Economic and Social Council

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Seventh Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Bangkok, 25–27 March 2020
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
**Linking national, regional and global dimensions of the 2030
Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Advancing partnerships for the implementation of the
regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

　　In accordance with paragraph 39 of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, reviews of progress on implementation of the regional road map will take place annually at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, with reference to the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework. The present document contains the highlights of key achievements of the secretariat's technical cooperation programme for the period 2018–2019, as well as selected success stories and results delivered in collaboration with a wide range of partners.

I.　Introduction

1.　The Asia-Pacific region was the first to develop a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted at the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, held in March 2017, and endorsed by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in its resolution 73/9.

2.　The objective of the regional road map is to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development through regional cooperation in a set of priority areas (see table) that support the effective pursuit of sustainable development by member States.

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　　* ESCAP/RFSD/2020/L.1.

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Priority areas of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

Means of implementation and partnership	*Thematic issues*
(a) Data and statistics	(a) Leaving no one behind (social development)
(b) Technology	(b) Disaster risk reduction and resilience
(c) Finance	(c) Climate change
(d) Policy coherence	(d) Management of natural resources
(e) North-South, South-South, international and regional partnerships	(e) Connectivity for the 2030 Agenda
	(f) Energy

3. The present document contains the highlights of key achievements of the secretariat's technical cooperation programme for the period 2018–2019 in support of the implementation of the regional road map in each priority area, as well as selected success stories and results delivered in collaboration with a wide range of partners, including the member States, United Nations entities, development banks, international and regional organizations, think tanks, research institutes, civil society organizations, and private philanthropic and other entities.

II. Highlights of the progress of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

A. Means of implementation and partnership

1. Data and statistics

4. The production, collection, dissemination and use of data and statistics within the Asia-Pacific region is vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Quality statistics are needed to support appropriate governance and policymaking at both the national and international levels. It is vital that policymakers have access to accurate data and statistical information as a means of implementation in order to support policy planning and analysis in the context of the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

5. In order to create an enabling policy environment to maintain demand for population and social statistics, ESCAP, in partnership with the Pacific Community, developed and piloted a tool entitled "Every Policy is Connected" (EPIC) as one of the outputs under the United Nations Development Account programme on statistics and data implemented by ten United Nations entities.[1] The tool, which was first piloted in the Philippines and Samoa, facilitates dialogue between policymakers and data producers. It covers social, economic,

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[1] The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latina America and the Caribbean, the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

environmental and institutional principles and is aimed at assessing policies, data and official statistics for inclusive development and developing an indicator set relevant to policy priorities. The two key outcomes from the application of the tool are a set of national indicators for sustainable development and a set of recommendations for policymakers to review the coverage of issues requiring action and target groups under the existing policies. In Samoa, the tool was used to help to identify all vulnerable groups requiring action and then target them for policy action.

6.   In partnership with the Governments of Australia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, ESCAP assisted Maldives with the completion of a review of national statistical systems, which served to identify strengths and weaknesses in economic statistics and helped to improve the capacity of the country's national statistical office to produce a core set of economic statistics. The secretariat also assisted the national statistical offices of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam in the areas of national accounts, statistical business registers, import price indices and training for national staff, including a training the trainers programme, which resulted in improving their capacities to produce national statistics.

7.   At the regional level, with funding from the Governments of the Russian Federation and of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, ESCAP organized an Asia-Pacific Economic Statistics Week, which served as a knowledge-sharing platform for member States to identify challenges and solutions in the development of their national core sets. Participants concluded that emerging technologies held great potential to transform statistical business processes and that adaptation to such technologies required the development of additional skill sets that would enable and equip national statistical offices to better coordinate activities within the national statistical systems to fill data gaps. In addition, participants said that national statistical offices in the region increasingly saw opportunities to use big data to help to monitor the 2030 Agenda, particularly in terms of getting timely data. They also emphasized the importance of developing ocean accounts to bridge the missing components in the underlying frameworks of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the System of National Accounts. The Asia-Pacific Economic Statistics Week was supported by a task force and steering group composed of representatives from Malaysia, India, Indonesia, New Zealand and Turkey.

8.   The statistics generated from civil registration and vital statistics systems are essential for individuals to exercise various human, legal, economic, social and political rights, and they enable access to services such as health care, education and social protection. These statistics are equally important for evidence-based policymaking across multiple sectors. Building on work initiated in this area through the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and in partnership with Bloomberg and Vital Strategies, ESCAP assisted Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Pakistan and Thailand with the drafting of their first national vital statistics reports using registration records.

9.   The work of ESCAP has contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 17 in participating countries.

2.   Technology

10.   The fourth industrial revolution is defined by frontier technological breakthroughs including artificial intelligence, robotics, 3D printing and the Internet of things. The Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the most dynamic,

pioneering and innovative countries in the world, yet it is also home to many of the most technologically deprived. To achieve the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda and the regional road map, it will be critical that technology should work for the societies, environments and economies of the countries in the region.

11. The secretariat assisted member States with the development of sustainable innovation policies and fostered collaboration to help to bridge this technology gap, ensuring that all countries are given access to the necessary technologies. Through a technical cooperation project funded by the Government of Canada, and in partnerships with other Governments and stakeholders such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) secretariat, the British Council and Google, ESCAP developed tools and methodologies for policymakers to develop strategies and policy frameworks that strengthen national innovation ecosystems as they relate to social enterprise and impact investment. By applying these tools and methodologies, ESCAP accomplished the following: (a) increased the capacity of policymakers in the Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Indonesia to collect and analyse data; (b) supported the development of the Social Impact Exchange in Malaysia; (c) helped Myanmar to formulate the social enterprise aspects of its entrepreneurship strategy; (d) provided expertise for the development of an impact investing ecosystem in Indonesia; (e) supported the development of draft legislation on poverty reduction through social entrepreneurship in the Philippines; (f) assisted with the formulation of a national social enterprise strategy in Pakistan; (g) provided advisory services to Thailand with regard to draft legislation on social enterprise promotion; and (h) trained 300 policymakers in gender-responsive analysis and policymaking.

12. The Asia-Pacific region is undergoing a rapid transformation in agricultural mechanization, triggered by increasing demands for more and better food, labour shortages and the impact of climate change. To address the lack of regional standards and the safety of agricultural machinery, the Asian and Pacific Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery, led by the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization of ESCAP, developed a standardized code for paddy transplanters and a quality manual for accredited testing stations and certification procedures. Field visits to China, Nepal and the Philippines were organized for engineers from 18 ESCAP member States, who were able to learn from good practices in the development of local testing facilities. Training the trainers sessions were held to build capacities across the region with regard to the testing codes of the Asian and Pacific Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery. These efforts were made in partnership with the Governments of China and Japan, which provided funding resources and expertise.

13. In partnership with the Government of India, the livelihoods and food security trust fund and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology of ESCAP assisted Myanmar with facilitating the transfer of advanced seed production technology for mung bean (also known as green gram) seed production. As a result of this technology transfer, 59 elite mung bean seed lines possessing pest and disease resistance were provided to the Myanmar Department of Agricultural Research, where trials are under way to select the best climate-resilient seed varieties for the benefit of smallholder farmers. Based on this pilot initiative, the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology developed a blueprint for future activities to strengthen the value chain for mung bean production through policy, technology and market-related interventions.

14.   With support from and in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Incheon Metropolitan City government, the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development of ESCAP continued strengthening the capacities of government officials and policymakers, women entrepreneurs, students and youth. Integrating three interrelated pillars of learning, namely training, knowledge-sharing and multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnership, the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development offered three learning programmes: (a) the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders, developed in partnership with information and communications technology (ICT) experts from around the world; (b) the Women ICT Frontier Initiative; and (c) the Primer Series on ICTD for Youth. Through the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders, the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development launched a new module on realizing data-driven governance as the twelfth training module of the comprehensive programme, offered in 16 languages. This new module was piloted in a regional training the trainers programme, attended by 22 government officials from ICT ministries, data agencies, civil service organizations and training institutions from Asia and the Pacific. It was further rolled out in the Philippines, Cambodia and Kazakhstan.

15.   The outputs described in the present subsection have supported progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 14 and 17.

3.   Finance

16.   Financing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is key to the effective achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in ESCAP member States. Governments in the region are not only faced with the monumental task of identifying what interventions will be needed to achieve the Goals and targets, but are also confronting the challenge of finding the funds to implement them those interventions. The secretariat worked closely with policymakers and major stakeholders to support the development of financing strategies to mobilize domestic and international resources for infrastructure development. These resources include tax revenue, public debt, official development assistance, private financing and public-private partnerships.

17.   In 2018, ESCAP established the Infrastructure Financing and Public-Private Partnership Network of Asia and the Pacific, comprising the representatives of public-private partnerships units, ministries of finance and public procurement and executing agencies, as well as infrastructure financing experts. The Network provided a platform to exchange knowledge, good practices and lessons learned on the effective use of public-private partnership mechanisms and other infrastructure financing tools to promote sustainable infrastructure development. The Network prepared a report entitled *Infrastructure Financing for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*, in which it proposed a strategic shift in infrastructure financing for the region. It also showcased 23 early-stage and pilot projects from 19 countries and conducted project-based training sessions targeting country-specific challenges. As a result, the Network advanced regional cooperation on public-private partnerships by facilitating the signing of two memorandums of understanding between the public-private partnership centre of Kazakhstan and the public-private partnerships centres of China and the Philippines. The Network initiated the development of a regional web portal to serve as an online platform to consolidate information on public-private partnership institutions, commercially viable project preparation techniques, project pipelines and the market environment in the region.

