
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Bangkok, 29-31 March 2017

Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda *

Strengthening implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region: form and functions of the Forum

The form and function of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Note by the secretariat **

I. Introduction

1. At its seventy-second session, the Commission adopted resolution 72/6 in which it decided to implement the recommendations of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development on its third session, including recommendations on the form, function and modalities of the Forum. These recommendations are reflected in paragraph 15 of the report of the Forum.¹

2. At its third session, the Forum had agreed that the form, function and modalities of the Forum would be modified/decided upon in 2016 and 2017, “taking into account the inputs from the high-level political forum on sustainable development regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and then periodically by member States, and adjusted as appropriate.”²

3. In this regard, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/299, deciding on a number of organizational issues pertaining to the High-level Political Forum, including decisions on the themes and review of a pre-defined cluster of goals for future sessions up to 2019. The Assembly had also previously decided, in its resolution 67/290, that the High-level Political Forum would meet annually in the context of the Economic and Social Council and every four years in the context of the Assembly.

* E/ESCAP/FSD(4)/L.1/Rev.1.

** This document is being issued without formal editing.

¹ See E/ESCAP/72/16

² See E/ESCAP/72/16 paragraph 15(i).

4. Bearing in mind the above, the current session of the Forum will consider its form, function and modalities with a view towards reaching agreement and forwarding the outcome for endorsement by the Commission at its seventy-third session. To facilitate this discussion, the secretariat has prepared the following draft terms of reference of the Forum, drawing on previous consultations and proposals presented to the second and third sessions of the Forum,³ as well as the agreed recommendations contained in paragraph 15 of the report of the Forum's third session.

5. The proposals also reflect the link between the Forum and the draft road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific (subject to its adoption by the Forum at its current session).⁴

6. The following draft terms of reference are structured to first define the overall functions of the Forum, how the Forum will be conducted, and then its link with the conference structure of the Commission.

II. Draft terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

A. Overall functions

7. The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development is an annual, inclusive intergovernmental forum. It supports preparations for the High-level Political Forum for sustainable development in the context of both the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

8. The Forum will serve as a regional platform for:

(a) Supporting countries, in particular countries with special needs, including through enhancing their capacity for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;⁵

(b) Providing a regional perspective on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by identifying regional trends, and consolidating and sharing best practices and lessons learned, taking into account the contributions of other United Nations system bodies at the regional level, other regional and subregional organizations and relevant stakeholders;⁶

(c) Supporting follow-up and review of progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level⁷ through: assessing progress and providing opportunities for peer learning related to the theme and goals that will be reviewed at the High-level Political Forum; supporting the presentation of Voluntary National Reviews; and undertaking periodic review of progress of the road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

9. These functions will benefit from inter-agency support through the United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism.

³ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/3 and E/ESCAP/FSD (2)/2.

⁴ See E/ESCAP/FSD(4)/XXX

⁵ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (a) (i)

⁶ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (a) (ii)

⁷ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (a) (iii)

B. Conduct of the Forum

10. As part of the conference structure of the Commission, the Forum will be convened annually as an inclusive intergovernmental forum ahead of the High-level Political Forum. The theme of the Forum should be consistent with that of the High-level Political Forum and the cluster of goals to be reviewed in-depth should be identical to the cluster of goals under the High-level Political Forum.⁸

11. The Forum will not get ahead of, or pre-judge decisions of the High-level Political Forum, increase the reporting burden of member States or increase the regular budget of the Commission beyond what has already been approved by the General Assembly.

12. The current format, including the election of the bureau and co-chairs for each session, could be maintained and provide space for multi-stakeholder engagement for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in consultation, as appropriate, with member States.⁹

13. The outcome of the Forum will be in the form of a report with a chair's summary annexed to the report.¹⁰

14. The Forum may consider subregional perspectives on the themes addressed by the Forum. Preparatory meetings of stakeholders may be convened, within existing resources.

15. The Forum, including stakeholder engagement, will be conducted in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Commission as well as the modalities of the High-level Political Forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council as long as there is no conflict between them.¹¹

16. During each session, a member of the bureau of the previous session could report on the discussions at the intervening High-level Political Forum and on the conclusions of the previous session of the Forum.¹²

17. The conduct of the Forum will avoid duplication with other regional forums and platforms; in the interest of efficiency, where appropriate, the Forum will be convened in coordination or collaboration with other forums and platforms.¹³

C. Relationship of the Forum with the conference structure of the Commission

18. The report of the Forum as defined in paragraph 13 will be brought to the attention of the subsequent session of the Commission by the Chair or rapporteur of the Forum.¹⁴

⁸ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (b)

⁹ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (c)

¹⁰ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (d)

¹¹ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (g) (i)

¹² See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (g) (ii)

¹³ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (h)

¹⁴ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (e) (i)

19. The Forum could receive inputs from the committees that are subsidiary to the Commission as well as other relevant stakeholders.¹⁵

20. The Forum could benefit from advice provided by the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission as a modality for consulting member States between sessions of the Forum.¹⁶

21. In the years when the High-level Political Forum meets under the auspices of the General Assembly at the summit level, which is every four years, the Forum may converge with the Commission session in April/May, and the Commission and the Forum will share the same theme. In other years when the High-level Political Forum meets under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, the Forum shall meet at the senior technical level.

22. If requested by member States, the terms of reference of the Forum may be revised upon recommendation of the Forum and endorsement by the Commission, taking into account new inputs from the High-level Political Forum and based on periodic review by member States.

D. Conclusions and recommendations

23. The Forum is invited to:

- (a) Comment generally on the draft terms of reference of the Forum.
 - (b) Consider the desirability of a possible merger every four years of the Commission session and the Forum, as suggested above, and how it can be accommodated.
 - (c) Adopt the draft terms of reference for endorsement by the Commission at its seventy-third session.
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¹⁵ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (e) (ii)

¹⁶ See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4 para 15 (e) (iii)