Boosting SDG Accelerators through Innovation and Cooperation: Lessons and Opportunities for North-East Asia and the Asia-Pacific Region

24 April 2024, MR-A, Level 1, UNCC

Co-organized by

ESCAP, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, and Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat

Background

During the SDG Summit 2023, Mongolia together with six Asia-Pacific member States (i.e., Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) heeded the call of the UN Secretary-General to deliver a 'Rescue Plan for People and Planet' and announced their national and global commitments that will help drive SDG transformation.[1] Digital innovation is a predominant accelerator articulated by the member States. Mongolia identified 12 accelerators, which include achieving a complete digital transition through innovation, science, and technology. This reaffirms Mongolia's policy priority on digitalization, having launched the 'Digital Nation' initiative in 2020, an acknowledgement that information and communications technology sector is a transformative driver of Mongolia's economic development.

East and North-East Asia is well-positioned in utilizing digital innovation to boost much needed acceleration to achieve the 2030 Agenda.[2] Members of the trilateral partnership – China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea – are ranked high in UNCTAD's frontier technological readiness index[3] and have refined their innovation policies through the years creating an enabling environment for digital innovation to support sustainable development. For instance, on-going initiatives in the subregion show how digital innovation plays a pivotal role in: (a) carbon neutrality policies strategies for climate action (Goal 13); (b) accelerating the smooth and sustainable transition in the energy sector (Goal 7); (c) optimizing resource utilization, minimizing environmental impact, and improving overall sustainability of cities (Goal 11); bolstering transboundary cooperation initiatives on biodiversity and nature conservation (Goal 15); and addressing acute socio-economic challenges related to ageing ensuring no one is left behind.

In addition, there are several subregional mechanisms such as the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) and Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI) that can be utilized as entry points

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[1] Forty countries have registered national commitments.
(https://sdgs.un.org/SDGSummitActions/National)
[2] Subregional perspectives on leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development, ESCAP/80/3.
(https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/ESCAP_80_3_E.pdf)
[3] UNCTAD (March 2023). Technology and Innovation Report 2023.
(https://unctad.org/publication/technology-and-innovation-report-2023)

to further enhance cooperation on leveraging digital innovations for sustainable development not only in North-East Asia but also in the Asia-Pacific region.

Objectives and Expected Outcomes

Against this backdrop, the side event aims to bring together member States and stakeholders to:

a. exchange insights on how digital innovation are prioritized in their national commitments for SDG accelerators; and
b. identify opportunities for cooperation to boost SDG accelerators leveraging from existing subregional partnerships and mechanisms.

The engagement from the side event is envisaged to shape action points of possible collaborations on SDG accelerators among member States in cooperation with regional and subregional partnerships and mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific region.

Provisional Agenda

Time	Agenda
12:15 – 12:45	Light refreshments available for participants (MR-A, Level 1, UNCC)
12:45-13:00 [15 mins]	**OPENING REMARKS** • Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP • Mr. HAHM Jeonghan, Permanent Representative to ESCAP, Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the Kingdom of Thailand **KEYNOTE REMARKS** • Ms. MANDKHAI Batsuren, Director-General of the Department of Multilateral Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mongolia
13:00 – 13:45 [45 mins]	**Roundtable Discussion** Moderator: Ms. Sarwat Ardan, Senior Sustainable Development Officer, UN Development Coordination Office, Asia-Pacific Region Panelists: • Mr. LEE Hee-sup, Secretary-General, Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat

Time	Agenda
	• Dr ZHANG Jin, Senior Research Fellow, Development Research Center of the State Council / Vice President, Center for International Knowledge on Development • Prof. KANIE Norichika, Professor, Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University / Chair, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Japan • Mr. Kasima Tharnpipitchai, Head of AI Strategy, SCB 10X, Thailand • *ESCAP member States (tbc)*
13:45 – 13:50 [5 mins]	**CLOSING** • Mr. LEE Hee-sup, Secretary-General, Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat • Mr. Ganbold Baasanjav, Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia