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Eighth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

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**Regional perspectives on accelerating progress on the
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Assessment of progress on Sustainable Development Goals
1–3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17 at the regional level****

Summary

The outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an unprecedented global wake-up call. The pandemic has not only taken a heavy toll on countries in the Asia-Pacific region, but it also threatens to stall or undo progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Further acceleration, ones that build inclusive and effective path, will be required to achieve the ambitions by 2030.

The present document, developed in partnership with the United Nations agencies and programmes, discusses Sustainable Development Goals 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good health and well-being), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 10 (Reduced inequalities), 12 (Responsible consumption and production), 13 (Climate action), and 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions), which, together with Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), constitute the cluster of Goals under review at the 2021 high-level political forum on sustainable development under the theme of “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”.

The document proposes priority areas to strengthen policy coherence in the implementation efforts to build an inclusive and effective path for sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of the Goals.

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/299, adopted in July 2016, has established the mechanism for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national, regional and global level. Furthermore, the resolution 74/298 adopted in August 2020, decides that the thematic focus of the Economic and Social Council for its 2021 session and the 2021 high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the

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auspices of the Council shall be “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”.

2. In line with the theme of the 2021 high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Eighth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development will discuss the following Goals, in depth.

- Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

3. In support of the discussion, and in collaboration with partner United Nations agencies and programmes and other stakeholders, the Goal profiles assessing the status of regional progress on Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 16 were developed. The Goal profiles are based on data from the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) statistical database, as well as data and resources from partner United Nations agencies and programmes.

4. In addition, survey to support the development of Goal profiles for Sustainable Development Goal round tables were launched by ESCAP in December 2020 to collect further information. A total of 238 of individual respondents from 41 countries completed the survey. Among those who indicated gender, the respondents are 46.01 per cent female, 53.05 per cent male and 1 per cent of others.

II. Developing Goal profiles for Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 16

5. The Goal profiles are provided to support common regional understanding of the status of the progress, areas where good progress is made and those that requires specific attention, and the integration of human rights and gender equality considerations. They also highlight promising innovation and best practices and priority actions aiming at making further progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals under review and sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. The profile for Goal 1 was developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and ESCAP.

7. The Goal profile for Goal 2 was developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), UN-Women, UNICEF, ESCAP, and OHCHR.

8. The Goal profile for Goal 3 was developed by UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN-Women, the World Health Organization (WHO), and OHCHR.

9. The Goal profile for Goal 8 was developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-Women, UNV, and OHCHR.

10. The Goal profile for Goal 10 was developed by ESCAP, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), OHCHR, UNICEF, UNDRR, and UN-Women.

11. The Goal profile for Goal 12 was developed by UNEP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UNESCO, UN-Women, ESCAP, and OHCHR.

12. The Goal profile for Goal 13 was developed by ESCAP, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), UN-Women, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNESCO, UNEP, UNDRR, UNICEF, and OHCHR.

13. The Goal profile for Goal 16 was developed by OHCHR, UNICEF, ESCAP, UNESCO, UNEP, UNDRR, UNFPA, UN-Women, the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), and UNDP.

14. These Goal profiles are available on the ESCAP website in the document section at <https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/8>.

III. Policy recommendations emanating from the Goal profiles on Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 16

15. This section presents the priorities for action in building an inclusive and effective path for sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, emanating from the development of the Goal profiles for Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 16.

A. No poverty: priority areas for regional action

16. **Increase investment on building human capabilities and empowering people necessary for poverty eradication:** Eradicating all forms of poverty including multidimensional poverty which is as high as two times of income poverty requires increasing investments in building human capabilities such as health, nutrition, and education. Apart from human capital, there is also need for

building other forms of capital and enhancing access to economic resources for the empowerment and enhancing the agency of people. Empowerment of individuals also require reform in policies including correcting exclusionary policies and implementing new inclusive policies.

17. Foster women’s participation in all facets of decision makings for nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures: To enhance economic empowerment by providing inclusive social protection, targeted efforts are required to address women’s needs. Crafting gender-responsive fiscal stimulus packages and social protection programmes is vital to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. Ensuring women’s participation in all stages of decision makings for national social protection systems is a key to a more inclusive and prosperous society.

18. Build the resilience of poor and vulnerable groups and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to shocks: Expanding the coverage of social protection is necessary for building the resilience and for sustained poverty eradication. Expenditure on social protection should be viewed as an investment in capital with return. The imperative of inclusive social protection is moved beyond its traditional protective role to promotive and transformative function - a role which helps build resilience as well as reduce vulnerability and thus sustain human progress protecting from increased frequency and intensity of shocks including health shocks such as COVID-19. Enhanced risk-informed social protection systems, factoring in scalability and adaptability of social protection schemas in existing policies would contribute to enhanced responsiveness of social protection systems in times of crisis as well as enhance their value to prevent negative coping strategies, enable recovery as well as to reduce vulnerabilities to climate and disaster risks.

19. Enhance climate and disaster risk reduction action to protect life, livelihoods and reduce disruptions in access to infrastructures and basic services: Management of disaster and climate risks is very much necessary to minimize the human and economic loss in Asia and the Pacific, a region which is most prone to disaster and suffers from higher loss compared to the other regions of the world. Between 2015 and 2019, 29 countries in the ESCAP region (25 in Asia and 4 in the Pacific) reported through the Sendai Framework Monitor, that 39,137 people died due to disasters and 104 million people directly affected during the same period. While there is a significant decline in disaster-induced mortality due to enhanced preparedness, disaster impacts are outpacing the region’s economic growth and contributing to intergenerational poverty and inequality. Moreover, while progress is noted in the adoption of national disaster risk reduction strategies (with thirty countries in the Asia Pacific), additional investments are required in strengthening multi-hazard disaster risk governance systems to enable multisectoral implementation of such strategies for effective reduction of risks and losses.

20. Promote and protect economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to social security: Expanding universal social protection along the Social Protection Floors following a life cycle approach and use the maximum available resources to invest in people and social services, is key to reducing poverty. To this end States must secure fiscal policy space to guarantee minimum essential levels of economic and social rights and consider reallocating existing resources and ringfencing social spending. For equitable financing, States must also ensure that the burden does not fall disproportionately on those left behind, and adopt fair and progressive taxation, address tax avoidance, illicit financial flows and corruption. As a lesson learned for COVID-19, we must also urgently address the underlying causes of vulnerability, marginalization and discrimination.

21. **Enhance capacity of developing countries, including least developed countries and small island developing States, to collect disaggregated data by eight attributes including gender:** Collecting high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics as mentioned in 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is necessary for effective planning and monitoring. For example, sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data help in crafting inclusive policies including gender-responsive policies to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, especially for women and other disadvantaged population groups overrepresented among the extreme poor. As COVID-19 is enforcing inequality exposing vulnerability specially on women, it is critical that governments collect sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data to understand the different social and economic impacts of the pandemic and its consequences on extreme poverty. Collecting sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data would address disproportionate impacts on women in extreme poverty. Data collection on disaster damage and losses with disaggregation by sector (agriculture, industry, service, housing, health, etc.) is limited among the member states which is also due to gaps in technical capacities, availability of data, and data harmonization. This also limits the abilities of the governments to analyse the sectoral impacts and pursue risk-informed development. Disaggregated data is necessary to assess the economic costs and human development impacts of disasters. This will help inform resilient recovery and decision-making in order to prevent and reduce risks, minimize losses, disruptions to basic services and mitigate socio-economic impacts.

B. Zero hunger: priority areas for regional action

22. **The transformation of the food system and its value chain for achieving nutrition and food security requires further investment and strong public- and private partnerships:** Improved quality, efficiency, and productivity of food systems can reduce essential foods' costs to make them more affordable and accessible. In collaboration with the private sector, the government is required to ensure regulations of sales and marketing of healthy food to consumers while enhancing investment in nutrition and food safety in fresh and street food markets to curb overweightness, obesity, and non-communicable diseases in Asia and the Pacific. Integrated approaches and policies to address food availability and accessibility to reduce the cost of healthy diets are necessary to overcome unaffordability issues and ensure healthy maternal and child diets.

23. **Invest in cost-effective technologies for data collection and for integrated surveillance systems to monitor nutrition, food security, and key livelihood indicators:** There is a need for strengthened availability and use of information for early warning through surveillance systems that capture nutrition, food security, and livelihood information in vulnerable areas during a higher risk period of food insecurity to better monitor progress towards Goal 2. Indicators need to be relevant to Asia-Pacific realities and ensure adequate food insecurity and human rights within the inequality and poverty focus.

24. **Lack of availability of data remains a key constraint to measure achievements and document evidence:** Differences in primary data availability and quality across countries in the region limit the Sustainable Development Goals' best understanding of accomplishments. Governments need to invest in regular household-based primary data collection, data quality, timeliness of data, and the precision of the “right” indicators being collected, to support progress and inform policies and interventions. Joint data management across different ministries can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of data and information management systems. In addition, investment into primary data collection,

especially for the COVID-19 impact on food security and nutrition in the Asia and Pacific region, is critical. Moreover, COVID-19 requires cost-effective and digitally-enabled data collection technologies such as earth observation data, mobile data, crowd-sourced data— known as Big Data- collected from remote sensors, web-scraping, mobile reporting, and computer-assisted interviewing (i.e., web and telephone).

25. Upscaling digitalization across the food system from production to consumption, improve access to markets and access food and nutrition by all, including the poor and vulnerable: Investing in digital technologies and bridging the digital divide among small farmers, rural households, and small-scale entrepreneurs has become a top policy and investment. This strategic priority is made more urgent by the COVID-19 pandemic and the multiple disruptions to food production, supply chains, and consumers' access. Digitalization (including smart farming, digital financial and extension services, digital platforms) has become necessary as part of post-COVID-19 building back better. Governments also need support in designing digitalization strategies ranging from agriculture, rural finance, and related rural services to accelerate the food system transformation needed to advance food security and healthy diets.

26. Strengthen urban agriculture, local food production, and short value chains to improve nutrition and access to food among the urban poor: Developing a resilient urban food ecosystem requires appropriate infrastructure, legislation and market management to better monitor, regulate, and enforce safety and health measures. Intensifying the promotion of urban agriculture, backyard/household gardening of edibles and backyard animal raising, and community gardening supported by appropriate legislation and stronger enforcement. Providing efficient transport and logistics systems to link production areas to markets, including secondary cities and small urban communities, and ensure unhampered movement of agriculture and food goods and services. Strengthening the online marketing of agriculture and fishery products, including establishing online or digital channels for transactions and delivery services. Rebuilding more robust urban food ecosystems requires ensuring better food access and affordability, delivering safe food through close monitoring and regulating quality standards, and providing assurances against disease transmission risk to humans. Improving urban agriculture includes designing incentives for local food production, removing bureaucratic and institutional impediments and promoting digital technologies with improved marketing and traceability, and designating appropriate multi-centric governance of urban food systems to effectively coordinate, regulate, and enforce food safety and health standards and safeguards.

27. Leveraging social protection system to enhance food security and nutrition outcomes: Countries in the Asia and Pacific region continue to underinvest in social protection and shock-responsive social protection, in particular, despite growing evidence of its impact on food and nutrition security. Social protection can protect and stabilize incomes to access a nutritious diet during disasters and crises. Governments in Asia and the Pacific need expanding investments in social protection systems that take food security and the nutritional needs of vulnerable populations into considerations, including those of nutritionally vulnerable groups such as women and children. This requires collaboration with other sectors such as health, education and agriculture.

