



## Economic and Social Council

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### Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Bangkok, 28–30 March 2018

### Report of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

1. The Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), was held in Bangkok from 28 to 30 March 2018.
2. It was attended by more than 750 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; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; France; Georgia; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nauru; Nepal; Pakistan; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Turkmenistan; Tuvalu; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Uzbekistan; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam. Representatives of Germany, Israel, Nigeria, Sweden and Switzerland attended as observers.
4. Under agenda item 1 (a), the Chair of the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, Mr. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary, Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Pakistan, made a statement on behalf of the Bureau on the outcome of the Fourth Forum. A video message was delivered by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered a keynote address and provided an overview of the Fifth Forum. Statements were also delivered by Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, and Ms. Joan Carling on behalf of civil society.

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

- (a) Co-Chairs:
  - Mr. Levan Davitashvili (Georgia)
  - Mr. Rajiv Kumar (India)
- (b) Vice-Chairs:
  - Mr. Thinley Namgyel (Bhutan)
  - Mr. George Sharvashidze (Georgia)
  - Mr. David Ranibok Adeang (Nauru)
  - Mr. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary (Pakistan)
  - Mr. Alexander Bedritsky (Russian Federation)
  - Ms. Faimalotoa Kika Iemaima Stowers (Samoa)
  - Mr. Tojiddin Jurazoda (Tajikistan)
  - Mr. Ezizgeldi Annamammedov (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 the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- 3. Strengthening the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region.
- 4. Other matters.
- 5. Review and adoption of the draft report of the Forum.
- 6. Closing of the Forum.

7. Under agenda item 2, a high-level panel discussed regional perspectives and trends related to the theme of the Forum, and good practices and effective interventions to build and strengthen resilience in the region.

8. A plenary discussion on progress in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 17 was held. The Forum was informed of key recommendations from five round tables, held during the Forum, which had conducted an in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15, to be addressed at the forthcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Economic and Social Council.<sup>1</sup>

9. Under agenda item 3, the Asia-Pacific countries participating in voluntary national reviews for the high-level political forums on sustainable development in 2016, 2017 and 2018 shared national perspectives on challenges, progress and achievements relating to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as lessons learned from the review.

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<sup>1</sup> The full summaries and recommendations from the round tables are available from [www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/apfsd5](http://www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/apfsd5).

10. The Forum was informed of the progress with respect to the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.
11. Members States, major groups and other stakeholders, and United Nations agencies shared perspectives on the role and achievements of partnerships in the region in accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
12. Under agenda item 4, no other matters were discussed.
13. Under agenda item 5, the Forum adopted the present report and the Chair's summary of the Forum, contained in annex I to the present document, on 30 March 2018.
14. The following publications were launched: *Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies in Asia and the Pacific*, jointly published by ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme; and *Partnering for Sustainable Development: Guidelines for Multi-stakeholder Partnerships to Implement the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific*, developed by the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability and ESCAP. The Asia-Pacific launch of *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2018: Nature-based Solutions for Water*, coordinated by the World Water Assessment Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization under UN-Water, was held as part of the marking of World Water Day 2018.
15. Side events were held from 28 to 30 March 2018.<sup>2</sup>
16. The following preparatory events were held: the Preparatory Youth Forum for the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development; the Asia-Pacific Peoples' Forum for Sustainable Development 2018: Defending the Environment and Redefining Resilience – Our Collective Actions for Development Justice; the ESCAP/United Nations Human Settlements Programme Asia-Pacific Regional Training Workshop on Human Settlement Indicators; the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand/ESCAP regional workshop on building resilience through participation; the ESCAP/Overseas Development Institute workshop on leaving no one behind in the Asia-Pacific region; and the ESCAP/Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat regional preparatory workshop for voluntary national review countries from the Asia-Pacific region.
17. The Forum concluded that the present report, including its annex, should be brought to the attention of the Commission, at its seventy-fourth 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 2018.

