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*"Promoting regional cooperation for inclusive and sustainable development in South and South-West Asia"*

South and South-West Asia Office



## ESCAP Executive Secretary visits India



Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, in her first official visit to India from 3-5 February 2015, called on a number of senior officials in the Government of India, namely, H.E. Ms. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs; H.E. Mr Suresh Prabhu, Railway Minister; H.E. Ms Maneka Gandhi, Minister for Women and Child Development, Mr Rajiv Kher, Commerce Secretary; Dr Shailesh Nayak, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences; Dr Vijayraghavan, Secretary (DSIR), Ministry of Science & Technology, and Prof. TCA Anant, Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. She also addressed a number of public events as reported elsewhere.

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## Policy Options for Sustainable Urbanization

H.E. Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, Honorable Minister of Urban Development and Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India inaugurated a [Regional Policy Dialogue on Sustainable Urbanization in South Asia](#), convened by ESCAP in New Delhi on 17-18 December 2014, in partnership with the National Institute of

Urban Affairs. The two-day regional meeting brought together over 120 policymakers, representatives from academia, international organizations and civil society from seven countries in the region to reflect on the challenges of steering the rapid urbanization taking place in South Asia in a more sustainable manner. [Read more](#)



## Strengthening transport connectivity for regional integration in Southern Asia



Mr Rajiv Kher, Commerce Secretary, Government of India and H.E. Prof. Gowher Rizvi, International Affairs Adviser to Prime Minister of Bangladesh jointly inaugurated the Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Transport Connectivity in Southern Asia organized by ESCAP jointly with the Asian Institute of Transport Development on 19-20 November 2014 in New Delhi. Ambassadors, senior government officials, transport experts, logistics operators, heads of think-tanks, and subregional groupings and

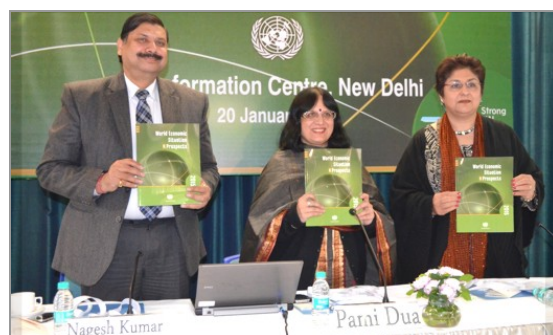
development banks were among 120 participants of the Policy Dialogue.

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### India MDGs Report Launched

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary ESCAP, Dr. T.C. A. Anant, Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and Chief Statistician, Government of India; Mr. Louis-Georges Arsenault, UNICEF Representative and Resident Coordinator, a.i. and Dr Nagesh Kumar, Head UNESCAP-SSWA at the launch



### World Economic and Social Prospects 2015 Launched along with ESCAP Survey Year-end Update 2014

Dr. Nagesh Kumar of UNESCAP-SSWA and Prof Parni Dua, Director of Delhi School of Economics launched the World Economic and Social Prospects 2015 along with the ESCAP Survey Year-end Update 2014 at an

of India and the MDGs: Towards a Sustainable Future for All" a report prepared by UNESCAP in New Delhi on 4 February 2015. The high-profile launch was followed by a panel discussion.

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event organized by the UN Information Centre moderated by its director Ms Kiran Mehra-Kerpelman, in New Delhi on 20 January 2015.

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## ESCAP at major forums in South Asia

### SDGs amidst wealth and income disparities

**15th Delhi Sustainable Development Summit, 5-7 February 2015, New Delhi**



During her visit to New Delhi, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar took part in a high-level panel on SDGs in a World of Wealth and Income Disparities at the [15<sup>th</sup> Delhi Sustainable Development Summit \(DSDS\)](#), held in New Delhi during 5-7 February 2015. She stressed that inclusive growth was the best means to tackle inequality and underscored the role of the SDGs in advancing this agenda.

"Fully integrating sustainability into our development discourse is ever more urgent, as evidence grows of pervasive inequalities and wealth concentration", Dr. Akhtar stated. "... Inequality is the nemesis of sustainable development. It undermines both the pace and durability of growth, which in turn retards progress on poverty and access to services", said Dr Akhtar. The session was chaired by Mr. Yvo De Boer, Director-General, Global Green Growth Institute.

### Pathways to Sustainable Development complex but attainable: Dr. Akhtar

**17th Sustainable Development Conference, 9-11 December 2014, Islamabad**



"New leadership across South Asia has a unique opportunity to mainstream the sustainable development agenda to ensure effective development outcomes for all people", stated Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary, delivering the Keynote Address to the Seventeenth Sustainable Development



Conference. Organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, the Conference was held from 9 to 11 December 2014 in Islamabad, Pakistan under the overarching theme 'Pathways to Sustainable Development'.

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ESCAP also co-hosted a session on Regional Economic Cooperation and Connectivity in South Asia at the SDC. In addition Dr Nagesh Kumar delivered a key presentation at the session on Materializing the SDGs in South Asia.

## ESCAP delivers key messages on SDGs, regional cooperation for food security & connectivity at the 7th South Asia Economic Summit

**7th South Asia Economic Summit, 5-7 November 2014, New Delhi**



As a partner organizer, ESCAP contributed to three plenary sessions at the 7<sup>th</sup> South Asia Economic Summit. Dr Nagesh Kumar chaired the plenary session on Post-2015 Development

Agenda and SDGs: A South Asian Perspective with distinguished speakers from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan representing think-tanks and the governments.

