



UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)

Thirteenth session of the SPECA Governing Council

Almaty, Kazakhstan, 21 September 2018, 1400-1700 hours

Agenda item 3: Activities of the SPECA Thematic Working Groups since the twelfth session of the Governing Council

PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECA THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

I. Introduction

The SPECA Thematic Working Groups implemented the following activities since the twelfth session of the SPECA Governing Council held in Dushanbe on 6 December 2017.

II. Water, energy and environment – Objectives: The main objectives of the Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment (WG on WEE) are: (i) to facilitate cooperation in the areas of water and energy resources between interested SPECA countries; (ii) to support the full implementation of the SPECA Cooperation Strategy to Promote the Rational and Efficient Use of Water and Energy Resources in Central Asia; (iii) to serve as a forum for discussion of issues of water and energy resources management; (iv) to support and coordinate capacity-building activities and programmes in the water and energy sectors, and (v) to promote and support the participation of SPECA countries in international conventions, agreements, programmes and projects related to water and energy resources management and development.

Name of Activity	Time & venue	Participating countries	Major results
Regional meeting on strengthening dam safety cooperation in Central Asia, UNECE	May 2018, Almaty, Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	Model regulation for the conservation and phase-out of outdated and obsolete hydrotechnical installations in Central Asia drafted. Actions for further strengthening cooperation on dam safety is discussed and approved.
Regional meeting on water quality and a capacity-building training, UNECE	December 2017, Almaty, Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	The updated ToR of the Regional Working Group on Water Quality was discussed and 20 experts from central Asia trained in application of transboundary water quality monitoring systems
Bilateral Afghan-Tajik meeting to improve hydrology and environment cooperation in the upper Amudarya basin and a capacity-building training, UNECE	May 2018, Dushanbe, Tajikistan	Afghanistan and Tajikistan	The meeting reviewed the progress on implementation of bilateral agreement on hydrology cooperation; discussed problems on hydrology information exchange; developed and endorse the cooperation programme for 2018-2020
Chu-Talas cooperation development, UNECE	28 February 2018, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan	At 24 th session of the Chu-Talas Water Commission (CTWC) the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for Chu and Talas River Basins was accepted in order to convene further internal Governmental clearance and approvals in two countries with follow-up consideration and signing of SAP at 7 th session of the Kazakh-Kyrgyz Intergovernmental Council (IGC). Signed SAP will open an access to the GEF and the other donors funding to practice IWRM in Chu and Talas River Basins at 1 st phase within 2020-2025.
Enhancing climate resilience and adaptive capacity in the	28 February 2018,	Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan	CTWC at its 24 th session has endorsed the set of Climate Change Adaptation Measures (CCAM)

transboundary Chu-Talas basin, UNECE	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan		for Chu and Talas River Basins elaborated by the Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change and Long-Term Development Programmes under the Secretariat of CTWC under the support of the UNECE project “Enhancing climate resilience and adaptive capacity in the transboundary Chu-Talas basin”. The CCAM set was fully integrated to the above SAP document.
Implementation of the project “Application of biogas technology model for rural areas in Kyrgyzstan”, UNECE	19-20 September 2018, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyzstan	The objective of the project is to introduce a cost-effective green technology biogas model in the rural areas of Kyrgyzstan. The project delivers concrete renewable energy solutions for rural application and targets the rural community near Kant town in Kyrgyzstan. The objective of the project has been achieved by installation of a biogas unit. The unit was launched on 19 September 2018. The biogas plant is producing biogas annually for heating purposes. Aside from biogas, the plant is producing organic fertilizers. The production of bio-fertilizers helps replace mineral fertilizers and results in US\$ 14,000 savings annually. Moreover, the methane produced will substitute 6.4 tonnes of diesel fuel, which is now used to heat farm, and this will save US\$ 3,120 annually.
Workshop on small-scale renewable energy solutions in Central Asian countries, UNECE	20 September 2018, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	Forty participants from all Central Asian countries attended the workshop. The national Institute of Energy and Economy, which executed construction of the biogas unit near Kant town presented results and experience of the biogas unit construction; all participants

