



## SRMUN Charlotte 2016

*The United Nations at 70: Addressing the Changing Landscape of Peace Security & Stability*

March 31 - April 2, 2016

[escap\\_charlotte@srmun.org](mailto:escap_charlotte@srmun.org)

Greetings Delegates,

Welcome to SRMUN Charlotte 2016 and the Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). My name is Sebastian Sarria, and I will be serving as your Director for ESCAP. This will be my second conference as a SRMUN staff member. Previously, I served as the Assistant Director (AD) for the League of Arab States (LAS) in SRMUN Atlanta 2013. Additionally, I am a May 2013 graduate of the University of Central Florida with a Bachelor's of Arts in Political Science and Comparative Politics, and a focus on International Relations. After graduating, I moved to Madrid, Spain to teach English for a year and a half, and now I am back in the United States planning to pursue a graduate degree in Environmental Policy with a focus on Latin America in the near future. Our committee's Assistant Director will be Mariah Coughlin. This will be Mariah's first time as a staff member but she has attended SRMUN Atlanta as a delegate since 2012 in committees such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Group of 77, and the Historical Security Council. Mariah is currently an undergraduate student at the University of Central Florida studying mathematics and economics, and is working as a student researcher at the Institute for Economic Competitiveness in Orlando, Florida.

Serving 53 Member States and nine Associate Members from Turkey to Kiribati in the Pacific, ESCAP is tasked with improving the lives of 4.1 billion people through sustainable development, trade and investment, and social development, to name a few. By envisioning a resilient Asia-Pacific on all fronts, ESCAP is a formidable multilateral tool for improving economic and social development, as well as cooperation among its Member States and Associate Members.

By focusing on the mission of ESCAP and the SRMUN Charlotte 2016 theme of "*The United Nations at 70: Addressing the Changing Landscape of Peace, Security and Stability*," we have developed the following topics for the delegates to discuss come conference:

- I. Encouraging Collaboration for Effective Trade Facilitation
- II. The Impact of Overpopulation on Socio-Economic Disparities

The background guide provides a strong introduction to the committee and the topics and should be utilized as a foundation for the delegate's independent research. While we have attempted to provide a holistic analysis of the issues, the background guide should not be used as the single mode of analysis for the topics. Delegates are expected to go beyond the background guide and engage in intellectual inquiry of their own. The position papers for the committee should reflect the complexity of these issues and their externalities. Delegations are expected to submit a position paper and be prepared for a vigorous discussion at the conference. Position papers should be no longer than two pages in length (single spaced) and demonstrate your Member State's position, policies and recommendations on each of the two topics. For more detailed information about formatting and how to write position papers, delegates can visit [srmun.org](http://srmun.org). **All position papers MUST be submitted no later than Friday, March 11, 2016 by 11:59pm EST via the SRMUN website.**

Mariah and myself are enthusiastic about serving as your dais for ESCAP. We wish you all the best of luck in your conference preparation and look forward to working with you in the near future. Please feel free to contact Director-General Maricruz Retana, Mariah or myself if you have any questions while preparing for the conference.

Sebastian Sarria  
Director  
[escap\\_charlotte@srmun.org](mailto:escap_charlotte@srmun.org)

Mariah Coughlin  
Assistant Director  
[escap\\_charlotte@srmun.org](mailto:escap_charlotte@srmun.org)

Maricruz Retana  
Director-General  
[dg\\_charlotte@srmun.org](mailto:dg_charlotte@srmun.org)

## History of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

On 28 March 1947, the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted Resolution 37 (IV), and established the Economic Commission of Asia and the Far East (ECAF).<sup>1</sup> ECAF initially operated out of Shanghai, China, and was created to aid in post-World War II (WWII) reconstruction within the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>2</sup> In 1949, ECAF moved its headquarters to Bangkok, Thailand, and throughout the postwar period, the organization focused heavily on the formation and development of institutions in order to rebuild its war-torn Member States.<sup>3</sup> As the legacy of WWII faded, ECOSOC aimed to endow ECAF with duties that went beyond postwar development.<sup>4</sup> On 1 August 1974, ECOSOC adopted Resolution 1895 (LVII), which changed ECAF's name to the Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and broadened the scope of the commission's mandate.<sup>5</sup> Today, ESCAP has 53 Member States, and nine Associate Members.<sup>6</sup>

Under its present mandate, ESCAP is tasked with formulating solutions that would enable the region's 680 million poor to achieve a sustainable level of social, economic, and environmental development.<sup>7</sup> ESCAP conducts analysis-based research projects aimed at fostering increased awareness regarding the conditions within the region, and promote cooperation among Member States in the formulation and adoption of developmental goals.<sup>8</sup> ESCAP also focuses on encouraging technological innovation and capacity building specifically within the spheres of sustainability, macroeconomic policy, trade and investment, transportation, social development, environmental development, information and communication advancement, disaster risk reduction, statistical analysis, and sub-regional activities.<sup>9</sup> ESCAP utilizes the detailed analysis projects it conducts to formulate policy dialogues and recommendations to its Member States.<sup>10</sup>

From its inception, ESCAP made several strides in fostering regional consensus, especially in regard to environmental conservation and development.<sup>11</sup> In 1957, ESCAP established the Mekong Committee, the largest single development project that a UN body had undertaken in the short period following its creation.<sup>12</sup> The project fostered cooperation between Member States, and involved international management, financing, and maintenance of the vast water resources within the Mekong Basin.<sup>13</sup> ESCAP's initial establishment of the committee allowed it to gain the necessary resources that allowed it to develop into a successful independent body, which is now known as the Mekong River Commission.<sup>14</sup>

The ESCAP reports to ECOSOC, and is the most comprehensive of its five regional development commissions, since the Asia-Pacific region is currently home to two-thirds of the world's population.<sup>15</sup> The ESCAP secretariat includes the Office of the Executive Secretary, the seven substantive divisions, the Division of Administration, and

<sup>1</sup> Resolution 37 (IV), *Work of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Implementing its Technical Cooperation Projects*, The United Nations Economic and Social Council, 28 March 1947, <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2004/resolution%202004-7.pdf> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> "From ECAFE to ESCAP," UN Intellectual History Project, November 2009, <http://www.unhistory.org/briefing/20Asia.pdf> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "History," United Nations ESCAP, <http://www.unescap.org/about/history> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> "ESCAP Mission," Guide to Archives of International Organizations, [http://www.unesco.org/archives/sio/Eng/presentation\\_print.php?idOrg=1009](http://www.unesco.org/archives/sio/Eng/presentation_print.php?idOrg=1009) (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "About ESCAP," United Nations ESCAP, <http://www.unescap.org/about> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> "What we do," United Nations Regional Commissions New York Office, <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/about/the-regional-commissions/what-we-do/> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> "ESCAP Annual Report 2014," UNESCAP, 2014, <http://www.unescap.org/resources/ESCAP-Annual-Report-2014> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> "The Story of Mekong Cooperation," Mekong River Commission for Sustainable Development, <http://www.mrcmekong.org/about-mrc/history/> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

the Programme Planning and Partnerships Divisions.<sup>16</sup> ESCAP has four sub-regional offices that support the recommendations of the secretariat, which are respectively located throughout Asia and the Pacific.<sup>17</sup> ESCAP's sub-regional activities are implemented upon the request of Member States through advisory services, training workshops, and field projects that aim to encourage the pragmatic implementation of the analytical and normative work that is conducted by ESCAP.<sup>18</sup>

ESCAP carries out its legislative functions through its Commission. The latter meets annually at the ministerial level to decide on recommendations of its Executive Secretary and subsidiary bodies, as well as review proposed strategies and frameworks for development.<sup>19</sup> The Commission reports to ECOSOC, and its decisions are often influenced by the developmental needs faced by least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small-island developing States (SIDS) within its membership.<sup>20</sup> The Commission also approves budgetary matters, which are then presented to the General Assembly for approval.<sup>21</sup> In 1977, A/RES/32/197 enabled ESCAP to receive funding from external donors, and it currently receives contributions from Member States, as well as various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and private sector entities.<sup>22</sup>

In 2008, the Commission created eight committees that meet biannually to promote regional dialogue and exchange knowledge regarding social, economic, and environmental policies and programmes.<sup>23</sup> These committees include Macroeconomic Policy; Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development; Transport; Environment and Development; Information and Communications Technology; Disaster Risk Reduction; Social Development; and the Committee on Statistics.<sup>24</sup> The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives (ACPR) is a separate committee that meets on a monthly basis and promotes open dialogue between Member States, Associate Members, and the Executive Secretary.<sup>25</sup>

