

Seventh North and Central Asia Multistakeholder Forum on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

“Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and Eradicating Poverty in Times of Multiple Crises: The Effective Delivery of Sustainable, Resilient, and Innovative Solutions in North and Central Asia”

Hybrid Event

1-2, November 2023 | Almaty, Kazakhstan and online

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

The Subregional Office for North and Central Asia (SONCA) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is organizing the Seventh North and Central Asia¹ **Multi-Stakeholder Forum on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals** (henceforth referred to as the Forum). The Forum facilitates dialogue and deliberations between government officials, civil society, think-tanks, academia, experts, and other stakeholders, providing a unique platform to share information on subregional implementation efforts, highlight subregional priorities and good practices. The outcomes and recommendations from the Forum feed into regional and global processes, including the **Eleventh Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD)** and the **2024 UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)**.

The Decade of Action for Achieving the 2030 Agenda has been severely impacted by intersecting crises including food and energy process, COVID-19, climate change and geopolitical uncertainties, which has been heavily affecting countries and the people in North and Central Asia. ESCAP’s 2023 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) progress report finds that North and Central Asia is not on track to reach any of the 17 SDGs by 2030. Although some countries in the subregion achieved higher progress than the regional average in Asia and Pacific, the pace is slow. Significant progress has been achieved particularly towards no poverty (Goal 1), reduced inequalities (Goal 10) and peace, justice, and strong institutions (Goal 16), while the subregion continues to regress on climate action (Goal 13).

The subregion urgently needs sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions to address these challenges in times of multiple interlinked crises. There is increasing divergence in social and economic outcomes within and across countries in the sub-region. The Tenth Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Forum highlighted the paramount importance of regional cooperation and enhanced multi-stakeholder partnership in North and

¹ ESCAP’s North and Central Asia (NCA) subregion includes the following nine ESCAP member States: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

Central Asia to achieve a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient recovery². Concerted efforts and actions from all stakeholders are needed to accelerate progress towards the 2030 goals.

Against this backdrop, the Forum will examine inclusive, resilient, and sustainable strategies to address key challenges and identify priorities to accelerate the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. In alignment with the focus of the 2024 HLPF and APFSD, this year's sub-regional forum will assess progress on the thematic SDGs of **Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 13 (Climate Action), Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and Goal 17 (Partnership for the Goals)**.

The Forum will serve as a common platform to bring together multiple stakeholders, reinvigorate existing partnerships, and explore innovative solutions to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Forum is conducted in English and Russian.

As an associate event of the Forum, ESCAP will also organize the **North and Central Asia Workshop on Next Generation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNR)** to facilitate implementation of the SDGs at national level and to promote subregional cooperation. The workshop will draw from the VNR experiences of Member States in North and Central Asia to examine national and subregional perspectives on challenges, progress, achievements, and lessons learned.

Objective and Expected Outcome

The main objective of the Forum is to facilitate an inclusive dialogue among multistakeholder groups in North and Central Asia on strengthening SDG implementation.

To achieve this, the Forum aims to:

- Enhance awareness and understanding of the key challenges and opportunities for implementing the 2030 Agenda in North and Central Asia through sharing of experiences and knowledge.
- Promote sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions and mainstream good practices in the national and subregional contexts on policies, actions, and partnerships for accelerating the progress of SDGs against multiple interlinked crises and compounding shocks.
- Identify subregional and multilateral cooperation opportunities in implementing the SDGs.

Participants

Targeted participants of the Forum are the representatives from:

- Governments and public institutions in North and Central Asia responsible for various aspects of implementing the SDGs and ESCAP focal points;
- UN entities, international financial institutions and national development agencies, international and regional organizations, that support the implementation of the SDGs;
- Civil society, industry associations and private sector organizations, advocacy groups, technical experts and academia, and other experts on the SDGs.

² Report of the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, <https://www.unescap.org/events/apfsd10>

Organization

The Forum will be organized by the ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia in close collaboration with UN entities, UN Resident Coordinator offices, other international and regional organizations, and other stakeholders.

