



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Eightieth session**

Bangkok, 22–26 April 2024

Item 4 (i) of the provisional agenda*

Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission: information and communications technology, science, technology and innovation**Report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development on its eighteenth session***Summary*

At its eighteenth session, held in Manila on 16 November 2023, the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development reviewed the work of the Centre since its seventeenth session and expressed appreciation for the Centre's contribution to strengthening the capacities of member States on using digital technologies for sustainable development. It also reviewed the Centre's administrative and financial status.

The Governing Council endorsed the Centre's medium-term strategy (2024–2026) and its workplan for 2024, which would enable the Centre to expand its footprint across the region, broaden its reach to all subregions and ensure that its programmes also benefited local governments. The Governing Council welcomed the Centre's efforts to deepen support to national Governments through technical assistance and customized training programmes.

The Governing Council expressed its appreciation to the host country, the Republic of Korea, for its continued funding support for the Centre and to other member States for their voluntary and in-kind contributions. It called upon all member States to collaborate and support the Centre's work on promoting capacity-building for digital development in the region.

* ESCAP/80/1.

I. Matters brought to the attention of the Commission

1. The Governing Council expressed its appreciation to the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development for its notable accomplishments in enhancing the human and institutional capacities of member States in the realm of digital development and transformation.

2. The Governing Council endorsed the Centre's workplan for 2024 and invited all members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to collaborate with the Centre and support its work, including through voluntary and in-kind contributions.

II. Proceedings

A. Administrative and financial status of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (agenda item 2)

3. The Governing Council had before it the report on the administrative and financial status of the Centre.

4. The Governing Council was informed about the Centre's financial status, management and staffing capacity. A summary of operational funding was presented, including the institutional funding provided by the host country, the Republic of Korea, through the Incheon Metropolitan City and the Ministry of Science and Information and Communications Technology, as agreed under the Administrative and Financial Arrangement signed by ESCAP and the Government of the Republic of Korea for the period 2021–2025.

5. Additional funding had been received from the Government of Canada to support the implementation of the ESCAP project entitled "Catalyzing women's entrepreneurship", under which the Centre had implemented training activities in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Nepal, Samoa and Viet Nam.

6. During the reporting period, voluntary contributions had been received from Bangladesh, as well as from Macao, China. The Governing Council was informed that national partners continued to provide in-kind contributions, in the form of logistical, material and human resources, to support the implementation of the Centre's capacity-building activities and programmes.

B. Work of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development since the seventeenth session of the Governing Council (agenda item 3)

7. The Governing Council had before it the report on the work of the Centre since the seventeenth session. A presentation was given by the Director of the Centre.

8. The Governing Council was briefed on the Centre's completed activities under its three pillars of work: training, technical assistance and knowledge-sharing. The Governing Council was informed of progress made in the implementation of the Centre's flagship programmes for policymakers and civil servants (Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders), women entrepreneurs (Women ICT Frontier Initiative) and students and youth (Primer Series on ICT for Development for Youth).

9. The representative of the Republic of Korea expressed appreciation for the Centre's achievements in delivering pertinent digital transformation programmes to member States and reaffirmed the Government's continued support for the Centre's programmes and operations.

C. Workplan for 2024 (agenda item 4)

10. The Director of the Centre presented the workplan for 2024.

11. The workplan focused on developing practical and impactful capacity-building programmes tailored to the specific needs of member States under the Centre's medium-term strategy (2024–2026). The workplan would enable the Centre to expand its footprint across the region, broaden its reach to all subregions and ensure that its programmes also benefited local governments. It would also enable the Centre to increase the support it provided through policy and advisory services in alignment with ESCAP programmes and priorities. National partnerships would remain a key focus, allowing programmes to be customized to fit national contexts and be integrated into partner training curricula.

12. The representative of the Russian Federation reiterated the Government's intention to provide in-kind contributions to support the localization of modules and their national roll-outs. More training programmes were needed on new and emerging technologies, including in areas such as artificial intelligence and the ethical considerations associated with it. Electronic government services too were important, particularly in the light of the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In addition, the representative proposed adding modules to ensure digital inclusion, not only addressing the needs of vulnerable populations such as Indigenous populations and other marginalized groups, but also extending support to businesses facing unique challenges in the digital landscape, in particular micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises.

