Economic and Social Council

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

Bangkok, 27–29 March 2019
Agenda item 5
Review and adoption of the report of the Forum

Draft report

1.   The Sixth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), was held in Bangkok from 27 to 29 March 2019.

2.   It was attended by more than 850 participants, including representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations bodies, international organizations, civil society organizations and other entities.
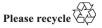
3.   The Forum was attended by representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP: Afghanistan; Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Cook Islands; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; Georgia; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Mongolia; Nauru; Nepal; New Zealand; Pakistan; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Tuvalu; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam. Representatives of Austria, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland attended as observers.

4.   Under agenda item 1 (a), the Co-Chair of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, Mr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice-Chair, National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), India, made a statement on behalf of the Bureau on the outcome of the Fifth Forum. Welcome messages were delivered by Ms. Kira Christianne D. Azucena, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council; Mr. Thani Thongphakdi, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand; and the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations delivered a keynote address. A statement was also delivered on behalf of civil society.

5.   Under agenda item 1 (b), the Forum elected the following Bureau members:

(a)   Chair:

Mr. Fidelis Magalhaes (Timor-Leste)

(b)   Vice-Chairs:

Mr. Ahmad Jawad Osmani (Afghanistan)
Ms. Dipu Moni (Bangladesh)
Mr. Semi Tuleca Koroilavesau (Fiji)
Ms. Nino Tandilashvili (Georgia)
Mr. Rajiv Kumar (India)
Mr. Subandi Sardjoko (Indonesia)
Ms. Bulgantuya Khurelbaatar (Mongolia)
Mr. Puspa Raj Kadel (Nepal)
Ms. Rosemarie Edillon (Philippines)
Mr. Ruslan Edelgeriev (Russian Federation)
Mr. Daya Dharmapala Kilittuwa Gamage (Sri Lanka)
Mr. Silap Velbegov (Turkmenistan)

6.   Under agenda item 1 (c), the Forum adopted the following agenda:

1.   Opening of the Forum:

(a)   Opening statements;

(b)   Election of officers;

(c)   Adoption of the agenda.

2.   Regional perspectives on progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3.   Linking national, regional and global dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4.   Other matters.

5.   Review and adoption of the report of the Forum.

6.   Closing of the Forum.

7.   Under agenda item 2, a ministerial panel discussed regional perspectives and trends related to the theme of the Forum, including effective interventions to ensure inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for a more equal Asian and Pacific region.

8.   A panel discussion on revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development in the context of empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality addressed progress in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 17.

9.   The Forum conducted five parallel round tables dedicated to identifying key challenges and opportunities in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16.

10.   Under agenda item 3, the Asia-Pacific countries participating in voluntary national reviews for the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2019 shared national perspectives on challenges, progress and achievements relating to the 2030 Agenda, as well as lessons learned from the review.

11. The Forum was informed of the progress on the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and discussed a way forward.

12. The Forum was informed of key recommendations emerging from the five round tables on Goals 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16, to be addressed at the forthcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.[1]

13. Members States, major groups and other stakeholders, and United Nations agencies shared perspectives on achievements in the region in accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. Under agenda item 4, no other matters were discussed.

15. Under agenda item 5, the Forum adopted the present report and the Chair's summary of the Forum, contained in the annex to the present document, on 29 March 2019.

16. The Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goal Partnership between ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme released the publication, *Accelerating Progress: An Empowered, Inclusive and Equal Asia and the Pacific*.

17. Side events were held from 27 to 29 March 2019.[2] On 27 March, side events were held on the following topics: sustainability reporting – thinking circular economy by businesses; China's transition towards sustainable development and its implications for Asia and the Pacific; inclusive climate action for sustainable cities; the role of higher education for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; volunteering for the Sustainable Development Goals: integrating volunteerism in national development processes; and a new take on gender data analysis to leave no one behind.

