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CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)**

Fifth session of the SPECA Governing Council

**PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE SPECA PROJECT WORKING GROUPS**

Palais des Nations, Geneva, 19 October 2010

Implementation of the SPECA Work Plan for 2010-2011, adopted on 13 November 2009 by the SPECA Governing Council, is proceeding according to schedule. Activities of the six SPECA Project Working Groups since the last session of the Governing Council are summarized below:

I. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON WATER AND ENERGY RESOURCES

Dam Safety

The project to improve safety of dam operations in Central Asia started in 2006. There are two main results from the first phase of the project: (i) a model national law on safety of large hydraulic facilities, including dams, intended to be a base of national harmonized legal frameworks for dam safety; and (ii) a draft of the regional agreement on cooperation on dam safety, which stipulates, *inter alia*, exchange of information and notification of other countries in case of accidents with dams.

The second phase of the project is being implemented during the period 2008-2011 with funding from Finland and the Russian Federation. The main results of the second phase include further negotiations and development of the draft regional agreement, input to the development of dam safety legislation in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as well as joint training for experts in the region. A Technical Regulation for all five countries is being developed in cooperation with Russian experts. Information about the project can be found on: <http://www.unece.org/env/water/damsafety.htm>.

Water, Environmental and Energy Information

The “Central Asian Regional Water Information Base” (CAREWIB) Project, funded by Switzerland, was launched in 2004. It is implemented by the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC-ICWC) in Tashkent in cooperation with UNECE and UNEP/Grid-Arendal. The project includes a Water Portal (www.cawater-info.net) that provides access to Central Asian water information, a bibliographic database of Land and Water Resources Use in the Aral Sea basin, lists of and links to donors active in the Aral Sea basin, databases for the Aral Sea basin, the Amudarya and the Syrdarya river basins etc. The portal also hosts the websites of various projects. The project further includes the development of an Information System on Water and Land Resources in the region for experts and decision makers in the five Central Asian States. Phase 2 of the project started in the end of 2007.

In the second phase of the CAREWIB project the focus will be on developing national water information systems. There is some enthusiasm from the side of the countries and the experts that have developed the regional Information System are supporting the efforts on the national level.

Development of Cooperation on the Chu and Talas Rivers

On 26 July 2006, water relations in Central Asia took a significant step forward when the Kazakh-Kyrgyz Chu and Talas Rivers Commission was inaugurated with the support of UNECE. The establishment of the Commission created a mutually beneficial way for Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to share responsibility for water infrastructure used by both countries. A new project in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) - started in 2008 and funded by Finland - supports the further broadening

of cooperation to improve the joint management of the Chu and Talas rivers, to include, among other things, protection of ecosystems and stakeholder participation in the river management. The project will be finalized in the end of 2010.

Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Water Resources Management in Central Asia

The Programme “Trans-boundary Water Management in Central Asia” was launched in 2008 by the Government of Germany. A Programme component “Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management” is implemented in 2009-2011 by the UNECE. It includes work on regional institutions, international water legislation and regional Guidelines/Principles for water management as well as development of monitoring and information exchange.

Water quality in Central Asia

The United Nations Development Account has made funding available to UNECE for a project to improve cooperation and policy related to water quality in Central Asia. The project started in the beginning of 2009 and is being undertaken with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC). A first step is to establish common principles for measurement, exchange of information and joint assessment. The development of more efficient national policies, including the standards and principles applied in the permitting of environmentally harmful activities, is another key aspect. As the water quality monitoring has seriously deteriorated since the early 1990s, it is a challenge to establish a basic monitoring network.

Baku Initiative on Energy Efficiency and Conservation

In 2006, the SPECA Coordinating Committee endorsed the Baku Initiative on Energy Efficiency and Conservation which had been previously reviewed by the Project Working Group on Water and Energy Resources. As a follow-up, meetings in 2008 and 2009 focused on identifying priority activities under the Baku Initiative. Recommendations included (a) the development of a network of energy efficiency institutions among SPECA member countries; (b) the development of a regional project on energy efficiency in buildings; and (c) the development of a regional concept on energy efficiency.

