

Inputs to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2024
Inputs from functional commissions of ECOSOC, other intergovernmental bodies and forums to the 2024 HLPF

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4. Impacts of multiple crises on the implementation of SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body.

Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals has been slow and uneven across Asia and the Pacific. At the current pace, the region as a whole will not achieve any of the 17 Goals by 2030. Stepping up climate action stands out as an immediate priority across the region, as does working to reduce the inequalities that impact women and girls, populations in rural areas and the urban poor. Small island developing States face the steepest climb as the progress they had made was lost to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and they continue to lag behind the rest of the region after two years of recovery.

Tackling climate change, overcoming poverty and ending hunger are defining challenges faced by countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Climate change exacerbates poverty and hunger, threatening to reverse sustainable development gains, with vulnerable groups facing disproportionate impacts owing to their limited capacity to adapt and scarce resources. These challenges are deeply interwoven, and the impacts of climate change are both widespread and intensifying. The impacts are straining biophysical systems, including land, water and ecosystems, thereby amplifying food insecurity.

Climate hazards are becoming more severe and frequent, straining food and livelihood systems, causing declines in crop yields, freshwater fisheries, pastoralist activities, and impacting activities such as storage, transportation, retail, and consumption. With over 400 million undernourished people in Asia-Pacific, food security requires urgent attention. COVID-19 has undone years of progress, with an assessment of regional food system risk suggests rising risk in all six dimensions of food security namely availability, access, utilization, stability, agency and sustainability, after years of improvement.

Most of the climate-related displacement of people recorded globally takes place in Asia and the Pacific. A combination of high vulnerability of populations, high country-level exposure to climate hazards, depletion of natural capital, state fragility and conflict, and low coping capacity, amplify the climate impacts on poverty and food insecurity. Human displacement as a result of climate impacts is also increasing. Over the five-year period 2018-2022, 96 million people were displaced in the region due to climate-related shocks. The losses from climate-induced disasters in the region are high, with an annual estimate of around \$780 billion from natural and biological hazards. Climate change worsens the interconnected challenges of environmental degradation, governance system failures and conflict. Governance failures including conflict also exacerbate the impacts of climate change and amplify environment degradation and livelihood losses in vulnerable communities and ecosystems.

(Includes input from Chair's summary, APFSD official documents, SDG Partnership report, SDG Progress Report)

5. Three key areas where sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2024, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.

1. Sustainable agricultural practices and food systems approaches can address the triple challenge of providing food security and nutrition to a growing population, supporting sustainable livelihoods of farmers and food producers, and reducing the environmental and climate impacts of food production. Various feasible approaches exist, encompassing activities across the value chain such as to conserve and regenerate soils, efficient use of agricultural inputs, use of renewable energy, reducing methane emissions from rice cultivation, managing manure to reduce associated carbon emissions and embracing agroecology practices. Examples from the region include farm diversification, value-chain improvement, sustainable packaging and solar technology.
2. Decent work and a just transition in the context of climate change: Addressing climate change will lead to new employment opportunities, while phasing out jobs in carbon-intensive sectors. It is critical to ensure that new employment generated from transitioning to a sustainable economy is green and decent, supporting a just transition and contributing to poverty and hunger alleviation.

Nature-based solutions – comprising activities that restore, protect and sustainably manage natural ecosystems – are examples of integrated responses, as they provide multiple benefits, including adaptation from climate change, human health, food and water security, disaster risk reduction and employment opportunities. Examples include Mangrove protection, tree planting, just transition in early coal retirement.

3. Climate resilient social protection systems: Developing social protection systems, should target people in vulnerable situations and take into account new areas of risks related to climate change, building adaptive capacity of vulnerable people to prepare, adapt and respond to climate impacts. This will address the underlying causes of poverty and food insecurity and reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts. Examples include public works programs providing social protection and climate adaptation, social protection as disaster relief, and a Climate Bridge Fund.

Efforts by member States to ensure policy coherence can accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; voluntary national reviews are instrumental for aligning efforts at all levels of government and can foster collaboration and engagement, leading to forward-thinking, inclusive governance.

6. Three examples of specific actions, policies and measures that are most urgently needed to effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to eradicate poverty and reinforce the 2030 Agenda, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs.

