



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

Bangkok, 22–26 April 2024

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Dates and venue of and theme topic for the eighty-first session of the Commission (2025)**Dates and venue of and theme topic for the eighty-first session of the Commission (2025)****Note by the secretariat*****Summary*

The present document contains information on the proposed dates and venue of the eighty-first session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, to be held in 2025, and proposals for the theme topic for that session.

The Commission may wish to take a decision on these matters.

I. Introduction

1. The present document contains suggestions made by the secretariat for the consideration of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its eightieth session on the dates and venue of and theme topic for its eighty-first session, to be held in 2025.

II. Dates and venue

2. Rule 1 of the rules of procedure of the Commission requires it to recommend the dates and venue of its next session, subject to the approval of the Economic and Social Council and in consultation with the Secretary-General.

3. In addition, in rule 1 of the rules of procedure it is stated that the sessions of the Commission shall ordinarily be held at the office of the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific, unless the Commission recommends otherwise.

* ESCAP/80/1.

** The present document was submitted late owing to the need to take into account the views expressed by the members of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission at its 411th session, held on 27 February 2024.

4. In accordance with the programmatic procedural requirements of the United Nations Secretariat, the annual proposed programme plan is to be endorsed by the Commission before it is submitted for review and approval by the General Assembly. Pursuant to Assembly resolution 77/267, the timeline for reviewing the proposed programme plans by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the main subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly for planning, programming and coordination, has been brought forward starting in 2024. The Commission will therefore need to review and endorse the proposed programme plan for 2026 before the end of April 2025.

5. The secretariat proposes that the eighty-first session of the Commission be held in Bangkok from 21 to 25 April 2025, taking into account also other major meetings and holidays occurring in April 2025.

III. Theme topic

6. The Commission is invited to consider the following proposals regarding the theme topic for its eighty-first session:

(a) Regional cooperation to accelerate the energy transition in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development;

(b) Financing climate action and interlinked Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific.

A. Regional cooperation to accelerate the energy transition in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development

7. The world faces the challenge of how to scale up energy production to meet the needs of its societies, while managing the challenges of climate change and the environmental impacts of energy use. Sustainable energy is one of the core elements for the achievement of internationally agreed goals and commitments, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy) and Goal 13 (Climate action), the Paris Agreement on climate change and the outcomes of the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Achieving these goals and commitments will require accelerating the energy transition, and success at the global level hinges on the performance of the Asia-Pacific region. The region accounts for the largest share of global energy production and consumption, consuming about 44 per cent of the primary energy supply and generating more than 55 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

8. At its fifth session, held in conjunction with the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement called upon all parties to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science. It also called upon the parties to triple renewable energy capacity globally and to double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030.

9. The energy transition is the process of shifting the ways in which energy is generated and consumed towards clean and renewable systems. This process requires making changes to technologies, policies and behaviours and involves adopting renewable energy sources, switching to lower-carbon fuels,

enhancing energy efficiency and embracing new energy paradigms. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group, recognizing the catalytic and multiplier effects of the energy transition, has identified energy access and affordability as one of the six key transitions needed globally to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. In addition to mitigating the impacts of climate change, there are other objectives that must be part of the energy transition. These include reducing the negative environmental impacts of energy use, enhancing public and private financing for the energy transition, ensuring a socially just transition and enhancing energy security. As many of these are transboundary issues or relate to the generation of regional public goods, there is a strong need for regional cooperation.

11. Given the economic, environmental and social diversity of the Asia-Pacific region, the energy transition will unfold at different speeds and along different trajectories in the countries of the region. Some countries are progressing rapidly, while others are only beginning their journey. In view of the region's pivotal position as both a major consumer of energy and a significant source of the technologies needed for the world to make the energy transition, it is of global importance to accelerate the energy transition in Asia and the Pacific.

12. For the purposes of guiding the energy transition, consideration must be given to the significant rise in demand for materials and minerals needed to manufacture renewable energy technologies, batteries and electric vehicles. Ensuring an adequate and stable supply of such materials is of utmost importance for the region's success in the energy transition.

13. The secretariat has been working with member States on several issues related to the energy transition. Issues covered by its energy subprogramme include regional power grid connectivity, the preparation of national Goal 7 road maps and the development of regional approaches to the management of materials and minerals critical to the energy transition. Its transport subprogramme addresses the decarbonization of the transport sector, and its environment and development subprogramme provides support to member States on climate change strategies. As part of its macroeconomic policy, poverty reduction and financing for development subprogramme, the secretariat supports member States with financing policies and regulations that accelerate the provision of capital, as well as innovative financing partnerships.

14. In the context of the long-standing and cross-cutting work of the secretariat in supporting member States in the energy transition and the commitments made at the Third Asian and Pacific Energy Forum in 2023, the proposed theme will enable member States to forge a collective vision of integrated actions to accelerate the energy transition. The theme study of the eighty-first session of the Commission presents an important opportunity for policymakers to discuss how to accelerate the energy transition through regional cooperation in support of global mandates.

15. In the theme study, the secretariat would take stock of the region's energy transition progress to date, examining notable successes and lessons learned. By analysing energy and climate goals, it would highlight the areas where stronger progress is required and suggest avenues for policy enhancements and regional cooperation. By placing a special focus on the intersectoral nature of the energy transition, it would examine the relevant issues and opportunities and offer recommendations for the region's policymakers. Its analysis would cover the impacts on and synergies with other

areas such as the environment, finance, digitalization, the reduction of inequalities and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as opportunities to strengthen the resilience of the region against future crises. The differentiated impacts of the energy transition on different population groups would also be a key issue for analysis, given the links between energy use and gender dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region. The study would provide an opportunity to advocate for greater gender diversity in energy sector leadership.

B. Financing climate action and interlinked Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific

16. In its resolution 79/1, the Commission reaffirmed that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and is already resulting in multiple negative impacts on economies and societies. It emphasized the urgency of scaling up action and support, including finance, capacity-building and technology transfer, to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change, taking into account the priorities and needs of developing countries.

17. Similarly, in the Bangkok Declaration Commemorating the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: a Common Agenda to Advance Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, adopted by the Commission in its resolution 78/1, the Commission highlighted the need to mobilize financial resources from all sources and promote the provision and the transfer of appropriate forms of environmentally sound technology and provide support to help countries to achieve low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development in Asia and the Pacific. The Commission also underscored the importance of enhancing sustainable financing for development goals and committed itself to aligning public and private financial resources to effectively pursue sustainable development aspirations.

18. More recently, in the outcome of the first global stocktake,¹ which was adopted during the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement expressed serious concern that impacts from climate change were rapidly accelerating and emphasized the need for urgent action. Similar to what was emphasized by the Commission in its resolution 79/1, it emphasized that finance, capacity-building and technology transfer were critical enablers of climate action.

19. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement also recognized the importance of making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development and noted the limited progress towards this end. It emphasized the role of governments, central banks, commercial banks, institutional investors and other financial actors with a view to improving the assessment and management of climate-related financial risks, ensuring or enhancing access to climate finance in all geographic regions and sectors, and accelerating the ongoing establishment of new and innovative sources of finance for implementing climate action.

20. Furthermore, it was highlighted that there was a growing gap between the needs of developing country parties and the support provided and

¹ FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/16/Add.1, decision 1/CMA.5.

mobilized for their efforts to implement their nationally determined contributions, and that such needs were estimated at \$5.8 trillion to \$5.9 trillion for the pre-2030 period. While this estimate refers to the financing gap for nationally determined contributions as calculated in 2021,² another estimate, prepared in November 2023 by an independent expert group commissioned by the Group of 20,³ indicates that the investment needed in order for emerging markets and developing economies, excluding China, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and climate and nature goals by 2030 is much higher: \$5.4 trillion per year until 2030. Delivering such financing will require a transformation of financial systems and their structures and processes, engaging governments, central banks, commercial banks, institutional investors and other financial actors.

