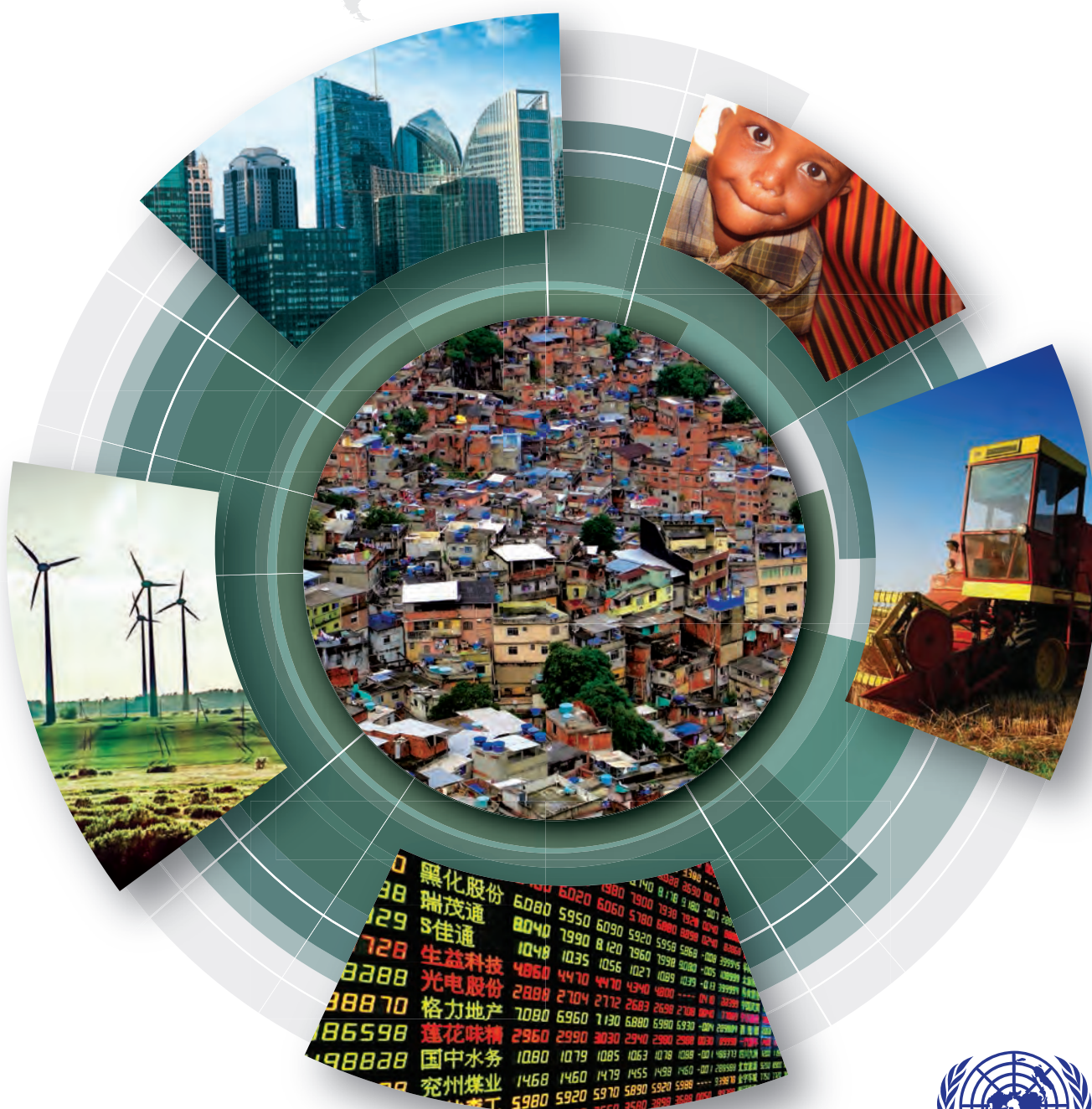


# REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Advancing Integration of its Three Dimensions through Regional Action



United Nations



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# Foreword

## Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

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The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have galvanized unprecedented national commitment and international support since their adoption in 2000, generating meaningful results in the lives of people around the world.

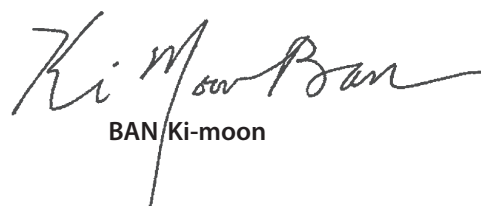
United Nations Regional Commissions have helped to drive this success by designing regional policy approaches, mobilizing political will and technical resources, monitoring progress, and adapting to emerging challenges. I applaud the vision and leadership of the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions.

