

North-East Asian Multistakeholder Forum on Sustainable Development Goals *Building back better from COVID-19* *while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda*

15:00-18:00 GMT+9 (Seoul/Tokyo Time), 28 - 29 October 2021

Virtual Meeting via ZOOM

Concept Note

(Updated 30 September 2021)

Background

Based on ESCAP assessment of SDG achievement in 2020¹, the North-East Asian subregion is on track to achieve no poverty (Goal 1), and clean water and sanitation (Goal 6) by 2030, according to the Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021. North-East Asia has also made relatively good progress towards zero hunger (Goal 2), good health and well-being (Goal 3), affordable and clean energy (Goal 7), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), and industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9). Yet the subregion needs to strengthen efforts to accelerate progress for the remaining goals, in particular, life below water (Goal 14) where the negative trend has to be reversed.

At the regional level, Asia and the Pacific is not on track to achieve any of the 17 SDGs by 2030. Given the tremendous impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs, there is an added urgency to ensure that responses to the pandemic in the region and at the national level accelerate progress toward the 2030 Agenda. The 8th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) in 2021 highlighted the role of international solidarity in the COVID-19 response through cooperation at the regional level and between subregions. The Forum also stressed the importance of a whole-of-society approach, emphasizing on active partnership and engagement with civil society, the private sector, local communities, and other stakeholders for inclusive recovery efforts.²

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, commitment to achieving the SDGs and implementation efforts had continued and advanced. There is an increasing consensus and call at regional and global fora to improve the response to the crisis and find ways to build back better to accelerate the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Building on the efforts that addressed the immediate socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, the experiences and lessons learned of fighting against the crisis provide valuable insights to the long-term policy framework and

¹ SDG Progress | SDG Data Gateway. <https://data.unescap.org/>

² Report of the Eighth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. https://unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/APFSD8_4E_2.pdf

cooperation mechanism for advancing SDG implementation. As the ESCAP report proposes a five-point policy agenda, countries are recommended to (i) enhance regional collaboration by establishing or mobilizing existing sectoral mechanisms, (ii) build universal social protection along the life course and extend coverage to vulnerable population groups, (iii) invest in a sustained socio-economic recovery that aligned with the SDGs, (iv) promote trade facilitation, digitalization, and harmonization, and (v) safeguard environmental health.³

Regional and Global Context of the North-East Asia Forum

The North-East Asia Multistakeholder Forum on Sustainable Development Goals is a part of the preparatory process for the 9th APFSD in 2022, which itself is one of the regional consultations towards the 2022 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and provides a unique opportunity to share sub-regional perspectives on the implementation of SDGs.

All the countries in the subregion have submitted or planned to submit their first or second Voluntary National Review (VNR) by 2021; China (2016 and 2021), Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (2021), Japan (2017 and 2021), Mongolia (2019), Republic of Korea (2016) and Russian Federation (2020). The progress and approaches in implementing the 2030 Agenda vary across countries, but the common requirement is the effective operation of extensive partnership among state and non-state actors within the country as well as partnerships across countries.

Taking into account the thematic focus of the 2022 HLPF of “Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda”, as well as the set of goals identified for in-depth review (i.e., Goals 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17)⁴, the 2021 North-East Asian Multistakeholder Forum on Sustainable Development Goals will focus on sharing experiences and lessons learned for advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda from the pandemic.

³ ESCAP 77th Commission document ESCAP/77/1 ([Summary of the theme study on building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific \(unescap.org\)](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Beyond%20the%20pandamic_Theme%20study.pdf)). Full report: Beyond the pandemic: Building back better from crises in Asia and the Pacific. https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Beyond%20the%20pandamic_Theme%20study.pdf

⁴ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27619PGA_Letter_HLPF_ECOSOC_Silence_Procedure.pdf



The Forum will bring together and connect key stakeholders from government, academia, civil society, the private sector, and the international community in North-East Asia.

Objectives

The main objective of the Forum is to enable an inclusive dialogue among multistakeholder groups in North-East Asia on improving the response to the pandemic and strengthening SDG implementation, as well as to reflect subregional perspectives into the relevant regional and global processes. To achieve this, the forum will:

1. Enhance awareness and understanding of the key challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in North-East Asia in view of the COVID-19 pandemic through sharing of experiences and knowledge;
2. Review the impacts and implications of the COVID-19 in the context of the Decade for Action;
3. Provide good practices in the national and subregional contexts in policies, actions and partnerships for accelerating the progress of SDGs based on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic; and
4. Facilitate sharing experiences among countries in the subregion in their VNR processes

Targeted Participants

1. Government officials, representatives of institutions in ESCAP member States responsible for various aspects of implementing the SDG in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
2. VNR focal points and ESCAP focal points for sustainable development;
3. Representatives of local government (e.g., mayors and representatives of the municipality);
4. Representatives of civil society organizations and private sector organizations;
5. Representatives of regional and sub-regional organizations that support SDG implementation;
6. Experts from think tanks and academia;
7. UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in North-East Asia; and

8. Other stakeholders involved in SDG implementation at national, regional and global levels

Organization

The Forum will be conducted in English.

Expected Outcome

The outcome of the Forum will consist of a summary of key topics and issues, as well as recommendations and presentations. The materials will be shared with participants and be made available on ESCAP Website.

Provisional Agenda

28 October 2021	
15:00 – 15:30	Opening
15:30 – 17:20	<p>Session 1. Progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in North-East Asia and VNR</p> <p>This session aims to reflect the impacts of the pandemic on the subregion, with government representatives presenting progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and experience of conducting VNR.</p>
17:20-17:30	Break
17:30 – 18:30	<p>Session 2. Promoting quality education and empowerment of women</p> <p>This session discusses inclusive measures that support vulnerable groups in facing the COVID-19 pandemic and digital divide under the areas of quality education and gender equality.</p>
	 
29 October 2021	
15:00 – 16:10	<p>Session 3: Enhancing sustainable management and restoration of natural resources</p> <p>This session examines initiatives that rebuild the relationship between people and nature in view of climate disruption, biodiversity decline, and a pollution epidemic, focusing on marine protected areas and sustainable land management.</p>
	 
16;10-16:20	Break
16:20 – 17:40	<p>Session 4: 2022 Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership Report</p> <p>This session identifies subregional challenges and development priorities, and brainstorm cooperation measures that will support the North-East Asian subregion to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and continue progress toward achieving the SDGs. The discussion points will feed into the thematic priorities of and examples shared in the 2022 Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership Report.</p> <p><i>*Note: Breakout rooms will be arranged to discuss each thematic topic: SDG 4, 5, 14 and 15</i></p>
17:40 – 18:00	<p>Session 5: Subregional perspective of advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the way forward</p> <p>This session highlights opportunities and challenges pertinent to the subregion to accelerate SDG implementation while building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
18:00	Closing