

REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (STI) FOR PROMOTING RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

(In Support Of the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review)

CONCEPT NOTE

A. BACKGROUND

1. The Annual Ministerial Review

The Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) is a key function of the Economic and Social Council established by Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit. It was mandated as an instrument to track progress and step up efforts towards the realization of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), including the Millennium Development Goals, by the 2015 target date.¹ General Assembly resolution A/RES/61/16 and A/65/286 provide general guidance on the preparation of the AMR.

The first AMR was held in July 2007 in Geneva and focused on poverty and hunger (MDG1). The following AMR sessions focused on, respectively, goals related to sustainable development (MDG7) in 2008; health (MDG 4, 5, 6) in 2009; gender (MDG3) in 2010, education in 2011, and productive capacity, employment and decent work for sustainable and equitable growth (all MDGs) in 2012.

The theme for 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review, to be held in July in Geneva is “*Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals*”.

Over the last six years, the ECOSOC AMR has assumed an important role to assess and review progress (or lack thereof) in the implementation of these goals. The Outcome of Rio+20, which recognized the role of the ECOSOC in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, has called for strengthening this role in the broader context of the review of the implementation of GA resolution 61/16². The 2013 AMR will thus be an important opportunity for the Council to affirm its role and capacity to review progress towards sustainable development, contribute to the ongoing discussions on the Post-2015 development agenda, and influence the shaping of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

¹ A/RES/60/1, Para. 155 (c).

² On “Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council”.

Science, technology and innovation (STI) have a cross-cutting role to play in addressing the interconnected challenges of sustainable development and providing effective solutions to the emerging problems of a post-2015 world- such as global growth, health, climate change, energy and food security. The effective use of STI in this context will require breaking down barriers between disciplines. In particular, it will require strengthening the connection between science and society and linking scientific knowledge to productivity, sustainable production, job opportunities, and competitiveness. The theme of the 2013 AMR is an important opportunity to explore this link and to identify ways to transform creativity and innovation into sustainable development assets.

The AMR process features three main elements: national voluntary presentations, country-led regional reviews and a global review, based on a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General. These elements are complemented by an innovation fair; and, prior to the session, by a global preparatory meeting and e-forums on the theme of the AMR.³

2. Regional consultation on STI for promoting renewable energy

Nearly half the world's population lacks reliable access to modern energy services and more than 20 per cent of the global population, or 1.4 billion people (almost 800 million in Asia and the Pacific), remain without electricity. Worldwide, 2.7 billion people (almost 2 billion in Asia-Pacific) rely on the traditional use of biomass for cooking.⁴ The lack of energy access and its impact on health, education and income is considered a major obstacle in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Furthermore, extensive use of fossil fuels like coal, petroleum and natural gas would contribute to rapid increase in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), global warming and climate change. Despite the recent growth in the sustainable and low-carbon energy sources, fossil fuels remain as the primary sources of energy for countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Since 1980, the world has doubled its use of primary energy and most of this increase has come from Asia and the Pacific region⁵. This heavy dependence on fossil fuels is the biggest challenge for the economic performance and political stability of countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

The role of renewable energy technologies is considered critical for achieving the Rio+20 sustainable development agenda. It is therefore imperative for countries in the region to embark on a multi-pronged approach including, but not limited to: the formulation and implementation of policies that encourage the production and consumption of sustainable energy sources; promotion of energy efficiency through market as well as legislative mechanisms; improvement of energy sector governance; encouragement of public-private partnerships in the energy sector; investment in research and development and incentivization of innovative practices that reduces energy consumption; promotion of the development, transfer, utilization and adoption of renewable energy technologies; and adoption of a green growth strategy. Access, affordability, reliability of supply and quality of energy services are critical factors that affect the ability of countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Science, technology and innovation are the key

³ For more information, see: <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunc/amr.shtml>

⁴ UNDP, "Towards an 'Energy-Plus' Approach for the Poor: a review of good practices and lessons learnt from Asia and the Pacific", September 2011.

⁵ Energy Security and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific 2008, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (URL: http://www.unescap.org/esd/publications/energy/theme_study/energy-security-ap.pdf)

drivers that can enable countries to gradually shift their developmental paradigm from fossil fuel dependent economies to sustainable energy based low-carbon economies.

Given the importance of science, technology and innovation for the promotion of renewable energy, a Regional Consultation Meeting for Asia and the Pacific on this topic will be held in preparation for the 2013 ECOSOC AMR on 13 March 2015 in Bangkok. The meeting is being jointly organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), including its regional institute the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT).

The meeting will be held in conjunction with the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum, which will be held in Bangkok on 14 and 15 March 2013 targeting the same participants at senior official level. The Asia-Pacific Energy Forum will be held in Vladivostok, Russian Federation from 27 to 30 May 2013.

B. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Regional Consultation on STI for Renewable Energy in Asia and the Pacific are three-fold:

(1) To support the preparations of the AMR by enabling countries in the region to address the complex issues surrounding the use of STI with the objective to promote national and regional renewable energy technology innovation systems which contribute to sustainable development;

(2) To facilitate exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practices between countries in the region on effective STI policies/approaches which promote renewable energy technology innovation systems, and identify regional common perspectives, priorities and solutions at an early stage in the AMR process leading to the global review at the ECOSOC high-level segment;

(3) To contribute to the work of the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda; in particular to the regional meeting of the HLP in Indonesia⁶ (Bali, March 2013) on “the means of implementation and global partnership”, with regard to the role of STI.

C. EXPECTED VALUE-ADDITION OF THE MEETING

The Regional Consultation is expected to add value by providing the following:

- Analysis of current energy strategies and systems and to what extent they have contributed to promote energy security for sustainable development

⁶ The assumption is that the regional meeting of the HLP will take place after the AMR meeting in Bangkok. If the HLP regional meeting is held before then Indonesia will present the outcome of the discussion in Bangkok.

- Analysis of current and potential role of STI in promoting national renewable energy technology innovation systems to address energy access and security challenges for sustainable development
- Assessment of opportunities and challenges in achieving energy access through renewable energy based approaches and the extent to which renewable energy can directly contribute to achieving the MDGs and the sustainable development agenda in the region
- Perspectives on how the challenges to energy access and security and sustainable development could be addressed through STI strategies/approaches at the national level and through development of regional technology innovation systems
- Exchange of experiences and lessons learned on effective STI policies and practices to promote renewable energy there by contributing to energy security and sustainable development
- Opportunity for stakeholder engagement -- governments, civil society, UN system institutions and private sector – early on in the AMR process
- Opportunity to promote the launch of new regional STI-based initiatives at the AMR July 2013 session, in Geneva

D. STRUCTURE OF THE MEETING

The meeting will be held as a one-day event in conjunction with the ESCAP Preparatory Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Energy Forum on 13 March 2013, in Bangkok, Thailand, at the United Nations Conference Centre.

The proposed structure of the meeting is as follows:

- Opening: A brief introduction on the linkages between STI, energy security, renewable energy technologies and sustainable development;
- Session 1: STI as an enabler for national and regional renewable energy technology innovation systems contributing to the achievement of the MDGs and sustainable development;
- Session 2: Regional case studies, including lessons learned and good practices on effective STI policies/approaches for promoting renewable energy towards contributing to the MDGs and sustainable development with a focus on identifying potential synergies and regional solutions to common problems – e.g. energy security, access to and adaptation of technology, etc
- Session 3: Regional perspectives, priorities, and potential solutions on using STI to promote renewable energy for achieving the MDGs and sustainable development: this session will draw from the discussion of regional case studies of the previous session; .

- Session 4: Main regional messages and policy recommendations to be transmitted to the 2013 ECOSOC AMR session.

All sessions could be organized as round table discussion with the participation of a broad range of stakeholders – from policy-makers, to practitioners, academics, NGOs, business sector, and relevant UN agencies- to incorporate diverse perspectives and facilitate an interactive debate.

E. DOCUMENTATION

A substantive background document on the theme of the meeting will be prepared in advance of the event to lay the basis for the debate and raise issues for the discussion. ESCAP and APCTT, in collaboration with relevant UN agencies, will provide support in the preparation of this document. As a follow-up to the meeting, an analytical summary will be circulated.

F. PARTICIPATION

Participants in the meeting will be primarily those attending the Preparatory Meeting of the ESCAP Asia-Pacific Forum in Bangkok. Target participants include: (1) senior-level policy makers from the countries in the region in charge of or involved in the implementation of national development strategies; (2) representatives of multilateral institutions and key donors, including local governments working in the region on the theme of the meeting; and (3) representatives of civil society, NGOs, academia, and the private sector, including philanthropic organizations present in the region.

G. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The meeting is expected to have the following main outcomes.

- (a) An analytical summary capturing best practices and lessons learned from the regional consultation meeting will be prepared by UNDESA. This summary will be submitted and circulated at the main AMR session during the ECOSOC high-level segment. A Ministerial level representative of the Government of Thailand will be invited to present a report of the meeting to the July 2013 AMR session in Geneva. Similarly, the case studies presented would be made available at the AMR session, as well as disseminated through the ECOSOC website (through an open database).
- (b) This regional consultation meeting is also expected to provide an important opportunity for key policy makers to develop new partnerships – North-South and South-South, Triangular – as well as between local entities, which could be announced at the AMR session in July 2013.
- (c) It is also envisaged that the deliberations will lead to actionable suggestions and follow-up actions for the relevant stakeholders in countries in the Asia-Pacific region in the overall context of energy security and sustainable development.

- (d) It is envisaged that the deliberations will provide a contribution to the discussions of the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda to be held in Bali, Indonesia on 26 March 2013.