Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2023:
Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Seamless and Sustainable Connectivity

Agenda item 3: Special Body of Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Small Island Developing States
1530-1700 hours (Bangkok Time), 16 May 2023

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Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

- Examines the role of transport, energy and ICT connectivity in achieving sustainable development and a low-carbon, resilient economy
- Focuses on LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in Asia and the Pacific
- Discusses how the recent connectivity shocks have affected these countries
- Provides examples of how regional cooperation can facilitate a long-term transformation towards a net-zero emission future
Transport connectivity: current status and challenges

- LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS are poorly connected in the region, with widening gaps compared to other countries
  - Systemic factors are key bottlenecks
    - Unbalanced modal split
    - Infrastructure shortages
    - Insufficient operational connectivity
    - Unrealized transit potential

Maritime connectivity levels in selected States in Asia and the Pacific as measured by the Liner Shipping Connectivity Index

Source: UNCTADstat.
Note: The solid lines represent SIDS, and the dashed lines represent other selected countries in the region.
Transport connectivity: opportunities for policy actions and regional cooperation

• The polycrisis exacerbated these challenges but also gave rise to new opportunities
• Suggested actions include:
  • Continuing support to connectivity initiatives involving LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS
  • Scaling up multimodality
  • Promoting transport corridor cooperation
  • Supporting resilient and sustainable maritime connectivity in SIDS
Energy connectivity: current status and challenges

- Power system connectivity can bring significant economic and social benefits
- Several connectivity initiatives exist, but most remain at the study stage or at best bilateral
- Political will and strong institutional frameworks are fundamental
Energy connectivity: opportunities for policy actions and regional cooperation

• Understanding the benefits associated with power system connectivity is key to accelerating the implementation

• Countries looking to connect need a level playing field to enable the development of political, technical and institutional standards required for power system connectivity

• For SIDS, cooperation needs to include harmonization of regulatory frameworks and technical collaboration
ICT connectivity: current status and challenges

- Access to broadband in countries in special situations lags behind the regional average
- Mobile broadband Internet is several times more expensive in these counties, especially in SIDS, than the Asia regional average
- Internet usage increased significantly during the pandemic, although large gaps remain in Internet bandwidth capacity
ICT connectivity: opportunities for policy actions and regional cooperation

- Suggested areas for policy actions and regional cooperation include:
  - Promoting public-private partnerships (PPP) for digital infrastructure
  - Strengthening digital capacity and adopting digital technologies and applications
  - Promoting the safe and secure use of data through capacity building and regulatory policies
Ways forward

Supporting decarbonization efforts along the Trans-Asian Railway, Asian Highways and dry ports, and with green shipping corridors initiatives.

Promoting cross-border electricity connectivity for sustainable development through the implementation of the Regional Road Map on Power System Connectivity.

Promoting regional ICT connectivity through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway platform.

Maximizing synergies across the three sectors through co-deployment and management.
Thank you!

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