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OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)

Tenth Session of the SPECA Working Group
on Knowledge-Based Development

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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE WG ON KBD

This report contains activities organized by the ESCAP and UNECE secretariats either within the framework of the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (WG on KBD), or addressing topics within its thematic areas that were held since the ninth session of the SPECA WG on KBD in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 23 July 2017. These activities are in line with the Programme of Work of the WG for 2017-2018, which was adopted at the ninth session. ESCAP and UNECE secretariats carried out the following capacity-building activities for the SPECA countries from July 2017 to June 2018:

Implementation of the UNECE project “Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews”

- Within the framework of this project, *Innovation Performance Reviews of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and other CIS countries* have been completed. Reports are available in English and Russian. The Review process and structure has been updated to reflect the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the reviews becoming Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews.
- Within the framework of the preparation of the *Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Kyrgyzstan*, the peer review of policy recommendations took place during the *International Conference “Making innovation work for the SDGs”* in Bishkek on 22-23 June 2017, with the findings and policy recommendations discussed at the tenth session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies in Geneva on 19-20 October 2017. The UNECE Committee on

Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-private Partnerships at its twelfth session on 26-28 March 2018 welcomed the findings and policy recommendations and invited the Team of Specialists to work with the Government of Kyrgyzstan on facilitating the implementation of the policy recommendations, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources. The Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Kyrgyzstan is currently being edited for release as an official UN publication.

Implementation of joint ECE-ESCAP capacity building activities in SPECA countries

- Upon request from the Government of Kazakhstan, a *Workshop on Strengthening Technology Transfer in Countries in Central Asia* was carried out jointly by ECE and the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) of ESCAP in Astana on 30-31 May 2018, with the support of the National Agency for Technological Development (NATD) of Kazakhstan.

Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative

- Based on the feedback and discussions at the *Regional Workshop on Resilient ICT Connectivity for the Knowledge Economy, SDGs and the WSIS Goals*, 20-22 September, 2016 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, ESCAP finalized a study titled *Building a Resilient Digital Economy: Fostering SMEs in Central Asia*¹ which discussed natural disasters that affect SPECA countries, with particular emphasis on their effects on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and how resilient ICTs (e-resilience) can promote inclusive and sustainable digital economy for the achievement of the SDGs. ESCAP's Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative, which aims to promote seamless regional broadband connectivity across the Asia-Pacific region, was highlighted as a way forward.
- ESCAP carried out a study titled *The Belt and Road Initiative and the Role of ESCAP*,² which examined China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), including ICTs as a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The study examined the existing fiber-optic corridors and their capacity, and identified missing links in the cross-border fiber-optic routes in the SPECA countries.

¹ Available from <http://www.unescap.org/resources/building-resilient-digital-economy-fostering-smes-central-asia>

² Available from <http://www.unescap.org/resources/study-ict-connectivity-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-enhancing-collaboration-china-central>

- ESCAP delivered technical on presentation on the preliminary findings of its ICT studies (“Building a Resilient Digital Economy: Fostering SMEs in Central Asia in SPECA countries” & “The Belt and Road Initiative and the Role of ESCAP”) during a subregional workshop titled, “Enhancing regional integration of landlocked developing countries in North and Central Asia through infrastructure connectivity”, 6 – 7 September 2017, Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan. As a result, SPECA countries enhanced their awareness and interest on ESCAP’s effort towards enhancing broadband connectivity in the sub-region, through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative. In addition, ESCAP held informal consultations with potential subregional partners in the implementation of the AP-IS initiative for SPECA countries.
- ESCAP delivered a presentation on the preliminary findings of its ICT studies (“Building a Resilient Digital Economy: Fostering SMEs in Central Asia in SPECA countries” & “The Belt and Road Initiative and the Role of ESCAP”) during the “5th Regional Internet Government Forum”, Baku, Azerbaijan, 7 December 2017. As a result, participants enhanced their knowledge and awareness on ESCAP’s effort towards enhancing broadband connectivity in the sub-region, through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative.
- In preparation for the High-Level Dialogue on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration (RECI) for Enhancing Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP carried out a subregional study of *North and Central Asia as a Transit Hub: Potential, Challenges and the Way Forward*; and a regional study, *Enhancing Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific*, which called for enhancing regional ICT connectivity through RECI, which could offer enormous potential in generating trade, growth and employment, improving social outcomes and managing environmental risks and shared vulnerabilities.

Statistical Geospatial Indicators for Monitoring the Implementation of the SDGs

- ESCAP supported SPECA countries through organization of two expert group meetings (EGM) in Bangkok on 10 October 2017 and in Almaty, Kazakhstan from 31 January to 1 February 2018. The key objectives of the meetings are to discuss the conceptual framework of statistical geospatial indicators, and relevant existing models and methodologies on indicators, as analytical tools, for member States in Central Asian countries to monitor and report the progress of the implementation of disaster-related SDGs. Draft framework and indicators are expected to support policymakers and technical officials of member States to prepare more effective policies and actions in support of reducing disaster risks, preventing or mitigating human suffering and

economic and environmental damages. The indicators also contribute to statistical accuracy of the already established SDG indicators, the ESCAP Regional Roadmap for the SDGs and the UN global agendas such as the UN Global Statistical Geospatial Framework.

Representatives of the SPECA countries participated in the events:

- ESCAP-KOICA Fellowship Programme 2017: Capacity building on spatial data and technologies for urban planning and disaster management for Central Asia” in the Republic of Korea from 28 August to 8 September 2017.
 - First session of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Steering Committee”, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1-2 November 2017.
 - Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Group Meeting, 12 December 2017 and Joint Session of Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Group Meeting and Seventh Meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway Network”, 13 December 2017, Bangkok, Thailand.
 - Tenth session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies and its Substantive segment “Towards the Circular Economy - Innovation Policies for Sustainable Production and Consumption”, Geneva, Switzerland, 19 - 20 October 2017.
 - First session of the Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships, Geneva, Switzerland, 21 - 22 November 2017.
 - Expert group meeting on development of statistical geospatial indicators for monitoring the SDGs, 31 January -1 February 2018, Almaty, Kazakhstan.
 - Twelfth session of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships with its high-level substantive segment on “Innovative Partnerships for Sustainable Consumption and Production”, Geneva, Switzerland, 26 - 28 March 2018.
 - UNECE International Forum on people-first PPPs for the Sustainable Development Goals, Geneva, Switzerland, 7-9 May 2018.
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