A number of projects have been initiated in 2009 and 2010 to support these recommendations. The Project “Strengthening Institutional Capacity to Support Energy Efficiency in Selected Asian Countries” includes the SPECA subregion in its analysis. The results of the preliminary study are available and guidelines for institutions are currently being developed. An Asia-Pacific regional meeting was held in April 2010 which included Central Asian countries.

With regards to concept on energy efficiency in the SPECA region, the Project “Supporting the implementation of the Baku initiative on energy efficiency and conservation for sustainable and inclusive development” was initiated in 2010 to work with countries to develop an energy efficiency concept that will allow cooperation in implementing energy efficiency policies at the subregional level. With the assistance of national experts in this field, a preliminary draft was prepared for discussion and comment during a SPECA regional meeting held as part of the International Energy Efficiency Forum, which was organized in parallel to the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development on 28-30 September 2010. Though initially only four of the SPECA member countries are included under the

concept, it is hoped that further SPECA member countries will join this initiative in 2011, subject to available funding.

Within the framework of the “Financing Energy Efficiency for Climate Change Mitigation” Project, UNECE has been working on enhancing the capacity of the Member States in Eastern Europe and Central Asia to attract private sector financing. Following this successful Initiative of the UNECE, the “Global Energy Efficiency 21” was initiated with all Regional Commissions, including ESCAP, to replicate this initiative in other regions. Currently only Kazakhstan is a member of the UNECE initiative. Through the GEE21, it is expected that more countries from Central Asia will participate to strengthen the capacity of each country to foster energy efficiency market formation, public-private partnerships and to attract more private sector investment.

In addition to this, the “Eco-efficiency and Sustainable Urban Infrastructure in Asia and the Pacific” Project incorporates a study on eco-efficient public buildings in Tajikistan along with a number of eco-efficiency activities in other Asian cities. From discussions with other UN agencies it was clear that projects on energy efficiency in buildings are currently being developed in almost all Central Asian countries. There may be some potential for collaboration among countries related to these projects.

The Project “Development of the Renewable Energy Sector in the Russian Federation and in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries: Prospects for Interregional Cooperation” was launched by UNECE in 2008. The First International Workshop on RES in the Russian Federation and CIS countries was held on 22 and 23 July 2010 in Minsk, Belarus. National Reports from 10 participating countries have been elaborated and commissioned by UNECE. Progress has also been made in preparing a strategy to promote an enhanced investment climate for renewable energy technologies for dissemination to national and regional authorities in participating countries. The project will be finalized in the end of 2010.

Methane Capture and Use: Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Use in Coal Mines

The Cooperative Project on Methane Capture and Use: Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Use in Coal Mines was launched in 2008 by UNECE, Methane to Market Partnership (M2M Partnership) and United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA). The Best Practice Guidance publication is intended for managers, mine operators, regulators, and government officials. The publication has been launched in March 2010. The workshop and seminars to disseminate the findings to mining professionals have been already held in China, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. It is expected that more countries from Central Asia will be interested in the Guidance.

II. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON TRANSPORT AND BORDER CROSSING

The annual sessions of the Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC) serve as an effective cooperation mechanism to address the specific problems of transit transport from, in and through SPECA member countries. Improvement of international transit transport infrastructure and services, as recognized in the Almaty Programme of Action, facilitates further integration of SPECA member countries into international trade and the global economy.

The ESCAP resolution 63/9 on Implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme, phase 1 (2007-2011) reiterated its support for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action for the benefit of landlocked and transit developing countries.

