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High-level political forum on sustainable development
Convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council
10–19 July 2023
**Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease
(COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda
for Sustainable Development at all levels**

Report on the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits, as input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the report on the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, which was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and held from 27 to 30 March 2023.



Report on the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development*

1. The Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), was held in Bangkok and online from 27 to 30 March 2023.

2. The Tenth Forum was attended by more than 1,700 participants, including representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations bodies, international organizations and major groups and other stakeholders.

3. The Tenth Forum was also attended by representatives of the following 48 members and associate members of ESCAP: Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Cook Islands; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; France; French Polynesia; Georgia; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Micronesia (Federated States of); Mongolia; Nauru; Nepal; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Türkiye; Turkmenistan; Tuvalu; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam. Representatives of Belarus, Germany, Mexico, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as the European Union, attended as observers.

4. In accordance with rule 12 of the rules of procedure of ESCAP, the Chair and Vice-Chairs examined the credentials of all the representatives and reported upon them to the participants in the Tenth Forum. The credentials of the representatives of 45 members of ESCAP were found to be in order. Acknowledging the report of the Credentials Committee to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session,¹ and in line with Assembly resolution 396 (V) of 14 December 1950, the bureau decided to defer any action on the credentials pertaining to the representatives of Myanmar at the Tenth Forum. The participants in the Tenth Forum took note of the oral report of the bureau on credentials.

5. Under agenda item 1 (a), the Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered opening remarks. Special remarks were delivered by the President of the Economic and Social Council; the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Mr. Don Pramudwinai; and the President of French Polynesia, Mr. Edouard Fritch. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs delivered statements. Statements on behalf of major groups and other stakeholders were delivered by the representative of the Asia-Pacific Peoples' Forum, Kai Ra Cabaron, and the representative of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development Youth Forum 2023, Ms. Prim Rajasurang Wongkrasaemongkol.

6. Under agenda item 1 (b), the following members of the bureau were elected:

Chair:

Mr. Mohamed Aslam (Maldives)

Vice-Chairs:

Mr. Min Bahadur Shreshtha (Nepal)

Mr. Fidélis Manuel Leite Magalhães (Timor-Leste)

Mr. Pagnathun Theng (Cambodia)

Mr. Shehan Asanka Semasinghe (Sri Lanka)

* The addendum to the report on the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was converted to Annex III to the present addendum for procedural purpose.

¹ [A/77/600](#).

7. Under agenda item 1 (c), the following agenda was adopted:
 1. Opening of the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development:
 - (a) Opening addresses;
 - (b) Election of officers;
 - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
 2. Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.
 3. Towards the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit.
 4. Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through voluntary national reviews.
 5. Review of regional progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and opportunities for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals:
 - (a) Implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the subregional level;
 - (b) Progress towards the achievement of Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 at the regional level;
 - (c) Reporting on system-wide results of the United Nations at the regional level in Asia and the Pacific in support of the 2030 Agenda.
 6. Other matters.
 7. Adoption of the report on the Tenth Forum.

8. Under agenda item 2, the participants in the Tenth Forum took note of the note by the secretariat on delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals through the energy, food and finance nexus (ESCAP/RFSD/2023/2). The discussion on the theme of the Tenth Forum, “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific”, was initiated with a ministerial round table.

9. Under agenda item 3, the participants reviewed the progress that had been made in Asia and the Pacific towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, discussed the impacts of COVID-19 on the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and heard a presentation by the secretariat on the Asia and the Pacific Sustainable Development Goals progress report 2023.

10. Representatives of member States, major groups and other stakeholders and United Nations agencies shared information on efforts made in the region, including high-impact initiatives and transformative actions, to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

11. Under agenda item 4, the participants considered the experiences of member States in preparing their voluntary national reviews for the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in New York from 10 to 19 July, discussed the role of the voluntary national reviews in strengthening evidence-based policies and shared national and subnational perspectives on challenges, progress and achievements, as well as lessons learned.

12. Under agenda item 5, the participants discussed subregional approaches for accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and heard a presentation by the secretariat on the outcomes of the subregional forums.
13. Five round tables were organized to facilitate the conduct of regional multi-stakeholder dialogues on ways to accelerate action on the Sustainable Development Goals that would be under review at the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development, namely Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy), Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).
14. The participants noted the various views arising from the five round tables, which would inform the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development.²
15. The participants discussed the coordinated approach of the United Nations system at the regional and subregional levels to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the regional, subregional and national levels and shared information on actions and results, including those attained through the issue-based coalitions and other groups established under the Regional Collaborative Platform for Asia and the Pacific.
16. Under agenda item 6, no other matters were discussed.
17. Under agenda item 7, the report on the Tenth Forum was adopted on 30 March 2023. The Chair's summary of the discussions held during the Tenth Forum and the lists of the side events and other associated events held prior to and on the margins of the Tenth Forum are annexed to the report. Furthermore, the summaries of the five round tables organized under agenda item 5 were issued as an addendum to the report.
18. The report on the Tenth Forum and its addendum, which will be submitted to ESCAP at its seventy-ninth session, are intended to inform the global dialogues on sustainable development, including the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development and the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit, to be held in New York on 18 and 19 September.
19. The publication entitled *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2023: Championing Sustainability Despite Adversities* was prepared for the Tenth Forum and presented to the media on 22 March 2023.
20. On 29 March 2023, the publication entitled *Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals through Solutions at the Energy, Food and Finance Nexus* was issued in the framework of the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goal Partnership between ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme.
21. Between 27 and 30 March 2023, 51 side events and 17 other associated events were held (see annex II).³

