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Item 4 (d) of the provisional agenda*

Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: disaster risk reduction

Report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management on its sixth session**

Summary

The sixth session of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management was held online on 8 February 2022. The Council addressed the programmatic and technical activities and the administrative and financial issues of the Centre.

The Council acknowledged the report on the activities of the Centre since its fifth session and expressed its satisfaction with the progress made in the implementation of the programme of work of the Centre. The Council endorsed the Centre's revised programme of work 2021–2022.

The Council expressed its deep appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the Centre and providing generous financial and in-kind contributions to the Centre. The Council further expressed its thanks and appreciation to the governments of Cambodia and Macao, China, for providing financial contributions to the Centre.

The Council encouraged the Government of the host country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, to continue providing its valuable support to the Centre. The Council further encouraged the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to mobilize financial and/or in-kind support for the Centre and to take an active role in the delivery of the Centre's programme of work.

The Council endorsed the draft elements for a regional plan of action on sand and dust storms and recommended further consultations with ESCAP member States with a view to submitting the draft regional plan of action to the Commission at its seventy-eighth session, in May 2022, for its consideration and endorsement.

The Council elected Cambodia as its Chair and Turkey as its Vice-Chair until its next regular session. The Council endorsed, with appreciation, the offer made by the Government of Turkey to host its seventh session.

* ESCAP/78/L.1/Rev.1.

** The present document was submitted late owing to the need to finalize substantive and financial information.

I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

1. The following decisions adopted by the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management are brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP):

Decision 1

The Council takes note of the report on the activities of the Centre since the fifth session of the Council and expresses its satisfaction with the progress made in the implementation of the programme of work of the Centre. The Council notes that owing to insufficiency of financial resources, only some activities included in the Centre's programme of work 2021–2022 could be implemented, and endorses the Centre's revised programme of work 2021–2022.

Decision 2

The Council takes note of the administrative and financial status of the Centre. The Council expresses its appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its generous financial and non-financial contributions made so far for the establishment and operation of the Centre. The Council also expresses its thanks and appreciation to the governments of Macao, China, and Cambodia for their valuable contributions to the Centre.

The Council takes note of the current financial status of the Centre. With the disbursement of the contributions received from the host country in November and December 2021, it was possible to extend contracts of the Centre's staff through 2022 and carry out some basic functions without, however, the ability to fully deliver the approved biennium programme of work 2021–2022.

The Council encourages the Government of the host country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, to continue providing its valuable support to the Centre. The Council further encourages the members and associate members of the Commission to mobilize financial and/or in-kind support for the Centre and to take an active role in the delivery of the Centre's programme of work.

Decision 3

The Council endorses the draft elements for a regional plan of action on sand and dust storms and recommends further consultations with member States with a view to submitting the draft regional plan of action to the Commission at its seventy-eighth session, in May 2022, for its consideration and endorsement.

Decision 4

The Council elects Cambodia as its Chair and Turkey as its Vice-Chair until its next regular session. The Council endorses, with appreciation, the offer made by the Government of Turkey to host its seventh session.

Decision 5

The Council, having reviewed the draft of the proceedings circulated to its members after the conclusion of the session, endorses the draft. The Council agrees to submit the full report on its sixth session for endorsement by the Commission at its seventy-eighth session.

II. Proceedings

A. Activities of the Centre since the fifth session of the Governing Council, including the progress on the implementation of the Centre's strategic programme of work and its programme of work for the period 2021–2022

(Agenda item 2)

2. The Council had before it the report on the Centre's activities since its fifth session. The secretariat briefed the Council on the progress in the implementation of the Centre's strategic programme of work and programme of work for the period 2021–2022 which comprised programmes and activities of the Centre under the three long-term outcomes: risk information, information capacity and application, and regional cooperation. In addition to the report on the activities, the secretariat presented the revised programme of work for the period 2021–2022, as the programme of work 2021–2022 that the Council had endorsed at its fifth session was not fully implemented owing to financial constraints.

