Harnessing regional cooperation for building back better in Asia and the Pacific

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Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Monday, 19 October 2020 [10:00 am– 12:00 pm, EST]

DIALOGUE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS WITH THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SECOND COMMITTEE, 75TH Session of the UNGA
1. SDGs Progress and COVID-19 in Asia-Pacific Region

2. ESCAP priority areas for Building Back Better

3. Regional cooperation and inclusive multilateralism
Mobilizing support for 2030 Agenda
SDGs Progress in Asia-Pacific

### 2000

- 1 No poverty
- 2 Zero Hunger
- 3 Good health and well-being
- 4 Quality education
- 5 Gender equality
- 6 Clean water and sanitation
- 7 Affordable and clean energy
- 8 Decent work and economic growth
- 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- 10 Reduced inequalities
- 11 Sustainable cities and communities
- 12 Responsible consumption and production
- 13 Climate action
- 14 Life below water
- 15 Life on land
- 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions
- 17 Partnerships for the Goals

### 2019

#### Pre COVID-19

- Good progress
- Slow progress
- Regression
- Insufficient data
- Evidence strength

### TARGET 2030

- Asia-Pacific is not on track to meet any of the Goals, but is making good progress on Goals 4 and 7
- There is great concern with regard to regress in Goals 12 and 13
- Environmental Goals 11, 13, 14 and 15 are particularly concerning
- Data gaps for many of the globally agreed SDG indicators (Goals 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 in particular)

Source: ESCAP SDG Gateway
Understanding of COVID-19
Socio-economic impacts in Asia-Pacific region

- Most countries experienced contraction in GDP growth
- Millions of people potentially pushed into extreme poverty
- Jobs losses and increased vulnerability of the informal sector, SMEs and migrant workers

Source: IMF, World Bank and ILO
Priority areas for Building Back Better
Working with member States in charting a Pathway to a New Normal

ESCAP Resolution on COVID-19: Call for action

Regional cooperation to address the socioeconomic effects of pandemics and crises in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/RES/76/2)

- Reaffirmed the importance of international and regional cooperation to strengthen resilience to pandemics like COVID-19, emphasized that recovery from COVID-19 provides an opportunity to build back better in Asia and the Pacific and underlined the need for the UN system to work as one to support all governments.

- Four priority actions for regional cooperation:
  I. Protecting people
  II. Ensuring economic recovery
  III. Restoring and building resilience in supply chains and connectivity
  IV. Protecting and restoring ecosystems

- Theme Study for the 77th session of the Commission in 2021:
  - Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.
Protecting people

Priority actions

• Increasing **social protection**, anchored in domestic resources.

• Establishing a **universal health care system** covering all persons within a country.

• Supporting **micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)**, with a focus on women-led enterprises.

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration [Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand]

Incheon Strategy: Make the Right Real Persons with Disabilities [China, Japan, Republic of Korea, India, Bhutan]

Beijing Platform for Action [China, Philippines, Pacific & South Asia]

Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing [China, Fiji, Republic of Korea, ASEAN]

Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development [Fiji, Philippines]
ESCAP offer: Protecting people

Strengthen regional cooperation on social protection
• Consolidate national experiences.
• Develop a regional platform to facilitate peer learning and the sharing of good practices.
• Provide technical advice and capacity-building support, especially to identify Leaving No One Behind and Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade for 2015-2024.

Catalyzing Women Entrepreneurship
• Advance women entrepreneurship and market participation.
• Implement activities in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Nepal, Samoa and Viet Nam.
• Foster Women ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI).
• Implement E-Commerce capacity-building of women-led MSMEs activities in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal.
Ensuring economic recovery

Priority actions

• Improving fiscal space and managing debt distress.
• Promoting sustainable recovery consistent with Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda.
• Supporting regionally coordinated financing policies.