Programme & Session Overview

*All times as stated in Astana Time (GMT+6)

Time	Sessions
Wednesday, 1 November 2023	
Morning	<p data-bbox="423 667 927 699">Opening and Introduction of the Forum</p> <p data-bbox="423 705 1446 772">Session 1: “Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Times of Multiple crises”</p> <p data-bbox="423 816 1471 1062"><i>In North and Central Asia, progress on SDG implementation is increasingly at risk of being swept away by multiple crises, such as the COVID-19 disruptions, climate change, and geopolitical uncertainties. The scale and complexity of these challenges led to soaring living costs, rising poverty levels, food insecurity, widening inequalities, and regressing in climate action. There is a renewed urgency in making radical changes at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda and advancing towards an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable recovery.</i></p> <p data-bbox="423 1106 954 1138"><i>The session will discuss, among other things:</i></p> <ul data-bbox="472 1144 1463 1388" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="472 1144 1446 1211">• <i>Subregional progress, good practices, and priorities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in North and Central Asia;</i> <li data-bbox="472 1215 1463 1318">• <i>Efforts to accelerate inclusive recovery amidst compounding crises and how this could align with initiatives to progress on implementation of the SDGs across the social, environmental, and economic dimensions.</i> <li data-bbox="472 1323 1425 1388">• <i>Concrete solutions to improve the monitoring of the progress and gaps of SDGs and build up momentum for accelerated actions.</i>

	<p>Session 2: “Eradicating extreme poverty for all” (SDG 1)</p> <p><i>Countries in North and Central Asia achieved declining poverty rates in 2022 in the face of a challenging external environment, although absolute figures remain high in historical and global terms. Threats brought on by multiple crises are increasing economic and social vulnerabilities, with a disproportionate impact on women and most vulnerable groups. Access to adequate education, healthcare, electricity, safe drinking water and other critical services remains elusive for many people, as numerous people are at risk of being pushed back into poverty. Investments in human capital development and social protection measures have a critical role in ensuring more inclusive access to sustainable livelihoods, business opportunities and productive resources.</i></p> <p><i>On the other hand, there is a need to rethink social protection measures to enable more inclusive access to basic social services, including through redistributive transfers and universal social protection. There has been concerted effort among development partners to tackle systemic constraints to eradicating poverty and address its multidimensional drivers.</i></p> <p><i>The session will discuss, among other things:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Trends, progress, challenges, and priorities on poverty reduction in the sub-region, with a focus on the interlinkages and multi-dimensional nature of poverty;</i> • <i>Role of social protection systems and government policies to mitigate the impact on most vulnerable and increase resilience to shocks;</i> • <i>Protecting and investing in people and enhancing resilience, especially among women and vulnerable population groups;</i> • <i>Innovative solutions to scale-up resource mobilization for poverty reduction and investments in human capital development and support more inclusive and equitable access to economic opportunities and jobs;</i> • <i>Role of international community and stakeholders to support poverty reduction efforts through more effective development assistance and subregional cooperation.</i>
<p>Afternoon</p>	<p>Session 3: “End hunger and all forms of malnutrition” (SDG 2)</p> <p><i>Addressing food security issues is closely linked to poverty eradication and inequality. In North and Central Asia, the cost-of-living crisis has deprived numerous people of safe and nutritious food, especially the most vulnerable groups. As the sub-region population continues to rise, much has yet to be done to meet the growing demand for food in a sustainable manner.</i></p> <p><i>On other hand, climate change impacts are likely to cause a decline in the available farmland, while increasing scarcity of water. Higher prices for fuel and fertilizers will further add to this challenge. The scale and complexity of the current energy-food-finance crisis has moved to the front the importance of improving coordination among the food, health, and agriculture sectors. There is a need for transformative action towards more sustainable food systems.</i></p> <p><i>The session will discuss, among other things:</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Status, trends, emerging challenges on food security in North and Central Asia, with focus on the ongoing energy-food-finance crisis and interlinkages with other SDGs;</i> • <i>Principles, methods, and best practices to enable more productive, inclusive, effective multi-stakeholder collaboration on food systems including in governance arrangements;</i> • <i>Measures to strengthen essential public service, knowledge-sharing, access to financing, and social protection for rural development;</i> • <i>Potential areas to promote systemic change in food systems towards more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient agri-food systems;</i> • <i>Innovative economic, organizational, and technological solutions to address undernourishment, food security challenges, and livelihoods impacts.</i>
Thursday, 2 November 2023	
Morning	<p>Session 4: “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts” (SDG 13)</p> <p><i>North and Central Asia face increasing vulnerability to climate change, as warmer temperatures and more volatile weather patterns disrupt ecosystems and increase the frequency of extreme weather events. Recent data confirms a regressing trend for SDG 13 on Climate Action in the subregion. It underscores the urgency to enhance the region’s capacity to respond and adapt to climate-induced impacts. Long-term climate change trends towards melting glaciers, reduced water flows, and increasing desertification, such as in the Aral Sea, require regional cooperation and transboundary solutions. With climate change threatens agricultural productivity, livelihoods and water security, there is an urgent need to seek means of implementations to accelerate mitigation and adaptation measures.</i></p> <p><i>The session will discuss, among other things:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Status, trends, emerging challenges, opportunities, and interlinkages of implementing climate action initiatives;</i> • <i>Potential areas for cross-border collaboration and multi-stakeholder participation to accelerate climate action and impactful solutions at scale;</i> • <i>Innovative policies, frameworks, and measures to accelerate in-country and regional actions for climate mitigation and adaption;</i> • <i>Opportunities to scale-up public and private sources of financing in support of climate commitments, particularly through innovating financing instruments.</i>