3. The Council was informed that leveraging partnerships was the key element of the Centre's work, which had been expanded in the past year to include international, regional and national stakeholders, namely the China Meteorological Administration, Tohoku University, the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre, the Finnish Meteorological Institute, the Japan Meteorological Agency, the Global Earthquake Model Foundation, the Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the European Institute on Economics and the Environment, the Spanish National Research Council, the Risk Nexus Initiative, ESCAP Divisions (Statistics, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction, Transport and Energy), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, co-chair with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for the working group on regional cooperation and mediation, the technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones, the Disaster-related Statistics Framework, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)/WMO/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Focus Group on Artificial Intelligence for Natural Disaster Management, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Management Group, and the World Health Organization office in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

4. The Council was informed that under the Centre's first identified long-term outcome, namely ensuring that access to effective disaster risk information is enabled and facilitated at the regional and national level, and to support the United Nations country teams in mainstreaming disaster risk information into country assessments, strategic frameworks and United Nations operations and plans, the Centre had contributed to the development

of a road map to implement the Economic Cooperation Organization Regional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and had initiated a joint project with the Organization on enhancing capacity in its member countries. The Centre had also contributed to the development of the disaster risk reduction and management component of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the Islamic Republic of Iran and had provided advisory services with regard to the development of the Strategy for Development of Cooperation of Countries of Central Asia in Disaster Risk Reduction for 2022–2030 and the Regional Disaster Risk Profile of Central Asian Countries.

5. The Council was further informed that with regard to partnership-building and advocacy efforts to combat sand and dust storms, building on the sand and dust storms risk assessment in Asia and the Pacific, the Centre had advocated the effective use of sand and dust storms information and linkages between disaster risk and socioeconomic fields of analysis in addition to promoting regional and intraregional networking and cooperation. That advocacy was done notably through the Centre's active engagement with the members of the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms throughout the year and particularly co-leading the working group on regional cooperation and mediation, which had led to conducting an intraregional discussion that included various sectors and States members of ESCAP and ESCWA. Furthermore, the Centre had substantially promoted and contributed to awareness-raising and broadening the understanding of the risk of sand and dust storms through information management, vulnerability and risk analysis, data compilation and processing, as well as presenting the impact of sand and dust storms on the various socioeconomic sectors, with specific details on regional and subregional scales. That work included engaging with relevant partners and stakeholders at several high-level international forums, namely the following: fourth training session of the Disaster-related Statistics Framework, organized by the Statistics Division of ESCAP on 22 March 2021; knowledge-sharing and awareness-raising workshop on sand and dust storms in agriculture, organized by FAO on 23 March 2021; workshop on sand and dust storms management and mitigation in Central Asia, organized by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme on 19 May 2021; workshop on space technology applications for drought, flood and water resource management, organized by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, through the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response, and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 10 August 2021; side event, held prior to the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, entitled "Sand and dust storms: a critical climate change adaptation issue", on 30 September 2021.

6. The Council was informed that with regard to building partnerships and advocating disaster and climate risk information and data management for sustainable development, the Centre had participated in high-level international events such as the 5th meeting of the Governing Board of the Global Earthquake Model Foundation, on 17 June 2021. The Centre had discussed with the Global Earthquake Model Foundation the establishment of potential collaborations to develop a risk information and knowledge repository, build capacity for risk assessment and cooperate on a seismic risk assessment for critical infrastructure at the transboundary level. The Centre had also engaged in a regional webinar entitled "Asia-Pacific drought risk dialogue: transforming institutional drought risk management for resilience", organized by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction with the

