



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Seventy-sixth session**

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Item 6 (d) of the provisional agenda*

Management issues: report on the evaluation activities of the Commission during the biennium 2018–2019 and outcomes of the evaluation/review of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization and the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management**Report on the review of the establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management pursuant to resolution 71/11****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document is submitted pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 71/11 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in which the Commission decided to assess the performance of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management, on the basis of the findings of an independent, comprehensive review at its seventy-sixth session, and to determine the continuation of operations of the Centre as a regional institution of the Commission thereafter. The present document contains an overview of the independent and comprehensive review of the Centre, which was conducted by an external consultant. At its fourth session, held in Pakistan in February 2020, the Governing Council endorsed the recommendations addressed to the secretariat. The present document also contains the management response and a description of the actions to be taken by the secretariat to address the recommendations in the review.

The Commission may wish to consider the review recommendation on the continuation of the operation of the Centre as a regional institution of the Commission.

* ESCAP/76/L.1/Rev.1.

I. Background

1. In resolution 71/11, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) decided to assess the performance of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management at its seventy-sixth session and to determine the continuation of its operations as a regional institution of the Commission thereafter. In line with that decision, the secretariat commissioned an independent and comprehensive review of the Centre, conducted from October 2019 to February 2020, to inform the Commission's assessment of the performance of the Centre.

2. The review consultant presented the key conclusions and recommendations of the review to the members of the Governing Council of the Centre at its fourth session, held in Islamabad on 20 February 2020. The Governing Council endorsed the recommendations addressed to the secretariat (recommendations 1 to 7 presented in paragraph 13 below). The conclusions and recommendations of the review are excerpted from the full report¹ and included in the present document for the consideration of the Commission. The present document also contains the management response and a description of the actions to be taken by the secretariat to address the recommendations in the review.

II. Purpose and method

3. The aim of the review was to inform the Commission's assessment of the continued substantive relevance and financial viability of the Centre and provide recommendations to ESCAP management and the Commission on how to improve the substantive relevance and financial viability of the Centre, in particular in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and on improving the results-orientation and performance of the Centre.

4. The review was conducted in accordance with the norms, standards and procedures as set out in the ESCAP monitoring and evaluation policy and guidelines² to ensure that the review would be independent, objective and of high quality. It was conducted from October 2019 to February 2020 by Ms. Madhavi Malalgoda Ariyabandu, a senior expert in disaster risk reduction with extensive knowledge of and experience in the Asia-Pacific region.

5. The review included a desk review of relevant documents; consultations with relevant senior government officials and stakeholders of the host country; and consultations with the members of the Governing Council and participating member States, as well as with the national focal points for the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 of the members of the Governing Council. The consultant also sought the views of national, regional and global centres relevant to the Centre's partnership strategy. The review consultant conducted a mission to Bangkok in October 2019, and in December 2019 she conducted a mission to Tehran, where she consulted with officials from the Plan and Budget Organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Iran Meteorological Organization.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

6. The conclusions and action-oriented recommendations of the review underscored the relevance of the Centre and its work in the Asia-Pacific region.

¹ For the full report on the evaluation, see ESCAP/76/INF/4.

² See www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAPME2017.pdf.

The mandate of the Centre remains relevant and has been reaffirmed in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations development system reform. Despite some limitations of an administrative nature, the Centre's accomplishments have been significant during its five years of operation under each of the three thematic pillars for the implementation of its programme of work. Member States consulted in the review noted that the Centre had set several important processes in motion to advance regional and South-South cooperation in disaster information management in pursuit of its intergovernmental mandate.

7. At the operational level, the Centre has enabled the development of analytical frameworks and strategies for risk reduction and resilience-building and has mobilized expertise and networks to address Governments' critical and current disaster risk management needs, thereby positioning itself as a functional resource organization in this domain. Recognizing the complex nature of the current disaster vulnerability and political setting in the Asia-Pacific region, the Governments and stakeholders consulted in the review identified the Centre as a strategically positioned conduit within ESCAP to facilitate intergovernmental dialogue and consensus on issues related to cross-border disaster risk management.

8. The Centre has evolved as an organization proficient in addressing the unmet needs for disaster information management in the Asia-Pacific region, equipped with a clear strategic direction, programmatic focus and governance mechanism. Some of the gaps experienced in the outputs and delivery are attributed to the Centre being in its initiation phase. In light of these achievements, the Centre is in a strong position to move forward as a regional institution of ESCAP.

9. The current geopolitical context of the host country has some implications for the operations of the Centre. Representatives of the member States and stakeholders suggested that in the programme of work for the next phase, due attention should be paid to determining the outputs and their delivery mechanisms. The establishment of the Centre in Tehran and its progressive development in the face of limitations related to the geopolitical context was underscored as a significant achievement from a regional perspective.

10. In the course of the review, the host Government reiterated its five-year financial commitment as outlined in the founding resolution.³ In addition, significant monetary and in-kind contributions have been made over the period covered by the review. However, securing diversified funding sources is needed for greater efficiency and medium- to long-term sustainability.

11. These conclusions are supported by the information derived from the comprehensive desk review of relevant documents, consultations and key informant interviews with the representatives of member States, secretariat staff and relevant national, regional and international organizations. The conclusions are also consistent with the statements and recommendations made at the three Governing Council sessions held between 2016 and 2018.

