

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**
Eleventh Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Bangkok and online, 20–23 February 2024

Summary of round-table discussions**Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document contains a summary of the various views arising from the five round tables held during the Eleventh Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development to review regional progress in and opportunities for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 (No poverty), Goal 2 (Zero hunger), Goal 13 (Climate action), Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The views summarized herein do not represent a negotiated outcome.

I. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 1 (No poverty)

1. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 1 was informed by the relevant Goal profile¹ and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Promote access to social protection.** Adopting integrated policy planning for inclusive and adaptive social protection is essential to leave no one behind. Formulating a clear definition of social protection that includes both contributory and non-contributory systems and is grounded in human rights and aligned with International Labour Organization standards is crucial for fostering an understanding of the concept and parameters of social protection. Concerted efforts are needed to broaden the reach of social protection systems in the light of demographic changes and the impacts of climate change. Addressing gaps in contributory schemes is particularly important, and engaging informal workers in the design of such schemes is instrumental. Tailoring social protection schemes to address the specific needs of groups in vulnerable situations is essential, including accommodating the higher cost of living for persons with disabilities and facilitating portability arrangements for migrant workers. Furthermore, improving domestic resource mobilization and leveraging emerging sources of external financing are crucial. Synergies with climate change measures can open new opportunities for investments aligned with the Paris Agreement. These investments, coupled

¹ Available at www.unescap.org/kp/2024/sdg-1-no-poverty.

with efforts to improve domestic resource mobilization, have the potential to build comprehensive social protection systems that provide adequate benefits and respond not only to current life cycle contingencies but also to new and exacerbated risks in the context of a changing climate;

(b) **Minimize exposure to and impacts of disasters.** Digital and data-driven approaches can play a vital role in minimizing exposure to and impacts of disasters, in particular those related to weather. The digitalization of early warning systems can be highly effective. Addressing the digital divide is essential to leverage such approaches and ensure inclusivity. The safety and security of vulnerable persons are important aspects of inclusive and adaptive disaster planning and response. A focus on localized and community-driven approaches, including the prioritization and monitoring of participatory community empowerment approaches, is vital. Amplifying the voice of the population in decision-making processes is key to building resilience;

(c) **Enhance access to decent jobs.** Facilitating access to decent jobs for young people and other marginalized groups requires increased efforts in skills upgrading, including vocational training. Integrating skilling into the education system through a life cycle approach to learning can ensure comprehensive skills development. Increased efforts are needed to ensure decent work. Regulating emerging digital platforms, professionalizing the care sector and incentivizing good practices in the private sector would support such efforts. Building capacity for data collection and analysis, while emphasizing investments in inclusive and disaggregated data collection, is crucial. Variables such as income, gender, age, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographical location should be covered to ensure that no one is left behind in achieving Goal 1.

II. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero hunger)

2. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 2 was informed by the relevant Goal profile² and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Prioritize multipronged action, investments and targeted support to promote accessible and affordable diets.** Key actions include implementing food fortification programmes, enforcing supportive regulations and laws and promoting home-grown feeding and school feeding initiatives. Social safety net policies, such as cash transfers to support vulnerable women, children and other groups, are crucial to safeguard against nutritional deficiencies;

(b) **Invest in sustainable and diversified food production and leverage digital innovations.** Key actions include increasing food production and productivity, investing in crop and food diversification, focusing on climate adaptation and resilience, improving agrifood value chains and promoting the sustainable use of digital technologies by producer groups;

(c) **Focus on both supply-side and demand-side food policies.** The transformation of food systems in the face of overlapping crises and financial constraints necessitates a careful consideration of trade-offs and synergies. Building a more resilient and low-emission food system capable of withstanding future crises is critical;

² Available at www.unescap.org/kp/2024/sdg-2-zero-hunger.

