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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Review of regional progress in the implementation of the
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and
opportunities for achieving the Sustainable Development
Goals: progress towards the achievement of Goals 1, 2,
13, 16 and 17 at the regional level

Progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 at the regional level**

Summary

The magnitude of the challenge to attain the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 in Asia and the Pacific is further out of reach with the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict and climate change slowing or reversing many of the region’s hard-won development gains. Loss of livelihoods, together with the rising cost of living, have exacerbated multidimensional poverty and inequalities. The need to shift to a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient development pathway is clearer than ever.

The present document, developed in partnership with the United Nations agencies and programmes, examines Sustainable Development Goals 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 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 2024 High-level Political Forum on sustainable development under the theme of “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solution”.

The document proposes priority areas for accelerated action and opportunities for greater policy coherence towards the achievement of the Goals.

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** The present document is being issued without formal editing.
I. Introduction

1. The United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/299, adopted in July 2016, established the mechanism for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national, regional and global level. The thematic focus of the 2024 High-level Political Forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council shall be “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.”

2. In line with the theme of the 2024 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Eleventh Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development will examine 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 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 collaboration with partner United Nations agencies and programmes and other stakeholders, Goal profiles assessing the status of regional progress on these goals were developed. These 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. The Goal profiles are provided to support common regional understanding of the status of regional progress, areas where good progress has been achieved and areas that require specific attention. The profiles also integrate human rights and gender equality considerations and highlight promising innovations, good practices and priority actions aimed at making further progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals under review.

5. These Goal profiles are available on the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development event page on ESCAP website in the document section at www.unescap.org/events/apfsd11.

II. Policy recommendations emanating from the Goal profiles on Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17

6. This section presents the priorities for action in building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in times of multiple crises, emanating from the development of the Goal profiles for Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17.
A. No poverty: priority areas for regional action

7. Integrated policy planning for inclusive and adaptive social protection to leave no one behind is critical to cope with multiple shocks. This entails shifting towards agile systems that coordinate with different actors, provide anticipatory and post-shock/disaster transfers, and facilitate longer-term inclusive, sustainable and net-zero development. Concerted efforts can broaden the reach of social protection systems in view of demographic change and climate change impacts, covering people more exposed to vulnerabilities. Member States can deliver contributory and non-contributory social protection schemes in a coherent and complementary manner. Investments in adaptive social protection schemes can build resilience. Non-contributory cash transfers that are regular, predictable, reliable and inclusive can facilitate savings, ensure food security and help households diversify their sources of livelihoods. Digital technologies can offer immense opportunities to enhance the design and delivery of social protection helping gain efficiency and minimising waste.

8. Strengthened implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies at national and local levels can help build a resilient future for all. This includes (a) conducting comprehensive disaster and climate risk assessment, particularly in multi-hazard risk hotspots, (b) transitioning from a sectoral to system approach whereby social protection and climate change interventions are aligned to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable populations to adapt, absorb and transfer risks, (c) implementing comprehensive disaster and Climate Risk Management which is critical for food systems to be resilient, (d) investing in the Global Executive Action Plan on Early Warnings for All by leveraging emerging technologies, (e) building local capacities to respond effectively and rapidly to early warning alerts, (f) ensuring the meaningful participation of marginalised groups in disaster risk reduction and management, (g) expanding global satellite data use and strengthening networks and services which disseminate early warning messages and (h) implementing prioritised actions in line with the Gender Action Plan for Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, an outcome of the mid-term review.

9. Upgrading skills to access decent jobs during a just transition especially for young people is key. Climate change and digitalisation are increasing the demand for green and digital jobs, which are likely to constitute a considerable share of decent job creation. To better match this demand, the skill set of all workers, especially youth considering their disproportionate rate of unemployment, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities requires upgrading. There is a strong role for active labour market policies to equip the workforce with skills, prioritising those who are already left behind with timely and tailored programmes. The quantity and quality of vocational, life, technical, business and entrepreneurial skills training can be expanded and improved. Developing training programmes through collaboration with the private sector and accommodating the needs of intended beneficiaries are critical. Other active labour market policies including labour market services can complement skills trainings, especially for the youth as they transition from school to work. The positive impact of active labour market policies also depends on whether women’s time and labour spent in care work are valued and recognised. Expanding active labour market policies can be complemented by investments in the care economy. This, however, requires a series of efforts at multiple levels with policies and programmes that reduce, recognise, redistribute and adequately reward care work. Measures can be undertaken in four care policy categories including (a) building and ensuring access to care infrastructure, (b) expanding non-contributory programmes in the form of unconditional cash transfers without income targeting, (c) mandating and providing care services
including childcare, older person care and care provisions for persons with a disability or illness and (d) providing employment-related care including parental leave policies and benefits, and family-friendly working arrangements.