13. The representative of the Republic of Korea noted that, during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Korea had affirmed the Government's commitment to supporting the digital transformation of countries with limited digital penetration and utilization. The Government had unveiled comprehensive strategies and plans, including a national strategy for digital technology and artificial intelligence ethics and a digital bill of rights. Notably, the Government was set to initiate a digital innovation flagship project between the Republic of Korea and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to which it would allocate \$30 million over a five-year period. The Government extended a warm welcome to collaborative efforts in support of its initiative.

14. The representative of Indonesia expressed appreciation to the Centre and offered to host the twentieth session of the Governing Council, to be held in 2025, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

15. The representative of Cambodia highlighted the Government's emphasis on digitalization, both within the Government itself and in collaboration with the private sector. The representative expressed concern about the adverse effects of digitalization in Cambodia, particularly among children, and suggested that it would be beneficial to offer courses or information sessions on the consequences of digitalization. Such initiatives could educate parents and the Government on strategies to limit children's access to digital content, given their exposure to digital devices from a very young age.

16. The representative of India emphasized the critical role of information and communications technology in the economic development of India. The representative highlighted the country's achievements in the digital realm, including the establishment of a pool of professionals in emerging technologies, the launch of the Digital India programme and the development of world-class, low-cost digital infrastructure. The representative invited ESCAP members to join the Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository, an India-led initiative. The representative outlined the success that India had had with its digital identity platform, Aadhaar, including in terms of facilitating the transfer of benefits. The representative also highlighted the contributions made by India during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the CoWIN platform for vaccine delivery. The representative stressed the Government's commitment to sharing expertise in emerging technologies, supporting capacity-building and contributing to the Centre's programmes.

17. The representative of Kazakhstan noted with appreciation the Centre's work to equip hundreds of individuals with essential skills in the rapidly evolving field of digital technologies. The representative informed the Governing Council that various projects and practical courses had been implemented in the country, aimed at accelerating the introduction of next-generation digital solution platforms for the government sector. The representative expressed confidence in the benefits of cooperation with the Centre for the organization of courses and advanced training programmes for countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

18. The representative of Thailand acknowledged the importance of the training-of-trainers programme initiated by the Centre, as well as the need to extend training efforts to local governments. The representative stated that partnerships with local governments could facilitate direct outreach to communities, emphasizing the importance of local involvement in enhancing the effectiveness of the Centre's initiatives. The representative underscored the need to develop training programmes on artificial intelligence, including on how to use the technology securely and mitigate associated risks. Climate change and disaster risk reduction were cited as areas that continued to pose unique challenges. Finding ways to incorporate digital solutions for training, awareness-raising and problem-solving in those areas could significantly improve the effectiveness of training courses. Cross-sectoral cooperation, involving relevant departments and agencies, would be key to addressing climate change and disaster management comprehensively. The representative also commended the Centre for providing e-learning courses and recommended creating a certification system to motivate civil servants and government officials to regularly upgrade their digital literacy skills. A structured approach, for example involving a tiered certification system, would encourage continuous learning and skills development, and e-learning could be leveraged as a valuable tool for advancing digital literacy among government officials.

19. The representative of Cambodia informed the Governing Council that the Cambodia Academy of Digital Technology faced challenges in implementing digital training programmes. While the focus of the Academy was on training government officials, it had issues with engagement, particularly among senior officials, who had limited time for training due to the nature of their work. Participation rates for its e-learning platform were low. The Academy's programmes included training for chief information officers and general government officers, covering topics such as digital transformation, cybersecurity and digital literacy. Challenges included the high cost of international certification programmes, low interest in online learning and the

need for localized content. The Academy was also exploring new strategies to make online content more engaging and effective.

20. The representative of Bangladesh acknowledged and expressed appreciation for the role played by the Centre and the initiatives it had introduced to benefit various segments of society, especially women and youth. As tomorrow's leaders, young people in particular represented a demographic dividend for their country. The representative proposed emphasizing the need for more programmes to strengthen the capacities of young people and women, among others. The representative also proposed introducing initiatives to reduce the digital divide in the region.

21. The Governing Council endorsed the Centre's workplan for 2024.

D. Date and venue of the nineteenth session of the Governing Council (agenda item 5)

22. The Governing Council considered a possible date and venue for its nineteenth session, to be held in the fourth quarter of 2024. The secretariat, in consultation with the Governing Council, would make the necessary arrangements for the organization of the session.

