

South Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals

4-5 October 2018
Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Concept Note

Background and rationale

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embody the strategic vision and aspirations of all countries for the future of development and its implementation will require implementation action at the global, regional¹ and subregional levels, as indicated in General Assembly Resolution 70/1 on Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda comprising 17 SDGs is particularly relevant for the countries of South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). Despite sustained high levels of economic growth and dynamism in recent decades, South Asia falls behind in many social, economic and environmental development indicators. Countries in South Asia have repeatedly highlighted quality education and training, broad based economic growth, decent and productive work, skills development, reducing inequality, social exclusion and ensuring environmental sustainability through low-carbon climate resilient pathways as key transmission mechanisms necessary for SDG progress. Given South Asia's weight in world population and its share in global poverty, if South Asia falls behind on the 2030 agenda, then the world cannot achieve the SDGs. South Asia, therefore stands to gain much from the transformational opportunity provided by the 2030 Agenda to adopt inclusive and sustainable development pathways and leverage large fundamental shifts underway in the structure of the subregion in terms of demographic, geographic, sectoral and human capital transitions.

The “**South Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals**” provides a unique opportunity to share perspectives on “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality,” the theme of the next session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2019 and the sixth session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) also in 2019.²

¹ UNESCAP resolution 72/6 on ‘Committing to the Effective Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific’, calls upon member States to cooperate at the regional level in the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

² UNESCAP resolution 73/1 outlines the functions of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development as an inclusive regional intergovernmental forum which supports the preparations for the HLPF, discusses national and subregional perspectives and sharing of good practices; provides perspectives for implementing the 2030

The Forum provides an opportunity to bring together stakeholders from the government, academia, international community, civil society and private sector to discuss how countries in South Asia can cooperate to assess progress on the thematic SDGs for review by the HLPF, i.e. SDG 4 on inclusive and quality education, SDG 8 on economic growth and decent work, SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, SDG13 on climate action, SDG 16 on peaceful, inclusive societies and justice for all and SDG 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

The SDGs selected for in-depth review at HLPF 2019



Objectives

The main objective of the Forum is to strengthen the policy environment that supports the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development by ensuring subregional perspectives on follow up and review of the 2030 agenda are articulated and well reflected in all relevant regional and global processes.

To achieve this, the South Asia Forum for the SDGs aims to:

- Enhance awareness and understanding on key challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the regional roadmap to support and complement the subregional agenda through sharing of experiences and knowledge.
- Provide a platform for expert discussions and reflections on subregional perspectives and good practices on the cluster of Goals under review at the HLPF in 2019 and the APFSD in 2019.
- Support capacity building for countries in the subregion ahead of their Voluntary National Review (VNR) presentations in 2019, building on presentations from VNR countries at the HLPF in 2017 and 2018.
- Identify ways, through expert discussions to strengthen implementation efforts, stakeholder engagement, follow-up and review, linking national, subregional, regional and global processes.

Agenda; and assesses progress and provides opportunities for peer learning related to the HLPF thematic goals. UNESCAP, ADB and UNDP have established a partnership to support the attainment of the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific through knowledge products, evidence based policy advocacy, monitoring of the SDGs and capacity development to strengthen regional follow-up and review and national implementation efforts. Under this partnership, an annual thematic report will support discussions at the APFSD and the HLPF, presenting regional perspectives.

- Identify needs and opportunities for regional cooperation and delivery by regional and subregional bodies and the United Nations Development System.

Intended Participants

1. Representatives of institutions in UNESCAP 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 UNESCAP focal points for sustainable development
3. Representatives of local government organizations
4. Representatives of regional and subregional organizations that support SDG implementation
5. Experts from think tanks and academia; and
6. Other stakeholders involved in SDG implementation at national, regional & global levels.

Organization

- The meetings will be conducted in English and all documentation will be in English.
- The meetings will include panel discussions on key topics. Depending on the session focus, presentations may be delivered by resource persons and experts.

Expected outcome

The outcome of the meeting will consist of a summary of proceedings of the key topics and issues raised by participants, as well as training materials and slide deck presentations. The materials will be sent to participants and also be made available on the UNESCAP Website.