



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
4 March 2024

English only

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Eightieth session

Bangkok, 22–26 April 2024

Items 4 (c) and (d) 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:

Environment and development

Disaster risk reduction

Annual reports of international and intergovernmental organizations provided to the Commission**

Summary

The present information document contains overviews of the annual reports of the following international and intergovernmental organizations: the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia; the Mekong River Commission; the Typhoon Committee; and the Panel on Tropical Cyclones.

These organizations were established under the auspices of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to work on areas under their respective competence to support economic and social development in the region.

The Commission may wish to comment on the work of these organizations and take note of the present document.

I. Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia

1. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia was established under the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 1966. In 1991, the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia became an independent intergovernmental organization.

2. Starting from January 2021, the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes has introduced a new strategic plan (2021–2025) with a vision “to be a leading intergovernmental geoscience organisation for sustainable development in East and Southeast Asia”. The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes has worked towards its mission “to work together on advancing geoscience for better lives on a future earth, in line

* ESCAP/80/1.

** The present document is being issued without formal editing.

with the goals of international conventions including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and the Paris Agreement, through: the application of geoscience knowledge and provision of technical solutions, provision of advice and geoinformation for economic development and sustainable management of the national resources and environment; adapting to digital transformation in geoscience for future earth; and the promotion of education, capability building and outreach". The Coordinating Committee has also spotlighted young geoscientists and equal gender issues.

3. The Coordinating Committee has now a total of 16 Member Countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam), 14 cooperating countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America), and 19 cooperating organizations located around the world. The activities of the Coordinating Committee cover a wide range of issues including geohazards, geo-data and information, mineral resources, groundwater resources, urban geology, energy resources, environmental geology and climate change, geo-heritage for sustainable geology, geoscience education and geological survey.

4. In 2023, the Coordinating Committee successfully organized the eightieth and eighty-first Steering Committee meetings in Jeju Island, the Republic of Korea and in Kao Lak, Thailand respectively, as well as its fifty-ninth annual session. The Coordinating Committee made progress in project collaboration in 2023. Firstly, the Coordinating Committee successfully applied for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-Korea Cooperation Fund project entitled "Critical minerals management and strategy for sustainable environment in ASEAN" with a duration of three years and a total budget of US\$5,683,632. The project aims to expand knowledge on critical minerals, enhance capacity in field exploration, and share/optimize smart mineral exploration technology and real-time data platform for the sustainable development of critical minerals, supporting the development of the critical mineral sector in ASEAN Member States. Secondly, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Adaptation Fund, the Coordinating Committee started to implement a project entitled "Groundwater Resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative Management to Increase Climate Change Resilience", with a total budget of US\$4,898,775 for four years. Additionally, based on some of the ongoing projects and multilateral collaboration activities listed below, the Coordinating Committee organized 39 physical/virtual workshops, training courses, and meetings, benefiting over 400 participants from ASEAN Member States. Additionally, the Coordinating Committee supported nine young geoscientists who have been accepted and fully sponsored by the Hanyang University in Seoul for an educational degree from 2024.

5. Some of the projects and multilateral collaboration activities of the Coordinating Committee include:

(a) Projects in cooperation with the Republic of Korea and China on 'urban geology' for sustainable cities in the region aiming to share smart integrated solution system technology in response to complex geological hazards and disasters in cities;

- (b) Project in cooperation with the Republic of Korea and Japan on groundwater sustainable development;
- (c) Projects in cooperation with China, the Republic of Korea and Japan on digital transformation;
- (d) Multilateral activities on mineral resource sustainable management with a focus on critical and strategic minerals with the Expert Group in Resources Management of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the China-ASEAN Mining Cooperation Forum and Exhibition, and the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Minerals, among others; and
- (e) Capacity-building activities hosted by the Korea Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources, the Geological Survey of Japan and the China Geological Survey.

More information about the activities of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia can be found at: <https://ccop.asia/about-annual>.

II. Mekong River Commission

6. The Mekong River Commission is an intergovernmental organization for regional dialogue and cooperation in the Lower Mekong River Basin, established in 1995 based on the Mekong Agreement between Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam. The organization serves as a regional platform for water diplomacy and a knowledge hub of water resources management for the sustainable development of the region.

7. The Mekong River Commission made progress in the third year of the implementation of the Mekong River Commission Strategic Plan 2021–2025. Key achievements made in 2023 are described below.

8. Firstly, the successful delivery of the fourth Mekong River Commission Summit in Vientiane, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, in April 2023 was underscored by the issuance of the Vientiane Declaration. This declaration served to reaffirm the commitment to cooperation and to clarify the Mekong River Commission's role, mandate, and financial framework. Notably, the leaders provided significant political impetus to seven key priorities, with a strong focus on innovation and digital technology, aimed at addressing the diverse challenges in the Mekong River Basin. The International Conference of the fourth Mekong River Commission Summit held prior to the Summit, showcased a range of innovations, creative expressions, and active engagement of the youth, highlighting their crucial role in shaping the future of the basin.

9. Secondly, the collaboration between the Lower and Upper Mekong, the Mekong River Commission, and China, in addition to Mekong Lancang Cooperation, achieved remarkable progress. China's active involvement in various events of the Mekong River Commission, ongoing hydrological data sharing, and the groundbreaking visit of the Mekong River Commission Joint Committee and Secretariat to the Lancang cascade control centre paved the way for heightened technical collaboration. The joint meeting in Beijing successfully concluded Phase one of the Joint Study on Changing Flow Patterns and Adaptation Strategies for the Lancang-Mekong River Basin, receiving unanimous endorsement from all six countries.