ESCAP co-hosted the plenary session on Regional Cooperation for Food Security, in South Asia. It brought together experts involved in ESCAP project on the subject to share the findings of their work.



Dr Nagesh Kumar of ESCAP delivered a special address at the plenary session on Regional Transport Connectivity in South Asia based on the work done by ESCAP in the transport connectivity in

the subregion and beyond.

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## Role of Business Enterprises in Sustainable Transformation



Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered a well attended special lecture at Imperial Hotel under the auspices of the Global Compact Network India (GCNI) on 4 February 2015 on Sustainable Transformation of India and the Role of Business Enterprises. “Post-2015 sustainable

development has the potential to break new ground... as a wide-ranging and transformational new development paradigm”, stated Dr. Akhtar, underscoring the critical role that business enterprises can play in implementing the sustainable development agenda, in terms of resources necessary for implementation and the need for business enterprises to realign their priorities and adopt sustainable business practices. **Full speech** [here](#)

## Seamless Transport Connectivity for shared prosperity in Asia-Pacific

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered a keynote speech on Seamless Transport Connectivity for shared prosperity in Asia and the Pacific at the India International Centre, New Delhi, under the auspices of the Asian Institute of Transport Development (AITD) on 3 February



2015 at a dinner hosted in her honour by Mr. K.L. Thapar, Chairman of AITD. Dr. Akhtar’s speech focused on transport and trade connectivity in South Asia, intermodal transport systems as key to improved connectivity, rail corridors, the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, and a roadmap for future action on subregional connectivity.

## Regional brainstorming on Employment and Social Protection in South Asia



ESCAP is a part of the South Asia Research Network on Employment and Social Protection for

Inclusive Growth (SARNET) established jointly with the ILO South Asia Decent Work Team and the Institute for Human Development and supported by IDRC. SARNET organized an international conference on Meeting the Challenges of Employment and Social Protection in South Asia on 15-16 December 2014 in New Delhi. Dr Nagesh Kumar delivered opening remarks at the conference besides making a presentation at the first plenary session on employment creation through manufacturing oriented structural transformation of South Asian countries.

## 5th Technical Workshop on Afghanistan's WTO Accession

The Fifth Technical Capacity Building Workshop on Afghanistan's WTO Accession jointly organized by ESCAP and the International Trade Centre, Geneva was inaugurated in New Delhi on 1 December 2014 by H.E. Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali, Ambassador of Afghanistan in India. The three-day programme which brought together 25 officials from the Government of



Afghanistan and representatives of the country's Chamber of Commerce, also covered field visits to export promotion organizations. [Read more](#)

## Bhutan explores trade policy choices

The Trade and Investment Division of ESCAP (with support from ESCAP-SSWA Office), in collaboration with the Department of Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Government of Bhutan organized the National Workshop on Trade Policy Choices: Accession to WTO and APTA from 8 to 10 December 2014 in Thimphu. The three-day workshop sought to build the capacity of government officials and business leaders in trade policy choices. The workshop covered a broad range of topics, from trade and sustainable development, to regional trade agreements in Asia-Pacific, accession procedures of APTA, and challenges and opportunities related to Bhutan's accession to the WTO. Several trade policy making tools were also presented. The workshop inaugurated by Hon'ble Secretary, Mr. Dasho Sonam Tshering, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Bhutan brought together over 30 Government officials and trade experts from the Royal Government of Bhutan.

## Standing Committee meeting of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement





Mr. Ravi Ratnayake, Director, Trade and Investment Division, ESCAP and Dr. Nagesh Kumar addressed the inaugural session of the 45<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meeting of APTA held at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi from 10 to 12 November 2014.

## UN Secretary-General meets with the UN Country Team in India



The United Nations Secretary general Mr Ban Ki Moon during his visit to India on 11-13 January 2015 delivered a public address at the Indian Council of World Affairs besides calling on dignitaries in the Indian Government. He also addressed the UN staff at a town hall meeting and held a breakfast meeting with the Heads of UN Agencies. Dr Nagesh Kumar, Head of ESCAP-SSWA was invited by the UN Resident

Coordinator among the three heads of agencies to brief the Secretary-General and his delegation. Dr Kumar in his briefing highlighted the India's possible role and potential in the sustainable development agenda especially through its unique frugal engineering capability, its regional and South-South Cooperation activities and ESCAP's work in support of regional cooperation and connectivity.

## Dr Shamshad Akhtar visits ESCAP-SSWA and APCTT



Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary of ESCAP took time out of her very hectic schedule of meetings and engagements during her first official mission to New Delhi to visit the ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office and the the Asia Pacific Centre for the Transfer of Technology (a regional institute of ESCAP), co-located in Qutub Institutional Area in New Delhi and interacted with staff members.

## Outreach and networking

### Post Disaster Need Assessment in South Asia

A five-day SAARC Training Programme on Post-Disaster Needs Assessment was conducted in Sri Lanka from 13 to 17 October, with participants from all SAARC countries. ESCAP-SSWA supported the programme by providing a resource person through APCICT, at the request of the SAARC Disaster Management Centre, main organizer of the event. The course objective was to support the professionalization of damage and loss assessment in post-disaster scenario, in order to assess the real impact of disaster and assist timely sustainable recovery.

### Role of ICTs for People with Disabilities

ESCAP (Social Development Division and ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office) participated in the International Conference 'From Exclusion to Empowerment - The Role of ICTs for Persons with Disabilities' held in New Delhi from 24 to 26 November 2014. The event built on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and sought to promote the human rights of

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