

COVER STORY

# Challenges of Asia-Pacific least developed countries highlighted at global UN forum in Antalya



The experiences and challenges of Asia-Pacific's least developed countries (LDCs) in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) were highlighted by ESCAP in two high-level side events held alongside the Midterm Review of the IPoA in Antalya, Turkey from 27 to 29 May. High-level officials from around the world collectively reaffirmed the global commitment to support the special needs of LDCs in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

On 27 May, ministers from the Asia-Pacific region, private sector and civil society representatives joined a high-level panel discussion 'Towards the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Asia-Pacific LDCs' chaired by United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary Dr. Shamshad Akhtar. United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for UN-OHRLS Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya also presented special remarks.

At the side event, ESCAP launched its new report entitled *From the Istanbul Programme*

*of Action to the 2030 Sustainable Development.* The *Report* finds that there are significant complementarities between IPoA and the 2030 Agenda, suggesting that LDCs could make substantial progress towards the achievement of the SDGs by pursuing action of the Istanbul Programme. The *Report* also proposes a unique analytical framework to identify optimal pathways for the achievement of SDGs in each country, based on their individual development progress and capacities.

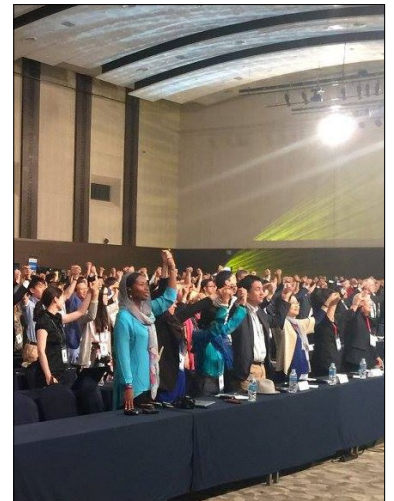
The second high-level side event organized by ESCAP on 28 May focused on 'Harnessing technology and innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.' The Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the most innovative countries in the world but also some of the most technologically deprived. Panelists reviewed the key innovation and technology challenges and opportunities that LDCs see lying ahead, and provided insights on how effective technology and innovation collaboration and cooperation can be achieved.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/1sBNUiR>

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## ESCAP underlines critical role of Asia-Pacific NGOs in advancing SDGs

**E**ducation for global citizenship, with support of civil society advocacy and accountability will be instrumental in driving implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), underscored United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary Dr. Shamshad Akhtar at the opening of the 66th United Nations DPI-NGO Conference in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea on 30 May. In her opening remarks, Dr. Akhtar also emphasized the importance of proactive and stronger partnerships between governments and NGOs at all levels, including on regional platforms.

“Asia-Pacific NGOs are well known as effective development actors and for their role in service delivery, and now increasingly, they are lending their voices to shape regional debates on sustainable development,” said Dr. Akhtar. “Many governments in the region are expanding development partnerships with NGOs, including for South-South cooperation initiatives across borders.”

The DPI/NGO conference was held for the first time in Asia, from 30 May to 1 June 2016, under the theme of ‘Education for Global Citizenship: Achieving the SDGs Together.’

ESCAP shared insights at a roundtable discussion exploring how the education community can ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to learn and grow to their maximum potential as stated in SDG 4 to ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,’ and why this is crucial to achieving all of the SDGs.

ESCAP also participated in a panel discussion focused on practical investment, policy and advocacy strategies to expand access to science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) education that “leaves no one behind” and proactively reaches out to girls and women.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/28T3X84>



ENVIRONMENT



## Asia-Pacific countries assess the impact of El Niño at ESCAP consultation

**I**mpacts from the El Niño in Asia-Pacific threaten the most vulnerable populations in the region and may have long lasting implications. Understanding risks and the timely response to these risks is the first line of defence against the impacts of El Niño. ESCAP, together with UNDP, brought together 60 participants from 14 El Niño affected countries for a ‘Regional Consultative Workshop on El Niño in Asia-Pacific’ from 7 to 9 June in Bangkok, Thailand.

The hands-on training introduced a standardized methodology to interpret, translate and communicate El Niño associated risks. It presented an end-to-end risk assessment process - beginning from understanding the risk, its linkages with hydro-meteorological disasters, their impacts on ecosystems, economies and livelihoods, and finally communicating these risks to policymakers and communities at risk.