28. Stronger investments in disaster and pandemic preparedness needed across the systems: Joint and comprehensive actions are required to enhance food production, protect incomes, ensure access to health services, and increase social transfers. Governments need to invest in stronger disaster preparedness,

early warning, and response systems to build resilience to future disasters and epidemics, learning from the COVID-19 pandemic.

29. **Design policies to increase women's access to productive resources, markets, training and technology to meet the agricultural productivity and nutrition targets:** Women's role in agricultural activities, food production, processing and distribution is critical to meet the targets for Goal 2. It is essential for women to control over the proceeds of their labour to tackle food insecurity at the household level further in a community, by accessing productive resources, markets, training and technology. Governments and policy makers need to ensure designing gender-responsive policies to support women's access and women's participation in all facets of decision makings, further to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition and ensure access by all people.

30. **Implement surveys for sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data to craft more focused and gender-responsive policies:** There are risks on the household surveys that they would not analyse intra-household inequality unless sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data is collected. To tackle the disproportional food insecurity, it is critical for governments and policy makers to craft more focused and gender-responsive policies based on the analysis with sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data.

C. **Good health and well-being: priority areas for regional action**

31. **Sustain the progress of the Sustainable Development Goal agenda related to sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health:** Attention should be paid to inequities in access to services and gender inequalities, including in fragile and vulnerable settings. Attention must also be given to improving the quality of care for all, including gender non-conforming communities, disadvantaged groups, people living with disabilities and those left furthest behind.

32. **Focus on health systems strengthening, including improving equitable coverage and quality of the health workforce:** Countries should directly focus on implementing strategies and plans to increase the number, distribution, mentoring and retention of health personnel, particularly investing in midwifery and specialized care for obstetric and neonatal emergencies.

33. **Strengthen the primary health care:** A well-functioning primary health care is the key to achieving universal health coverage as it addresses comprehensive health needs at the community level. Improved government health spending on primary health care along with quality health services can help countries provide efficient and equitable care; and meet the majority of the health needs of most people. Ensure the timely procurement, equitable distribution and access, appropriate use and maintenance of essential medical commodities and products (equipment, technologies, diagnostics and lifesaving medicines) to facilitate the delivery of high-quality health services. Increased attention to continuous quality improvement of healthcare across the life-course and at all levels of services. The Lancet Commission on High Quality Health Systems has reported that more deaths are caused by poor quality of care compared to non-access to care, presently.

34. **Increased attention to new technologies and other innovations for self-care and community-based services:** Increased attention should be given to optimizing current methodology and applying modern technology for capacity building (eLearning/mLearning), virtual delivery (telemedicine), self-care (self-awareness, self- screening/testing and self-management), and accountability focusing on primary health care and midwifery led continuity of care models.

35. **Increase domestic health expenditures:** There is a need to increase domestic health expenditures and to ensure that all countries have allocated sufficient domestic and international resources to strengthen their health systems and implement their national health plans.

36. **Expand access to essential health services coverage:** It is important to expand access to essential health services coverage, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, by reducing out-of-pocket and catastrophic health expenditures and improving financing and financial protection and increased government investments in health preferably through domestic budgets.

37. **Response and resilience:** Countries have a preparedness and response plan that includes preventive measures to pandemics and other emergencies, ensuring procurement of emergency supplies and monitoring survival and health outcomes.

38. **Increase engagement and awareness among stakeholders in the health and non-health sector:** Health is linked to many other Sustainable Development Goals; achieving Goal 3 will directly and indirectly depend on the progress in other Sustainable Development Goals. For an example: reduction in child malnutrition (Sustainable Development Goal target 2.2) or access to clean water and sanitation (Sustainable Development Goal target 6.1) will lead to positive health outcomes. Addressing harmful gender and social norms will contribute to reducing inequities in access and utilization of health care services. The Sustainable Development Goals have provided countries with an opportunity to promote “health in all policies” – a coherent approach to public policies across all sectors that takes into account health implications, seeks collaborations and avoids harmful health impacts and addresses the social determinants of health.

39. **Support the adoption of integrated approached between environmental health and human health:** as human health and environmental health are closely linked, as the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted. It is important to adopt integrated policy frameworks that take into account those links at the national and regional level, such as the approaches used in Planetary Health.

40. **Strengthen data quality and improve availability of disaggregated data:** Countries need to continue improving the availability, quality and comparability of Goal 3 data such that Sustainable Development Goal progress can be measured and strengthen accountability. There are few indicators such as the availability and accessibility of essential medicine in health facilities (Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.b.1) that have limited data availability. Lack of disaggregated data also continues to be a challenge. Countries need to significantly increase their efforts to collect disaggregated health data by equity stratifiers such as gender, age, income and other population subgroups. This will allow us to identify those who are left behind and inform equity-oriented programs, policies and practices, and help countries attain health for all.

D. Decent work and economic growth: priority areas for regional action

41. **Be inclusive in setting and strengthening the institutional mechanisms for decent work-led 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 are included in the decision-making process. Economic stimulus packages and other economic support should target not only big business but also be channeled to workers, including in the informal sector, and small and medium enterprises who underpin the economy in Asia and the Pacific. Specific attention should be aimed at sectors such as manufacturing, tourism and hospitality, and other businesses where women are predominantly employed in precarious contracts and particularly vulnerable to a global economic recession.

42. Strengthen labour market institutions for effective and inclusive labour market governance: Key labour market institutions include legislation and regulations on employment and social protection, anti-discrimination, occupational safety and health, unacceptable forms of work, minimum wages and collective bargaining. These key labour market institutions, when properly enforced, are critical to supporting recovery from the current COVID-19 crisis and serve as the basis for 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 is needed to extend the reach of labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for vulnerable groups, including home-based and migrant workers. Governments in countries of destination and countries of origin as well as employers and hiring agencies should provide all migrant populations including women, men, girls and boys irrespective of their migration status the full protection of their human rights during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, without prejudice and discrimination and in compliance with international law. Also related to strengthening institutions is the call to increase the capacity of national statistics offices to ensure regular collection of gender-disaggregated labour force surveys, or other household surveys needed to monitor decent work and inclusive growth.

43. Accelerate occupational safety and health as a fundamental labour right: The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the importance of proactive occupational safety and health preventive measures. Upgraded occupational safety and health measures and renewed commitment for protecting all workers, including informal workers and migrant workers, from future pandemic and emerging occupational safety and health hazards and risks are required. In response to increasing impacts of the outbreak in areas with inadequate resources for normal prevention and mitigation strategies, such as in informal settlements, governments and civil society organizations should collaborate to implement gender-responsive interventions including provision of essential emergency needs such as food, medical treatment, and water, sanitation and hygiene including sanitary products for migrant populations, especially women and girls. This may include providing flexible working arrangements, paid leave, housing in case their migrant workers have to self-quarantine, and supplying food, daily essentials, and health care during the pandemic.

44. Step up investments in human capital to provide all people the opportunities to realize their full potential throughout the lifecycle: While education for all, lifelong learning and building technical and core skills are themes featured under Goal 4, they also serve as key input to human development as well as the decent work and economic growth outcomes of a country. The pandemic has elevated the importance of reskilling, especially for workers in impacted sectors like tourism and manufacturing who could be trained for future growth sectors. What is more, the crisis has laid bare the persistent inequality in education and training systems throughout the region linked to the digital divide. For this reason, and in the context of rapid technological advances, progress in Goal 8 will necessitate increasing investments in people's capabilities. This can include a universal entitlement to

lifelong learning that enables people to acquire skills and to reskill and upskill, while also increasing investment in the institutions, policies and strategies that will support people to navigate the increasing number of labour market transitions over the course of their lives.¹

45. Progressive policy reforms are required 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 is an urgency to act on climate change. The transition to a low greenhouse gas economy is expected to lead to a net creation of jobs, including green jobs. Substantial progress can be made to reduce the global material footprint through greater resource efficiency in the key sectors of agriculture, food, construction, and infrastructure. Reversing the increased rate of material extraction requires an adoption of a new economic model that decouples economic growth from environmental degradation. To achieve a positive impact at the required scale, decoupling needs to be at the heart of national economic planning. The challenge remains to ensure that the greening of economies does not threaten the livelihoods of marginalized groups, such as indigenous peoples. As more countries are encouraged to adopt broad and comprehensive policy frameworks on the green economy, attention will need to focus on implementation especially in view of ensuring that no one is left behind in the transition process.

46. Design 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 have initiated strategies to formalize the informal economy in line with the ILO’s Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2015. The guidelines of R.204 highlight the formulation of appropriate macroeconomic and skills policies; simplified registration procedures; extended scope of, and compliance with, labour laws; improved access to credit; and offering incentives, such as tax incentives, and extending social protection coverage to all categories of workers, including migrant workers. Technological advances demand the further extension of social protection and regulation of new forms of work that have the potential to erode the quality of jobs for an increasing number of workers. More immediately, as part of their short- and longer-term COVID-19 recovery, companies must include gender-sensitive measures to ensure that women are not left behind in the workplace and across their entire value chains at a challenging time. The Women’s Empowerment Principles, established by UN-Women and the United Nations Global Compact since 2010, provide guidance and tools for companies that are committed to this agenda.

47. Frameworks to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid and underpaid care work should be developed, and public investment in care infrastructure alongside investment in public service infrastructure should be enhanced: There is an opportunity to professionalize and create secure and decent work opportunities in the care economy in the region. This can be accomplished by creating women-led/owned social enterprises in care work and supporting the transition of care workers from informal to the formal economy through training, education, and certification. To free more women up to work for pay requires expanding affordable childcare, improving household and transport infrastructure, sharing unpaid work more equally between men and women through, for instance, policies promoting parental leave and flexible

¹ ILO, Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, adopted at the International Labour Conference, 108th Session, Geneva, 21 June 2019.

working, deploying digital technologies, and, most importantly, shifting attitudes regarding women's role as family caregivers.²

E. **Reduced inequalities: priority areas for regional action**

48. **Increase investment in social protection:** Across the region, all countries need to step up investments in universal, accessible, gender-sensitive and disaster-responsive social protection, in accordance with the social protection floor. If properly designed and implemented, social protection is a transformative investment in people. It boosts economic growth, dampens inequality and protects against environmental and disaster risks. Social protection also shields children from compounding risks. COVID-19 has brought these important functions of social protection into focus. Through appropriate fiscal policies, governments in the region should continue prioritizing human capital development by spending on people in the long-term.

49. **Promote decent job creation and equal pay:** Policies should be developed along the four pillars of decent work, including principles and rights at work, job creation, social protection and social dialogue. Achieving equal pay for work of equal value requires policies aimed at combating discriminatory practices and gender-based stereotypes, including concerning the value of women's work. It also requires effective policies on maternity, paternity and parental leave, as well as advocacy for better sharing of family responsibilities. As national economies continue to adjust to the challenges brought forth by the COVID-19 crisis, policymakers must be cognizant of the challenges facing low-income workers and those in the informal economy to ensure they are not excluded from the benefits of economic recovery.

