

## COVER STORY

# It is time for Asia and the Pacific to lead on Sustainable Development



Already recognized for its leadership in global output, trade and development, the Asia-Pacific region now has a new opportunity to lead on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, urged United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Dr. Shamshad Akhtar during the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) held in Bangkok from 3 to 5 April, the first meeting of Asia-Pacific leaders on sustainable development since the 2030 Agenda was adopted.

In 2016, the first year of implementation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the region faces significant challenges including prioritizing SDG implementation, pace and sequencing, meeting the massive data and statistics requirements, as well mobilizing the necessary means of implementation.

“The demands of this ambitious and complex agenda are extraordinary,” said Dr. Akhtar. “It is the most comprehensive framework ever adopted by world leaders to eradicate poverty and ensure access to basic services for all. It offers an unprecedented opportunity for the Asia-Pacific region to transform its economies through an integrated development framework, balancing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Regional transformation is, therefore, urgently needed,” she added.

Asia-Pacific economic growth has moderated in the wake of delays in the global economic recovery and given the lack of aggregate demand. This has been compounded by rising inequalities and the fact that more than 1.4 billion people still live in extreme poverty across our region, suffering from hunger, water insecurity, poor sanitation, insufficient access to energy and a range of other serious challenges to human dignity and well-being.

Real transformation requires not only revitalized economic growth, but also progress on all three dimensions of sustainable development. Defining national priorities will be critical, but implementation also calls for a change of political mind-set, a commitment to effective leadership, policy and institutional coordination, to balance the interests of our people and our planet.

Implementation also demands significant financial resources. The 2030 Agenda could cost Asia and the Pacific as much as \$2.5 trillion per year to close infrastructure gaps, provide universal access to social protection, health and education, as well as initiate action on climate change. Getting baseline statistical indicators right demands an overhaul of national statistical systems, and the appropriate mechanisms to draw on the new and innovative data generated by private providers.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

## ENVIRONMENT

PAGE 3

### NEW REPORT



## SDGS

PAGE 4-5

## ASIA-PACIFIC VOICES



## ICT

PAGE 6

## WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



## MAY EVENTS

PAGE 6

## UPCOMING AT ESCAP

COVER STORY CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

The deployment of science, technology and innovation calls for strong cooperation across the region. Success in Asia and the Pacific is contingent on sufficient resources being invested. In 2013 alone, Asian developing economies spent more than \$650 billion on research and development.

Dr Akhtar emphasized that for the SDGs to succeed, Asia-Pacific countries must take a more integrated approach. "Developing regional understanding of the SDGs and harnessing their means of

implementation are core strategic priorities for ESCAP," she said. "Regional cooperation is critical to galvanize national action on the SDGs, and ESCAP stands ready to support the countries of our region in their efforts to achieve sustainable development outcomes."

For more visit:  
[bit.ly/APSustDev](http://bit.ly/APSustDev)

## ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### Views from the region

The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2016 brought together representatives from member States, UN institutions and other stakeholders to discuss regional priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Here are a few comments from the Ministers who attended the Forum:



#### Mr. Don Pramudwinai Foreign Minister, Kingdom of Thailand

We are here for the 3rd Asia Pacific forum for SDG's. This is certainly a crucial meeting, the first of its kind for Asia Pacific after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September last year. So it is momentous for ESCAP to undertake this task. I noticed that it is a quite a well-attended forum as well, so what we can expect from this meeting to be a very successful one, one which will contribute further to the achievement of the SDG's by 2030. SDGs are at a crucial juncture now, after all the crucial time spent on attaining the MDG's. It is time for the SDG's to turn the vision of the international community into action. Everyone can have a role and this role is crucial for Thailand; we believe our part in assisting and partnering with ESCAP and the UN in achieving the SDG's will be a very promising one.

#### Mr. Ahsan Iqbal, Minister of Planning, Development and Reform, Pakistan

SDGs are very comprehensive and sets an ambitious agenda. It requires social, economic and environment progress on all fronts. However, this global agenda must be regionalized because different regions have different requirements and needs. ESCAP, as a regional commission, is suitably placed to regionalize this global agenda to the needs of the region. The SDGs go beyond the scope of the Millennium Development Goals - it's not just about eradicating poverty, it's about creating a shared prosperity. It touches not just the developing countries but also the developed countries. In today's global world, we cannot have islands of prosperity and islands of poverty. We cannot have islands of developed world and islands of underdeveloped world.







