

# UNESCAP REPRESENTATIVE PROGRESS REPORT August 2019

By

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I attended the 75<sup>th</sup> Commission session (CS75) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on 27-31 May 2019, together with Dr. Chonchanok Viravan, and Miss Chularat Israngkool Na Ayutthaya. The theme was “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

The 75th Commission Session was opened by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Prime Minister of Cambodia H.E. Samdech Techo Hun Sen and President of Nauru H.E. Baron Divavesi Waqa also attended. The theme study for the 74th session in 2018, entitled “Inequality in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” set the stage, showing that the region's high inequality of outcomes and opportunities traps the vulnerable in poverty and marginalization. The 2019 theme study builds on these findings to examine how empowerment and inclusion are critical for reducing inequality.

Delegates adopted 9 resolutions to leave no one behind on critical issues including statistics, innovation, space applications and air pollution. ESCAP also signed 3 Memorandum of Understanding and one Statement of Cooperation on the sidelines of the Commission Session to increase regional cooperation in the areas of disaster resilience, early warning systems, renewable energy, research and evidence-based policy making.

ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Alisjahbana remarked, “*We can learn from each other as we strengthen policies, institutions and legislation to empower people and promote equality. This can help accelerate our journey to the transformed and resilient society for which we strive.*”

The 75<sup>th</sup> Commission session concludes with a call for greater empowerment, inclusion of the disadvantage.

## **Progress toward SDGs is a major concern**

Asia-Pacific region will not achieve any of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 on its current trajectory even though progress has been made on a spectrum of challenges.

- Slow progress has been made for towards SDG 1 (ending poverty), SDG 4 (ensuring all have access to quality education and lifelong learning) and SDG 7 (measure to achieve affordable and clean energy).
- The situation deteriorated for SDG 6 (providing clean water), SDG 8 (ensuring decent work and economic growth) and SDG 12 (supporting responsible consumption and production).
- Progresses are stagnated for other remaining goals.

Progress for SDGs related to environment are extremely necessary. Good practices to protect the environment while improve economic status of people, such as creation of green jobs, are worth noting and replicating. For example, Fiji women were sent to India to train as solar engineers to maintain solar energy equipment in the rural areas and get paid for it. Pakistan planted 3.4 million trees and creating half a million green jobs in the process.

SDG 17 includes underlying targets on measuring tax revenues, debt sustainability, statistical capacity, technology transfer, international cooperation, trade conditions and policy coherence on sustainable development. Progress in all these areas is necessary to ensure we have the means to finance, target and implement policy solutions to achieve sustainable development by year 2030.

In response to this, ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Alisjahbana called for urgent action to reverse these negative trends. She said, “I hope this report will contribute to targeting our efforts to accelerate progress towards all Goals and to strengthen the region’s commitment to improving the quality of data and statistics essential to measuring progress.”

**For more information:**

- a) Related documentation and video of the sessions during CS75 can be downloaded or viewed from <http://www.unescap.org/commission/75/timetable>
- b) Reports and survey which were launched, discussed and/or reviewed during CS75 can be download from <http://www.unescap.org/publications>

- ***The Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2019***

This report analyses Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) trends as well as data availability for monitoring progress in Asia and the Pacific and its five sub-regions. It assesses progress towards the SDGs and the gaps which must be closed for these to be achieved by 2030. This assessment is designed to ensure the region’s actions remain on target, shortcomings are addressed as they arise, and all interested parties remain engaged. It is an invaluable resource for all stakeholders involved in prioritization, planning, implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

- ***Closing the Gap: Empowerment and inclusion in Asia and the Pacific***

Equality lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its ambition to leave no one behind. This report, prepared as the theme study for the 75<sup>th</sup> Commission Session, gages recent progress towards equality in three key outcomes: education, full-time employment and income. Covering the past ten years, the report assesses whether women, rural populations, persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups have fallen further behind, been included in overall national development gains, or empowered to catch up with outcome levels of more privileged groups. The report measuring how gaps between disadvantaged and advantaged groups have changed over time. It finds encouraging signs of empowerment in education, but improvements in full-time employment is slow.

- ***Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2019: Structural transformation and its role in reducing poverty***

This Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2019 highlights the role of structural transformation in reducing poverty in the Asia-Pacific least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, collectively referred to as “countries with special needs”. While the countries with special needs in Asia and the Pacific have made considerable development gains in recent decades, two in five people still live on incomes below \$3.20 a day, which is the standard poverty line for lower-middle income countries. Poverty is high in many countries as real

wages remain low. In part, this is because a transition to services has bypassed the relatively higher-productive, employment-generating dynamism of the manufacturing sector in many countries. Also, little progress has taken place in within-sector upgrading in the agriculture sector, failing to facilitate value added activities in rural areas. This report examines the link between structural transformation and poverty reduction and puts forward relevant policy considerations to align structural transformation and poverty reduction, highlighting the importance of targeted industrial policies and rural development.

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