Evaluation of SPECA
Summary of key findings and recommendations
Content

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Purpose

- Endorsed by 11th Session of the Governing Council in Ganja

- Analyze programmatic achievements and results;

- Identify strengths and challenges in the current institutional and organizational setup;

- Highlight partnership arrangements and resource mobilization efforts;

- Formulate recommendations for strengthening SPECA in fulfilling its mandate
Method

+ Mix of desk analysis of documents, interviews and a questionnaire

+ Interviews:
  + ESCAP and UNECE representatives
  + Focal points of SPECA at the Min of Economy and MFA, and representatives of thematic ministries/agencies in AZE, KZ, KYR and TAJ
  + Representatives of missions of SPECA countries to the UN in New York, Bangkok.
  + Representatives of international orgs (UNDP, UN Resident Coordinators and UNRCCA).
Challenges

- Lack of response to questionnaire
- Loss of institutional memory in the Regional Commissions and at the country level;
- Lack of sufficient discussions with other international organizations
Relevance

- Welcomed as a neutral UN platform for regional cooperation and coordination especially as the only CA focused program (w Aze and Af)
- Seen as having a high potential now that Uzb is cooperative
- Relevance of themes of TWGs confirmed as relevant to national and regional priorities
- Seen as relevant for supporting implementation of SDGs that are regional or require regional cooperation.
Added value vis-à-vis other programs is not always clear and not the same for all (countries, regional commissions etc).

SPECA more relevant as platform for coordination of policy than project implementation
Effectiveness

- Effectiveness impacted by politics, lack of willingness to cooperate in the region

- SPECA seen as most effective as a platform for exchanges of information and experiences
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Objectives of SPECA according to its TOR</th>
<th>Are these objectives being met? Why or why not?</th>
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<tr>
<td>To provide a <strong>neutral UN platform for discussions</strong> on strategic issues of regional economic cooperation;</td>
<td>• More about exchanges of information than on cooperation per se.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Little concrete evidence of impact</td>
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<td>• Documents from meetings mostly declarative, without concrete implementation nor follow up;</td>
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<td>To develop, support and coordinate relevant <strong>capacity-building activities</strong> in SPECA countries;</td>
<td>• Valued by countries</td>
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<td>• But sometimes adhoc, not always in line with the needs and demands, and with very little follow up after the</td>
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<td>meetings.</td>
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<td>To <strong>promote compliance</strong> with relevant international legal instruments, norms, guidelines, standards and</td>
<td>• Added value of regional commissions</td>
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<td>recommendations;</td>
<td>• Effective in the area of trade, transport and statistics</td>
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</table>
| To stimulate the exchange of best national practices among SPECA countries | • Most effective and valued among participants  
• Opportunity for networking opportunity |
|---|---|
| To raise funds from multilateral and bilateral donors for capacity-building activities in participating countries | • Special program with no adequate funds for projects  
• Other institutions better funded organizations  
• Need better partnerships  
• Not the best role for SPECA |
Efficiency

- SPECA institutions are set up with precise rules, TORs, reports etc. and supported efficiency by UN Economic Forums introduce innovative ideas and open to others,
- Most efficient TWGs have a common strategy, sense of unity, norms
- TWGs praised mostly as forums for exchanges with counterparts from other countries, not as opportunities for the harmonization of policies
- High level of support provided by the UN regional commissions
Yet, challenges

- Special Program without adequate resources
- No secretariat, burden on staff of commissions
- In countries: High staff turnover turnover, loss of intuitional memory
- Lack of knowledge about work of TWGs, ad hoc work, no networking between, no network of regular experts, etc
Sustainability

- Special Program not created with adequate operational, even less programmatic budget
- Contribution from countries very minimal
- Cannot compete in raising money for projects with other regional organizations backed by IFIs
- Less potential impact from small projects than on policy
Conclusion: SPECA has untapped potential

- Identity and added value of SPECA should become more clear
- Is it a platform for Regional Commissions to report all their projects in the region under SPECA?
- Or a country-led, country driven platform for cooperation and policy coordination to unify position?
- Strategic decisions needed
Option 1: Status quo +

- Keep purpose and institutions as is, but the two Regional Commissions to make efforts to engage States more extensively:
  - Sustain separate trust fund for activities in both commissions
  - Encourage countries to pay and take responsibility for organization of meetings
  - Introduce more follow up mechanisms for ensuring policy impact for TWGs, etc
  - Better networking/partnership with other UN agencies and IFIs
  - For SDGs, concentrate on those that are regional, coordinate with other agencies.
Option 2: Reform SPECA

- Revisit SPECA rationale and modus operandi to make it more a country-owned and country-led loose structure which could help existing or developing regional processes of cooperation, with support/facilitation from UN

- Revamp platform for policy dialogue and coordination, and not as a series of one-off meetings organized by UN Regional Commissions, nor as a mechanism for implementation of projects
• Countries to take more ownership and show commitment: funding contribution, participation, agenda setting, staffing, etc.
• Review priority themes and rationale of TWGs, give them concrete tasks and outputs
• Ensure that outcomes of TWGs, Economic Forums are implemented, translated into national policies.
• Consider a proper Secretariat, even if virtual and online, with focal points coordinating together
Option 3: Institutionalization

Transform SPECA into a member-owned, member-driven, and member-financed formal inter-governmental body.

Countries to get together to decide on format, rationale, method: legal/institutional issues, governing body, TWGs, financing, secretariat, HQ, role of the UN etc.

UN Regional Commissions support by providing examples, etc.
Option 4: Gradual closure

- Gradual close and absorption as part of existing ESCAP and UNECE activities

- Regional cooperation issues to be pursued by countries through other bodies/processes.

- Transition modalities/period to be decided.