² The summary of the various views arising from the round tables, which was not negotiated was issued as an addendum to the report on the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and included in Annex III to the present addendum.

³ Additional information on the side events is available at www.unescap.org/events/2023/apfsd10-side-events-person-and-virtual and additional information on the other associated events is available at www.unescap.org/events/2023/apfsd10-associated-and-pre-events.

Annex I

Chair's summary of discussions at the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

1. The Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was held on the theme “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific”. During the Tenth Forum, members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), intergovernmental bodies, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and major groups and other stakeholders exchanged regional perspectives on implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

I. Key messages

2. The key messages stemming from the discussion held at the Tenth Forum, further detailed in sections II to V below, are the following:

(a) Multiple crises have pushed millions of people in Asia and the Pacific into poverty, increased inequality and further undermined progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(b) Despite multiple challenges, countries in Asia and the Pacific are implementing an array of solutions and remain strongly committed to the 2030 Agenda as a blueprint for responding to the multiple crises and the region's major challenges, including for transforming the energy and food systems to support a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery;

(c) Regional cooperation and partnerships, including through high-impact initiatives and transformative actions that enhance health and well-being, provide social protection, tackle climate change and support more sustainable urban development and the region's energy transition, are important for accelerating a more inclusive and sustainable recovery;

(d) Enhanced partnerships with civil society and businesses, as well as through South-South and triangular cooperation, are also essential for bringing about the necessary transformations at the speed and scale necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

(e) Voluntary national reviews that are forward-looking and firmly based on disaggregated data, evidence and inclusive processes are instrumental for accelerating progress on the Goals and ensuring that people in vulnerable situations, such as persons with disabilities, women and girls, are not left behind;

(f) Confronting food, energy, social and environmental crises will require scaling up investments in achieving the Goals, including through targeted national stimulus measures and innovative public and private sector financing, and addressing debt sustainability concerns;

(g) While the challenges faced in each subregion in Asia and the Pacific in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda vary, there are also many common opportunities and priority actions that could be taken to accelerate progress, including strengthening partnerships and mechanisms for sustainable development, addressing climate change and enhancing disaster resilience;

(h) The collective and coordinated work of the United Nations development system at the regional level remains of critical importance to the members and associate members of ESCAP in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

3. The addendum to the report on the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development sets out many priority actions that could be taken to make progress in implementing the five Sustainable Development Goals under review.

II. Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

4. Under agenda item 2, the participants in the Tenth Forum reviewed the challenges posed by multiple crises and the approaches that were being taken to shape an inclusive and sustainable recovery, with a focus on leveraging synergies and strengthening the nexus of the energy, food and finance systems.

5. It was highlighted that multiple crises had pushed millions of people into poverty, increased inequality and further undermined progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Together with global climate change, the recent food and energy crises had exacerbated inflation, affecting particularly vulnerable populations and bringing about severe socioeconomic consequences.

6. The participants underlined the need to transform the energy and food systems in support of a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery. It was important for institutions and policies to be dynamic in order to strengthen social protection programmes, distribute energy and food more equitably and mobilize sustainable sources of finance to ensure that the needs of vulnerable populations were addressed.

7. The participants reiterated their commitment to the 2030 Agenda and underscored the need for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach for greater policy effectiveness. They emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and partnerships with civil society and businesses to bring about the necessary transformations at the speed and scale necessary and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Also, more disaggregated data would improve policymaking and the ability to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

8. Several representatives shared their countries' experiences and the policy measures adopted in response to the converging crises. These included extending cash transfer programmes and other forms of social support, improving access to food and energy services for households, prioritizing small and medium-sized enterprises, increasing investment in infrastructure, digitalizing public financial management and creating an enabling environment for private sector investment, including through public-private partnerships for the blue economy and climate financing. They noted, however, that investments needed to be scaled up further, including through national stimulus measures targeted at promoting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the areas of renewable energy, social protection and urban infrastructure, and that debt sustainability needed to be addressed.