18. On 28 March, side events were held on the following topics: blended finance and leaving no one behind: opportunities and challenges in Asia-Pacific; leveraging partnership for empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality: role of the private sector and civil society in achieving Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17; inclusive participation as a key driver and accelerator of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and Sustainable Development Goal 10: civil society organizations best practices and lessons in ensuring inclusiveness and equality towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; promoting an enabling environment for inclusiveness by localizing Sustainable Development Goals; decent jobs for youth: working together in Asia and the Pacific; empowering smallholders through agricultural mechanization in the digital era; the role of culture for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda; strengthening the link between the environmental and social dimensions of development in Asia; decent work, inclusiveness and equality for migrant workers in South-East Asia; and redesigning youth engagement for sustainability: a showcase of outcomes from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – Thailand Institute of Justice youth forum on innovation, justice and collaboration for the 2030 Agenda.

[1] The full summaries and recommendations from the round tables are available at www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/apfsd6.

[2] A list of side events is available at https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/6/sideevents.

19. On 29 March, side events were held on the following topics: achieving Sustainable Development Goals in South Asia; people-centered early warning systems: making the last mile the first mile; sexuality education: essential life skills to empower youth, promote inclusion and equality for all; are older women being left behind? - the financial security of older women in South-East Asia; waves to action: from transformative migration to socially-inclusive development in cities; empowerment, equality and inclusivity challenges and good practices in the Pacific; fostering transboundary climate action for safe-guarding Sustainable Development Goals in Asia: nurturing regional adaptation plans and a climate action alliance for the Hindu-Kush Himalayan region; independent oversight for effective, accountable and inclusive institutions: strengthening the role of supreme audit institutions in Sustainable Development Goal implementation and review; child rights now! a world without violence against children is possible; empowering migrants through safe, orderly and regular migration in Asia and the Pacific; ensuring women's inclusiveness and equality in land rights and management of natural resources – the role of women human rights defenders; empowering the most marginalized and ensuring inclusiveness and equality: realizing the Sustainable Development Goals through human rights; multi-stakeholder partnerships for Sustainable Development Goal 4 and launch of the *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019* youth report; the missing link: reviewing and strengthening regional processes for Sustainable Development Goal implementation in the Asia-Pacific region; quality education for sustainable agriculture and agri-food systems in South-East Asian colleges and universities – Sustainable Development Goal 4 reflections and Sustainable Development Goal 2 synergies; and linking the peace and disarmament agenda to the Sustainable Development Goals framework of PyeongChang Agenda for Peace 2030.

20. An engagement space hosted by ESCAP during the Forum provided an informal space for dialogue on empowerment, equality and inclusion for sustainable development.

21. The following preparatory and associated events were held: the Preparatory Youth Forum for the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development; the Asia-Pacific People's Forum on Sustainable Development organized by the Asia and Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism; the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand and ESCAP regional workshop on "Empowering People for a Sustainable Future"; the United Nations Volunteers programme and ESCAP regional consultation on the plan of action for integrating volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific; the preparatory meeting for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Mayors Forum 2019 organized by United Cities and Local Governments Asia and Pacific; the ESCAP and Department of Economic and Social Affairs regional preparatory workshop for voluntary national review countries from the Asia-Pacific region; and the third high-level brainstorming dialogue on complementarities between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, co-organized by the Government of Thailand and ESCAP.

22. The Forum concluded that the present report, including its annex, should be brought to the attention of the Commission, at its seventy-fifth session, and to the global dialogues on sustainable development, including, in particular, the upcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development, which would be held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2019.

Annex

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

1.   The theme of the Sixth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality". During the Forum, 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 engaged in a dialogue on regional perspectives on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

I.   Empowering people for a more inclusive and equal Asia-Pacific

2.   During the session, changes were identified that were needed to promote empowerment, inclusion and equality of all people within efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its central aspiration to leave no one behind. A ministerial panel discussed strategies at the regional and subregional level to empower people and promote inclusion of all.

3.   The Forum recognized progress in areas of poverty reduction, education and health, but noted disparities and rising inequalities in the region, such as widening income and wealth gaps, unequal access to resources, education, employment opportunities, technology and social protection, and the impacts on vulnerable and marginalized populations. The Forum noted the importance of empowerment and inclusion to address inequalities spanning the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and to accelerate progress towards many of the Sustainable Development Goals.

