

Summary Assessment

Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation Third Session 19-20 August 2020

I. Introduction

The third session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation took place from 19-20 August 2020 in a hybrid mode due to the COVID-19 and related travel restrictions in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

A questionnaire assessing the relevance, effectiveness and quality of the meeting was distributed to each delegation of ESCAP members and associate members. The main purpose of this assessment is to support the secretariat's ongoing efforts to improve its servicing of the session.

II. Attendance

The third session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation was attended by 60 per cent of all ESCAP members and associate members (37 of 62). Some 25 of delegations (69 per cent) were headed by officials from the respective capital, including 6 participants at ministerial level. In total there were 196 individual participants, of whom 59 were female (30 per cent).

A number of other entities participated, including United Nations bodies and agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. From these entities, there were 44 participants of whom 20 were female (45 per cent). Therefore, the total number of participants from both governments and other entities was 280 individuals and the total number of female participants was 79 (33 per cent).

III. Respondent's Profile

A total of 68 individual respondents from 32 member countries shown in the table below completed the questionnaire. Of this total, 16 respondents participated in-person and 52 participated virtually. 47 respondents were male, 20 were female and 1 person preferred not to indicate.

SEA	SSWA
Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
NEA	Pacific
China, DPRK, ROK	Fiji, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa

NCA	Others
Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	-

IV. Preparatory dry-test session (for the participant via online platforms)

More than half of the respondents personally participated in the dry test session organized by the secretariat. More than half of the respondents used the same equipment in both dry test session and the Committee session, and joined the meeting using earphones as advised in the Technical Guide.

Please rate your agreement of the following statements	YES	NO
I personally participated in the dry test session organized by the secretariat	55.7% %	44.3%
Someone from my office/team participated in the dry test session organized by the secretariat	41.5%	58.5%
The same equipment was use in dry test session and in the Committee session	67.3%	32.7%
I joined the meeting using a headset/earphone as advised in the Technical Guide	67.2%	32.8%

V. Relevance

Overall, respondents agreed that the agenda items reflected the present development trends and issues in the Asian and Pacific region. The respondents also agreed that the issues discussed were useful for their government/organization. The rating is slightly lower on the discussion related to gender issues and concepts.

Please rate your agreement of the following statements	Ratings
The issues discussed reflected the present development trends/issues in the Asia-Pacific region	Average: 4.3
The issues discussed were useful for my government/organization	Average: 4.3
The meeting discussed related gender issues and concepts	Average: 3.7

VI. Effectiveness

The respondents agreed that the meeting effectively enhanced their knowledge of the issues discussed; promoted regional cooperation and networking among participants; the facilitators effectively engaged with participants in discussion; and the meeting documents and presentations were of high quality, concise and clear. However, the respondents gave a slightly lower rating on time available for discussion.

Please rate your agreement of the following statements	Ratings
The meeting effectively enhanced my knowledge of the issues discussed	Average: 4.3
The meeting effectively promoted regional cooperation and networking among participants	Average: 4.1
The facilitators effectively engaged with participants in discussions	Average: 4.1
Enough time was available for discussion	Average: 3.9
The meeting documents and presentations were of high quality, concise & clear	Average: 4.2

VII. Efficiency

Generally, the respondents rated positively on the efficiency of the meeting, in particular, they highly agreed that the meeting was organized in a timely manner and according to the programme; and that the communications from ESCAP to the member States on the preparation for the meeting were effective.

Please rate your agreement of the following statements	Ratings
I am satisfied with the administrative and logistical arrangement of the meeting	Average: 4.2
The meeting was organized in a timely manner and according to the programme	Average: 4.3

The communications from ESCAP to the member States on the preparation for the meeting were effective	Average: 4.2
The duration of the meeting was appropriate	Average: 4.0

VIII. Performance of the virtual tool

Overall, the respondents were satisfied with the technology, in particular the technical support from the secretariat during the meeting. The rating was lower on the Internet connectivity, including audio and video quality.

Please rate your agreement of the following statements	Ratings
The virtual tool was easy to use	Average: 4.3
I was able to hear others clearly (audio quality)	Average: 3.9
I was able to see other clearly (video quality)	Average: 3.9
Internet connectivity is satisfactory	Average: 3.9
The duration of the virtual meeting was appropriate	Average: 3.9
The screen sharing feature was effective	Average: 4.2
Interaction tools (live polls, Q&A etc) were used effectively	Average: 3.9
Adequate technical support from ESCAP was provided during the meeting	Average: 4.2

IX. Comments and suggestion received

The results achieved through this meeting indicated by respondents included:

- Many participants expressed that the third session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation was very fruitful and effectively organized, despite the COVID-19 situation.
- Participants assessed that the meeting was a knowledge sharing platform where countries' best practices could be shared to promote digital inclusion, innovation and e-Government.
- Participants had clearer awareness and increased knowledge on current activities and initiatives, which were carried out by the secretariat and the member States. The strengthened knowledge would be applied for their respective departmental work and shared with colleagues. Furthermore, participants expressed a willingness to continue cooperation with UNESCAP and member States notably on promoting seamless regional Internet infrastructure for better access to information and

knowledge. Participants also recognized the role of space technologies for disaster risk reduction.

- Participants supported accelerated implementation of the 2nd phase actions of AP-IS for inclusive tech and innovation policy development. The guidelines for inclusive STI policies for SDGs are required to develop for the sub-programme of the period 2020-2022.
- Participants highlighted that Internet broadband increasing for affordability and accessibility including the regional IXPs needs to be strengthened for member States in the region. More regional cooperation among member States is also important to promote ICT and RS/GIS.
- Participants expressed that the support for the promotion of Inclusive Innovation Policies needs to be strengthened from countries and across the Asia Pacific region, with a priority on grassroots innovation.
- Participants also renewed the commitment to implementing the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications (2018-2030). Enhanced regional cooperation amongst member States and international organizations on the use of space applications and geospatial information systems is important for sustainable development.
- Participants requested the ESCAP secretariat to continue the support for member States in developing inclusive technology and innovation policies, facilitating the sharing of best practices and learning in the region.
- Participants recognized innovative business models and practices, such as social enterprises, inclusive businesses and impact investing, as important sources of innovation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. At the national level, the Committee recommended that the secretariat continue to support member States, upon request, to develop policy initiatives and capacities.

Suggestions:

- ✓ For using virtual modality, some difficulties were experienced with the KUDO platform. Need to improve video conference facilities.
- ✓ Please send draft documents to member States in advance. Share the points of discussion and ppt files in advance for pre-consideration.
- ✓ In terms of effectiveness, looking forward to offline meetings in Bangkok.
- ✓ The meeting needs more time.

X. Conclusion

Overall, delegations agreed that the third session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation was well organized and fruitful. The session was generally relevant to the needs of the region, especially in highlighting regional connectivity, addressing digital divide including understanding recent trends and key issues, highlighting inclusive technology and innovation policies, and showcasing policies to enable innovative business models and practices. The efficiency of the session also received positive feedback, in particular, the servicing and organization of the session by the secretariat, as well as the communications between the secretariat and member States. Some issues such as gender balance in the field of ICT/STI and the allocated time for discussions during the session may need more consideration in future sessions.