50. **Address discrimination:** Inequalities are often the result of discriminatory laws, policies and social practices that leave particular groups of people behind. Governments should adopt and implement effective anti-discrimination legislation and policies. The legislation should contain comprehensive definitions of discrimination and grounds for discrimination, which should include all aspects prohibited under international human rights law including sex, race, skin colour, language, religion or conviction, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, nationality, age, economic position, property, marital status, birth and migration status. Ensuring accessible mechanisms that provide effective remedies for discrimination is a priority.

51. **Protect the most vulnerable from the impact of natural and human-caused hazards:** It is 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, environmental hazards, and other large-scale crises. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated acutely how the most vulnerable are disproportionately affected by shocks and unexpected disruptions, thus widening inequality gaps. Disaster risk reduction mechanisms need 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 build on traditional knowledge systems and practices.

² UN-Women (2020). Women as a Force for Accelerated and Inclusive Economic Recovery Post Covid-19 in Asia and the Pacific.

52. **Address inequalities faced by migrants:** Efforts to achieve equality must include all migrants, including addressing inequality as an adverse driver of migration, climate and disaster displacement, and reducing the inequalities faced by migrants, especially migrants in vulnerable situations. Migration should be a choice made free of duress; take place in a safe, orderly and regular fashion, respecting the human rights of migrants and their families; and mechanisms should be developed to produce and share accurate, disaggregated data that are used to guide policy. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration provides detailed guidance on steps governments can take to achieve this Goal.

53. **Identify the furthest behind through sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data:** Identifying those who are the furthest behind through rigorous analysis and evidence will be the foundation for developing inequality-reducing policies. Intersecting characteristics that aggravate disadvantage (or accentuate advantage), should also be explored, as ESCAP has recently started doing to support UN Country Teams' analysis.³ For example, when gender inequality intersects with other forms of discrimination, the impacts intensify on marginalized women and girls. Policymakers need to emphasize the collection of sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data. Additionally, strengthened regional cooperation for monitoring of emerging transboundary disaster 'hotspots' is needed, including disaggregated data highlighting the groups most at risk and comparatively most affected by disasters.

F. Responsible consumption and production: priority areas for regional action

54. **Strengthen the regulatory frameworks for sustainable consumption and production:** Despite the economic benefits of resource efficiency, market forces alone are insufficient and too slow to overcome systemic barriers to sustainable consumption and production. All countries need a strong regulatory framework to make the transition to responsible consumption and production before planetary boundaries are crossed, and in time for major capital investments in the region. Three policies that can support this include strict industrial standards on environmental protection and pollution mitigation, the internalization of environmental externalities into the price of goods and services, and strict standards on air pollution and emissions from vehicles.

55. **Promote green recovery as the engine for COVID-19 recovery:** Countries should be encouraged to take the socio-ecological crisis more seriously. We know plastic pollution is a major issue, but not enough is done to prioritize this. The same is true for air-pollution, which has reached dimensions that school had to be closed, for example in Bangkok, and combustion engines are still the normal in times of serious air pollution, with associated human health issues. Human health and environmental sustainability should be the new normal, and they should be high on the list of national priorities in each and every country. Also, the removal of subsidies to energy products (petroleum products, electricity production, and electricity consumption) should be part of the overall framework of the country's tax reform and more importantly the COVID-19 Green Recovery Agenda. The revenue freed up from the rationalization of the energy products could be used to provide social welfare and social safety nets for those who are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

³ ESCAP (2020). Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) by Country Reports. Available at: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/leaving-no-one-behind-lnob-country>.

56. **Unifications of approaches:** The unification of approaches under the Sustainable Development Goals is essential, either through national plans on sustainable consumption and production or sustainable consumption and production integration into other core national strategies and more holistic approaches to sustainable consumption and production policies that address production as well as lifestyles and consumption in essential sectors such as food, mobility, housing, or education. A sound foundation for sustainable consumption and production exists in Asia-Pacific, through multiple and complementary approaches, and can be advanced through the unifying framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, supported by the 10 Year Framework of Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (known as 10YFP).

57. **Awareness raising on sustainable consumption and production and Sustainable Development Goal 12:** The Sustainable Consumption and Production policies and action plans are shaping up in countries at national and sub-national level. However, the policymakers and stakeholders are not yet fully aware of the Sustainable Consumption and Production implications cutting across all the sectors and all the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, further work on awareness-raising and capacity building on mainstreaming Sustainable Consumption and Production across the different sectors and along the national and sub-national policies and actions is required. Capacity building on implementation of Sustainable Consumption and Production policies, action plans and reporting on Goal 12 can also to be included along with awareness-raising as one of the key priority areas for action.

58. **Integrated circular economy approach:** The region must transition toward a more circular model that strengthens resource efficiency (Goal 12.2), improves waste management (Goal 12.3, 12.4, 12.5) and embeds environmental impacts in various sectoral and national development policies. A shift toward circular production and consumption pathways can reduce pollution on land and in water (Goal 14, 15), lead to innovation in industry and energy infrastructure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Goal 7, 9, 13), and provide decent jobs to reduce poverty and inequality (Goal 1, 8, 5, 10).

59. **Strengthen capacity building, technical and financial support:** Sustainable Consumption and Production is significantly externally driven with many processes requiring technical assistance from and funding of external actors. Strengthening domestic support and the development of financial instruments at national level is needed.

60. **Enhance stakeholder involvement:** Greater engagement of a range of stakeholders involved in production and consumption processes is needed to make shifts towards Sustainable Consumption and Production. This includes especially sub-national actors, the private sector and changing consumption behaviour of societies. For instance, we can encourage corporate change through policy tools. Eco-innovations (eco-products and eco-process innovations) have significantly gained attention with business and manufacturers. Appropriate policy tools including regulations, taxes and subsidies will trigger corporate decisions on green innovation investments, and encourage green consumption.⁴

61. **Monitoring systems and indicators:** To measure progress and prioritize action, monitoring systems and indicators need to be developed that integrate

⁴ Tariq et al (2017), *Drivers, and Consequences of Green Product and Process Innovation: a Systematic Review, Conceptual Framework, and Future Outlook*, available from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160791X17300210>.

natural resources, socio-economic development, and policies, from process to impact.