10. Digitalisation can contribute to resilience building and poverty reduction efforts. To fully unleash the potential of digital innovation for transformative development outcomes that benefit all through social protection, public employment schemes and digital labour platforms and support for micro and small-sized enterprises, it is vital to address structural obstacles including digital divide by age, gender, disability and location to connectivity. This includes establishing and improving digital infrastructure for marginalised communities that remain offline to enable high-speed and unlimited connection; enhancing the affordability of digital devices and services for marginalised groups through measures such as targeted financing schemes; improving the accessibility of the digital environment by conducting accessibility audits and applying universal design principles to the development of digital products and services; engaging people in vulnerable situations through co-design and addressing their diverse needs in the entire development cycle of digital products and services and incentivising private sector entities to invest in gender-sensitive, age-friendly and disability-inclusive digital technologies.

11. Investing in data collection and building capacity for data analysis is crucial for evidence-based policymaking from the design stage to monitoring and evaluation. This includes using nationally representative surveys which allow for multiple levels of disaggregation, including income, gender, age, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location, among others. Disaggregated data allows for understanding the intersectionality of circumstances that leave population groups behind in indicators associated with Goal 1. In addition to data collection, member States can continue building capacity to analyse data following rigorous methodologies. Monitoring and evaluating policies and programmes at national and sub-national levels require local capacity to analyse data and inform decision-making processes in a timely manner.

12. Improving domestic resource mobilization and leveraging emerging sources of external financing is essential to build comprehensive social protection systems that can provide adequate benefits and sufficiently respond to current lifecycle contingencies, as well as to new and exacerbated risks in the wake of a changing climate. Domestically, progressive taxation is key. Intelligently designed taxation can reduce extreme inequalities in wealth and income and raise sufficient revenue to support a sustainable transition to a greener economy. This requires broadening the tax base and taxing incomes, wealth and profit, and moving away from taxing consumption. Illicit financial flows also require attention. Externally, there is an urgent need to reform the international financial architecture to resolve the growing debt burden in developing countries. Currently, neither development nor climate finance are fit for purpose for developing countries. Concessional finance is not easily accessible with debt finance left as the main instrument.

B. Zero hunger: priority areas for regional action

13. Multipronged investments and targeted social policy support can improve accessible and affordable diets, including through social safety net programs. Tackling malnutrition requires the implementation of measures such as nutrition fortification programmes and supporting regulations and laws, in addition to homegrown feeding, school feeding and other nutrition-specific
approaches. Social safety net policies, including cash transfers to vulnerable and marginalised groups are critical. Social protection measures can be complemented by efforts to strengthen local value chains, reduce food waste and loss, and provide necessary subsidies to manage high inflation and food price increases that impact food purchasing power. These measures necessitate the rebalancing and realigning of less prioritised initiatives to ensure financial sustainability during national financial constraints.

14. Investing in food production, diversification and sustainable management powered by digital innovations and sustainable mechanisation can secure healthy, balanced and more reliable food provision and supply. Food system transformation for enhanced food security and nutrition requires recalibrating production strategies. This includes increasing food production, improving productivity, investing in crop and food diversification, aiming for balanced nutrition, adapting to climate change, building resilience, and agrifood value addition. Improving food provision for food security also requires addressing unsustainable production practices, such as chemical use, deforestation, biodiversity loss and resource depletion while sustaining food output. Enhancing the sustainability and efficiency of food production and promoting green and climate-smart agriculture requires large-scale investment in sustainable mechanisation. This involves policy support through harmonisation of standards, increased capacity for testing and adaptation, digitalisation and digital-enabled farm advisories, smart farm technologies, and the use of big data, artificial intelligence, and Internet of Things tools to improve food production, processing, marketing and trade.

15. The transformation of the food system following overlapping crises necessitates reprioritizing food policies, addressing trade-offs and synergies, and fostering strong public-private partnerships. This involves balancing supply-side actions, such as promoting local production and improving rural-urban market linkages, with demand-side interventions, including ensuring affordable and accessible food, implementing calibrated social protection and safety net policies, and fortifying food fortification through nutrition measures. Additionally, investing in digital agriculture innovations and last-mile digitalisation are crucial aspects to be considered.

