



Transformation for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific region





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Executive Secretary's Message



Transformation for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific region identifies key issues that define the work of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and advocates for regional cooperation and action on core priorities for a future of shared and sustainable prosperity.

The Asia and Pacific region has been an important driver of our shared global development journey since the Millennium Declaration was first adopted 15 years ago. Seizing the opportunities presented by the Rio+20 summit, our region has used the ESCAP intergovernmental platform to give strong voice to our regional priorities in shaping the global development future.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has said that 2015 is a year of “test and transition,” during which we will see landmark negotiations that will set the global development agenda for the next 15 years.

It is time for us to grow better. It is time to end poverty and hunger. It is time to embrace diversity and reject inequality. It is time to value our natural resources and to guarantee the future for our children.

Supporting this transformation, ESCAP strives to promote greater cooperation and integration between our members. Closer, stronger regional bonds are crucial for shared prosperity and a more sustainable future. Let us together shape and define our path, driving the transformations our region needs. It is time for Asia and the Pacific region to again lead the world by advancing regional action for our people and our planet.

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

About ESCAP



VISION

ESCAP envisions a resilient Asia and the Pacific region based on shared prosperity, social equity and sustainability. It contributes to these goals through its comprehensive multilateral platform for promoting cooperation and development among its member States.



WHO
WE ARE

ESCAP is the regional arm of the United Nations and plays a unique role as the only intergovernmental forum for all countries and territories of the Asia and Pacific region. Established in 1947, ESCAP today has 53 members and 9 associate members, covering more than 60 per cent of the world's population, or 4.1 billion people.



OUR
WORK

From its headquarters in Bangkok, ESCAP provides a forum for its member States that promotes regional cooperation and collective action, assisting countries in building and sustaining shared economic growth and social equity.



OUR
OUTCOMES

In pursuing its vision, ESCAP provides various forms of assistance to member States:

- ESCAP promotes rigorous analysis and peer-learning through its seven core areas of work: macroeconomic policy and development, trade and investment, social development, transport, statistics, environment and development, and information communications technology and disaster risk reduction.
- These analyses are translated into policy dialogues and recommendations.
- ESCAP also provides good development practices, knowledge-sharing and technical assistance to member countries in the implementation of these recommendations.
- The norm-setting and policy work of ESCAP ultimately affects people's lives in a positive way by assisting countries to shape and implement a more balanced and inclusive development agenda for the region.



Executive Secretary
Dr. Shamshad Akhtar

Headquarters
Bangkok, Thailand

Founded
1947

53
members

4
subregional
offices

9
associate
members

over
60%
of the world's
population

4.1
billion people

ESCAP enables stronger participation for smaller and often left-out voices of the region the Least Developed Countries, the Small Island Developing States and the Landlocked Developing Countries.

Year in Review

MAY 2014 - MAY 2015

May 2014

Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development I (APFSD I) (19-21 May)

Forty-third Session of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) Standing Committee (26-27 May)

70th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – Phase I (23 May)

June 2014

Asia-Pacific Outreach Meeting on Sustainable Development Financing (10-11 June)

Launch of the United Nations Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) Decade (18 June)

Sixth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (23-25 June)

July 2014

Tenth ESCAP-Asian Development Bank (ADB) Annual Consultation Meeting (18 July)

Forty-fourth Session of the APTA Standing Committee (24-25 July)

August 2014

70th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – Phase II (4-8 August)

Regional Consultation on Accountability for the Post-2015 Development Agenda (5-6 August)

Launch of the United Nations Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2014 (6 August)

Third Session of the ESCAP Committee on Social Development (18-20 August)

September 2014

High-level International Conference on the Role of Transport and Transit Corridors in Ensuring International Cooperation, Stability, and Sustainable Development (3-4 September)

Asian Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) (4 September)

Second Regional Forum on Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in Asia and the Pacific (9-11 September)

Sixth Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) (22-27 September)

Launch of the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2014 (APTIR) (24 September)

October 2014

Fourth Session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology (14-16 October)

Fourth Session of the Committee on Transport (15-17 October)

November 2014

Fifth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (4-7 November)

Forty-fifth Session of the APTA Standing Committee (10-12 November)

Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (17-20 November)

Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific (24-28 November)

December 2014

Seventeenth Sustainable Development Conference: Pathways to Sustainable Development (9-11 December)

January 2015

Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS (28-30 January)

February 2015

Third Joint Session of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones and the Typhoon Committee (9-13 February)

March 2015

High-Level Asia-Pacific Dialogue on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPOA) for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (4-6 March)

Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (14-18 March)

Forty-sixth Session of the APTA Standing Committee (17-18 March)

Fourth Session of the Committee on Statistics (25-27 March)

April 2015

Regional Forum for Least Developed Countries of Asia and the Pacific Region (28-29 April)

Asia-Pacific High-Level Consultation on Financing for Development (29-30 April)

First Meeting of the Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation (1-3 April)

May 2015

Launch of the United Nations Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015 (14 May)

Regional Conference on Aligning Corporate Sustainability with SDGs (20 May)

APFSD II (21-22 May)

71st Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (25-29 May)



Connectivity



Connectivity

Promoting interconnectedness is vital to the future of the Asia and Pacific region. Consolidating growth necessitates cooperation between countries since, despite the region's dynamism in recent decades, most of that development came from the growth of individual countries. To best unlock the potential of the region, a broader perspective on connectivity is key. This should not be considered sector by sector but rather as part of a unified whole, encompassing the development of corridors of prosperity through networks of transport, information and communications technology (ICT) and energy.

Launching this transformation will require both physical and political networks. Through our partnerships with governments in the region, we promote the advancement of critically underdeveloped systems and the development of infrastructure to foster links between the countries of the region. ESCAP supports and assists member States in the expansion of transport infrastructure, facilitating inter-country transport, broadband and energy networks while emphasizing the constructive impact of connectivity in the region. Mobilizing governmental authorities and gaining their political and financial support is essential for continued prosperity, along with creating stronger links between nations.

In this context, ESCAP encourages and helps member States adopt safe, modern and environmentally-friendly ways of moving goods and people in efficient, interlinked systems. Since its inception in 1959, the ESCAP Asian Highway project has expanded to include over 140,000 kilometres of

standardized roadways, connecting 32 countries across the region. This, together with the Trans-Asian Railway programme, signals a move towards more robust frameworks of integrated intermodal connectivity – roads leading to railway networks with effective links to ports – which are crucial for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and transit.

There is, however, more to our connectivity work than the infrastructure for physically connecting people. We also seek to address the growing digital divide in broadband connectivity that, without investment, could turn into a development gap. The current ICT revolution has resulted in numerous innovations with great potential development impacts but the benefits are not shared equally by all. Broadband infrastructure is typically concentrated in commercially viable urban markets while rural areas are often left underserved. This leaves large swathes of the region without sufficient access to ICT.

To tackle this, ESCAP's Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative seeks to promote seamless ICT connectivity. Designed to improve regional transmission networks through better cross-border fibre-optic cabling, the project envisions the Asian Highway network as the foundation for cost-effective intraregional broadband access.

In this framework, fibre-optic cables can be laid along road or railways as part of construction or maintenance. This also promotes open access to key transmission infrastructure, boosting competition and ultimately resulting in lower prices for consumers. Other advantages of new terrestrial routes include improved resilience in international transmission, which is currently viewed as excessively reliant on a small number of submarine cables.

ESCAP advocates that these infrastructure improvements underpin relations between countries and that our ICT capacity-building work can support countries to transform their businesses, drive productivity and improve efficiency.

At the same time, greater energy connectivity is crucial for fuelling development in our region. Through our intergovernmental forum we advocate for the creation of an Asian Energy Highway to improve infrastructure and stimulate cooperation between power importers and exporters. This would combine different types of delivery methods, including pipelines and cross-border grids, and serve as an effective option to optimize the application of energy resources, in particular renewable energy.

We also understand that greater intraregional connectivity will be a force for change for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific subregion. These states suffer from multiple transport, ICT and energy gaps that hinder their long-term development where large distances and lack of adequate infrastructure make the transfer and sale of goods prohibitively expensive. Sustainable energy production is also needed since scarce natural resources and limited networks render these islands vulnerable to exploitation from energy providers.

Subprogrammes

- Transport
- Environment and development
- Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction



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