Presently, ESCAP is promoting the expedient development of an extensive network of technological resources that would benefit the entire region by providing populations with increased access to civil registration and legal documentation.<sup>26</sup> In an address on 28 July 2015 to delegates at a meeting of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific, Executive Secretary Dr. Shamshad Akhtar emphasized that there is an "urgent need for improved data to support sustainable development across Asia and the Pacific."<sup>27</sup> This technology would promote digital inclusiveness, and advance the establishment of CRVS systems that will generate universal civil registration, accessible legal documentation, and accurate vital statistics.<sup>28</sup>

ESCAP continues to act as the main UN economic and social development center within Asia and the Pacific, and it constantly labors to produce developmental frameworks that promote social, economic, and environmental growth and momentum within all of its Member States and Associate Member States.<sup>29</sup>

For better understanding of the diverseness of this committee, ESCAP is divided into four sub-regional offices. Those are:

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Sub-regional Activities for Development," UNESCAP, <http://unescap.org/subregional-office> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> "About the Commission," UNESCAP, <http://unescap.org/about/commission> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Introductory Statement as Delivered by Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Under-Secretary-General of the UN & Exec Sec of ESCAP, 26 April 2013, [http://pacific.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CS69.Stmt\\_4.ES\\_Opening.pdf](http://pacific.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CS69.Stmt_4.ES_Opening.pdf) (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> "Working with ESCAP," UNESCAP, <http://www.unescap.org/partners/working-with-escap> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> "Committees," UNESCAP, <http://unescap.org/about/committees> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> "Advisory Committee of Permanent Reps and Other Reps," UNESCAP, <http://www.unescap.org/about/acpr> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> "Harnessing Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development," UNESCAP, <http://www.unescap.org/speeches/harnessing-science-technology-and-innovation-sustainable-development> (accessed July 29, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

- *East and North-East Asia*: China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation, and Associate members Hong Kong and Macau;
- *North and Central Asia*: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan;
- *The Pacific*: Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu and the Associate Members: American Samoa, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Niue and the Northern Mariana Islands; and,
- *South and South-West Asia*: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey.<sup>30</sup>

The Current Member States of ESCAP that will be represented at SRMUN Charlotte 2016 are:

AFGHANISTAN, ARMENIA, AUSTRALIA, AZERBAIJAN, BANGLADESH, CHINA, DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA, FIJI, FRANCE, GEORGIA, INDIA, INDONESIA, IRAN, JAPAN, MALAYSIA, MONGOLIA, MYANMAR, NEPAL, NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, PAKISTAN, PHILIPPINES, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, RUSSIAN FEDDERATION, SINGAPORE, TURKEY, TURKMENISTAN, UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, and VIET NAM.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> "Sub-Regional Activities for Development," UNESCAP, <http://www.unescap.org/subregional-office> (accessed October 27, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> SRMUN Charlotte – Nations, <http://www.srmun.org/charlotte/nations.php> (accessed November 16, 2015).

## I: Encouraging Collaboration for Effective Trade Facilitation

*“Global, regional and national partnerships in finance; trade; as well as science, technology and innovation, will be critical to execute and implement this complex but attainable development path.”*

*–Shamshad Akhtar,*

*Executive-Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)<sup>32</sup>*

Trade facilitation is an important avenue for economic growth in the Asian-Pacific region. This topic guide will describe the issue of trade facilitation, examine the ways in which this objective has been historically approached in Asia-Pacific and consider some of the main ways in which trade facilitation can be addressed in the present. The economic benefits of trade facilitation are potentially high, but limited state capacities as well as political conflicts between Member States in the region keep them from being realized.

In an address to the second United Nations (UN) Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in November 2014, the Executive-Secretary of ESCAP, Shamshad Akhtar, stated “intraregional trade in Asia over the past few decades has grown significantly.”<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, commercial growth has been achieved in an uneven manner, as certain Associate Members within the region have yet to experience the positive effects of regional connectivity.<sup>34</sup> In particular, least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small island developing states (SIDs) face certain obstacles that prevent them from achieving increased trade integration, and this lack of integration has contributed to the continued impoverishment of more than 1.4 billion people living in the region.<sup>35 36</sup> Such obstacles include a lack of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), limited access to seaports, and high political tensions.<sup>37</sup>

In order to resolve such obstacles, and translate the benefits of economic growth and sustainable development to all Member States and Associate Members in the region, ESCAP has taken on the task of increasing collaboration for trade facilitation. Historically, ESCAP has cooperated with other institutions, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Trade Centre (ITC), and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), to promote and enact better trade policies. Key to effective regional cooperation measures is the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). Passed in 2013, the WTO TFA seeks to foster trade and investment practices that are both sustainable and promote trade diversification.<sup>38</sup> ESCAP must work together to spread the benefits of trade and deliver more economic prosperity to the people of the region.

### *Past Efforts*

Today, there exist almost 50 international conventions for the transportation of goods, people, and vehicles across borders. These conventions and resolutions serve to improve development across States and therefore facilitate trade. Historically, ESCAP has worked closely with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), implementing such resolutions and conventions as the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) Carnets, the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, and the Customs Convention on Containers.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2015.

<http://www.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-trade-facilitation-forum-2015> (accessed October 27, 2015)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> “Connectivity and Integration in Asian LLDCs,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, November 4, 2014. <http://www.unescap.org/speeches/connectivity-and-integration-asian-lldc> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> “Policy Statement to the 71st Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, May 28, 2015. <http://www.unescap.org/speeches/policy-statement-71st-session-economic-and-social-commission-asia-and-pacific> (accessed October 28, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Trade facilitation used to revolve around tariff reduction.<sup>40</sup> This was evident in the success of General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) - precursor to the WTO - as in securing trade reduction, it focused on the elimination of imports quotas and voluntary export restraints.<sup>41</sup> However, the WTO is phasing out these forms of protectionism and is shifting the debate on trade facilitation to the design of infrastructures and technologies that are able to facilitate the flow of goods from one Member State to another.<sup>42</sup>

In 2003, ESCAP adopted the Almaty Programme of Action to promote trade diversification and grow transportation networks that would allow landlocked Member States to develop export markets.<sup>43</sup> In September 2015, ESCAP released a report entitled *Waiting for Service? Progress in Preferential Market Access for Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries' Services Exports*. This publication reports on the progress still needed in LDCs and recommends preferred market access for infant industries. ESCAP further supports the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT). UNNExT seeks to provide universal access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), like internet and cell phone access, to the region.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Components and Benefits of Trade Facilitation***

International trade rules and viewpoints vary from region to region. ESCAP considers trade facilitation as the expansion or implementation of policies and processes that “reduce the cost, time, and uncertainty associated with engaging in international trade,” while excluding traditional trade instruments such as tariffs, and import quotas.<sup>45</sup> The main objective of ESCAP on the subject of trade facilitation has historically been that of simplifying trade processes, minimizing transaction costs, and maintaining effective levels of government control.<sup>46</sup> Historically, ESCAP has recognized five key areas for improvement in trade facilitation: (i) publication of trade policies, (ii) rules and procedures for import and export, (iii) product quality, (iv) trade-related infrastructure and service, and (v) products on their way to their destination.<sup>47</sup> While other trade institutions like the WTO have focused more generally on reducing direct policy barriers, ESCAP uses these five dimensions to better tackle more complex issues that are relatively more important in the current economic environment.

