



**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME  
FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)**

**Second Session of the SPECA Working Group  
on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development**

(Chair country: Kyrgyzstan, 21 October 2021)

**PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE SPECA WG ON ITSD  
FOR OCTOBER 2021-DECEMBER 2023**

The activities to be carried out by the Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development (WG on ITSD) are demand-driven, focused on a limited number of priority topics and matched with available resources.

**ACTIVITIES ENVISAGED FOR OCTOBER 2021-DECEMBER 2022**

**1. Capacity-building on policy options and practical instruments to promote innovation and technology for sustainable development**

**Objectives:**

To strengthen the national capacity of the SPECA countries to advance knowledge-based development by developing relevant substantive skills, increasing the organizational capacity of the institutions involved, promoting regional cooperation and fostering investment in modern infrastructure.

**Rationale:**

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

**Proposed activities:**

- (i) Organization of a regional/subregional capacity-building event on innovation and technology for sustainable development, possibly in conjunction with an annual session of the WG on ITSD;
- (ii) Participation of experts from SPECA countries in UNECE policy-oriented meetings and capacity-building events on promoting knowledge-based development for policymakers and practitioners; and

- (iii) Policy advisory services and other events promoting innovation and technology for sustainable development at the request of Governments of SPECA countries on priority topics, e.g. business incubators, accelerators and innovative high-growth enterprises.

## **2. Implementation of UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries**

### **Objectives:**

To increase the role of innovation in promoting further economic development of the SPECA countries.

### **Rationale:**

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

### **Proposed activities:**

Undertaking Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews and capacity building support to implementation of policy recommendations in selected countries of the SPECA region (envisaged for 2021-2023).

## **3. Support to SPECA countries to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs**

### **Objectives:**

Policy advisory support to SPECA countries to stimulate the private and public sector innovation required to deliver the SDGs.

### **Rationale:**

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

### **Proposed activities:**

- (i) Capacity building activities upon request from SPECA countries, for example on integrating innovation policies into national strategies for sustainable development and supporting participation of SPECA countries in wider UN initiatives in support of Agenda 2030; and
- (ii) Adoption and implementation of an Action Plan for the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development, identifying innovative joint initiatives between SPECA countries with potential to support delivery of Agenda 2030 within the sub-region and including support to innovation policy benchmarking among the SPECA countries.

#### 4. Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Action Plan 2022-2026

##### **Objectives:**

Strengthening institutions to enhance regional cooperation and strengthen connectivity through implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway action plan 2022-2026.

##### **Rationale:**

The activities are in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of ESCAP extrabudgetary funds.

##### **Proposed activities:**

- (i) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from SPECA countries in the implementation of the action plan 2022-2026 of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway platform (AP-IS);
- (ii) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from SPECA countries in the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee meetings on 25 November 2021 and in 2022-2023;
- (iii) Participation in the discussions and meetings on establish the Digital Solutions Center for Sustainable Development (DSC SD) in Central Asia including the development of the roadmap for DSC SD;
- (iv) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials, and private sector) from SPECA countries to the Expert Group Meetings and Subregional Capacity Development Workshop (planned in Kazakhstan) and National workshops;
- (v) Partnership development to support fibre-optic cable co-deployment capitalizing on opportunities created by infrastructure sharing and co-deployment;
- (vi) Facilitation of mobilisation of investment for Operation Models of Trans-Border Terrestrial Cable Networks for the Implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway to foster building of consensus on cross-border, cross-sectoral fibre optic co-deployment;
- (vii) Monitoring of implementation of the AP-IS action plan 2022-2026.

## 5. Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development

### Objectives:

To enhance the capacities of policymakers, government officials and other relevant stakeholders to promote, adopt and utilize ICT for achieving national sustainable development goals.

### Rationale:

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. The activities will be funded through the extrabudgetary resources of APCICT and APCTT and co-funding mobilized through national and subregional partners. Implementation is subject to the availability of APCICT and APCTT funds.