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<sup>2</sup> A list of side events is available from [www.unescap.org/events/apfsd-2018-side-events](http://www.unescap.org/events/apfsd-2018-side-events).

## Annex

### **Chair's summary of discussions at the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development**

1. The theme of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". 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 follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region. The Forum also discussed means to strengthen implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region.

#### **I. Regional perspectives on the theme of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development**

2. During the session, panellists reflected on the social, environmental and economic challenges to achieving sustainable development and on institutional responses that were being mainstreamed in the region to strengthen resilience to natural disasters and economic shocks, improve the livelihoods of vulnerable populations and ensure that no one was left behind. Social risk factors, such as gender inequality, lack of social protection, rural-urban inequality and lack of financial inclusion and diversification of economic activities, were also discussed.

3. The Forum stressed the importance of inclusive, multi-stakeholder participation, including by disadvantaged and risk-exposed populations, and engagement by all levels of government, including subnational and local authorities. The Forum noted efforts in the region to identify and empower poor and vulnerable populations, including women and children, and to strengthen resilience through social inclusion, health, education, housing, nutrition and food security, water and sanitation strategies and awareness programmes. Capacity-building and regional cooperation were also discussed as opportunities to develop mechanisms for mutual support, with a view to defining common approaches, strengthening climate change response and building resilient communities, including in coastal areas and low-lying islands.

4. The Forum noted the need to build resilient infrastructure and develop early warning systems, including with respect to education and preparedness for natural disasters and economic shocks, and to make transport connections climate-proof. The Forum noted progress in the region in mainstreaming climate change policies, including through the adoption of policies on energy efficiency and renewable energy, and the development of action at the local level. One representative stressed the need to assess the sectoral impacts of climate change across the economy.

5. The efforts of Governments to align policies with the 2030 Agenda and other relevant frameworks, such as the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, and to cooperate with other regional organizations such as the Eurasian Economic Commission and joint efforts in the Eurasian Economic Union to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals were underlined. Several representatives noted the need to establish monitoring systems and improve interministerial coordination in order to effectively integrate policy responses to increase resilience, including by identifying the

most relevant indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals framework to national circumstances. The adoption of innovative approaches and use of new technologies were highlighted as key tools to support the success of efforts to build resilience. One permanent observer highlighted the need for Governments to facilitate broad participation in resilience building, taking into account stakeholders' risk analysis and perspectives, and to expand quantitative evidence on the benefits of participation, define dimensions of effective engagement and develop innovative communication methods to engage stakeholders.

6. Representatives from international organizations stressed that a focus on resilience was necessary to achieve multiple Sustainable Development Goals. Associated risks of megatrends such as climate change, industrial development and rising inequalities could endanger regional progress towards the Goals. The need for attention to gender equality and for the empowerment of multiple stakeholders, including women and poor populations, were noted. Pre-disaster planning, wider disaster risk reduction programmes and innovative, integrated and coordinated responses were discussed as regional needs.

7. Representatives from major groups and other stakeholders emphasized the need to strengthen social infrastructure, including the roles of social entrepreneurship and social enterprises to serve as innovative and transformational platforms to address poverty and build resilience. They also emphasized the need for attention to grass-roots and marginalized constituencies and for focus on human rights and the priorities of poor communities, including populations living in urban slums and unliveable areas.

## **II. Progress in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 17 and promotion of the means of implementation**

8. The Forum reviewed progress in the region towards the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 17, particularly with respect to global and multi-stakeholder partnerships, technology and innovation, and data and statistics. Panellists and representatives highlighted perspectives on indicators, data gaps and means of implementation in terms of alignment with national contexts. Presenters and panellists discussed priority areas for implementing the Goals and building resilience – such as technology and innovation, finance and trade, renewable energy, connectivity and communication technology, food security, productive employment, social protection, climate change, sanitation and water resource management, and data and statistics – and reported on progress made in their countries.