Infrastructure financing [30 member States]

Financial resilience, local currency bond market [Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Samoa, Sri Lanka]

Economic assessment, including COVID-19 policy simulation model [Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan]

SDG Investment Needs [Indonesia, Kazakhstan]

Digital finance [Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Bhutan, Samoa]

LDCs sustainable graduation [Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Nepal, Solomon Island, Timor-leste, Vanuatu]
Innovative financing instruments, including digital finance

• Support in diversifying financial sources, **first sovereign bond launched in Bhutan** (September 2020).

• Leverage Financial technology (fintech) to increase financial access to MSMEs by launching **Women MSME Fintech Innovation Fund** & to launch **Women MSME Recovery Fund**.

• Conduct **policy-oriented research and provide technical assistance** for Fintech in Remittance, Digital Finance on G2P & G2B, and Digital Finance on Tokenization.

Build capacities for public private partnerships

• Facilitate Infrastructure Financing and **Public Private Partnership (PPP) Network** of Asia and the Pacific.

• Develop **InfraPPPnet Web Portal** to consolidate PPP institutions, regulatory framework and viable project pipeline, and market environment.

• Build **technical capacities** to finance infrastructure projects in over 30 member States in the Asia-Pacific region.
Restoring and building resilience in supply chains and connectivity

Priority actions

• Synergizing **Digital, Resilient and Decarbonized** Supply chains
• Integrating cross-border **trade and transport** facilitation.
• Accelerating **sustainable connectivity instruments** for transport, trade, energy and technology.

Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network [30 countries in Asia-Pacific]

Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific [Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China*, Iran IR, Philippines]

Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) [Bangladesh, China, India, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka]

Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network [21 Parties: entry into force for Myanmar in December 2020]

Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports [16 Parties with 2 new ratifications in 2020]

Special Programme on Economic Cooperation of Central Asia (SPECA)

North-East Asia Power Interconnection & Cooperation [Mongolia, China, Republic of Korea and Russian Federation]
ESCAP offer: Restoring and building resilience in supply chains and connectivity

**DIGITALIZED**
- Smart infrastructure
- Affordable broadband for all
- Intelligent transport/logistics
- Digital trade facilitation / paperless trade

**RESILIENT**
- Multimodality
- Operational connectivity
- Trade policy
- Disaster risk reduction and geospatial data applications

**DECARBONIZED/GREEN**
- Railways
- Waterborne transport
- SDG 7 roadmap, energy efficiency, renewable energy and NDCs

**2021-2026:** Next Regional Action Programme on Sustainable Transport Connectivity
**2016:** Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade
**2018:** Regional road map on power system connectivity
**2017:** The Pacific and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative
Protecting and restoring ecosystems

Priority actions

• Enforcing air quality standards.
• Strengthening cooperation to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans.
• Building resilience for disaster risk reduction strategies.

North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership platform
[China, Mongolia, Republic of Korea]

ESCAP Resolutions 76/1: Oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
[Indonesia, Pacific]

Tackle Marine Plastic Pollution
[ASEAN, Japan]

ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness [Donors: Bangladesh, India, Japan, Nepal, The Netherlands, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland; 20 beneficiary member States]

Plan of Action on Space Applications [Japan, India, Indonesia, Russian Federation, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand]
**ESCAP offer: Protecting and restoring ecosystems**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MARINE PLASTIC</th>
<th>OCEAN STATISTICS</th>
<th>AIR POLLUTION</th>
<th>DISASTER RESILIENCE</th>
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| • SDG 14 progress  
  • Technical support and promote sustainable alternatives to plastic  
  • Support and implement conventions and initiatives | • Ocean accounts for sustainable ocean development  
  • National capacity-building for SDG14 | • Monitor air quality  
  • Share technological know-how and solutions  
  • Support technical and capacity-building | • Multi-hazard early warning systems  
  • Geospatial data information applications  
  • Regional drought monitoring mechanism |

- **2020:** Strengthening cooperation to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/RES/76/1)
- **2019:** Global Ocean Accounts Partnership
- **2019:** Strengthening regional cooperation to tackle air pollution challenges in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/RES/75/4)
- **2018:** Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018-2030)
Regional cooperation and inclusive multilateralism