Organizations like the WTO, World Customs Organization (WCO), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and ESCAP have made significant progress in reducing tariff- and quota-related barriers to trade, but developing states cannot make strides in trade growth through tariff concessions alone. Exports are encouraged to be competitive globally, but many markets in Asia and the Pacific are being left behind. In a 2013 report on the progress of trade facilitation in the Asia-Pacific, it was estimated that intraregional trade could potentially increase by 21 percent (more than USD 250 billion) if trade facilitation reform was enacted.<sup>48</sup> It was further noted that increasing transparency in the region could boost intraregional trade by seven and a half percent (USD 148 billion).<sup>49</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> “Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries,” United Nations Documents: Gathering, <http://www.un-documents.net/almaty-p.htm> (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> “Our Work in Trade Facilitation,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, <http://www.unescap.org/our-work/trade-investment/trade-facilitation> (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>45</sup> “An Overview of Trade Facilitation,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2013, [http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%20Part%20I\\_An%20Overview%20Of%20Trade%20Facilitation.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%20Part%20I_An%20Overview%20Of%20Trade%20Facilitation.pdf) (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> “Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2015,” October 2015. <http://www.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-trade-facilitation-forum-2015> (accessed October 27, 2015)

<sup>49</sup> “An Overview of Trade Facilitation,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2013, [http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%20Part%20I\\_An%20Overview%20Of%20Trade%20Facilitation.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%20Part%20I_An%20Overview%20Of%20Trade%20Facilitation.pdf) (accessed October 29, 2015).



Since most profit opportunities lie in the production of goods for export, cost-effectiveness and ease of transport for internationally traded goods are major components investors consider before entering a market. Member States that make trade facilitation a priority are more likely to secure Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and as a result of new investments, become more integrated with regional and global supply markets. Furthermore, increased trade facilitation directly benefits small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – or local businesses, which are regularly regarded as engines of growth in both emerging and developed economies.<sup>50</sup> SMEs in Asia and the Pacific lack international experience, and are therefore discouraged from joining the international market, usually by complicated customs procedures. Coordinating and streamlining trade procedures will spur the development of SMEs, and therefore the overall economy.

Generally speaking, by participating in trade facilitation, Members States should expect to see improved economic standards. This includes more reliable services and lower production costs, a better standard of living through international engagement and inclusive development policies, and a projected two and a half percent increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita.<sup>51</sup> In order to fully benefit from trade liberalization, there are several key areas for addressing barriers to trade: infrastructure, institutions, and trade financing. Infrastructure, in particular, is extremely important for any trade facilitation agenda, as the quality of infrastructure directly determines how much an economy will export.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Infrastructure***

Trade-related infrastructure and service has two dimensions: hard infrastructure dealing with roads and buildings, and soft infrastructure that deals with efficient administration. For example, hard infrastructure development helps lower the transportation cost of goods moved between port facilities, as well as by reducing costs by having better maintained buildings.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, good road systems, especially for LLDCs, increase trade by reducing costs of transport.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, ICTs create an opportunity for producers to engage in ecommerce, drastically simplifying trade through electronic transactions.<sup>55</sup> Soft infrastructure, however, is linked more to international collaboration through the consideration of policies that increase logistical capacities and efficiency in port facilities.<sup>56</sup>

Infrastructural improvements, whether hard or soft, stimulate economic growth, and by extension, help in the fight against poverty. Infrastructure improvements expand the ability of producers to supply more products at lower costs to international consumers. These services also boost national import markets, and better connect to our globalized world. By implementing physical projects, like new roadways and ports, or providing better Internet access, communications shoot up, spurring innovation and regional cooperation.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Institutions***

The improvement of institutions can be classified as soft infrastructure development, often employing policy-making tools to form new systems and reform old or inefficient institutions. Components (i), (ii), and (iii) of ESCAP's five key areas of trade improvement apply to improving institutions. Public and administration issues (i) deal with the availability of information to producers. There is a particular focus on the publication and implementation of new trade laws. Article 10 of the GATT as well as the International Convention on Mutual Administration Assistance have proved useful, as the latter focuses on new trade regulations, and the former on exchange of information between borders.<sup>58 59</sup> When producers are informed, they are empowered. Therefore,

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Brooks, Douglas. "Regional cooperation, infrastructure and trade costs in Asia," Trade Facilitation and Regional Cooperation in Asia, Asian Development Bank, 2010, <http://www10.iadb.org/intal/intalcdi/PE/2010/05834.pdf> (accessed November 20, 2015).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

making sure national and regional institutions can efficiently and accurately provide information is a key aspect of growing trade.

Issues surrounding rules and procedures (ii) and product quality (iii) are similarly affected by a lack of information sharing. Unintelligible rules and regulations for importing and exporting are chief among these issues. Without cooperation, Member States end up creating their own regulations. This results in overlapping, complex, and often contradictory policies. One solution to this issue might be a call for increased intraregional cooperation on procedures and standards. ESCAP could potentially adopt regional codes that allow for better trade. They could also identify similar procedures used by different Member States, so border agencies can cut down on the time costs of trade.<sup>60</sup> Organizations like the WTO and the WCO have made significant progress in this area, with a founding Article of the WTO calling for the minimization of complexity through a rule-based system. This system would govern the release and clearance of goods, but the WTO recognizes that more needs to be done through regional bodies like ESCAP.<sup>61</sup>

### ***Transiting and Financing***

Goods in transit (v) are more or less governed by rules established by GATT Article 5 and the TIR Convention.<sup>62</sup> Goods in transit are defined as goods that have been shipped by a seller, but have not yet been received by the buyer. The problem here is that once the goods have been shipped, the ownership of the good remains with the seller, but the seller loses all control of the good. The shipment could be detained, or refused entry to a country, making the seller responsible and prone to losing money.

Rules governing goods in transit deal directly with the balance between expedient customs and domestic protection. This is especially important to land-locked developing countries (LLDCs), and particularly to ESCAP since 12 of the world's 30 recognized LLDCs are Members of ESCAP.<sup>63</sup> For producers in LLDCs who already struggle to reach sea ports, not being able to regulate goods while in transit adds potential problems and cost. This has the effect of discouraging international trade.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, there is a growing demand for LLDCs to go from "land-locked" to "land-linking" countries.<sup>65</sup> Very often LLDCs provide the fastest over-land routes between coastal neighbors. Such countries can become an economic advantage for international goods, decreasing shipping times for coastal States and improving trade for LLDCs. The initiatives undertaken by the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) highlights the transition from landlocked to land-linking States, linking China, Thailand, and Viet Nam, with plans to eventually link Laos and Myanmar.<sup>66</sup>

One further emerging subtopic in trade facilitation is trade finance facilitation. Since 2003, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has sponsored the Trade Finance Program (TFP). The latter aims to encourage partnerships between regional development banks and States in Asia, support regional borrowing and enhancing national bank capacities, support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), provide counseling and financial options in times of crisis, and improve regional currency exchanges so that the ADB can finance trade more effectively.<sup>67</sup> The use of banks, like

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> "Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2015," October 2015.  
<http://www.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-trade-facilitation-forum-2015> (accessed October 27, 2015)

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> "An Overview of Trade Facilitation," United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2013, [http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%20Part%20I\\_An%20Overview%20Of%20Trade%20Facilitation.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%20Part%20I_An%20Overview%20Of%20Trade%20Facilitation.pdf) (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> "Cross-Border Facilitation and Transit for Landlocked Developing Countries," United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2013. [http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pub\\_2399-1\\_ch10.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pub_2399-1_ch10.pdf) (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>66</sup> Kunze, G. "In Laos: Land-linked, not Land-locked," The Asia Foundation, July 18, 2008, <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2008/08/27/in-laos-land-linked-not-land-locked/> (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> "ADB Trade Finance Program," The Asian Development Bank, November 1, 2014, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/evaluation-document/36218/files/trade-finance-program.pdf>



the ADB, as an intermediary for guaranteeing payments has been referred to as “the lifeblood of international trade” due to the role it plays in managing the risks associated with trade.<sup>68</sup> Crises like the 2008-2009 global recession highlight the importance of trade financing and investment, making it a global topic of interest to the UN, WTO, World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

### *Present Trade Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific*

The region is home to many of the world’s best and worst trade facilitation performers. In the European Union (EU), the average time for completing export procedures is 10 days, and costs USD 1,123 on average.<sup>69</sup> In Asia, these figures fluctuate in the extreme. Some economies like Hong Kong and China take six days or less, and cost USD 650 on average, with others taking over 75 days, and costing more than USD 3,000 on average.<sup>70</sup> This difference within Member States portrays an increasingly wide gap that inhibits growth for the region.