9. Representatives reported on international development efforts, noting their alignment with the principles of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, while also calling for enhanced mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of aid and for strengthened accountability and transparency of development cooperation. One representative called for more political will to collaborate to achieve the Goals and leave no one behind, while another called for the Forum to continuously support member States by examining pathways towards resilience. Several representatives noted the importance of multi-stakeholder and multilevel partnerships, including with civil society, academia and business, and provided concrete examples of such partnerships. Some representatives highlighted gender equality as a tool for achieving the Goals and called for participation by marginalized groups to be enhanced to ensure that their voice was heard. Representatives reported on increased domestic financial mobilization and called for increased foreign direct investment and voluntary contributions.

10. Progress was reported by several representatives on data and statistics linked to the Goals, including the development of country-specific and local indicators. The Forum noted the need to address data and statistical challenges, in particular further methodological development and enhanced data generation and disaggregation. Several representatives called on international and regional statistical institutions to take specific action and provide clear guidance to countries on methodology and standards for the collection, processing and dissemination of statistics and data and encouraged technical and financial support to reduce data gaps and increasing data quality.

11. The Forum pointed to the usefulness of administrative data, particularly for civil registration and vital statistics. One representative noted the development of an effective system for civil registration and vital statistics, which enabled more accurate diagnosis of social issues for more adequate policies and coordinated measures. The development and strengthening of the statistical capacities of countries in the region were important for evidence-based decision-making and accountability. Countries were producing high-quality and timely statistics by using new data sources and technologies.

12. Major groups and stakeholders cautioned that partnerships with business should benefit workers and called for social dialogue to ensure decent work.

### **III. Assessment of progress in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, and 15 at the regional level**

13. The Forum conducted an in-depth review of five of the six Sustainable Development Goals that would be the focus of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018, in line with General Assembly resolution 70/299 on the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level.

14. Under agenda item 2, five parallel round tables were held on the follow-up to and review of Goals 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15. Rapporteurs from the round tables informed the Forum about their recommendations, as described below.

15. The round table on Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation) made several recommendations on the Goal in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>3</sup>

16. Asia and the Pacific had made some progress towards achieving Goal 6. However, the region needed to accelerate its efforts across all sectors to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030. Acceleration could be supported by encouraging policy coherence and intersectoral coordination within and between countries by enhancing synergies and minimizing trade-offs between sectors and Goals. Water-resource management, within and across countries, needed further attention and required the implementation of existing policies and laws in the water sector, supported by monitoring and accountability schemes. More efforts should be made to ensure just and equitable access to water and sanitation for all, with a particular focus on women and children and poor people.

17. Given that the region faced serious scarcity issues, with the lowest availability of water per capita in the world, the region needed to improve and stimulate the management of recycled water and other sources of water, such as rainwater, as valuable resources. Governments needed to design better incentives and systems to ensure compliance with respect to water

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<sup>3</sup> The round-table summary for Goal 6 is available from [www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APFSD\\_Roundtable\\_SDG\\_6\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APFSD_Roundtable_SDG_6_Report.pdf).

management and sanitation and stronger policies to fully eliminate water pollution. Good practices like raising awareness and promoting clean water and sanitation in relation to human rights and human health, and in the world of work, should be actively promoted. Stronger attention should be paid to water-related innovations and the promotion of green jobs across countries, but it was also important to promote existing technologies that could be applied in new sectors or in new settings. All of those objectives could be achieved only by promoting partnerships and ensuring wide participation by local stakeholders, including women and indigenous communities and other vulnerable groups.

18. The round table on Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy) made several recommendations on the Goal in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>4</sup>

19. Achievement of universal access to energy would require additional efforts and collaboration by all stakeholders, including Governments, the private sector and civil society. Platforms for raising awareness needed to be created and the roles of the stakeholders must be efficiently coordinated to achieve coherent action, enable multi-stakeholder dialogue with a view to improving progress towards Goal 7 and engage international development partners where needed. Issues of quality and reliability of energy access and availability of reliable data for monitoring needed to be promptly tackled by policymakers. National targets for clean cooking fuels and technologies should be established, and the issues of clean cooking and the development of renewable energy sources must be better integrated into energy policy frameworks, taking into consideration specific cultural differences among member States. Efforts to promote affordable and accessible renewable sources were urgently needed in order to address environmental sustainability and air pollution. Energy efficiency measures were required as a matter of urgency in social and public services, such as in the transport, industry and building sectors, and would need full support through subsidies from national Governments. To facilitate renewable energy and energy efficiency expansion, member States needed to address existing policy barriers such as monopolistic utility positions and the lack of regulation of energy prices.

20. With the support of ESCAP and relevant regional institutions, member States needed to develop an intergovernmental mechanism to promote equitable cross-border electricity power trade and connectivity as one of the building blocks towards attaining sustainable development. International energy cooperation efforts to deploy publicly available innovative technologies, along with safeguards, needed to be enhanced among member States. Energy sector reform was needed to move from vertically integrated energy systems to more comprehensively integrated approaches that encouraged local production and State regulation in distribution and transmission, and therefore improved affordability and increased resilience to blackouts. Policymaking processes and governance should be made more transparent through appropriate control and monitoring mechanisms, as well as through enhanced public participation. Energy policies needed to respond to the needs of the local communities and stimulate sustainable energy projects. Small renewable energy projects were resource-efficient, environmentally sustainable and capable of stimulating economic growth and providing jobs and needed to be promoted across the region. The close linkages between water, food and energy required a suitably integrated approach to ensuring water and food security, sustainable agriculture and energy production.

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<sup>4</sup> The round-table summary for Goal 7 is available from [www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APFSD\\_Roundtable\\_SDG\\_7\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APFSD_Roundtable_SDG_7_Report_Final.pdf).

21. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) highlighted several recommendations to make further progress on the Goal in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>5</sup>

22. Asia-Pacific countries needed to accelerate progress against Sustainable Development Goal 11 by empowering local governments and community groups to deliver against that Goal in an integrated fashion across all the Goals and global sustainability agendas. While it had been estimated that 65 per cent of the total Goal targets needed to be delivered by local authorities and actors, that was not matched with the requisite decision-making authority required to drive local implementation of Goal 11 and all urban related targets.

23. Recommendations on efforts to build an enabling environment and policy coherence across different spheres of government for stronger progress against Sustainable Development Goal 11 included (a) national Government partnerships with local and regional governments and communities to operationalize Goal 11 should be enhanced and greater decentralization of functions to local authorities to support their efforts to deliver on Goal 11 on the ground should specifically focus on deepening fiscal devolution processes to address the issue of unfunded mandates which was hindering progress against the Goal; (b) inclusive implementation of Goal 11, specifically its social dimensions, should be strengthened through more targeted commitments to empower local communities, especially associations of the urban poor, who were vital to upgrade informal settlements and to leave no one behind in cities; (c) innovative local examples of effective implementation of Goal 11 by local governments and a diverse range of urban communities should be documented and scaled up to accelerate progress in countries leveraging South-South platforms for learning and further replication; and (d) many of the indicators under Goal 11 required spatial data collection from subnational actors to effectively measure and report on progress and therefore, harmonization, cooperation and capacity development aimed at subnational data collectors in partnership with national statistical authorities should be a priority moving forward.

24. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 12 (Responsible consumption and production) highlighted several recommendations to make further progress on the Goal in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>6</sup>

25. Responsible consumption and production policies should be integrated into core economic agendas and sectoral plans with centralized and coordinated mechanisms for policies and initiatives, clearly identifying roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders. Multi-stakeholder networks should be strengthened by engaging scientific organizations, the private sector and civil society. Circular economy initiatives should be promoted, prioritizing sustainable public procurement. Responsible consumption and production should be seen as an enabler of the other Sustainable Development Goals.