4.   The Forum highlighted the impacts of climate change in the region, including on vulnerable populations, and the need to strengthen inclusive decision-making on issues of environment, natural resource management and food security. Representatives highlighted that an inclusive approach to climate change could accelerate progress, and that steps could be taken through building more resilient industrial and communications infrastructure.

5.   The Forum noted efforts of Governments to ensure the empowerment of people, inclusive development and equitable opportunities, including through initiatives to increase income, adopt Sustainable Development Goal-based budgeting, legal frameworks to protect vulnerable people and data collection. The importance of accountability and multi-stakeholder dialogue and access to basic services, education and health care was emphasized. One representative noted that cities are important to achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals and announced that the seventh Asia-Pacific Urban Forum would be held in October 2019, in Penang, Malaysia, co-organized with ESCAP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

6.   The Forum highlighted the need to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Forum emphasized that economic growth must be inclusive and one representative noted challenges to achieve inclusion, such as diverse ethnicities, languages and geographies, as well as capacity and resource constraints and the need for better data to address inequalities. The Forum highlighted the need to increase multi-stakeholder and inclusive partnerships for sustainable development and identified international cooperation and South-South and North-South cooperation as tools for

ensuring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A representative noted that the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and the role of ESCAP were important to ensure no one was left behind.

7.   Representatives from major groups and other stakeholders emphasized the importance of justice, inclusive planning and rights for the most marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples; girls and women, especially rural women; farmers; workers; fisherfolk; urban poor; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons; people living with HIV/AIDS; people living in conflict; older persons; youth; migrants; persons with disabilities; Dalits; and those discriminated based on work and descent.

II.   Progress in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 17

8.   The Forum discussed progress in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 17 on partnerships for sustainable development in the context of the theme of the Forum of empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Panellists reflected on progress in mobilizing, redirecting and unlocking investments from different sources. The panel also explored the role of technology, innovation, data and monitoring and accountability frameworks to reinforce partnerships to accelerate progress on sustainable development.

9.   Representatives reiterated their Governments' commitment to the 2030 Agenda and shared key initiatives at national and local levels. Those included aligning national frameworks, development plans, laws and governance structures, including establishing coordination mechanisms and steering committees and expanding multi-stakeholder engagement. The Forum noted the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in particular to empower people and ensure inclusiveness and equity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

10.   Member States reported on support initiatives to other countries in the region and on cooperation with United Nations agencies and programmes linked to the means of implementation under Sustainable Development Goal 17 as well as on South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation.

11.   Several member States reported on their initiatives towards economic diversification, infrastructure development linked to transport and information and communications technology, attracting foreign direct investment, as well as trade, and highlighted the importance of relevant global and subregional intergovernmental organizations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the World Trade Organization.

12.   Representatives reported on initiatives and intentions to strengthen the collection of disaggregated data and statistics and domestic resource mobilization for sustainable development.

III.   Parallel round tables for in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16

13.   The Forum conducted five parallel round tables dedicated to Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16 to provide focused follow-up to and review of the implementation of each Goal. Each of the round tables had been organized by United Nations system organizations with inputs from other stakeholders, under the overall coordination of ESCAP. Participants in

the round tables agreed on recommendations that were delivered during plenary session 6.

14. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality education) made several recommendations on the Goal for Asia and the Pacific.[3]

15. It recommended accelerating efforts to remove systemic and non-systemic barriers that hindered equity, inclusion and quality at all levels of education through ensuring participation of diverse stakeholders. Concrete and effective policy interventions were vital to remove any form of barrier (direct and indirect) to education, and to significantly increase equitable access to quality learning opportunities during early years and pre-primary level.

16. It recommended diversifying learning pathways, both in formal and non-formal education, to eradicate illiteracy. Implementation of effective formal and non-formal literacy programmes that were of high quality and tailored to the needs of learners and linked to skills development for decent work and livelihood were crucial. Flexible education programmes that would allow students to continue to formal education should be provided as a viable option.

17. It recommended increasing and ensuring the supply of motivated, qualified, adequately resourced and empowered teachers supported by an enabling environment. Teachers as well as caregivers and facilitators for early learning and early childhood development must be accorded better support and resources for their continuous professional development, decent working conditions and career pathways.