62. **Implement 10YFP projects:** With a rapidly urbanizing population and a growing middle-class, the 10YFP programmes on consumer information, sustainable tourism and sustainable lifestyles and education provide toolkits and lessons learned from other countries that can be rolled out in the region.

63. **Efficient plastic waste management:** Strong regulatory and legal frameworks are needed to address land and marine pollution issues and to control plastics movements in the region. National roadmaps to address plastics waste can catalyze action including supporting investment in alternative material to plastics. Support to local governments to invest in capital and infrastructure needed for a circular economy approach to plastic waste prevention, and to harness effective policy instruments, such as Extended Producer Responsibility, fiscal policy and regulatory instruments. The potential for an international treaty to track plastic waste across countries can be explored. For instance, Basel Convention Annex 2 has list of materials that need to be tracked and plastic scraps could be added to this list.⁵

64. **Empower women entrepreneurs in renewable energy sectors:** Women are in the position to distribute the clean energy services to every corner of communities.⁶ Financing women entrepreneurs in renewable energy sectors as well as providing capacity building, ensuring their access to technology, designing supporting policies, and establishing financial frameworks are the keys to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. We can also ensure a proportional representation and participation of women in all facets of decision makings from households, industries to policy planning. Curbing the use of polluting fuels and switching production and consumption patterns towards sustainability are essential steps to ensure environmental and human health across the region. Men are overrepresented among those engaged in polluting industries across all countries in Asia-Pacific. Women, on the other hand, often have the final say regarding small household purchases, such as groceries and cleaning products. Shifting towards more sustainable habits in daily consumption as well as ensuring a proportional representation and participation of women in all facets of decision makings in industries and policy planning can promote cleaner production processes.

G. Climate action: priority areas for regional action

65. **Redesign the finance and investment systems to become climate action compatible:** The amount of climate financing utilized in Asia-Pacific is increasing year on year; countries in East Asia and the Pacific are the largest receivers of climate finance flows, 41 per cent or USD 238 billion in 2017-2018. To elevate the levels of climate finance a favourable environment must be fostered to incentivize such investment. This includes engagement of private sector and increasing accessibility of climate finance to generate demand. Several important measures need to be undertaken, including:

- A thorough subsidy reform to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies coupled with Sustainable Development Goal 7 roadmaps

⁵ Chair's summary of the third United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, available from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mDn-tzHgmYvbDlx9Xh50rVb-C3OoMHmc/view>.

⁶ <https://www.empowerforclimate.org/en/resources/p/o/w/powering-equality>.

- Incorporate climate action conditionality in post-COVID19 recovery packages to prohibit investments in carbon-intensive activities
- Robust enforcement of the polluters' pay principle, including through the establishment of carbon taxes/carbon pricing instruments and fostering of sub-regional and regional carbon markets
- Working with private finance sector to integrate climate action and risks into their operations

66. **Seize COVID-19 recovery opportunities to accelerate climate and disaster risk reduction action:** The national COVID-19 recovery initiatives provide a window of opportunity for green, healthy, safe and more resilient recovery. There is potential for leveraging climate actions from mitigation, adaptation and resilience-focused efforts in line with the Paris Agreement with co-benefits for realization of multiple Sustainable Development Goals, across all levels (local, sub-national, national, sub-regional, regional) over the short, medium and long-terms. Climate actions can leverage co-benefits in areas of, inter alia, air pollution (including transport, energy) – and contribute to multiple Sustainable Development Goals. To leverage recovery opportunities a review of climate and disaster risk governance mechanism (laws, policies and strategies) at central and subnational levels is recommended to ensure better coherence across the various frameworks and the adoption of a multi hazard approach.⁷

67. **Increase ambition levels in nationally determined contributions:** The path to achieving safe climate is the one where countries undertake ambitious climate action to achieve Paris Agreement compatible 1.5°C emissions pathways, which are also aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. This will entail that emissions peak in 2020-2021, and then with sufficient measures for mitigation, the emissions decline by 45 per cent by 2030 and reach net-zero by 2050. Most recent nationally determined Contribution updates from the region show ambitions towards achieving the latter target and it is imperative for the other regional countries to follow suit with ambitious pledges and nationally determined contribution reviews in 2021. Those can well be aligned with green and inclusive, pro-poor, post-COVID-19 recovery strategies for achieving both human and planetary health. Since emissions from fossil fuels constitute the sizeable amount of the overall regional emissions, it is important for the countries in the Asia-Pacific region to embark on a path of decarbonization of power generation by 2050. One key factor to achieving this scenario is increasing the share of renewables by a factor of six, reaching a minimum of 60 per cent and above by 2050. The co-benefits of such a pathway are numerous, ranging from creation of new jobs, fostering new revenue streams and opportunities for economic growth and business development, to drastic reduction of air pollution with direct and indirect impact on health, including prevention of over 7,000 coal-related deaths and close to 60,000 PM 2.5-related deaths in South-East Asia⁸ for example, to access to more affordable and clean energy sources and poverty reduction.

68. **The Third Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of the Asia Pacific**, which was held from 24 to 25 January 2019 in Singapore demonstrated that there is political will in the region to scale up low emission and climate resilient development and recognized that the nationally determined contributions provide an opportunity to support such pathway, as well as green building action plans, regional and global coordination for science and

⁷ UNDP. 2020. *Recovering from COVID-19: Lessons from Past Disasters in Asia and the Pacific*.

