

FOREWORD



Inclusive and sustainable economic growth is essential for the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Robust and consistent economic performance is also necessary to implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on development financing and the Paris Agreement on climate change. In Asia and the Pacific, however, the pace of economic expansion has decelerated significantly in recent years. Reviving sustainable economic growth in this, the most populous region of the world, is vital to keeping the promises of these three transformative and universal new global agreements.

The 2016 edition of the ESCAP *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific* highlights the importance of increasing productivity to reinvigorate economic growth and support sustainable development. The *Survey* provides a detailed analysis of factors that have caused the recent economic and productivity slowdown in the region, and examines their implications for eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and improving employment prospects. It explores issues of the rising middle class and rapid urbanization as examples of multifaceted challenges to sustainable development and analyzes issues, such as ageing populations, natural disasters and participation of women in the labour force.

To bolster economic growth in the light of fragile global economic conditions, the *Survey* argues for higher priority to be given to stimulating domestic and regional demand through higher levels of productivity and increases in real wages. Just as strengthening productivity will contribute to the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals, investing in the Goals will nurture growth in productivity, creating a virtuous cycle between sustainable development and inclusive economic growth.

Emphasizing the importance of greater labour productivity in agriculture, the *Survey* argues that a modest increase in agricultural productivity between 2016 and 2030 could lift an additional 110 million people from poverty. It also underscores the importance of industrialization, especially in rural areas, and the rapid transformation towards service-based economies. The *Survey* also contains valuable proposals to increase productivity, including an emphasis on the importance of higher-quality education to promote innovation and enhance skills.

I commend ESCAP for this insightful and thorough analysis. On the basis of this report, policymakers in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond will be better able to design and adapt national policies to support productivity-driven economic growth and sustainable development.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ki Moon Ban". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ki" and last name "Ban" being more prominent.

BAN Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations