Subregional perspectives on
Current and emerging policy issues for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

9:00-11:00, 23 April 2025

ESCAP Hall, United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok

Concept Note

Since its establishment seventy-eight years ago, ESCAP has been a recognised platform for a consolidated voice of Asia and the Pacific on the most important issues. Subregional organisations play an important role in advancing regional priorities through cooperation. The subregional dialogue of the 81st Commission session will focus on opportunities for an inclusive and sustainable development to contribute to the region's social, economic and environmental transitions.

This agenda item will discuss priorities for regional cooperation within and among the five subregions, namely, the Pacific, East and North-East Asia, North and Central Asia, South and South-West Asia, and South-East Asia highlighting the key areas of collaboration between the subregional organisations and ESCAP as well as identifying potential cooperation areas among subregions.

The discussions will bring together member States, key subregional organisations and stakeholders to deliberate how regional or subregional cooperation can achieve inclusive and sustainable development to contribute to the region's social, economic and environmental transitions.

Tentative Programme

I. **Opening Remarks** by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP *(5 minutes)*

II. **Regional and subregional cooperation**: progress and strategic priorities *(60 minutes)*

Selected subregional organizations will (i) take stock of their collaboration with ESCAP as well as achievements in recent years and (ii) share their future strategic priorities with ESCAP to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These organizations can focus on areas such as debt vulnerabilities, natural disasters, digital transformation, connectivity, and urban development. Each speaker will have 6 minutes.

Chair: Chair of Commission Session 81
Speakers:

1. H.E. Mr. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary-General, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
2. H.E. Mr. Golam Sarwar, Secretary-General, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
3. H.E. Mr. Lee Hee-sup, Secretary-General, Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat
4. H.E. Mr. Kairat Sarybay, Secretary General, Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia
5. H.E. Dr. Mohammad Taghi Hosseini, Deputy Secretary General, Asia Cooperation Dialogue
6. H.E. Mr. Sohail Khan, Deputy Secretary-General, Shanghai Cooperation Organization
7. H.E Mr. Esala Nayasi, Deputy Secretary-General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (video)
8. H.E. Mr. San Lwin, Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (video)

III. **Interventions from member States** *(50 minutes)*

Member States will share country perspectives on inclusive and sustainable development and areas for regional cooperation that can be facilitated by the subregional organisations and ESCAP.

Brief profiles of organizations and programmes

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an inter-governmental organisation promoting regional cooperation and integration in the areas of economic, social-cultural, and political-security. Established in 1967, the grouping sets out to accelerate economic growth through social progress and cultural development while promoting regional peace and stability based on the rule of law and the principles of the UN charter. ASEAN comprises the countries of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, (Timor-Leste), and Viet Nam. The current chair of ASEAN is Malaysia.

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an international organisation of seven South Asian and Southeast Asian nations, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat is located in Dhaka. BIMSTEC aims to foster rapid economic development and social progress in the Bay of Bengal region through joint endeavors and cooperation in various fields. It promotes active collaboration, mutual assistance, and the sharing of training and research facilities among Member States. Additionally, BIMSTEC focuses on maintaining peace and stability, eradicating poverty, enhancing connectivity, and boosting trade and investment for regional prosperity.

The Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) is the permanent regulatory body of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Currently, there are five EEC countries: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation. The main purpose of the Commission is ensuring the functioning and development of the EAEU and developing proposals for the further development of integration. The EEC also seeks to advance cooperation with countries beyond EAEU members. Among recent activities by EEC includes initiatives to better integrate EAEU businesses into one common market and to improve procedures for official statistics. EEC has a fruitful cooperation with ESCAP since 2013 as governed by the EEC-ESCAP Memorandum of Understanding, updated and signed in 2019.

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), founded in 1981, is the region's premier political and economic policy organisation of 18 independent and self-governing states and territories. The Forum's vision is for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives. The Pacific Islands Forum works to achieve this by fostering cooperation between governments, collaboration with international agencies, and by representing the interests of its members. In July 2022, Forum Leaders endorsed the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent as the overarching blueprint to advance Pacific regionalism for the next three decades, articulating the region's long-term vision, values, and key thematic areas and strategic pathways.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation which was founded in 2001 and was preceded by the Shanghai Five Mechanism. Currently, the SCO consists of nine member States. The SCO's main goals are to strengthening relations among its members, promote effective cooperation in key priority areas, and make joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region. SCO has a strong cooperation with ESCAP since 2012 as governed by the SCO-ESCAP Memorandum of Understanding, updated and signed in September 2022.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka on 8 December 1985. SAARC comprises of eight Member States: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Secretariat of the Association was set up in Kathmandu on 17 January 1987. The objectives of the Association as outlined in the SAARC Charter are: to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life; to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials; to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia; to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems; to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields; to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries; to strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests; and to cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes. SAARC has five technical Regional Centres and ESCAP currently collaborates with the SAARC Disaster Management Centre in India and the SAARC Energy Centre in Pakistan.

The Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) is an international organization established with a vision to promote peace and common prosperity among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Upon the agreement signed and ratified by each of the three governments, the TCS was officially inaugurated in Seoul, the ROK, in 2011. The TCS has been widely involved in intergovernmental occasions among three member States related to political, socio-cultural and economic affairs as a trilateral consultative mechanism; and facilitated cooperative projects and dialogues at various levels. The TCS has a close cooperation with ESCAP, and since 2021 has jointly organized a high-level forum on carbon neutrality goals of three member states with ESCAP.

The Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) is an intergovernmental organization created on 18 June 2002 to promote Asian cooperation at a continental level and to ensure coordination among different regional organizations such as the ASEAN, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the SAARC. It is the first international organization to cover the whole of Asia. Its secretariat is in Kuwait City.