The 15th session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing held in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 7-8 April 2010 discussed specific issues relating to transport policy, infrastructure and facilitation. Main conclusions and recommendations include:

1. The PWG reaffirmed the importance of the international legal instruments listed in the report of its 2nd session including the TIR, Harmonization and ATP conventions, and invited SPECA member countries to intensify their efforts to accede and effectively implement these conventions;
2. The PWG highlighted the need to identify any outstanding issue related to the accession to and implementation of the conventions, and requested the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats to provide assistance in assessing the implications of acceding to and implementing the transport-related international legal instruments, when possible;
3. The PWG stressed the importance of the effective cooperation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders in the public and private sector for the formulation and implementation of international transport facilitation measures. It noted the current status/progress of SPECA member countries in establishing/strengthening national coordination mechanisms for trade and transport facilitation, and pointed out the possible benefits that could be brought about by effective functioning of such mechanisms;
4. The PWG recognized the usefulness of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and the ESCAP Time/Cost-Distance methodologies in identification and isolation of bottlenecks along international routes and invited SPECA member countries to consider wider application of the methodologies and to use the findings from the application of the methodologies for consideration of facilitation measures;
5. The PWG welcomed the progress achieved with regard to the organization of container block train services in the SPECA region, and encouraged SPECA countries to use container block train modality to benefit from the flexibility and speed of intermodal transportation;
6. The PWG encouraged SPECA member countries to participate in the corridor-based cooperative arrangement for operationalization of international intermodal transport corridors, and in the planning and organization of demonstration runs of transport operation along selected corridors;
7. The PWG noted the progress achieved in the development of the common CIM/SMGS consignment note, and encouraged SPECA member countries to consider actively participating in the project to contribute to the creation of the unified rail transport law and promoting facilitation of railway transportation;
8. The PWG reviewed the progress in the development of four SPECA transport databases, namely, the databases on road and rail routes of international importance in the SPECA region; the database on border crossing and the database on intermodal transport infrastructure in the SPECA region, and requested SPECA member countries, UNECE and ESCAP to provide regularly data and information to the

Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the lead SPECA country in the field of transport, for updating of the SPECA transport databases;

9. The PWG welcomed the initiative of the Research Institute for Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the preparation of the Overview of the transport sector in the SPECA member countries and requested SPECA member countries to provide their comments/suggestions on the draft Overview before the document is published on the website of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
10. The PWG highlighted the tangible results achieved by UNDA project Improving Global Road Safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets, jointly undertaken by five UN Regional Commissions and invited SPECA member countries to set national road safety targets and work towards their achievement;
11. The PWG noted the ESCAP training activities in multimodal transport and logistics and requested ESCAP to assist SPECA member countries in establishing their own training courses;
12. The PWG encouraged SPECA member countries to actively participate in the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages Project and noted that an expert group meeting within the framework of the project would be organized in the second half of 2010 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan; and
13. The PWG supported unofficial bilateral consultations on border crossing issues between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan held on 7 April 2010 within the framework of the SPECA PWG-TBC. The PWG requested to organize the bilateral consultation on transport and border crossing issues between SPECA countries at the next 16th session of the SPECA PWG-TBC.

III. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON TRADE

The SPECA PWG on Trade continued with the implementation of its work plan and the decisions of the fourth session of the Group, which took place on 28 October 2009 in Geneva.

The UNDA Project on Trade Facilitation in the SPECA Member Countries

This major project under the 5th tranche of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) was finalized on 31 December 2009. The project, implemented jointly by UNECE and ESCAP, met its objectives. It increased the capacity of the SPECA member countries to formulate trade development policies, primarily through the support for the PWG on Trade. It raised the understanding in the SPECA member countries of the importance of trade facilitation as a driver of development. Consequently, it led to a higher level of implementation of trade facilitation measures in the region. The objectives were achieved through the delivery of five regional capacity-building seminars, four meetings of the ministerial-level SPECA PWG on Trade; 8 additional capacity-building activities (supported through additional resources); and one pilot project (a “forms repository” in Kyrgyzstan). It helped build two networks: of policymakers (PWG on Trade) and a network of public-private cooperation for trade facilitation.

Under this project, the countries adopted, established, or implemented: 1 regional Work Plan (of the PWG on Trade); 2 Single Window Action Plans; 4 national Single Window and trade facilitation project plans and/or feasibility studies established (in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan); 9 sets of recommendations (from each seminar and SPECA PWG meeting); 1 study on FTAs; 6 national interagency groups in support of trade facilitation and the Single Window; and 1 pilot project on a “forms repository” and a regional web page for such repositories. More than 415 participants and experts took part in the 5 capacity-building seminars and 4 meetings of the SPECA PWG on Trade. Among them 78 participants from the SPECA member countries and 42 resource persons (experts) were sponsored by the project’s budget. 341 participants and experts took part in the 8 additional seminars, financed through additional sources. Over 37 national and international agencies were involved as partners in the implementation of the project.

The project thus significantly contributed to regional cooperation. All seven SPECA member countries – Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – were actively involved in the project activities, the regional networks, and took part in specific activities on electronic trade documents; the Single Window; forms repositories, etc. UNECE, ESCAP, UNCTAD, UNDP, ITC, AITIC, WTO, WCO and other international organizations participated in the project’s activities. The project achieved very well a key objective: to serve as “seed money” for leveraging resources of other agencies in the further implementation of trade facilitation measures and, notably, of the UN norms, standards, and tools in projects of the development partners active in the region (GTZ, USAID, ADB, and others), as well as regional organizations and programmes, such as EurAsEC, TRACECA and CAREC. Those agencies and most of the countries (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) included the concepts and standards presented in the UNDA-5 project’s activities in their projects on trade development and facilitation.

A seminar on Single Window implementation and Business Process Analysis was organized in July 2010 in Baku, Azerbaijan, which has already completed the first stage of its Single Window project.

Initiative SPECA Roadmap for Aid-for-Trade

Following the proposal of Azerbaijan and the decisions of the fourth session of the PWG on Trade in October 2009, UNECE, ESCAP, UNDP, IDB and ITFC, ITC, and a number of other organizations launched an initiative in support of Aid-for-Trade for the SPECA member countries. A concept document was prepared by UNECE in wide consultation with the Member States and the international community. Needs assessments were prepared for the SPECA member countries (except for Afghanistan) with support from UNDP. A preparatory meeting for the SPECA Aid-for-Trade Ministerial meeting was held in Bishkek in March 2010, and a steering group of the initiative started working on a regular basis. A regional report was developed (again with support from UNDP), and a first draft for a SPECA Ministerial Declaration is currently under review. These documents are to facilitate the work of the SPECA Aid-for-Trade Ministerial Meeting, scheduled to take place on 1-2 December 2010 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Next Steps

The next session of the SPECA PWG on Trade will take place on 2 December 2010, in Baku, back-to-back with the SPECA Aft Ministerial Meeting. The expectations are that the SPECA PWG on Trade will become the institutional backbone for the SPECA Aid-for-Trade initiative.

New projects are proposed to the Group: in support of regional cooperation for trade policy formulation and WTO accession (ESCAP); and accession to the UNCITRAL instruments on e-commerce (UNCITRAL).

IV. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON STATISTICS

The SPECA Project Working Group on Statistics was established in 2006 to strengthen the capacity of SPECA member countries in monitoring their demographic, social and economic progress. Improved data are needed in tackling poverty and social issues, and supporting economic recovery in the countries. Since November 2009, the focus has been on quality and dissemination of Population and Housing Censuses, measurement of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and development of new Environmental Indicators.

After a Seminar on Global Assessments in Yalta, in September 2009, some countries requested for a Global Assessment (GA) of their statistical system. The purpose of a GA is to provide a clear picture of the state of development of official statistics in a country. It helps the national authorities to better programme the long-term development of statistics, and also international donors to have a deep knowledge of their institutional and administrative work frame for the programming of statistical cooperation. More specifically, the objectives of a global assessment are:

- To assess the administrative capacity of the country in the field of statistics;
- To assess the technical aspects of the statistical system in the country; and
- To assess the compliance of national statistics with international standards.