16. Strengthening urban agriculture, local value chains and rural-urban linkages can improve nutrition and access to food among the urban poor and the most vulnerable. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent crises underscore the urgency of shifting the agrifood paradigm towards more balanced domestic sources to secure food security. Improving food availability requires connecting shock-proof supply chains, improving food market linkages, including rural-urban linkages, and enacting measures that reinforce resilient supply chains. This entails investing in storage and logistics infrastructure, as well as providing incentives to reduce food loss and waste applied at both farm and post-farm levels. Improving food access for urban poor and vulnerable groups entails effective urban food governance and mainstreaming the urban food agenda into urban planning. This integration involves urban agriculture, advanced smart farming, and digital technologies that facilitate rural-urban market linkages and promote short food value chains.

17. Pandemic, disasters and their resulting shocks to the systems require enhanced risk assessment and management capacities, along with the development of effective risk coping strategies. Lessons from the crises emphasise the need to invest in disaster-proof and resilient value chains capable of withstanding shocks from natural or human conflict sources. Addressing food insecurity and rising malnutrition requires adopting risk management strategies as part of policy action. This involves investing in data
and information, monitoring market trends and increasing analytical capacity. Governments can develop data analysis and information systems capacity, including investments in big data technologies, enhanced statistical capacity and human capacity for monitoring food and nutrition analysis to inform policy action. Disaster-related risk management frameworks and models can provide evidence and recommendations for humanitarian assistance and emergency support to help populations in disaster situations receive adequate and timely nutritional diets. As risk profiles develop over time, tracking it evolution and near-term risks and their impacts on increasingly vulnerable smallholders need particular attention and investment.

18. Increased investments in research and development and technological innovations can contribute to food systems transformation. These transformation pathways, including deploying climate-smart agricultural practices and low-carbon technologies across the food value chain require resource mobilisation and international partnerships. Investment plans need to consider human capital development and last mile technologies for accelerated digitalisation of agrifood. Strengthening public-private partnerships and encouraging private sector engagement can scale up adoption of best practices and increase the use of innovative financial instruments.

C. Climate action: priority areas for regional action

19. The forthcoming update cycle of Nationally Determined Contributions in 2025 can be utilised for increased ambition by countries in Asia-Pacific region to align greenhouse gas emission reduction trajectories with the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The recommendations indicate that to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, countries need to aim for reduction trajectories of 43 per cent, 60 per cent and 84 per cent compared to 2019 levels by 2030, 2035 and 2050 respectively.

20. Implementing the decisions of the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is crucial. This requires the mobilised scaling up and aligning of financing for climate action; strengthening policy guidance, incentives, regulations and enabling conditions for investments; engaging financial actors to improve the assessment and management of climate-related financial risks; accelerating the establishment of innovative sources of finance; and supporting country-driven strategies to mobilise finance while considering the needs and priorities of developing countries. Increased investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy production can facilitate economic diversification, supporting the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions. Additionally, greater coherence in policy and regulatory frameworks can enhance sustainable finance flows and improve coordinated decision-making across institutions responsible for climate-related mandates. Effective Nationally Determined Contributions financing strategies, led by authorities with clear mandates, can provide a crucial signalling commitment to change and attract investment. Furthermore, the development of a pipeline of green bankable projects is a crucial aspect to consider. The projects need to align with volumes, scales and risk-return profiles that interest multilateral climate funds, multilateral development banks, development financial institutions and private investors. Early engagement of investors can address coordination costs.

21. Promoting the production, accessibility and use of gender and environment data, including sex, age and disability disaggregated data, can enable the design, implementation and monitoring of robust climate and disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes. Coherent and reliable
data can contribute tailoring to the specific contexts and realities of different segments of the population. Designed during the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the key priorities to advance the production and use of gender and environment data include: (a) promoting and prioritising the production of gender and environment data in an ethical and transparent way; (b) accelerating the use and uptake of gender-environment data for decision-making, programme development, monitoring, research and advocacy; (c) financing and investing in gender-environment data production and use; (d) ensuring global, regional and national statistical and data governance processes are inclusive; and (e) creating and strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships for gender and environment data. Other approaches involve the implantation of dedicated Gender and Environment Surveys; integrating existing data sources to generate new gender and environment estimates (such as geospatial data and demographic and health survey data or others) including reprocessing administrative data; leveraging big data including citizen-generated data and other non-conventional data sources; utilising existing official statistics on issues related to the environment and to gender equality to produce models for forecasting the effects of climate change on different population groups; and utilising a variety of data sources to generate gender-sensitive satellite accounts, that include a gender perspective to the System of Economic and Environmental Accounts. Additionally, initiatives that promote data user-producer dialogues, both pre and post data collection, as well as those that promote the participation of gender statisticians in policy committees for the production of national reports that inform policy decisions can be considered.

