



ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

ESBN Monthly Update: December 2023

Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business

The ESNB Executive Council adopted the Green Deal for Business at its 7th Meeting in May 2022. The Green Deal for Business was officially launched at the Asia Pacific Business Forum held in Bangkok Thailand on 26 August 2022.

Pledge your support to the Green Deal for Business at: <https://www.unescap.org/projects/gd>

Upcoming events of ESNB interest

20-23 February 2024: [Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2024](#)

The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) is an annual, inclusive intergovernmental forum to support follow-up and review of progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the regional level. The 11th APFSD will be organized from 20-23 February under the theme: “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions in Asia and the Pacific” at the United Nations Conference Center (UNCC) in Bangkok, Thailand.



Recently Concluded

21 November 2023: Executive Council, 10th Meeting

The Executive Council of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) met on 21 November in Hong Kong and online. The meeting reviewed the work of the ESBN Task Force and the progress in implementing the Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business. The meeting also reviewed preparations for Asia-Pacific Business Forum that will be held in 2024.



22-23 November 2023: [Asia-Pacific Business Forum \(APBF\) 2023](#)

ESCAP and ESNB with support from the Hong Kong Environment and Ecology and the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) organized the APBF 2023 in Hong Kong. The theme of APBF 2023 was “An Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business: Driving the Green transformation”. Participants at the APBF 2023 had the opportunity to discuss the role of business in driving the Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business and heard from experts and business leaders that joined the various panel discussions. The Forum also showcased current and future business opportunities in the Asia Pacific and allowed participants an opportunity to hear and meet key decision makers, business leaders and emerging entrepreneurs committed to sustainable development across the Asia and Pacific region. Several networking events were held on the sidelines of APBF 2023, including a site visit to Pat Heung depot of the MTR Corporation.



21-22 November 2023: [Expert Group Meeting on Social Outlook 2024: Future Proofing Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific](#)

ESCAP’s biennial flagship publication, Social Outlook for Asia and the Pacific, due for launch at the 8th Committee on Social Development in September 2024, will be published on the theme of future proofing social protection in the presence of global complex crises and megatrends including climate change, ageing and digitalization. To this end, ESCAP organized a two-day hybrid meeting bringing together over 40 experts from public and private sector, academia and civil society in Bangkok and employed strategic foresight and futures thinking exercises to build stronger, inclusive and more flexible social protection systems that leaves no one behind during just transition.

Upcoming ESCAP activities and events

4 December 2023: [Debt-for-Climate Swaps: A Tool to Supporting the Implementation of the Paris Agreement](#)

Debt-for-climate swaps provide a unique opportunity from traditional debt-for-nature swaps, which have recently been successfully implemented in Ecuador, Belize, and Cape Verde. Like debt-for-nature swaps, debt-for-climate enables financial recovery with steadfast climate action, allowing distressed nations to revitalize their economies while championing their climate commitments. While debt-for-nature swaps are commonly practiced, they are not necessarily tied to the climate commitments of debtor countries and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). However, debt-for-climate supports NDC actions

beyond conservation and paves the way for Annex II countries to meet their Paris Agreement obligations genuinely and efficiently. This session deconstructs the opportunities debt-for-climate swaps offer for debt-distressed countries to gain fiscal space while addressing their climate commitments. At the same time, debt-for-climate swaps are a tool for Annex II countries to meet their commitments under the Paris Agreement.

4 December 2023: [Project Pipeline Development: A Prerequisite for Effective NDC Implementation](#)

Creating a solid project pipeline is fundamental for the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy. It enables governments to lay out a clear roadmap of projects that align with their NDCs, thereby giving clarity on public financing priorities, and to private investors on potential opportunities. Furthermore, well-structured project pipelines assist in attracting blended finance solutions and leverage private sector investment, which is vital to filling the climate finance gap. This event aims to explore strategies for building robust project pipelines that are essential for turning NDCs into actionable investment opportunities. It will address the challenges of project identification and the role of risk mitigation mechanisms in crowding in investment. The session highlights best practices, enabling policies and tools to support pipeline development, and showcases how improved project pipelines can boost investor confidence and facilitate the achievement of NDCs.