Some of the difference in performance is due to a lack of investment in infrastructure. States with the highest trade costs need to adopt new similar measures with the International Trade Centre (ITC) in order to lower these costs. These measures include investments in physical infrastructure, or the adoption of new policies for customs procedures. This, in addition to promoting WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) provisions, is key in closing the trade facilitation performance gap in Asia.<sup>71</sup>

Efficient overland trade is also crucial to expanding intraregional trade, yet very little progress has been made in this area. Much of the focus of national facilitation efforts has been directed to port facilities (sea and air). This is in part because of increasing demands from international trading partners to have more technology-based security protocols at sea- and air-ports. As a result, trade facilitation concerns over land have been largely ignored. Trade facilitation for transit over land requires intensive collaboration among ESCAP Members. These collaborations could potentially include actions on trade policies, agreements on standards for importing and exporting, more transparent monitoring of international transactions, and projects for enhancing transportation infrastructure.

The World Bank Logistics Performance Index (LPI) also indicates that some regions in Asia and the Pacific lack timeliness and predictability.<sup>72</sup> Beyond the direct costs of trading, one of the primary goals of trade facilitation is to ensure that goods are delivered on time, and through proper infrastructure. Poor performance in these areas is mostly due to unclear customs procedures, and can be improved through collaborative efforts by ESCAP for a unified, streamlined customs policy. Additionally, many developing Member States have low-performing logistical, or administrative, services. In detail, logistical services means the national capacity to manage the flow of trade from point A to point B, while coping with a series of trade policies and standards.

Surveys conducted by ESCAP in Asia and the Pacific reveal that although the WTO and previous ESCAP resolutions have identified key needs in improving trade facilitation, the needs and priorities of Members vary significantly across borders. As a result, there are a few issues that have emerged as high priority. They include the elimination of corruption and bribery practices by officials, improving coordination between trading agencies (most notably for the purposes of documentation), the timely announcement and implementation of new rules and regulations for international trade, and the simplification of import/export documents.

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(accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> “An Overview of Trade Facilitation,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2013, [http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%20Part%20I\\_An%20Overview%20Of%20Trade%20Facilitation.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%20Part%20I_An%20Overview%20Of%20Trade%20Facilitation.pdf) (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> “ESCAP and ITC strengthen cooperation for trade facilitation in Asia and the Pacific,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, June 15, 2015, <http://www.unescap.org/news/escap-and-its-strengthen-cooperation-trade-facilitation-asia-and-pacific> (accessed October 28, 2015).

<sup>72</sup> “An Overview of Trade Facilitation,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2013, [http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%20Part%20I\\_An%20Overview%20Of%20Trade%20Facilitation.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%20Part%20I_An%20Overview%20Of%20Trade%20Facilitation.pdf) (accessed October 29, 2015).

Corruption and bribery occur when there is a financial benefit for traders to work outside the legal system. Complex procedures and high costs create trade environments increasingly vulnerable to misconduct.<sup>73</sup> In regions like East Asia, corruption is a significant barrier to trade.<sup>74</sup> Possible solutions to bribery and corruption include the computerized storage of trade procedures, increasing wages of trade officials, increasing the availability of information on procedures, and infrastructure improvements to ports (sea, air, or land).

### ***Addressing Political Barriers to Trade***

Much of South and Central Asia's trade landscape is dominated by increasing political tensions between States. Given that much of South Asia's trade in goods is by over-land routes, the relationships of neighboring Member States is extremely important to the time and cost of transporting merchandise. Politically unstable relationships effectively cut off the possibility of international road or rail transportation in South Asia. At these borders, goods are transshipped (sent to an intermediate "or middle-man" destination, and then again to the final destination), doubling the price and time of trade for involved parties.<sup>75</sup> These complicated procedures combined with the absence of trans regional infrastructure incentivize informal trading. Unemployed people come to these crossings seeking jobs in the informal sector, expanding illegal trade.<sup>76</sup>

In these instances, time delays and ever-increasing costs of transshipment reduce the benefits of trade liberalization. In contrast to the EU and North America, Asia has no overarching regional transportation agreement. Instead the region utilizes a system of inefficient bilateral agreements among LLDCs. ESCAP must consider how to improve the trade environment of politically divided neighbors if trade facilitation is to be addressed effectively.

### ***Conclusion***

Trade procedures that are overly complex or prone to political tensions actively discourage economic activity and overall growth, and therefore decrease participation in regional and global markets. Trade facilitation aims to increase the ease of participating in international trade. This is achieved by simplifying trade procedures and regulations, which cuts down on the time and costs for importing and exporting. ESCAP assists all Members States and Associate Members, but in particular LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS by publishing research on tools and guides for trade facilitation improvements. These improvements focus on ecommerce, the availability of information and ICTs to producers, logistical services, reducing trade times and costs, increasing import transparency, and encouraging collaboration among stakeholders toward goals stated above.

It is generally recognized that the diversity of Asian markets is the reason behind the strong growth seen in the region over the past 30 years.<sup>77</sup> As the global leader in trade fragmentation (the separation of production components and assembly to multiple countries), trade facilitation is necessary for Asia and the Pacific to maintain their status as drivers of diversity and economic opportunity.

### ***Committee Directive***

The above briefly describes the ways in which trade facilitation policy has been articulated in international trade agreements and conventions. Delegates should consider this description as a road map to this topic, identifying areas in which Member States, particularly lesser developed ones, can work to improve trade facilitation and thereby take full advantage of the economic growth potential offered by international trade.

Through strengthening collaboration, ESCAP is better positioned to assist developing Member States to realize their full economic potential, increasing economic competitiveness and the overall quality of life experience by the people living in LDCs. No other organization is as equipped as ESCAP to address this issue and delegates within

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

the committee should feel empowered to make real reforms that will have a lasting impact on Asia and the Pacific. Delegates should come to committee knowledgeable about their own Member States' trade facilitation initiatives, known trading partners, and key areas for national trade development. Delegates should also consider what platforms and conventions they are party to, and if they classify as an LDC, LLDC, or SIDS. How can your assigned Member State gain from trade? Does your Member State have barriers to trade, and to what extent are your trade procedures facilitated by ICTs? Is it possible to implement regional transit agreements and economic corridors within your own sub-region?

Every single component of trade facilitation is highly affected by policy intervention, and inclusive participation in policy-making is necessary for the evolution of trade in Asia and the Pacific. In this regard, it would do well to follow the precedent of the WTO FTA, and promote "positive integration."<sup>78</sup> Agreeing to focus on positive integration means pursuing specific practices and building towards consensus among diverse approaches, rather than imposing limits or agreements refraining from quotas and tariffs, for example.<sup>79</sup>

Trade facilitation will remain vital in the pursuit of economic growth and long-term stability, and all Members of ESCAP must work to reduce barriers that limit successful international trade.

<sup>78</sup> Brooks, Douglas, "Regional cooperation, infrastructure and trade costs in Asia," Trade Facilitation and Regional Cooperation in Asia, Asian Development Bank, 2010, <http://www10.iadb.org/intal/intalcdi/PE/2010/05834.pdf> (accessed November 20, 2015).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

## II. The Impact of Overpopulation on Socio-Economic Disparities

*“Overpopulation in various countries has become a serious threat to the well-being of many people and a grave obstacle to any attempt to organize peace on this planet of ours.”*  
- Albert Einstein<sup>80</sup>

### Introduction

Human activity has reached unprecedented levels since the start of the Industrial Revolution. Not only are humans demanding more resources, but there are more people on planet Earth than ever before.<sup>81</sup> Currently, there are around 7.2 billion humans that inhabit this planet, with 9 billion expected in 2050.<sup>82</sup> This exponential growth pales in comparison to just 1950, when “the Earth’s human population was roughly 2.2 billion.”<sup>83</sup> This sudden growth has come at an environmental, social and economic cost. The Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) will therefore note that “for an area to be considered overpopulated, its population reaches a point where it cannot be maintained without rapidly depleting nonrenewable resources and without degrading the capacity to support the population.”<sup>84</sup>

To meet humans’ growing appetite for resources, forests will continue to be torn down, rich soil for agriculture depleted of its nutrients, and fresh water scarce for many. Additionally, as people migrate to cities from their rural homes, they are faced with unsafe living conditions once they get there. This is true in the case of Suzette Flores, a mother of a 19 month-old son in Manila, Philippines. According to Vice News, her son died September 2014 after vomiting five times and experiencing seizures, all due to bacterial meningitis from polluted groundwater.<sup>85</sup> Due to economic reasons, she left her rural home in search of a better life in Manila. However, she now resides in Tondo, “a Manila neighborhood that is one of the world’s most densely populated slums.”<sup>86</sup> As a result, many people have flocked from rural areas to urban ones because of declining agricultural commodity prices, livelihood opportunities and insufficient rural land to confer social standing.<sup>87</sup>

### Brief History of Human Overpopulation in the Asia-Pacific Region

Several advances in recent memory have enabled humans to multiply at the rate seen today. According to the Population Reference Bureau, “for the first one-half million years of human existence, the population growth rate was about zero.”<sup>88</sup> However, it was not until the early 1700s that the modern growth rate took place. Thanks in part to the Industrial Revolution, the European and North American continents experienced a substantial surge in

<sup>80</sup> “Quotations,” Population matters for a sustainable future, <http://www.populationmatters.org/take-action/speak-out/making-case/quotations/> (accessed November 15, 2015).