26. Governments were encouraged to shift towards an integrated and inclusive circular economy approach by (a) identifying interlinkages across the Sustainable Development Goals at the target level and applying a cost-benefit analysis to identify synergies and trade-offs; (b) strengthening statistical capacity by investing in frameworks and databases that incorporated economic,

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<sup>5</sup> The round-table summary for Goal 11 is available from [www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APFSD\\_Roundtable\\_SDG\\_11\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APFSD_Roundtable_SDG_11_Report.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> The round-table summary for Goal 12 is available from [www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APFSD\\_Roundtable\\_SDG\\_12\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APFSD_Roundtable_SDG_12_Report.pdf).



environmental and social accounts for evidence-based policymaking; and (c) establishing interministerial dialogues and consultative multi-stakeholder processes and partnerships to inform inclusive and impactful policies as well as to coordinate joint implementation of a circular economy.

27. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 15 (Life on land) highlighted several recommendations to make further progress on the Goal in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>7</sup>

28. Integrated data systems that supported ecosystem-based management, integrating information from diverse sources, including community, indigenous and traditional knowledge, should be used; engagement across sectors and stakeholders, in particular with local communities and indigenous peoples should be encouraged; strengthened governance approaches and effective laws to promote participation to clarify land-tenure arrangement, to enforce the rights of indigenous peoples and environmental defenders, to support ecosystem-based management approaches and social impact assessments and to recognize the intrinsic rights of nature should be encouraged; diversification of financing and linking that with improvements in governance and management approaches should be encouraged; land degradation neutrality should be achieved; and regional cooperation should be strengthened, including by implementing the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment held in 2017.

29. Given the vital importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services for human survival and well-being, it was essential to urgently mainstream biodiversity conservation into decision-making processes, including by ministries of finance, agriculture, infrastructure, planning, tourism and education, among others. That could be done by working in partnerships and adopting an integrated and evidence-based approach to sustainable development, planning and implementation, taking into account the links, synergies and trade-offs between Sustainable Development Goal 15 and other Goals, such as Goal 1 (No poverty), Goal 2 (Zero hunger), Goal 3 (Good health and well-being), Goal 5 (Gender equality), Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation), Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth), Goal 12 (Responsible consumption and production), and Goal 13 (Climate action).

#### **IV. Assessment of the interlinkages among the Sustainable Development Goals**

30. The panellists emphasized the importance of preserving natural ecosystems and their services as a basis to achieve transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies. Inequalities, damage to ecosystems and waste production were unprecedented. Actions on sustainable forest management were a means of reaching zero hunger, no poverty and gender equality and promoting good health, well-being and affordable and clean energy, among others, with young people playing a catalytic role. Three actions were recommended, focusing on initiating informed action at the individual level with involvement and engagement. Interlinkages were also discussed from the angle of water-sensitive cities and from the perspective of the private sector. The interlinkages were context-specific, and social and infrastructure resilience needed attention. Sustainable urban design provided a powerful integrating platform for addressing multiple issues, including through nature-based solutions.

<sup>7</sup> The round-table summary for Goal 15 is available from [www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APFSD\\_Roundtable\\_SDG\\_15\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APFSD_Roundtable_SDG_15_Report.pdf).

31. The interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs between the Sustainable Development Goals were pointed out. Some member States outlined their initiatives in support of mainstreamed and integrated approaches to implementation, including the formulation of a Sustainable Development Goal road map, aligning the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks with the Goals, constitutional amendments to enhance inclusiveness and mainstreaming the Goals into budget processes. Strategic and policy actions on the cluster of Goals were also described, including those that presented integrated approaches to deal with access to basic services, rapid urbanization and the development of future growth centres, including beautification, disaster response, traffic management and waste reduction. Other priorities included promoting sustainable food management and consumption patterns, sustainable forest management, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Currently more than 60 per cent of energy generated in one country was from renewable sources, while a green growth framework continued to orient the Government's investments.

