

South and South-West Asia Development Monitor  
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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 forum calls for enhanced regional connectivity for shared prosperity

The 70<sup>th</sup> annual session of ESCAP was held in Bangkok from 4 to 8 August 2014, under the overall theme of Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity. The theme study which informed the discussions, available [here](#) underscored the critical role of connectivity in driving recent economic growth in the region and identified new drivers of growth likely to shape social and economic development in the future.

Speaking at the opening of the session, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar said: "With little more than 500 days left to the end of the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs, no region has done better than Asia and the Pacific. But with 743 million Asia-Pacific people still desperately poor, there is no room for complacency".

"The key to closing our development gaps and achieving our development goals is economic growth", Dr. Akhtar added. But we cannot afford growth at any cost. To build the future we want, growth must be sustainable, inclusive and job-generating".



### Ministers discuss Asia-Pacific perspectives on Sustainable Development and Financing

Further to the [Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development](#) held in Pattaya, Thailand in May 2014 and the [Asia-Pacific Outreach Meeting on Sustainable Development Financing](#), held in Jakarta in June 2014, the annual Commission session of ESCAP provided a high-profile platform to deliberate on the shaping and means of financing of the development agenda beyond 2015. The Commission session also provided an opportunity to discuss the development challenges and policy proposals contained in the outcome documents of the two preceding events which had received the backing of public and private sector figures from more than 30 countries in Asia-Pacific.

A ministerial-level panel discussion convened on 8 August 2014, as part the Commission session thus lent further support to the decision-making process on regional priorities related to financing, means of implementation, monitoring and reporting of implementation frameworks for sustainable development in the region, as well as on stakeholders engagement. The panel also deliberated on issues of domestic resource mobilization and taxation, as well as challenges that countries face in strengthening tax revenues, and offer policy options, including drawing upon those presented in the [Economic and Social Survey of](#)

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### ESCAP-SSWA work receives support at the Commission session

High-level representatives from all Asian and Pacific countries assembled in Bangkok from 4 to 8 August 2014 for the annual session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). A luncheon meeting was convened on 4 August for representatives of South and South-West Asian countries by Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP who addressed it as well. At the luncheon meeting, chaired by H.E. Mr. Govind Pokhrel, Vice-Chairman of the National Planning Commission of Nepal, Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Head of ESCAP-SSWA briefed participants about the work of ESCAP in the subregion. Later on, under



the agenda item related to the ESCAP-

led subregional activities for development in Asia-Pacific (Committee of the Whole-I), the Commission session was apprised of the work programme for South and South-West Asia. Implemented by the New Delhi-based ESCAP-SSWA Office, the programme focuses on select thematic areas...

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### Food Security: New ESCAP

[Asia and the Pacific 2014](#), the ESCAP flagship publication.

The panel was moderated by H.E. Mr. Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Bhutan and Chair of the 70th session of the Commission. It was broadcasted live and its recording can be accessed [here](#).



A few other high-level and special events were organized in

conjunction with the Commission; in particular the Regional Consultation on Accountability for the Post-2015 Development Agenda held on 5 and 6 August 2014. It provided an opportunity to feed the perspectives of the Asian and Pacific region into the current global discourse on the future monitoring and accountability framework after 2015. The consultation can be accessed [here](#).



### Bhutan Prime Minister elected Chair of ESCAP 70th Commission Session

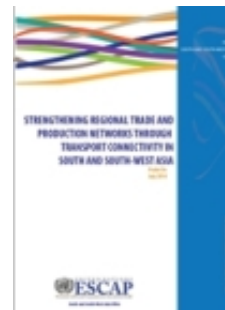
Honorable Prime Minister of Bhutan, H.E. Mr. Tshering Tobgay was elected to the position of Chairman of the 70th Commission session of ESCAP. H.E. Mr. Tobgay and his delegation also met with Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary to discuss opportunities for ESCAP to support the Government of Bhutan's development efforts.

## Paper reviews South Asia's progress, challenges & opportunities

The latest [ESCAP-SSWA Development Paper](#) (No. 1402), available [here](#), reviews the tremendous progress achieved during the past 25 years towards alleviating hunger and food security in South Asia. It argues that, in spite of impressive progress, the rate of decline of chronic undernourishment is too slow to completely eliminate chronic undernourishment, even by 2050.

The paper reviews South Asia's progress, challenges and opportunities for realizing sustainable food security in the post-2015 development agenda. It finds that South Asia's average dietary energy supply is inadequate to reduce the prevalence of undernourishment to 5 per cent, which can be considered as the lowest attainable level for a given country.

