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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a set of globally agreed goals that put people and planet first. Tracking progress towards achieving these goals against clear baselines is essential. We need this capability to keep up the reform momentum, and ensure actions remain on target and attentions focused on overcoming challenges as they arise. An unbiased quantitative assessment of results on the ground could make a major contribution to keeping the wider public informed and engaged in the development agenda.

The Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Baseline Report introduces an innovative regional progress measurement methodology. The report estimates objective and feasible target values for the region. It makes use of available data to establish a baseline and assess the gaps which need to be closed if the SDGs are to be achieved by 2030. The analysis uses national values for 30 per cent of the proposed global SDG indicators to assess regional achievements for each SDG in the baseline year 2015. It applies a subset of these indicators to illustrate the progress made since 2000 and progress needed to meet the 2030 targets.

The report presents the SDG baseline for the Asia and the Pacific both at the regional and sub-regional level for selected targets of each SDG. It uses the latest country data and supplementary statistical information aligned to the proposed global indicators. Based on this evidence the report summarizes key findings and analysis. It outlines ways to gradually improve the availability of data and refine our ability to assess progress. Disaggregated data has a critical role to play in our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda's ambition to "leave no one behind".

The report shows that Asia and the Pacific, a region with an impressive development track record, needs to step up its overall development reform effort. For over one third of the SDGs, existing data point to slow or stagnating progress since 2000. For another third (reducing inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, and life on land) the data suggest the region is moving in the wrong direction, a trend we must reverse. For only five SDGs (no poverty; quality education; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; and life below water), do the current trends set the region on the path to achieve the

desired development outcomes by 2030. But even in these areas, there is a need to redouble our efforts.

Data scarcity is a major challenge identified by the report. It stems in large part from insufficient resources, but also unfinished work to develop measurement and methodological guidance for a series of SDG indicators. Goals and targets related to the environment have more pronounced data gaps. They require improvements in measurement development and support to national statistical systems. Inequality is also difficult to track in all its dimensions using the current body of data. A more integrated and inclusive approach to the production of statistics is required. ESCAP is committed to continuing to support work to close these gaps and strengthen capacity of its Member States in this area.

The availability and quality of development data impact on policy choices and the effectiveness with which Agenda 2030 is implemented. Addressing systemic data and statistics gaps for monitoring the SDGs will only be possible if resources are mobilized in a targeted and sustainable way to support the implementation of national strategies for statistical development. While multilateral and bilateral support to statistics in Least Developed Countries has quadrupled (from \$32 million to \$128 million between 2006 and 2013), investments are uneven within and across countries and still insufficient to fully address gaps in available data.

Yet compared to the Millennium Development Goals, follow-up and review of Agenda 2030 is data intensive. It requires extra efforts from all stakeholders to fill financial, methodological and capacity gaps in the production, dissemination and use of statistics. Statistical systems need to be transformed to use all possible data sources (including big data, geographical information and administrative data) and expanded to embrace new data producers, owners and users. To pursue this vision, ESCAP is working to support statistical systems in the region which develop national comprehensive indicator frameworks driven by specific and measurable national policy priorities. These frameworks cover all population groups and their development concerns. They can contribute to fostering political support and mobilizing resources for statistics. I trust this report can help foster regional collaboration on statistics as governments develop national policies and monitoring frameworks based on clear, measurable targets to achieve sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.