<sup>81</sup> “The Challenge for Humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – adaptin gand sizing outelves to fit within the capacity of one planet,” Sustainable World Initiative, 9 September 2014, <https://mahb.stanford.edu/blog/the-challenge-for-humanity/> (accessed September 20, 2015).

<sup>82</sup> “U.S. and World Population Clock,” United States Census Bureau, 26 September 2015, <http://www.census.gov/popclock/> (accessed September 26, 2015).

<sup>83</sup> Salim Akhter, Prof. Dr. Muhammed and Dr. Shahzad Alam Khan, “Population Explosion and Freshwater Crises,” University of South Florida, <http://www.usf.edu.pk/Population%20and%20water.pdf> (accessed September 25, 2015).

<sup>84</sup> “The Effects of Growing Populations,” University of Michigan, <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/section4group5/implications> (accessed September 24, 2015).

<sup>85</sup> Jones, Sarah, “A Lack of Clean Water and Sanitation in the Philippines Kills 55 People Every Day,” Vice News, 27 March 2015, <https://news.vice.com/article/a-lack-of-clean-water-and-sanitation-in-the-philippines-kills-55-people-every-day> (accessed September 25, 2015)

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> “Chapter 1: Effects of Population Growth and Urbanization in the Pacific Islands,” World Bank, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPACIFICISLANDS/Resources/Chapter+1.pdf> (accessed September 23, 2015).

<sup>88</sup> Human Population: Future Growth,” Poluation Reference Bureau, <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Lesson-Plans/HumanPopulation/FutureGrowth.aspx> (accessed October 19, 2015).

population in the 1800s and later in the mid-1900s. That is because death rates decreased as a result of improved farming and transportation technologies that “expanded the food supply and lessened the danger of famine.”<sup>89</sup>

Although the European and North American continents have experienced lower mortality and birth rates since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that is not comparatively true of the Asia-Pacific region. As noted by ESCAP in 2013, the Asia-Pacific region held 60 percent of the world population, or 4.3 billion.<sup>90</sup> Specifically, “there are 1.8 billion in South and South-West Asia, 1.6 billion in North and North-East Asia, 0.6 billion in South-East Asia, 0.2 billion in North and Central Asia and 38 million in the Pacific.”<sup>91</sup> These numbers pose challenges to the ESCAP’s Member States and Associate Members. With 60 percent of the world’s population, citizens are and will continue to demand more resources and services from their local governments. Consequently, more resources in forms of jobs, educational opportunities, public services like water, and equitable access to food are detrimental in this overpopulated region of the world.

### ***Socio-Economic Challenges from Overpopulation***

#### *Access to Education*

In the year 2000, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), specifically Goal 2, set out to “ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.”<sup>92</sup> Despite tremendous progress, and with the official end of the MDGs in 2015, the region is home to Member States and Associate Members with some of the “highest numbers of out-of-school children in the world” as many never enroll or eventually drop out.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, although the number of school-aged children dropped from 74 to 21 million since 1990 to today, a staggering 573.7 million people were added to the region since 2000.<sup>94</sup>

The region can generally attribute “persistent rural-urban disparities, rising socio-economic inequality and continuing exclusion of children with disabilities” as contributing factors to a lack of access to education for its children.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, girls from the fringes of society like urban slums and ethnic minorities are less likely to complete a full education, unless female teachers and support to poor households is enhanced and provided.<sup>96</sup>

While children are usually the first to receive educational opportunities, Member States and Associate Members must not forgo progress to educate the current adult population. As of 2012, the “literacy rate for the adult population in the Asia-Pacific region stood at 83.6 percent.”<sup>97</sup> When taken into a world perspective, that accounts to “64.2 percent of the world’s total illiterate adults.”<sup>98</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> “Population Trends in Asia and the Pacific,” UNESCAP, November 2013, <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SPPS-Factsheet-Population-Trends-v3.pdf> (accessed October 23, 2015).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> “Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education,” United Nations, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml> (accessed October 25, 2015).

<sup>93</sup> “Making it Happen, Technology, Finance and Statistics for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific – Asia-Pacific Regional MDGs Report 2014/15,” UNESCAP, 2014-2015, <http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/dam/rbap/docs/Research%20&%20Publications/mdg/RBAP-RMDG-Report-2014-2015.pdf> (accessed October 26, 2015).

<sup>94</sup> “Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific,” UNESCAP, 2014, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/statistical-yearbook-asia-pacific-country-profiles-education-2014-en.pdf> (accessed October 18, 2015).

<sup>95</sup> “Regional Overview: Youth in Asia and the Pacific,” United Nations Youth, 2010, <http://www.youtheconomicopportunities.org/resource/267/regional-overview-state-youth-asia-and-pacific> (accessed November 17, 2015).

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> “Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific,” UNESCAP, 2014, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/statistical-yearbook-asia-pacific-country-profiles-education-2014-en.pdf> (accessed October 18, 2015).

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

## Employment

Just in 2013, the Asia-Pacific region had an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent, the lowest in any region in the world.<sup>99</sup> While this is an incredible number when compared to Europe's 10.7 percent on the same year, there are underlying factors on the success the Asia-Pacific region has had. Those include youth unemployment, underemployment, employment for women, and rural-to-urban employment differences.

The region's average youth unemployment rate stood at 11 percent in 2010.<sup>100</sup> Since then, the rate has increased throughout the region, as it stood at 19.5 percent in Sri Lanka, 14-19 percent in the Philippines and Indonesia, and 13.4 percent in New Zealand, to name a few.<sup>101</sup> According to UN Youth, a tremendous challenge posing Member States is providing an easier access in transitioning from education to employment.<sup>102</sup> This is further emphasized by the International Labor Organization, as it stated in its Asia Pacific Labor Market Update in 2015 that knowing the "requirements of employers and youth aspirations" can reduce youth unemployment region-wide.<sup>103</sup>

While there are the fortunate few that are employed, three in five workers in 2014 faced vulnerable or underemployment conditions.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, youth "simply cannot afford to be unemployed and are obliged to take up jobs with poor pay, poor conditions and poor prospects."<sup>105</sup> The World Economic Forum states that while there are 300 million employed, as many as 200 million "earn less than USD two a day."<sup>106</sup> This is critical in lifting people out of poverty, as outlined by Sustainable Development Goal 1.<sup>107</sup>

Regarding women's employment, they actually have a "higher unemployment rate than men, almost twice the global average."<sup>108</sup> However, Member States and Associate Members should note that most of the employed women are in unstable jobs, resulting in lost productivity due to low pay and little to no health benefits.<sup>109</sup> It is also important to point out that women are 7 percentage points higher than men to be underemployed in the overall Asia-Pacific region, while in some Member States the difference is much higher.<sup>110</sup>

With half of the world's population now living in cities, Asia contributes 16 mega-cities to the world list of 28.<sup>111</sup> To take that into perspective, a mega-city is defined as a "very large city, typically one with a population of over ten

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> "Regional Overview: Youth in Asia and the Pacific," United Nations Youth, 2010, <http://www.youtheconomicopportunities.org/resource/267/regional-overview-state-youth-asia-and-pacific> (accessed November 17, 2015).

<sup>101</sup> "Asia-Pacific Labor Market Update, February 2015," International Labour Organization, February 2015, [http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS\\_342137/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_342137/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed November 11, 2015).

<sup>102</sup> "Regional Overview: Youth in Asia and the Pacific," United Nations Youth, 2010, <http://www.youtheconomicopportunities.org/resource/267/regional-overview-state-youth-asia-and-pacific> (accessed November 17, 2015).