			considered Central Asian countries barriers, challenges and solutions to achieve sustainable energy in rural areas and defined next steps and phases to provide rural areas with sustainable energy solutions; UNECE presented overall results of the project.
Study “Promoting clean and affordable energy to empower women and girls in Kazakhstan (and beyond in Central Asia)”, UNECE	2018	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	In cooperation with UNDP delivered a national study “Promoting clean and affordable energy to empower women and girls in Kazakhstan (and beyond in Central Asia)” aimed at involvement of women in the energy related decision-making in Kazakhstan, based on gender-disaggregated data from official statistics as well as additional qualitative and quantitative data collected through the tailor-made questionnaire. The study mapped the gender gaps in in energy related decision making in the energy sector and provided in-depth analyses on the differences in the use of the current energy services by women and men in rural and urban areas. Practical recommendations from the study support strengthening the gender-responsiveness of the energy sector in Kazakhstan, to develop gender-responsive policy to ensure gender equality in access to sustainable energy, to increase participation of women in decision-making and management of the energy and related sectors and provide opportunities for jobs and career development.
Implementation of the United Nations Development Account project “Sustainable Energy for All	12-14 June 2018,	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	Targeted at government representatives and other important energy stakeholders from the five Central Asian countries, the workshop had

<p>(SE4All) in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and Workshop/Stakeholder consultations on “Pathways to Sustainable Energy: National Sustainable Energy Action Plans & Scenarios for Central Asia”, UNECE and ESCAP</p>	<p>Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan</p>		<p>several objectives. The workshop provided an opportunity to inform Central Asian stakeholders about the Pathways project and the study on policy options for Kyrgyzstan. Also, participants actively shared their comments and inputs to shape the development of sustainable energy scenarios and policy options from the perspective of Central Asia. Workshop results include a summary of the specific challenges of Central Asian countries in achieving sustainable energy from today’s perspective, and an outlook towards policy options and pathways to achieve sustainable energy in the future. In total, 48 participants attended the workshop.</p>
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III. Sustainable transport, transit and connectivity: WG on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity supports the efforts of participating countries towards achieving the transport-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by enhancing the sustainability of transport. It also contributes to the development of transport networks through the exchange of best practices and experiences, consultations, relevant activities and implementation of projects in SPECA countries. Specifically, TWG focuses at: (i) implementation of transport-related activities and initiatives at national and subregional level, including development of road and railway networks, dry ports as well as facilitate intermodal transport in SPECA countries; (ii) supporting establishment and operation of national coordinating mechanisms for transport facilitation; (iii) facilitating accession and implementation of transport-related conventions and intergovernmental agreements; (iv) assisting in identification and elimination of major bottlenecks along international transport routes in SPECA region; (v) improving road safety to reduce road traffic fatalities and casualties in the SPECA region etc.

Name of Activity	Time & venue	Participating countries	Major results
<p>The 23rd session of the SPECA Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and</p>	<p>27-28 August 2018, Astana, Kazakhstan</p>	<p>Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan</p>	<p>The session discussed the implementation of SDG Target 3.6 (road safety) and SDG Target 9.1 (develop resilient infrastructure) and shared information on national achievements and future</p>

Connectivity, UNECE and ESCAP			plans. In addition, the following topics were discussed: coordination in subregional transport infrastructure development and future investments in all inland transport modes, improved subregional connectivity, border-crossing facilitation and improving road safety situation. Further, the meeting discussed accession to and implementation of UN transport conventions and intergovernmental agreements; and monitoring and reporting on transport-related SDGs achievement.
Seventh meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway Network, ESCAP	13- 15 December 2017, Bangkok, Thailand	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	The Working Group adopted an amendment to the Agreement adding new Asian Highway routes and discussed co-deployment of fibre optic infrastructure along road and rail networks. In addressing road safety in the region, the role of the Agreement as an institutional framework supporting the road safety related SDGs was strengthened by the Working Group which adopted a new annex to the Asian Highway Agreement entitled “Asian Highway Design Standards for Road Safety” and a detailed “Design Guideline” for road safety. The new standards and guidelines had been developed under ESCAP 3-year project (2015-2017) “Development of technical standards on road infrastructure safety facilities and model intelligent transport systems (ITS) deployments for the Asian Highway Network”.