18.   The secretariat also assisted Bhutan, Cambodia and Vanuatu in assessing the effective allocation and utilization of existing resources to implement the 2030 Agenda and to overcome structural transformation challenges. Analytical studies, training materials and knowledge products were developed, with a focus on designing policies and strategies for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States, to allocate and utilize existing resources effectively. These outputs were applied in the three above-mentioned countries to build capacities related to existing financial resources and to develop mechanisms for raising additional funds. As a result of the ESCAP-led initiative to support domestic resource mobilization, a Committee on Government Bond Issuance was established in Bhutan to work on key implementation issues, such as the amount of funds to be raised, potential bondholders, bond yield, maturity period and the value of each unit of the bond. Bhutan will be the first landlocked least developed country to issue a sovereign green bond. In Vanuatu, ESCAP partnered with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the country's process of graduation from the category of least developed country in 2020.

19.   In 2018, ESCAP, in partnership with the United Nations Capital Development Fund, developed a framework to guide research and analysis to evaluate mechanisms that support access to credit and to better understand the financing challenges facing micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries. Relying on this framework, and with support from the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network, ESCAP conducted a series of national studies (in Bangladesh; Cambodia; Hong Kong, China; Nepal; Samoa; and Singapore) on financing for small and medium-sized enterprises, covering regulatory frameworks, policies, business models, lending infrastructure, the role of banks and fintech. The aim of the studies was to contribute to national-level policy discussions and provide further options to improve the access to finance afforded to small and medium-sized enterprises. ESCAP provided research and analysis as well as advisory services to Georgia, Nepal, the Philippines, Samoa and Viet Nam on approaches to mobilizing domestic and international resources to support sustainable infrastructure development in their national financing strategies.

20.   The outputs described in the present subsection have supported progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 17.

4.   Policy coherence

21.   Successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development into policymaking, which in turn requires a cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder response and policy coherence. There is increasing awareness of the need to continue to foster synergies across economic, social and environmental policy systems at the regional, subregional and national levels; identify trade-offs; and reconcile domestic policy objectives with internationally agreed objectives. Coherence is also needed to address the diverse actions of multiple actors and stakeholders and various sources of finance.

22.   To promote knowledge and skills transfer among member States in implementing coherent policies and working with a myriad of stakeholders, ESCAP launched the Sustainable Development Goals Help Desk, an online platform to support member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the regional road map (see box). By the end of 2019, the platform had established a series of partnerships with international organizations and other institutions and

enrolled over 25,000 unique registered users, reaching over 3,000 policymakers and stakeholders through on-site peer learning sessions, hands-on training sessions and online e-learning sessions, with a focus on least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

Sustainable Development Goals Help Desk

The Sustainable Development Goals Help Desk provides a one-stop online knowledge platform to enable access to Goal-related tools, knowledge, expertise and advice and to encourage peer learning and regional and subregional South-South cooperation. The Help Desk offers the following features:

(a)   Knowledge-sharing: access to 15 thematic areas and over 65 e-learning courses, as well as knowledge products and learning videos;

(b)   Statistical data: access to 36 data portals;

(c)   Capacity-building: access to 49 toolboxes and 65 online e-learning courses; on-site training courses and technical assistance service line; and ability for member States to submit direct requests;

(d)   Community of practice: access to a database of over 41 good practices from practitioners and an online community with over 220 members;

(e)   Partnerships: access to over 300 partner pages, as well as knowledge products, policy toolboxes and training tools, methodologies, online networks of partners including United Nations entities, regional think tanks, training institutions and other international organizations.

Key partners include the following: Asian Development Bank; Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat; Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; Green Growth Knowledge Platform ; Institute for Global Environmental Strategies; International Labour Organization; Keio University; Transparency, Accountability and Participation Network; United Nations Capital Development Fund; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); United Nations University; and University of Copenhagen.

The Sustainable Development Goals Help Desk is available at sdghelpdesk.unescap.org.

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23.   To respond to requests from its developing member States for technical support on the implementation and follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the regional road map, ESCAP launched a rapid response facility. Prioritizing the capacity development needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, the rapid response facility focuses on the following: (a) capacity development to strengthen the quality of the voluntary national review reports, including methodologies for the preparation of the report, engagement of stakeholders and participation of the public; (b) technical training on existing tools to address Sustainable Development Goal integration and policy coherence, including alignment of development priorities, mapping of the interlinkages among Goals and targets in the voluntary national review and implementation of the voluntary national review recommendations; and (c) technical advice to national statistical offices on providing high-quality data and statistics and on alternative data sources. The secretariat partnered with international entities such as the

Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and UNDP, as well as other entities including the International Association for Public Participation, to deliver technical assistance.