<sup>103</sup> "Asia-Pacific Labor Market Update, February 2015," International Labour Organization, February 2015, [http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS\\_342137/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_342137/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed November 11, 2015).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> "Youth Employment in Asia-Pacific," International Labour Organization (ILO), [http://www.ilo.org/asia/areas/WCMS\\_117542/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/areas/WCMS_117542/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed October 26, 2015).

<sup>106</sup> "Youth Employment and Skills Development in Asia and the Pacific: By the Numbers," Asian Development Bank (ADB), 9 December 2015, <http://www.adb.org/features/youth-employment-and-skills-development-asia-and-pacific-numbers> (Accessed October 26, 2015).

<sup>107</sup> "Sustainable Development Goals," Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2015, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300> (accessed November 1, 2015).

<sup>108</sup> "Asia and the Pacific," UN Women, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/asia-and-the-pacific> (accessed October 27, 2015).

<sup>109</sup> "Youth Employment and Skills Development in Asia and the Pacific: By the Numbers," Asian Development Bank (ADB), 9 December 2015, <http://www.adb.org/features/youth-employment-and-skills-development-asia-and-pacific-numbers> (accessed October 26, 2015).

<sup>110</sup> "Asia-Pacific Labor Market Update, February 2015," International Labour Organization, February 2015, [http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS\\_342137/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_342137/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed November 11, 2015).

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.



million people.”<sup>112</sup> As people living in rural areas are faced with poor living conditions when compared to their urban counterpart, many other cities are projected to add even more people in the decades to come. This is the case in India, as it is projected to add 404 million urban dwellers by 2050, it will pose tremendous sanitation, environmental, safety, and food challenges to the region.<sup>113</sup>

### *Water Scarcity*

As the Asia-Pacific region continues to add more and more people every year, the amount of freshwater available per person has and will continue to decrease in nearly every Member State and Associate Member.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, “of all wastewater generated in the region, only 15 percent to 20 percent receives some level of treatment before being discharged into water bodies” like lakes.<sup>115</sup> That means that the rest of the untreated wastewater gets released back into the public full of pollutants and toxic compounds. Therefore, low-income families who are reliant on streams or lakes for freshwater become sick, and are unable to work or go to school, resulting in a perpetual cycle difficult to get out of. Moreover, water scarcity is becoming a growing conflict issue. According to UNESCO, China alone has experienced “more than 120,000 water-related disputes since 1990,” with more expected to come.<sup>116</sup>

Furthermore, rising sea-levels in the Pacific are threatening local aquifers.<sup>117</sup> Since the Pacific Island Countries are low-lying, they are prone to the most subtle high tides infiltrating their freshwater drinking resources. As a result, people will be left with no drinkable water.<sup>118</sup> Member States and Associate Members must then address this alarming issue, as it is affecting millions throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

### *Environmental Stresses*

The environmental strain placed on the Asia-Pacific region by its growing population is higher than ever before. As the region’s population increases, so does their demand for food and other resources. In other words, more agricultural land must be harvested by chopping down forests – and fishing already depleting fish stocks, resulting in more pollution, and the endangerment of species who called forests and oceans their home.<sup>119</sup>

Moreover, as more people continue to migrate to mega-cities, they are increasingly in danger of natural disasters affecting them. That is why “of the world’s reported natural disasters between 2004 and 2013, 41.2 percent, or 1690 incidences, occurred in the Asia-Pacific region,” with 713,956 people killed and 1.5 billion affected.<sup>120</sup> As a result of such devastating consequences, governments are burdened with costly damages amounting to over USD 560 billion, and therefore deviate from focusing on socio-economic programs aimed to help their citizens.<sup>121</sup>

### *Food Security*

A recent shift in diets worldwide is putting a strain on land and water. With a multitude of people in Asia-Pacific moving up the income ladder, as well as increasing populations, “the difficulties in improving food security will become more severe” as they start demanding more livestock products and vegetables, which need more land and

<sup>112</sup> “Megacity,” Oxford Dictionaries, [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/megacity](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/megacity) (accessed October 27, 2015).

<sup>113</sup> “Making it Happen, Technology, Finance and Statistics for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific – Asia-Pacific Regional MDGs Report 2014/15,” UNESCAP, 2014-2015, <http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/dam/rbap/docs/Research%20&%20Publications/mdg/RBAP-RMDG-Report-2014-2015.pdf> (accessed October 26, 2015).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Siddle, Julian, “Kiribati: Tiny island’s struggle with overpopulation,” BBC: Science & Environment, 3 February 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-26017336> (accessed September 23, 2015).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> “Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific,” UNESCAP, 2014, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/statistical-yearbook-asia-pacific-country-profiles-education-2014-en.pdf> (accessed October 18, 2015).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

water than typical cereals like rice.<sup>122</sup> Those difficulties are based on sustainable agriculture, and in “keeping the real price of food stable and affordable.”<sup>123</sup> According to the Asian Development Bank, food prices that have been on the rise since the 2000s and have limited the purchasing power of families, especially those in the low economic bracket. The impact is so severe, that it is estimated that around 112 million people could have escaped poverty if food prices had not risen during the 2000s.<sup>124</sup> The rise has been so high, that “prices [in 2011 were] 85 percent higher than their 2003 levels.”<sup>125</sup> Unfortunately, high food prices also leads to undernutrition.

This is especially true in India, where due to food insecurity, malnourishment affected 21 percent of the population in 2011.<sup>126</sup> As a result, India suffered from a “loss of productivity, indirect loss from impaired cognitive development, and losses from increased long-term healthcare costs.”<sup>127</sup> Additionally, while faced with the largest number of people considered to be food insecure in the world, the Indian government spent nearly one percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on food aid for low-income households in 2013, the largest spent on food by any Member State in the world.<sup>128</sup>

Addressing food insecurity will require Member States and Associate Members to formulate “measured and balanced policies that promote agricultural productivity and price stability, increase the availability of and access to food, and ensure adequate nutrition.”<sup>129</sup> Moreover, focus should be placed on providing smallholder farmers better access to profitable markets that will sustain their livelihoods season after season, with little to no agricultural protectionism. ESCAP should note that food nutrition must also be made a priority when improving food security. Furthermore, in order to prevent another possible food crisis, adequate and timely information on food markets and stocks is “critical to preventing market speculation” and affecting millions in Asia-Pacific.<sup>130</sup>

### *Family Planning*

The Population Reference Bureau states that proper family planning can help lift people out of poverty.<sup>131</sup> By couples planning accordingly, they are able to invest more in the health and education of their children.<sup>132</sup> However, proper family planning is not universal, and the region differs across its Member States and Associate Members due to a variety of reasons. Take Central Asia for example, “one in three women said that she or her partner opposed use of family planning,” while in Southeast Asia, “almost four in 10 women did not use an effective method” because of potential side effects.<sup>133</sup> Besides objections from a spouse and potential side effects influencing a woman’s decision to decline family planning, lack of knowledge, cultural and religious reasons are also common.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>122</sup> “Food Security and Poverty in Asia and the Pacific: Key Challenges and Policy Issues,” Asian Development Bank, April 2012, <http://www.adb.org/publications/food-security-and-poverty-asia-and-pacific-key-challenges-and-policy-issues> (accessed November 20, 2015).

<sup>123</sup> “Food Security in Asia and the Pacific,” Asian Development Bank and Liu Institute for Global Studies at the University of British Columbia (UBC), 2013, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30349/food-security-asia-pacific.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2015).

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> “Food Security and Hunger in Asia and the Pacific,” Asian Development Bank, May 2012, <http://www.adb.org/features/fast-facts-seven-billion-and-growing> (accessed November 22, 2015).

<sup>126</sup> Thomson, William, “India’s Food Security Problem,” The Diplomat, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/04/indias-food-security-problem/> (accessed October 30, 2015).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> “Food Security in Asia and the Pacific,” Asian Development Bank and Liu Institute for Global Studies at the University of British Columbia (UBC), 2013, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30349/food-security-asia-pacific.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2015).

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Gribble, James N., “Fact Sheet: Unmet Need for Family Planning,” Population Reference Bureau, July 2012, <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2012/world-population-data-sheet/fact-sheet-unmet-need.aspx> (accessed October 27, 2015).