El Niño is a complex, transboundary phenomenon that is frequently neglected due to its slow onset nature. The 2015-2016 El Niño event is one of the strongest since 1997-98. Actions often come too late for affected communities to prepare for the impending disaster.

The meeting also discussed the establishment of a regional network to share scientific knowledge to understand El Niño risk, develop mitigation strategies, and communicate the risks in a manner that will enable stakeholders to take timely action on risk information.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/25LhSD5>



CS72

## Outcomes of the ESCAP 72nd Commission session



**T**welve resolutions were adopted at ESCAP's 72nd Commission in May, the first session since the adoption of the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Thus the Commission's actions focused on fostering regional cooperation and partnerships towards implementing the new global pathway for sustainable development, including a focus on science, technology and innovation, and climate change issues. The framework agreement on facilitation of cross-border paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific is also the first of its kind to focus on implementing advanced trade facilitation measures.

In her closing statement, United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Dr. Shamshad Akhtar underscored the importance of doing things differently in Asia and the Pacific to deliver on the promises of the 2030 Agenda. "We need to harness positive synergies. Real action requires the commitment, involvement and leadership of every development player – to ensure that the inter-generational interests of all our people and our planet take precedence," she said.

Other resolutions adopted at the Commission session covered new areas such as promoting the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, and combating sand and dust storms, as well as transport connectivity, and advancing disaster-related statistics for the implementation of the Sustainable Development (SDGs). In the resolution whereby member States committed to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda, they agreed to establish a yearly regional forum to follow up on the experiences of countries in putting into effect policies in pursuit of sustainable development. The remaining resolutions provide for a regional review of the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society action lines, as well as revised the statutes on three of ESCAP's regional institutions, dealing with sustainable agriculture, sustainable agricultural mechanization and technology transfer, respectively.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/28Sctkm>

### ENERGY

## Global UN energy seminar opens with focus on overcoming barriers to achieving universal energy access by 2030

**T**he inaugural United Nations global seminar on supporting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 to ensure universal energy access by 2030, opened in Bangkok, Thailand, on 21 June with experts underlining that despite worldwide efforts, much remains to be achieved for the most isolated and disadvantaged communities, where energy poverty continues exasperating the cycle of extreme poverty.

Whilst extraordinary development gains have been made over the past few decades, energy access remains a major challenge in Asia-Pacific, where 455 million people are living without access to electricity and 2.06 billion rely on solid fuels for cooking and heating.

The Seminar was jointly organized by ESCAP, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development and (UNOSD), in cooperation with UN-Energy and Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL). Over three days, policymakers, practitioners and experts developed coherent recommendations on policy frameworks, institutional capacities, technical issues, business models, access to financing and the integration of energy into national development strategies.

The Seminar culminated in an outcome document with recommendations to help address gaps and accelerate implementation of SDG 7. The outcome document will represent an input to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) to be held in New York from 11 to 20 July 2016. The HLPF is the United Nation's central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs.



Read more at <http://bit.ly/28K413Z>



## Asia-Pacific cities called on to increase action for sustainable development at ESCAP urban forum in Seoul

**W**ith Asia-Pacific's urban population projected to increase from 1.8 billion to around 2.8 billion by 2030, city and national government officials were urged to scale up action and responsibility for sustainable development, including tackling climate change and achieving resilience, at the inaugural International Forum on Urban Policy for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) held in Seoul, Republic of Korea from 8 to 10 June. The Forum was co-organized by ESCAP, the Seoul Metropolitan Government and CityNet.

"The 17 Sustainable Development Goals offer solutions and opportunities for sustainable urban development," said Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP in her opening address.

The Forum provided a multi-stakeholder platform to address these issues, and exchange experiences and knowledge sharing on the broader role of cities in achieving sustainable urban development. During the Forum, ESCAP and its partners also presented the development of a new Urban SDG Knowledge Platform. This online portal aims to support city-to-city urban policy sharing and cooperation, facilitating the transfer of innovations, solutions and models for sustainable urban development.