<p>Final Expert Group Meeting on Comprehensive Planning of Eurasian Transport Corridors and Intermodal Transport in North-East and Central Asia, ESCAP</p>	<p>7-8 November 2017, Bangkok, Thailand</p>	<p>Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan</p>	<p>The Final Expert Group Meeting on Comprehensive Planning of Eurasian Transport Corridors and Intermodal Transport in North-East and Central Asia finalized study reports on “Documentation and Procedures for the Development of Seamless Rail-Based Intermodal Transport Services in Northeast and Central Asia”, including a proposed unified multimodal transport document, and on “Information Technology for Seamless Rail-Based Intermodal Transport Services in Northeast and Central Asia to Enhance Euro-Asian Transport Linkages”. The studies had been developed under the ESCAP project “Development of seamless rail-based intermodal transport services in Northeast and Central Asia for enhancing Euro-Asian transport linkages”.</p>
<p>Regional Meeting on Harmonization of rules and regulations for facilitation of international railway transport in the region, ESCAP</p>	<p>20-21 December 2017, Astana, Kazakhstan</p>	<p>Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan</p>	<p>ESCAP finalized a project “Harmonization of rules and regulations for facilitation of international railway transport in the region” and organized a regional meeting to finalize three studies prepared under the project. The first study on border crossing practices in international railway transport documents the processes at few selected railway border crossings in the region and proposes measures to enhance their efficiency. The second one on identifies three dimensions of interoperability. The third study reviews the existing systems for electronic exchange of information for international railway transport. The studies aim to support the operationalization of the</p>

			Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network.
“Tackling main causes of road traffic crashes, fatalities and injuries in Asia-Pacific countries to achieve road safety targets of the Sustainable Development Goals” project, ESCAP	2018	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	The project aims to support ESCAP member States to achieve the 50 per cent reduction in road traffic fatalities and injuries by increased awareness and capacities of member States to formulate and implementing comprehensive road safety policies and plans. The project will deliver recommended standards on road safety policies, regulations, legislations and enforcements to address main causes of road traffic crashes, fatalities and injuries. The standards will be reviewed and finalized at regional seminar and two capacity-building workshops will help countries on the implementation of the recommendations. The project will contribute to target 3.6 of Goal 3 and target 11.2 of Goal 11 of the SDGs.
“Strengthening the capacity of ESCAP member States to harmonize standards on weights, dimensions and emissions, of road vehicles for facilitation of transport along the Asian Highway network” project, ESCAP	2018	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	ESCAP is undertaking a study aimed at developing recommendations that will facilitate the harmonization of national and subregional standards on weights, dimensions and emissions of vehicles to make cross-border and transit road freight transport more seamless and efficient for countries along the Asian Highway network and beyond. The key recommendations of the study will be used to enhance the capacity of policy makers in the region, including SPECA countries to harmonize standards on weights, dimensions and emissions of road vehicles.

Implementation of the project “Strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and Least Developed Countries, to link with, subregional and regional transport and trade networks”, ESCAP	2018	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	The project explored linking beneficiary countries to the existing and proposed subregional road and railway networks along the Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) routes and Europe-Asia Transport Linkages (EATL) corridors based on minimal investments; possibilities for facilitation of the movement of goods along corridors in beneficiary countries’ sub-regions; and possibilities for facilitation of trade through the promotion of paperless trade and the creation of economic corridors at the border crossings that could be of particular interest to LLDCs and countries emerging from conflict, such as Afghanistan.
Project “Strengthening the logistics and transport competitiveness of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan”, UNECE	2018	Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan	The project involves the preparation of two studies, one per country, to analyze the current transport situation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of transport infrastructure (road, rail and combined transport; having in mind outcomes of Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) Phase III and other relevant Europe-Asia corridor plans/projects); and • current level of the national logistic system and its functioning; transit issues and problems; as well as the national legislative basis from the point of international transportation.
International Transport Infrastructure Observatory, UNECE	2018	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,	One of the key challenges towards sustainable infrastructure development in the Euro-Asian region remains the lack of funding. In response

		Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	<p>to this, under the auspices of the UNECE an International Transport Infrastructure Observatory is being developed with funding support of the Islamic Development Bank.</p> <p>It is devised as an online platform where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • governments find the data to prepare benchmark and present their transport infrastructure projects and • financial institutions can consider, analyze and compare projects from a regional/international perspective and identify those they wish to finance. <p>The observatory is also expected to enhance cooperation among different initiatives, create economies of scale, maximize efficiency and provide concrete and tangible inputs to Governments. In accordance with the initial project plan, the first phase of the observatory will be ready and operational in autumn 2018 with infrastructure projects from SPECA countries included.</p>
International Conference on Making Euro-Asian Transport Corridors Operational, UNECE	3 September 2018 Geneva, Switzerland	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	The conference targeted senior-level representatives of Euro-Asian Transport Links countries (many of which are Landlocked Developing Countries) but also private sector, shippers, rail operators, road transport associations, investment banks as well as representatives of international organizations. Focus of the discussions was on how to further facilitate the development of Euro-Asian

			corridors, eliminate if possible any non-physical obstacles and make inland transport a major contributor to the economic development and trade facilitation. Representatives from key private companies that already perform transportation services along EATL corridors shared their experience, lessons learnt and challenges that they still facing.
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IV. Trade – Objective: The major objective of the Working Group on Trade is to foster regional cooperation to promote global and regional trade and investment for development of the SPECA participating countries. In particular this should be achieved through subregional cooperation in: (i) capacity-building in the areas of trade facilitation and development; regulatory harmonization; agricultural quality standards; investment policy; and supply-side capacity-building, including identification of funding modalities; (ii) assisting preparations for WTO accession; effective implementation of WTO commitments or participation in the multilateral trade negotiations, as noted in the Ashgabat Statement from 13 May 2016, (iii) providing institutional support for the SPECA Aid-for Trade Initiative, as outlined in the Baku Ministerial Declaration from 1 December 2010; (iv) strengthening and consolidating regional and bilateral trade agreements in the SPECA region; (v) designing institutional arrangements that engage all relevant stakeholders, notably in developing public-private cooperation for trade and investment development and facilitation; (vi) developing an innovation-driven trade diversification agenda (including the use of ICT and electronic business standards); (vii) identifying best practices to build institutions and mechanisms to support productive trade and investment; (viii) creation of a larger regional market through integration into global and regional supply chains, with focus on capacity development of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the encouragement of FDI; (ix) assistance in the implementation, harmonization and alignment with international trade facilitation standards and instruments, including the Single Window; (x) strengthening trade research capabilities and forging effective linkages among SPECA trade research institutions; (xi) forging synergies among various activities in the above-mentioned areas by UNECE and ESCAP and other international agencies.

The thematic orientation of the activities of the WG on Trade includes: (i) trade development and facilitation; (ii) promotion of trade facilitation norms, standards and best practice recommendations; (iii) public-private cooperation for trade facilitation; (iv) regulatory harmonization, market surveillance and risk management; (v) agricultural commercial quality standards; (vi) investment and trade development; and (vii) other areas of competence of UNECE and ESCAP related to the development of trade, regional markets and harmonization of standards in these areas.