• Harnessing regional, subregional and plurilateral cooperation for SDGs in Asia-Pacific

1. Member States, 53 members and 9 associates members
2. Regional agreements and frameworks
3. Resolutions
4. Implementation
5. Facilitation

ESCAP subregional offices

- UN ESCAP HQ Bangkok (+South East Asia Office)
- South & South-West Asia Office
  New Delhi, India
- North & Central Asia Office
  Almaty, Kazakhstan
- East & North-East Asia Office
  Incheon, Republic of Korea
- Pacific Office
  Suva, Fiji

Regional Institutes

- APCTT (Asian and Pacific Centre for the Transfer of Technology)
- CSAM (Centre for Sustainable Aid Management)
- APOIM (Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management)

- Leverage core competence areas through regional frameworks, knowledge services and technical assistance and capacity-building, especially focusing on LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.
Enabling regional platforms for building partnerships

Intergovernmental Platforms
- ESCAP Annual Commission
- Committees
- Ministerial meetings (mandated)
- SPECA intergovernmental platform

Regional-Subregional SDGs Forums
- Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development with multi-stakeholders
- Subregional SDGs Forums
- Subregional dialogues on Building Back Better (South Asia, ASEAN)

Subregional Institutions & Platforms
- ASEAN-UN Plan of Action: COVID-19 recovery plans
- Strategic partnerships on thematic areas with ECO, EEC, PIFS, SPC, SAARC, SCO, GTI, TCS
- North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation

Facilitation of Frameworks
- China-Mongolia-Russian Federation Economic Corridor Program
- Regional agreements on Highways, Railways, Dry Ports, Trade facilitation, Energy and ICT

Regional & global Institutions
- ADB SDGs partnership, including trade facilitation and connectivity
- AIIB, WB, EDB, IsDB, EIF
- OECD, IRENA, ISA

Regional Thematic Platforms
- Asia-Pacific Business Forum
- ASEAN Mayors Forum
- Partners: APRU, Google, IBM
UN Regional Development System Coordination
Operationalization of the Regional Reform

1: Regional Collaborative Platforms

- 5 proposed Issue-based Coalitions (IBCs) in Asia-Pacific
  - Climate change mitigation (ESCAP and UNEP)
  - Building resilience (UNDRR and UNDP)
  - Inclusion and empowerment (ILO and UNICEF)
  - Human mobility and urbanization (IOM and UN-Habitat)
  - Human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment (UNHCHR, UNFPA, UN-Women)

2: Knowledge management hub

- Knowledge management hub developed by an interagency task team, led by UNESCAP and UN DCO Asia-Pacific, with in-kind and financial contribution of UN entities
  - Soft launch on 15 October 2020

3: Transparency and results-based Management

- First report on system-wide results of the Regional UN presented at APFSD – 20 May 2020

4: Consolidate capacities on data and statistics

- Fully functional Asia Pacific SDG Gateway and linked to the Knowledge Management Hub
- Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report evolved to include wider contribution of the Regional UN

5: Efficiencies through common back offices

- Regional Operations Management Team established to develop common back offices, drawing on ESCAP’s services to regional entities
ESCAP Internal Management and Innovation
Modern, agile and adaptable

Eminent Persons Advisory Group, 2019

- Medium to long-term strategic reposition.
- Key recommendations: organization, branding, strategic themes and partnership.

ESCAP Innovation Roadmap

- Enhance relevance and impact. Deliver services faster, innovate and digital workspace.
- First year of implementation: 13 innovative ideas developed, and large number of ESCAP staff trained through Innovation Design training and Labs.

SG’s Data Strategy Roadmap

- ESCAP action plan for innovation, Data and Digital.
- ESCAP Roadmap to be developed based on SG’s Data Strategy and CEB System-wide Roadmap for Innovating UN Data and Statistics.

Staff engagement follow-up Roadmap

- ESCAP roll-out of Staff engagement implementation, support and monitor progress.
- Focus on building trust & integrity, transparency, cross-sectoral collaboration, as well as on ethics, agility and alignment.
THANK YOU

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