The Forum and the Urban SDG Knowledge Platform are new programmes initiated by ESCAP and its partners in response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes the important role that cities play in the pursuit of sustainable development with the inclusion of Goal 11 aiming to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable."

Read more at <http://bit.ly/21787bB>

## UN-APCICT launches Women and ICT Frontier Initiative to promote women's entrepreneurship

**T**he 'Women and ICT Frontier Initiative' (WIFI) was launched by the United Nations Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (UN-APCICT) a regional institute of ESCAP, at the 'Regional Forum on ICT Human Capacity Development' on 9 June in Incheon, Republic of Korea. WIFI aims to create socially and economically-empowered women through ICT-enabled entrepreneurship. It also aims to strengthen the capacity of policymakers to create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs through gender responsive policies, programmes and services. The Forum marked UN-APCICT's 10th anniversary.

"WIFI is a much-needed programme that can have a transformative impact on the lives of women entrepreneurs, their families, and their communities," said Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP during her opening remarks. "The success of women generates ripple effects, from increased household savings and investment in children's health and education, to boosting job creation, which can contribute significantly to a country's socio-economic growth."

At the launch, partners from government and civil society highlighted how WIFI can benefit current and aspiring women entrepreneurs in Cambodia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Tajikistan through various WIFI roll-out activities. Technology companies including Google, Microsoft and Intel also presented their initiatives

and emphasized how they can collaborate and support women entrepreneurship through ICT, including for the WIFI project.

WIFI is the third flagship programme of UN-APCICT, with the mandate of strengthening capacities of member States on using ICT for sustainable development.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/1tjyNM2>



## Reducing inequality is key to achieving sustainable development in the Pacific, highlights ESCAP forum

In response to the call of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to “leave no one behind,” ESCAP and the Governments of Fiji and Kiribati held national consultations on 15 and 17 June respectively to explore innovative policies to combat growing inequalities in the Pacific.

Shaped by their small size, remoteness and vulnerability to economic and natural shocks, the Pacific Island Developing States face unique challenges in relation to inequality. Youth are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults in the subregion. Gender inequality continues to be an obstacle, with over 65 per cent of women having experienced violence at the hands of a partner in some Pacific countries, and across the region, women and persons with disabilities continue to face barriers to employment and decent work opportunities.

The consultations brought together high-level government representatives and key stakeholders from civil society and academia to boost knowledge on critical policy measures required to achieve



more inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies in Fiji and Kiribati. The forums built on the findings of a recent ESCAP publication entitled *Time for Equality: The Role of Social Protection in Reducing Inequalities in Asia and the Pacific* as well as the ESCAP Social Protection Toolbox, which provides access to an interactive database of over 130 good practices in social protection from developing countries.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/1sFCzi5>

## Strengthening local capacities for climate-resilient agriculture in Myanmar

A multi-stakeholder dialogue, held from 30 to 31 May in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, promoted efforts in strengthening the human, financial, technological and institutional capacities of local farming communities to adopt climate-resilient agricultural practices. The dialogue was organized by the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture (CAPSA) and the Network Activities Group (NAG), in collaboration with the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) and the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM).

During the opening session on 30 May, Regional Ministers of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation from the Magway and Sagaing Regions, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, as well as senior representatives from ESCAP, CAPSA and NAG addressed the audience. Among its outcomes, the dialogue highlighted the importance of strengthening the capacities

of local communities for climate-resilient agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone with a focus on smallholders, other vulnerable communities and women. The roles of various government and non-government stakeholders were also examined, and various technical, policy and programmatic interventions reviewed.

The multi-stakeholder dialogue was implemented under an ongoing project titled ‘An Integrated Rural Economic and Social Development Programme for Livelihoods Improvement in the Dry Zone of Myanmar’ which is supported by the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT). The project is being led by CAPSA in collaboration with NAG, APCTT and CSAM.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/293MyVc>

## UPCOMING AT ESCAP

12-13 JULY

**Regional Expert Forum on Population Ageing**  
BANGKOK, THAILAND

18 JULY

**HLPF 2016 Side Event – Financing for Development to Ensure that No One is Left Behind**  
NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

21 JULY

**Adaptation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Role of Development Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific**  
NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ESCAP CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

