

COVER STORY

Principal UN policy forum in Asia-Pacific opens with focus on implementation of 2030 Agenda



ESCAP opened its 72nd session in Bangkok on 17 May with United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Dr. Shamsah Akhtar emphasizing that strong political commitment, action and well-functioning coordination mechanisms, fully supported by the countries of Asia and the Pacific, will be critical to ensure that “no one is left behind.”

“Comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires partnerships and deployment of new solutions between countries and across subregions,” said Dr. Akhtar. “The 2030 Agenda calls for fundamental policy rethinking, and shifts in action, for which pacing and sequencing of national initiatives will be critical.”

Dr. Akhtar highlighted the crucial role of regional cooperation and connectivity, noting that appropriate pacing and sequencing of regional cooperation holds the potential to reinvigorate growth and shared prosperity through diversification, inclusiveness and sustainable development.

“Smart development demands that we move from silo-bound to cross-sectoral approaches and solutions, deploy the right mix of policies and incentives and address cross-cutting and thematic areas such as tackling all types and sources of inequality,” added Dr. Akhtar.

The 72nd session was held under the theme ‘Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for Sustainable Development’, and placed particular emphasis on harnessing STI towards achieving the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP’s new theme study proposes shifting STI policy to focus on supporting social justice and environmental protection; resource efficiency; integrating openness and inclusivity into innovation strategies; and the promotion of technology to support quality jobs and reduce environmental impact.

In his inaugural address, the Minister of Energy of Thailand, H.E General Anantaporn Kanjanarat emphasized that this year’s theme topic is timely, and of great significance to all member States of ESCAP. The Minister said that STI must be shared for the benefits of humanity, the environment and the planet.

The Prime Minister of Fiji, H.E. Mr. Josai Voreqe Bainimarama, outgoing Chair of the session highlighted the commitments made by the international community to the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai framework, and most importantly for Fiji, the Paris Agreement on climate change. The Prime Minister said the biggest challenge now is to implement these agreements, and he underlined that ESCAP has a very important role to play in meeting that challenge.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

STI

PAGE 1

THEME STUDY



SDGS

PAGE 3

VOICES OF CS72



HIGHLIGHTS

PAGE 4

SIDE EVENTS



MYANMAR

PAGE 5

SUPPORTING CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE

JUNE EVENTS

PAGE 6

UPCOMING AT ESCAP

COVER STORY CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

The Prime Minister of Tajikistan H.E. Mr. Qohir Rasulzoda, who was elected to Chair of the session added that ESCAP serves as a unique intergovernmental platform and the members of ESCAP shall work hand in hand with the secretariat to promote truly inclusive and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region.

More than 430 participants from 48 member States and Associate Members attended the 72nd Commission session.

See more: <http://bit.ly/CS72opening>

THEME STUDY

Harnessing science, technology and innovation will be critical to achieving 2030 Agenda in Asia-Pacific



Innovation policy must move beyond its traditional focus on economic competitiveness to include social justice and environmental protection if the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are to be met, ESCAP said in its new Report, Harnessing Science, Technology and Innovation for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in the Asia Pacific, launched on 18 May during the 72nd Commission session.

The Report shows that some countries in the region lead the world in innovative business environments, socially inclusive government

initiatives, and complex scientific research. A number of countries also rank among the best in terms of research spending as a share of GDP, with the region accounting for almost 43 per cent of global research and development expenditure. However, the Report also points out that these impressive gains have been confined to a relatively small number of countries. For example, 95 percent of the region's researchers are located in just five countries.

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary emphasized that business as usual is not an option for the region if science, technology and innovation (STI) is to be used as an effective means of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

“There is ample scope for regional STI collaboration in Asia and the Pacific. The challenge for the Asia-Pacific region is to develop concrete STI opportunities to help bridge the gaps that remain, to enable countries at all levels of development to take advantage of available technologies and to develop a robust regional culture of innovation,” said Dr. Akhtar.

The Report calls for action on regional STI collaboration to provide a resilient and productivity-driven foundation for successful pursuit of the Goals. It also provides a comprehensive overview of how a range of STI policy recommendations can support countries in harnessing STI for sustainable development.