### Proposed activities:

- (i) Conduct capacity-building workshops on APCICT's flagship ICT for development programmes;
- (ii) Development of localized versions of the APCICT training modules, targeted at SPECA countries;
- (iii) Provide advisory services to SPECA countries in areas related to ICT for socio-economic development, subject to funding and resource availability; and
- (iv) Conduct capacity-building workshops on the application of ICT tools for renewable energy resource assessments at the national level in SPECA countries, subject to funding and resource availability (APCTT).

## 6. Capacity development on the utilization of ICT and geospatial information for disaster risk reduction

### Objectives:

Develop knowledge-based tools for disaster risk management and strengthen resilience into development policy and planning of SPECA countries.

### Rationale:

The project contributes to the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in the Terms of Reference, in particular to objective of knowledge-based disaster risk reduction and management. Implementation will be financed from the ESCAP extrabudgetary funds.

### Proposed activities:

- (i) Assist SPECA countries to use tailored operational tools and geospatial information platform for drought monitoring and early warning.
- (ii) ESCAP provides continued support on disaster risk reduction by promoting innovative technology applications including ICT and geospatial information.

- (iii) Support SPECA countries, upon request, to enhance capacity on forest fire monitoring through applications of geospatial information.

## **7. Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia**

### **Objectives:**

Enhance the institutional capacity of Central Asian countries to integrate geospatial and statistical information.

### **Rationale:**

The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD to support drought management and land-related SDG challenges including disaster risk reduction as specified in its Terms of Reference.

### **Proposed activities:**

- (i) Conduct assessment of country profile on drought monitoring and land accounts with a diagnostic tool and template (patterned after ESCAP's environment statistics diagnostic tool) to identify policy priorities, available information, data sources, stakeholders and institutional mechanisms necessary to develop or strengthen the land accounts.
- (ii) Organize an inception regional workshop and expert group meetings to discuss preliminary estimates of assessment on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia region, and assist capacity building on using the System of Environmental- Economic Accounting (SEEA) and the framework for integration of the geospatial and statistical information.
- (iii) Organize high level policy meeting in February 2022 to share key findings and methodologies to assess land use- related SDGs implementations.

## **8. Capacity Development to reduce and mitigate disaster risks in endorheic (inland) water basins in Central Asia**

### **Objectives:**

Strengthen disaster risk reduction and management for the Aral Basin in Central Asia through analytics, sharing of best practices, and regional cooperation efforts

### **Rationale:**

Understanding the risk drivers of water-related disasters in inland water-basins including the impacts of climate change through advances in earth observation, digital elevation modeling, geospatial techniques and high-resolution climate modeling can support development of regional cooperation processes that could significantly address the Aral Sea catastrophe from multi-sectoral risk management perspectives.

### **Proposed activities:**

- (i) Prepare a literature review, risk modeling, assessing the latest scientific evidence on the Aral Sea Crisis using a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach.

- (ii) Prepare an integrated risk assessment of the Basin using the latest advances in hydrological modelling, digital elevation modelling and socio-economic modelling to demonstrate the impact of the Aral Sea Crisis on economies and populations.
- (iii) Organize a capacity development workshop on preventing and mitigating natural disaster of endorheic (inland) water basins and prepare an outcome report to submit to the ESCAP Commission at its seventy-eight session.

## SUMMARY TABLE

Area of Activity	Lead Executive Agency	Timeframe
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Capacity-building on policy options and practical instruments to promote knowledge-based development	UNECE	October 2021- December 2023
Implementation of the UNECE project on Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries	UNECE	October 2021- December 2023
Support to SPECA countries to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs	UNECE	October 2021- December 2023
Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway action plan 2022-2026	ESCAP	October 2021- December 2023
Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development and on e-resilience	ESCAP	October 2021- December 2023
Capacity development on the utilization of ICT and GIS for disaster risk reduction	ESCAP	October 2021- December 2023
Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia	ESCAP	October 2021- December 2023
Capacity Development to reduce and mitigate disaster risks in endorheic (inland) water basins in Central Asia	ESCAP	October 2021- December 2023