regional learning platform on climate change adaptation and resilience during the seventh session of Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction (Bangkok and online, 25–27 August 2021). The Centre had also been a member of the organizing team for a session on the science-policy interface at the 2021 European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction, organized by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, the Portuguese National Authority for Civil Protection, the European Commission and the Council of Europe, from 24 to 26 November 2021. The Forum had also been attended by representatives of countries in Central Asia. Moreover, the Centre had joined the ITU/WMO/UNEP Focus Group on Artificial Intelligence for Natural Disaster Management. To support the utilization of disaster risk data for enhancing risk data governance and policy design, the Centre had engaged with the technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific and had contributed to two step-by-step guides, prepared by the ESCAP Statistics Division, on the use of quantum geographic information system software to produce urban hot spot maps and to map population exposure to flood hazards, which were launched at the Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe series on 11 October 2021. The Centre had also actively contributed to the Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe series event on making headways in disaster-related statistics organized by the Statistics Division.

7. The Council was informed that under the Centre's second long-term outcome, namely ensuring that country and regional organizations have the capacity to access, understand and apply disaster risk information towards risk-informed development policies and investments, the Centre had progressed in consultation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction on the selection of countries to receive training and guidance on reporting data on the impact of sand and dust storms through the Sendai Framework monitor, applying the Centre-developed specific guideline which had come to a halt owing to political changes in Afghanistan.

8. The Council was informed that under the Centre's third long-term outcome, namely ensuring that there is effective regional cooperation and coordination to compile, access and apply disaster risk information, the Centre had contributed to increasing the understanding of the transboundary impact of sand and dust storms at the regional level through the launch of the report entitled *Sand and Dust Storms Risk Assessment in Asia and the Pacific* during a side event it had organized entitled "Sand and dust storms risk assessment in Asia and the Pacific: potential for concerted action at the regional level to reduce risk and strengthen resilience" during the seventh session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, on 26 August 2021. The report had received wide media coverage throughout the region from major wire services. The Centre had also conducted on 6 December 2021 an in-depth subregional and thematic consultation with affected countries with a view to developing draft elements for a regional plan of action on sand and dust storms. In addition, the Centre had issued a call for photography of living with sand and dust storms. The Council was also informed that, with a view to delivering an early warning cooperation and coordination mechanism on sand and dust storms for South, South-West and Central Asia, the Director of the Centre was regularly meeting with the Northern Africa-Middle East-Europe steering group of the regional centre of the WMO Sand and Dust Storm Warning Advisory and Assessment System Northern Africa-Middle East-Europe to help to expand the coverage of the system.

9. The Council was informed that the Centre had collaborated with the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies of ESCWA. The Centre and ESCWA had convened on 7 July 2021 an online discussion on enhancing understanding and expanding interregional and regional cooperation on sand and dust storms

in the context of the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms to share national experiences, showcase transboundary cooperation examples and highlight potential for collaboration across various regions. During that discussion, expert representatives from Afghanistan, Tunisia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kuwait had contributed to a panel discussion emphasizing the importance of cooperation and collaboration at the national, regional and interregional levels. Experts from WMO, the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre, the University of Oxford, the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies and the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management had presented information, examples and opportunities with regard to regional collaboration, risks of sand and dust storms in Asia and the Pacific, regional climate projections and applications, data and knowledge gaps, and socioeconomic impacts of sand and dust storms.

10. The Council had before it the revised programme of work for the period 2021–2022, developed on the basis of available resources. The Council was presented with planned deliverables organized into three categories: to be implemented (i.e. to be carried out by 2022 with funding currently available); on-hold (i.e. can be implemented by 2022, provided substantial additional funding is available by April 2022; and cancelled (i.e. cannot be implemented in 2022 owing to lack of necessary action in 2021 and 2022 due to funding constraints.