Session 5: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” (SDG 16)

There has been considerable progress in developing peaceful and inclusive societies in North and Central Asia, especially in reducing violence and building effective institutions. All countries in the subregion have put in place strategies to implement changes and innovations in the delivery of public services in response to the pandemic, including through digital tools and e-platforms. However, there is a need to better increase institutional preparedness and resilience to future crises and risks, especially in times of prolonged stress. At the same time, access to public services, including education, health, childcare, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and legal and justice services, is key to protect the vulnerable from increasing risks and inequalities. Issues of disinformation and misinformation rose to the fore while vulnerable groups such as women and girls, youth were often unable to participate effectively in decision-making. The demands for responsive, inclusive, participatory, and accountable decision-making in public policies are at the forefront when charting pathways for the future.

The session will discuss, among other things:

- *Status, trends, emerging challenges, opportunities, and interlinkages of promoting peaceful and inclusive society, building effective institutions, and ensuring access to public services for all;*
- *Digital innovations, policies, and initiatives to ensure the successful delivery and access to public services in times of multiple crises;*
- *Policies and frameworks to enhance resilience and the effectiveness, accountability, and responsiveness of institutions;*
- *Efforts to align public and private transnational governance framework with strengthened institutions;*
- *Stakeholder engagement through participatory decision-making (including e-participation and digital spaces) and inclusive dialogues, with focus on vulnerable groups.*

<p>Afternoon</p>	<p>Session 6: “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development” (SDG 17)</p> <p><i>The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in North and Central Asia region has been adversely affected by the e intersecting crises of the past three years. The recent economic and social turmoil has also put immense pressure on public finances and reduced financial resources available to achieve the SDGs. Responding to challenges that are cross-border and cross-sector in nature requires multinational and multisectoral solutions. It is therefore critical to re-think current approaches and explore ways to unlock cross-sectoral synergies to build greater resilience against future shocks. More catalytic partnerships from diverse economic sectors, social groups, and scientific communities at the local, national, and subregional level can create collective and innovative solutions to shared challenges for a sustained recovery.</i></p> <p><i>The session will discuss, among other things:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Subregional analysis and good practices for cross-sector partnerships and solutions to leverage SDG interlinkages;</i> • <i>Opportunities for regional partnerships, including North-South, South-South and Trilateral Cooperation, to strengthen crisis response strategies and regain momentum on the SDGs until 2030;</i> • <i>Innovative policy frameworks and instruments to public and private sources of financing towards the SDGs.</i>
	<p>Closing Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing remarks

Further Information

The Forum will take place on 1-2 November 2023 in Almaty, Kazakhstan and online. It will be conducted in English and Russian with simultaneous interpretation. Detailed information can be found on the official event page [HERE](#).

Invited participants are required to register [HERE](#) to participate in the Forum.