Name of Activity	Time & venue	Participating countries	Major results
12 th session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade, UNECE and ESCAP	19 September 2018, Almaty, Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	<p>Progress on four key deliverables of the WG for the next years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPECA regional strategy for trade facilitation: draft ready for consultation with Governments; • Regional cooperation for the achievement of SDGs related to trade (background paper reviewed); • Linking water management, trade and environment in Central Asia (background study discussed); • Non-tariff measures in trade in the SPECA region (ESCAP) <p>Policy recommendations adopted focusing on the following SDG targets: 17.10 and 17.11.</p>
UNECE support for the readiness assessment and implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in Kazakhstan), UNECE	January 2018, Geneva, Switzerland	Kazakhstan	As a result, on 17 July 2018, Kazakhstan notified to the WTO on its readiness to implement category B and C measures using these advisory services and the results of the UNECE-led study on the readiness of Kazakhstan to implement the TFA.
Seminar on the readiness assessment of Azerbaijan to implement the TFA, UNECE	21-22 June 2018, Baku, Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	The seminar helped the Government of Azerbaijan to prepare for the WTO accession negotiations on the TFA, and to prepare for action on the implementation of the unfulfilled measures. It prepared the ground for an interagency, public-private national committee for trade facilitation in Azerbaijan. This project is a contribution to SDG 17.10: Promote the universal, rules-based, trading system.

<p>Series of workshops to improve the know-how of Trade Ministry officials, customs officials, the traders including micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and women entrepreneurs on supply chain management, business process analysis, and e-business tools like Single Window development that can be used to submit import-export documents for regulatory purposes, UNECE</p>	<p>June 2018 Bishkek, Osh and Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyzstan</p>	<p>Kyrgyzstan</p>	<p>The Government of Kyrgyzstan expressed its gratitude for these seminars and agreed on priorities for further action.</p>
<p>Three-day training on trade facilitation for SPECA and other countries to raise the capacity of senior experts from these countries to achieve tangible results in trade facilitation, UNECE</p>	<p>24-26 July 2018, Dushanbe, Tajikistan</p>	<p>Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan</p>	<p>Participants (middle to senior level managers from ministries of economy and trade, Customs and other regulatory agencies and the business community in the six countries) improved their capacity to analyze TF issues discussed at the seminar, identify solutions; successful inclusion of Uzbekistan in these regional training events; ways for improving regional cooperation in trade and developing cross-border supply chains in the SPECA subregion identified.</p>

<p>Implementation of the project “Strengthening the national capacity of trade-support institutions of Kyrgyzstan”, UNECE</p>	<p>2018, Bishkek and Osh, Kyrgyzstan</p>	<p>Kyrgyzstan</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training materials on risk management in regulatory systems, conformity assessment and market surveillance were developed in English and Russian. 2. Two training courses were organized in order to build capacity for the implementation of a risk-based approach for regulatory authorities, business associations, conformity assessment bodies and market surveillance institutions (in Bishkek and Osh). 3. Additionally, two train-the trainer courses were held resulting in the creation of a group of trainers who have necessary skills to conduct risk management trainings 4. Advisory services for applying a risk-based approach in regulation and market surveillance were given to all relevant institutions.
<p>Assistance to the Governments in establishing a comprehensive database of applied non-tariff measures (NTMs) using the internationally recognized United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) administered Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) classification system, UNECE</p>	<p>Throughout the reporting period</p>	<p>Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan</p>	<p>With the support of the UNECE and UNCTAD, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan experts created national sets of NTMs in accordance with the UNMAST classification system 2017. The datasets were validated in 2018 and published online at http://i-tip.unctad.org/. The database assisted the two countries in identifying non-compliant NTMs. Reports to this effect were prepared by the UNECE in consultation with the Governments and presented to the UNECE inter-governmental body on trade capacity and standards SCTCS in 2018.</p>

Implementation of the multi-year training project for producers of apricots in the three countries sharing the Fergana Valley to combine the harvest in a cross-border production scenario, increase export opportunities and provide the Valley's family farmers with employment and sustainable income, UNECE	Throughout the reporting period	Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan	Objective: Bringing together the three Fergana Valley countries to cooperate on cross-border supply chains for the production, processing and exportation of dried apricots that are compliant with international standards.
Implementation of the UNDA-financed project on increasing the quality of agricultural produce as a way to prevent and mitigate post-harvest losses, UNECE	Throughout 2018	Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan	Technical work under the project started in January 2018.

