

## **“ESCAP CO-ORDINATION EFFORTS FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY”.**

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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was founded in 1947 for encouraging and enhancing economic and social development of Asia and Far East. Previously it was known as Economic Commission for Asia and Far East (ESCAFE), the new title, replacing the old one was adopted in 1974, after the re-organization of the ESCAFE. It is a regional commission under UN Economic and Social Council \*(ECOSOC), and a regional outlet of UN in the Asia Pacific. Its inaugural members consisted of four Asian and six non-Asian countries, against its present membership of more than 55 countries. Majority of them is reflected in the countries of Asian continent. France, U.K and Netherlands are included in it. It has also more than 10 Associates.

\*Economic and Social Council was created in 1947 as a U.N. organ to effect the international economic and social development. It may be termed as a super agency, engaged in wide range of economic and social activities through its subsidiary organs and specialized cooperative agencies. ESCAP is one of these to promote its activities like economic development, social progress, human rights, and improved techniques for reporting and comparing national statistics. Other such commissions are meant for Europe, Africa, and Latin America etc. Originally it composed of 18 members against 54 in 1973. Members are elected for 3 years term with immediate reelection. It meets twice a year at New York and Geneva, respectively.

Members, again with majority from Asia, including French Polynesia, New Caledonia, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, etc. ESCAP has a Ministerial Committee, which meets annually to examine the regional problems. It also reviews progress of the organization. It decides priorities of activities based on the recommendation of the Executive Secretary of the organization. Ministerial and intergovernmental conferences are also arranged to resolve the specific issues, arising from

time to time. It has a good number of Committees and Special Bodies, such as

- (i) Committee on Environmental and Natural Resources Development, which meets every year to cater to the needs of development of natural resources and effect its enhancement,
- (ii) Committee on Regional Economic Co-operation also meets once in two years. It has a high level steering group, which meets every year to promote policy options after detailed deliberations and conferring,
- (iii) Committee on Socio-Economic Measures to alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas. It also meets annually to take care of its assignments.

Besides, Committee on Statistics meets once in two years, Committee on Transport, Communication, Tourism and Infrastructure Development also meets annually, to fulfil its assignments and take appropriate steps for further progress. ESCAP has also a Special Body on least Developed and Land-locked Developing Countries, as well as Special Body for Pacific Island Developing Countries. Both of these meet after every two years, to evaluate the progress of the task allotted to them. In addition to this, An Advisory Committee of permanent representatives and designated members of the commission work as an advisory body for ESCAP.

Besides above set-up, ESCAP has a permanent Secretariat with Executive Secretary as its head, which works under the guidance of the commission and its subsidiary bodies. It consists of two serving divisions, viz Industry and technology, Environment and natural resources management, Social development and all other Committees mentioned above.

The Secretariat also includes ESCAP / UNCTAD, (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), Joint Unit on Transnational Corporations and the UN Information Services.

ESCAP is also staffed with a sub-Regional office known as Pacific Operation Centre (POC) to cater to the needs of island Countries.

## ACTIVITIES

ESCAP may be considered as the only UN regional Centre, to present itself as an only intergovernmental forum for Asia and Pacific. It helps to execute developmental programs through technical assistance. It also provides advisory services to the governments through research, training and information exchange.

Since 1992, ESCAP took organizational changes and focused upon regional economic cooperation, poverty alleviation through economic growth, social, environmental and sustainable development. Therefore ESCAP made arrangements in the following set-up to achieve the above-referred objectives.

- i) As regards Regional Economic Co-operation and Investment, ESCAP provides technical assistance and advisory services. Knowledge and information is imparted through exchange of experience and specialization. ESCAP also evaluates the matters and problems arising out of the implementation of the WTO (World Trade Organization – a replacement of GATT – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). Such studies are helpful for the developing economies to decide about the liberalization of their trade and commerce, while taking into consideration their own national and regional priorities. ESCAP also promotes the enhancement of trading efficiency through e-commerce and e-economics (Electronic Commerce and Electronic Economics). It may help to increase the export of developing countries based on areas and spheres of particular and surplus commodities. It may include textiles and manufactured products of small and medium sized enterprises. Special facilitating attention pertinently in the package of PTA (preferential trade agreement) is given for the needs of land-locked and island least developing countries. Transition Economies like newly emerging states (especially after the break up of USSR in 1991) are also attended to specifically in

a peculiar way. It promotes their integration in the regional economic co-ordination. Private capital flows for trade related investment like Chinese open door policies, are encouraged and strengthened through provision of information, documents and publications. It may increase the understanding of global as well as regional economic and social environment and situation. It may generate self sustained economic growth and alleviation of miserable poverty. Wise and prudent macro-economic decisions and key policy processes are incorporated to achieve positive results.