6 December 2023: [Moana Pacific Side Event: A Nexus approach to Finance Biodiversity and Climate](#)

In recent years, various financial tools and mechanisms have emerged to tackle the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. These include carbon markets, green bonds, and debt-for-nature swaps. However, there needs to be more discussion of how these instruments intersect. A nexus approach could uncover synergies and identify trade-offs by analyzing the interactions among multiple sectors. The event will examine the interplay of the various financial instruments and mechanisms to address climate change and biodiversity and what needs to be done to avoid unintended consequences for vulnerable countries and communities in the Asia Pacific region.

6 December 2023: [UNCTAD eCommerce Week: Launch of the ESCAP-UNIDO-UNCTAD Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2023 “Unleashing Digital Trade and Investment for Sustainable Development”](#)

The 2023 Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report, a collaborative effort between UNESCAP, UNCTAD, and UNIDO on “Unleashing Digital Trade and Investment for Sustainable Development”, will be unveiled in this session. Tailored for policymakers and business leaders, the session will commence with a succinct presentation of the report's principal findings and suggestions. Subsequently, experts will provide insights and discuss strategies to optimize digital trade and investment's contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

6 December 2023: [Asia-Pacific Commemoration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)

This year's Asia-Pacific Commemoration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, organized by ESCAP, will focus on promoting disability-inclusive business. The Commemoration will take place on 6 December from 13:00-15:30 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok. Business has a pivotal role to play in accelerating disability-inclusive development through practicing inclusion and ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects of the business value chain. Implementing disability-inclusive policies can also reap multifaceted benefits for businesses. The Commemoration will feature a panel and plenary discussion on disability-inclusive business and the screening of several of the short films from the Focus on Ability short film festival. At this event, ESCAP will also launch the publication *Disability at a Glance 2023: Catalysts of Change: Disability Inclusion in Business in Asia and the Pacific*.

6 December 2023: COP 28 side event: Responsible and inclusive management of critical energy transition minerals

This event is intended to stimulate discussion and obtain feedback from a broad range of stakeholders, including policy makers, civil society, financial institutions, and research institutes, on key issues to be considered in order to ensure that policy measures and investments made in the extractives industries drive the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

7-8 December 2023: Capacity-Building Training for Sovereign Thematic Bond Issuance to Ministry of Economy and Finance Team (Stage 2)

A collaborative effort between ESCAP, GGGI, UNDP and MEF is underway to host the comprehensive capacity-building training program. This initiative aims to empower MEF and its stakeholders with the knowledge and skills to excel in thematic bond issuance and sustainable financing. The training series spans four days for four stages, and each is dedicated to a specific stage for one day full of the thematic bond issuance process. The Four Main Topics Covered in the Training Series are Stage 1 – Feasibility, Stage 2 - Pre-Issuance, Stage 3 – Issuance, and Stage 4 - Post Issuance and Project Implementation This Stage 2 training aims to provide additional general concepts on thematic bonds and deep dive into reviewing the draft Sustainable Finance Framework and its key features, addressing stakeholders’ questions regarding the proposed draft, and defining the next steps and timelines. They will involve various MEF stakeholders, particularly the technical task force members, who will play a pivotal role in driving this initiative and supporting the engagement of other ministries within the Steering Task Force for future thematic bond issuance.

12 December 2023: Inclusive Business in Agriculture and Food Systems Haryana Workshop

Given the market opportunities available for and the value provided by inclusive businesses, Invest India, with the support of ESCAP and the Bill & Melinda Gates, is exploring opportunities to promote inclusive business models in India, and in Haryana and Telangana in particular. To do so, it is conducting a Landscape Study of Inclusive Business in India, providing business coaching services to 20 selected inclusive businesses and organising several forums to raise awareness and help link businesses with investors and support organisations. This mission organized by the Foreign Cooperation Department, Haryana State Government, Invest India and ESCAP, with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, seeks to identify inclusive business models in Haryana, good practices and concrete actions to further promote inclusive business models and facilitate investments towards this sector in Haryana. The outcomes of this forum will help inform the study and government actions.