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

While families in the Asian continent generally have better access to family planning, Pacific Island Countries suffer from a lack thereof.<sup>135</sup> This is further concerning in the Pacific, where unmet family planning ranks among the highest in the world.<sup>136</sup> If addressed properly, family planning can help improve a variety of issues, like “universal education, women’s empowerment, prevention of HIV, poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability.”<sup>137</sup>

Therefore, Member States and Associate Members must look at regional differences in family planning, and what are the reasons for such differences. That is, improving access, lowering cost, and educating people about its use are all possible solutions to consider.

### ***Incorporating the SDGs***

This past September 2015, world leaders gathered at the United Nations (UN) for the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly (GA) in New York City to discuss a myriad of topics, among them the direction of the post-2015 agenda.<sup>138</sup> After much deliberation, world leaders agreed to continue moving forward from the success of the MDGs by creating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>139</sup> Composed of 17 different, ambitious goals, world leaders have until 2030 to end poverty (Goal 1), to taking urgent action on climate change (Goal 13), among many other goals.<sup>140</sup>

Already, regional organizations throughout the world are gearing up for the implementation of said goals, with ESCAP being no exception. Towards the end of September 2015, an ESCAP forum organized in Bangkok, Thailand, eventually concluded “that the relevance and impact of the proposed SDGs and targets varies substantially from country to country, and called for global monitoring to be led by national priorities.”<sup>141</sup>

Moreover, the meeting stressed the importance of the Asia Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the ESCAP Committee on Statistics in making the implementation of the SDGs realistic.<sup>142</sup> This is done by “fostering the ongoing engagement between policymakers and national statistical offices necessary to achieve the goals.”<sup>143</sup> Therefore, Member States and Associate Members will be able to implement the necessary SDGs to their specific needs, and work towards eliminating socio-economic disparities.<sup>144</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The Asia-Pacific region is home to a staggering 60 percent of the world population.<sup>145</sup> That means that as different as all the Member States and Associate Members may be in terms of religion, culture and interests, they all share and rely on basic things like water, food, employment, and the environment, just to name a few. ESCAP therefore sees it as a turning point for this region to use its differences as its specialty from all others around the planet. By

<sup>135</sup> “Population and Development Profiles: Pacific Island Countries,” United Nations Population Fund, Pacific Sub-Regional Office, April 2014,

[http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/drive/web\\_140414\\_UNFPA%20PopulationandDevelopmentProfiles-PacificSub-RegionExtendedv1LRv2.pdf](http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/drive/web_140414_UNFPA%20PopulationandDevelopmentProfiles-PacificSub-RegionExtendedv1LRv2.pdf) (accessed October 15, 2015).

<sup>136</sup> Kennedy et al., “The case for investing in family planning in the Pacific: costs and benefits of reducing unmet need for contraception in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands,” US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, June 2013, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3700798/> (accessed December 1, 2015).

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> “Historic New Sustainable Development Agenda Unanimously Adopted by 193 UN Members,” United Nations, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/09/historic-new-sustainable-development-agenda-unanimously-adopted-by-193-un-members/> (accessed December 5, 2015).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> “Country-led monitoring will be critical to achieving SDGs in Asia-Pacific, says UN,” UNESCAP, 23 September 2015, <http://www.unescap.org/news/country-led-monitoring-will-be-critical-achieving-sdgs-asia-pacific-says-un> (accessed October 18, 2015).

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> “Population Trends in Asia and the Pacific,” UNESCAP, November 2013, <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SPPS-Factsheet-Population-Trends-v3.pdf> (accessed October 23, 2015).

formulating solutions to the region's population problem, the Asia-Pacific region could be a catalyst for other developing regions facing the same phenomenon.

Incorporating better and improved methods towards educating the youth, without providing the necessary tools to enter the workforce will be fruitless. Addressing a lack of food staples will also see no productive results if communities are not given fair prices and nutritious foods. Moreover, if sustainable agricultural methods are not made common practice throughout Asia-Pacific, then existing forests and oceans will be depleted and polluted, resulting in polluted waterways and depriving everyone of clean air. Furthermore, overpopulated areas like slums will continue to foster disease and reduce freshwater for all unless proper drainage systems are installed and planning is set in place. While family planning may be available in some areas of the Asia-Pacific, without educating women about its safety and long-term benefits, as well as encouraging spouses to support one another, the Asia-Pacific will continue seeing more and more people throughout the years.

As difficult as it seems to tackle all these different topics at once, it is further encouraged for ESCAP to incorporate language acknowledging the recent SDGs and their proper implementation throughout the region. Focusing solely on the SDGs will not be beneficial, and will only steer Member States and Associate Members from the primary nature of this topic.

### ***Committee Directive***

The Asia-Pacific region is a challenging place for policymakers. Composed of many different languages, religions, and ethnic groups, the people of the Asia-Pacific have a huge potential to solve many issues. Although the topic could go in many directions, Member States and Associate Members are highly encouraged to come prepared knowing their delegation's stance on education, employment, water scarcity, environmental stresses, family planning, and food security. While researching these various issues may seem daunting, coming prepared will ease the delegate into negotiating from the very beginning. If the delegate is having difficulty finding information on their assigned Member State or Associate Member, look at what sub-region the delegation is located. Often times, Member States neighboring each other share similar policies. With that said, how should ESCAP better collect data on overpopulation? Especially in the Pacific where data is lacking. Can ESCAP utilize its unique diversity in being a model for the world? How can Pacific Island Countries be able to prevent rising-sea levels from infiltrating their water reserves? Should desalination be a solution? Who will provide the funds? Will the Asia-Pacific region reduce food prices? How can countries do so in light of international law? Lastly, will ESCAP Member States and Associate Members acknowledge the recent SDGs in solving socio-economic disparities caused by overpopulation?

## **Technical Appendix Guide (TAG)**

### **I. Encouraging Collaboration for Effective Trade Facilitation**

“Regional Organizations Cooperation Mechanism for Trade Facilitation,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. <http://www.unescap.org/our-work/trade-investment/trade-facilitation/roc-tf>.

The Regional Organizations Cooperation Mechanism (ROC-TF) was established by UNESCAP in July 2011 to encourage increased information exchanges between Member States in Asia and the Pacific. The mechanism also seeks to bolster cooperation and identify key areas for trade development. The ROC-TF publishes bi-annual newsletters on the progress of current UNESCAP projects and other regional bodies for trade facilitation.

“Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program: Overview,” Asian Development Bank. <http://www.adb.org/publications/greater-mekong-subregion-economic-cooperation-program-overview>.

The Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) is an excellent study on collaboration. With the help of the Asian Development Bank, GMS is able to identify high-priority projects in different economic sectors for the Member States of the GMS (Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam). GMS advocates sustainable development, infrastructure development, and community-building.

“Transparency & Trade Facilitation in the Asia Pacific: Estimating the Gains from Reform,” The World Bank. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRES/Resources/Transparency-APEC-Study-Fin.pdf>.

The World Bank and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) have pieced together the expected gains from eliminating corrupt, or “behind-the-border”, trade transactions in Asia and the Pacific. The paper concludes that by eliminating “hidden” costs caused by low levels of transparency could raise intra-regional trade by a significant amount. They further stress the need to tackle transparency in a capacity-building agenda, working with APEC on a “Transparency and Competitiveness” action plan that coordinates with governments and development institutions.

“Trade procedures must be simplified to improve regional integration, Asia-Pacific forum concludes,” Oceania Customs Organization Secretariat, October 28, 2015. <http://www.ocosec.org/pages.cfm/newsroom/latest-news/trade-procedures-must-be-simplified-to-improve-regional-integration-asia-pacific-forum-concludes.html>.

The 7<sup>th</sup> annual Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) organized by ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank, and Chinese Electronic Commerce Center, concluded on 28 October 2015 with an agreement to make the automation of trade procedures, and the movement toward paperless trade, as a forefront goal for the region. The theme of the forum was “deepening regional integration through trade facilitation,” and stressed the necessity to simplify trade procedures. It was further agreed that ratifying the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Free Trade Agreement (FTA) would be a high priority measure for lowering trade costs, and the gap in trade costs, across the region.

“ESCAP and ITC strengthen cooperation for trade facilitation in Asia and the Pacific,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asian and the Pacific. <http://www.unescap.org/news/escap-and-itc-strengthen-cooperation-trade-facilitation-asia-and-pacific>.