- ii) As regards Regional Economic Co-operation for Industry and technology, ESCAP, aims at assisting disadvantaged economies. It advises the policies of accelerated industrial and technological development. It may augment the use and development of environmentally sound technology in industrial production. Foreign Capital inflows are attracted and women folk are also involved in light industrial manufacturing. It may strengthen industrial and technological infra-structures. New innovations and inventions are geared in practical execution. It generates institutionalism to adapt appropriate technologies. Private sector is also attracted to promote human resources in a skilled and talented way. It generates a polarization-free industrial atmosphere, where sustainable management of natural resources is implemented through integration of different economic concerns. During 1996 – 2000, the Regional Action Program for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development was adopted in November 1995. Under this program integration of water resource development and management to check drought and it's after effects, promotion of land and mineral resources in a sustainable way was executed. Consolidation of energy resource options was emphasized upon. In addition to this, consideration of energy resource options, such as rural energy supply, energy conservation and planning of new power net works, use of the space technology etc, were practiced to evade natural disasters, detrimental for sustainable development of the economy and social upliftment of the masses.



- iii) As regards Social Development, disadvantaged economies were helped to formulate the sound policies of human resource development, with the purpose to promote delivery of social sciences and training programs. It may take care of the disadvantaged sections of population, such as poor, unemployed youth, women, the disabled, secluded and elderly. Emphasis was laid to strengthen the capacity of public and non-governmental institutions to address the problems of marginalized social groups and the destitute. It generated the partnership between public and private sectors and all other community organizations aiming at promotion and enhanced provision of mass welfare and well being. Local and municipal organizations are stabilized to provide civic facilities for both rural and urban populace. Such programs have assured food security, especially at the times of droughts and famine. Modern agricultural improving methods are adopted to boost up the food and cash crop production, rural employment as well as attractive opportunities for the same etc are furthered. Access of the poor and have-nots to the land, credit and other such chances and production assets are also put into practice for ameliorating the welfare of the poor masses. Technical co-operations are coordinated to look after ageing population, female economic migration and reproductive health, through specific publications, information and organs.
- iv) As regards transport, communication, tourism and infrastructure development, ESCAP helps to develop inter and intra regional transport links, to stimulate trade and tourism. Infrastructures are to be developed in a less hazardous fashion. Private sector is encouraged for financing, provision of skilled and trained management to operate in a risk-sharing manner. It may boost up the industrial culture of the economy and enterprises. Development of transport and communication attracts tourism, flow of capital and construction of infrastructures, which facilitate equitable and easier access of social amenities and development of human resources. It attracts greater investment for industry, agriculture, as well as cultural and civic facility promotion. Statistical requirements---such as national accounts statistics,

gender statistics, population census and surveys, management of statistical systems---support the regional industrial fulfillment. Differences and discrepancies in the comparable socio-economic statistics are resolved with increased use of electronic media, which trains required senior level personnel in effective management of information technology. Such measures and practicable steps of ESCAP distinctively help and assist the least developed land locked and island-developing nations of Asia.

To cater to the above-mentioned objectives, since July 1993, ESCAP has entered into co-operation with Asian Development Bank (ADB). Priority areas of such co-operation devolve upon regional and sub-regional co-operation, progressing issues concerning least developed, land locked and island developing member countries. Such co-operation also aims at the method of poverty alleviation, women in development, management of environmental and natural resources, promotion of statistics and data bases, economic analysis; transport and communications, restructuring of industry and privatization and marketing of products. These two organizations also arrange stimulation programs, workshops, seminars, conferences, group discussions etc on regular basis, to promote exchange of information, knowledge and technology. Through such exchange not only parameters of industrial development and technological advancement are cemented but also typhoon damages of wild life and tree plantation, forest fires and topographical losses etc are mitigated through the promotion of early warning systems based on electronically advanced communications. This may help the Asian under-developed economies to be benefited through economic dynamism and diversification, based upon market-oriented economic development and progressive achievement.