21. In its resolution 78/231, in which it decided to convene a fourth international conference on financing for development in 2025, the General Assembly noted with concern the lack of progress made on financing for development commitments since the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as several emerging trends that had contributed to the finance divide and risked further exacerbating it.

22. In the theme study prepared for the seventy-ninth session of the Commission,⁴ the secretariat highlighted the enormous risks that climate change and related disasters were posing to sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. While many countries had taken positive steps, including making pledges to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, joining global initiatives and passing legislation at the national level, the secretariat noted that such initiatives were insufficient to keep greenhouse gas emissions in check and limit the average global temperature rise to 1.5°C. It highlighted actions to reverse the current trend in greenhouse gas emissions through the decarbonization of key sectors, such as energy, transport, manufacturing and construction.

23. Under the proposed theme topic for the eighty-first session of the Commission, the study to be prepared by the secretariat and the discussions to be held could be focused on opportunities for financing climate action and interlinked Sustainable Development Goals in selected sectors, with a view to accelerate sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

24. For instance, substantial financial resources are needed to undertake a just energy transition, to develop sustainable and low-carbon transport systems, including addressing their social impacts, to restore biodiversity, to prevent climate-related disasters, to deal more effectively with the loss and damage caused by climate disasters and to reverse the damage that human activity has caused to the natural environment and biodiversity in terms of degraded land, deforestation and damage to water supplies and oceans. Discussing how governments can develop and use ecosystem accounting and valuation could also be helpful to ensure more effective and sustainable

² Standing Committee on Finance, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *First Report on the Determination of the Needs of Developing Country Parties Related to Implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement* (Bonn, Germany, 2021).

³ Group of 20, *Strengthening Multilateral Development Banks: The Triple Agenda – A Roadmap for Better, Bolder and Bigger MDBs*, vol. 2 (2023).

⁴ *The Race to Net Zero: Accelerating Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific* (United Nations publication, 2023).

financing of climate action. Another important issue is that of financing climate-responsive social protection systems. Furthermore, promoting trade and investment flows and agreements that are consistent with climate ambitions could complement efforts to support climate action.

25. It is important to point out that the concept of financing climate action and interlinked Sustainable Development Goals is much broader than what is commonly understood by the term “climate finance”, which is often used to refer to the financial mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to provide financial resources to developing country parties, and under which developed countries committed to mobilizing \$100 billion per year through 2025. In 2024, the Standing Committee on Finance of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change⁵ will provide an update to the compilation of definitions of climate finance and criteria used by parties and institutions and a comparison of approaches used in the context of reporting climate finance, such as sector-based methodologies, methodologies for estimating mobilized private finance and domestic climate finance tracking systems. The secretariat’s theme study would not focus on climate finance in this sense, but rather on the broader implications of financing climate action and interlinked Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific.

26. A transformation of banking and capital markets in support of climate action is under way across the Asia-Pacific region. There has been significant uptake of sustainable loans, green bonds, environmental, social and governance funds and other sustainable finance products. However, the current scale of such financing is significantly short of what is needed, and most developing countries in the region have not yet tapped into the green, social and sustainability bond market. In addition to green bonds, other products, including loans and equity, can also be used to finance climate action, provided they are effectively designed for such purpose. Moreover, there will be a need to ensure the social accountability of climate action financing, that is, to ensure it benefits women and other groups in vulnerable situations in the region.

27. Action to halt climate change and deal with its consequences is integral to successfully achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, given their interlinked nature. Failure to effectively tackle climate change poses a major threat to peace and sustainable development because its widespread impacts disproportionately affect the region’s poorest and most vulnerable communities. For climate action to drive sustainable development, it should go hand in hand with a just transition, recognizing that the implications and choices will be different for different countries, in line with national circumstances.

28. Possible areas of focus for the proposed theme topic include:

(a) Identifying gaps, progress and solutions related to the financing of climate action and interlinked Sustainable Development Goals, across a broad spectrum of areas, to better harness the fiscal resources of Governments and to mobilize private finance at the scale needed, from both domestic and international resources;

⁵ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Report on Clustering Types of Climate Finance Definitions in Use* (Bonn, Germany, 2023).