18. It recommended increasing investment by reaffirming the global commitment to allocate at least 4–6 per cent of gross domestic product and/or at least 15–20 per cent of total public expenditure to education and ensuring efficient, transparent and equitable resource allocation and accountability in expenditures. Full realization of Goal 4 and reversing the stagnation of funding to the education sector required increased, sustained, innovative and well-targeted financing. Governments had the primary obligation to ensure the right to education and a central role in ensuring accountability systems were in place for effective allocation and use of resources.

19. It recommended strengthening the monitoring of inclusion, equity and quality by ensuring that adequate resources, mechanisms and capacity were available. To comprehensively and systematically track progress and address inequalities, high-quality and more disaggregated data, based on gender/sex, ethnicity, language, income, disability status, and geographical location must be available to planners, decision makers and stakeholders. Greater investment was needed in national statistical systems that were struggling to meet the demand for more and better data for the global Goals and targets.

20. It recommended promoting greater engagement of diverse stakeholders, including young people, civil society, academia, media and the private sector, in the achievement of Goal 4 and maximizing synergies among the Sustainable Development Goals. The achievement of Goal 4 required the involvement of other sectors and collective efforts. It recommended establishing participatory mechanisms with all stakeholders to help set

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[3] The profile for Sustainable Development Goal 4 is available at www.unescap.org/apfsd/6/document/sdgprofiles/SDG4Profile.pdf.

priorities and implement strategies to accelerate the achievement of Goal 4.

21.   The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth) made several recommendations on the Goal for Asia and the Pacific.[4]

22.   It recommended inclusivity in setting and strengthening the institutional mechanisms for decent work leading to sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Given its breadth, making progress on Goal 8 necessitates the integrated planning of a broad array of actors including ministries of economy, environment and labour, local governments, trade unions, employers' organizations, the private sector, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society. A particular emphasis should be made to ensure that also the voices of marginalized groups were included in the decision-making process.

23.   It recommended strengthening labour market institutions for effective and inclusive labour market governance. Key labour market institutions included legislation and regulations on employment and social protection, anti-discrimination, occupational safety and health, unacceptable forms of work, minimum wages, freedom of association and collective bargaining. Those labour market institutions, when properly enforced, were critical to the achievement of Goal 8, as well as for other interlinked Goals concerning the eradication of poverty (Goal 1), achieving gender equality (Goal 5), reducing inequalities (Goal 10) and promoting just institutions (Goal 16). Special consideration was needed to extend the reach of labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for vulnerable groups, including home-based and migrant workers. Also related to strengthening institutions was the call to increase the capacity of national statistical offices to ensure regular collection of labour force surveys or other household surveys needed to monitor decent work and inclusive growth.

24.   It recommended the development and enforcement of national policies and programmes to combat child labour and for better prevention and assistance to victims of forced labour. A variety of strategies and measures available with the aim of strengthening legislation and policy frameworks for action against child labour were discussed in the 2017 report of the International Labour Organization on *Ending Child Labour by 2025: A Review of Policies and Programmes*. To facilitate more effective policymaking and monitor impact, it was of critical importance to increase investment in data collection.

25.   It recommended stepping up investments in human capital to provide all people the opportunities to realize their full potential throughout the life cycle. While education for all, lifelong learning and building technical and core skills were themes featured under Sustainable Development Goal 4, they also served as key inputs to the human development as well as the decent work and economic growth outcomes of a country. For that reason, and in the context of rapid technological advances, progress in Sustainable Development Goal 8 would necessitate increasing investments in people's capabilities. That could include a universal entitlement to lifelong learning that would enable people to acquire skills and to reskill and upskill, while also increasing investment in the institutions, policies and strategies that would support people to navigate an increasing number of labour market transitions over the course of their lives.

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[4]   The profile for Sustainable Development Goal 8 is available at www.unescap.org/apfsd/6/document/sdgprofiles/SDG8Profile.pdf.