In such a mode of economic modification, private sector plays the role of main motivator including multinational enterprises. Such trends have been adopted in China, where more than desired results have been achieved. Open door policy of China has attracted trillions of dollars (annually \$50 billion approximately) of foreign investment, which has generated spontaneous co-operative mood and benefiting strategy for mutual profitability and reciprocal gains, financial perquisites, import—substitution and perks of new exports, based on bilateral and multilateral

economic benefits. This practical implementation has given birth to steady regional co-operation and progressive achievement in a consolidated and stabilized way.

The progress of regional economic interdependence naturally encourages the atmosphere for regional co-operation, principally in the economic era with the result-oriented achievement of social progress meant for amelioration, betterment and economic emancipation of the society in general, where standard of living is upgraded through enhancement of per—capita income and reducing the cost of living expenses.

### **ESCAP ALSO CO-ORDINATES WITH SAARC\***

SAARC is consisted of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka. These countries are emphasizing upon peace dividend as the engine of the progress in the region. Pragmatic policies, rational economies and popular participation may strengthen the scope of co-operation between SAARC members on wider levels. It may help to enhance complementary strength to exploit the tremendous opportunities and potentialities of SAARC region to meet the challenges of globalization while footing on the empowerment of regional economic integration. South Asian close regional co-operation can cash on the strategic importance of the geo-political location of the region by facilitating secure transmission of promising energy sources of natural gas reserves, passing through Pakistan to India. These reserves are owned by Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Central Asian countries, Iran, Pakistan etc, and are direfully needed by only big neighbor India to meet its energy demands which are expanding exponentially with the every passing day.

SAARC came into being in 1985 and so far 12 Summit Conferences have been arranged. Last one was held at Islamabad from 04-06 January 2004. This Summit emphasized upon SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Area) and SAPTRA (South Asia Preferential Treaty Agreement), with the purpose to promote co-operation in the economic and commercial affairs; poverty alleviation, science and technology, social development, cultural interaction, environment, suppression of terrorism, enhancing information and communication links and broaden peace and stability in South Asia.

Agreements on SAFTA Frame Work Social Charter and suppression of terrorism were signed. Greater economic co-operation, liberalization of trade and removal of barriers to intra-regional interactions were advocated. Thaw into India Pakistan relations was optimistically welcomed. It may stimulate peace-stability-cooperation-amity-progress-prosperity and development of economic potential of South Asia region tremendously. The Summit vigorously stressed upon principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence etc, which may help the establishment of South Asia Economic Union based on mutual and reciprocal benevolence for bi-lateral and multi-lateral promotions. Such peaceful co-operation may usher in economic prosperity of the region as a whole, under the free trade policies. This may ultimately lead to adopt the domain of common currency in the SAARC region.

ESCAP has a close co-ordination with ADB, which is a functional inter-governmental body with a highly institutionalized structure. ADB was established in 1966 also under the auspices of ESCAPE (Economic Commission for Asia and Far East – later changed in name as ESCAP) with the purpose of fostering economic growth and co-operation in Asia Pacific region. It helps to promote investment and private capital for development purposes in the region. It also performs as a helping hand for financing infrastructure building, such as water supply, sanitation, urban development and education etc. USA and Japan are its principal donors, besides regional countries. It therefore includes regional (60%) and non-regional (40%) economic powers to maintain its sound financial and funding position intact. Efforts are on the way that ADB should work as a regional Bank. The use of its special funds must take care of regional consideration motivated by purely economic principles.

Colombo Plan, established in 1950 as a cooperative scheme for Commonwealth\* members in Asia, also provides assistance on bilateral basis. Some-times it also coordinates its efforts with ESCAP in specific fields meant for economic build-up.

\*Presently the Commonwealth organization has a membership of 54 countries mostly consisting of the former colonies of Great-Britain, which won liberation and independence after second world-war.