⁸ Climate Analytics, 2019.

technology transfers including for energy efficiency and for monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions using satellites.

69. Development of roadmaps to affordable and clean energy, as was developed by Indonesia for example, would allow countries in Asia-Pacific to design best scenarios for the energy production, energy supply, and energy use in industry, transport and housing to achieve net zero emissions, develop renewable energy business options, ensure access to affordable and clean energy for all and create new job opportunities.

70. **Enhancing institutional frameworks, adopting a whole-of-society approach** and integrating the nationally determined contribution commitments in sectoral and subnational budgets will ensure gains in implementation and further raising the ambition of the second editions of the nationally determined contributions. Engagement of public sector in developing climate finance strategies would ensure mobilization of domestic financial resources needed for implementation and upscaling of nationally determined contributions, as for example is achieved in the Philippines with the strategy for a just transition to a zero emissions society and promoting green jobs.⁹

71. **Integrate climate change and disaster risk reduction into public financial management and private investment:** Urgent action is 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 develop evidence-based and inclusive policies that are linked to financial resources. Measures noted below, can also be used to strengthen the climate dimension of National Integrated Financing Frameworks:

- Adoption of tools to support such action including Climate change financing Frameworks; Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional reviews; and Climate budget Tagging.¹⁰
- Action that encourages private investors and banks to strategically align their investments with the goals of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals and scale up their contribution to the achievement of both. This can be done through encouraging participation and adoption of relevant initiatives such as the Principles for Responsible Banking; Principles for Positive Impact Finance; Sustainable Stock Exchange Initiative, UNEP Finance Initiative which mobilize private sector finance for sustainable development and already has 60 banks and insurance companies from the region as members. There are also opportunities to scale up blended finance. While blended financial tools exist in the region, the conceptual understanding and implementation knowledge is limited, especially among small island developing states and least developed countries who need readiness support to develop such tools and access relevant funding mechanisms. Innovative schemes can 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 integration of climate change and disaster risk reduction into business operations should be promoted.

⁹ CAT Climate Governance Series: The Philippines. Climate action Tracker. October 2020.

¹⁰ <https://www.climatefinance-developmenteffectiveness.org/topics>.

- Increase institutional capacity of governments, civil society, public and private stakeholders to develop ‘bankable’ proposals that enable harnessing co-benefits for human rights and gender equality and allow investors to make gender-responsive climate-related investments (for instance, through creating climate finance training in universities, taking down barriers hindering women’s access to climate finance). Support to youth-focused and youth-led organizations can be prioritized, given their active role in implementing climate solutions on the ground and the intergenerational inequity caused by the climate crisis. Developing countries, especially small island developing States, least developed countries and climate vulnerable areas, will require ‘readiness’ support to accredit direct access entities and help them develop successful Green Climate Fund proposals. Finance reporting needs to be improved and climate finance flows need to become more transparent to address the gap between pledged and received resources. This can be supported by engaging civil society in the review of proposals.

72. Strengthen climate information services for vulnerable sectors and communities, integrate human rights approaches, and develop gender-responsive monitoring systems, data collection and application: Investment in climate and disaster risk assessments and disaster loss accounting systems, with strong emphasis on vulnerability analysis and sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data collection can be strengthened to ensure that vulnerable populations (children, gender minorities, migrants, displaced etc.) and social sectors crucial to them (e.g. health, education etc.), are reflected in climate and disaster risk management and policies and investments. Shortfalls of sex-disaggregated data and lack of gender analysis undermines relevant policymakers and agencies to address the disproportionate climate-related impacts on women and that inevitably leads to gender-blind policies, planning, and strategies. National environmental and disaster statistics and disaster forensic capabilities can be improved to identify gender and socio-economic impacts of past extensive and intensive disasters, assess costs and benefits of disaster risk reduction investments and improve the accuracy of future disaster risk impact modelling that takes into account diversities across population groups. Voluntary National Reviews can also be used to assess and present progress on achieving climate and disaster resilience goals. Ministries responsible for managing monitoring systems and data collection should leverage existing platforms and mechanisms to strengthen coordination and data sharing across sectors, civil society, and other stakeholders.

73. A human rights-based approach should be integrated in any climate change adaptation or mitigation measures, such as the promotion of alternative energy sources, forest conservation or tree-planting projects, resettlement schemes and others. Affected individuals and communities must participate, without discrimination, in the design and implementation of these projects. They must have access to due process and to remedy if their rights are violated.

74. Investments in environmentally and climate friendly technologies can especially benefit women with green job opportunities: To address the widening gaps of gender equality and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, women’s economic empowerment through green jobs could be a priority for COVID-19 recovery. One promising area for this is improving women’s access to renewable energy solutions. Decentralized renewables for energy access provide opportunities to open new economic potential for the poor as well as unlock resilient livelihoods for communities, including women, through access

to electricity for irrigation, processing equipment or early warning systems.¹¹ Investment in environmentally friendly technologies, eco-based adaptation, climate-smart agriculture and climate-resilient food system is also crucial to help vulnerable people and to build climate-resilient societies.

75. Enhance the capacities of local governments to accelerate climate actions: Multilevel climate action is essential to leverage local climate action and contribute to Nationally Determined Contribution implementation. Decentralization, supported by clear governance frameworks, can be a key enabling instrument to enhance collaborative climate action among national and subnational authorities and develop shared responsibilities that may reduce the burden on central governments.¹² Support for financing of subnational actions is essential to capitalize on local mitigation and adaptation opportunities, including through energy efficiency, public transport and resilient urban infrastructure.