11. The representative of Mongolia asked whether two additional activities could be reflected in the plan. First, the representative asked if one more activity on post-disaster damage assessment for sand and dust storms, floods and earthquakes could be added, because there was information on disaster damage and its assessment was vital for conducting risk assessment, including in Mongolia. There was a need to update current methodologies and learn from the experience of other countries with the same issues. If it was not possible to include that activity individually in the plan, it was suggested that the secretariat could try to integrate it under deliverable 1.2.1. Second, the representative asked if the establishment of a space-based real-time risk monitoring system at the regional level could be added to share information in an effective and timely manner. Efforts to that end were under way in Mongolia, but the monitoring system was not working effectively. For example, if a country and its neighbouring countries received information about sand and dust storms, they could carry out some preparedness activities at the country and regional levels.

12. The secretariat thanked the representative of Mongolia for the suggestions and affirmed that the Centre would be pleased to take on the suggestions. The post-disaster damage assessment was feasible in the sense that there was already an ongoing process within the United Nations. An additional tool which could be useful in that regard was the “Guideline on Monitoring and Reporting the Impact of Sand and Dust Storms through the Sendai Framework Monitoring”. Indeed, it would be possible to fold the suggestion into deliverable 1.2.1, reflect it in the record and include it in the plans for the current year. With regard to the monitoring and sharing of advanced forecasting, the work was within the activities of the WMO Sand and Dust Storm Warning Advisory and Assessment System. However, the Centre was working very closely with the System and would discuss the matter with WMO to work towards identifying what would be feasible in the current year.

B. Report on the administrative and financial status of the Centre
(Agenda item 3)

13. The Council had before it the report on the administrative and financial status of the Centre. The secretariat briefed the Council on the administrative and financial status of the Centre.

14. In introducing its briefing under the agenda item, the secretariat recalled key background information. The Centre had been established as a regional institution under the auspices of ESCAP. In accordance with its statute, annexed to Commission resolution 71/11 on the establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management, the activities of the Centre were in line with relevant policy decisions adopted by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission and they contributed to the organizational goals of ESCAP. The Centre was subject to the financial and staff regulations and rules of the United Nations and the applicable administrative instructions. The Centre reported its activities to the Commission annually as part of the subprogramme on information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction. The Council had held its fifth session online, hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran, on 26 January 2021. Its report was submitted to and endorsed by the Commission at its seventy-seventh session, in April 2021. At its seventy-fifth session, in May 2019, the Commission elected, together with the host country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the following members and associate members of the Commission as members of the Council for the period 2019–2021: Bangladesh; Cambodia; Fiji; India; Macao, China; Mongolia; Pakistan; and Turkey.

15. The Council was informed that in order to expedite the full operationalization of the Centre, the secretariat and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran had signed on 21 January 2021 the Administrative and Financial Arrangement for the Centre, which set forth the specific arrangements for the Centre in Tehran as a regional institution of ESCAP pursuant to Commission resolution 71/11. The document included the terms and conditions for the occupancy and use of the Centre's premises and the disbursement of the host country financial contribution. The Council was also informed that the secretariat had taken the necessary steps for setting up the Centre in Tehran in close consultation and cooperation with the host Government and with the support of the Resident Coordinator Office in Tehran. Preparations for the office space of the Centre in the Sepand Building in Tehran had been carried out and completed by the host Government in consultation with and under the supervision of the secretariat. The office premises, facilities and equipment were in-kind contributions provided by the host country. Considering the finalization of the preparation of the office in the Sepand Building and its compliance with the minimum operating security standards, the Centre team had moved in in February 2021. The use of the office by the Centre staff during the reporting period had been aligned with the prevailing advice for United Nations staff in Tehran in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

16. The Council was informed that in accordance with its multi-year strategic programme of work (2021–2030) and programme of work for the biennium 2021–2022, on the basis of the availability of financial resources, the Centre's initial team had been running the office. The present team consisted of a Director (D-1), a Senior Programme Officer (P-5), two Project Officers (NOB) and a Programme Assistant (G-5) recruited by ESCAP through extrabudgetary resources. On the basis of the Centre's strategic programme of work adopted by the Council at its the fifth session, and subject to the

availability of funds, the Centre could expand its team in 2022 and beyond in order to fully implement the activities in its approved programme of work. The relocation of the post of Director to Tehran had been set for July 2021 after the successful conclusion of the Administrative and Financial Arrangement on 20 January 2021, but had subsequently been put on hold owing to liquidity issues pending disbursement of the outstanding contributions.