Besides organizations like \*ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), established in 1967, which is a sub-regional intergovernmental organization also coordinates with ESCAP, in the fulfillment of schemes, meant for economic build-up in the region. ASEAN has established a hierarchical structure with the summit, ministerial meeting and committees on relatively advanced levels. ASEAN has been successful in promoting regional economic co-operation between less-developed countries of the Asia-Pacific region, deregulation, harmonization, investment protection and envisaged private sector to government dispute mechanism. ESCAP has more or less the same policy goals to be achieved and facilitated in the region. By such like-minded policies, hesitation against rapid industrialism, avoidance of rigid binding rules, removal of economic barriers, trade bottle necks, protection obstacles and preference for informality, are adopted, to stimulate the economic development and achievement in the under-developed areas, in a more positive and result-oriented way.

\* ASEAN's 10 members include-Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Recently it has been decided by Japan and ASEAN members to create East Asian community to enhance co-operation and Tokyo promised 3 billion dollars aid for the region. Tokyo declaration signed at the Summit Conference held on 12-12-2003 between the leaders of ASEAN and Japan, has laid emphasis for regional grouping. It may usher in shared spirit of mutual understanding and upholding Asian traditions and values while respecting universal rules and principles. It was stressed upon to consolidate the co-operation in the political and security fields. Such dialogue will be held with China and South Korea also, which may result in strengthening economic ties aiming at comprehensive economic partnership from 2005. It may enlarge the Asian grouping for coordination in economic, strategic and sensitive sectors.

Such co-operation promotes three pillars. i-e developmental assistance, trade liberalization and trade facilitation, the common goals to be achieved under WTO\* policies. It may create self-confidence encouraged by favorable preferential treatment among less-developed economies of Asia in relative economic reconstruction and successful achievement of targets,

boosting up towards self-reliance. The recently concluded treaty of “Amity of co-operation” between ASEAN and China may rule out the use of force to settle disputes. It may enable ASEAN to gear up for the new economic reality in the region, (a free trade area that will unite China and ASEAN members). This may entail the world’s largest economic entity of its kind. Such co-operation may boost up the trade worth 100 billion dollars between China and ASEAN by 2005. Because China is presently enjoying phenomenal spell of economic growth, i-e 8.2% in the first half of 2003 as compared to 7.2% in 2002.

There is also a similarity between the targeted goals of achievement in APEC and ESCAP, such as economic-studies, trade liberalization, investment, technology transfer and human resources development, review of data on regional trade flows and development, the facilitation of identifying trade investment and technical transfer opportunities, transport and telecommunication, tourism, and sub-regional trade arrangements. Such policies have brought into field the indigenous investors to participate into the economic activity of the region vigorously.

\* A coalition of G-20 developing countries-Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa-Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El-Salvador, Guatemala, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, Venezuela--, emerged at the sidelines of Cancun Summit (Mexico) held in September 2003, are pleading to developed countries to provide more market access for their agricultural and non-agricultural products on non-reciprocal bases. It is being done to meet the dead lines in various sectors for completion of the Doha Development Agenda.

APEC \*(Asia –Pacific Economic Co-operation) established in 1989 may also be found as coordinating organization with ESCAP to help and assist the less developed economies of the region. APEC co-operation programs reflect business concerns, such as trade liberalization, flexibility and facilitation in non-discrimination, equal national treatment and provision of business opportunities. Multilateral trade is being reenergized. These may generate the reduction and removal of economic barriers for swift transformation, dynamism and diversification. It wants to gain ambitious and balanced outcome. Such tendencies may help the economy to cross the

limits of the take-off position and enter into self-sustained stage of economic attainment. This enriches the economies with prudent and transparent policy reflections, sound macro-economic and structural arrangements, fruitful human resource development and effective financial regulations to gear the economy on a self-propelled pattern of development, where social cohesion and uplifting of society in general can be promoted comprehensively, with relative positivism.

\* APEC was initiated in November 1989, in the meeting held at Canberra (Australia). Its aim is to promote multilateral economic co-operation with adjustable political and economic policies and enactment. It is the combination of 21 countries (Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China-People's Republic, Nationalist Taiwan (Formosa) China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, USA, Vietnam, as areas of pacific rim and account for 40% of world population, 56% of the world's GDP of over 18 billion dollars in 1999 and 43.85% of the world trade.