32. In one country, institutional arrangements had been put in place to promote integrated approaches, including Sustainable Development Goal coordination and implementation committees and thematic committees. Efforts to promote integrated approaches were further strengthened through the involvement of stakeholders in implementation. However, horizontal and vertical coordination, lack of access to robust and disaggregated data, localization of the Goals and mainstreaming were still challenges.

33. One international organization emphasized support for integrated, nature-based solutions, with a focus on water. Several transboundary initiatives were in place, and the legal basis for management of transboundary water bodies was being strengthened. The organization offered its continued support to countries. One organization underlined the need to fully integrate air transport across the Sustainable Development Goals and the actions taken to mitigate the climate impact of the aviation sector. A joint statement was delivered by international agricultural organizations, with a group of indigenous people, emphasizing the need to foster productive synergies between rural and urban development to ensure that no one was left behind. Small-scale farmers were essential to all food systems and played important roles in the energy and water sectors. The interests and rights of indigenous peoples, smallholder farmers and women must underpin transformations towards sustainability in an integrated and socially inclusive manner.

34. Major groups and other stakeholders highlighted the need for an integrated approach to Sustainable Development Goal implementation given the close links between poverty, food security, energy, health, sustainable cities and climate change, among others. The indivisibility of human rights and the active participation of people were stressed as foundations for cooperation across sectors, stakeholders and levels of government. Mapping and planning for institutional coherence and the involvement of grass-roots and underrepresented communities, as well as groups at risk, in planning and implementation was urged. The structural drivers of inequality were described, together with the resulting inequality of access to quality public health care, the risks of trafficking and unequal access to justice. They called for strategies to strengthen control over natural resources, particularly by women as keepers of natural resources, in addition to greater investment in delivery of public goods as basic human rights.

## **V. National perspectives and progress through the lens of the voluntary national reviews**

35. The participants in the session discussed key learning outcomes and challenges resulting from countries participating in the voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Member States highlighted the importance of (a) government ownership/political leadership; (b) stakeholder engagement and consultation; (c) coordination, within government and with stakeholders and development partners; (d) integration with national planning; and (e) ensuring the availability of quality, disaggregated data for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and their follow-up.

36. Political leadership and good intragovernmental coordination was important for ensuring government ownership. To ensure government ownership and coordination, one country had created a presidential decree that served as a guideline for coordination, and others had established committees or coordinating councils at top levels, some directly under the Head of Government. Citizen engagement, ownership and localization were considered key in formulating policies and action plans on the Sustainable Development Goals. Transparency and accountability were also important to building peaceful and inclusive societies.

37. The Forum emphasized the importance of full and comprehensive consultations that included a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, businesses, local governments, philanthropies and the media. The Forum also emphasized the importance of integrating the Sustainable Development Goals with national planning tools and processes, including for monitoring and follow-up. Several countries had already integrated the Goals into existing national planning instruments.

38. The importance of accurate, timely and disaggregated data was highlighted by the Forum, which noted that data was a challenge even for developed countries. One representative reported having established an electronic monitoring tool for the Sustainable Development Goals. The system would help to distribute information on progress and would also help to ensure accountability and transparency of government agencies. Finally, the Forum highlighted funding as a challenge, in particular for least developed countries.

39. Major groups and other stakeholders emphasized the importance of inclusiveness and the meaningful participation of civil society, in particular those representing marginalized groups, including in establishing indicators that reflect the aspiration of the Sustainable Development Goals. Voluntary national reviews could serve as an accountability mechanism to hold Governments accountable and responsible to the people.

## **VI. Progress on the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific**

40. 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 session included a video prepared by the secretariat to illustrate cooperation with member States and partners in implementing the road map's priority areas of action, followed by a summary of actions taken to implement it in the past year. Country and stakeholder

statements highlighted ongoing action across all sectors, expressed appreciation for support by regional partners such as ESCAP, and drew attention to remaining gaps, such as statistical capacity.

