

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**
Committee on Trade and Investment**Sixth session**

Bangkok, 13–15 March 2019

Items 8 and 9 of the provisional agenda**

**Recent activities of the secretariat and associated results
pertaining to trade and investment under the
subprogramme on trade, investment and innovation****Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme on
trade, investment and innovation in trade and investment
and the strategic direction of the Committee on Trade and
Investment****Recent activities and priorities for future work of the
secretariat in the area of trade and investment under the
subprogramme on trade, investment and innovation****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document provides an update on the recent activities of the secretariat related to the implementation of subprogramme 2 on trade, investment and innovation of the programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the results achieved in that regard since the fifth session of the Committee on Trade and Investment, which was held from 31 October to 2 November 2017. It provides a summary of progress made on work focusing on (1) research and analysis, (2) technical assistance and capacity-building, and (3) regional cooperation and normative work. The document also contains a review of possible priority areas for future work.

The Committee is invited to review the work and results of the secretariat and provide guidance and direction for further development of the subprogramme.

I. Introduction

1. Promoting regional cooperation is the key mandate of the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development are at the centre of the Commission's work under subprogramme 2 on trade, investment and innovation. The objective of this work is to assist member States in harnessing

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** ESCAP/CTI/2019/L.1/Rev.1.

trade, investment, innovation, technology and enterprise development for sustainable development and regional cooperation for shared prosperity.

2. To achieve this objective, the secretariat functions in three main ways: (a) as a think tank¹ providing research and analysis for evidence-based policymaking and consensus building; (b) as a development partner providing technical assistance and capacity-building to government officials and other stakeholders; and (c) as a convener of the region's Governments and other stakeholders to enable regional cooperation, dialogue and networking. A summary of the portfolio of products and activities associated with trade and investment is provided in the figure.

Figure

Portfolio of products and activities under the subprogramme in the areas of trade and investment

Research, analysis and consensus building	<i>Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report</i>	<i>Studies in Trade, Investment and Innovation</i>	<i>ESCAP Trade Insights and Working Paper series</i>	ESCAP-World Bank Trade Costs Database	Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Agreements Database	United Nations Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation 2017 Database
	Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT)	Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum	Asia-Pacific Business Forum	United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT)	Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week	Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) on Foreign Direct Investment
Technical assistance and capacity-building	Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) Empirical Trade Analysis Training	Trade Intelligence and Negotiation Adviser	Guides, workshops and masterclasses through the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT)	Handbooks on negotiating development-friendly trade and investment agreements	Development Account projects	World Trade Organization - ESCAP Technical Assistance Programme

¹ ESCAP will be listed for the first time among international economic think tanks in the forthcoming *2018 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*, produced by the University of Pennsylvania, United States of America.

Regional cooperation mechanisms	Committee on Trade and Investment	Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation and Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific	Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement	Regional Organizations Cooperation Mechanism for Trade Facilitation
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3. The present document contains an overview of activities of the secretariat related to the implementation of the subprogramme on trade, investment and innovation since the fifth session of the Committee on Trade and Investment, held from 31 October to 2 November 2017.² The present document contains information on the main results achieved, but it should be read together with the other documents prepared for the Committee that indicate challenges economies in the Asia-Pacific region are facing in trade and investment. The conclusion of the present document contains proposals for consideration by the Committee to scale up commitments and support for trade and investment in the context of sustainable development. In this regard, the present document may be read in conjunction with document ESCAP/CTI/2019/8 on the strategic direction of the Committee on Trade and Investment.

II. The Commission's role as a think tank

A. Providing research and analysis for evidence-based policymaking

4. Evidence-based policymaking rests on the availability of high-quality quantitative and qualitative research. To this end, the secretariat has produced several studies on emerging and ongoing policy issues in the region. The secretariat has contributed to building reliable data sets and improving methodological approaches for applied research. While the focus has been on providing assistance for evidence-based policymaking to the countries with special needs, the secretariat has also responded to the needs of middle-income countries in the area of trade and investment.

5. Much of the research agenda since the fifth session of the Committee was motivated by several broad priority themes identified in the programme of work and by demands for technical assistance from member States:

- (a) Understanding the impact of a surge in trade tensions among the major trading nations and the fallout for the economies in the region;
- (b) Understanding the scope and impact of non-tariff measures and their linkages to sustainable trade and investment;
- (c) Monitoring the evolution of preferential trade and investment liberalization and facilitation and regional integration;
- (d) Supporting the expansion of digital trade;

² The activities and mechanisms of the secretariat to engage the business sector are covered in document ESCAP/CTI/2019/6. Furthermore, the report on activities under the area of innovation was provided at the second session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation which was held from 29 to 31 August 2018.