22. Leaving no one behind in climate action is critical. This involves strengthening synergies between climate action and social protection policies. For example, integrating social protection measures into Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans supports communities affected by the transition to a net-zero economy. Women's participation in the green and blue economy workforce is essential, requiring investments in their access to green skills and decent work. Improving access to traditional and innovative climate financing mechanisms fosters women's entrepreneurship and supports women-led micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

23. The transport sector as one of the main emitters of greenhouse gas emissions requires institutional, technical and financial assistance to implement decarbonization plans. Collaboration between environmental ministries and other related line ministries is essential. Increased investments can facilitate the shift to electric mobility and set the transport sector on a sustainable low-carbon pathway. Gender equality and support for other vulnerable groups in transport solutions as well as in the transport workforce need to be promoted.

24. Access to information on climate change and climate action as well as effective participation of people in vulnerable situations, civil society organizations and environmental human rights defenders in climate-related decision-making and implementation can contribute to climate justice. Including the lived experiences and expertise of communities in climate action at all levels is crucial. This involves facilitating access to information in languages and formats that are accessible and understandable to everyone everywhere; ensuring that every person worldwide is protected by early warning systems in the next five years, in line with the Early Warning for All initiative; ensuring that climate policy planning and implementation is undertaken with the meaningful and effective participation of people in
vulnerable situations; and promoting access to justice in environmental matters, including the access of people in vulnerable situations to court facilities, interpreters and culturally appropriate (legal and other) services.

25. Ensuring the meaningful engagement of youth in climate action is critical. Approaches that can be adopted include integrating climate change education into school curriculums and engaging youth in research; involving youth in awareness-raising campaigns and climate action skills building; ensuring public access to information on environmental policies or plans; engaging youth in the collection of environmental data and in follow-up and review processes; consulting youth in climate action policy and project design and implementation; leveraging and investing in youth solutions; engaging youth in community activities such as ecosystem preservation; and de-stigmatising youth engagement through awareness raising campaigns and by training older persons in leadership positions.

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

26. Strengthening national and subnational capacity can increase the pace of establishing National Human Rights Institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles. This entails prioritizing the delivery of Sustainable Development Goals and the human rights obligations underpinning the targets in national planning, oversight mechanisms and domestic budgets. Improved access to information and meaningful engagement of vulnerable and marginalised groups are critical elements in these processes. Increased investments can enhance public sector capacity and develop suitable digital infrastructure. Improved capacities of local and subnational governments can contribute to the implementation of Goals without discrimination at the ground level. An effective regulatory framework is crucial to align private sector governance models with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals, based on respect for human rights. Strengthened civic space and public engagement in policy and decision-making can support to maximise the data dividend, enhancing monitoring, follow-up and review of Goals.

27. Increased data-collection efforts, leveraging available tools, resources and collaboration with international partners can strengthen national monitoring capacities. This includes developing tools to measure governance, corruption, crime, and access to justice and providing guidance on applying a human rights-based data approach. Advancing data collection on the perpetration of sexual and psychological violence, including against children, and aligning efforts with international mechanisms and agendas on Women, Peace and Security, Youth Peace and Security and Children and Armed Conflict are critical. Efforts can involve partnerships with United Nations agencies mandated to collect data on these indicators. Enhancing data collection on transnational organized crime and its societal impact as well as prioritising data collection on human trafficking, drug use and illicit financial flows are aspects to be considered. Data is crucial for shaping policies and supporting victims in the evolving criminal landscape. Collaboration to validate data on the enabling environment for human rights defenders such as leveraging the United Nations Statistics Division-led Collaborative on Citizen Data is vital.