(b) Highlighting innovations, trends and best practices across the Asia-Pacific region in terms of actions taken and policies pursued in different sectors to unlock financing for climate action;

(c) Identifying financing mechanisms and discussing potential enabling policies to incentivize investment and increase the flow of capital towards areas and sectors that could lead to better climate outcomes and thus support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Identifying regional cooperation opportunities that could capitalize on global trends and the emerging consensus on climate action financing and that would involve not only public sector stakeholders but also multilateral development banks and private finance actors.

29. Climate change is, by definition, a multilateral issue and cannot be addressed by individual countries alone. To effectively finance climate action, what is needed is a multilateral approach that is inclusive (in which all countries participate), networked (in which different institutions leverage their respective expertise) and intergenerational (recognizing that climate change affects future generations more than current generations). As an inclusive and representative multilateral platform for intergovernmental conversations in Asia and the Pacific, the Commission can contribute significantly to this endeavour.

IV. Previous theme topics

30. For reference, a list of the theme topics of previous Commission sessions is contained in the annex to the present document.

V. Issues for consideration by the Commission

31. The Commission may wish to consider the dates and venue of its eighty-first session, to be held in 2025, and to provide the secretariat with guidance in this regard.

32. The Commission may also wish to consider the proposed theme topics and the outlines of the proposed theme studies.

Annex

List of theme topics of previous Commission sessions

<i>Session^a</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme topic</i>
40	1984	Technology for development
41	1985	Technology for development
42	1986	Human resources development
43	1987	Human resources development
44	1988	Human resources development
45	1989	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
46	1990	Restructuring the developing ESCAP economies in the 1990s
47	1991	Industrial restructuring in Asia and the Pacific, in particular with a view to strengthening regional cooperation
48	1992	Regional economic cooperation in the ESCAP region: prospects, priorities and policy options
49	1993	Expansion of investment and intraregional trade as a vehicle for enhancing regional economic cooperation and development
50	1994	Infrastructure development as key to economic growth and regional economic cooperation
51	1995	Strengthening of regional cooperation in human resources development with special reference to the social implications of sustainable economic growth in Asia and the Pacific
52	1996	Sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Asia and the Pacific
53	1997	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: opportunities and challenges for ESCAP
54	1998	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: status of and prospects for social development
55	1999	Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: information technology, globalization, economic security and development
56	2000	Development through globalization and partnership in the twenty-first century: an Asia-Pacific perspective for integrating developing countries and economies in transition into the international trading system on a fair and equitable basis
57	2001	Balanced development of urban and rural areas and regions within the countries of Asia and the Pacific
58	2002	Sustainable social development in a period of rapid globalization: challenges, opportunities and policy options
59	2003	Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region
60	2004	Meeting the challenges in an era of globalization by strengthening regional development cooperation
61	2005	Implementing the Monterrey Consensus in the Asian and Pacific region: achieving coherence and consistency

<i>Session^a</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme topic</i>
62	2006	Enhancing regional cooperation in infrastructure development, including that related to disaster management
63	2007	Development of health systems in the context of enhancing economic growth towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific
64	2008	Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific
65	2009	Towards sustainable agriculture and food security in the Asia-Pacific region
66	2010	Addressing challenges in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: promoting a stable and supportive financial system; and green growth or environmentally sustainable economic growth, including through technology and financing
67	2011	Beyond the crises: long-term perspectives on social protection and development in Asia and the Pacific
68	2012	Enhancing regional economic integration in Asia and the Pacific
69	2013	Opportunities to build resilience to natural disasters and major economic crises
70	2014	Regional connectivity for shared prosperity
71	2015	Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation
72	2016	Science, technology and innovation for sustainable development
73	2017	Regional cooperation for sustainable energy
74	2018	Inequality in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
75	2019	Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality
76	2020	Promoting economic, social and environmental cooperation on oceans for sustainable development
77	2021	Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific
78	2022	A common agenda to advance sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific
79	2023	Accelerating climate action in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development
80	2024	Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

^a The Commission started choosing theme topics for its sessions at its fortieth session.