(e) Supporting sustainable trade and investment including through the compilation and provision of new reliable data sets.

6. Some of the research outputs informed *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2018*³ and the forthcoming 2019 report, which were summarized in documents ESCAP/CTI/2019/1 and ESCAP/CTI/2019/2. Other research outputs were disseminated through publications, reports and commentaries issued by the secretariat as well as partner institutions, such as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).⁴

7. Given the continuing need to make international trade simpler and more inclusive and the rise of digital trade, the secretariat deepened its analytical work in this area. In the study *Digital Trade Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific*, ESCAP estimated the benefits associated with the full digital implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation and cross-border paperless trade. In another study *Embracing the E-commerce Revolution in Asia and the Pacific*, conducted in collaboration with ADB, ESCAP introduced a new analytical framework to assess the level and quality of e-commerce development in the region.

8. Significant efforts have been dedicated to novel research approaches and surveys to compile new data to measure and monitor the trade and investment performance of member States in areas such as trade costs, trade facilitation and paperless trade measures, non-tariff measures, sustainable investment and others. Free access to those databases and data sets is available through the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) (<https://artnet.unescap.org>). Information on some of the databases are presented below.

9. Trade costs, including tariff and non-tariff components, significantly impair developing countries' expansion of trade and their integration into global and regional value chains. The ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database was developed to assist in monitoring aggregate and bilateral trade costs. Regular updates to the database,⁵ combined with trade facilitation indices based on data collected through the ESCAP-led United Nations Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation 2017,⁶ are particularly useful to assess and monitor the extent and impacts of non-tariff measures and regulatory burdens for most of the ESCAP member States.

10. In the *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2019*, the results of research conducted in partnership with UNCTAD will be shared. The aim of this research is to develop an impact index of non-tariff measures to support countries in monitoring progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, the secretariat also developed a web-based open database on tariff concessions, rules of origin and non-tariff measures

³ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.F.3.

⁴ A full list of publications and other resource materials as well as of activities is available in the annex.

⁵ The most recent update includes data from 1995 to 2016 for more than 180 countries. In addition to maintaining the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database, ESCAP issued a value-added trade cost database, based on the joint Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development–WTO Trade in Value Added data, which includes trade cost in services (<https://artnet.unescap.org/databases>).

⁶ See <https://unnexnext.unescap.org/AP-TFSurvey2017/index.html>.

related to the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (www.unescap.org/apta). These data sets will contribute to a better understanding among policymakers of the best policy options for least developed countries and other developing countries to minimize harmful effects of non-tariff measures.

11. In the area of regional integration, the secretariat has provided research and analysis to address the challenges of negotiating and successfully implementing preferential trade and investment agreements. The secretariat's analytical outputs and commentaries have provided insights and policy options on how to deal with possible adverse effects of the complex web of rules associated with multiple preferential trade agreements, known as the noodle bowl phenomenon. The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Agreements Database was developed a decade ago as a tool for both policymakers and analysts to explore the landscape of preferential trade agreements (www.unescap.org/content/aptiad/).

12. In conclusion, the secretariat, with support from partners, including international organizations and research institutions, has contributed to the development of new publications, databases and research tools for analysing the impact of trade and investment policies. This work has made a significant contribution to the body of relevant knowledge products and tools available to the economies in the region.

B. Providing technical assistance and capacity-building

13. The secretariat is also engaged in building the capacity and skills of those involved in making trade and investment policies, negotiating trade and investment agreements and implementing policy changes and reforms.

