account sixth tranche project, the secretariat organized a symposium on building regional capacity for paperless trade and launched the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT) (Thailand, 2009). In order to assist member States in tackling the challenges posed by the current financial crisis, the secretariat, in collaboration with the World Bank and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, organized a regional policy forum on trade facilitation and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in times of crisis (China, 2009), back to back with a roundtable meeting on examining the progress of WTO negotiations on trade facilitation and related Aid for Trade initiatives and needs in Asia and the Pacific. A workshop on e-commerce for countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) was organized jointly by the ESCAP secretariat, the All China Federation of Industry and Commerce, GMS Business Forum and Mekong Institute (China, 2009).

Analytical work remains one of the priorities of ESCAP in the area of trade facilitation. The major publications under preparation include: (a) ESCAP-ADB Handbook on Trade Facilitation; (b) Monograph on Impact of Trade and Transport Facilitation on Export Competitiveness; and (c) Guide to Business Process Analysis to Simplify Trade Procedures and Documents. In terms of trade information, recurrent activities, such as E-TISNET monthly newsletters and trade manuals, were carried out to disseminate timely and relevant trade information and knowledge throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Lessons learned:

Organizing the above-mentioned events demonstrated the importance of collaboration among the various ESCAP divisions. Food partnerships among the various United Nations agencies, as well as with other international and regional organizations, are also important.

Expected accomplishment (c): Increased capacity to design and implement policies and programmes that create an enabling environment for investment and promote a competitive business sector

Indicators of achievement:

Percentage of officials and others benefiting from ESCAP activities who indicate that they can use or have used knowledge and skills to design and implement policies and programmes that create an enabling environment for investment or promote a competitive business sector

Results:

With regard to expected accomplishment (c), capacity-building activities related to designing and implementing policies and programmes for investment and enterprise competitiveness continued to receive very positive feedback from participants.

The Asia-Pacific Business Forum (APBF) has continued to solicit much interest from government and business alike. A total of 97 per cent of participants in the APBF 2008 who returned the questionnaire were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with all aspects of the Forum, including the topics, choice of speakers, networking opportunities, and the relevancy to work. The Forum produced a number of policy recommendations to the Ministerial Roundtable. APBF 2009 had more than 250 participants from business, governments, international organizations, civil society and academics. In an online survey sent to delegates after the Forum, overall opinion of the conference was positive (97 per cent). Survey results show that many participants went home with new ideas, and were in general pleased with the quality of the substance and format.

One hundred per cent of the participants who returned the full questionnaire at the workshops for the Asian Global Compact Local Network Focal Points agreed “strongly” (i.e., top score) or “moderately” (i.e., just below top score) that the workshop achieved the intended outcome. During the pilot implementation period, the Global Compact Asia-Pacific regional website (www.globalcompactasiapacific.org) attracted an average of 1,500 visits per month.

Key activities:

In order to achieve expected accomplishment (c), the secretariat followed a balanced approach by promoting a more competitive business sector through improvement of business climates coupled with an increased uptake of corporate social responsibility (CSR), to ensure that business is not only profitable but also inclusive and sustainable. Key activities include the following:

1. Technical assistance in private sector development for GMS: The activities included supply-side capacity-building, SME development, women's entrepreneurship development and e-business applications, and were conducted under the programme entitled "Forum for the comprehensive development of Indo-China (FCDI)" in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the GMS Business Forum. As a new phase of FCDI, ESCAP has been preparing activities on capacity-building for SMEs in GMS for their effective penetration into regional and global markets and will explore further collaboration with participating countries for its implementation.

2. Business for Development: Building on the knowledge and experience gained from its regional and global value chain initiative in GMS, ESCAP is implementing a project in South Asia entitled "Business for development: creating an enabling environment for South Asian SMEs' effective penetration in regional and global markets (Phase I)" as part of its Business for Development initiative, a comprehensive programme for private sector development in the region.

3. APBF and the Business Advisory Council: The theme of APBF 2008, which was held in Bangkok in April 2008, was "Energy security: opportunities through regional energy cooperation and public-private partnerships". The Business Advisory Council of ESCAP, consisting of 23 senior business executives from the region, held its seventh meeting in April 2008. The theme of APBF 2009, which was held in Bangkok on 22 January 2009, was "Climate game change: innovations and solutions for climate change adaptation". Each year, APBF has been attended by over 250 participants, including trade and investment policymakers, senior executives of major businesses and senior representatives of international development agencies.

4. Investors for Development (I4D) project: Stakeholder consultations and workshops for the Global Compact Local Network (GCLN) focal points, involving 15 network countries, were organized: 3 in 2008 and 2 in 2009. The activities were held in Bangkok, Seoul, Bonn and Istanbul, to identify needs and challenges, to share ideas and experiences in developing networks, and to enhance the focal points' ability to implement the Network Sustainability Framework. Under the I4D project, a regional training-of-trainers course on the Global Compact for 38 trainees, based on tools and training materials developed by the project, was held in Kuala Lumpur on 16 and 17 September 2009.

GCLNs play an increasingly powerful role in strengthening the ability of business to implement CSR and rooting the Global Compact within different cultural and linguistic environments. Special attention is paid to transforming GCLNs into inclusive communities of practice where businesses together with governments, trade unions, civil society organizations, media and academic institutions can share best practices, discuss CSR issues and develop a collective view which potentially can

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