



**Statement by
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(ESCAP)
at
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Agenda Item 5: Programme implementation and the future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), I would like to express my appreciation to you for giving me the opportunity to briefly describe the activities we have undertaken during the past year in the field of population. ESCAP has been playing a pivotal role in the Asian and Pacific region in addressing the demographic challenges responding to the rapidly changing socio-economic and political paradigms. The activities carried out by ESCAP in the past year placed a focus, among others, on selected priority issues of the region, such as youth and development, maternal mortality and international migration.

Youth and Development

By 2005, the youth population of the Asia and Pacific grew to 726 million, accounting for roughly 18 per cent of the total population in the region. Many Governments are tasked to provide a growing youth population with quality education, income security, and higher levels of quality of life. ESCAP organized an Expert Group Meeting in February 2009 to follow-up on the regional implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY). The Meeting focused, in particular, on critical youth challenges under current recessionary economics; such as unemployment and underemployment; the interface between education and work; the use of ICTs to facilitate distance-learning programmes in rural areas; and youth and their well-being, including adolescent health. The meeting brought leading experts of the region to explore and address creatively the Asian experience of youth, with insights from young people themselves.

Maternal mortality

In the Asia and Pacific region, still some 250,000 women die each year during childbirth or from pregnancy-related complications. The reduction in maternal mortality has been progressing slowly, hampering the achievement of MDG goal 5. ESCAP, in collaboration with the Health Bureau of the province of Anhui, China, held a workshop entitled "Addressing Multisectoral Determinants of Maternal Mortality in the ESCAP Region". The workshop addressed medical as well as non-medical factors affecting maternal mortality. Participants at the workshop shared experiences of reducing the level and developed country-level actions plans. It adopted the policy recommendations that could serve as references for intercountry learning and emulation.

International migration

ESCAP has undertaken a number of activities to deepen the understanding of the linkages between human mobility and development. In September 2008, ESCAP and the United Nations Population Division joined the efforts in organizing the Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in Asia and the Pacific, in Bangkok, Thailand. During the Meeting, experts from academia and practitioners from non-governmental institutions and organizations of the United Nations system discussed migration trends and patterns in Asia and the Pacific, migration policies and cooperation mechanisms, labour migration, and the interlinkages between international migration and development. Participating experts also examined the availability of data concerning migration and agreed that there still exist large data gaps which remain to be filled.

The Expert Group Meeting was followed immediately by the Asia-Pacific High-level Meeting on International Migration and Development, held in collaboration with the Government of Thailand, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Population Division, in Bangkok, in September 2008. The Meeting provided a forum for dialogue for representatives from 22 Governments in the region, with four roundtable discussions which focused on 1) remittances for development; 2) social dimensions of international migration; 3) migration in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small islands developing states; and 4) data and research on migration. Reiterating that international migration is an intrinsic part of development, participants at its end adopted the Chairman's Summary

Furthermore, ESCAP continues to coordinate its activities on international migration with relevant United Nations agencies and bodies, in order to avoid duplication of efforts and promote cooperation of activities at the regional level. As a co-chair of the Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration, including Human Trafficking, ESCAP took a lead, with IOM, in identifying the most recent knowledge on the issue. The Group ultimately produced the *Situation Report on*

International Migration in East and South-East Asia in October 2008, thereby providing a regional perspective on migration, including comparative information and statistics, and covers cross-cutting topics such as gender, health and regional cooperation. The publication was also widely disseminated at the Second Global Forum on Migration and Development, held in Manila in October 2008.

Ladies and gentlemen,

EMG on the 5th APPC

The most recent activity which we undertook was the Expert Group Meeting to Assess the Progress in the Implementation of the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty Adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC). It was organized last February, in collaboration with the Asia and Pacific Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). As I mentioned earlier under the agenda item 3, the meeting highlighted the convergence between the ICPD and the Fifth APPC and their centrality to the achievement of the MDGs. The meeting also identified the priority areas and actions to be taken, given the rapidly changing socio-economic and demographic environment of the region. It issued various recommendations, including for ESCAP and UNFPA to seek a possibility of organizing in Asia and the Pacific, a high-level meeting for the Fifth APC and ICPD Plan/Programme of Action.

Turning to the knowledge sharing and information dissemination activities, ESCAP provides a wealth of policy-relevant information on population issues through various modes. ESCAP published last year three issues of the *Asia-Pacific Population and Social Studies*, including the special issue which focused on the use of longitudinal data in health research. We also published *ESCAP 2008 Population Datasheet*, part of its annual series, and an issue of the *Asia-Pacific Population and Social Studies* series, which highlighted the social implications of international migration. It also established a database on labour outflows from selected source countries of migration in the region. All these publications and the database are available on line, attracting interest and attention, with remarkable web traffic statistics.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

In carrying out these activities, ESCAP is grateful to the members and associate members that welcome cooperation with ESCAP and that actively participate in its programmes. Although the resources available for population work have been increasingly constrained, ESCAP believes that it can respond to requests for assistance from Governments in the region. We welcome suggestions from those Governments on ways that we could be of even greater assistance.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.