14. Technical assistance and capacity-building provided by the secretariat cover various topics, including liberalization at the multilateral, bilateral and plurilateral levels, but the common feature of the assistance and advisory services is that they are demand driven. The secretariat responded to government requests by delivering policy advisory services and targeted training in the following areas:

(a) Preparing and coordinating trade and investment policy reforms, preparing countries for trade and investment negotiations, assisting with policy implementation and evaluating impacts of policies. The work covers all major trade policy instruments, such as tariffs, non-tariff measures, subsidies, countervailing measures, anti-dumping practices and regulatory barriers, as well as management of revenue lost as a result of tariff reductions;

(b) Helping countries understand, engage with and benefit from the multilateral trading system as well as helping them with the process of WTO accession (only 38 of ESCAP member States are members of WTO). Issues addressed include liberalization of trade in environmental goods, services trade liberalization, mainstreaming of trade and investment facilitation into development, government procurement and trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights;

(c) Providing information on preferential market access for goods and services from developing and least developed countries, in particular on how to make the most of the opportunities offered by reciprocal as well as non-reciprocal preferential treatment of exports from developing and least developed countries by trading partners (both developed and developing countries, some of which have a duty-free, quota-free regime for exports from least developed countries);

(d) Building competitiveness and promoting diversification of exports through policy advice on how to tackle restrictive rules of origin or other non-tariff measures in order to create meaningful market access and enhance opportunities for intraregional trade and regional integration;

(e) Organizing capacity-building workshops on the implementation of specific trade facilitation measures, including digital customs systems and national single window facilities. Support was also provided for the development of national trade and transport facilitation monitoring mechanisms;

(f) Promoting and facilitating foreign direct investment (FDI) for sustainable development through national workshops in selected countries, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Uzbekistan, based on the *Handbook on Policies, Promotion and Facilitation of Foreign Direct Investment for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*.⁷ The training targeted national level policymakers and officials involved in promoting and facilitating FDI at the subnational level, for example, at the provincial or municipal level. Capacity-building also took place at the annual meetings of the Asia-Pacific Foreign Direct Investment Network for Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries, which has been brought under the umbrella of the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) on FDI.

15. The Trade, Investment and Innovation Division has been at the forefront of using information and communications technology-enabled innovation to deliver advocacy, advisory and capacity-building services and engage with the public. The most recent example is the ESCAP Trade Intelligence and Negotiation Adviser, an online decision-support system on trade negotiation designed to build the capacity of trade negotiators in developing countries in a sustainable manner (<http://tina.negotiatetrade.org/>). The system combines data from a multitude of sources, including the UN Comtrade - International Trade Statistics Database, the WTO tariff database, the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Agreements Database and data from the United Nations Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation 2017, as well as the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database. The central premise behind the creation of the Trade Intelligence and Negotiation Adviser is that much of the analysis conducted to identify trade potential, as well as sectors in which to negotiate tariffs, is laborious and monotonous without clear guidelines or a single repository of data. The system automates most of the data collection and analysis commonly conducted in the preliminary stages of trade negotiations. The advisory board of the Trade Intelligence and Negotiation Adviser includes prominent researchers and trade negotiators who provide expertise on the further development of this tool. Future extensions may include the examination of legal provisions, the addition of non-tariff data, analysis of the impact of graduation from the category of least developed countries and quantifying the impact of tariff reductions.

16. In conclusion, knowledge generated under the research programme is well integrated with the secretariat's capacity-building and technical advisory activities. These activities are demand driven and responsive to the individual needs of member States.

17. When it comes to offering more generic training, a series of handbooks on negotiating sustainable development-friendly provisions in the areas of services trade, intellectual property rights, safeguards and rules of origin has been developed to support capacity-building for the negotiation of

⁷ ST/ESCAP/2786.

next-generation preferential trade agreements. Pending the availability of funding, most of these generic courses can be made available online.

C. Convening the region's Governments and other stakeholders to enable regional cooperation, dialogue and networking

Normative work

18. With respect to promoting regional cooperation in trade and investment, the secretariat has been successful in two key areas: the conclusion of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific and the revitalization of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement.

19. The Framework Agreement is the most recent United Nations treaty on trade and development, signed by five countries (Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China and the Islamic Republic of Iran) and ratified by Azerbaijan. The objective of the Framework Agreement is to promote cross-border paperless trade by enabling the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in an electronic form and facilitating interoperability among national and subregional single window and other paperless trade systems. This would make international trade transactions more efficient and transparent while improving regulatory compliance.

20. Progress made under the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement includes the implementation of the results of the fourth round of tariff liberalization as of 1 July 2018. In implementing the results, the participating States expanded a range of exchanged tariff concessions and increased the margin of preference. Negotiations began in designated working groups in trade facilitation, investment, commercial services and rules of origin.

