



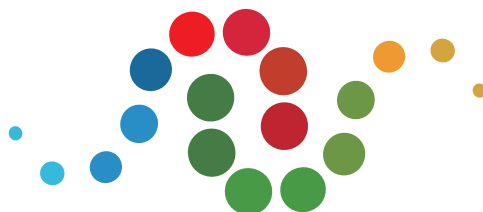
Achieving Sustainable  
Development Goals  
in East and  
North-East Asia

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*The shaded areas of the map indicate ESCAP members and associate members.*

# ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN EAST AND NORTH-EAST ASIA



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For further information on this publication, please contact:

East and North-East Asia Office  
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific  
7th floor, G-Tower  
175 Art center-daero, Songdo-dong,  
Yeonsu-gu, Incheon 22004, Republic of Korea  
[escap-sroenea-registry@un.org](mailto:escap-sroenea-registry@un.org)



## PREFACE

This publication highlights challenges and priorities of the East and North-East Asian subregion in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The subregion comprises China (including Hong Kong, China; and Macau, China), Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea and Russian Federation, a mix of developed and developing members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The subregion as a whole is well advanced in terms of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the predecessors of the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, despite having made significant achievements in that regard, there are many unfinished development challenges facing the subregion. In particular, in view of its large population, the ENEA subregion has a large pool of people still living in poverty.

Equally important, the Sustainable Development Goals shed light on various issues which were not within the scope or the main focus of the Millennium Development Goals but are more pertinent to the ENEA subregion, particularly in areas associated with environmental sustainability.

In this publication, an attempt has been made to provide a quick overview of challenges pertinent to the East and North-East Asian subregion, and explore policy responses needed at national, subregional and regional levels to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, utilizing resources, financial and technological advantages, and maximizing the potential for regional and subregional cooperation.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

East and North-East Asia (ENEAs), as **one of the most dynamic, innovative and fast-developing areas** of the world, has made remarkable progress over the past two decades – with annual GDP growth higher than that in the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of world. The ENEAs subregion is well advanced in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

**Yet many challenges remain.** The ENEAs subregion still has a large number of people living in poverty and a large disparity in income among countries, with Japan at one end of the spectrum and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the other. There has been no fundamental trend in reversing environmental and resource losses, or in reducing the growth of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The subregion's resource-intensive economic growth has led to large increases in the demand for materials and energy.

**A number of emerging challenges remain to be dealt with.** The ENEAs subregion is home to a large number of older persons, with the process of population ageing taking place at unprecedented speed and on a scale never before experienced in human history.

**The priority areas for the ENEAs subregion to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** include the following:

- **Promoting poverty reduction and safeguarding basic needs:** In 2012, the population living in extreme poverty – on less than \$1.90 a day in 2011 purchasing power parity (PPP) – in East and North-East Asia reached 127 million, accounting for 7.4 per cent of the total population of the ENEAs subregion. For this reason, it is necessary to give top priority to promoting poverty alleviation and safeguarding the basic living needs of the poverty-stricken people in the ENEAs subregion.
- **Enhancing energy efficiency and optimizing energy structure:** Energy consumption in the ENEAs subregion represents a third of global energy consumption. Except for Japan and the Republic of Korea, the energy efficiency of other countries in the subregion is lower than that of the global average. The share of coal use accounts for 23.7 per cent of total final consumption, double that of the global average. It is therefore very important to increase energy efficiency and to promote sustainable consumption.
- **Addressing climate change:** GHG emissions from countries in the ENEAs subregion constitute about one third of the global total. By developing the necessary technologies and introducing effective policies and measures, the ENEAs subregion could play a key role in helping to mitigate global climate change.
- **Increasing resilience to disasters:** The ENEAs subregion is vulnerable to extreme weather conditions. In 2015, a total of 23 million people in the subregion were affected by natural disasters. It is important to strengthen the capacity of the subregion in fighting against and adapting to disasters related to climate and other natural causes.
- **Enhancing resource efficiency to maintain resource security:** Resource efficiency in the ENEAs subregion is lower than the global average. Actions to increase the efficiency of resource use, adopt cleaner and more environment-friendly technologies and industrial processes to improve the ENEAs subregion's infrastructure and industrial conditions would result in multiple benefits in terms of sustainable development in the subregion.
- **Driving ecological innovation for growth:** Increasing the rate of scientific and technological achievements and translating the innovative results into industrial transformation across the subregion could contribute to shifting economic growth into a resource-efficient and low carbon pathway.

- **Integrating population ageing into national development priorities:** The challenge of population ageing has already begun to affect ENEA countries. Many countries have thus embarked on a new era in establishing supporting structures to deal with a rapidly ageing population and to shift older persons from being idle beneficiaries of welfare to active contributors to society.
- **Transforming the role of development assistance – means of implementation:** Countries in East and North-East Asia are poised to exercise regional and global leadership in terms of the means of implementation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with best practices emanating from the subregion in such areas as North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, by scaling up and efficiently utilizing their financial assistance, as well as by sharing knowledge and technical support in various areas, including green and eco-efficient technologies.

Addressing such priorities requires developing country-specific goals and Sustainable Development Goal implementation plans, promoting information disclosure, promoting participation of all stakeholders, including the private sector and legislators, and advancing innovation for the financing mechanisms necessary for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. ENEA countries have begun the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup> and are at an early stage in formulating policies and measures and putting into place the necessary institutional architecture for this purpose. East and North-East Asian countries have already participated in national reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals. China and the Republic of Korea were two of the inaugural 22 countries to present their national voluntary reviews at the 2016 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In 2017, Japan will present its national voluntary review at the Forum.

ENEA countries could jointly mobilize their contributions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through national measures and enhance both subregional and regional cooperation.

- At the national level,** ENEA countries can establish and improve financing mechanisms, including through public-private partnerships, increase their technical support and promote the dissemination of knowledge and best practices, for instance by investing in education and technological innovation;
- At the subregional level,** despite political difficulties and historical differences, it is important for ENEA countries to promote meaningful partnerships by making full use of existing mechanisms. Deepening cooperation among countries in the existing subregional framework could promote subregional economic cooperation and contribute to regional economic integration. Ongoing environmental cooperation in East and North-East Asia, under the aegis of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation, could be intensified to address subregional environmental issues, as well as to build mutual trust and promote cooperation among the countries in the subregion;
- At the regional level,** ENEA countries can take a leadership role in facilitating the means for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by assisting other countries in such areas as finance, knowledge-sharing and technical support by:
  - **Enhancing technical assistance for capacity-building:** Given the key role of ENEA countries in providing

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