17. The Council was informed that the Centre's programmes and operations were funded by voluntary contributions from members and associate members of the Commission. During the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021, the Centre had received \$1,223,850 in cash contributions. The Centre had used the balance carried forward from previous years to implement some of its programmes and activities in 2021 within the framework of its multi-year strategic programme of work and biennium programme of work 2021–2022. The total cash contributions of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the establishment and programmes of the Centre from 2016 until December 2021 totalled \$5,791,502. In 2021, the Government had made cash contributions to the Centre in the amount of \$159,329 on 7 November 2021 and \$1,052,522 on 8 December 2021. The government of Macao, China, had made a cash contribution of \$10,000 to the institutional support account of the Centre. The Government of Cambodia had made a contribution of \$2,000 to the Centre in 2021. The Centre expressed its deep appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its generous financial and non-financial contributions made so far for its establishment and operation. The Centre also expressed its thanks and appreciation to the governments of Macao, China, and Cambodia for their valuable contributions to the Centre. The Centre's initial proposed budget for the financial year 2021 ending on 31 December 2021 had been \$1,700,000, out of which only the amount of \$849,429 had been approved on the basis of available funds. Its total expenditures for the reporting period until 31 December 2021 had been 96 per cent, equal to \$813,181. Expenditure items included staff and personnel, technical research and publications consultancies, and contractual services.

18. The Council noted the staff move and settling into the Centre's permanent office in the Sepand Building and the completion of the process for the operationalization of the Centre. The Council also noted that with the disbursement of the contributions received from the host country in November and December 2021, it was possible to extend contracts of the Centre's staff through 2022 and carry out some basic functions without, however, the ability to fully deliver the approved biennium programme of work. The Council further noted that the remittance of the full contribution of 2021 to the Centre by the host Government would enable the Centre to continue its functions and activities in 2022 on the basis of the approved programme of work 2021–2022, while the annual contributions for 2022 and 2023 were being processed. Payment of the 2022 contribution, which had been due in October 2021, could be made available before April 2022 and the 2023 contribution in October 2022, in accordance with the Administrative and Financial Arrangement.

19. The Council acknowledged with appreciation the commitment and contributions of the host country, the Islamic Republic of Iran. It encouraged members and associate members of the Commission to mobilize financial and/or in-kind support for the Centre and take active roles in the delivery of the Centre's programme of work.

20. The representative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran thanked the secretariat for the detailed report on the administrative and financial status of the Centre and asserted that the Islamic Republic of Iran

attached great importance to the work of the Centre and its objectives. The representative said that the Government had put a great deal of effort and energy into mobilizing the resources required for the continuation of the activities of the Centre, despite the fact that the country was under severe constraint due to the sanctions imposed by the United States of America, which affected the ability of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to provide funding adequately in due time, and that the Government had been able to disburse the required resources with some delay. The representative emphasized that the Government had been successful in mobilizing and providing the funds to the ESCAP account in Tehran and said that the Centre was in a position to go forward and continue with its programme of work. The representative requested other members of the Council and all other potential contributors from within the ESCAP member States or outside the ESCAP region to consider providing a financial or in-kind contribution to the work and activities of the Centre. The representative requested some amendments to the language of paragraph 17 of the report presented to the Council in order to thank officially the host country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, for its contributions to ESCAP, and requested the secretariat to consider and revise that language, using encouraging and appreciative language.