Knowledge and practice networks

21. Networks aim to enable representatives of Asia-Pacific countries to collaborate, exchange experiences and identify common challenges in the areas of trade, investment and sustainable development.

22. Two of the most mature ESCAP knowledge networks operate in the area of trade and investment: the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) and the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT). Both were established to develop and share expertise on pressing regional challenges in the areas of trade policy, regional integration and trade facilitation in the context of pursuing sustainable development. They particularly focus on capacity development and research relevant to developing countries in the region and have attracted many members, associates and partners.

23. Since 2016, the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) has been featured among the most influential regional think tank networks in the annual *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*. The Network continues to grow; at present, it has 74 member-institutions, 5 core partners, 12 associate partners and 7 collaborating institutions and networks. It currently reaches a community of more than 1,800 individual researchers and has published more than 20 books and reports on policy and more than 180 working papers. Through its capacity-building workshops, the Network has directly trained hundreds of researchers, and by making all training materials freely accessible on its website, it has contributed indirectly to the improvement of skills and knowledge of many more.

24. As economies and societies grow, they continuously adapt to new challenges and conditions. Similarly, the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) must evolve to respond to the changing environment that affects policymakers, analysts, researchers and other stakeholders. As a result, it is evolving as a collaborative platform which will lead to new and broader areas of research beyond trade and investment, to include competitiveness, technology transfer, innovation, inequalities and inclusive growth, and environmental sustainability.

25. More recently, in 2018, the Network expanded by establishing the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Science, Technology and Innovation Policy. Its core partners include the National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Office of Thailand, the Science and Technology Policy Institute of the Republic of Korea and the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) on FDI (subsuming the Asia-Pacific Foreign Direct Investment Network for Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries).

26. The United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT) is a community of experts from developing countries and economies in transition involved in the implementation of electronic trade systems and trade facilitation. Established by ESCAP in 2009, it supports national, subregional and transcontinental single window, paperless trade and other trade facilitation initiatives, including transit transport facilitation. Activities of the Network include the development of tools and guides, capacity-building, knowledge-sharing, regional advisory services, and research and analysis.

27. The Network continues to achieve significant results. More than 430 experts in the Asia-Pacific region are currently registered in the database and more than 1,000 government officials and private sector stakeholders from developing countries, particularly from least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, have benefited from the Network's capacity-building activities since it was established. As of November 2018, more than 50 per cent of ESCAP member States were actively engaged in the development of single window systems for trade facilitation. Officials from more than 20 developing countries have participated in the masterclass on single window implementation, an intensive two-week programme co-organized with the World Customs Organization and the Korea Customs Service. The fourth masterclass was held in Cheon-an, Republic of Korea, from 5 to 14 November 2018.

28. The Network supports the work mandated by the Commission in its resolutions 68/3 and 70/6 on enabling paperless trade and the cross-border recognition of electronic data and documents for inclusive and sustainable intraregional trade facilitation, by providing a ready pool of experts that member States and the secretariat can tap into to facilitate the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.⁸

29. The meetings of the Asia-Pacific Foreign Direct Investment Network for Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries have enabled sharing of knowledge between members and increased connections among policymakers and officials from investment promotion agencies from selected least developed countries and landlocked developing countries in the region.

⁸ The state of implementation of the Framework Agreement is discussed separately in document ESCAP/CTI/2019/3.

The Network has expanded to cover all ESCAP member States. The Network routinely devotes one day to FDI policy and promotion issues and one day to developments in international investment agreements. Meetings of the Network are often organized in partnership with the World Economic Forum, UNCTAD and other partners. Participants in the Network meetings often confirm in person and/or in evaluation questionnaires that the Network is filling a useful role in sharing knowledge and experiences on FDI among countries in the region, and that they would welcome an expansion of the Network.

Regional forums

30. The Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum has been held every two years since 2009 by ESCAP in cooperation with ADB. Different countries have hosted the Forum, which has become the main open platform to exchange information, experiences and practices regarding trade facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region, identify priority areas for regional cooperation and integration, and learn about new tools and services that can increase the efficiency of cross-border transactions. It also promotes regional cooperation and coordination on aid for trade.

31. The Forum has achieved considerable success. More than 500 participants from more than 30 countries, including least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, benefited from the Forum's technical and capacity-building sessions which were held in Wuhan, China, in 2015 and Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 2017. Over the last few years, on average, 90 per cent of the participants reported that their knowledge of trade facilitation and paperless trade increased as a result of their attendance.