(d) **Strengthen urban agriculture, local value chains and rural-urban linkages to improve nutrition and food access for the urban poor and the most vulnerable.** Key actions include creating shock-proof supply chains, improving market linkages (including rural-urban linkages), enacting measures that reinforce resilient supply chains and facilitating connections between producers and consumers through digital technologies and platforms;

(e) **Strengthen capacities for enhanced risk assessment and management in response to pandemics, disasters and their impacts on food systems.** Key actions include integrating risk management strategies into policy formulation, investing in data and information systems and building capacity in data analysis and information management to improve decision-making along the food value chain;

(f) **Continue investing in research, development and technology to adapt food systems to the climate crisis.** Areas of investment include making food systems nutrition-centred and climate-resilient. Local knowledge can be leveraged to promote sustainable, resilient and diversified local food production systems and to inform policies;

(g) **Minimize food loss and waste.** There is a need for more investment in technologically feasible and economically viable solutions to tackle food loss and waste, with the aim of enhancing food security and nutrition, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and alleviating pressures on water and land resources. Identifying critical loss and waste points and implementing prevention and reduction strategies require increased awareness and collaboration and coherent governance frameworks;

(h) **Enhance the livelihoods and prosperity of farmers.** Key actions include boosting employment and scaling up community-level innovations. It is crucial to invest in farmers' organizations and family farms, including with a view to ensuring access to quality seeds, enabling producers to determine fair prices, addressing declining soil health, improving water management and fostering capacity-building and skills development. These measures are vital for transitioning to sustainable agroecology practices.

III. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate action)

3. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 13 was informed by the relevant Goal profile³ and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Leverage the 2025 updates to nationally determined contributions to raise the level of ambition.** In updating their nationally determined contributions, countries in the Asia-Pacific region are encouraged to put in place processes that include all stakeholders and to commit to more ambitious mitigation and adaptation targets that are aligned with Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change guidance and supported by a robust greenhouse gas emissions monitoring system to keep the goal to limit global warming to 1.5°C alive;

(b) **Scale up and align financing for climate action.** Member States and development partners are encouraged to implement the decisions related to climate finance made at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

³ Available at www.unescap.org/kp/2024/sdg-13-climate-action.

They are also encouraged to strengthen policy coherence between climate and financial sector mandates, develop mitigation and adaptation financing strategies as part of their nationally determined contributions, boost investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy and promote access to zero-interest finance for young people and vulnerable rights holders;

(c) **Promote the production, accessibility and use of gender and environment data, including data disaggregated by sex, age and disability that are specific to various sectors.** The availability of nationally representative, high-quality data is crucial for designing, implementing and monitoring climate and disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes that are tailored to the diverse needs of different population segments. In line with the call to action on gender and environment data developed during the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, actions include using individual-level data, producing models to forecast the impact of climate change on specific groups, leveraging big data, integrating a gender perspective into artificial intelligence algorithms, strengthening data dissemination and adopting locally led data gathering approaches;

(d) **Strengthen synergies between climate change and social protection policies.** This entails integrating measures to support those affected by the transition to a net-zero economy into nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans. It is essential to ensure a fair and just transition while focusing on protecting workers' rights, promoting women's inclusion and securing equitable benefits in low-carbon economies, including for persons with disabilities, young people and Indigenous groups;

(e) **Enhance coordination between environment ministries and other relevant line ministries.** Increased institutional, technical and financial support is needed to effectively execute national transport decarbonization plans. Public transport, active mobility options, green hydrogen for transport and more pedestrian-friendly areas should be promoted. Capacity-building and knowledge-sharing at the national, regional and global levels are essential, especially in areas such as promoting electric vehicles and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders;

(f) **Increase access to information and ensure the effective participation of all stakeholders in climate-related decision-making and justice processes.** Climate action should use the experiences of front-line communities to promote human rights and climate justice. It is also crucial to make early warning information available to local communities, women, children, young people and persons with disabilities, and to use traditional and Indigenous wisdom to inform early warning systems;

(g) **Engage young people in climate action.** Key actions include providing climate education, organizing climate awareness campaigns, collecting, reviewing and monitoring environmental data, encouraging young people to participate in political and decision-making processes related to climate change and developing innovative climate solutions.