**Mr. Siaso 'Ofa ki Vahafola Sovaleni  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of  
Environment, Kingdom of Tonga**

I believe that the Pacific is in a better place now given the efforts in trying to achieve the MDGs. We have learned a lot from the experience, particularly in establishing a benchmark of where we are and that is very important in determining how we want to get to where we are supposed to be. A key factor that is crucial for the Pacific and our efforts to achieving the SDGs is dealing with disasters. One of the important interventions is building resilience, not just for natural disasters but also for man-made disasters. Resilience is an integrated approach whereby you look at health, education, infrastructure, energy and so forth. We are in a better place now, given the change in the mindset of the Pacific, primarily driven by the climate change and disasters that we've faced in the last years.

**Mr. Gamini Jayawickrama  
Minister of Sustainable Development and  
Wildlife, Sri Lanka**

In Sri Lanka, we are working to link ESCAP and the Sustainable Development Goals for the development of our people. My ministry was created recently to address the SDGs and to coordinate with all the other ministries on the annual implementing actions towards the achievement of these goals. We are now facing the crisis of climate change. Rising sea levels are threatening island countries like Sri Lanka and others are experiencing unexpected floods, droughts and high pollution levels. These are affecting the entire planet. It is very important that we work as one, with ESCAP members thinking about how to align our policies and working together to implement them.



**Mr. Namdag Battserreg  
Minister of Environment, Green Development  
and Tourism, Mongolia**

Governments are now applying the Sustainable Development Goals nationally as a primary policy framework. Achieving the SDGs is not an issue that any country can manage individually; all nations in the region should strengthen their cooperation not just at bilateral level but also, and more importantly, at the regional and multilateral levels. One of these areas of cooperation is climate change. It is one of the most challenging issues facing humankind and together, we must overcome this challenge. I believe the role of ESCAP will substantially increase over the coming years and hope ESCAP will continue providing its support and activities to every country in the region.





**Mr. S.B. Dissanayake**  
**Minister of Social Empowerment & Welfare**  
**Sri Lanka**

As a fast developing country in South Asia, we are very concerned about the equality of people and environmental problems in our country. ESCAP is opening a path for the Sri Lankan people and government to achieve the SDGs. Nationally, we are very keen to take these guidelines to develop our economy, education and health. Internationally, we are keen to cooperate with our neighbours, to maintain our environment, to control pollution and to develop trade agreements. We are also interested to change wealth disparities, both locally and in our region.

## Asia-Pacific countries must transform relationships between economy, society, and environment to achieve 2030 Agenda



**M**egatrends influencing the future of the Asia-Pacific region, such as urbanization, economic and trade integration, rising incomes and changing patterns of production and consumption, must be better managed to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, according to a new report by ESCAP, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations University (UNU), and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES).

The report, *Transformations for Sustainable Development: Promoting Environmental Sustainability in Asia and the Pacific*, was launched by Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the ESCAP, together with partners at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) in Bangkok, the first meeting of Asia-Pacific leaders on sustainable development since the 2030 Agenda was adopted. The report aims to support Asia-Pacific governments as they work to achieve the promise of the 2030 Agenda

over the next 15 years.

Dr. Akhtar underscored that urgent transformations are needed in the areas of resource use, social justice, economic structure and investment flows. "Using an environmental lens, the report explores policy and practical initiatives in each of these areas, while at the same time emphasizing the critical links to the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. Many ESCAP member States have solid track records of economic transformation, many more are in the process of political transformation, and others are strategizing how best to fast-track reforms," said Dr. Akhtar. "The capacity for managing transformations to promote environmental sustainability, as an integral pillar of sustainable development, must now be developed."