The first assessment mission to Azerbaijan was conducted in June 2010, and the second is scheduled for October 2010. Kyrgyzstan has also requested for a global assessment to start in 2010 or 2011.

The annual plenary sessions of the Conference of European Statisticians provide an opportunity to exchange best practices in statistics production. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan participated in the 58th plenary session of the Conference, 8-10 June 2010. Based on country presentations, the Conference discussed dissemination issues, government finance statistics, time-use surveys, measurement of information society and quality of employment, the new manual on gender statistics and the impact of the economic and financial crisis on statistical systems, etc.

To improve availability of indicators on Millennium Development Goals and knowledge on the related technological tools, a Training Workshop on Dissemination of MDG Indicators was held in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 23-25 November 2009. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan participated in the Workshop.

The first session of a Task Force on Environmental Indicators was held in Geneva on 3-4 May 2010. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were the SPECA member countries that took part in the session. The state of environmental indicators in the countries was reviewed during the meeting. The next session is scheduled for 1-2 September 2010. It will discuss, inter alia, general issues in producing environmental indicators, and examples of progress in their production.

The SPECA Project Working Group (PWG) on Statistics held its fifth meeting in Paris on 8 June 2010. Representatives of National Statistical Offices of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and

Tajikistan participated, as well as EFTA, Eurostat and the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT). The meeting was chaired by the newly elected Chair, the Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan. During the meeting, a memorandum of understanding was signed between CIS-STAT and UNECE, and discussions were held also with Eurostat and EFTA in order to plan joint activities for the SPECA member countries.

The meeting of 8 June discussed future training needs of the countries, as reflected in the SPECA Work Plan for 2011-2012 for Statistics. In addition, the proceedings of a project for strengthening the statistical capacity of the SPECA member countries on monitoring Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were analysed. The final report was based on an external evaluation, and the report underlined the visible progress achieved by countries, in particular, in Population and Housing Censuses and measurement of Non-Observed Economy.

As a result of this project, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan prepared the 2010 round of Population and Housing Censuses following the Recommendations of the Conference of European Statisticians. In addition, Turkmenistan plans to carry out their Census in 2012. So far, Uzbekistan has no plans to conduct a Census. UNECE has stressed the necessity of Census data for efficient policymaking and democratic processes, e.g. to improve public services and to determine, how many people need new roads, schools or other services.

To continue the support for the ongoing Census activities and communication of results, a Training Workshop on Population and Housing Censuses was organised in Geneva on 5-6 July 2010. The Workshop was attended by representatives of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

A Regional Workshop on International Migration Statistics took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 15-17 February 2010, and it was attended by experts from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The objective was to identify the gaps in international migration data, and to find ways to close these gaps before the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development at the 68th session of the General Assembly in 2013.

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan participated in a special session for transition economies on 26 April 2010 in Geneva to discuss the plans for improvement of the core economic statistics, National Accounts. Improvements are needed in order to respond to the new international recommendations, the 2008 System of National Accounts, and therefore, to better describe the economy.

In addition to the workshops and capacity-building, some individual SPECA member countries have participated in meetings on statistical metadata, communication of statistics, migration statistics, measuring violence against women, consumer price indices, human resources management and gender statistics. Some country experiences on the latter topic, on a project on 'Engendering National Statistical Systems' have been described at: <http://www.unece.org/operact/opera/rptc-sstor-stat.html>

More detailed materials and proceedings of all the above mentioned workshops and meetings are available on the UNECE web site: <http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/docs.date.e.htm>

V. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON KNOWLEDGE-BASED DEVELOPMENT

This report contains activities carried out/to be carried out by the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (PWG on KBD) in 2010 in line with the Programme of Work for 2010-2011 of the PWG on KBD adopted at its second session in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on 9 November 2009.

The UNECE and ESCAP Secretariats within the framework of implementation of the Programme of Work for 2010-2011 of the PWG on KBD organized/will organize the following capacity-building events in 2010 with the participation of representatives of SPECA member countries, including experts of the Network of SPECA Policymakers on Knowledge-based Development:

- UNECE International Conference on Addressing the Challenge of Doing Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the Black Sea Region, the Caucasus and Central Asia: Bridging the Gap in PPP knowledge and skills (Istanbul, Turkey, 29-30 April 2010).
- UNECE International Conference on Policies to Address Financing and Entrepreneurial Challenges in High-growth Innovative Firms (Helsinki, Finland, 2-4 June 2010).
- Special session named “Innovative Congress” on the formation and development of the Innovative Economy (Astana, Kazakhstan, 1-2 July 2010). The event was co-organized by UNECE and the National Innovation Fund of Kazakhstan within the framework of the III Astana Economic Forum.
- First Meeting of the Expert Group on PPP for Central Asia (Astana, Kazakhstan, 2 July 2010). This meeting was co-organized by UNECE, GTZ and the Kazakhstan PPP Center.
- Special Session on the Creation of the International Association of PPP Units and Associations (Astana, Kazakhstan, 2-3 July 2010). The Session was organized in cooperation with the UNECE Team of Specialists on PPP within the framework of the III Astana Economic Forum.
- Training Workshop on Public-Private Partnerships: How to Assess and Implement Infrastructure Projects (Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 28-29 July 2010). The Workshop was co-organized by UNECE, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the State Committee on Demonopolization and Competition Development of Uzbekistan and the UNDP Office in Uzbekistan.
- UNECE International Conference on the Commercialization and Enforcement of Intellectual Property (Moscow, Russian Federation, 6–8 October 2010). The Conference is co-organized by the All-Russian Association of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (OPORA), the Russian Patent Office (Rospatent), and the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).
- UNECE International Conference “From Applied Research to Entrepreneurship: Promoting Innovation-driven Start-ups and Academic Spin-offs”(Kiev, Ukraine, 9-10 November 2010). The Conference will be co-organized by the Ministry of Science and Education of Ukraine.

- UNECE Capacity-building Seminar “Intellectual Property Management at Public Research Organizations” (Kiev, Ukraine, 11 November 2010). The Seminar will be co-organized by the Ministry of Science and Education of Ukraine.
- Second Meeting of the Expert Group on PPP for Central Asia (Istanbul, Turkey, 15-17 December 2010). This meeting will be co-organized by UNECE, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the World Bank.
- Regional Working Group (RWG) and Stakeholder Consultation Meeting on the Regional Cooperative Mechanism on Drought Disaster Monitoring and Early Warning (Kunming, China, 28-30 April 2010).
- Regional Experts and Stakeholder Meeting on the Regional Cooperative Mechanism on Drought Disaster Monitoring and Early Warning (Nanjing, China, 14-16 September 2010).
- Regional Workshop on ICT Applications for Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainable Economic Development (Astana, Kazakhstan, 28-30 September 2010).
- Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening ICT Policies and Applications to Achieve MDGs and WSIS Goals in Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, 22-24 November 2010).
- “Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders” (Academy) and the Virtual Academy (AVA) of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT):
 - (i) National Academy Workshop in Uzbekistan, September 2010;
 - (ii) Using the Academy curriculum developed by APCICT, localization of four ICT for Development (ICTD) training modules by UNDP in Uzbekistan for training of approximately 600 government officials in 12 regions of the country, July-August 2010;
 - (iii) Training of students of the Master’s of Public Administration course at the Academy of Management under the President of Kyrgyzstan, based on APCICT’s Academy curriculum, by APCICT alumni and Hanns Seidel Foundation, June-July 2010;
 - (iv) Collection of ICTD case studies for the Commonwealth of Independent States subregion and Russian-speaking countries, September 2010;
 - (v) Localization of the first three AVA online training modules into Russian, in partnership with the National Information Technology Centre (NITC) of Kyrgyzstan, May 2010;
 - (vi) Translation of the Academy curriculum into Dari and Pashto in partnership with the Ministry of Communications and IT in Afghanistan, to be completed in 2010; and
 - (vii) Translation of the first set of eight issues of APCICT’s Briefing Note Series, which aim to provide at-a-glance information of key ICTD topics for high-level policy and decision-makers, into the Russian and Uzbek languages, September 2010.