V. Statistics – Objectives: The objectives of the SPECA Working Group on Statistics, as set out in the revised Terms of reference, adopted at its 10th session in 2015, are:

- Promote and coordinate capacity-building programmes and activities in SPECA countries;
- Promote the compliance of national statistical methodology and dissemination practices with international guidelines and recommendations;
- Stimulate the exchange of best national practices among SPECA countries; and
- Secure funds and technical assistance for statistical capacity-building operations from multilateral and bilateral donors.

Name of Activity	Time & venue	Participating countries	Major results
Defining the boundaries of the national statistical system, including between administrative and statistical data (this challenge is increased by the need for national	July 2018	Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan	Azerbaijan (financed by EFTA) and Kyrgyzstan (financed by UNECE) were invited to a High-Level Seminar on this topic organised by EFTA and Eurostat in July 2018. Progress on this topic will be reviewed at the 2018 session of the

statistical organisations to coordinate national data from various sources for SDG statistics.), UNECE			Working Group on Statistics to see if further activities are needed.
How to use geospatial information and integrate it with statistical information, particularly in the context of the 2020 round of population and housing censuses, UNECE	2018	All SPECA countries	This topic will be treated in more detail at the October 2018 session of the Working Group on Statistics. The particular case of geospatial information for population and housing censuses will be treated at the UNECE meeting of the Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses in September 2018. UNECE has secured financial support from EFTA and UNFPA for participants from SPECA countries to attend this meeting and learn from international best practices. In the meantime, UNECE has been developing a strategic partnership with the European Group of the UN initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Europe), with a result that all UNECE member countries are now invited to participate in UN-GGIM: Europe activities. The partnership agreement also includes provision for joint capacity-development activities, including a workshop on integrating statistical and geospatial information, which is planned for 2019. This workshop will follow-up on issues identified at the 2018 session of the Working Group on Statistics.
Practical experiences of implementing the Generic Statistical Business Process Model, UNECE	Ongoing	All SPECA countries	UNECE, as custodian of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model, is preparing capacity development activities, linked with the release of an updated version of the model in 2019.

			UNECE also provided funding for Kyrgyzstan to present experiences in implementing the model, at a workshop on this topic in Albania in summer 2018. This topic has also been added to the agenda for the Eurostat High-Level Seminar for EECCA Countries and Mongolia, to be held in Ukraine in October 2018.
National reporting platforms for SDG statistics, UNECE	April 2018	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	This topic was covered in a UNECE Workshop on Reporting and Communicating SDG Statistics, attended by 5 SPECA countries in April 2018.
Good practices in coordination across national governments to produce SDG statistics, UNECE	April 2018	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	This topic was covered in a UNECE Workshop on Reporting and Communicating SDG Statistics, attended by 5 SPECA countries in April 2018.
Managing statistical quality, including the quality of data from non-statistical sources	June 2018	All SPECA countries	This topic was covered at the European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics, organised by Eurostat in June 2018. Funding was provided by the organisers for Azerbaijan to attend and share experiences on this topic.
Support for updating statistical laws, UNECE	Ongoing	All SPECA countries	UNECE has developed and published (in 2016) a Generic Law on Official Statistics for EECCA countries, in English and Russian. This was followed by “Guidance on Modernising Statistical Legislation”, which was endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians in June 2018. Bilateral support has been provided to Kyrgyzstan for re-drafting their statistical legislation, in cooperation with the UN Statistical Division.

Disaggregation of data for SDG indicators, UNECE and ESCAP	2018	All SPECA countries	This topic is planned to be treated under the UN Development Account 10 th tranche Programme on Statistics and Data, being implemented jointly by ten UN Secretariat bodies including UNECE and ESCAP.
Implementing the SDMX (Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange) standard, UNECE	April 2018	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	This topic was also covered in the UNECE Workshop on Reporting and Communicating SDG Statistics, attended by 5 SPECA countries in April 2018.
Data integration methods and practices, particularly when there are several potential sources, UNECE	November 2017 and December 2017, Almaty, Kazakhstan	All SPECA countries	This topic was treated at a Workshop on Integrating non-traditional data sources in the production of the SDG indicators. This workshop was jointly organised by UNECE, the UN Statistical Division and the UN Environment Programme. It was funded from the UN Development Account 10 th tranche, which enabled the participation of representatives of SPECA countries. The topic was also treated at an Expert Seminar on Integrated Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals, held in Bangkok, Thailand in December 2017.

