

Representative of Organization of the Families of Asia and the Pacific attended the 70th Session of ESCAP, Phase II “Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity”



The annual policy session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was held in Bangkok from 4th -8th August 2014, focusing on the role of regional connectivity in supporting economic growth and development, particularly through the three dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental.

Mr. Jorge, representing OFAP, attended in the senior government officials segment ahead of the

Commission’s high-level ministerial segment which was attended by Heads of State and senior ministers.

The ESCAP session is being held against the backdrop of high public debt levels and declining international development assistance, which has affected Asia-Pacific growth and contributed to rising income inequality, both within and between countries in the region. The opening session was addressed by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP.

First discussion was about high-level exchange on development cooperation in the post 2015 era: perspectives from Asia-Pacific least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries. The Executive Secretary served as the moderator of the panel and concluded the following points:

- a) It was critical to integrate considerations for least developed, landlocked developing and Pacific island developing countries into the development cooperation framework;
- b) Official Development Assistance (ODA) remained critical for the situation, and became more important. Therefore, ODA should be enhanced in the era beyond 2015, with higher priority given in its allocation to countries with special needs;



Mr. Nuno Jorge, OFAP, Ms. Celeste Vong, IAS and Mr. Ka-Fa Wong, UN ESCAP

- c) It was also necessary to look at alternative sources of financing for development, including those that would tap into the private sector. In that connection, ODA and fiscal resources could be used to provide the risk mitigation strategy and credit enhancement necessary to leverage private sector investment;
- d) Just as important as the level of resources available was their effective use in areas that had a direct impact on sustainable development in countries with special needs. As countries were moving up the income ladder, development cooperation had to evolve to meet their changing needs;
- e) While emphasis on development effectiveness was important, it was also important to look at more innovative and holistic mechanisms for development effectiveness as that would attract aid flows and give donors confidence concerning the use of resources.



The commission then started to review the issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the regional institutions and the management issues.

The Executive Secretary also made a Policy statement on the key challenges to inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific. She emphasized on the deadline for achieving the Millennium

Development Goals set for the end of 2015. With

high absolute numbers of people still in poverty, many still without safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and many children still dying before reaching age 5, she addressed the key to closing development gaps and achieving development goals was economic growth. However, the region could not afford growth at any cost; growth needed to be sustainable, inclusive and job-generating. The region's growth dynamics had been influenced by the anemic recovery in the developed world, weak implementation of policy responses and the impact of monetary policy normalization. At the same time, growth potential was being held back by deep-rooted structural weaknesses, such as infrastructure shortages, large budget deficits, environmental degradation, high resource-intensity of production, and rising and high inequality. Therefore, it was necessary to focus on and nurture new drivers of economic growth.

He continued to emphasize the importance of addressing the challenge of high and rising inequalities. Inequalities in the region were rising and pervasive. Different dimensions of inequality reinforced each other, creating an "inequality trap" that disproportionately affected all vulnerable groups and



risked intensifying social exclusion and creating a group called the “bottom billion” who would be left behind. Reducing inequality of outcome and opportunity required a combination of redistributive policies, enhancement of social protection and promotion of productive and decent work, especially for youth.