For a full copy of the report visit  
[bit.ly/SustDevreport](http://bit.ly/SustDevreport)



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

# Global goals - Asia Pacific voices

From around the region, ESCAP has created a platform for 'Global Goals: Asia-Pacific Voices', inviting people to address key issues related to achieving sustainable development. This platform highlights the opinions of diverse stakeholders, ranging from policymakers, civil society, academia and youth. The compilations of videos can be found at:

[bit.ly/APvoicescampaign](http://bit.ly/APvoicescampaign)

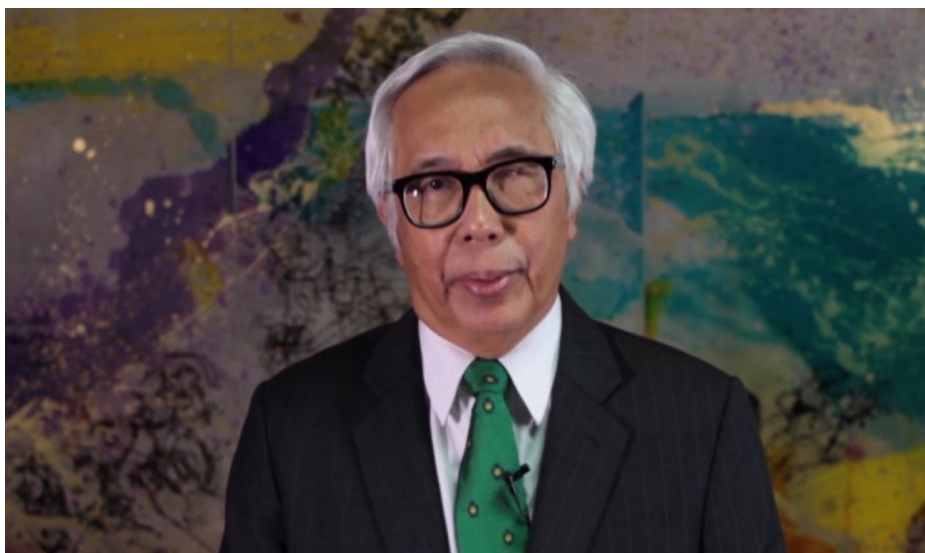
Here are some of the thoughts shared by participants:



## THE VOICES FROM THE REGION

**Josephina Leaia Chan Ting**  
**DRR Officer, Ministry of Natural**  
**Resources & Environment**  
**Samoa**

“Not one island nation can survive or do everything by itself. I truly believe that by working together with other governments we can pursue the agenda of advocating for mitigation options for climate change. This is especially important for our region because we know that we are a few disasters away from being extinct.”



**Dr. Zakri Abdul Hamid**  
**Science Adviser to the Prime Minister of**  
**Malaysia**

“The SDGs are the last hope we have to have a sustainable world. I think that science technology and innovation (STI) will have a very big role to ensure the success of the SDGs. We have to look at STI as an engine or vehicle for socio-economic development. It is incumbent upon the Asia Pacific community to demonstrate how we could achieve the SDG's using STI, but there's one gap that we need to realize: for most of the countries in this region, developing countries, we lack the capacity, we lack the skill, we lack the knowhow. We need to build on that so that individual countries will be more prepared to address the challenges of the SDG's.”

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**Togrul Novruzlu**  
**Student**  
**Azerbaijan**

“Democracy and good governance are complimentary. One should not be compromised for another. For me, peace at home, in the region and internationally is a major agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals.”



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**Durreen Shahnaz**  
**Founder, Shujog/ Asia IIX**  
**Bangladesh**

“Science and technology can the channel the potential of the SDGs, however, financing them is still the catalyst. The biggest hurdle is bringing the private sector to embrace these goals more effectively. This is where the government can create incentives and de-risk investments for the private sector so they can be a part of the ecosystem for achieving the SDG targets.”



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**Ariunaa Chadraabal**  
**Senior Specialist, NEMA**  
**Mongolia**

“The Asia Pacific Region is one of the most vulnerable regions in the world for disasters. Most of the countries in the region are Less Developed Countries so we really need to establish, strengthen and maintain our regional and global partnerships in the field of disaster risk deductions. From the top to the grassroots, we are all responsible for implementing the SDGs. Governments should also make a commitment to implement these goals by ensuring disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.”





## ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT

### Building ICT capacity of women entrepreneurs

The Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT) organized a consultative meeting on 'Women and ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI)' in Incheon, Republic of Korea from 14 to 15 April. WIFI is APCICT's new flagship programme designed to empower women socially and economically through ICT-enabled entrepreneurship. The programme will also assist government officials to foster supportive policy environments for ICT-enabled women entrepreneurship.

