



Sustainable Development Goal 16 Round Table at the 11th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

Meeting Room MR-G United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok

Date: 22 February 2024 (09.00-11.30 Bangkok time)

Reporting back to APFSD Plenary: Thursday 22 February, 13:30-16:30

Background

SDG 16 highlights the need for peaceful societies, access to justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Its realization is essential for achieving all SDGs, fulfilling the aim of leaving no one behind and enabling the protection and promotion of all human rights.

In 2023, a report from the UNDP, UNODC and OHCHR assessed global progress on SDG 16 indicators. Since 2015, one-third of the targets globally showed 'fair' progress, while one-quarter 'stagnated or regressed'. More than 40 per cent of the targets lack sufficient follow-up data. Notably, global data for all SDG 16 indicators became available in 2023, thanks to new initiatives and partnerships involving UN entities, national institutions and experts. Despite this, SDG 16 data remain limited in the Asia-Pacific region, with 58 countries and territories lacking data on six indicators. Overall progress on SDG 16 in Asia-Pacific remains alarmingly slow, and not the most significant or impactful.

The global progress report analysed available data to draw policymakers' attention to the most significant challenges facing people today. These global challenges are equally applicable to Asia-Pacific region and range from violence and the changing nature of conflict, increasingly hidden trafficking of persons, significant gaps in people's ability to access justice, corruption affecting both individuals and business, to serious under-representation of women and youth in decision-making, and prevalent discrimination and threats to the life of human rights defenders and journalists (UNODC, UNDP and OHCHR, 2023).

Among the 53 ESCAP Member States, only Fiji and Sri Lanka have ratified all nine core international human rights instruments (UN Treaty Collection, 2022). Sixteen States are party to eight, 15 to seven and 20 to six or fewer. Increased demand for natural resource extraction, combined with weak enforcement of environmental laws, including inadequate impact assessments, has led to environmental and human rights harm in the region. Asia-Pacific is



seeing growing harassment, arbitrary arrests, detentions, threats and killings of the groups most affected by environmental harm, including Indigenous peoples, women and other vulnerable groups (UNEP, 2023).

Research indicates that prioritizing accountability, inclusive participation and transparency positively impacts social protection, equal opportunities and poverty. Despite progress, challenges continue to negatively impact women's meaningful participation in public life. Increased violence in politics, including harassment, intimidation, sexual and physical violence, online abuse and gender-biased scrutiny, hinders women's engagement. The meaningful engagement of young people in governance processes and institutions boosts innovation, agility and representation of diverse interests. However, even compared to the low global average, the large youth population of Asia-Pacific is significantly underrepresented in parliament and other decision-making fora relative to its share in the national population.

In the Asia-Pacific region there are 2.6 million stateless persons (UNHCR, 2023). Stateless persons are often among the most marginalized and impoverished members of any society. Transnational organized crime increasingly undermines regional stability and the rule of law, with trafficking victims increasingly forced to commit online scams and financial fraud. In 2023, the Global Peace Index (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023) noted a slight improvement in "average peacefulness" of the Asia-Pacific region—the scores having worsened for six countries in this region (driven chiefly by increased internal armed conflict), while 13 countries recorded improvements.

Against this background, the SDG 16 Roundtable will provide an opportunity for multi-stakeholder discussions on priority actions that should be taken to address the most pressing issues pertaining to SDG 16 in Asia-Pacific region and accelerate progress towards SDG 16 targets.

Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and SDG 16 Round Table

The annual Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) is an inclusive intergovernmental forum and regional platform for supporting countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 11th APFSD will be organized from 20-23 February 2024 under the theme *"Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions in Asia and the Pacific"* in Bangkok, Thailand, at the United Nations Conference Center (UNCC).



APFSD will feature multi-stakeholder “Round Tables” dedicated to the goals under review at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2023. The Round Table on the review of SDG 16 will be organized by OHCHR and UNDP in collaboration with ESCAP.

The specific objectives of the Round Tables are to:

- I. Establish a shared understanding of the regional outlook/progress on the Goals and of the interlinkages across Goals by providing an update on progress made since the last assessment.
- II. Jointly develop recommendations on:
 - (a) Addressing human rights and gender equality as well as other systemic challenges that are barriers to further progress,
 - (b) Priorities for strengthening policy coherence in implementation efforts – including through attention to key leverage points.
 - (c) Promising solutions and innovations (policy, social, institutional, technological, or other) at the national level
 - (d) Areas for regional cooperation to address the transboundary dimensions of these Goals and challenges.

The Round Table will provide an opportunity for representatives from governments and local authorities, civil society, academia, youth and the private sector to review the progress on SDG 16 in the Asia-Pacific region and associated challenges, and to discuss priorities for action. Discussions during the Round Table will be based on the SDG 16 Goal Profile which was drafted in preparation to the Forum and will be available on the APFSD website for reference. Data gaps and how these can be addressed may also be discussed.

The Round Table format includes a presentation on the SDG 16 Profile, a panel discussion, breakout group discussions, and a plenary session. The agenda is presented below. The report of the Round Table will be presented to the broader APFSD plenary during agenda item 4 (a) scheduled for 22 February 2024 between 13:30-16:30 hours.

Themes of SDG 16 Round Table	Priority Targets/Areas for Discussion
Human rights and fundamental freedoms	Targets 16.3; 16.10; 16.a; 16.b
Effective, inclusive and accountable governance processes and institutions	Targets 16.5; 16.6; 16.7
Violence, organized crime, access to justice	Targets 16.1; 16.2; 16.3; 16.4; 16.5
Measuring SDG 16 targets	Data availability on SDG16 indicators



Programme

Date: 22 February 2024 Time: 09.00 – 11.30	
Time	Agenda
09:00 (5 mins)	Welcome and opening remarks <i>Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, UN Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights</i>
09:05 (13 mins)	Presentation of the Goal 16 Profile <i>Ms. Sophia Mo, Data Specialist, Human Rights Indicators and Data Unit, OHCHR</i>
09:20 (25 mins)	Panel discussion on whole-of-society contributions to accelerating progress on SDG 16 <i>Moderator: Mr. Surya Deva, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development</i> <i>Panelists:</i> Mr. Raymund Rosuelo , Human Rights Commission of the Philippines Ms. Hayley Whatarau , HP Inc. Ms. Sushma Shrestha , Beyond Beijing Committee Mr. Pervez Siddiqui , Films4Peace Migrants
09:45 (45 mins)	Breakout groups discussions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights and fundamental freedoms • Effective, inclusive and accountable governance • Violence, organized crime, access to justice <i>Data availability on SDG16 indicators (cross-cutting)</i>
10.30 (10 mins)	Break
10.40 (40 mins)	Plenary session: Insights from breakout groups and priority actions agreed by SDG16 Round Table <i>Moderator: Mr. Surya Deva, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development</i>
11.20 (10 mins)	Closing remarks <i>Mr. Gerd Trogemann, Manager, Regional Programme and Global Policy Network, UNDP</i>



Rapporteur on the SDG 16 Round Table: Mr. Raymund Rosuelo, Chief of Research and Knowledge Management Division, Human Rights Commission of the Philippines

SDG 16 Round Table: Ms. Rineeta Rajendra Naik at rineeta.naik@un.org and Ms. Doina Ghimici at doina.ghimici@undp.org

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