28. Regional cooperation can be instrumental in addressing corruption which acts as a catalyst for and enabler of various types of organized crimes. Efforts can utilise legally binding tools such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption, to which member States in the region are parties.
Corruption undermines the achievement of the Goals by depleting valuable resources and degrading the quality of public services. Combatting corruption is a service delivery and development finance concern that impacts people's trust in institutions. Addressing corruption as an enabler of other crimes aligns with priorities, notably contributing to reducing illicit activities and their impact in the region.

29. Promoting survivor-centred and evidence-based approaches for victims of trafficking and for people who use illicit drugs is critical. This includes promoting access to survivor-centred, timely and quality services and justice mechanisms. Transnational organised crime, emerging crimes and traditional challenges like drug production and trafficking disproportionately impact marginalised individuals, heightening the urgency for a call to action.

30. Advancing strategies to reduce prison overcrowding is critical in the region. This entails revising sentencing thresholds and promoting alternatives for certain drug possession and use sentences.

31. Increasing the political representation of young people and institutionalizing their meaningful engagement in policymaking and overall governance processes can contribute to the implementation of Goal 16. Young women, men and gender-diverse persons need enabling environments that are peaceful, just and inclusive for them to exercise agency, positively influence their societies and own their lives. Yet, young people are often affected by violent conflict, do not have a place at the decision-making table or feel that their voice is unheard. Leveraging young people’s innovative ideas and future orientation can make governance more anticipatory and agile. Meaningful youth engagement is indispensable for achieving peace, justice and inclusion in any country.

32. Advancing the rule of law, including environmental rule of law and recognition and integration of environmental rights, such as the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; and access to information, justice and public participation are critical. This can create an enabling environment for human rights defenders, aligning with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Upholding freedoms of association, assembly, opinion, and expression, the right to participate in public affairs, protection from abuse by authorities, and access to justice are aspects to be considered. These rights collectively form the foundation for an enabling environment for human rights defenders. Systematic monitoring of progress in line with human rights norms and standards at the national and regional levels is essential.

E. Partnerships for the goals: priority areas for regional action

33. South-South and triangular cooperation can facilitate integrated policy planning, exchange of best practices and contribute to the implementation of all Goals. This involves strengthening the role of regional and subregional intergovernmental mechanisms and forums, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Mekong River Commission, Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia and the Pacific, Asia-Pacific Regional Hub for South-South Cooperation, the Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development, and the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment. These forums and mechanisms can contribute to development and implementation of thematic action plans and roadmaps to advance progress on the Goals.
34. Increased mobilisation of financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources is crucial given competing fiscal demands. This involves boosting domestic resource mobilisation, attracting foreign direct investment, leveraging multilateral development banks, unlocking private finance and accessing climate finance. Addressing gaps in gender equality in the various financing instruments is critical. Integration of gender equality considerations into Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans can contribute to gender-responsive climate financing and budgeting. Integrating Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators into sustainability metrics of financial instruments and investment vehicles can contribute to orient greater amounts of public and private financing that is aligned with the Goals.

35. Enhanced coordination and collaboration among stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector can contribute to efficient resource utilization and alignment of Goal 17 activities. Capacity building support in project management, monitoring and evaluation and partnership development are crucial aspects for effective implementation. Meaningful engagement of youth in decision-making processes through mechanisms within regional forums can better integrate the ideas and concerns of young women and men. Sharing lessons and best practices from existing multi-stakeholder programmes such as the Just Energy Transition Partnership can further contribute to scaling up partnerships in key climate and sustainable development initiatives. Regional-level partnerships can work in tandem with global initiatives in developing strategies to advance the Goals while adding value by localising solutions to suit the unique challenges faced in the region.

36. Improved collection, analysis and dissemination of data across all Sustainable Development Goals can contribute to evidence-based decision-making. Investing in high-quality and timely data collection allowing for multiple levels of disaggregation is key for programme design, targeting and implementation. Capacity building mechanisms and partnerships at national and regional levels with multi-stakeholder participation can enhance the availability of and quality of data. Digital technologies can be leveraged to improve the collection of extensive, recent and reliable data across the Goals. The role of private entities in designing innovative data collection and analysis systems based on digital technologies, artificial intelligence and mobile phones is also critical.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

37. A number of priority areas are proposed in this document. Many of these include greater cooperation among member States to ensure that action can be taken on a regional basis. These priority areas may serve a basis for discussion between member States and other stakeholders on opportunities to strengthen policy coherence in implementation efforts to eradicate poverty in times of multiple crises and reinforce the effective delivery of the 2030 Agenda.