E. Other matters (agenda item 6)

23. No other matters were discussed by the Governing Council.

F. Adoption of the report of the Governing Council on its eighteenth session (agenda item 7)

24. The Governing Council adopted the present report on 12 December 2023.

III. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

25. The eighteenth session of the Governing Council was held in Manila on 16 November 2023.

26. A statement was made by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. In her remarks, the Executive Secretary stated that the digital divide encompassed not only access and connectivity issues but also disparities in human and institutional capacities for digital development. Addressing gaps in digital literacy, skills training and institutional readiness to adopt and benefit from digital technologies was crucial for ensuring that the benefits of digital transformation were shared more broadly and equitably. ESCAP was dedicated to fostering policy dialogue, cooperation and partnerships to bridge the digital divide in the Asia-Pacific region. The Centre played a key role in assisting member States in addressing institutional and human capacity gaps. The Executive Secretary expressed appreciation to Governing Council members for providing strategic guidance and support in advancing the Centre's mission.

27. The Director of the Centre thanked the Chair, the Vice-Chair and the members of the Governing Council for their strong engagement and cooperation.

B. Attendance

28. The session was attended by representatives of the nine members of the Governing Council: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and Thailand.

C. Election of officers

29. The Governing Council elected the following officers:

Chair: Ms. Ishariyaporn Smiprem (Thailand)

Vice-Chair: Mr. Mohammed Yousuf (Bangladesh)

D. Agenda

30. The Governing Council adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session:
 - (a) Opening addresses;
 - (b) Election of officers;
 - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
2. Administrative and financial status of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development.
3. Work of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development since the seventeenth session of the Governing Council.
4. Workplan for 2024.
5. Date and venue of the nineteenth session of the Governing Council.
6. Other matters.
7. Adoption of the report of the Governing Council on its eighteenth session.

Annex I

List of documents

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
ESCAP/APCICT/GC(18)/1	Annotated provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/APCICT/GC(18)/2	Report of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development on its eighteenth session	
	Report on the administrative and financial status of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development	2
	Report on the work of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development since the seventeenth session of the Governing Council	3

Annex II

**Financial statement of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for
Information and Communication Technology for Development for
the year ended 31 December 2023**
(United States dollars)

<i>Income</i>	
Contributions	1 535 740
Interest income	217 062
Total income	1 752 802
<i>Less: Expenditure</i>	
	(1 903 102)
Net income over expenditure	(150 300)
Fund balance as at 1 January 2023	4 421 742
Refunds to donors	-
Fund balance as at 31 December 2023	4 271 442^a

^a The balance amount is earmarked for future programmatic and operational activities of the Centre.

Annex III

**Financial statement of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for
Information and Communication Technology for Development for
the year ended 31 December 2023, by project component**
(United States dollars)

	<i>Incheon Metropolitan City and Ministry of Science and ICT</i>	<i>Joint contribution and other projects</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Income</i>			
Contributions	1 480 601	55 139	1 535 740
Interest income	205 210	11 852	217 062
Total income	1 685 811	66 991	1 752 802
<i>Less: Expenditure</i>			
	(1 778 756)	(124 346)	(1 903 102)
Net income over expenditure	(92 945)	(57 355)	(150 300)
Fund balance as at 1 January 2023	4 087 586	334 156	4 421 742
Refunds to donors/fund transfer	-	-	-
Fund balance as at 31 December 2023	3 994 641	276 801	4 271 442^a

^a The balance amount is earmarked for future programmatic and operational activities of the Centre.

Annex IV

**Cash contributions to the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for
Information and Communication Technology for Development
received for the years ended 31 December 2022 and 31 December 2023**
(United States dollars)

<i>Country/area</i>	<i>Year ended 31 December 2022</i>	<i>Year ended 31 December 2023</i>
1. Incheon Metropolitan City and Ministry of Science and ICT		
Republic of Korea (Incheon Metropolitan City)	782 980	782 980
Republic of Korea (Ministry of Science and ICT)	739 230	697 621
Subtotal	1 522 210	1 480 601
2. Other technical cooperation projects		
Bangladesh	10 000	10 000
Cambodia	4 000	2 000
Macao, China	5 000	5 000
Republic of Korea (Ministry of Science and ICT)	35 446	38 139
Subtotal	54 446	55 139
Total	1 576 656	1 535 740