Ambitious climate action, coupled with robust investments in social protection, energy efficiency and renewable energy production and focused on gender equality and access for marginalized groups, is necessary to mitigate the adverse effects of climate-induced disasters and support

livelihoods. Emphasizing climate action (Goal 13) as an immediate priority remains imperative, notably due to its ongoing regression. Integrating robust climate action measures into national policies, strategies and plans is of paramount importance. Resilience and adaptive capacities to address climate-related hazards and natural disasters must be strengthened.

This focus should also prioritize gender equality and access for marginalized groups to mitigate the adverse effects of climate-induced disasters and support livelihoods. Leveraging science, technology and innovation can facilitate sustainable development and should be supported by effective and ongoing international, regional and subregional cooperation.

Actions that also leverage science, technology and innovation can facilitate sustainable development and ensure that no one and no country is left behind. These actions can be supported by effective and ongoing international cooperation, including through South-South and triangular cooperation, for peace and prosperity in the region.

Regional and subregional cooperation plays an important role in addressing transboundary challenges, enhancing connectivity and trade, strengthening food security, reducing the risk of disaster and managing water resources sustainably.

Transformative solutions require the right enabling environment, driven by improved educational awareness, strengthened institutional capacity, coherent policy frameworks, augmented capital, innovation and technology, robust regional cooperation and partnerships by multiple actors.

7. Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit.

(inputs summarized from the draft SG report on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields)

Financing sustainable recovery and resilience: ESCAP provided technical support to build national capacity in developing innovative climate and SDG financing instruments in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Tajikistan. ESCAP provided training to government officials and the private sector in climate risk management and disclosure reporting policy in Sri Lanka, in integrated national climate financing strategies in Samoa, in increasing tax revenues from digital tax systems in Pakistan and in integrating climate risks into financial stability analysis by the Central Bank of Mongolia.

A just energy transition: To accelerate inclusive and just energy transition, ESCAP worked with countries to develop scenarios for energy transition through National Roadmaps for Goal 7, currently available in 9 countries and 8 cities. To accelerate energy transition through better power system connectivity, ESCAP launched the Green Power Corridor Road Map for Northeast Asia as part of the implementation of the Regional Road Map on Power System Connectivity. Work is on-going to support development of the ASEAN Power Grid focusing on enhanced multilateral power trading and better integration of renewable energy resources.

Through the Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport, ESCAP is working with member States and key stakeholders to lock in the changeover to low-carbon mobility, clean energy technologies and logistics. In addition, ESCAP has been working to channel investments into sustainable development such as support to governments to monitor, evaluate, and approve investments with sustainable FDI indicators and mobilization of businesses through the Asia Pacific Green Deal for Business.

The issue-based coalition on raising ambitions on climate action, co-chaired by ESCAP and the United Nations Environment Programme, led the annual assessment of Nationally Determined Contributions and emission gaps to inform discussion among Resident Coordinators and governments in the lead up to and during COP28. ESCAP worked with other members of the Coalition and member states to spearhead the Asia-Pacific Climate Week to enable exchange of climate solutions. The Coalition also led joint advocacy efforts such as youth engagement in climate actions and building partnerships through the Climate and Clean Air Conference.

Social development and leaving no-one behind: The Asian and Pacific Population Conference identified the profound demographic shifts of rapid ageing and declining fertility in the region. ESCAP continued to support countries in developing forward-looking policies and programmes to address ageing and to develop care economy in Cambodia, China, Indonesia and the Philippines.

To enhance national social protection systems, ESCAP is supporting member States such as Cambodia, the Maldives and Mongolia in line with the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation in Social Protection. To ensure everyone has access to legal identity, ESCAP worked with national stakeholders such as in Bangladesh, Fiji, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Samoa to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics. This resulted in improvements in birth registration in Fiji and improved analysis of inequality in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

ESCAP provided a framework for countries and collaborated with the UN development system towards support comprehensive early warning for all initiative in such countries as in Cambodia and the Maldives.

In advancing the principle of "leaving no one behind" in the rapid digital transformation, ESCAP continued to work with member states in bridging digital divide through the Action Plan for Implementing the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative, 2022–2026. ESCAP facilitated among member states the application of geospatial tools and systems for resilient agriculture, air pollution control and disaster risk management.

8. Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 HLPF.

(Our input for this is past the March 1st deadline)