24. Through the rapid response facility, ESCAP supported Lao People's Democratic Republic; Papua New Guinea; Sri Lanka; Turkmenistan; and Uzbekistan in stakeholder engagement planning, and Armenia; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; Georgia; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Micronesia; Mongolia; Papua New Guinea; Sri Lanka; Solomon Islands; Timor-Leste; Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam in their voluntary national review preparations. The secretariat also assisted Indonesia; Kazakhstan; Sri Lanka; Thailand; and Turkmenistan in the follow-up, review and implementation of the voluntary national review.

25. The tripartite partnership among the Asian Development Bank (ADB), ESCAP and UNDP continued to provide a platform for delivering high-quality knowledge products and facilitating high-level policy dialogues and capacity-building of member States to effectively achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the region. The partnership delivered the Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership Data Portal,[2] which offers access to global Sustainable Development Goal indicators; interactive charts on Sustainable Development Goal progress assessment; national and regional Sustainable Development Goal performance profiles; statistical methods for data compilation; and comparative information on countries and regions for Sustainable Development Goal indicators, allowing stakeholders and Governments to conduct their own reviews of progress. It also produced two reports, entitled *Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies in Asia and the Pacific* and *Accelerating Progress: An empowered, Inclusive and Equal Asia and the Pacific*, to inform discussions at the Fifth and Sixth Asia-Pacific Forums on Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

26. The secretariat also provided support to Mongolia, in partnership with the United Nations country team, to produce a report entitled *Sustainability Outlook of Mongolia.* The report analysed progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; identified areas for action on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the regional road map; and enabled a multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral participatory process.

27. In partnership with UN-Habitat, ESCAP supported the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals by promoting policy coherence in sustainable urban resource management at the regional and country levels. The Sustainable Urban Resource Management project was developed to assist cities in assessing opportunities, priorities and contexts, by linking sustainable urban resource management with the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. The project was piloted in five cities, namely Battambang, Cambodia; Nasinu City, Fiji; Ulaanbaatar; Naga City, Philippines; and Nadee, Thailand.

28. The outputs described in the present subsection have supported progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 2, 9, 11 and 17.

5. North-South, South-South, international and regional partnerships

29. With its multidisciplinary nature and convening power, ESCAP has a unique ability to bring together a variety of stakeholders and to strengthen sustainable development projects that share knowledge and mobilize expertise,

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[2] Available at https://data.unescap.org/sdg.

technology and financial resources. It plays a key role in supporting member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships and contributing directly to the partnership-related targets under Sustainable Development Goal 17. The secretariat has engaged in a range of initiatives and programmes to support and enable North-South, South-South, international and regional partnerships.

30.   Through the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development, ESCAP engaged in South-South and triangular cooperation to strengthen geospatial information-sharing and early warning systems to guard against natural disasters and build resilience. The satellite-derived products and services for disaster management offered to member States included near real-time scenes, archived satellite imagery and damage maps. These were provided in collaboration with the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development members and strategic partners such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research Operational Satellite Applications Programme, the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management, and other international and regional entities. The Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018–2030), which was adopted by the Third Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and endorsed by the Commission, is intended to guide work in the region for the next decade with a view to enhancing cooperation and the contribution of space applications to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

31.   To maximize the impact of its interventions and pooled resources, ESCAP continued to work with the member States and partners to manage the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries.

32.   In partnership with the Government of Thailand and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, ESCAP organized the Regional Consultation on South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific: Towards the Buenos Aires Plan of Action 40th Anniversary. The Regional Consultation addressed various South-South cooperation issues, including trends, challenges and opportunities in Asia and the Pacific in support of the 2030 Agenda. It also provided the region's input into the outcomes of the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. The secretariat, the Governments of Thailand and Indonesia and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation launched the first Asia-Pacific Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The Forum provided a platform for the heads of development cooperation and South-South cooperation agencies and units operating in developing member States in the region to exchange knowledge, experience, lessons learned and good practices in South-South cooperation. It also helped coordinate information-sharing between providers and users of South-South cooperation to match solutions with demand. The secretariat also contributed to the Directors General Forum of ASEAN Countries on Development Cooperation, convened by the Government of Thailand (in August 2019, in Bangkok).