32. The Asia-Pacific Business Forum⁹ has evolved as an important annual event for dialogue between the public and private sectors on the role of business in achieving sustainable development. Organized in partnership with the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network, the Forum has attracted interest as the only region-wide forum addressing issues related to business and sustainability. In 2018, the Forum was held in Hong Kong, China, on 10 and 11 April hosted by Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited and supported by the Government of Hong Kong, China. Approximately 600 participants from government, business, civil society, academia and others attended the meeting and discussed partnerships to promote responsible investment, the role of frontier technologies such as financial technologies and artificial intelligence in sustainable development, developments regarding the Digital Silk Road project in support of the Belt and Road Initiative, promotion of impact entrepreneurship, business innovation in disaster risk reduction, enhancing social inclusion through disruptive innovations and smart energy solutions for sustainable development.

III. Lessons learned

33. In the implementation of activities under the subprogramme, the following lessons learned contributed to efforts to plan activities that achieve maximum results and impact:

(a) The involvement of policymakers, the business sector and civil society is crucial to maximize the impact of ESCAP activities and translate

⁹ The report of the proceedings and recommendations of the fourteenth Asia-Pacific Business Forum are available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APBF%202018%20Report-FINAL.pdf.

knowledge into policies. At the same time, the implementation of these activities in partnership with regional or global development partners is important in maximizing impact and avoiding duplication;

(b) Cooperation among experts and networks of experts is important to advance the development of new ideas and innovative policy approaches (based on experience with various organized expert group meetings and existing networks under the subprogramme) and in building cooperation in the area of economic integration, including trade facilitation and investment;

(c) Collaboration between the public and private sectors to facilitate cross-border trade is significant. Such collaboration exists in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region in different formats. It is important for Asia-Pacific developing countries to learn from such cases. Exchange of knowledge, experiences and practices play a key role in enhancing trade facilitation in the diverse Asia-Pacific region;

(d) The participation of a cross-section of key policymakers from relevant national entities and ministries during capacity-building activities is essential to ensure necessary follow-up. Furthermore, capacity-building activities can provide an opportunity to establish dialogue and collaboration between key stakeholders to support the future implementation of policy recommendations;

(e) The sharing of best practices, case studies and experiences among experts and policymakers of member States has been shown to be a valuable means of building capacity by highlighting processes and measures for implementing trade facilitation and investment policy reform;

(f) To promote the implementation of capacity-building measures, it is important that national stakeholders identify gaps as well as the means and national strategies required to address these gaps. Clearly defined strategies can assist in translating knowledge generated through capacity-building activities into policies and measures.

IV. Priority areas for future work under the subprogramme

34. The global and regional policy landscape for trade and investment is rapidly changing. Currently, trade tensions among leading trading partners is disrupting value chains and hubs and triggering the shift of production and supply nodes from established exporting locations to others, mainly in South-East Asia.¹⁰ Through the subprogramme on trade, investment and innovation, the secretariat will continue to respond to the shifting priorities of member States in the area of trade and investment. While keeping the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at centre stage, in particular the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 8, 9 and 17, which are closely associated with the subprogramme, the secretariat will accommodate the shift from a biennial to an annual budget and programming cycle. In this regard, the secretariat proposes the following priority areas for consideration by the Committee:

(a) Promoting the development of digital trade and the digitalization of trade procedures, such as paperless trade and e-commerce, through various modalities, including through the implementation of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific;

¹⁰ This issue is discussed at length in document ESCAP/CTI/2019/1, which provides a summary of the *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2018*.

(b) Promoting intraregional trade through deepening and widening regional integration mechanisms for enhanced market access in merchandise and services trade, including the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement, and the identification and possible reduction and harmonization of non-tariff measures, in particular emerging non-tariff measures related to digitalization;

(c) Promoting responsible business conduct and the identification of policies at the national and regional levels that strengthen linkages between trade and investment and selected Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 8, 9 and 17;

(d) Promoting FDI and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises through enabling sustainable investment and business environments at all levels with a focus on investment facilitation and helping small and medium-sized enterprises integrate more effectively into global and regional value chains;

(e) Promoting stakeholder engagement through established regional cooperation forums such as the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum, the Asia-Pacific Business Forum and the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week as well as the Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum, which will be held for the first time in 2019, and networks such as the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT), the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT) and the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network.