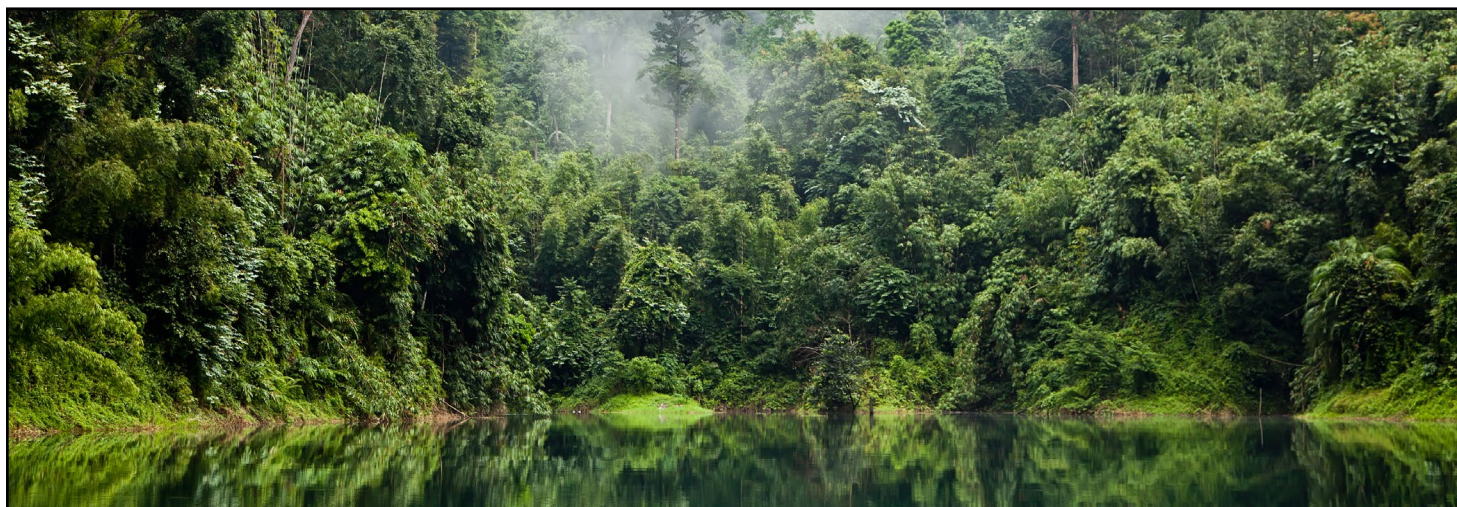
The workshop was attended by 18 experts and practitioners in the areas entrepreneurship, gender, and ICT from nine countries, and sought to enhance the quality of WIFI training modules and relevance to target audiences of women

entrepreneurs and policymakers. National and sub-regional implementation strategies were also examined to improve the reach of the programme to include entrepreneurs at the grassroots level.

In addition to forming consensus on implementation plans and strategies, participants of the consultative meeting identified the national roll-out plans that will proceed the WIFI launch from 9 to 10 June in Incheon. The launch will present WIFI modules and foster partnership with government champions, universities, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to develop practical and easy-to-use applications in support of women entrepreneurs.



## UPCOMING AT ESCAP



**2-6 MAY**

**Asia-Pacific Economic Statistics Week**  
BANGKOK, THAILAND

**5-6 MAY**

**Fifth Meeting of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics (RPES)**  
BANGKOK, THAILAND

**9-11 MAY**

**Capacity Building Workshop on Regional Cooperation and Integration**  
YANGON, MYANMAR

**10-13 MAY**

**Second Meeting of the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) of the Asian and Pacific Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery (ANTAM)**  
BANGKOK, THAILAND

**12-13 MAY**

**Capacity Building Workshop on Trade Facilitation**  
YANGON, MYANMAR

**15-19 MAY**

**Seventy-Second Commission Session**  
BANGKOK, THAILAND

**26-27 MAY**

**ARTNeT-ITD Training on Government Procurement Negotiations**  
BANGKOK, THAILAND

**30 MAY**

**Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Strengthening Local Capacities for Climate-Resilient Agriculture in Myanmar's Dry Zone**  
NAY PYI TAW, MYANMAR

[ESCAP CALENDAR OF MEETINGS](#)