## CONCLUSION

While concluding one may observe that the mandate of ESCAP includes research and planning, information collection, infrastructure building, population policy, trade and investment, agriculture, industrialism, transport, communication and regional economic coordination. Such efforts may help the poorer countries to manufacture the competitive products for exports.

All forms of agricultural export subsidies, unjustifiable export prohibitions and restrictions are to be abolished. Primacy of multilateral trading system has to be reaffirmed. Fair rather than free trade may be stressed upon. This may help to check the domination of rich against poor nations. Hegemony of increasing the dependence of the poorer countries on the richer ones is to be checked with. Richer may not be given a free hand to exploit the poorer, in the name and slogan of globalization of economy and trade. Sustained exploitative process against the interests of the poorer countries carried on through unholy alliance of multinationals and multilateral organizations have to be finished with. Economic, social, cultural and

regional dualism is to be disembodied from APEC area where majority of more than 60% of the world population lives in sub-standard dwelling conditions.

Economic interests of the poor countries are to be safeguarded and benefited while implementing policies of globalization. Process of WTO is to be modified in a universally acceptable framework. Developing countries may be vitally enabled to breathe the sigh of relief and life into ensuing moribund trade liberalization policies of WTO (to be implemented by January, 2005), partially beneficial for already fattened economies. Farm subsidies in richer states and high tariffs on agricultural imports from developing nations are to be conscientiously streamlined in a profitable way based on mutual and reciprocal agreed profit-sharing formulae. Industries of comparative cost-benefits are to be encouraged in the developing world, where circumscribing of their export potential may be loosened. This may allow their manufacturers to compete in the global trading. Differences of time---lag and cultural---lag developmental pattern are to be shortened and curtailed. Such tendency may reduce the gap between poor south and rich north. North strongly believes in abolition of subsidies, relaxation of anti-dumping laws, removal of tariffs and other such restrictions (presently used as protective shield), as major impediment for North-South trade and investment. It may allow north to perpetuate its tactful economic exploitation of the south. On the contrary efforts of south to seek market access in the development north are diffused. Indigenous industries of the poor countries are to be protected against the flooding of the marketing items at dumping prices from the rich (especially from China and India in the ESCAP region)—rapidly growing size of Asia's three elephant economies, China, Japan and India have surpassed targeted goals of development. Measuring their gross domestic products in terms of purchasing power parity, China has attained the position of world's second largest economy, after U.S.A. Its gross domestic out put is valued at more than \$ 5 trillion, compared to \$ 9.8 trillion of U.S.A in 2001, whereas world's total GDP was \$ 45.2 trillion. Comparatively US accounted for 22 % of the global out put against the 11.3 % of China, Japan with \$ 3.3 trillion as third and India which \$ 2.9 trillion as fourth.



All these large Asian economies of Asia have accounted for \$ 11.2 trillion of total output in 2001, i.e 15 % more than U.S.A. One may estimate that one quarter of world output was being produced in these countries. As regards Europe one may analyze that Europe has fallen below in 2001. Four larger European economies, viz. Britain, France, Germany and Italy gained \$ 6.3 trillion of global output in 2001, i.e little more than China, but considerably much less than that of USA and Asian big three. It proves that China and India are moving steadily in economic progress against the stagnating Europe.

China has focused its domination through economic rather than military muscle. Fallacious cut-throat competition has to be disengaged with. Regional exchange and trade problems may be judiciously resolved through regional negotiations and amicable dialogue and deliberations without any interference or brokerage of WTO, for it has to deal with the perspectives colored by broader issues and concerns. Regional solutions may generate mutual trust and reciprocal benevolence. Stability of government and less involvement of bureaucracy has to be achieved and implemented to provide secured atmosphere. It may attract abundant inflow of foreign investment in the less-developed areas of the region. Rapid economic growth and tremendous urbanization may improve the living standard in a eulogistic spontaneity favored with self-sponsorship and endogenous egalitarianism. It may usher in advanced betterment for teeming millions of world, living below-poverty line. This may envisage improvement in impoverishment of the society leading a below-subsistence level of life standard.

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