21. The representative of the Plan and Budget Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran thanked the Centre team and wished even more success on the Centre. The representative informed the Council that the Organization supported the programmes of the Centre, that the annual budget had been raised and that support for the programmes of the Centre was envisaged. Recently, \$1,200,000 had been provided despite difficulties related to COVID-19 and sanctions, and the transfer of funds itself had proved to be quite complex, but through the facilitation of the Centre, the Government was able to disburse some of the committed funds. The representative informed the Council that additional funding, as committed, had been raised in the annual budget. The Government was trying its best in order to fulfil the commitments made through the Administrative and Financial Arrangement. The representative further stated that the Organization, as the national focal point for ESCAP, with the collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was honoured to facilitate support for the programmes of the Centre in the form of in-kind and cash contributions, as well as expertise and consultative services.

22. The secretariat responded to the request from the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran and highlighted that paragraph 17 to what the secretariat had discussed and reviewed under agenda item 2 with regard to the fact that the Centre had been obliged to change its multi-year strategic programme of work, and that it was a factual paragraph. The secretariat fully appreciated the contribution from the host country, as reflected in paragraph 15 of the report presented to the Council, and that it would include the requested language in the present iteration of the report, which would be submitted to the Commission. The secretariat would be sure to underscore the contribution that the Centre had received so far from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

23. The Council took note of the administrative and financial status of the Centre.

C. Regional plan of action on sand and dust storms

(Agenda item 4)

24. The Council had before it the document on the regional plan of action on sand and dust storms which included the report of the regional consultation on developing elements for a regional plan of action on sand and dust storms, held on 6 December 2021, and the draft elements for a regional plan of action on sand and dust storms in the Asia-Pacific region.

25. The secretariat presented the intergovernmental mandate of the Centre to work on sand and dust storms. The Commission, in its resolution 72/7, made the following requests of the Executive Secretary: (a) within existing mandates and expertise, to accord priority focus on the work of the Commission relating to sand and dust storms as a great transboundary challenge; (b) to work, including through the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management, as well as with other relevant regional organizations, utilizing a combination of existing funds and extrabudgetary contributions, to promote regional and interregional networking on sand and dust storms.

26. The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/225, stressed the need for cooperation at the global and regional levels with a view to managing and mitigating the effects of sand and dust storms through the enhancement of early warning systems and the sharing of climate and weather information to forecast sand and dust storms, and affirmed that resilient action to combat sand and dust storms requires a better understanding of the severe multidimensional impacts of sand and dust storms, including the deterioration of the health, well-being and livelihood of people, increased desertification and land degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and land productivity, and their impact on sustainable economic growth.

27. At its fifth session, the Council had been informed that in the area of regional cooperation on transboundary hazards, the Centre had conducted the sand and dust storms risk assessment in Asia and the Pacific to provide a long-term horizon of the risk and potential socioeconomic losses and impact associated with sand and dust storms. The Centre report entitled *Sand and Dust Storms Risk Assessment in Asia and the Pacific* was launched by the Executive Secretary during a side event it had organized, entitled “Sand and dust storms risk assessment in Asia and the Pacific: potential for concerted action at the regional level to reduce risk and strengthen resilience” during the seventh session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction.

28. Building on the assessment findings, and in line with the General Assembly resolution 75/222 and Commission resolution 72/7, the Centre conducted a series of consultations with the most-affected countries to develop draft elements for a regional plan of action on sand and dust storms. On the basis of the outcomes of those consultations, the Centre had prepared an initial draft for a regional plan of action on sand and dust storms for the attention of the Council.

29. The Council was informed of the contents of the *Sand and Dust Storms Risk Assessment in Asia and the Pacific*. The secretariat highlighted that the report was the first of its kind in terms of its regional and sectoral coverage. The report served to assess the risk of sand and dust storms in various sectors, including human health, urban, energy, transport (aviation), agriculture and environment, and provided projections on sand and dust storms and associated economic loss in the region, as well as findings and policy implications.

