

Opening Introductory Remarks for APFSD 2016

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Hironori Hamanaka

IGES Chair of the Board of Directors

Thank you Mr. Chair

H.E. Mr. Siaso 'Ofa ki Vahafola Sovaleni,

H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai,

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar,

Excellencies, distinguished representatives of governments and other key stakeholders,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to be given this opportunity to address the High-Level Opening of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2016.

The past decade has witnessed a growing interest in sustainability transitions. This interest is driven by a desire to demonstrate that radical transformations of unsustainable development patterns are feasible. Perhaps nowhere is such a transformation more needed than Asia and the Pacific.

The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), for which I serve as Chair of the Board of Directors, is an independent strategic policy research institute located in Asia and the Pacific, aiming to generate and disseminate practical knowledge for problem solving. IGES is working to act as an Agent of Change, through strategic networking and partnership with key stakeholders across the world, for a global transition to sustainability and resilience.

At IGES, we have been working on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2030 Development Agenda and the preceding Rio+20 processes for more than five years. Most recently IGES contributed to the UNESCAP report, *Transformations for Sustainable Development: Promoting Environmental Sustainability in Asia and the Pacific*, to be launched this evening. Our work involved framing many of the report's main messages in terms of the SDGs and the new 2030 Development Agenda.

UNESCAP's timely report offers critical insights into how policymakers in Asia and the Pacific can harness four megatrends to make the region more sustainable. These megatrends are 1) social justice, 2) investment flows, 3) economic structure and 4) resource use. One strength of this report is that it demonstrates how policymakers can capitalize on these trends to advance, rather than inhibit, sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

Another strength of the report is that it helps translate the rather abstract “transitions” language into recommendations that resonate with policymakers in Asia and the Pacific. For instance, it offers clear-eyed recommendations on how policymakers can enable the scaling up of good practice “niches”, or spaces for sustainability transitions, in renewable energy, organic agriculture, and green buildings.

Building on IGES’ work on the SDGs, including our contribution to the UNESCAP Report, and in the context of the Priority Action Areas mentioned in the Regional Road Map for implementing 2030 Agenda that include 1) Integration of SDGs into national planning, 2) Promotion of policy coherence, 3) Enhancing data and statistical capacities, 4) Identifying and promoting sources of funding, 5) Leveraging science, technology and innovation, 6) Accelerating regional connectivity and integration, 7) Fostering south-south and regional partnerships, and 8) Translating regional models into action, I would like to highlight three areas of IGES current research and strategic operations that we envisage as being essential to fostering transformations in Asia and the Pacific, namely: 1) SDG readiness; 2) SDG capacity building; and 3) SDG indicators.

The first area that IGES is working on is **SDGs Readiness**-we are currently surveying the initial response to the SDGs by national and local governments in Asia and the Pacific, including their awareness on this new agenda - meaning what actions are being taken by governments and non-state actors to introduce the SDGs to people, both nationally and sub-nationally

We are also looking at their institutional arrangements for implementing the agenda - referring to committees, commissions, decrees or task forces at high political level to help integrate the agenda into existing institutional structures.

Another point for surveying readiness is to look at the mechanisms for follow-up review – meaning what are the existing monitoring and review mechanisms, and what are the roles of academia and others in contributing to tracking progress, and

We also ask about the challenges they see in achieving the goals and targets - including lack of funding, lack of awareness and specific challenges that countries may face in their development.

IGES is already working with contacts in several countries in the region, and we are planning to expand this work further to look deeper into the aspects of SDGs implementation in the future.

The second area of focus for transformation is **SDG Capacity Building**-IGES has worked with the private sector and is currently discussing ways in which our work can support development agencies to build capacity on the SDGs. One thing is certain - action on the universal 2030 agenda will have to involve everyone to the largest extent possible. Our capacity building programme will therefore consist of interactive modules that can be adapted to suit different audiences.

- The first target audience is **Governments** - there is an urgent need to clarify **how sectoral portfolios relate to the new Sustainable Development Goals and Targets**. **Awareness raising** and **matching of existing policies with the goals and targets** as well as **design of action plans** are relevant first steps for governments.
- The second target audience is **Businesses** - Businesses can gradually **change their core priorities to incorporate triple bottom lines** and **report how their activities contribute to achievement of the SDGs**. This requires **awareness of the agenda, its goals and targets** and an **understanding of how business activities impact the SDGs**.
- **Civil society** is our third target audience. – For the 2030 Agenda, **Civil Society Organisations** can be strategically engaged as **implementing partners** - for example by raising awareness at the grass-roots level and among citizens, or through voluntary reporting on implementation.
- The fourth target audience is **development agencies** – They are familiar with strategic goals and targets. But the integrated nature of the 2030 agenda requires inclusion of the new goals, targets and indicators. Regional and national offices of development agencies within and beyond the UN and the OECD countries need **awareness raising to identify how existing work portfolios on agriculture, education and other traditional development sectors relate to the new goals and targets**.

Let me now explain the third and final area that IGES is working on, which relates to **SDGs Indicators**-IGES is **collecting and analysing data for 100 SDGs indicators for 10 countries**. Data at the **subnational level for the SDGs city goal** is also being gathered for Japan and the Philippines. This **data will be compiled and analysed to identify synergies** that could **help achieve multiple objectives across goals** as well to identify **trade-offs** between goals that need to be addressed so as **to avoid conflicts**. A **visualization tool** is also being developed to **facilitate public access to SDGs data via the internet**.

It should be noted that research on national readiness, work on SDG capacity building, and efforts on SDG indicators are meant to reinforce each other.

Distinguished Ministers, representatives of governments and other key stakeholders, ladies and gentlemen,

I very much hope my remarks can serve as a useful contribution to discussion throughout the Forum over the next three days, and I wish the Conference every success.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.