33.   Partnerships can be a way to increase the impact and effectiveness of ESCAP in the region. Indeed, partnerships with regional and subregional organizations remained a key element of work during the past two years. The secretariat worked with a range of regional and subregional partners, including under formal cooperation agreements. These partners include ADB, ASEAN, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Development Bank, the Eurasian Economic Commission, the Greater Tumen Initiative, the Islamic

Development Bank, the Pacific Community, the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

34.   The secretariat and ASEAN continued to collaborate on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the United Nations (2016–2020). In order to identify areas and modalities of cooperation, ESCAP led the preparation of the publication entitled *Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A Framework for Action*. The report is the first outcome of an initiative to support ASEAN member States to implement the two agendas in an integrated way.

35.   The Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade took an innovative approach to supporting South-South and triangular cooperation. Under its recent initiative on supporting equitable economic development in ASEAN, the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade brought together officials and researchers from ASEAN countries to conduct collaborative research. The results contributed to assessing and managing the impact of non-tariff measures in the context of development-oriented responses in trade policy areas. By promoting equitable economic development in ASEAN, the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade helped to strengthen institutions, narrowed development gaps and encouraged sustainable growth in the subregion.

36.   In 2018, ESCAP and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean formed a new partnership with the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation and established a multi-donor fund focused on trade and investment promotion; science, technology and innovation; infrastructure and transport; and public policies and public-private alliances for sustainable growth.

37.   The outputs described in the present subsection have supported progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 17.

B.   Thematic issues

1.   Leaving no one behind (social development)

38.   The Asia-Pacific region has made significant strides towards inclusive and sustainable social development in recent decades. Economic growth has yielded new opportunities, leading to better access to basic services and an overall increase in income. However, these economic gains have been accompanied by greater inequalities, the impacts of which are most acutely felt by vulnerable groups in society. Through regional dialogue, policy advocacy, research, analysis, technical support and capacity-building, ESCAP worked to strengthen social protection, foster gender equality and promote social inclusion, targeting some of the most vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities, older persons, youth and migrants, among others.

39.   To advance the state of knowledge on inequality and exclusion, ESCAP produced a report entitled *Closing the Gap: Empowerment and Inclusion in Asia and the Pacific*, in which it assessed whether women, rural populations, persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups had fallen further behind, had been included in overall national development gains, or had been empowered to catch up with outcome levels of more privileged groups.

40.   To promote the economic empowerment of women, ESCAP, in partnership with the Government of Canada, launched a regional initiative on the theme "Catalysing women's entrepreneurship: creating a gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem to support women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment". The initiative is aimed at creating an enabling environment for policy and business to enhance the access to capital afforded to women entrepreneurs through innovative financing mechanisms and a greater use of ICT and digital solutions. Through partnerships, including with the United Nations Capital Development Fund, the project uses three innovative financing mechanisms to support women entrepreneurs in accessing affordable, regulated financial services, including the following: (a) innovation fund grants to seek out new, innovative and transformative digital finance and technology solutions that support women entrepreneurs; (b) the women's bond, developed as a debt security mobilizing private investment capital to fund a portfolio of loans to women-focused borrowers; (c) the impact fund, which is aimed at providing equity investment for more mature businesses owned by women.

41.   To promote the exchange of experience and knowledge, the secretariat developed the Asia-Pacific Portal for Gender Equality,[3] a comprehensive online resource on gender equality and women's empowerment, and the E-Government for Women's Empowerment online toolkit,[4] an innovative public resource related to the design and implementation of gender-responsive e-government institutional ecosystems.

42.   To ensure that the concerns of the 690 million persons living with some form of disability are taken into account in policymaking, and in partnership with the Governments of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, the secretariat continued to support the implementation of the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. The secretariat improved the availability of data on disabilities in 35 governments, resulting in a marked increase in the number of indicators and the amount of related data in participating countries. The secretariat helped Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka with the development and adoption of national action plans on disability data collection. It also assisted Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, in the context of the Pacific Enable project, with developing legislation and policies in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

43.   To promote the exchange of experience and knowledge on issues related to ageing populations, ESCAP strengthened the capacities of policymakers to design and reform pension systems, focusing on comprehensive coverage and distributive justice, through a series of capacity-building workshops, policy advice and technical support. Training and advocacy materials were developed to showcase good practices in pension system reform.

44.   The outputs described in the present subsection have supported progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16 and 17.

2.   Disaster risk reduction and resilience

45.   The Asia-Pacific region is among the parts of the world most vulnerable to natural disasters. Since 2005, Asia-Pacific countries accounted for almost 60 per cent of total global deaths, 45 per cent of total global economic damage and 80 per cent of those affected by natural disasters. In 2018 alone, the region

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[3]   Available at www.asiapacificgender.org.