30. The Council was informed that the risk assessment contained in the report leveraged the wide partnership network and had received incredible support from all partners, including WMO, Tohoku University, the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre, the United Nations Environment Management Group, the Finnish Meteorological Institute, the Japan Meteorological Agency, the Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the European Institute on Economics and the Environment, the Spanish National Research Council, the Risk Nexus Initiative, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, FAO, the WHO office in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Statistics Division, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, Transport Division and Energy Division of ESCAP.

31. The Council was informed that the analysis contained in the report had been developed with a view to providing the evidence base on which to develop a regional plan of action to reduce the negative impact of sand and dust storms. Sand and dust storms knew no boundaries, and regional cooperation was key to mitigating their impact and reducing risk.

32. The Council was informed of a regional consultation on sand and dust storms risk reduction and developing elements for a regional plan of action on sand and dust storms that the Centre had organized, in collaboration with WMO and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, at which the findings of the report had been presented to the countries of the region. The discussions had been focused and structured around three key areas: better understanding, a coordinated monitoring and early warning system, and coordinated actions. The discussions on the three key areas had been conducted in two breakout rooms for North, North-East and Central Asia, and for South and South-West Asia, structured around sets of key questions.

33. The Council was informed that the Centre had produced a report of the consultation, which was the Council had before it. The Council was also informed that on the basis of the findings of the assessment and regional discussions, the Centre had developed the draft elements for a regional plan of action, which contained actions at the national and regional levels. The Council was further informed of the road map for developing the regional plan of action on sand and dust storms.

34. The secretariat presented the findings of the *Sand and Dust Storms Risk Assessment in Asia and the Pacific*. It informed the Council that the regional consultation had been officially convened through a note verbale to the attention of all member States to ensure all parts of government affected by sand and dust storms were involved in and contributed to the discussions.

35. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran acknowledged and appreciated the hard work of the secretariat regarding sand and dust storms in the region. Acknowledging the Centre's efforts in terms of networking, collaborating and participating in the activities of other international initiatives and institutions such as the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, including WMO and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, the representative suggested that there were many opportunities that the Centre could further utilize to improve its delivery and outputs. Spanning East and West alike, sand and dust storms were a regional phenomenon that negatively impacted many countries and required regional cooperation. The representative expressed the Government's willingness to accomplish the regional plan of action, saying that it looked

forward to the implementation phase, especially for the early warning system in place in Central Asia, and to its expansion to other regions, since it was an important tool for preventing the damages and negative impact of sand and dust storms in the future. The representative appreciated the comprehensiveness of the report and requested the secretariat to update it and add recently adopted General Assembly resolutions 72/225, 72/235 and 74/226. The representative suggested that the Centre could leverage the potential of the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms and the working group to expand its networking and participation.

36. The representative of India thanked the secretariat for the presentation and expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Centre in preparing the draft elements for a regional plan of action. The representative requested the secretariat to adopt a multi-hazard approach, as the region was exposed to multi-hazards. The situation faced during the COVID-19 pandemic made manifest the importance of managing concurrent disasters. In the case of sand and dust storms, the representative highlighted the importance of looking at the root causes of sand and dust storms together with the impact of many other root causes, since there had been a paradigm shift over the past three to four decades. It was important to take a disaster risk reduction point of view when addressing sand and dust storms or any other disaster. The representative highlighted that the regional plan of action should include all root causes in arid and semi-arid regions, including drought, desertification and land degradation. The Government of India was highly focused on land degradation, having developed a desertification and land degradation atlas of India. The representative also emphasized the importance of sharing knowledge and experiences among the member States.

37. The Council considered and endorsed the document on the regional plan of action, which included the report of the regional consultation on developing elements for a regional plan of action, and the draft elements for a regional plan of action, and requested the secretariat to continue the consultations on the draft of the regional plan of action on sand and dust storms through thematic discussions with member States and to solicit comments and feedback for submission to the Commission at its seventy-eighth session.