VI. Knowledge-based development: Objectives: The main objectives of the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based development (WG on KBD) are: (i) to promote and support policies on knowledge-based development; (ii) to facilitate cooperation in the initiatives related to knowledge-based development between SPECA countries and other regional initiatives; (iii) to support and coordinate capacity-building and institutional strengthening activities and programmes related to knowledge-based development in the SPECA countries; (iv) to serve as a forum for discussion on issues related to knowledge-based development, including information and communication technologies (ICT) related policy and regulatory issues.

Thematic orientation of the activities of the WG on KBD includes: (i) ICT for development; (ii) promoting innovation and innovative development; (iii) supporting knowledge-based competitiveness; (iv) financing ICT infrastructure and innovative development; (v) commercialization and protection of intellectual property; (vi) public-private partnerships; and (vii) knowledge-based disaster risk reduction and management.

Name of Activity	Time & venue	Participating countries	Major results
Elaboration of the Innovation Strategy to Promote Sustainable Development in the SPECA Region, UNECE	Throughout the reporting period	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	The work in developing the Innovation Strategy is carried out in accordance with the Recommendation 8 of the 2017 SPECA Economic Forum adopted by the SPECA Governing Council at its 12 th session held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in December 2017.
The 5th Regional Internet Government Forum, ESCAP	7 December 2017, Baku, Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	Enhanced awareness and interest from participants on ESCAP effort towards enhancing broadband connectivity in North and Central Asia, through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative.
The Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Group Meeting, Joint session of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Group Meeting and seventh meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway Network, ESCAP	12-13 December 2017, Bangkok, Thailand	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan	Recognized and enhanced knowledge that the co-deployment of optical-fibre cables along transport infrastructure networks had the potential to strengthen information and communications technology (ICT) connectivity.
Expert group meeting on Statistical Geospatial Data and Indicators for the SDGs, ESCAP	31 January - 1 February 2018, Almaty, Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	Strengthened knowledge and awareness on conceptual framework, existing models and methodologies for development of combined statistical and geospatial data and indicators, as analytical tools to monitor and report the progress of the implementation of disaster-related SDGs.

			The statistical and geospatial data and indicators contributed to statistical accuracy of the already established SDG indicators, the ESCAP Regional Roadmap for the SDGs and the UNGGIM Global Statistical Geospatial Framework.
Twelfth session of the UNECE Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-private Partnerships, UNECE	26-28 March 2018, Geneva, Switzerland	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	The Committee welcomed the findings and policy recommendations from the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Kyrgyzstan 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 review is currently being finalised and edited as an official UN publication.
Workshop on strengthening technology transfer in countries in Central Asia, ESCAP, UNECE and Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) of ESCAP and the National Agency for Technological Development (NATD) of Kazakhstan, ESCAP	30-31 May 2018, Astana, Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	Increased knowledge and awareness of innovation for sustainable development, technology transfer mechanisms, challenges and opportunities for SMEs, demand and support policies in support of international technology transfers, technology transfer evaluation, intellectual property rights issues, and international technology transfer platforms.
Regional Workshop “Innovation Strategy, Technology Applications and Infrastructure for the SDGs”, UNECE	4-5 July 2018, Baku, Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	See Annex of the Report of the 10 th session of the SPECA WG on KBD for a summary of discussions during the Regional Workshop. Sharing of best practices on innovation policies and innovation technology applications for sustainable development. A draft outline of a SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development was discussed, with feedback from participants to be incorporated into this draft outline.