16 January – 6 February 2024: Online Course on Mainstreaming Sustainable Development in Regional Trade Agreements

Co-organized by United Nations ESCAP, ECA, and CITD (Georgetown Law). Sustainable development issues are increasingly mainstreamed in trade agreements. As the inclusion of sustainable and inclusive development provisions becomes more systematic, it will be important that the new provisions meet the needs of both developed and developing trade partners to ensure a real impact on advancing the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). This course is designed to build capacity of trade negotiators and policy makers to design and negotiate sustainable development provisions appropriate to specific situations of different economies. It covers 5 key topics of trade and sustainable development: MSMEs, Gender, Environment, Labour and Investment.

19 February-1 March 2024: Optimizing trade agreement text analysis: How to use ESCAP’s Trade Agreement Text Analysis Tool

The number and complexity of trade agreements has boomed. In addition to traditional trade-related provisions, there is a proliferation of provisions addressing other issues, which do not necessarily directly regulate trade, yet have a significant impact on it. In this context, ESCAP developed a web-based tool that allows users to efficiently map topics or provisions in texts of trade agreements. Currently, there are 463 trade agreements in the searchable database, including 237 involving at least one economy from the Asia-Pacific Region. The algorithm is based on detection of keyword combinations in the articles of trade agreements. It allows to accommodate for the variability of the natural language, as well as to map multiple categorized provisions or topics. As the final output, it generates datasets (spreadsheet format) that can be used in quantitative research or to create insightful visualizations. The objective of this course is to teach how to use the online tool so that researchers can make the best use of what it has to offer by conducting automated text analysis and generating quantitative datasets.

For a short overview of ESCAP related news, please see <https://www.unescap.org/news> or subscribe: <https://unescap.us10.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=c0fdb6e03fa08a5e575b433c0&id=e318af22fc>

All ESCAP upcoming events: <https://www.unescap.org/events>

Recently published by ESCAP

[Social protection and climate change in Asia and the Pacific \(30 November 2023\)](#)

[Trends in social development : the future of work in Asia and the Pacific \(27 November 2023\)](#)

[Compendium of best practices on low-carbon cities in North-East Asia \(23 November 2023\)](#)

[Pacific perspectives 2023 : advocating the aspirations of Small Islands Developing States \(21 November 2023\)](#)

[Feasibility study on cross-border electronic exchange of trade data : Timor-Leste \(20 November 2023\)](#)

[Feasibility Study on Cross-border Electronic of Trade Exchange Data – BHUTAN \(20 November 2023\)](#)

[The role of social protection to address climate change in the Maldives \(17 November 2023\)](#)

[2022 : Leaving no one behind : Thailand country brief \(17 November 2023\)](#)

[Leaving no one behind : Philippines country brief \(17 November 2023\)](#)

[E-Commerce for inclusive development : policy considerations \(17 November 2023\)](#)

[Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia \(SPECA\) 2023 \(17 November 2023\)](#)

[Asia-Pacific sustainable development journal. Vol. 30, No. 2, November 2023 \(16 November 2023\)](#)

[2023 review of climate ambition in Asia and the Pacific : just transition towards regional net-zero climate resilient development \(13 November 2023\)](#)

[ESCAP population data sheet 2023 \(13 November 2023\)](#)

[Regulatory sandbox guideline on central bank digital currency for the Maldives Monetary Authority \(12 November 2023\)](#)

[Regulatory sandbox guideline on Fintech for the Maldives Monetary Authority \(12 November 2023\)](#)

[Meaningful youth engagement in climate action in Asia and the Pacific : building sustainable futures today \(01 November 2023\)](#)

[10 guiding principles for sustainable freight transport in Asia and the Pacific \(31 October 2023\)](#)

[Leaving no one behind: access to social protection in Asia and the Pacific \(30 October 2023\)](#)

[Global toolkit on regulatory sandbox for central bank digital currency and FinTech \(28 October 2023\)](#)

[Leaving no one behind : ICT skills in Asia and the Pacific \(1 October 2023\)](#)

Working paper series

Macroeconomics: Click [here](#)

Trade: Click [here](#)

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us to provide input, questions or suggestions for the monthly update: esbn@un.org

Best regards,

ESBN Secretariat