26.   It recommended progressive policy reforms to promote a "just transition" towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all. With economic prosperity and social progress in the region threatened by environmental degradation and climate change, there was an urgency to act on climate change. The transition to a low greenhouse gas economy was expected to lead to a net creation of jobs, including green jobs; however, the challenge remained to ensure that the greening of economies did not threaten the livelihoods of marginalized groups, such as indigenous peoples. As more countries were encouraged to adopt broad and comprehensive policy frameworks on the green economy, attention would need to focus on implementation, especially in view of ensuring that no one was left behind in the transition process.

27.   It recommended designing coherent and integrated strategies to ensure the dignity of work for all, including for informal workers and those in precarious employment. Certain countries in the region had initiated strategies to formalize the informal economy in line with the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2015. That recommendation provided guidelines highlighting the formulation of appropriate macroeconomic and skills policies; of simplified registration procedures; of extending the scope of, and compliance with, labour laws; of improved access to credit; of offering incentives, such as tax incentives; and of extending social protection coverage to all categories of workers, including migrant workers. Technological advances demanded the further extension of social protection and the regulation of new forms of work that had the potential to erode the quality of jobs for an increasing number of workers.

28.   The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced inequalities) made several recommendations on the Goal for Asia and the Pacific.[5]

29.   It recommended reaping maximum benefits by focusing on social protection investments. All countries needed to step up investments in universal, accessible and gender-sensitive social protection, in accordance with the social protection floor. Social protection was a transformative investment in people, if well-designed and implemented effectively. It would boost economic growth, dampen inequality and protect against environmental and disaster risks.

30.   It recommended promoting decent job creation and equal pay. Policies should be developed along the four pillars of decent work, including rights and principles at work, job creation, social protection and social dialogue. Adequate minimum wage setting and affirmative action were some tools for supporting the incomes of those in the lower part of the income distribution. Achieving equal pay for work of equal value required policies aimed at combating discriminatory practices and gender-based stereotypes, including about the value of women's work. It also required effective policies on maternity, paternity and parental leave, as well as advocacy for better sharing of family responsibilities.

31.   It recommended increasing the effectiveness of fiscal policies. An effective tax system enhanced public revenues and facilitated increasing investments in essential services, such as health care, education and social protection. To that end, a regional fiscal/tax forum could ensure effective

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[5]   The profile for Sustainable Development Goal 10 is available at www.unescap.org/apfsd/6/document/sdgprofiles/SDG10Profile.pdf.

reform strategies for progressive taxation, curbing tax evasive corridors, and combating illicit financial flows and corruption. More effective programming and gender-responsive budgeting were needed. A regional cooperation mechanism could be enacted to support a comprehensive review of tax policies, trade and investment agreements and private sector accountability.

32. It recommended protecting the poor and disadvantaged from disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards. It was essential to address the disempowerment of marginalized communities and their lack of voice and visibility as a root cause of vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and environmental hazards. Disaster risk reduction mechanisms needed to be inclusive, taking into account the vulnerabilities of all groups irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status, and to build on traditional knowledge systems and practices. Further, strengthened regional cooperation for monitoring of emerging transboundary disaster hotspots was needed, including disaggregated data highlighting the groups most at risk.

33. It recommended addressing the digital divide and potential risks of the fourth industrial revolution. For the most marginalized to benefit from new technologies, government regulations should ensure that they were accessible and affordable for all. The impact of new technologies and the fourth industrial revolution on human rights should be reviewed by intergovernmental bodies from a pro-people and pro-planet perspective.

34. It recommended addressing inequality as a driver of migration and reducing inequalities faced by migrants. The scale and complexity of internal and international migration and its impacts on society meant that efforts to achieve equality must include migrants, address inequality as an adverse driver of migration and reduce the inequalities faced by migrants, especially vulnerable groups of migrants. Migration should be a choice; take place in a safe, orderly and regular fashion, respecting the rights of migrants and their families; and mechanisms should be developed to produce and share accurate, disaggregated data that would be used to guide policy. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration provided guidance on steps countries could take to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 10.

35. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate action) made several recommendations on the Goal for Asia and the Pacific.[6]

36. It recommended integrating climate change and disaster risk reduction into the entire project cycle from policy planning to implementation. Urgent action was needed to understand risk, prevent new risks, reduce existing risk and adapt to a changing climate by strengthening coherent climate and disaster risk governance systems and developing evidence-based and inclusive policies that were linked to financial resources. That included developing coherent disaster risk reduction and climate change strategies at all levels and including all relevant stakeholders in order to create multiple benefits in national priority sectors, such as scaling up sustainable food and energy consumption and production, investing in resilient and sustainable infrastructure and applying ecosystem-based approaches to increase resilience and carbon storage. To implement the recommendation, the round table recommended the development of sector-specific knowledge products, such as policy briefs, based on the experiences of countries in the region that could be used by different stakeholders to advocate for coherent climate and disaster risk policy

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[6] The profile for Sustainable Development Goal 13 is available at www.unescap.org/apfsd/6/document/sdgprofiles/SDG13Profile.pdf.

planning and implementation by the next Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, which would be held in 2020.

37. It recommended leveraging climate action with co-benefits. It recommended leveraging climate actions from mitigation, adaptation and resilience-focused efforts in line with the Paris Agreement with co-benefits for the realization of multiple Sustainable Development Goals, across all levels (local, subnational, national, subregional and regional) over the short, medium and long term. Climate actions could leverage co-benefits in areas such as air pollution, including transport and energy (Goals 7 and 13); human settlements and infrastructure (sustainable smart cities) (Goals 9 and 11); ecosystem restoration, sustainable land management and biodiversity (Goals 14 and 15); inclusiveness and gender equality (Goals 5 and 10); public health (Goal 3); water scarcity and quality (Goal 6); and education and vocational training (Goal 4).

38. It recommended strengthening monitoring systems and data collection. Investment in climate and disaster risk assessments and disaster loss accounting systems, with an emphasis on vulnerability analysis and disaggregated data collection, would enable implementation and monitoring of adaptation and disaster risk management policies and inform public investment frameworks. National environmental and disaster statistics and disaster forensic capabilities needed to be improved to identify socioeconomic impacts of past extensive and intensive disasters, assess the costs and benefits of disaster risk reduction investments, and improve the accuracy of future disaster risk modeling. It recommended emphasizing the importance of data for national planning and localizing the Sustainable Development Goals. Ministries responsible for managing monitoring systems and data collection should leverage existing platforms and mechanisms to strengthen coordination and data sharing across sectors, with civil society and other stakeholders.

39. It recommended strengthening regional cooperation on mobilizing financing for anticipatory disaster risk reduction and adaptation strategies. Regional cooperation, encompassing countries, civil society and other stakeholders, should strengthen the focus on mobilizing and financing ex-ante measures to prevent hazards from becoming disasters. Such collaboration could focus on enhancing the capacities of countries to improve the quality of disaster risk assessment to inform public expenditure and institutional reviews, on conducting technical reviews to better understand the financial arrangements suitable to the risk profiles and capacities of countries, on scaling up innovative anticipatory financial mechanisms, and on regional and global networking of civil society organizations. Access by civil society organizations to financial mechanisms should be enhanced to enable them to contribute to addressing the vulnerabilities of local communities to disasters.

40. It recommended developing innovative and blended climate finance tools. It recommended complementing conventional and international climate finance with blended approaches to climate action and disaster risk reduction by mobilizing private sector financing and shifting national budgets. While examples of blended financial tools existed in the region, the conceptual understanding and implementation knowledge were limited, especially among small island developing States and least developed countries who needed readiness support to develop such tools and access relevant funding mechanisms. Innovative schemes could include launching carbon-pricing instruments, such as emissions trading systems or a carbon tax to incentivize industries to reduce emissions. Tools such as green and catastrophic bonds and the integration of climate change and disaster risk reduction into business operations should be promoted. While doing so, screening, markers and

safeguards should be developed to ensure the returns on investment would not be limited to economic returns but also include social and environmental returns, which would also enhance accountability. Necessary incentives should be provided to enhance the development and application of such tools. Finally, financing tools should ensure that investments in adaptation would be increased.