Now, as the international community engages in a final push to achieve the MDGs by the target date of 2015, we must intensify the focus on areas where more progress is needed.

At the same time, we must forge a vision for sustainable development in all of its economic, social and environmental dimensions to meet the demands of our changing world. New economic powers are rising while new technologies are reshaping our societies. Rapid urbanization and other demographic trends are heightening pressures on the planet. The impacts of climate change are growing. And inequalities are increasing in both rich and poor countries.

In my report on the post-2015 development agenda, *A Life of Dignity for All*, I stressed that in a world of great wealth and technological advances, no person should be left behind. This requires an approach that is bold in ambition yet simple in design. It must be universal in nature, yet responsive to individual countries. It needs to be rights-based, with particular emphasis on women, young people, and marginalized groups. And it must protect the resources of the planet, emphasize sustainable consumption and production, and support action to address climate change. We must ensure peace and governance as key outcomes and enablers of development. We must be open to new and innovative partnerships to mobilize the means of implementation.

This report contains thorough analysis of the regional challenges and opportunities of sustainable development. I commend it to all those interested in enhancing long-term well-being for all people and the planet.



BAN Ki-moon



# Preface

## Executive Secretaries of Regional Commissions

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“The Future We Want”, the outcome document of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, reaffirmed the significance of regional frameworks that complement and facilitate effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action. It called on the Regional Commissions of the United Nations to promote a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental.

Such recognition was not new. “Agenda 21”, adopted by the original 1992 Rio Conference, highlighted the potential contributions of Regional Commissions to capacity-building, integration of environmental concerns into development policies, and cooperation regarding transboundary challenges related to sustainable development. The “Johannesburg Plan of Implementation” of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development also elaborated on specific roles and approaches for the Regional Commissions in promoting this integration.

The reaffirmation of this role at Rio+20 however, has significant implications for Regional Commissions in the course of developing and implementing the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Regional Commissions have held extensive consultations with governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, and parliamentarians. These consultations highlighted the need to finish the unfinished business: meeting the Millennium Development Goals, as well as to address new challenges and priorities, calling for a new development model to be based on structural changes for equality, inclusiveness, resilience, and sustainable development, as a more integrated whole.

The over-arching message which emerged from the consultations was that the next phase of development has to be based on a transformative agenda that is people-centred, cares for our planet, and which generates shared and sustained prosperity. This is the regional vision of the future we want.

The question, across all regions, is how best to get there. We need to take into account that not all countries and regions face identical challenges. Moreover, some countries are beset with conflicts, while others still suffer from decades-long devastating foreign occupations. Despite the importance of universal agreement on SDGs, there cannot be a homogenous approach to implementation. The framework to be developed must take sufficient account of different initial conditions and resource bases, and there must be enough flexibility to adapt this agenda to the local, national, and regional levels.

The Regional Commissions have key roles to play in addressing these challenges and supporting the work to advance sustainable development. Under the Rio+20 outcome, the Regional Commissions have a mandate to coordinate the collection and compilation of regional inputs to global processes on sustainable development, the formulation of SDGs, and the assessment of their implementation. In the context of the new high level political forum (HLPF) on sustainable development, Regional Commissions have also been invited to hold annual regional preparatory meetings prior to each meeting of the HLPF to include a regional dimension in its deliberations. This will ensure coherence from the local to the global level, leading to multi-stakeholder collaboration at both national and local levels, and assisting in implementation.

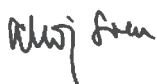
## Preface

The role of Regional Commissions is not limited, however, to acting as a facilitator between global and national processes, but it also includes supporting the reshaping of regional actions in support of internationally agreed norms, policies and programmes.

The Rio+20 outcome document envisions the prioritization of sustainable development by regional and subregional organizations, in particular to: 1) promote more efficient and effective capacity building; 2) develop and implement regional agreements and arrangements as appropriate; and 3) facilitate exchange of information, best practices, and lessons learned. Regional Commissions have made solid contributions to such needs at a regional level by hosting and operating various regional platforms for dialogue and cooperation, and by integrating critical elements in the three dimensions of sustainable development into our work.

In line with the commitments in the Rio+20 outcome document, the Regional Commissions have prioritized sustainable development to promote more efficient and effective capacity building, develop and implement regional agreements and arrangements, and facilitate the exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned. The Regional Commissions have led regional consultations and offered platforms for dialogue and cooperation to support post-Rio+20 follow-up and to help shape the post-2015 agenda. In doing so, we are exploring new ways to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development into our work.

This report presents the major regional challenges to sustainable development and the work being done to address these challenges in an integrated way. The information and analysis presented in the report represents a small fraction of our work on sustainable development. However, we have no doubt that this report provides our partners with a better understanding of our efforts and important roles in advancing sustainable development.



**Sven Alkalaj,**  
Executive Secretary, ECE



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