Download a full copy of the Report here <http://bit.ly/themestudy>

SURVEY 2016

Economic and Social Survey for Asia and the Pacific 2016

As nations begin implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the next phase of Asia-Pacific economic growth should be driven by broad-based productivity gains, ESCAP said in its flagship publication Economic and Social Survey for Asia and the Pacific 2016, launched on 28 April, emphasizing that this will require higher, targeted fiscal spending, enhanced skills, better infrastructure, and improved agricultural productivity.

In the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific, annual average growth of total factor productivity declined from 2.8 per cent in 2000-2007 to just below 1 per cent in 2008-2014, according to the Survey.

The productivity slowdown accounts for almost a fifth of the recent economic slowdown, from an average of 9.4 per cent during 2005-2007 to an estimated 4.6 per cent growth in 2015. ESCAP underscored that this was a concern because sustained and resilient economic and productivity growth, backed by balanced economic, social and environmental development, is a prerequisite for successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Launching the Survey in Bangkok, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary emphasized that steady growth in real wages, which is critical for tackling poverty and inequality, as well as supporting domestic demand, also ultimately depends on productivity growth.

“Concerted efforts are needed to revive the region’s economic dynamism and more effectively pursue the 2030 Agenda,” said Dr. Akhtar. “Such interventions, particularly through fiscal measures, could support not only domestic demand but also strengthen the foundations for productivity-led growth, while fostering real demand through social safety nets and wage increases.”

The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific was launched simultaneously in 22 countries around the Asia-Pacific region. The year-end update of the Survey will be released in November 2016.

Download a full copy of the Survey here <http://bit.ly/AP2016Survey>

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Voices of the 72nd Commission Session



“With the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals we have the blueprint for the future we want. We also have the resources that we need to implement the Goals – what is still missing are the action steps to unlock these resources and to meet the targets that have been set, in every subregion and in every country”

- Dr. Shamshad Akhtar,
ESCAP Executive Secretary



“The issue of climate finance to build resilience, is just as pressing as the climate agreement reached in Paris last year”

- H.E. Mr Josaia Vorege Bainimarama
Prime Minister of Fiji



“During our journey towards sustainable development, our strength will come from tackling common challenges together. Governments need to ensure an ecosystem that supports science, technology and innovation”

- H.E. General Anantaporn Kanjanarat
Minister of Energy, Thailand



“ESCAP serves as a unique intergovernmental platform and the members of ESCAP with the Secretariat promote truly inclusive and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region”

- H.E. Mr Qohir Rasulzoda
Prime Minister of Tajikistan



“South-South and triangular cooperation efforts have to take a fresh look at financial inclusion.”

- H.E. Ms Saida Muna Tasneem
Ambassador of Bangladesh to Thailand
& Permanent Representative to ESCAP



“We do see important actions and initiatives from ESCAP and the UN system, working with our regional agencies, to connect the dots between the global and regional levels. Yet more is needed to be done at the national level to truly align ourselves with the SDGs”

- H.E. Ms. Amatlain E. Kabua,
Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Marshall Islands to the
United Nations



HIGHLIGHTS OF CS72 SIDE EVENTS

‘Accelerating Financial Inclusion in Least Developed Countries in Asia and the Pacific: The Role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation’

Hosted by the Government of Bangladesh in collaboration with the United Nations Capital Development Fund

The side event further explored strategies to promote South-South and triangular cooperation to address key areas that accelerate financial inclusion for least developed countries, and policymakers from Bangladesh, Kiribati, Cambodia and Australia shared their national experiences in developing financial inclusion strategies.



‘G20 Hangzhou Summit: Perspectives from Asia and the Pacific’

Hosted by the Government of China

At the panel discussion, Chinese Ambassador H.E. Mr Ning Fukui highlighted that the theme of this year’s G20 summit in Hangzhou is ‘Innovative, invigorated, interconnected and inclusive world economy,’ and the summit will focus on providing policy support and recommendations to help least developed countries realize the Sustainable Development Goals.

‘The Belt and Road Initiative: From Vision to Action’

Hosted by the Government of China

At the side event, Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Qian Hongshan and ESCAP Executive Secretary Dr. Shamshad Akhtar both underlined that the aims of the Belt and Road Initiative are very much in line with ESCAP’s mission to promote regional cooperation for socioeconomic development in a sustainable manner.