41. It recommended improving access to and flow of climate finance. The institutional capacity of governments, civil society, and public and private stakeholders needed to be strengthened to develop bankable proposals that would allow investors to make climate-related investments (for instance, by creating climate finance training in universities). Developing countries, especially small island developing States, least developed countries and climate vulnerable areas, would require readiness support to accredit direct access entities and help them to develop successful green climate fund proposals. Finance reporting needed to be improved and climate finance flows needed to become more transparent to address the gap between pledged and received resources. That could be achieved by engaging civil society in the review of proposals.

42. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) made several recommendations on the Goal for Asia and the Pacific.[7]

43. It recommended localizing the Sustainable Development Goals. It recommended institutionalizing Sustainable Development Goal 16 in local planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting systems.

44. It recommended strengthening access to information and civic engagement. It recommended decriminalizing dissent.

45. It recommended improving data collection and reporting. It recommended strengthening the capacity of national statistical systems to collaborate with diverse stakeholders on disaggregated data collection, with specific focus on vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and indigenous groups.

46. It recommended improving public sector financing. It recommended increasing public sector financing for the Sustainable Development Goals through progressive taxation, institutional capacity development and meaningful civic participation.

47. It recommended increasing multi-stakeholder engagement. It recommended institutionalizing inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms and mechanisms to ensure accountability, accessibility and transparency through information-sharing, data gathering, and bottom-up progress reporting, as well as reviewing funding allocations and spending based on international standards.

48. It recommended increased oversight and accountability. It recommended strengthening the role of oversight institutions and involving non-state actors in Sustainable Development Goal planning, implementation, performance reviews and reporting at all levels of government.

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[7] The profile for Sustainable Development Goal 16 is available at www.unescap.org/apfsd/6/document/sdgprofiles/SDG16Profile.pdf.

IV. Voluntary national reviews

49. The session on voluntary national reviews brought together country representatives and United Nations resident coordinators, as well as stakeholders from local authorities, supreme audit institutions, research institutes and civil society organizations involved in voluntary national review preparations. The participants shared their experiences in participating in the voluntary national review process with a view to highlighting lessons learned and areas of common interest to countries preparing to present their reports at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2019.

50. Some member States shared the status and process of their preparations and of institutional mechanisms, including for stakeholder engagement, that they had established to prepare for their voluntary national review reports while others shared lessons learned from their past report processes. Member States preparing for the voluntary national review noted that their preparation for and consolidation of the review reports were aligned with national and subregional strategies, giving priority to the development concerns of their most vulnerable groups such as older persons, women, persons with disabilities and indigenous groups. Some member States endeavoured, through inclusive consultations at national and subnational levels, to localize the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of national development priorities, adjusting Goals and targets. The importance of political commitment was emphasized as a critical factor in establishing a national mechanism on Sustainable Development Goal implementation. Countries also highlighted progress and gaps in data collection for the Sustainable Development Goals and remaining data gaps, especially those linked to disaggregation. One representative highlighted the need for cooperation and assistance, especially to countries with special needs, such as landlocked developing countries.

51. The Forum highlighted the role of ESCAP as a regional platform for sharing best practices and building regional capacities for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets and for providing a regional perspective on the Goals and targets.

52. One organization representative shared experiences supporting voluntary local reviews which could provide important contributions to the voluntary national review process by deepening multi-stakeholder engagement and enabling national Governments to integrate local level information. One stakeholder representing major groups noted that little progress had been made in setting up local and national institutions and mechanisms to ensure diverse voices were reflected in Goal implementation and monitoring. It was noted that there was a need for disaggregated and accessible data and that civil society could contribute to monitoring and review. A call for transparency on State policies and budget allocations, as well as to enhance learning on the Goals accountability framework from other United Nations system review mechanisms was made. One representative emphasized the need to institutionalize vertical coherence between national and local governments in order to achieve the Goals. It was further noted that there was unbalanced access to financing at the local level and significant differences among countries in involving local governments in the 2030 Agenda. Another stakeholder representative stressed the importance of taking into account the needs and interests of older people in the attainment of the Goals amid the region's demographic transition towards an aging society.