12. The secretariat expressed its appreciation for the full cooperation that member States, the host Government and other development partners accorded to the review consultant by engaging in constructive interviews and discussions and providing relevant information to address the issues raised in the review. On

³ In its resolution 71/11, the Commission decided to establish the Centre with funding through voluntary contributions from the host Government, including up to a limit of \$50 million during its first five years of operations.

the basis of the review's findings and conclusions, one recommendation was made to the Commission and seven recommendations were made to the secretariat, aimed at improving the Centre's operations, affirming its relevance, enhancing its effectiveness and efficiency and strengthening its sustainability.

13. The following paragraphs contain excerpts from the review recommendations and a description of the actions to be taken by the secretariat to address the recommendations.

Recommendation to the Commission

The mandate of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management as a regional institution of the Commission should be continued. The relevance of the Centre's mandate has increased. The overall performance of the Centre to date, assessed against the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, is satisfactory and indicative of strong potential to contribute to reducing disaster risk through information management in the Asia-Pacific region. The continuation of the operation of the Centre as a regional institution of the Commission is warranted.

14. With regard to the above recommendation, ESCAP welcomes the assessment that the Centre's overall performance has been satisfactory and that it has a strong potential to contribute to reducing disaster risk through information management in the Asia-Pacific region. In this regard, the Commission may wish to consider the continuation of the operation of the Centre as a regional institution of the Commission.

Recommendations to the ESCAP secretariat

Recommendation 1: The secretariat should develop a new multi-year strategic programme of work which considers the priority requirements of the countries in the evolving context and trends with regard to disaster information management in the region.

15. With regard to recommendation 1, ESCAP will develop a results-oriented multi-year strategic programme of work for the next phase of the Centre's work, taking into account the priority outputs and activities identified in the review. The strategic programme of work will be developed in accordance with the objectives and functions contained in the statute of the Centre and will be submitted to the Governing Council for its approval at its fifth session.

Recommendation 2: A partnership strategy and a road map should be outlined in the new strategic programme of work to be approved by the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management, defining niche products and services that closely correspond with the current and future needs of member States.

16. With regard to recommendation 2, ESCAP will develop a partnership strategy as part of the multi-year strategic programme of work for the next phase of the Centre's work. The secretariat concurred with the review finding that strong partnerships are key to improving effectiveness and efficiency. The partnership strategy will be aimed at strengthening existing partnerships and forging new partnerships with United Nations entities and other global and regional development organizations as well as national and international academic and research institutions.

Recommendation 3: Further to the approval of a new multi-year strategic programme of work, the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management should develop and implement a fundraising strategy to diversify funding with a view to increasing its utility and added value for member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

17. With regard to recommendation 3, ESCAP will develop a resource mobilization strategy for the Centre in line with the overall ESCAP resource mobilization strategy and in line with the programmatic requirements of the Centre's multi-year strategic programme of work for adoption at the next session of the Governing Council, to be held in 2021.

Recommendation 4: The integration of the functions and services of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management with the related programmes and activities of ESCAP should be further strengthened.

18. With regard to recommendation 4, ESCAP recognizes the significant benefits of further integrating the work of the Centre with substantive divisions and other regional institutions of ESCAP. In this regard, ESCAP has issued a guidance note and put in place mechanisms for promoting a unified and coherent vision and strategy through more effective cooperation and coordination among its substantive divisions, subregional offices and regional institutions. The secretariat will continue to strengthen existing synergies to leverage efficiencies in administrative functions and to ensure closer linkages between the Centre's functions and services, on the one hand, and the secretariat's policy and technical outputs related to the Sustainable Development Goals, on the other. Those are produced by its substantive divisions and considered at intergovernmental meetings and meetings of subsidiary bodies of ESCAP, such as the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Recommendation 5: The secretariat should pursue outputs and activities that demonstrate the added value, impact, utility and visibility of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management, with a stronger focus on outputs and activities that address the current and medium-term disaster information needs of member States.

19. With regard to recommendation 5, ESCAP has commissioned a comprehensive study to assess baseline, demand and gap analysis of disaster risk data for disaster risk reduction in the high-risk, low-capacity countries in North and Central Asia and South and South-West Asia, to be used as the basis for designing the Centre's information and knowledge repository and capacity development programmes. The regional baseline assessment and scoping study is aimed at obtaining a thorough understanding of the member country requirements with regard to disaster information and an estimate of supply and demand for use as a guide to inform the selection of outputs aligned with the needs of member States as expressed at the Governing Council sessions and expert group meetings and through other thematic consultation mechanisms.

Recommendation 6: The design of the business models and programmes of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management should consider the prevailing geopolitical context of the host country, with a view to exploring how best to leverage technical support available from ESCAP divisions in Bangkok and resource centres in other locations.

20. With regard to recommendation 6, linked with the implementation of recommendation 2 on the partnership strategy and recommendation 4 on the closer integration of the Centre's functions with those of the secretariat in Bangkok and other regional institutions, ESCAP will explore options as noted in this recommendation, taking into account the evolving regional and global geopolitical context.

Recommendation 7: The capacity development approach, outputs and activities should be reviewed and revised to firmly address the capacity needs of member States, confronting the limited impact realized in this area.

21. With regard to recommendation 7, and in line with the decision taken by the Governing Council at its fourth session, the Centre will maintain a broad multi-hazard focus in its capacity-building programme. The regional baseline assessment and scoping study mentioned under recommendation 5 will further inform the detailed programmatic aspect of the Centre's work in this field, in line with the needs of member States as expressed at the Governing Council sessions and expert group meetings and through other thematic consultation mechanisms.