10 th session of the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development, ESCAP and UNECE	5 July 2018, Baku, Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	The session approved its progress report since the ninth session, adopted its updated Programme of Work for 2018-2019 and adopted its decisions. In relation to the draft outline of a SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development, the WG welcomed the draft outline of an innovation strategy to promote sustainable development in the SPECA region. The WG noted the active and productive discussion of the Strategy that took place during the regional workshop and requested that these discussions be reflected in an updated draft outline to be submitted to the next session of the SPECA Governing Council for its consideration, which will be held in Almaty, 21 September 2018. The WG recommended the nomination of national focal points for the innovation strategy.
2nd session of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Steering Committee and WSIS regional review, ESCAP	27–28 August 2018, Bangkok, Thailand	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan	Increased knowledge and awareness of the broadband connectivity for sustainable development, fourth industrial innovation. Also identified challenges and opportunities on promoting national and cross-border broadband connectivity in line with the AP-IS strategic initiatives. and discussed the elements of subregional implementation plans.

VII. Gender and economy – Objectives: The main objectives of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and Economy are: (i) to raise awareness among all stakeholders on gender and economy issues and exchange good practices in mainstreaming gender into economic policies; (ii) to develop pilot projects in selected areas such as financing and other support measures for women’s entrepreneurship and gender budgets; and (iii) to promote cross-sectional linkages and synergies with other relevant areas of the SPECA activities, such as statistics, trade and ICT.

Name of Activity	Time & venue	Participating countries	Major results
Annual session of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and Economy, UNECE & ESCAP	19 September 2018, Almaty, Kazakhstan	SPECA countries	The meeting reviewed the activities over the period 2018; shared examples of gender-transformative economic policies to address gender gaps in the countries of SPECA; and identified priorities for subregional cooperation on the implementation of SDG 5 and its mainstreaming into other SDGs.
Capacity-building activities to support women's economic empowerment as part of 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, UNECE	throughout the reporting period	SPECA countries	Key results are increased capacity for specific skills to equip women with tools and make them competitive at the markets, networking and communicating, and broadened knowledge of the development agenda and how to better implement it through at local level.
International training workshop "Economic Empowerment of Women", UNECE	22 April - 11 May 2018, Haifa, Israel	SPECA countries	The workshop broadened the horizon of the participants in business creation and business development through getting them acquainted with new tools and approaches to business models generation and marketing strategies, digital strategies and planning framework, business psychology and budgeting.
International Workshop "Supporting Women Entrepreneurs through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and networking", UNECE	13-30 August 2018, Haifa, Israel	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	The International workshop contributes to capacity-building for women entrepreneurs through upgrading their skills in using new information and communication technologies. In addition, it provides support on how to network and create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs in doing business in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

Roundtable on “SDGs and women entrepreneurship: challenges and opportunities”, UNECE	13-30 August 2018, Haifa, Israel	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	The role of women entrepreneurship in supporting the achievement of the SDGs in the countries of Central Asia was discussed.
Workshop “Women and the ICT: impact on SDGs”, UNECE	13-30 August 2018, Haifa, Israel	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	Participants proposed various ways to better incorporate their entrepreneurship activities to advance sustainable growth, innovation and aim at social goals.

VIII. Other activities related to the work of SPECA

Name of Activity	Time & venue	Participating countries	Major results
Regional Interim Workshop on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia, UNDA project, UNECE	20-23 February 2018, Tbilisi, Georgia	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan	Interim review of all national criteria and indicators sets for sustainable forest management.
National coaching workshop for Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management for Kyrgyzstan, UNDA project, UNECE	25-26 April 2018, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyzstan	Advanced draft of the national criteria and indicator set for sustainable forest management for Kyrgyzstan.
Preparatory meeting for the Ministerial Roundtable on Forest Landscape Restoration under the Bonn Challenge, UNDA project, UNECE	27 April 2018, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	Briefed country delegates on the pledging process for forest landscape restoration under the Bonn Challenge.
Ministerial Roundtable on Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge in the Caucasus and	21-22 June 2018, Astana, Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	2.5 million ha of forest landscapes were pledged to be restored by 2030 under the Bonn Challenge.

Central Asia, UNDA project, UNECE			
National coaching workshop for Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management for Uzbekistan, UNDA project, UNECE	8-10 August 2018, Tashkent, Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan	Advanced draft of the national criteria and indicator set for sustainable forest management for Uzbekistan.