[4]   Available at https://egov4women.unescapsdd.org/toolkit.

was struck by five sudden-onset disasters. It is estimated that over 500 million poor people continue to live in medium- or high-disaster-risk areas in Asia and the Pacific. Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, 13 are linked to disaster risk reduction and resilience, which is considered far more effective and less costly than response, relief and recovery efforts. This demonstrates the cross-cutting role that disaster risk reduction and preparedness play in sustainable development strategies.

46.   The secretariat supported policymakers in developing policies and tools to plan disaster risk management. It also engaged in capacity-building at the regional, subregional and national levels to support Governments in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction. A regional advisory network of experts and practitioners was developed to share good practices and lessons learned. Country-based reviews were undertaken to identify priority issues related to disaster risk reduction. The secretariat delivered these well-targeted interventions and initiatives in partnership with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization, ASEAN and the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia. Key results included the following: (a) the creation of the Asia-Pacific Disaster Resilience Network to reinforce work on disaster risk reduction and resilience in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the regional road map; (b) the publication of a joint ASEAN-ESCAP report entitled *Ready for the Dry Years: Building Resilience to Drought in South-East Asia*, providing drought prospects for decades ahead; (c) the development of a new disaster management plan for Maldives by the National Disaster Management Authority; (d) the scaling up of Monsoon Forums in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, including through the use of second generation knowledge products, with an emphasis on downscaled, sector-wise socioeconomic risks and climate and weather risks; (e) the establishment of national climate outlook forums in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Samoa, providing climate and hydrological information products to enable key economic sectors to anticipate, prepare for and respond to climate anomalies and extreme events.

47.   A report entitled "Ocean accounting for disaster resilience in the Pacific SIDS: a brief note for policymakers" was issued to help policymakers quantify the risk and deepen knowledge related to oceanic disasters in Pacific small island developing States.

48.   According to the 2019 edition of the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report*, many countries in the region could be reaching a tipping point beyond which disaster risk fuelled by climate change exceeds their capacity to respond.

49.   The secretariat also continued building the technical capacity of member States to apply geospatial data, information and tools for drought monitoring and disaster risk reduction. Through its Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning, ESCAP developed the capacity of 125 government officials from 18 countries in Asia and the Pacific to carry out precise risk assessments in climate-sensitive sectors and develop anticipatory strategies to address disaster risk. The secretariat also helped the National Remote Sensing Centre of Mongolia to operationalize the customized drought watch system. In addition, drought monitoring systems were tested in Cambodia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, with the support of three regional service nodes in China, India and Thailand.

50.   The secretariat, in collaboration with the Government of Japan, the Regional Training Centre in Indonesia and the Geoinformatics Centre of the Asian Institute of Technology, strengthened the capacities of the Pacific Island countries to use risk-sensitive geospatial data in multi-hazard risk assessment and early warning systems. National action plans were subsequently developed, and the geological information portals and databases for multi-hazard early warning systems were operationalized in Fiji, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

51.   The outputs described in the present subsection have supported progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 3, and 13.

3.   Climate change

52.   The Asia-Pacific region is extremely vulnerable to climate-induced natural disasters, with annual regional economic losses estimated at $675 billion. This represents around 2.4 per cent of the region's gross domestic product. Of the estimated losses, $405 billion, or 60 per cent, are drought-related agricultural losses, which disproportionately impact poor people living in rural areas. At the same time, the Asia-Pacific countries account for over 50 per cent of global emissions, a figure that is likely to increase. It is thus vital that governments take stronger measures to transition to more efficient low-carbon economies.

53.   In collaboration with the UNEP, ESCAP supported the development of financial instruments to leverage domestic investments in order to meet 2030 Agenda implementation needs and bridge financing gaps for low-carbon, climate-resilient development. Technical and advisory services were provided to financial institutions in Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka in the form of national scoping studies, fact sheets and case studies. Two rounds of consultations were held, instigating discussions on innovative climate finance instruments for financial institutions and establishing platforms for dialogue and learning among key stakeholders. These efforts led to the establishment of national networks of climate finance champions in the above-mentioned countries.

54.   As part of the annual events organized across the region to support countries in the implementation of their nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, ESCAP co-hosted the Asia-Pacific Climate Week in September 2019 in partnership with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, ADB, the International Emissions Trading Association, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, UNEP and UNDP. The Week served to advance regional climate action through the promotion of market-based actions, economic instruments and climate-aligned finance. Multi-stakeholder partnerships at the global, regional, national and subnational levels were fostered, and a host of engaging events were held, covering such topics as finance for climate action, carbon trading systems and sector discussions, including energy, urban development, waste management and sustainable agriculture.

55.   The secretariat also took concrete measures to reduce its carbon emissions and other environmental impacts generated by its facilities and operations, through a pilot programme under the Sustainable United Nations initiative, which was carried out with guidance from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. These measures resulted in the following achievements: (a) 10 per cent reduction in electricity use in two years; (b) over a million single-use catering items prevented from becoming waste in one year (nine tons of waste prevented and 27 per cent of waste recycled); (c) 18 per cent reduction in freshwater use and over 6 per cent of water recycled in two years; (d) climate

neutral and green intergovernmental meetings convened by ESCAP; (e) 19 per cent reduction in air travel emissions in two years; and (f) ESCAP becoming a climate-neutral organization, offsetting operations emissions in 2018 and 2019.

56.   The outputs described in the present subsection have supported progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 17.

4.   Management of natural resources

57.   The Asia-Pacific region consumes over half the world's natural resources, with an increasing rate of absolute and per capita use threatening to jeopardize access to food and water, not only at the regional level but also at the global level. The work of ESCAP was focused on safeguarding natural resources and promoting resource efficiency for land and ocean systems. The secretariat relied on regional convening mechanisms to engage in high-level policy dialogue, encouraging environmental issues to be mainstreamed into regional and subregional development policies. It also worked to raise awareness and strengthen the capacities of Governments to integrate environmental sustainability into country policies and programmes.

58.   In partnership with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration; Kashtakari Panchayat, in Pune, India; the Stockholm Environment Institute Asia Centre; and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, ESCAP developed a new initiative on the theme "Closing the loop: unlocking the informal economy to recover plastic waste and reduce marine pollution as part of an inclusive circular economy approach". The objective was to develop inclusive waste management solutions to return plastic resources to the production cycle; reduce plastic waste leakage into the environment, including the oceans; and contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 14. Good practice case studies were identified in Pune, India, and the Sai Mai district of Bangkok, where local initiatives filled gaps in formal waste management systems and contributed to the practical implementation of a circular plastic waste economy. The case studies informed the plastic waste management systems in the Pune Municipal Corporation and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, both of which now support community-based waste cooperatives as key service providers in the fight against plastic pollution.

59.   In partnership with the Government of Germany and Local Governments for Sustainability, ESCAP developed an enabling framework for the piloting of urban nexus initiatives in 12 Asian cities located in China, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. For example, the pilot in Ulaanbaatar led to the following actions: (a) producing an urban nexus pre-feasibility study on the city energy plan and securing $12.7 million to address heat loss; (b) adopting measures to improve insulation in residential and commercial buildings, such as upgrading heating pipes and shifting to renewable energy; and (c) developing plans for an ecovillage project to provide affordable green housing on one of the community-driven redevelopment sites. In Tanjung Pinang, Indonesia, a vacuum sewage system was established, providing sanitation services to hard-to-reach coastal areas and increasing sanitation coverage to 100 per cent. In Naga City, the Philippines, a Climate Change Resilient Pilot House was completed and an urban nexus task force was established, thereby introducing urban nexus and design thinking as a new approach to participatory, interactive planning.

60.   Under the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation, ESCAP, in partnership with the Governments of China, Japan, the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia and the Russian Federation, launched the North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership in 2018. The Partnership provided a new subregional platform to promote science-based, policy-oriented cooperation by building a subregional emission inventory, publishing a scientific assessment report, developing policy scenarios on optimized mitigation solutions and facilitating policy dialogues.

61.   The outputs described in the present subsection have supported progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17.

5.   Connectivity for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

62.   Connectivity is essential for inclusive economic growth and remains vital to unlocking greater regional and interregional economic cooperation. According to ESCAP research, approximately 80 per cent of international trade costs could be reduced through a combination of policy reforms involving trade, transport and ICT. Improving seamless connectivity will require an integrated and comprehensive approach towards sustainable transport, the liberalization and facilitation of trade, and investment in goods and services and ICT. A key priority of the work of ESCAP is to bring about an integrated and comprehensive approach to seamless connectivity, enabling goods, services, people and information to move more freely and efficiently across borders in the Asia-Pacific region.

63.   In partnership with the Governments of China, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, ESCAP actively engaged in identifying areas for regional actions aimed at addressing infrastructure requirements, capacity bottlenecks and institutional issues that negatively affect the costs and delays of international transport in the region. As part of these activities, ESCAP conducted studies on the simplification of documentation and the deployment and use of information technology for rail-based intermodal transport services. The secretariat subsequently published the *Handbook on Cross-Border Transport along the Asian Highway Network*, which contains information on the overall status of border crossing conditions along the entire network. In late 2018, ESCAP focused on addressing rail connectivity gaps along the route extending from China to the Caucasus via Central Asia and conducted a targeted capacity-building seminar, in which bottlenecks and measures to improve railway network connectivity and interoperability along this route were identified. The secretariat also implemented a project to support the development of dry ports in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam, helping countries gain synergies in rail transport connectivity between inland dry ports and seaports.