The paper makes a strong case for greater effort at the regional level for coordinating policy responses, given the trans-boundary implications of food production systems, distribution and trade, with huge implications for food security. There is greater scope for enhanced coordination of national and regional efforts on food security within the post-2015 development agenda, in line with the Zero Hunger Challenge initiative launched by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the paper states.



## Role of connectivity in strengthening trade and production networks in SSWA

The [ESCAP-SSWA Development Paper](#) (No. 1401), available [here](#) explores the potential of developing regional production networks in South and South-West Asia. Based on an analysis of trends in intraregional trade in 'parts and components', it argues that the region-wide production network in the subregion remains underdeveloped, despite high potential. Poor transport connectivity within the subregion is identified as the key reason for the situation. The Paper underscores that South and South-West Asian countries possess strong complementarities for the development of production networks in many sectors. Promoting such networks through better connectivity measures would help to collectively enhance the trade competitiveness of the subregion's final outputs in world markets. Improving transport infrastructure and transit facilitation along corridors proposed by ESCAP-SSWA can help production networks develop, beside other externalities for development. The paper also reviews challenges and offers policy suggestions to achieve connectivity across the vast and heterogeneous subregion. It also supports the need for a regional connectivity masterplan to guide the most optimal development of the subregion's connectivity requirements.

## Outreach and networking

### South Asia's perspectives on MDGs and Post 2015



Dr. Nagesh Kumar delivered a key presentation on MDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: A South Asian Perspective at the inaugural session of the Conference on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Perspectives from India and Beyond, organized by the Observer Research Foundation and Saferworld. The Conference was held in New Delhi on 13-14 August 2014. In his presentation, Dr. Kumar shared key findings from the [ESCAP/ADB/UNDP 2013 MDG regional report](#) and discussed issues related to the post-2015 development agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and means of implementation, from a South Asian perspective. He made a case for stronger provisions for means of



implementation and global partnership in the post-2015 development agenda, while discussing the proposals of the Open Working Group. The session was also addressed by representatives of think-tanks from India, China and Africa.

### ESCAP-SSWA at the WTO's Committee on Trade and Development

At the invitation of the WTO Secretariat, Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Head of ESCAP-SSWA addressed the Thirty-First Session of the Committee on Trade and Development of the World Trade Organization (WTO), held in Geneva on 18 June 2014. Dr. Kumar made a presentation on Regional Transport Connectivity for Economic Integration in South and South-West Asia, underscoring how poor transport connectivity and facilitation at the borders caused the potential of intraregional trade in the subregion to be greatly constrained. He argued that regional economic integration had to drive the dynamism in the new changed global context as advanced economies grow at relatively subdued rates of growth. In that context, he discussed the imperatives of developing regional transport connectivity and facilitation through development of extended corridors across the breadth of the subregion. He then briefed the Committee on the work undertaken by ESCAP in promoting broader transport corridors in South and South-West Asia, to enhance intraregional trade as well as position the subregion as a hub of intraregional trade. To view the meeting note, as published on the website of WTO, please click [here](#).



### Trade and Technology Transfer, drawing from Asian countries' experience

Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Head of ESCAP-SSWA also addressed the WTO Workshop on Trade & Transfer of Technology held in Geneva on 16 June 2014 as a resource person, at the invitation of WTO Secretariat. Dr. Kumar made two different presentations at the Workshop. The first highlighted national policies enacted to facilitate technology transfer, drawing upon the experience of Asian countries. These included policies fostering industrial deepening, reverse engineering, performance requirements (such as joint venture requirements), and those promoting vertical inter-firm linkages, besides skills formation, training and R&D activities. The second presentation focused on cluster policies and their role for trade and transfer of technology in the services sector. It summarized the policies adopted by India to build the ICT software and business process outsourcing industry that has grown to be a USD 100 billion industry with export earnings estimated at \$70 billion per year. Dr. Kumar highlighted the importance of skill development, clustering around centres of excellence and common infrastructure facilities to benefit from agglomeration economies for the development of ICT services.

### Indian trainee diplomats visit ESCAP-SSWA



A group of 25 probationers of the Indian Foreign Service visited the ESCAP-SSWA Office for a lecture-cum-briefing session about ESCAP and regional economic integration in South Asia on 30 June 2014. The visit was organized at the request of the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) where the group underwent a training programme. At the session, Dr. Nagesh Kumar briefed the trainee diplomats about the work of ESCAP and its various offices and delivered a talk on regional economic integration at the broader and subregional levels. He also underscored the central role of transport connectivity in promoting regional economic integration, especially highlighting the work of ESCAP.

## Key visitors and bilateral meetings

- **Ms. Lise Grande**, UN Resident Coordinator, India visited ESCAP-SSWA Office for a courtesy call on Mr. Nagesh Kumar on 1 July 2014.
- **Dr. Jyoti K. Parikh**, Executive Director, Integrated Research and Action for Development (IRADe), visited ESCAP-SSWA on 18 July for a courtesy call on Dr. Nagesh Kumar. Dr. Parikh briefed SSWA on its work on the vulnerability profile of Indian cities.
- **Ms. Ishita Roy**, Secretary-General, International Sericultural Commission, Bangalore visited ESCAP-SSWA on 21 July 2014 for a meeting with Dr. Nagesh Kumar. Ms. Roy extended an invitation to ESCAP to

take part in the Commission's 23rd International Congress on Sericulture and Silk Industry scheduled to be held in November 2014.

- The new Country Director of UNDP, India, **Mr. Jaco Cilliers**, made a courtesy call on Dr. Nagesh Kumar on 1 August 2014, for a briefing on the subregional office's work and discuss opportunities for collaboration.
- **Mr. Duncan Overfield**, Senior Adviser, DFID Asia visited Dr. Nagesh Kumar on 1 August 2014 for further discussions on transport corridors across SSWA.
- **Mr. Harsha Vardhan Singh** from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Geneva, a former Deputy Director-General, World Trade Organization visited ESCAP SSWA Office on 14 August for a courtesy call on Mr. Nagesh Kumar.
- During his visit to WTO, Geneva in mid-June 2014, Dr. Nagesh Kumar made courtesy calls on seniors officials at the UNCTAD viz. **Mr. James Zhan**, Director, Division on Investment, Technology and Enterprise Development; **Mr. Richard Kojul-Wright**, Director, Division on Globalization and Development; **Ms. Mina Mashayeki**, Trade Division; Mr. Jan Hoffmann, Logistics Section; **Mr. Rajesh Agarwal**, International Trade Centre, and **Mr. Ratnakar Adhikari**, Executive Director, EIF Secretariat, WTO. Dr. Kumar took this opportunity to brief them on SSWA work programme.
- Dr. Nagesh Kumar participated in the inter-ministerial meeting convened on 17 July 2014 by the Joint Secretary, **Department of Commerce**, Government of India, in preparation for India's participation in the ESCAP 70th Commission Session.
- **Mr. Vivan Sharan** and **Ms. Geethanjali Nataraj** from the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi visited ESCAP-SSWA Office on 18 July for a discussion on possible collaboration on trade and investment in South Asia.
- Dr. Nagesh Kumar visited the **Ministry of External Affairs** of the Government of India for a meeting on 17 July with the Joint Secretary (Border Connectivity and SAARC) regarding the work of ESCAP and upcoming meetings on connectivity organized by ESCAP.
- Dr. Nagesh Kumar was interviewed by the Indian national television channel, **Doordarshan** on the topic of "Expectations from the Union Budget". The Budget 2014-2015 was presented to the Parliament of India on 10 July 2014.
- **Mr. Sajal Mathur**, Professor, Centre for WTO studies, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi made a courtesy call on Mr. Nagesh Kumar on 23 June 2014.
- Dr. Nagesh Kumar was interviewed by **ET NOW TV** channel on 11 August 2014 in relation to the recent FDI policy changes.

## Announcements - Useful links

- [SARNET Training Programme for Young Asian Scholars on Labour Economics](#)
- [Doctoral Student Fellowships in Economics for Asian Scholars](#)
- [Post-doctoral Fellowships for Asian Scholars](#)

### SSWA News Digest

*The South and South-West Asia Development Monitor looks at recent news coverage of the ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office's activities as well as items from news outlets from around the subregion and beyond related to its broad priority areas.*

### Inclusive Growth and Achieving the MDGs

#### [Planning Post-2015 Development](#)

"The U.N. Millennium Development Goals are due to expire at the end of next year. Debate is underway on what should replace them. One U.N. official says they should be based, in part, on the findings of the 2014 Human Development Report...The Human Development Report, released in end July, calls for reducing

vulnerabilities in society and building resilience.

Khalid Malik, author of the report and director of the Human Development Office of the U.N. Development Program stated that the goals that replace the MDGs must support livelihoods and families. "The new set of goals should look at universal approaches to social services, social protection – and also to push for Jobs. That's why the report puts a lot of emphasis on full employment, which sort of disappeared from strategic thinking of most countries, particularly developed countries since the 60s and 70s. And we are now arguing that it's time to return to them." He said it really comes down to making good investments...Those investments, he said, must be made in both men and women and require new thinking and a change in perspective.