35. The secretariat would continue to work in these priority areas through three established modalities: (a) research and analysis for evidence-based policymaking; (b) technical assistance and capacity-building; and (c) regional cooperation and normative work. It would pursue partnerships at the regional and global level, as appropriate, to forge synergies and avoid duplication. It would pursue these activities within the approved programme of work for 2018–2019 and the proposed programme of work and budget for the year 2020, which is currently in draft form.

36. The above-mentioned areas are based on the current role and functioning of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Under the ongoing initiative of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the future role and focus of the regional commissions is still being considered. The identification of priority areas has implications for the strategic direction of the Committee and therefore the proposals in this document need to be considered in tandem with those made in document ESCAP/CTI/2019/8 on the strategic direction of the Committee.

V. Conclusions and issues for consideration by the Committee

37. Under the subprogramme on trade, investment and innovation, thought leadership is exercised by identifying emerging or neglected issues that are important for developing countries, especially for least developed countries and other countries with special needs, and those developing countries that are caught in the middle-income trap.

38. The Committee is invited to review the present document and proposed future work and role of the secretariat as a major think tank in the region contributing to knowledge as a public good, as a provider of technical assistance and capacity-building, and as a convener of Governments in the region providing them with a platform to strengthen regional cooperation and their regional voice and resilience in a context of global uncertainties.

Annex

Lists of publications, documents and activities since the fifth session of the Committee on Trade and Investment

1. Publications and documents

Handbook on Policies, Promotion and Facilitation of Foreign Direct Investment for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, ST/ESCAP/2768, November 2017

A Handbook on Negotiating Development Oriented Intellectual Property Provisions in Trade and Investment Agreements, ST/ESCAP/2798, November 2017

Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation in ASEAN, ST/ESCAP/2805, November 2017

Digital Trade Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific. Studies in Trade, Investment and Innovation Series, No. 87 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.II.F.10), December 2017

Socially Responsible Business: A Model for a Sustainable Future. Studies in Trade, Investment and Innovation Series, No. 88, ST/ESCAP/2810, December 2017

Services and Global Value Chains: The Asia-Pacific Reality. Studies in Trade, Investment and Innovation Series, No. 89 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.II.F.11), December 2017

“A handbook on safeguard rules for least developed countries”, January 2018

“Is trade policy being effectively used to curb drinking and smoking? Evidence from ASEAN”, ESCAP Trade Insights, No. 21, January 2018

“Single window for trade facilitation: regional best practices and future development”, March 2018

“Trade facilitation and paperless trade implementation in OIC: results of the UN Global Survey 2017”, March 2018

“Trade war: two elephants in a porcelain shop”, ESCAP Trade Insights, No. 22, April 2018

The Role of Asia and the Pacific in Global Governance and Multilateralism, paper prepared for the seventy-fourth session of the Commission on the theme topic “Inequality in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, May 2018

Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation in Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs: Results of the UN Global Survey 2017, May 2018

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Embracing the E-commerce Revolution in Asia and the Pacific*, June 2018

Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2018: Recent Trends and Developments (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.19.II.F.3) December 2018

2. Activities

Activities related to capacity-building

Capacity-building workshop for Mongolia on how to utilize opportunities from Asia-Pacific trade agreement membership, Ulaanbaatar, 15 November 2017

Sustainable islands for the future: multi-stakeholder forum on responsible business practices for sustainable water management on resort islands, Phuket, Thailand, 1 December 2017

International Conference on Cross-border Paperless Trade: Single Window in the Context of New Technological Wave, Moscow, 7 and 8 December 2017

Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT), symposium on preferential trade agreements and inclusive trade, Bangkok, 14 and 15 December 2017

World Trade Organization (WTO)-ESCAP, thirteenth Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) capacity-building workshop on empirical trade analysis: structural gravity estimation and counterfactuals, Bangkok, 18–21 December 2017

International Chamber of Commerce-ESCAP, workshop on international trade finance and development of global value chains, Bangkok, 20 and 21 December 2017

Training workshop on promotion and facilitation of foreign direct investment for sustainable development in Uzbekistan, Tashkent, 20 and 21 December 2017

Capacity-building workshop on cross-border paperless trade facilitation: implications of emerging technologies, Bangkok, 21–23 March 2018

5th meeting of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network, Hong Kong, China, 9 April 2018

Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2018, Hong Kong, China, 10 and 11 April 2018