IV. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)

4. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 16 was informed by the relevant Goal profile⁴ and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Strengthen the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of public institutions and render them fit for the future.** Public institutions at both the national and subnational levels can enhance their capacities, the policymaking and budgetary processes, digitalization efforts, cross-sectoral collaboration and access to evidence and data. Adopting results-oriented planning and budgeting processes and establishing dedicated monitoring and evaluation units are encouraged to ensure future orientation and policy coherence;

(b) **Promote inclusion and representation in governance decision-making.** Political institutions can aim for greater transparency, accountability, inclusivity and representation of diverse interests and population groups. Efforts are encouraged to address the underrepresentation of women and young people in political and legislative offices by raising awareness and creating an enabling environment;

(c) **Promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.** Protecting civic and democratic spaces is crucial. It is essential to uphold the environmental rule of law, protect human rights defenders, remove barriers to justice and ensure the meaningful participation of marginalized groups in all policies and processes. Guiding all economic and social policies with a commitment to human rights is imperative;

(d) **Increase the pace of establishing national human rights institutions in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).** National human rights institutions that are independent, effective and well-resourced, in line with the Paris Principles, can monitor and follow up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(e) **Strengthen the rule of law and address corruption.** The digitalization of public services, where appropriate, is encouraged to reduce opportunities for bribery. Simplifying governance services and increasing transparency and access to information are also key to enabling meaningful public participation;

(f) **Promote survivor-centred and evidence-based approaches for victims of trafficking and persons with disabilities.** A more intersectional approach, especially for marginalized groups, is encouraged to ensure access to justice. The integration of technology, with adequate safeguards, can further facilitate access to justice;

(g) **Advance strategies to reduce prison overcrowding through drug policies.** Adopting a rights-based, gender-sensitive and rehabilitative approach to sentencing can enable tailored rehabilitation solutions for drug users and small-scale offenders. Countries are encouraged to make budgetary allocations for meaningful rehabilitation programmes to help reduce

⁴ Available at www.unescap.org/kp/2024/sdg-16-peace-justice-and-strong-institutions-promote-peaceful-and-inclusive-societies.

recidivism and facilitate social reintegration and to take measures to prevent young people from engaging with illicit drugs;

(h) **Encourage multilateral collaboration and partnerships on data.** It is necessary to strengthen the data collection capacities of member States and align national data with Sustainable Development Goal indicators. Improvements in data availability, accuracy, disaggregation and application for Goal 16 are critical in view of the persistent lack of data. The Goal 16 survey developed jointly by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime can be used to collect data on Goal 16 indicators.

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

5. 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) **Strengthen transparency for successful partnerships in support of achieving the Goals.** Targeted measures are needed to enhance transparency in public procurement and tax systems. Transparent public procurement systems have the potential to be gender-responsive, improve accountability and incentivize private sector engagement;

(b) **Promote accountability in the implementation of financing instruments and mechanisms.** Effective accountability mechanisms, including safeguarding policies, are essential for the implementation and scaling up of climate finance instruments. The implementation of United Nations tax conventions is also key to strengthening the international financial architecture. Efforts to ensure responsible resource allocation and management necessitate robust systems and frameworks;

(c) **Accelerate efforts to ensure responsible partnerships and efficient resource allocation.** Conducting comprehensive assessments, including by using data-driven approaches, is critical for managing risks associated with public-private partnerships. Tackling illicit financial flows through enhanced data-sharing and cooperation is vital for improving resource allocation and transparency. Capacity-building, research and international collaboration are key factors to address inefficiencies;

(d) **Facilitate an enabling environment for effective partnerships.** Transparent and gender-responsive public procurement systems and wider participation in such systems are instrumental to creating an environment conducive to the establishment of partnerships with the private sector. Tailoring tax systems to specific national contexts and strengthening the rule of law are necessary. Engaging the private sector in tracking Goal 17 targets and indicators is key to further foster collaboration and accountability.

⁵ Available at www.unescap.org/kp/2024/sdg-17-partnership-goals.