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Contribution by ESCAP

to the CSTD 2020-2021 priority theme on “Using science, technology and innovation to close the gap on Sustainable Development Goal 3 on good health and well-being”

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## **Input of ESCAP IDD to UNCTAD Priority Theme 2 on “Using science, technology and innovation to close the gap on SDG 3, good health and well-being” as of 7 October 2020**

1. COVID-19 has caused adverse impacts to our pace in implementing 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in the region. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak and the economic and development crisis surrounding it, ESCAP secretariat developed a Framework which sets out ESCAP’s offer and value addition to support member States socio-economic response to COVID19, around three main streams of work. Two are particularly relevant to geospatial information and innovative digital technology applications, namely “protecting people and enhancing resilience” and another is “building back better with resilience”. The COVID-19 experience highlights the need to build and truly invest in and scale a new digitalized infrastructure, and efforts on supporting the provision of affordable internet connection and necessary public services, such as health. Thus, there is scope for scaling up regional intergovernmental cooperation and implement policies that promote the benefits of digital healthcare.
2. There is a natural link between spatial information and epidemiology – not only for contact tracing, but also for many potential not immediately obvious trends and risks that can help plan for and mitigate the socio-economic impacts of epidemics. ESCAP is working in pilot areas with our national partners in South-East Asian countries to integrate geospatial and socio-economic information and identify correlations between COVID-19 and “place, space and community” characteristics.
3. As the COVID-19 pandemic calls for borderless solidarity, regional cooperation is a key tool to strengthen our capacity and to overcome unexpected challenges and find useful solutions.
  - ESCAP has for *over two decades engaged with national space agencies and GIS related organizations to enhance preparedness, resilience and recovery to many disasters*, COVID-19 being the latest and the biggest.
  - ESCAP’s *Asia Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Master Plan 2018-2022* aims to consolidate the implication of infrastructures in Asia and the Pacific and to bridge the digital divide. Experiences and knowledge regarding ICT technologies have been shared among countries with the help of ESCAP. As a key factor of digital healthcare, the deployment of digital infrastructure to enable the exchange of real-time information and provide more support to healthcare systems has become a challenge for countries.
4. *The Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018–2030)* drafted by member States of ESCAP in 2018, with much foresight, included epidemics in the Plan. It specifically requested ESCAP and its member States to strengthen regional cooperation to 1) leverage data sharing, and promote big data analytics for the containment of present and future spreads of diseases and epidemics, 2) to develop capacity on mapping health risk hotspots using geospatial information and big data, and 3) to pay special attention to the countries that are most vulnerable to emergency health situations.
  - However, such opportunities are available only to those that are connected to the internet and around 52% of the region’s population remains unconnected. COVID-19 has shown how digital connectivity can provide a lifeline and a big push is needed in closing the digital divide by bringing affordable broadband to all.
  - Nanotechnology has provided enormous opportunities and solutions in the areas of prevention (e.g. masks and disinfectants), detection (e.g. nano-sensors) and treatment (e.g. nano-medicines) to combat the current COVID-19 pandemic as well as future probable deceases. In this regard, the development and practical application of advanced technologies like nanotechnology to combat pandemic crisis needs close cooperation among government and institutions worldwide.
5. At its third session the Committee on ICT and STI reviewed [“Collaborative Actions on Harnessing Technologies during Pandemics”](#) and it further noted the need for monitoring and better understanding e-Resilience for pandemic recovery and e-readiness to be better prepared for future crises. Building on an e-resilience toolkit from a pandemic management perspective the secretariat is developing methodological approaches for e-resilience monitoring through visual statistics that will be presented on a dashboard.