ESCAP and the International Trade Center (ITC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding in June 2015 to support Least Developed Countries as ESCAP moves to implement the WTO FTA. The ITC will lend their products and services to ESCAP to enable the region to enact capacity-building initiatives for simplifying

trade procedures. The Memorandum also supports the economic development of SIDS and LLDCs, and specifically advocated for the transition to paperless trade.

“ESCAP Reports Slow Growth in Asia-Pacific, Recommends Trade Facilitation Measures,” Asia-Pacific Regional Coverage, November 2, 2015. <http://asiapacificsd.iisd.org/news/escap-reports-slow-growth-in-asia-pacific-recommends-trade-facilitation-measures/>.

The UNESCAP 2015 annual report showed that, excluding China, the Asia-Pacific economy declined by 0.4 percent in 2014. UNESCAP also reports strong Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), with developing States in the region receiving 43 percent of world investments. In 2014, Asia-Pacific countries have adopted more measures to restrict trade than liberalize it, causing the economic retraction, and identify trade facilitation as an absolute necessity to move forward in economic development.

“Integrated Border Management in Asia and the Pacific,” Integration and Trade Journal 38, Gala Gomez Minujin, 2013. <http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=39045928>.

Minujin concludes in this paper that the reduction in tariffs and quotas over the past few decades has caused more countries to consider trade facilitation more seriously, and in the light of collaboration and international agreements. She calls for increased capabilities of customs management as a measure for reducing time costs for trade procedures. The paper further exemplifies the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as an example for increased regional trade connectivity.

“Beyond Investment: Engaging the Private Sector in Trade Facilitation,” International Trade Forum Issue 4/2009, International Trade Centre. <http://www.tradeforum.org/Beyond-Investment-Engaging-the-Private-Sector-in-Trade-Facilitation/>.

The ITC encourages regional institutions to consider the vital role private industry plays in expanding international trade and connectivity, using public-private partnerships (PPPs) to identify needs and regional solutions. PPPs for trade facilitation will help States to address domestic barriers and corruption from an unbiased perspective, providing a more thorough report on existing trade infrastructure. The ITC recommends that these PPPs be supported by building coordinating committees between regional institutions, States, and private enterprise.

## **II. The Impact of Overpopulation on Socio-Economic Disparities**

“Asia-Pacific region facing a ‘hidden epidemic’ of HIV among adolescents, new report finds.” UNICEF, November 2015. [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_86395.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_86395.html).

An estimated 50,000 adolescents between the ages of 15-19 became infected with HIV in 2014. This unprecedented rise in the number of cases is prompting populous cities – where most of the cases are found, to reevaluate their policies towards limiting the spread of the disease. According to UNICEF, tackling the hidden epidemic among the youth is key to eliminating AIDS by 2030. Furthermore, this report states that comprehensive sexual education through all forms of media is necessary in reaching the target audience. Moreover, it states that few countries enable independent consent for young people to receive proper HIV testing and possible treatment. Therefore, governments in the Asia-Pacific region must focus in on this growing issue before it spirals out of control.

Jeffrey, Craig. “India’s jobless could hit the Asia-Pacific like climate change.” The Age, November 2015. <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/five-university-degrees-no-guarantee-of-a-job-in-timepass-india-20151119-gl30ib.html>.

Faced with the second-highest population in the world, India has a huge potential to put its youth to work and lift millions of its people out of poverty. That advantage, however, is being lost. This article states that many young people with college degrees lack the necessary skills to be hired into the highly competitive Indian economy. Moreover, the article notes that social connections remains very important in securing a



job. As a result, many youth feel frustrated, and end up involved in negative behavior, as was the case in the Hindu/Muslim riots of the 1990s. Additionally, if youth are unable to find employment, they will migrate and seek it elsewhere. Oftentimes, those in other countries end up putting a strain on their adopted country's welfare and economy.

“Never an Empty Bowl: Sustaining Food Security in Asia.” Asia Society and International Rice Research Institute Task Force Report, 2010. [https://asiasociety.org/files/pdf/FoodSecurityTF\\_online.pdf](https://asiasociety.org/files/pdf/FoodSecurityTF_online.pdf).

Focusing primarily on rice, this article explains that a growing consequence for the people of the Asia-Pacific is the amount of land available for growing basic staples. Due to a growing population demanding more resources, land is taken away for urban expansion, palm oil production, or to create biofuels, for example. Moreover, the Asia Society and International Rice Research Institute informs that if future demand for food is to be met, adequate agricultural productivity from smaller farmers will be essential. In looking at future climate change impacts, the article recommends that rice farmers be equipped to conserve water, land, and energy, while also understanding consequences of climate change.

“Powerful El Niño intensifying in Asia and the Pacific region – UN.” UN News Centre, December 10, 2015. <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52786#.VmtbKr-GPcd>.

The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing diverse weather patterns thanks in part to the strongest El Niño since 1998. While several Pacific Island Countries have suffered tremendous drought, others in mainland Asia – like India and Sri Lanka, are expected to see severe flooding. With India holding the second-highest number of people in the world, millions will be affected by the degradation of agricultural lands. As a result, there will be further food insecurity – and in the Pacific islands, more water shortage. Proposed solutions include early warning from these weather events, as well as adaptation and response to affected communities.

“Southeast Asian countries pledge cooperation on Bay of Bengal mixed migration – UN refugee agency.” UN News Centre, December 4, 2015. <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52736#.Vmtsir-GPcc>.

In recent months, thousands of people seeking a better life crossing the Bay of Bengal into the often safe and stable countries in South-East Asia have fared for the better, or worse. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more and more people will continue to cross the dangerous waters in search of a better life, unless socio-economic conditions improve in their native countries. Therefore, Southeast Asian countries agreed on efforts to returning migrants in a safe and dignified way or providing them stay that ensures access to health, education, and work. While a general agreement was made, further understanding of migration routes is needed to prevent fatalities at sea.

“The State of Asian and Pacific Cities 2015, Urban Transformation Shifting from Quantity to Quality.” ESCAP & UN Habitat, 2015. <http://www.unescap.org/resources/state-asian-and-pacific-cities-2015-urban-transformations-shifting-quantity-quality>.

Home to the world's largest urban slum populations and the most amount of people living in poverty, the Asia-Pacific region is projected to have more than 50 percent of its population living in cities by 2018. Providing adequate services like clean water and sanitation, electricity, transport and jobs for example is a daunting task for governments. Moreover, if these overpopulated spaces are not properly maintained, polluted and unhealthy cities will continue to hamper the citizens' potential to lead a full and healthy lifestyle. However, with climate change causing more severe weather like floods, and other natural disasters, cities must be able to withstand such impacts. Otherwise, millions of people will be affected.

“Valuing Waste, Transforming Cities.” UNESCAP, October 2015. <http://www.unescap.org/resources/valuing-waste-transforming-cities>.

In this innovative report, a proposal is made in revaluing how waste is treated. According to ESCAP, with most of the waste generated in low- and middle-income cities being organic, a huge potential to reutilize it

as compost or an energy source is found. Especially since the waste generated in the Asia-Pacific region is projected to increase to 2.5 million tonnes by 2025 from 1 million in 2012, innovative solutions at managing the waste are needed. By reusing the organic waste, communities have the opportunity to recreate their environments, empower individuals, and provide an economic stimulus. The report cites the integrated resource recovery centre (IRRC) as the base-model to follow in capturing the value of waste. In order for IRRC to work, four things must come into work: (1) government commitment, (2) cost-recovery from the sale of resources recovered from waste, (3) source separation, and (4) stakeholder engagement ranging from local people to the national government.

“Women can unlock Asia’s potential.” The Nation, December 11, 2015. <http://nation.com.pk/columns/11-Dec-2015/women-can-unlock-asia-s-potential>.

The amount of women working in Asia and the Pacific pales in comparison to their male counterparts. Currently, it is estimated that only 49 percent of working age women participate in the workforce, compared with 80 percent for men. If that gap were to be eliminated, incomes would be boosted by 70 percent within two generations in Asia and the Pacific. Tapping into that huge workforce would raise people out of poverty within years and see a huge positive growth for the region. In order to do that, ensuring girls complete their secondary and tertiary schooling is key, as well as supporting their families throughout the process. The support does not end there, with the Asian Development Bank offering financial support to employers when they grant apprenticeships to female graduates. While progress has been made in increasing female leadership at the corporate and government-level, as well as tackling discrimination, more can always be done. Some Member States for example, still offer no legal protections against gender bias at work.