‘Landlocked Developing Countries and the Belt and Road Initiative: A Corridor towards Sustainable Development’

Hosted by the Government of Mongolia

Asian landlocked countries shared their national development trajectories and explored options in adjusting their development strategies to maximize potential benefits and mitigate risks of the Belt and Road Initiative.

HIGHLIGHTS OF CS72 SIDE EVENTS

'Building Regional Tsunami Awareness'

Hosted by the Government of Japan

This side event highlighted the need to raise awareness at all levels on the impact of tsunamis, and further enhance preparedness efforts. H.E. Mr. Masakazu Hamachi, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, further underlined the importance of regional tsunami awareness in reducing human and economic losses.



'Transforming Adversity into Disaster & Climate Resilience'

Hosted by the Government of Fiji

Experts from Fiji, Indonesia, Thailand and the World Bank shared lessons learnt from post-disaster recovery efforts in the region, which emphasized how crucial it is for governments to integrate disaster and climate resilience into the overall context of sustainable development.

COUNTRIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

CSN to adapt 2030 Agenda to their unique national contexts

At the 72nd Commission session, leaders and ministers reaffirmed their commitment to developing strategies and frameworks, based on respective levels of development and capacity, to translate the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development into effective national and regional strategies for countries with special needs (CSN).

The translation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into workable national action plans is crucial for CSNs. These least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (SIDS), who make up the majority of ESCAP's member States, face a range of structural challenges, related to lower levels of development, smaller productive capacities and increased vulnerability shocks, such as those arising from volatile commodity prices, climate change and natural disasters.

Regional discussions have identified the need for CSNs to engage with the prioritization, sequencing and implementation challenges of the 2030 Agenda. An ESCAP survey of experts

and practitioners from across the Asia-Pacific region, launched during the Commission session, found that while experts from least developed countries expressed a strong preference for prioritizing the social pillar of sustainable development, experts from landlocked developing countries focused on the economic pillar and those from SIDS expressed a preference for a balanced prioritization of the social, economic and environmental pillars.

The 2016 edition of the Asia Pacific Countries with Special Needs report proposes a unique analytical framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The framework allows the computation of a country-specific measure - termed "SDG capacity" - which quantifies the capacity of each country to implement the Goals. The analytical framework allows for the identification of optimal strategies of implementation of the Goals, including specific recommendations for their prioritization and sequencing.

Key challenges identified by CSNs include the need for Asian landlocked developing countries to link with the rest of the world and to diversify their production. SIDS also require improvements in their renewable energy infrastructure as they remain highly dependent on expensive fuel imports to meet their energy requirements. Increasing renewable energy investments is seen as a means to mitigate the financial risks associated with oil price fluctuations.

The ESCAP report also identified a need to understand and exploit the synergies and linkages between the SDGs, when devising optimal policies for sustainable development and highlights the relative benefits of different implementation plans for each country.

Download a full copy of the report here <http://bit.ly/CSNreport>

Supporting climate resilient agriculture Myanmar

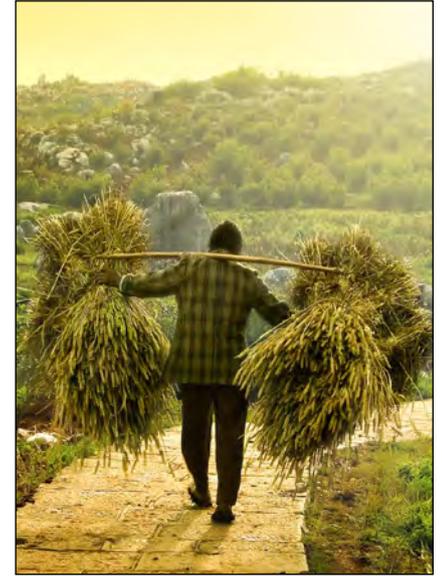
The Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM) organized a workshop on 'Business Management of Custom Hiring of Agricultural Machinery in the Dry Zone of Myanmar' in collaboration with the Network Activity Groups and with the support of Department of Rural Development of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation of Myanmar (DRD-MALI) from 3 to 4 May in Mandalay.