V.   Where are we on the road map?

53.   The Forum reviewed progress on the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, adopted by the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in 2017 and endorsed by ESCAP member States at the seventy-third session of the Commission. The secretariat's presentation showed that there was mixed progress in some priority areas of cooperation included in the regional road map and highlighted the lack of data to assess progress in others. The presentation demonstrated how the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development supported alignment between national, subregional, regional and global follow-up and review processes and provided a space for regional priorities to flow into the global discussions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Representatives of subregional organizations pointed to the complementarity of the 2030 Agenda, the regional road map, the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and investments in the education sector in South Asia. Remarks made on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum region underlined the commitment of Pacific States to the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Pacific road map for sustainable development.

54.   Underscoring the inadequate levels of means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda available at the country level, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development called for stronger regional cooperation along the priority areas identified in the regional road map and enhancing opportunities for peer-learning. The Forum also highlighted the need to align actions under the regional road map with other international, subregional and national processes, in particular those that could contribute to follow-up and review, and reduce the burden of reporting. One member State requested the secretariat to carry out analytical work that highlighted regional needs and to expand its partnership with other United Nations agencies and regional development institutions. The Forum noted that the lack of data and statistical capacity was an important impediment to monitoring the progress of the regional road map, and that ESCAP regional institutes such as the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific was supporting countries to improve their statistical capacity. One member State called for better leveraging of the data available at the national level and clearly defining methodology for data collection in the monitoring process of the road map.

55.   Major groups and other stakeholders emphasized their long-standing support for the regional road map and its importance for supporting implementation in the least developed countries. They identified several avenues to strengthen its implementation. Those included identification of more specific actions under the road map, mobilizing dedicated resources, and establishing robust accountability mechanisms, including for systematic review through institutionalized civil society engagement. The Forum was reminded that the road map was a living document, and specific processes should be defined to include more specificity and updating with emerging issues or underaddressed areas such as trade. Coherence between the road map's implementation and other instruments and commitments was urged, especially with regard to the social dimension. The representative of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network pointed out that policy coherence would allow the private sector to both create and derive value from action on the Sustainable Development Goals.

VI.   Regional to global perspectives

56.   The Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council delivered a statement that focused on the close linkages between the national, regional and global follow-up and review processes and the important opportunities presented by the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in September 2019. A statement was read on behalf of one of the co-facilitators of the political declaration for the 2019 high-level political forum under the auspices of the General Assembly (Sustainable Development Goals summit), which needed to have a focused political message that was understandable and inspired action from all stakeholders.

57.   The Chair summarized the main messages that emerged from the sessions of the Forum based on statements from members and associate members. The need for a whole-of-society approach for the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and the importance of partnerships and participation were highlighted as key success factors. The need to accelerate efforts and adopt coherent and integrated policies that looked at the interlinkages between the Goals was also underlined together with good governance and appropriate and effective investments which were vital for the development and implementation of policies to lead countries to a truly sustainable future. The importance of a regional platform, such as the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, was underlined, together with the need to safeguard that platform for dialogue and make it stronger as it brought important contributions to the global debates through the high-level political forum on sustainable development. It was emphasized that through Asian and Pacific countries' political support, momentum could be built to ensure a strong role both for the high-level political forum and the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

58.   One representative expressed support for the role of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, voluntary national review reports by countries and the annual Sustainable Development Goals progress report for monitoring the progress towards the 2030 Agenda. The representative noted that such platforms allowed member States outside of the region to understand Pacific island countries' sensitivity to external economic shocks, catastrophic events and the impacts of climate change.

59.   A representative of a United Nations organization emphasized that the New Urban Agenda, with its shared vision of the right to the city to foster prosperity and quality of life for all, was critically important to accelerating the implementation of international frameworks and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

60.   Representatives of stakeholders expressed their views that leaving no one behind was largely relevant to indigenous peoples and marginalized peoples, including youth and people affected by conflicts, disasters and human rights abuses, among others. A stakeholder noted that the persecution of environment defenders and whistleblowers was worsening action on climate change and shrinking democratic spaces. Stakeholders also addressed the need for mechanisms for data collection systems that were inclusive. Several stakeholders also highlighted the impacts of climate change, the importance of disaster risk reduction, and the need for more action and innovative disaster risk financing.

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