D. Date of and venue for the seventh session of the Governing Council
(Agenda item 5)

38. The Council endorsed, with appreciation, the offer made by the Government of Turkey to host its seventh session. The secretariat would consult on the date and venue and inform the Council members of the result.

E. Other matters
(Agenda item 6)

39. No other matters were discussed.

F. Adoption of the report of the Governing Council on its sixth session
(Agenda item 7)

40. The Council endorsed the section containing the matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention. The Council would review and endorse the draft of the proceedings that were to be circulated to its members after the conclusion of the session. The final report of the Council on its sixth session would be submitted to the Commission for endorsement at its seventy-eighth session.

III. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

41. The Council held its sixth session online on 8 February 2022. Mr. Seyed Hamid Pourmohammadi Gelsefidi, Deputy Vice-President, Plan and Budget Organization, Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered the opening statements.

B. Attendance

42. The session was attended by representatives of the following members of the Council: Bangladesh; Cambodia; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Mongolia; Pakistan; and Turkey.

43. Representatives of the following members and associate members of the Commission attended as observers: Nepal; Sri Lanka; Tuvalu; and Uzbekistan.

C. Election of officers

44. The Council elected the following officers:

Chair: Mr. Ku Bunnavuth (Cambodia)

Vice-Chair: Mr. Muhammet Maruf Yaman (Turkey)

D. Agenda

45. The Council adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session:
 - (a) Opening statements;
 - (b) Election of officers;
 - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
2. Activities of the Centre since the fifth session of the Governing Council, including the progress on the implementation of the Centre's strategic programme of work and its programme of work for the period 2021–2022.
3. Report on the administrative and financial status of the Centre.
4. Regional plan of action on sand and dust storms.
5. Date of and venue for the next session of the Governing Council.
6. Other matters.
7. Adoption of the report of the Governing Council on its sixth session.

Annex I

List of documents

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
	Report on the activities of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management since the fifth session of the Governing Council	2
	Report on the administrative and financial status of the Centre	3
	Report of the Regional Consultation on Sand and Dust Storms Risk Reduction and Developing Elements for a Regional Plan of Action on Sand and Dust Storms	4
	Draft report	7
<i>Limited series</i>		
ESCAP/APDIM/GC/2022/L.1	Annotated provisional agenda	1
<i>Information series</i>		
	List of participants	1
	Information for participants	1
	Tentative programme	1

Annex II

Financial statement of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management for the year ended 31 December 2021

(United States dollars)

<i>Income</i>	
Contributions	1 223 850
Interest income	3 827
Total income	1 227 677
<i>Less: Expenditure</i>	(813 181)
Net income over expenditure	414 496
Fund balance as at 1 January 2021	1 400 844
Refunds to donors	-
Fund balance as at 31 December 2021	1 815 340

Annex III

Financial statement of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management for the year ended 31 December 2021, by project component (United States dollars)

	<i>Strengthening disaster information management in the Asia-Pacific region in the evolving post-2015 development agenda</i>	<i>Institutional support for the Centre (Multi-donor)</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Income</i>			
Contributions	1 211 850	12 000	1 223 850
Interest income	3 658	169	3 827
Total income	1 215 508	12 169	1 227 677
<i>Less: Expenditure</i>	(813 181)	-	(813 181)
Net income over expenditure	402 327	12 169	414 496
Fund balance as at 1 January 2021	1 355 438	45 406	1 400 844
Refunds to donors	-	-	-
Fund balance as at 31 December 2021	1 757 765	57 575	1 815 340

Annex IV

Cash contributions to the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management received for the year ended 31 December 2021
(United States dollars)

<i>Country/area</i>	<i>Year ended 31 December 2021</i>	<i>Year ended 31 December 2020</i>
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1 211 850	170 621
Cambodia	2 000	2 000
Macao, China	10 000	10 000
Total	1 223 850	182 621