



## **High-Level Dialogue on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration for Enhancing Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific**

**Bangkok, Thailand, 20-21 April 2017**

### **I. Background**

In the Bangkok Declaration, adopted at the First Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration (RECI) in December 2013, ESCAP member States resolved to work together to enhance cooperation in four areas: (a) moving towards the formation of an integrated market; (b) the development of seamless connectivity across the region in the areas of transport, energy and information and communications technology; (c) enhancing financial cooperation; and (d) increasing economic and technical cooperation to address shared vulnerabilities and risks. ESCAP member States subsequently endorsed the Bangkok Declaration through ESCAP resolution 70/1.

Enhancing regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific is of great strategic significance in light of the diminished importance of the region's traditional export markets since the global financial and economic crisis of 2008. Furthermore, during 2001-2005 the GDP of the ESCAP member States represented only 27.5% of the world GDP, compared to 46.3% for North America and Western Europe combined. But ten years later, over 2011-2015, the ESCAP region share of the world GDP increased to 36.7%, slightly exceeding the share of North America and Western Europe (36.6%). In this vein, further expansion of trade and investment within the region – a major objective of RECI – could prove highly beneficial for Asia and the Pacific to generate jobs, reduce poverty and boost economic growth.

The enormous potential of RECI to generate income and opportunities makes it a critical enabler of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The complementarities between RECI and the 2030 Agenda go in both directions. Not only can RECI help finance the 2030 Agenda, but the latter can also guide the implementation of RECI. This can happen, for instance, by ensuring that infrastructure projects have favourable social and environmental, as well as economic, impacts. Ensuring that infrastructure projects connect small, low-income and geographically distant countries with the main markets of the region and giving high priority to address transboundary vulnerabilities and risks are two other ways in which the 2030 Agenda can inform how RECI can be most effectively implemented.

## II. Objectives

The purpose of the Dialogue is to discuss how the region can most effectively pursue regional economic cooperation and integration to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. The participants will discuss in detail the main challenges and way forward in each of the four pillars of RECI. The focus, however, will be on finding solutions rather on diagnosing obstacles. A report prepared by ESCAP, which will be made available ahead of the meeting, will provide background for the discussions.

Three particular issues will be emphasized in the discussions:

- 1) *Untangling the various 'noodle bowls'*. The region is characterized by a plethora of overlapping and not mutually consistent bilateral and plurilateral regulatory frameworks in areas such as trade preferences, investment protection, transport norms, trade facilitation and others. These 'noodle bowls' – as they are often referred in the trade literature – create inefficiencies and transaction costs. In order to facilitate trade and investment throughout the region, they should be simplified. The question is how this can best be done in a region as vast and heterogeneous as Asia and the Pacific? Possibilities to explore in this regards could include mutual recognition agreements between countries and various existing general and specialized groupings, including ASEAN, SAARC, and others. In the discussions, the role that ESCAP could play in such undertaking could also be discussed.
- 2) *Moving simultaneously in the four pillars of RECI*. A new initiative by the Chinese government, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been much discussed recently, and can play an important role in boosting physical infrastructure investment throughout the region. This will address the seamless connectivity pillar of RECI. However, infrastructure investment alone is not sufficient: it needs to be complemented with facilitation agreements and a simplification of regulations, including those pertaining to trade and investment. Also, a substantial expansion of infrastructure investment will require the mobilization of additional funding, for which it will be useful to enhance cooperation on financial matters across the region. Thus, it is important to discuss how to move forward simultaneously in the four pillars of RECI, complementing the BRI with additional work in the other pillars of RECI.
- 3) *Two-way links between RECI and the 2030 Agenda*. How RECI, through boosting employment and income throughout the region can support the 2030 Agenda and generate much needed funding for the SDGs? And how the SDGs can inform the best ways to implement RECI?

### III. Organization and Participation

The Dialogue will be hosted by the ESCAP Secretariat at the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok, Thailand in 20-21 April 2017. All ESCAP member and associate members are invited to Government nominate one or more senior representatives whose work closely relates to one or more areas of RECI to participate in the meeting. Invitations will be extended also to relevant international, regional, and subregional organisations working on various aspects of RECI in the region. A chair summary reflecting the main issues discussed at the Dialogue will be discussed in the last session of the meeting.

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_1508](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_1508)