This workshop is one of the capacity building activities under the project 'An Integrated Rural Economic and Social Development Programme for Livelihoods Improvement in the Dry Zone of Myanmar,' funded through the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund. More than 30 national participants attended from line ministries, regional government offices, NGOs and civil society organizations, farmers' associations and the private sector.

Under the unified focus of 'Climate Resilient Agriculture,' the workshop shared the preliminary versions of the case studies on policies/institutions/processes and stakeholder mapping of the custom hiring of agricultural machinery in the region.

The workshop also provided theories and concepts about business management of custom hiring services and invited custom hiring business operators from China, India and the Philippines to share their business models and real-life experience. Participants from different backgrounds actively exchanged perspectives and raised practical questions, such as the choice of agricultural machines, water management, soil management and farming methods.

For more information visit: <http://bit.ly/agricMyan>



Asia-Pacific countries enhance region-wide safety and quality codes to advance sustainable agriculture

Thirteen countries from the Asia-Pacific region have endorsed enhanced safety and quality standards for testing agricultural machinery, at a forum in Bangkok, organized by the ESCAP's Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM).

The improved Asian and Pacific Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery (ANTAM) Codes will help reduce the huge social and economic costs associated with the use of unsafe and substandard farm machinery, while also improving the environmental sustainability of farming. The Asia-Pacific region continues to experience rapid development of agricultural mechanization due to its fast-growing population and increasing food consumption demands. However, the use of unsafe and inefficient machinery also makes agriculture one of the most hazardous employment sources in the region.

Developed by a pool of regional experts in collaboration with CSAM, the second edition of the Codes protects the well-being of farmers,

enhances food security, and preserves the environment by promoting sustainable agricultural mechanization. The 2016 Codes include safety and quality standards of agricultural machinery such as power tillers and misters-cum-dusters. CSAM is also developing simplified and graphic-based test reports to make the Codes more accessible and understandable for farmers. The 2nd Technical Meeting for ANTAM was held from 10 to 13 May in Bangkok. ANTAM is the first focused, regional mechanism for testing agricultural machinery which largely aligns the national standards from ESCAP member States with international codes and guidelines adopted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Organization for Standardization (IOS) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The first set of Codes for Misters-Cum-Dusters and Power Tillers were approved by 12 participating countries in Asia and the Pacific in December 2015 as a result of over 25 rounds of technical consultations.

For more information visit: <http://www.un-csam.org/>

Promoting cross-border economic cooperation in Eastern South Asia

The vast development potential of border areas between Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and India and the constraints to greater cooperation to transform border areas into dynamic regional trade and economic hubs was the focus of a meeting led by the ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office (SSWA) in Shillong, India, from 25 to 26 April.

Organized jointly with the Government of Meghalaya, India and the North Eastern Council, the 'Economic Cooperation Dialogue on Regional Connectivity and Border Special Development Zones in Eastern South Asia,' the meeting brought together more than 400 senior officials from the region, as well as regional experts, development partners, business organizations and other key stakeholders.

SSWA noted that poverty and hunger remained high and largely concentrated in border regions of South Asia. Bhutan and Nepal, as well as India's North-Eastern states face geographic constraints that could be converted into opportunities through transport corridors giving them access to ports in Bangladesh and Myanmar, and rather than dividing people: borders should unite people and economies via regional economic integration.

The event was held as part of an initiative to promote the socio-economic development of Eastern South Asia and support regional economic integration, primarily by addressing land transport infrastructure and facilitation related issues at the borders. It also contributed to the preparation of policy roadmaps for economic development in the states adjacent to India and border regions.



6-10 JUNE

ARTNeT-AFD Research Capacity Building Workshop on ASEAN Integration

BANGKOK, THAILAND

7 JUNE

Informal roundtable on addressing the issue of e-waste in consumer electronics value chains through responsible business conduct (RBC) in South-East Asia

BANGKOK, THAILAND

8-10 JUNE

International Forum on Urban Policy for the Sustainable Development Goals

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

9-10 JUNE

Regional Forum on ICT Human Capacity Development and Launch of Women and ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI)

INCHEON, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

15-17 JUNE

Regional Workshop on Opportunities and Challenges in Using Evidence-based Trade Policy for the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals

THIMPHU, BHUTAN

12 JULY

Regional Expert Forum on Population Ageing

BANGKOK, THAILAND

ESCAP CALENDAR OF MEETINGS