64.   The secretariat developed the sustainable urban transport index, a set of indicators to help policymakers to track, summarize and compare the performance of sustainable urban transport systems in cities. The sustainable urban transport index was applied in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Viet Nam, resulting in improved urban transport policies and infrastructure.

65.   Governments in the Asia-Pacific region proactively use trade agreements to promote trade linkages within and outside the region. Of over 270 preferential trade agreements in existence globally, 66 per cent involve Asia-Pacific economies. To build the capacity of trade negotiators, especially from countries with special needs, ESCAP has developed the Trade Intelligence and Negotiation Adviser, an online tool for trade negotiators to analyse information

on bilateral trade flows, tariffs and regional trade agreements.[5] The Trade Intelligence and Negotiation Adviser tool also helps trade negotiators to prepare tariff request-and-offer lists used in bilateral negotiations on tariff concessions. It further helps to identify trade facilitation gaps which countries may cooperate to address, using data from another ESCAP-led initiative, the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation.[6] The Trade Intelligence and Negotiations Adviser portal has been accessed by over 100 users every month in Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Singapore and Thailand.

66.   The implementation of the ESCAP Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific is expected to reduce trade costs by 25 per cent. Since 2018, ESCAP has conducted legal and technical readiness assessments for cross-border paperless trade in eight countries, including five least developed countries, in partnership with the Government of China and the Enhanced Integrated Framework. It has also supported the development of the electronic exchange of trade data among China, Mongolia, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea through its partnership-based community of practice, the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific.[7]

67.   To support the implementation of the ESCAP Asia-Pacific information superhighway, a member-driven initiative of ESCAP, the secretariat assisted landlocked developing countries in North and Central Asia with the creation of an enabling environment for cost-efficient, resilient and inclusive ICT infrastructure. This entailed expanding broadband connectivity by developing technical, human and institutional capacity, and promoting co-deployment of fibre optic cables along roads, railways, pipelines and electric powerlines. The secretariat is currently preparing two studies on the feasibility of establishing shared Internet exchange points to improve Internet traffic management, enhance the regional exchange of content and bring down broadband prices. One exchange point is proposed to be shared by Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam, and the other to be shared by interested developing Pacific Island countries, which remain among the most disconnected countries. In partnership with the International Telecommunication Union, ESCAP is also working towards developing the first-ever interactive map showing the missing ICT links in terrestrial transmission across the Asia-Pacific region.

68.   The outputs described in the present subsection have supported progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 17.

6.   Energy

69.   The Asia-Pacific region faces many energy-related challenges. Over 230 million people in the region continue to live without access to electricity, and nearly half the regional population relies on cooking fuels and technology that are polluting and unhealthy. The regional road map serves to identify key opportunities for ESCAP to address regional energy-related challenges while supporting Sustainable Development Goal 7, ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

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[5]   Available at https://tina.negotiatetrade.org.

[6]   Available at https://untfsurvey.org.

[7]   Available at https://unnext.unescap.org.

70.   With over 200 representatives from 32 countries participating, ESCAP, in partnership with the Government of the Russian Federation, organized the Second Asian and Pacific Energy Forum, held in April 2018. The Forum reviewed progress on tackling energy security challenges, assessed the regional outlook on energy and discussed policy options for achieving the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 7. It also emphasized the role of renewable energy as an important pathway to a less carbon-intensive, more efficient and sustainable energy system. To facilitate consensus-building processes and capacity-development activities at the regional and subregional levels, the secretariat issued six reports, including two subregional reports containing the statistical overviews of the energy sector in ASEAN and Central Asian countries (Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Indonesia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Myanmar; the Philippines; Singapore; Tajikistan; Thailand; Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam). These reports contain an overview of regional, subregional and national trends on energy for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific, including energy connectivity and the transition to a low-carbon energy sector.

71.   The secretariat, with support from the Russian Federation, set up the Asia Pacific Energy Portal[8] to facilitate information dissemination and exchange by increasing the coherence and availability of energy statistics and policy-related information. In 2018, the Portal was further developed to improve its user interface and data coverage with a collection of over 200 data sets, including the following: (a) updated data indicators for the infrastructure maps and country profiles; (b) over 7,000 power plants displayed on the infrastructure maps; and (c) a new comprehensive compilation of national and subnational policy documents from ESCAP member States.

72.   The outputs described in the present subsection have supported progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 7, 12, 13 and 17.

III.   Conclusions and recommendations

73.   Member States may wish to note the progress on the implementation of the regional road map and suggest modalities to strengthen technical cooperation projects carried out by ESCAP.

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[8]   Available at www.asiapacificenergy.org.