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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Intergovernmental Consultation Meeting

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Incheon

**SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR EAST AND NORTH-EAST ASIA:  
PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2011-2013**

(Item 5 of the provisional agenda)

**STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRIES OF EAST AND NORTH-EAST ASIA**

*Note by secretariat*

The present document contains the draft concept paper of the capacity development programmatic approach of the ESCAP Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia. The concept paper has been prepared to effectively deliver the mandate of ESCAP: to promote regional cooperation for inclusive economic and social development in the Asian and Pacific region and, in particular, achieve the following development results.

- Member Governments have more effective, inclusive and sustainable development policies for addressing development from a multi-disciplinary perspective, to narrow development gaps and build resiliency;
- Global processes are shaped by a stronger coordinated regional voice and countries are supported in implementing international commitments;
- Regional cooperation mechanisms and institutional frameworks are in place to promote regional integration and inclusive development.

*The meeting may wish to provide the secretariat with guidance on areas and modalities of subregional cooperation to be supported and undertaken by the SRO-ENEACM.*

**1. Narrative summary**

**1.1 Summary situation analysis:**

East and North-East Asia is the economic powerhouse of the Asia Pacific region: it rests at the centre of policy and technology innovations that lead the subregion's exceptional progress in economic and social development. However, the subregion

also faces immense challenges to bridge the widening disparities between and within societies and reduce the negative environmental impacts from economic growth.

**Achieving MDG targets:** The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Mongolia are both isolated from the otherwise dynamic trade and investment flows in the subregion. In both countries, widespread poverty continues to be a serious problem. Similarly, in the rural areas of China and the Russian Federation, poverty remains a concern. Widening social disparities, not only inter-country but more evidently within countries, especially between rural and urban centres, are increasingly destabilizing communities. Other significant social and socio-economic challenges faced by the subregion are associated with extremely low birth rates/ageing, rapid urbanization and industrialization, gender issues, youth unemployment, social health (high pressure and stress in society resulting in high suicide rate), domestic rural-to-urban migration, and international economic migration. Another challenge is protecting the human rights of vulnerable groups, including those of migrants, women, children, youth, elderly, disabled and ethnic minorities. While in terms of MDGs, North-East Asia can be categorized as an "early achiever" in many of the indicators, further efforts are still needed in MDG-related areas such as health care, gender mainstreaming, social equality and human rights.

There is a need to strengthen institutional capacities of national and local governments in the subregional economies to formulate and implement policies that address the varied development concerns of key social groups and enable the countries to build an inclusive society for all.

**Environmental Challenges:** There are many environmental issues in the subregion such as air and water quality in the major industrial centres, a decline in agricultural land and reduction in soil fertility, and the loss of forests and creeping desertification. A problem with air pollution reflects the existence of fossil-fuel power plants with inadequate environmental controls continuing to produce large amounts of toxic substances and/or emitting large quantities of carbon. Subregional economies face difficulties in containing and cutting down their own greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, mitigating greenhouse gases emissions and the impacts of climate change are becoming the greatest challenges the East and North-East Asian countries face today.

**Transport and Infrastructure:** Infrastructure development is also a critical challenge. Rail transport systems and road networks are inadequate in DPRK and Mongolia and need to be further developed in China and the Russian Federation. The road networks in these countries remain also inadequate for transportation needs. The existing infrastructure can not be used effectively without the legal and regulatory bases for vehicles, goods, and people to move across the subregion. Of particular concern in the subregion is the need in its fast growing economies for stable and sustainable energy supplies.

**ICT connectivity:** Expanding and improving trade and transport will require better subregional ICT connectivity. New information technology will reduce the digital divide and accelerate cross-border information and communication flows in the subregion. In addition, ICT connectivity will boost economic development as well as it will establish systems for emergency early warnings and disaster response.

**Subregional cooperation mechanisms:** A final observation typical for the subregion is that East and North-East Asia has lagged behind other Asian and Pacific subregions in exploiting the potential of subregional economic integration. ASEAN in South-East Asia, SAARC in South Asia, SPECA in Central Asia, and Pacific Island Forum in the Pacific promote subregional trading and investment arrangements. There is no

such organization in the subregion of East and North-East Asia. Instead, as partners of ASEAN, China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea collaborate in the negotiating process for East Asia free-trade agreements (EASTA) and a comprehensive economic partnership of East Asia (CEPEA). EASTA and CEPEA are expected to provide significant welfare gains for their member countries. However, in order to prevent the risk of further widening the disparity gap between countries in the subregion, there is a need to extend this experience to other subregional economies – DPRK, Mongolia and the Russian Federation - and to strengthen the existing human and institutional mechanisms of the subregional economies to strengthen cooperation in different sectors such as transport, trade, knowledge-based development, water and energy, poverty reduction and economy. The large quantities of natural resource endowments and energy supplies in Mongolia and the Russian Federation would be a motivating factor for including these countries in subregional cooperation.

## **1.2 Contribution to the Programme of Work**

The Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia (SRO-ENEA) was established in order to address subregion-specific development priorities, to promote knowledge sharing and subregional cooperation for advancing sustainable development, to strengthen partnerships with civil society and other key development partners, and to further enhance the relevance of the Commission's work in the subregion. Member States recommended the SRO-ENEA to support the following thematic priority areas, as endorsed at the 66<sup>th</sup> Commission Session:

- (a) Sustainable development, taking into account the green growth approach, and energy efficiency, including the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC);
- (b) Information and communications technology, disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management;
- (c) Poverty reduction, including food security; and
- (d) Infrastructure, trade and transport facilitation, including connectivity.

The proposed capacity development programme is designed to support the priorities of ESCAP's overall work programme for 2011-2013 under its core objectives and development results. It is expected that the proposed capacity development programme in East and North-East Asia will contribute to:

- strengthened capacity of government officials and representatives of civil societies in the countries of East and North-East Asia to achieve internationally agreed development goals by promoting inclusive and sustainable social and economic development through the formulation and implementation of appropriate development strategies and programmes that aim at enhanced economic security and reduced poverty and social vulnerability of disadvantaged groups of population;
- strengthened presence and strategic position of ESCAP at the subregional level in East and North-East Asia to promote subregional cooperation and improve institutional and management capacity of member countries to identify subregional socio-economic perspectives including transboundary issues; and
- Strengthened cooperation and operational linkages between ESCAP headquarters and member States in the subregion.

To achieve real impact, the proposed programme pursues a mix of activities that address specific subregional needs and perspectives for capacity building to promote broader subregional cooperation in East and North-East Asia.

### **1.3 Collaboration with other ESCAP divisions/offices/institutions**

Given ESCAP's expertise in key economic, social and environmental issues and its mandate to undertake analytical and normative work that supports the achievement of inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Asia and the Pacific, the SRO for East and North-East Asia seeks to play a substantive role in strengthening the capacity of government officials and representatives of civil society to stimulate policy dialogues on main economic, social and environmental issues through conducting subregional workshops and seminars on key social, economic and environmental challenges faced by member countries of the subregion. The proposed capacity building programme of the SRO-ENEA will draw upon the resources and knowledge of the ESCAP substantive divisions in providing technical assistance to the countries of East and North-East Asia and speeding up effective implementation of the projects, especially in focus areas for East and North-East Asia.

So far, areas for collaboration have been identified as follows: (i) Statistics (SD and SIAP) – improving statistics in the field of economics, gender and employment including strengthened access to civil society; (ii) Connectivity and Disaster Risk Reduction (IDD and APCICT) – connectivity policy development, ICT for DRR including capacity development through training; (iii) Knowledge sharing – identification of best practises and transfer-of-knowledge in the agro-industrial sector for SMEs (APCTT and APCAEM); (iv) SDD - SRO-ENEA will identify a subregional angle to SDD's programme of work and collaborate with SDD in order to achieve greater depth and outreach to member States; (v) EDD – SRO will develop and implement subregional activities in support of the Regional Implementation Plan (RIP) adopted at MCED-VI; (vi) TID and TD – SRO may assist member states in strengthening national policy capacity and bilateral and multilateral cooperation; (vii) MPDD – SRO will contribute to economic research and analysis, including MDGs, poverty reduction and provide analytical inputs, at the subregional level, for the preparation of ESCAP flagship publications, including the Economic and Social Survey for Asia and the Pacific.

### **1.4 Collaboration with external partners**

Partnership and knowledge-sharing networks will be built with government officials in the six member countries, private sector, civil society and other relevant development partners in addressing priority areas of the subregion, covering sustainable development; the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC); information and communications technology, disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management; poverty reduction, including food security; and infrastructure, trade and transport facilitation, including connectivity. Close cooperation will be initiated and maintained with UN entities, including the UN Country Teams in the subregion. An external partnership will be sought with the secretariat of the Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI) with the aim of establishing an intergovernmental platform for economic cooperation and exchanges for five economies of North-East Asia.

## 2. Capacity development projects and key results

**Sub-programme objective<sup>1</sup>:** To promote inclusive and sustainable development and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, focusing on the specific priorities of ESCAP member States in East and North-East Asia

### **Relevant Expected Accomplishment(s)**

**EA 1:** Enhanced capacity of ESCAP member States to formulate and implement economic and social development policies and programmes, including those with a gender dimension, to address key priority areas in East and North-East Asia

**EA2:** Strengthened partnerships and knowledge sharing among member States, civil society and other relevant development partners to address key priority areas in East and North-East Asia to support the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

### **Capacity development projects**

1. Strengthen socio-economic foundation and cooperation for inclusive and sustainable development and attaining the MDGs in East and North-East Asian countries

### **Project results**

1. Improved capacity of policy-makers and practitioners to formulate and implement integrated national socio-economic policies that mitigate increased social disparity, further enhance social protection and reduce the vulnerability of disadvantaged groups.

2. Strengthened capacity of policy-makers and major stakeholders to develop and implement strategies for tackling persistent and emerging challenges to environmental sustainability.

3. Strengthened capacity of practitioners and experts to improve strategies for subregional connectivity to boost subregional economic cooperation, including trade and investment, among the countries in East and North-East Asia.

4. Improved capacity of national experts to analyze socio-economic implications of multi-hazard disasters and indentify policy options for mitigating socioeconomic impacts of disasters

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