41. Member States highlighted their follow-up and contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. The active participation of civil society, youth, women, vulnerable groups, businesses and others was noted as a need, to be enhanced through capacity-building programmes which actively partnered with a diverse range of stakeholders. The collection of adequate and reliable disaggregated data was also seen as vital in the effort to leave no one behind in the regional implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

42. Representatives of one country noted that equal importance was given to both adaptation and mitigation through their national adaptation plan and nationally appropriate mitigation actions and emphasized that the impact of frequent cyclones had made it essential for a well-coordinated multisectoral programmatic approach to flood mitigation to ensure the resilience of the communities most affected. Significant investments in capacity-building for data collection and analysis, especially in developing countries, were essential to meet the commitment on disaggregation of data and to make necessary policy adjustments in ensuring that no one was left behind.

43. Major groups and other stakeholders emphasized the need to increase domestic resource mobilization for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in least developed countries. They urged member States to revitalize the discussions of a regional tax body to tackle the issues of harmful use of tax incentives and illicit financial flows and to pursue regional cooperation mechanisms for the recovery of assets and potential lost revenues. Major groups and other stakeholders suggested that the road map was a living document and could be adjusted, especially with regard to the means of implementation, which fell short on the inclusion of various community issues, such as the removal of structural barriers and the promotion of human rights. There was also a need to ensure adequate availability of investments to support youth to engage in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Non-governmental organizations also called for the scaling up of efforts for community-based data collection for the Goals and for compatibility impact assessments of trade and investment agreements, the targeting of illicit financial flows and a convention to address corporate consolidation.

## **VII. Partnerships for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals**

44. The participants in the session discussed how to harness partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as part of agenda item 3 on strengthening the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region. The session facilitated discussion between a multi-stakeholder panel and member States, United Nations bodies and other stakeholders to highlight the diverse partnership methods, success stories, challenges and key criteria that underpinned successful partnerships in pursuit of sustainable development.

45. The panellists noted that long term multi-stakeholder and multisectoral partnerships, founded on participatory and inclusive processes were critical to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. There was a need to generate data to monitor the performance of partnerships, and adequate monitoring and accountability mechanisms should be integrated into partnerships to improve

their transparency. Realizing the specific resources and capacities that each stakeholder could bring was critical for transformative partnerships. Developing local capacity in all contexts needed to be a guiding principle of all partnerships. The panellists urged stakeholders to harness the power of volunteers, youth groups and the scientific community in strengthening partnerships. Some panellists cautioned that care was needed in ensuring that the partnership agenda was not captured by individual groups with vested interests and emphasized the need to ensure the protection of human rights and development justice in all partnerships.

46. The Forum stated the importance of building strong partnerships within and among member States and with other stakeholders for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In that context, the Forum expressed its appreciation for the Commission's efforts to build partnerships in the region. The need to strengthen partnerships, with industry to unleash entrepreneurship and with civil society to spread awareness of Sustainable Development Goals, was also highlighted. The Forum recounted the success of the region in establishing regional and subregional partnerships in the fields of trade, investment and connectivity and called for the safeguarding of the multilateral trading system. The Forum called for expanding partnerships at the regional level in areas such as climate change, food security, Goal indicator frameworks, energy, infrastructure, labour mobility, technology, knowledge-sharing and financial integration and macroeconomic cooperation, including through mutually reinforcing partnerships with communities across the region.

47. Several organizations emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in addressing the many economic, environmental and social challenges as well as in assessing the Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators and ensuring inclusion of vulnerable populations and local groups.

48. Major groups and other stakeholders emphasized the importance of integrating the commitments to human rights in partnerships to ensure the full participation of rights' holders, integrating issues like accessibility from the start. Partnerships should respect workers and trade union rights, foster decent work and support traditional knowledge systems for the Sustainable Development Goals. Public-private partnerships should be built on human rights standards with high levels of transparency, accountability, whistleblower protection and respect for indigenous cultures. Investor-State dispute settlement, provided for by international investment agreements, risked limiting the space for ensuring such rights.