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, interregional dialogue on sharing good practices on business and human rights, Bangkok, 4–6 June 2018

ADB-ESCAP-WTO, International Conference: Promoting Connectivity for an Inclusive Asia and the Pacific, Tashkent, 27 and 28 June 2018

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)-ESCAP-Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT), capacity-building workshop on non-tariff measures: economic assessment and policy options for development, Bangkok, 3–6 July 2018

International Institute for Trade and Development-ESCAP, policy dialogue on the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, Bangkok, 12 and 13 July 2018

ESCAP-Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT)-International Institute for Trade and Development, regional workshop on trade facilitation and paperless trade, Bangkok, 7–10 August 2018

ADB-ESCAP, Workshop on promoting e-commerce in Asia and the Pacific: a holistic approach, Bangkok, 27 and 28 August 2018

Regional workshop on using evidence-based trade policy for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, Thimphu, 3–5 September 2018

8th meeting of the Asia-Pacific Foreign Direct Investment Network, Bangkok, 25 and 26 September 2018

United Nations Industrial Development Organization-ESCAP, fifth Green Industry Conference for Sustainable Development, Bangkok, 3–5 October 2018

Training workshop on promotion and facilitation of foreign direct investment for sustainable development in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Tehran, 9– 11 October 2018

UNCTAD Non-tariff Measures Week 2018, side event, workshop on reducing the costs of non-tariff measures in North and Central Asia, Geneva, 11 October 2018

World Investment Forum, breakout session on international investment agreements reform and sustainable development: sharing Asia-Pacific experiences, Geneva, 23 October 2018

ESCAP-Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, policy dialogue on transforming small and medium-sized enterprises in South-East Asia, Bangkok, 31 October and 1 November 2018

United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT), fourth masterclass on licenses, permits, certificates and other regulatory requirements in a single window environment, Cheon-an, Republic of Korea, 5–14 November 2018

Regional workshop on evidence-based trade policy making for sustainable development, Bangkok, 27–30 November 2018

Sixth meeting of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network, Bangkok, 3 December 2018

Capacity-building workshop on facilitation of international railway transport to support intraregional and interregional trade, Bangkok, 18 and 19 December 2018

United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT), 3rd Task Force Meeting, Bangkok, 28 January– 1 February 2019 (tentative)

National training course on promoting and facilitating foreign direct investment for sustainable development in Timor-Leste, Dili, 19–21 February 2019 (tentative)

ESCAP-World Intellectual Property Organization, innovation driven development: building national institutional capacities in the least developed countries in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 25–27 February 2019 (tentative)

Youth and Digital Economy, Bangkok, 12 March 2019 (tentative)

WTO-ESCAP, Regional Meeting on Investment Facilitation for Sustainable Development, Bangkok, 12 March 2019 (tentative)

ESCAP-International Organization for Standardization-UNCTAD, workshop on non-tariff measures and international standards for sustainable development, Bangkok, 13 and 14 March 2019 (tentative)

Forum on Trade Digitalization for Sustainable Regional Integration, Bangkok, 14 and 15 March 2019 (tentative)

Workshop on reducing the cost of non-tariff measures in Central Asia, 14 and 15 March 2019 (tentative)

United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT), Task Force on Cross-border Electronic Data Exchange, 15 March 2019 (tentative)

Activities related to normative work

Fifty-second session of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement Standing Committee, Bangkok, 8 and 9 March 2018, and the 1st meeting of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement Working Groups on Trade Facilitation, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services and Investment, Bangkok, 7 March 2018

5th meeting of Legal and Technical Working Groups of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation, Bangkok, 20 and 21 March 2018

4th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation, Bangkok, 22 and 23 March 2018

Fifty-third session of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement Standing Committee, Seoul, 13 and 14 September 2018, and the 2nd meeting of Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement Working Groups on Trade Facilitation, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services and Investment, Seoul, 11–13 September 2018

Fifty-fourth session of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement Standing Committee, Bangkok, 17 and 18 January 2019, and the 3rd meeting of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement Working Groups on Trade Facilitation, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services and Investment, Bangkok, 15 and 16 January 2019 (tentative)

6th meeting of the Legal and Technical Working Groups on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation, Bangkok, 11 March 2019 (tentative)

5th meeting of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation, Bangkok, 12 and 13 March 2019 (tentative)