(Source: Voice of America)

#### [Recognizing the role of volunteer action in sustainable development](#)

"There is growing recognition that the development framework that will succeed the Millennium Development Goals must ensure a more bottom-up approach to development, one that puts people at its heart and leaves no one behind. To be able to achieve this, it is important that the post-2015 framework looks beyond traditional development approaches and actors.

In designing this framework, we in the global development community have a unique opportunity to think about and encourage a model of development that moves beyond a focus on financial and technical assistance to one that supports more people-centred approaches. And this is where we can really celebrate and learn from the ways that volunteers work — truly from the bottom up.

Volunteer action is the invisible hand in more development solutions than many people think."

(Source: Devex.com)

#### [WFP grants Sri Lanka US\\$ 23 million in food aid assistance to improve health of children and mothers](#)

"The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has granted Sri Lanka US\$ 23 million in assistance to address the malnutrition among children and pregnant and lactating mothers to improve their health. The World Food Programme has agreed to extend the food aid assistance through the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) program under the umbrella of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2013 -2017). Under the Mahinda Chintana Future Vision policy framework the Sri Lankan Government in collaboration with the WFP has taken effective measures to improve the health status of children and lactating and pregnant mothers by recognizing the importance of the balanced growth of a child. The total cost of the PRRO programme is US \$ 34,799,036. Out of which US \$ 23,482,866 will be the direct WFP grant assistance. An estimated 435,000 people are expected to benefit from the PRRO programme. (Source: ColomboPage)

#### [Ceylon Chamber calls for inclusive growth](#)

"At a time when Sri Lanka is all out to double its per capita income beyond US \$ 7,000 by 2020, the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC) Chairman Suresh Shah cautioned that this increase in incomes must not be haunted by income disparity plagues in many other middle income countries. Shah said if this rising per capital income is to benefit businesses, the income must be distributed among a broader group of consumers rather than among a small group of very high net worth individuals. "Sri Lanka must strive for more inclusive growth. This is also in the interest of the private sector. Businesses would benefit more with a broad group of consumers earning a reasonable income rather than with a small group of very high net worth individuals," he said, welcoming a packed audience at the 15th Economic Summit held recently under the theme 'Towards surpassing the US \$ 7,000 per capita by 2020'." (Source: Daily Mirror)

#### [Government \[of Pakistan\] set to implement Vision 2025 for sustainable economic growth](#)

"The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government is all set to implement Vision 2025 to put Pakistan on path to sustainable economic growth. Highlighting the details of the Vision 2025, the official said over the last decade, Pakistan's per capita income had grown at less than 3 per cent per year, while it ranged between 6 to 9 per cent in other countries, like Bangladesh, China, India, South Korea, and Sri Lanka. He further said that while there are several reasons for the relatively slower growth rate of Pakistan, including a number of geopolitical as well as domestic factors, an important one is the absence of a clear national vision supported by sustained political commitment... He said it [Vision 2025] would provide a conceptual platform for the revival of sustainable and inclusive growth, benefiting all citizens of Pakistan, strengthening of the development foundation and enabling the country to achieve international development goals within their respective time frames, and achieving the high level of human development and national

autonomy associated with a high-income status before the centennial anniversary of the creation of Pakistan.” (Source: Daily Times)

## Regional Cooperation and Connectivity

### [Landlocked North-East, Look East Policy and changing geopolitics](#)

“India's Look East Policy, in which Myanmar plays a key role as the route for major connectivity between India's landlocked North-East and South-East Asia, needs to rise above "mere academic talk" to show "more concrete action", experts said at a talk programme held at Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi on the topic 'Look East Policy: India and Myanmar Pitching for Greater Connectivity' in early August... If Myanmar is a key partner of India's Look East policy, the North-East region in general and Manipur in particular are the pivots of the entire policy. The region is remote from all directions but in terms of distance, the region is comparatively quite near to Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan and even China and Thailand than most other main Indian cities with the exception of Kolkata.” (Source: E-PAO)

### [Nepal keen to sign power trade deal with Bangladesh](#)

“Nepal is ready to sign an agreement with Bangladesh to spur power trade between the two countries, a minister of the Himalayan nation said recently. Nepal is close to striking a deal with India on power trade, and a similar deal could be signed between Dhaka and Kathmandu, said Nepalese Energy Minister Radha Kumari Gyawali. “We had a fruitful and productive meeting to forge cooperation in the power sector between the two countries,” Gyawali said at a media briefing after daylong ministerial talks on power sector cooperation in Dhaka. Gyawali welcomed the Government of Bangladesh's initiative for trilateral process involving Bangladesh, Nepal and India. Bangladesh plans to import 3,500 MW of electricity from SAARC countries by 2030 under its power sector master plan. However, Hamid said the regional share to the plan will increase significantly. Bangladesh and Nepal plan to pen a memorandum of understanding on power cooperation during the next round of bilateral meeting in Kathmandu in December this year.” (Source: The Daily Star)