Representatives of the SPECA member countries, including experts of the Network of SPECA Policymakers on Knowledge-based Development also participated/will participate in the following events:

- Special Policy Dialogue on the Implication of the Current Economic Crisis on Public-Private Partnership, organized during the second session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) (Geneva, Switzerland, 3-4 December 2009).
- Applied Policy Seminar on Promoting Innovation in the Services Sector, organized during the third session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies (Geneva, Switzerland, 25 March 2010).
- International Conference “Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement; the Role of Intellectual Property in International Research and Development and Knowledge Transfer”, organized during the fourth session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Intellectual Property (Geneva, Switzerland, 8-9 July 2010).
- Fifth Session of the UNECE Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration (Geneva, Switzerland, 1-3 December 2010).
- Mid-term Training course on “Geo-information for Spatial Decision Support System on Natural Hazards Management” (Cibinong-Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 25 July - 7 August 2010).
- 14th Session of the Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting on Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific (Manila, December 2010).
- 2nd Session of the ESCAP Committee on Information and Communications Technology (Bangkok, 24-26 November 2010).

VI. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON GENDER AND ECONOMY

Members of the PWG met at an Ad Hoc Meeting on 4 November 2009 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva to discuss progress made in 2008-2009 and to agree on the Work Plan for 2010-2011. The report of the Ad Hoc Meeting is available for download on the UNECE website: http://www.unece.org/gender/SPECA_WG_Gender/meetings.htm

Activities carried out under the 2010-2011 Work Plan

Capacity-building Activities to Support Women Entrepreneurs in the SPECA Region

As in previous years, and in line with the Work Plan for 2010, the Centre for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel and the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre (MCTC), in cooperation with UNECE, have continued to run biannual international training workshops on “Support systems for women in small business at national and local levels” (13-29 April 2010) and on “Women entrepreneurs and information communication technologies (ICTs)” (2-19 August 2010).

The capacity-building workshops, held in Russian, are targeted at women’s entrepreneurs from Central Asia. They provide support, guidance and managerial tools on the use of new technologies in the management of small business. Further they address government institutions in charge of small and medium-sized enterprise development at national and local

levels, women's business associations and other civil society organizations to build their capacity to strengthen the support environment for women entrepreneurs. Over the years, the training scheme has not only played an important role in strengthening the support for women entrepreneurship but has also facilitated networking among women entrepreneurs across Central Asia.

In 2011, two capacity-building workshops are planned to be organized in cooperation with MCTC and UNECE developing further the topics of support systems for women entrepreneurs and ICT.

UNECE Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender

Work on the Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender has been further continued in 2010 to provide a web-based regional platform for the exchange of information, policy guidance and good practice in mainstreaming gender in economic policymaking. Its purpose is to contribute to raising awareness of the economic implications of gender inequality, to encourage mutual policy learning by providing examples of gender-sensitive economic policies across the region, and an extensive resource section through a virtual library. It provides, for instance, gender mainstreaming handbooks and tool kits as well as useful links to government websites, international organizations and NGOs which are active in the gender and economy area. The web portal further informs about the relevant United Nations global processes such as progress on the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Knowledge Hub is currently password protected and it is planned to make it publicly available soon.

Assessments of the Business Environment for Women Entrepreneurs

With the financial support of the Governments of Finland and Sweden two assessments of the business environment for women entrepreneurs are planned to be conducted in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in 2010-2011 in cooperation with International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). These assessments build on previous research undertaken in cooperation with ILO to analyze the achievements and perspectives of women's entrepreneurship development in pilot countries in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan) with the purpose of developing policy recommendations for the improvement and further development of entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the region. The Assessments will generate new knowledge and improve our understanding of the gender differences in the perception of the business environment and of gender-specific factors and constraints to entrepreneurship development.