9. Representatives of major groups and other stakeholders highlighted the need to sustainably manage energy, food and finance systems in support of a sustainable recovery. Governments' policy priorities must be grounded in human rights, good governance and accountability. Governments should also focus on the vulnerable and empower women and girls through multi-stakeholder partnerships and empower local government units and communities.

III. Towards the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit

10. Under agenda item 3, progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the region was reviewed. In its presentation, the secretariat noted that progress had been made on some Goals, such as Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy) and Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), and that there had been a regression on Goal 13 (Climate action).

11. The participants expressed concern and recognized the need to accelerate action and enhance regional cooperation for sustainable development, including South-South and triangular cooperation. They highlighted the need to strengthen national policies, engage multi-stakeholder partnerships and tackle poverty and hunger to face the rising cost of living. More sustainable urban development required investments in inclusive and affordable housing and better waste management, including through the application of circular economy principles. Better disaggregated data was required so that people in vulnerable situations, such as persons with disabilities, women and girls, were not left behind.

12. High-impact initiatives and transformative actions at all levels were being taken to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These included: the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032; the Penang Platform for Sustainable Urbanization; the Energy Transition Mechanism of the Asian Development Bank, which is aimed at facilitating the early retirement of coal power assets in Asia; the Comprehensive Framework on the Care Economy of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); just energy transition partnerships; and the draft ASEAN principles on sustainable minerals development. They also included innovative actions taken by financial institutions to mobilize financing, including the issuance of Sustainable Development Goal bonds and the introduction of blended financing solutions for the Goals.

13. Several representatives noted the importance of mainstreaming and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals. They noted the importance of inclusive social protection systems, particularly for women and girls, and of financing, including in the form of overseas development assistance. They also noted the need for innovation and engaging local government, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders. Representatives also remarked on the centrality of the United Nations, its agencies and funds as critical development partners for achieving the Goals.

14. Representatives from major groups and other stakeholders highlighted the importance of involving marginalized groups in decision-making processes to ensure that no one was left behind. While the continued extraction of fossil fuels was impeding progress on climate action, a sustainable transition in the energy and food sectors had significant potential to support employment and decent work. Some voluntary local reviews had highlighted successful practices on the ground.

IV. Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through voluntary national reviews

15. Under agenda item 4, two panel discussions were held to share country experiences in preparing voluntary national reviews. The participants in the panel discussions examined how South-South cooperation and the ESCAP twinning programme could leverage the impact of voluntary national reviews to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and how such reviews could strengthen evidence-based policymaking and focus on those left behind.

16. The participants reiterated that follow-up and review processes were instrumental for resuming progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and expressed appreciation for the support received from the United Nations system. Voluntary national reviews served to raise awareness and to support countries to track progress and identify priorities and policy instruments aimed at leaving no one behind. They also provided for more accountability, supported policy coherence and recognized the contribution of different stakeholders and civil society organizations. Second and third voluntary national reviews had been more forward-looking and more firmly based on evidence and on more inclusive processes.

17. The participants noted that data and statistics formed the backbone of the voluntary national reviews by enhancing evidence-based policymaking and planning and expressed appreciation for the National SDG Tracker, an online tool developed by ESCAP to strengthen the analysis and use of data. They stressed the importance of disaggregating data and diversifying data sources.

18. Several representatives considered South-South cooperation an effective means of exchanging good practices to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. They commended the ESCAP twinning programme as a useful platform for knowledge exchange. Civil society, the private sector and parliaments should be considered crucial to South-South cooperation. Representatives also noted the importance of the voluntary local reviews and of localizing the Goals.

19. Major groups and other stakeholders noted the importance of creating safe spaces for engagement and for involving non-State actors, including children, youth, women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable groups, in voluntary national reviews. Citizen-generated data and perspectives could be used in preparing the reviews in order to foster inclusiveness and better disaggregated data could be used to ensure the inclusion of those left furthest behind.

V. Review of regional progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and opportunities for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

A. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the subregional level

20. Under agenda item 5 (a), subregional progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals was reviewed. In its presentation, the secretariat highlighted the achievements and challenges of each subregion in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and also spoke of the opportunities and priority actions that could be taken to accelerate progress, including strengthening partnerships and mechanisms for sustainable development.

21. The participants underscored the importance of strong partnerships and collaboration in addressing climate change and enhancing disaster resilience in the region. They acknowledged the continued need for technical support from the United Nations development system.

22. Representatives from subregional organizations shared information on collective actions that had been taken to address climate change and strengthen resilience. These included the following: harmonizing climate actions within the Eurasian Economic Union, coordinating climate change positions through the Pacific Political Climate Champions, coordinating resource mobilization and technical assistance for disaster management within ASEAN and sharing knowledge and practices for resilient and sustainable connectivity through the Greater Tumen Initiative.

23. Several representatives highlighted the importance of inclusive engagement with civil society members and communities, including women, persons with disabilities, older persons, children, youth and Indigenous Peoples, in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, which could be accelerated by empowering civil society organizations. That required adequate training and sufficient resources.

24. The participants noted the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, natural disasters and socioeconomic crises and stressed the importance of strengthening regional cooperation and solidarity and of promoting collaboration between relevant stakeholders at all levels.

B. Progress towards the achievement of Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 at the regional level

25. Under agenda item 5 (b), five round tables dedicated to reviewing progress towards Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 were held. The summaries of all five round tables were issued as an addendum to the report of the forum (ESCAP/RFSD/2023/6/Add.1) and included in Annex III of the present addendum.

26. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation) highlighted that the overconsumption of water resources was the leading cause of water scarcity in the region. Priority areas for action included the need to improve the quality of data on water; the need to strengthen national institutions and promote cooperation across all levels; and the need to involve diverse stakeholders and marginalized groups in policy design and implementation processes to promote transparency, accountability and equitable access to water.

27. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy) highlighted the need to encourage participation in the Global Methane Pledge and implementation of the global road map for accelerated Goal 7 action. Priority areas of action included continuing to take measures to reduce the carbon intensity of all sectors; facilitating a sustainable, rights-based, affordable and just energy transition; closing the clean cooking gap; adopting sustainable cooling measures; and strengthening regional cooperation, including through cross-border energy trading and harmonized rules.

28. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) highlighted priority areas of action, including enhancing strategic and evidence-based resource mobilization to drive systemic changes and innovation; increasing productivity as a critical driver of economic growth; investing in better working conditions and the upgrading of skills; strengthening labour unions to ensure respect for fundamental rights; and boosting research and development for industrial technologies to support small and medium-sized enterprises. Involving end-user groups in all stages of infrastructure development, addressing the digitalization access divide and bridging the finance gap were also suggested.

29. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) highlighted priority areas of action, including making urban development more resilient to disasters and climate crises; strengthening inclusive cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination across levels of urban and territorial governance; facilitating an urban digital transformation characterized by smart communities; and promoting inclusive and integrated approaches to urban and territorial planning that consider the benefits of blue and green infrastructure.

30. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) discussed policy priorities on finance, trade, capacity-building and

partnerships. It highlighted as priority areas of action expanding the fiscal space and making debt more sustainable; enhancing access to innovative and sustainable finance instruments and stronger regulatory frameworks; leveraging existing regional economic partnerships and communities; and streamlining trade procedures by digitalizing customs and trade. It also highlighted the need to strengthen South-South cooperation and increase national capacities to address data gaps. Inclusive measures of progress that went beyond the gross domestic product were highlighted as crucial to measuring environmental sustainability and well-being.

31. Representatives of members, associate members, major groups and other stakeholders underscored the efforts they had made towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17, including by integrating the Goals into their development plans and ensuring public participation in Goal implementation.

C. Reporting on system-wide results of the United Nations at the regional level in Asia and the Pacific in support of the 2030 Agenda

32. Under agenda item 5 (c), the participants considered the work of the United Nations development system at the regional level to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They were informed of some system-wide actions taken and results achieved in 2022, including those attained through the Regional Collaborative Platform for Asia and the Pacific and its four issue-based coalitions. The collective work of the United Nations development system at the regional level in supporting members and associate members in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was noted.

33. The participants also noted the need to accelerate actions to achieve the 2030 Agenda. These included building resilience to climate-induced disasters, especially among vulnerable populations; accelerating a just and inclusive energy transition; tackling gender inequality; and preserving the oceans and their ecosystems. Representatives expressed continued commitment to sustainable development in the region, including by further enhancing South-South cooperation and sustainable industrial development, reducing poverty and accelerating the net-zero-carbon transition through investments in renewable energy.

34. Representatives of major groups and other stakeholders noted that it was urgent to accelerate progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as doing so would also help to tackle the climate crisis. They underscored the need to ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, youth and women, among others, in efforts to implement the Goals at the regional level.

Annex II

Lists of side events and other associated events held prior to and on the margins of the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

1. On 27 March 2023, 10 side events were held on the following topics: “SDG 11 in Focus: ‘Glocalisation’: Catalysing Local Implementation of Global Goals in Asia and the Pacific”; “A Call to Action: Findings and Recommendations from the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework in the Asia Pacific Region”; “Regional Decisions for Sustainable Development: The Case of the Eurasian Economic Union and other Structures”; “Recovery for Whom? Challenging Corporate Power in Development”; “Canada-Southeast Asia Policy Dialogue on Clear Energy Innovation and Transition”; “Building a Sustainable and Resilient Asian Highway Network to Support SDG Implementation in Asia and the Pacific”; “Achieving Sustainable Development Goals 11&17 through Urban Youth Councils”; “Green Jobs for Circularity in High-impact Sectors”; “Girls’ Activism for Environment Justice: An Inter-generational Dialogue”; and “NUA implementation status and a case of Sanitation Champion Mayors”.

2. On 28 March 2023, 12 side events were held on the following topics: “Overview and Comparative Analysis of SDG Implementation in Asia through the Voluntary National Reviews (2016 to 2022) and People’s Scorecard (PSC) (2020–2022)”; “Building Accessible and Inclusive Cities and Communities in Asia and the Pacific”; “Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through Government and Universities Partnership”; “Dalit Women and Water & Sanitation – Addressing Multi-layered Intersecting Vulnerabilities”; “Child Friendly Cities to Accelerate Recovery in East-Asia and the Pacific”; “Strategic Partnerships for Policy Impact: Multi-Stakeholder Engagement for Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia”; “Leave No Issue Behind”; “Cambodian CSOs’ Inputs to the CSDGs Implementation on Priority Goals for 2023 Voluntary National Review”; “Integrated Climate Action for Low-Carbon and Resilient Cities in Asia and the Pacific”; “Multi-stakeholder Partnership in Facilitating Inclusive Economies and Protecting Rights of Migrant Workers”; “Partnership with Indigenous Peoples for Recognition of their Roles and Contributions on Water Resource Governance”; and “Facilitating Structural Transformation to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”.

3. On 29 March 2023, 14 side events were held on the following topics: “Fit for Purpose? Forwarding the Localization Agenda to Address the Conflict and Climate Crises in the Asia-Pacific Region”; “Best Practices Towards Inclusive Sanitation in South-Asia”; “Climate Finance in Asia-Pacific: From Resilient Infrastructure in Cities to Last-mile Clients”; “Actions to Harnessing Synergies between the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals: Enhancing City to City Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region”; “Harnessing Agroecology Through Partnerships to Transform Food Systems”; “Implications of the Energy Transition on Sustainable Critical Minerals Development in the Asia-Pacific: Aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals”; “Future Generation: Multi-Stakeholder Roles for Strengthening Space Applications and Sustainable Development”; “Financing and Safeguarding Just Transition in Asia: Trends and Future Pathways for Just and Inclusive Transition to a Zero-carbon Economy”; “Catalysing Local and National Action on Plastic Pollution to Achieve Regional Priorities and Global Goals in South-East and East Asia”; “Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Cooperation between Cities, Regions, Business and Governments – Practices Exchange”; “Implementing the New Urban Agenda and the Urban Dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards the Second Session of the United Nations Habitat

Assembly”; “Access to Safe and Sufficient Water: A Right of Children and Future Generations”; “A Resilient Planet for All: Intergenerational Solidarity in Action to Build Back Better”; and “Voices of Children and Youth in Asia Pacific: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals through Resilience-building in Early Childhood & Ending Violence against Children”.

4. On 30 March 2023, 15 side events were held on the following topics: “Are we Inclusive Enough? A discussion on Disability Inclusive Development”; “The Pacific Urban Partnership – Localising the Sustainable Development Goals and the Pacific New Urban Agenda toward the 6th Pacific Urban Forum”; “Water Scarcity in the Age of the Anthropocene”; “Workers, Forge The Future: An Info session on Informal and Platform Workers in Asia and the Pacific”; “Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific”; “Community Networks: Complementary Solutions, Innovations and Partnerships to Bridge the Digital Divide”; “APFSD Youth Forum Call to Action 2023: Agenda Setting for Strengthening Partnerships to Accelerate the Recovery from the COVID-19 with Human Rights, Gender Equality and SRHR at the Forefront”; “Youth-driven Actions for Sustainable Local Development in Southeast Asia”; “Challenging Gender-based Violence in Education and Youth Voices: A Must in Fast Tracking the 2030 Agenda”; “South-South and Triangular Collaboration Programme on Science, Technology and Innovation among Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Thailand, and Viet Nam”; “Bringing South-South and Triangular Cooperation into action through the Voluntary National Reviews”; “Fostering Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing among Asian Countries in the Energy Sector”; “The Strategic Role of Government Libraries in Providing Evidence to Support the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews”; “Building Links: Youth Partnerships for Impactful Action on the Sustainable Development Goals”; and “EU SWITCH-ASIA: Sustainable Consumption and Production and its Contribution to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals”.

5. The following associated and pre-events were held: Preparatory Workshop for ESCAP Region VNR Countries; APFSD Youth Forum 2023: Accelerating the Recovery from the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at All levels in Asia and the Pacific with Young People at the Forefront; 4th Social Enterprise Advocacy and Leveraging (SEAL) Asia Conference; The Road to 10th APFSD: Regional Dialogue on Youth Empowerment in Climate Action; Asia Pacific Peoples’ Forum on Sustainable Development; Voluntary National Review Learning and Networking Event; Pursuing Wellbeing in the Pacific and Beyond; Transforming Education Now and for the Future We Want: TES National Follow-up Actions to Move Towards the Achievement of SDG 4; Accelerating Partnerships in Small Island Developing States in the Asia-Pacific; The Eighth Meeting of the Expert Working Group on Universal Access to Modern Energy Services, Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Cleaner Use of Fossil Fuels; Transforming Food Systems in Asia and the Pacific: a Regional Stocktake; International Day of Zero Waste: Commemoration at UNCC Urban Engagement Space; Workshop on Policy for Agroecology Transition in Southeast Asia; Regional Learning Exchange for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda; City Enabling Environment (CEE) Rating in the Asia-Pacific: Indicator 11 (Environmental and Climate Change Governance) Expert Group Discussion; and The Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Third Asian and Pacific Energy Forum (APEF3).

Annex III

Summary of round-table discussions

1. Annex III contains a summary of the various views arising from the five round tables held during the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development to review regional progress in and opportunities for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy), Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The views summarized herein do not represent a negotiated outcome.

I. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation)

2. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 6 was informed by the relevant Goal profile¹ and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Improve data on water resources.** More must be done to enhance the collection and sharing of data for the sustainable management of water, including through periodic water resources accounting. Data derived from such accounting should underpin the decisions made to manage water resources sustainably, thereby allowing for the efficient allocation of water for multiple uses and improved access to safe water and sanitation;

(b) **Use integrated approaches for transboundary water management.** Employing integrated approaches that prioritize the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems, promote nature-based solutions and foster citizen action for river restoration can enhance linkages between water-related issues. Such approaches can also foster transboundary water management by promoting dialogue on multiple issues through the exchange of various perspectives;

(c) **Strengthen national institutions and coordination for better governance.** Institutional coordination on water quality, wastewater and groundwater management, climate change and disaster management, climate financing and national water accounting and allocation, are key to making progress on Goal 6;

(d) **Support gender equality and social inclusion.** The engagement of a wide range of stakeholders in the design and implementation of policies is necessary. In particular, the needs of marginalized groups, such as women, persons with disabilities and those facing social exclusion, who are often disproportionately affected by water-related issues, should be adequately reflected. Adopting an inclusive approach to policy development can further promote transparency and accountability in water governance;

(e) **Increase financing.** While many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have implemented new and robust water policies and mandates, in many contexts appropriate financial commitments are not in place, inhibiting the ability to fully implement new water policies and mandates. Increased funding to support effective water management is thus needed;

(f) **Invest in capacity development.** It is crucial to improve national capacities to monitor, evaluate, allocate and prioritize water use and to conduct water accounting exercises. Such improvements could enable Governments to prioritize the

¹ Available from www.unescap.org/kp/2023/sdg-6-clean-water-and-sanitation.

use of water resources by competing sectors and in transboundary contexts. Governments also need to acquire or strengthen the technical capacity to respond to new and emerging challenges associated with climate change and disasters;

(g) **Prioritize access to water as a human right.** The impacts of climate change; the unsustainable management and use of natural resources; air, land and water pollution; the unsound management of chemicals and waste; and the resulting loss of biodiversity and the decline in services provided by ecosystems have negative direct and indirect consequences for the enjoyment of all fundamental human rights. National policies and initiatives can be taken to uphold and ensure access to water as a human right;

(h) **Acknowledge the interconnected impacts of climate change and disasters.** While population growth is a key driver of water scarcity and degrading water quality, climate change is expected to continue to exacerbate those challenges. While climate-induced hazards result in devastating loss of human life and threaten livelihoods, climate change also brings additional challenges to the sustainability of freshwater resources, such as rising sea levels combined with overextraction of groundwater leading to the salinization of coastal aquifers.

II. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy)

3. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 7 was informed by the relevant Goal profile² and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Encourage participation in the Global Methane Pledge to accelerate the achievement of Goal 7.** The countries adhering to the Global Methane Pledge, which was launched at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, have agreed to take voluntary actions to contribute to a collective effort to reduce global methane emissions by at least 30 per cent by 2030 from 2020 levels. Reductions in the energy sector are closely linked to the success of the Pledge;

(b) **Encourage the implementation of the global road map for accelerated Goal 7 action in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.** Stemming from the high-level dialogue on energy held in 2021, the road map contains a call for action to close the energy access gap, rapidly transition to decarbonized energy systems, mobilize adequate and predictable finance, leave no one behind on the path to a net zero future and harness innovation, technology and data. Mobilizing public-private partnerships and resources is essential to achieving those targets;

(c) **Encourage countries to consider the findings in the policy brief of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific entitled “Slow advancements in sustainable energy: taking stock of SDG 7 progress in Asia and the Pacific”.** The findings suggest that there is a need to standardize off-grid electricity supply technologies and business models, consider electric cooking options in parallel with electrification, establish standards for cooking appliances aligned with the indoor air quality targets of the World Health Organization and electrify end-use consumption by using energy from renewable sources. Adopting these recommendations will accelerate the energy transition and decarbonization and result in increased efficiency, savings and immediate air pollution reductions in cities;

² Available from www.unescap.org/kp/2023/sdg-7-affordable-and-clean-energy.

(d) **Continue to take measures to reduce carbon intensity.** In order to be implemented in an effective and well-coordinated manner, such measures need to be taken in particular in those sectors responsible for the highest levels of emissions and be integrated with other supportive measures;

(e) **Encourage a sustainable, rights-based, affordable and just energy transition that respects human rights and equal access to energy services, focusing on the needs of people and groups in vulnerable and conflict-affected situations.** More investments need to be made in small-scale renewable energy projects led by and directly benefiting communities. Furthermore, more consultations need to be held on the reporting of progress made in implementing Goal 7, including with women, youth and local and Indigenous communities, to respect human and workers' rights and to minimize the environmental and social costs associated with large hydropower projects;

(f) **Close the clean cooking gap through policy interventions, planning, technology innovation, financing and partnerships.** Making progress in the clean cooking sector requires targeted policy support to build the necessary enabling environment and additional capacity-building to develop appropriate, well-functioning institutions and networks. Structuring innovative financing schemes can unlock larger streams of capital from the private sector, while the adoption of sustainable cooling systems, including through national cooling action plans, can accelerate efforts to reduce energy-related emissions.

III. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure)

4. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 9 was informed by the relevant Goal profile³ and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Promote decent jobs and green industry in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.** Additional resources are needed to drive systemic changes and innovation based on a strategic and evidence-based approach. It is important for countries to place women and young persons with disabilities at the core of industrial development, accelerate technology upgrading, boost productivity across sectors, invest adequately in working conditions and skills upgrading and strengthen labour unions and workers' rights to ensure fundamental rights. As countries shift from a resource-based to a knowledge-based approach to development, it is all the more critical for them to promote women's participation in digitalization and address new risks, such as cyberviolence. Countries also need to address the interlinked aspects of innovation and industry in order to meet Goal 9 targets. More investments need to be made in research and development in industrial technologies to enhance production, drive innovation, increase productivity, support small and medium-sized enterprises and reduce waste and pollution. Fair access to resources, skills promotion opportunities and targeted policy support for vulnerable populations is crucial. In order to increase sustainability, accelerated action is needed to decouple economic growth from emissions and to strengthen interlinkages within Goal 9;

(b) **Foster innovation and digitalization for sustainable development.** Better access to digital technologies, gender-responsive infrastructure and scientific research and development for marginalized groups is needed as a means of supporting inclusive community development. Better working environments for women and girls

³ Available from www.unescap.org/kp/2023/sdg-9-industry-innovation-and-infrastructure.

employed in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, enhanced benefits from artificial intelligence and safe, rights-based cybersecurity systems are critical. Public-private partnerships and the protection of intellectual property rights can drive innovation and digitalization. Addressing systemic challenges, promoting policy coherence, strengthening regional cooperation and facilitating digital inclusion and science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, for example, can further support progress on Goal 9. The issue of bridging the access divide requires more attention, particularly in the areas of digital literacy, inclusivity and affordability. However, it is also crucial to prioritize data privacy and protection. In addition, as technology develops, measures need to be taken to prevent cyberviolence;

(c) **Develop resilient infrastructure.** Infrastructure should be built in a way that makes it sustainable and resilient. Research should be conducted during the preparatory phase and consideration should be given to the interdependence and interconnectedness of infrastructure. Labour rights, human rights, gender equality and environmental aspects should be protected, along with the inclusion of Indigenous and local people. Funding gaps and financing for just transitions need to be addressed. Mechanisms and policies for stakeholder ownership and early warning systems are of vital importance. Appropriate plans need to be centred on sustainable development in the aftermath of crises and communication between individuals and government at all levels and stakeholder groups can be improved through the use of advanced communication technologies. Targeted support and quality infrastructure can promote the growth and innovation potential of small and medium-sized enterprises. Sustainable and inclusive approaches need to be embedded into infrastructure projects and enabling access to key services needs to be prioritized.

IV. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities)

5. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 11 was informed by the relevant Goal profile⁴ and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Prioritize city-level climate action and disaster risk management through anticipatory actions.** Applying innovative local approaches to addressing climate change by focusing on anticipatory actions and rapid capacity assessments for local governments supports stronger risk-informed urban development. Significant efforts have been made to develop urban climate and disaster management plans and policies. However, for these to be effective, three key action areas need to be pursued. Firstly, disaggregated data that accurately reflect the multidimensional climate vulnerabilities of local communities in both urban and rural areas need to be collected and shared widely. Secondly, decisive leadership at all levels is fundamental for ensuring that the voices and needs of everyone is accounted for in local climate action plans and that such plans are implemented in partnership with affected communities. Thirdly, cross-sectoral collaborations, including private-public partnerships, need to be developed to overcome silos, bridge funding issues and identify best practices to improve the effectiveness of local climate actions and disaster management policies;

(b) **Address gaps between communities and decision makers by strengthening inclusive cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination across different levels of governance.** Inclusive approaches require dedicated resources to be institutionalized and a diverse range of community voices, including those of

⁴ Available from www.unescap.org/kp/2023/sdg-11-sustainable-cities-and-communities.

women, youth, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, to be heard throughout the processes of urban development. Local governments and urban development professionals should be supported, trained and educated to leverage the wealth of data and information that communities can provide. This will increase the transparency and inclusivity of decision-making and governance processes;

(c) **Make urban digital transformation and data-driven decision-making people-centred.** Harmonized data platforms at the local level that simultaneously build data literacy and capacities and increase public awareness and accessibility are crucial for leveraging the potential of technologies for the future of cities. Smart communities, defined by their local context, should be the foundation of smart cities. The engagement of a broad range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, academic institutions and the most vulnerable groups in urban areas, can provide local governments with a greater understanding of local needs and support inclusive decision-making processes;

(d) **Ensure inclusive and integrated approaches to urban and territorial planning.** Participative people-centred processes engaging a broad range of stakeholders must be considered in urban development projects, plans, strategies and capital investments. Infrastructure needs for urban basic service delivery must be linked to an evidence-based approach that responds to the needs of communities and the rights of all, including the most vulnerable. A multisectoral and inclusive approach will also benefit linkages across urban and rural environments, ensuring that no one and no place is left behind in the rapid process of urbanization.

V. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

6. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 17 was informed by the relevant Goal profile⁵ and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Accelerate efforts to expand the fiscal space, improve the mobilization of public resources and enhance debt sustainability.** Governments can pursue tax policy reforms, including the establishment of a carbon tax, and the digitalization of tax administrations to improve efficiency and compliance. Meanwhile, Governments need to mitigate the risks associated with large public debts by improving public debt management and relying more on domestic resource mobilization. While public-private partnerships can provide additional resources for public investment, they need to be managed carefully to ensure that they are efficient and cost-effective. It is important to substantially increase access to concessional finance, address illicit financial flows and ensure that government spending and funding are directed at sustainable development, including climate adaptation;

(b) **Scale up access to sustainable financing and develop the necessary frameworks.** While sustainable finance instruments are becoming more widely used and can contribute to financing the Goals, several issues need to be addressed to improve the way they function. These include preventing greenwashing, promoting accountability and good governance through strengthened regulatory frameworks and establishing green taxonomies to provide clear guidance to market participants about the degree to which financial products contribute to sustainable development. These measures are essential to build investor trust and enhance market demand for sustainable finance instruments;

⁵ Available from www.unescap.org/kp/2023/sdg-17-partnerships-goals.

(c) **Actively seek to accelerate the digitalization and adoption of customs and trade processes.** Accelerating the digitalization and adoption of customs and trade processes can be done by leveraging the tools and solutions already available across the United Nations system and acceding to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. Such a move would streamline trade procedures to reduce costs, increase exports – especially for least developed countries – and make trade more inclusive;

(d) **Accelerate regional cooperation and integration efforts.** Greater regional integration, at both the bilateral and plurilateral levels, would ensure cost competitiveness with countries that already have established trade agreements. Leveraging existing regional economic partnerships and communities such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation could enable progress on trade for sustainable development;

(e) **Enhance South-South cooperation.** This includes strengthening mechanisms for sharing experiences among State and non-State actors in building back better. Strengthening existing networks, best practice communities and platforms for sharing information among different stakeholders is crucial in promoting South-South and triangular cooperation. Consensus-building with local governments and civil society organizations is especially necessary. Cooperation mechanisms should further ensure that people and the planet are at the centre of development planning and strategies;

(f) **Increase capacity at the national level to tackle data gaps on all the Goals, so as to facilitate reporting on progress in their implementation.** Training modules that are more inclusive and address the needs of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples, need to be developed. It is important to review whether the indicators are well designed to measure progress, considering the availability of data in each country. The need for inclusive measures of progress that take into account environmental sustainability and well-being was highlighted, in line with the concept of going beyond gross domestic product. The role of private sector entities in integrating the Goals into their business strategies is also vital for enabling transformative change.