### [India for Greater Transport Connectivity with ASEAN](#)

“India pushed for greater connectivity with the ASEAN countries as visiting External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj recently stressed that the geographic pathways could be linked to the five Ts - Tradition, Talent, Tourism, Trade and Technology - that the Narendra Modi Government is pursuing. Addressing the Third Round Table on ASEAN-India Network of Think tanks, Sushma Swaraj said the connectivity with the 10-member bloc should also ensure institution-to-institution and people-to-people linkages. She said the connectivity projects would become stronger if "we can bring in the soft infrastructure to advance trade integration and facilitation through joint transit arrangements and allow easier movement of goods and people". "There are opportunities for creation of infrastructure and capacity in manufacturing and industrial development, for skills training and vocational education, for establishing logistics chains, energy grids and food processing capacities, which in turn would help address issues relating to energy and food security in our region," she added.” (Source: The New Indian Express)

### [SAARC Summit to focus on connectivity](#)

“South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is expected to approve “Connectivity for Shared Prosperity” as the theme of its 18th Summit scheduled to be held in Kathmandu from November 22-27. The SAARC advisory committee formed by the Government of Nepal has recommended adopting “Connectivity for Shared Prosperity” as the key theme of the summit, diplomatic sources said. Quoting the foreign ministry official, Nepalese media said the advisory committee decided to recommend connectivity theme as it emphasizes connection and linkages from energy grids to rail, road, water and air links, inter-cultural as well as people-to-people contacts in the entire region. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are members of the SAARC, which also has nine observers, namely Myanmar, Republic of Korea, China, Japan, Australia, Iran [Islamic Republic of], the United States, Mauritius and the European Union.” (Source: The Daily Star)

## Food & Energy Security

### [Pakistan attaches high priority to timely completion of TAPI gas pipeline project: PM](#)

“Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Nawaz Sharif recently said that Pakistan attached high priority to

the timely completion of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project. The Prime Minister said this project is part of energy security plan of the Government of Pakistan. "We are glad that the Operations Agreement has been signed and all parties have showed their resolve to complete the project by the target date (i.e. 2017)," he added. "The focus of our foreign policy is on peace for development and the main thrust of our engagement with Central Asia is on trade, investment, energy, connectivity and culture," he added." (Source: Business Recorder)

#### [India Stands Firm on Protecting Food Security of South at WTO](#)

"India and the United States failed at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to reach an agreement on construction of a legally binding decision on a permanent peace clause that would further strengthen what was decided for public distribution programmes for food security in developing countries at the ninth ministerial meeting in Bali, Indonesia, last year. While work on clearing the way for the speedy implementation of the TFA has preceded at brisk pace at the WTO over the last seven months, other issues were somewhat neglected. Several African and South American countries, as well as India, remained unhappy with the lack of progress in issues concerning agriculture and development, particularly in public distribution programmes for food security."

(Source: Independent European Daily Express)

#### [Food security: The challenge of growing population](#)

"Can Bangladesh sustain the gains achieved in food security and make further progress towards sustainable food security? The main challenge in the way of progress towards food security emanates from continuing growth of population. The progress in reducing population growth, from 3.0 per cent per year at independence to about 1.2 per cent now, is laudable. But there are indications that the progress made in fertility reduction has slowed down in recent years... Strong traditional norms, and socio-cultural conditions in the Chittagong and Sylhet Divisions contribute to low acceptance of family planning that will not be easy to overcome. Despite the growth of population, the demand for rice may remain stagnant or even decline if Bangladesh can sustain rapid growth in per capita income. There is potential for further increase in rice production through intensification of land use in the vast coastal region and the depressed basins ... where single crop system (it covers about 25 per cent of the land) still prevails. The intensification is possible through use of shorter maturity crop varieties that have already been developed by our research and development (R&D) system."(Source: the Financial Express)

## Disaster Risk Reduction

#### [Nepal landslide deaths highlight disaster risk reduction gaps](#)

"A landslide in Nepal on 2 August killed more than 150 and search and rescue has ended. Experts say this event, one of the deadliest in the country's recent history, is a wake-up call for hazard mapping, early warning, and disaster management. According to the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium (NRRC) - a coalition of humanitarian, development, financial, and government bodies - floods and landslides are the main cause of 300 deaths per year in Nepal and economic damage exceeding US\$10 million. Disaster

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