10. Finally, the Mekong River Commission has garnered a commitment for substantial funding to address vital issues such as environmental degradation,

sustainable fisheries, and the livelihoods of Mekong residents. This support is channelled through the Mekong River Commission's latest initiative, the Mekong Fund, designed to assist those directly or indirectly impacted by climate change and the development of Southeast Asia's most crucial river.

More information about the activities of the Mekong River Commission can be found at: www.mrcmekong.org/publications/governance/annual-reports/.

III. Typhoon Committee

11. The ESCAP/World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Typhoon Committee is an intergovernmental body established under the joint auspices of ESCAP and WMO in 1968 to promote and coordinate the planning and implementation of measures required for minimizing the loss of life and material damage caused by typhoons in Asia and the Pacific. The Committee has evolved into a collaboration of 14 members: Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Hong Kong, China; Japan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Macao, China; Malaysia; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Singapore; Thailand; United States of America; and Viet Nam. The Committee develops activities under three substantive components: meteorology, hydrology, and disaster risk reduction, as well as training and research. The mission of the Committee is to reduce the loss of lives and minimize social, economic and environmental impacts caused by typhoon-related disasters through integrated and enhanced regional collaboration.

12. In 2023, the Committee was successful in achieving its mission to integrate and enhance regional activities of Members within international frameworks to reduce the loss of lives and minimize social, economic, and environmental impacts by typhoon-related disasters. Under the contribution, cooperation and support of all Committee Members, the Advisory Working Group of the Committee, working groups, and the Typhoon Committee Secretariat. The fifty-fifth session of the Committee was held online from 7 to 9 March 2023, and the Committee has implemented the decisions of the session smoothly. In 2023, 17 named tropical cyclones of tropical storm intensity or above formed over the western North Pacific and the South China Sea. This number was significantly lower than the climatological average of 25.1 (1991–2020) by the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre Tokyo–Typhoon Warning Centre in Japan, although typhoons or typhoon-related disasters still pose a serious challenge for the region.

13. The Eighteenth Integrated Workshop in conjunction with the Fourth Training and Research Coordination Group Forum was held successfully at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok from 28 November to 1 December 2023. The theme of the Workshop was “Early Warnings for All Through Enhancement of Typhoon Standard Operating Procedures” and the theme of the Forum was “Towards a Typhoon Resilient Society”. The topics included artificial intelligence for tropical cyclones related applications, special target observation over the western North Pacific and impact-based forecasting for tropical cyclones. Over 100 experts from 11 Committee Members, international organizations and observers participated in the event.

14. The Committee conducted the analysis of the Committee Annual Operating Plan implementation questionnaire. This initiative aims to evaluate the Committee's contributions to the United Nations Early Warning for All initiative, identifying opportunities for enhancing performance through Member reports and the Working Group's Annual Operating Plan

specification. The findings from this analysis will help enhance and improve the Annual Operating Plan implementation in the future.

15. The Asia Pacific Typhoon Cooperation Research Centre has been operating smoothly since its establishment. The Centre focuses on the research of typhoon scientific experiments, digital typhoon technology, and typhoon disaster prevention strategies. The Asia Pacific Typhoon Cooperation Research Centre has formulated and published “the Announcement for Shanghai Typhoon Research Foundation Projects”, and accepted visit scientists from Members to conduct joint research.

16. The Committee enhanced the capacity building of its Typhoon Committee Secretariat for better and stronger support to the activities of the Committee in future.

More information about the activities of the Committee can be found at: www.typhooncommittee.org/tc-annual-session/.

IV. Panel on Tropical Cyclones

17. The WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones is an intergovernmental regional body jointly established by WMO and ESCAP in 1972 to promote collaboration in addressing the impacts of tropical cyclones. It has been recognized as an important regional cooperation mechanism that integrates the actions and plans of the meteorology, hydrology, capacity development and disaster risk reduction components to reduce the impacts of tropical cyclone-related disasters. The Panel is composed of thirteen Members: Bangladesh, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

18. The fiftieth session of the Panel was organized in person from 19 to 23 December 2023 and was hosted by Bahrain. The session was attended by fifty-seven participants in person and many others attending online, from 12 Members of the Panel, and representatives from the ESCAP and WMO secretariats. The session began with a one-day technical workshop, coordinated by the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre in New Delhi, with five keynote presentations, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones. The session reviewed the past Tropical Cyclone season, exchanged views and experiences, and consolidated lessons learnt and good practices from operational Tropical Cyclone forecasts, warnings and related disaster risk reduction services for future operational services. Furthermore, it updated the Tropical Cyclone operational plan of the Panel to improve the procedures and practices of Tropical Cyclone operational services in the region. At the session, the Panel elected India to host the Panel on Tropical Cyclones Secretariat for the period 2024–2027, according to the criteria and the terms of reference of the Panel. A logo of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones was designed and will be used until the end of 2024. The Panel on Tropical Cyclones Secretariat will propose a permanent logo of the Panel based on wide circulation to the Panel on Tropical Cyclones Members, for consideration at the fifty-first session.

More information about the activities of the Panel can be found at: <https://community.wmo.int/tropical-cyclone-programme-final-reports-meetings>.