76. Mainstream climate change in education for sustainable development: Climate education, including from a human rights-based approach perspective, needs to be mainstreamed across all aspects of education systems to ensure strengthened understanding of the risks and remedial measures that can be taken at the national level. The five priority action areas include: advancing policy, transforming learning environments, building capacities of educators, empowering and mobilizing youth, and accelerating local level actions.¹³ Universities can be supported to teach and study climate change mitigation and adaptation options, and communities can be encouraged and enabled to apply best practices, as suggested for example in the UNESCO Green Academies brochures (available in Burmese, Chinese, English, French, German, Indonesian, Laotian, Malay, Thai, Vietnamese.).

H. Peace, justice and strong institutions: priority areas for regional action

77. Uphold fundamental freedoms and ensure public access to information: Ensuring access to information and freedom of expression while combating disinformation remains a priority for the region, a challenge that has come into acute focus under the pandemic. It is therefore important to protect journalists, media workers, human rights and environmental defenders in the region and in the monitoring of such efforts, collect disaggregated data. Related legislation must meet international human rights standards, and the effective implementation of legislation on access to information requires a fully functional access to information oversight body. The protection would also be strengthened with a regional instrument on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters, similar to regional agreements in other regions.

78. Equal access to justice for all during and after the COVID-19 pandemic: Barriers to access to justice increased with the onset of the pandemic and led to the suspension of court hearings and further restricted access to public services such as legal aid. Many judiciaries in the region reacted quickly in introducing, or expanding, the ability to hold court hearings online. For instance, in Bangladesh, online bail hearings resulted in more than 10,000 detainees

¹¹ United Nations Environment Programme (2020). *Powering Equality: Women's entrepreneurship transforming Asia's energy sector*. UNEP, Bangkok.

¹² *Vertical Integration of Climate Change Policies and Actions in Asia-Pacific Cities*. (UNESCAP 2020).

¹³ UNESCO. 2020. Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap. UNESCO: Paris. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>.

released on bail within 3 months, contributing to a reduction of over 11 per cent of the prison population. Both state and civil society legal aid providers in many countries developed applications and systems for remote access to legal advice, especially to assist the increasing number of survivors of gender-based violence. Innovations on e-justice or digital justice have the potential to increase access to justice in the region: including civil justice areas relevant to Goal 16 such as land, family, employment, public services and environmental damage. When implementing digital justice solutions, particular attention must be paid to accessibility of digital technologies for all (for example access to mobile devices, with optimization options for persons with disability) and that international standards relating to the rule of law are upheld.

79. **Strengthen environmental rule of law and protect environmental defenders to build back better from COVID-19:** Effective laws and policies and strong institutions provide the necessary foundation for environmental protection and enforcement in order to create resilience to environmental crises, stop environmental crime and reduce future pandemic risks. Environmental rule of law can contribute to the implementation of multi-lateral environmental agreements and progress towards internationally agreed global environmental goals, and support sustainable pandemic recovery through a just transition to a sustainable economy founded on renewable energy, sustainable resource use, community empowerment and livelihoods of dignity. Developing effective, accountable, inclusive and transparent institutions is critical to promote the environmental rule of law and the realization of human rights (including environmental rights) and protect environmental human rights defenders from threats, reprisals, and harassment, including as relating to emergency decrees and legislation.

80. **Address discrimination and stigma:** Public communication that promotes non-violence and rejects xenophobia, racism and all forms of intolerance, plays a key role in countering the alarming spike in intolerance and hate speech that has fueled longstanding challenges with discrimination and stigma. In line with the UN Plan of Action on Hate Speech and Guidance Note on Addressing and Countering COVID-19-related Hate Speech, a whole of society approach is required to proactively address on and offline misinformation networks, ensuring that government, civil society, private sector and vulnerable populations work together to inform policies and programming that balances freedom of expression with the need to curb mis/disinformation.

81. **Improve the collection and quality of data, particularly disaggregated data:** Recognizing the centrality of Goal 16 as an enabler and accelerator for the 2030 Agenda, further efforts are required to strengthen national capacities for data collection, and analysis, including birth registration and vital statistics, and data prioritization. As with many other Sustainable Development Goals, it is also urgent to address the lack of data disaggregated by sex, race, age, language, geography, religion, national, ethnic, or social origin, disability, migration, or other status.

82. **Increase efforts to eliminate gender-based violence and violence against children:** Increased efforts are needed to eliminate gender-based violence and violence against children, including by addressing drivers, such as discrimination, harmful social norms, and practices as well as gender stereotypes. It is also important to strengthen laws, policies, and national action plans on eliminating gender-based violence, and violence against children, to increase the capacity of frontline law enforcement, and justice actors on women's and children's access to justice, and of the social service workforce, and to take additional measures for persons at heightened risk of violence, such as women and girls with disabilities, indigenous women and LGBTIQI persons.

83. **Strengthen responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels:** Further efforts are required to promote equal, meaningful, responsive and inclusive participation, including of marginalized groups, in decision-making at all levels. The “Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs”, recognized by the Human Rights Council as a set of orientations for States, provides concrete suggestions for increasing participation and in furthering Sustainable Development Goal indicators 16.7 and 16.10. Living up to commitments to achieve gender parity in judiciaries, parliaments, public services and in decision-making bodies is also needed in support of Goal 16, as well as Goal 5 (Gender equality) and international commitments on human rights. Amendments to electoral codes, and the introduction of temporary special measures have effectively been used to close the gender gap and increase diversity of representation. In line with their evolving capacities, children and young people also have the right to participate in decision-making that affects their lives and wellbeing. Children can be powerful advocates for their own and others’ best interests; mechanisms and processes should be developed at all levels to facilitate their effective and meaningful participation.

IV. Conclusion

84. A number of priority areas for regional action are proposed in this document, as a basis for discussion between member States and other stakeholders on opportunities to strengthen policy coherence in implementation efforts to achieve sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and build an inclusive and effective path for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
