

11.11.2021

Fifth South Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals Building back better from COVID-19 while accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in South and South-West Asia

15-16 November 2021

Hybrid Mode

Venue: The Hilton Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Concept Note

Background and context

The [South Asia Forum on the SDGs \(SAFS\)](#) was conceived as the subregional preparatory meetings for the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)¹ to be held in March 2022, which in turn contributes towards the annual High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF). They have been organized by the South and South-West Asia office of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in collaboration with South Asian member States, stakeholders and partners since 2017.² The Forums facilitate dialogue and deliberations between Government officials, civil society, think-tanks, experts and other stakeholders on the themes of the annual APFSD and the HLPF, providing a unique opportunity to share information on subregional implementation efforts, highlight subregional priorities and share good practices. The outcomes and recommendations from the Forum feed into regional and global processes, in particular the annual APFSD and HLPF. The Fifth SAFS is being jointly organised by UNESCAP and the Government of Sri Lanka.

Countries of South and South-West Asia are not on track to achieve any of the 17 Goals without concerted efforts from all stakeholders to accelerate action in the Decade of Action for Achieving the 2030 Agenda. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has undermined South and South-West Asia's progress towards achieving the SDGs, making it critical for the subregion to build back better, aligned with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. UNESCAP's flagship SDG progress report 2021

¹ The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development is an inclusive regional intergovernmental forum which supports the preparations for the High-level Political Forum (HLPF). ESCAP resolution 73/1 indicates that the theme of the APFSD is aligned with the theme of the HLPF and will support an in-depth discussion of the cluster of goals under review at the HLPF.

² The First SASF was held in Kathmandu in collaboration with the National Planning Commission, Nepal. The Second SASF was organized by UNESCAP in partnership with the NITI Aayog, India and the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), on 4-5 October 2018 in New Delhi. The Third SASF was jointly organized by UNESCAP and the Government of Bangladesh on 8-9 December 2019 in Dhaka. The Fourth SASF was organized by UNESCAP in partnership with the Government of Maldives on 2-3 December 2020 in virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

finds that the South and South-West Asia subregion has made most progress on no poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), and good health and well-being (SDG 3).³ Among the priority areas that require urgent accelerated action to reverse negative trends are reduced inequalities (SDG 10); Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11); climate action and life below water (SDG 13 and 14); and Peace, Justice and strong institutions (SDG 16). The far-reaching, mutually reinforcing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, poses further hurdles in the way of the subregion's efforts to accelerate SDG implementation, making it critical to strengthen the means of implementation and partnership for the goals (SDG 17).

With a population of 1.8 billion (25% share in world population), the South Asian subregion (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) has a crucial role to play in the global achievement of the SDGs. Despite economic dynamism and steadily high rates of economic growth in the past decade, South Asia accounts for disproportionately high share (34 percent) of people living in extreme poverty and other multiple and often, intersecting socio-economic deprivations. With a global share of 37% in people who are undernourished and 40 million stunted children under the age of 5 years, South Asia accounted for almost 39% of children under 5 years of age suffering from stunting. With persistent development challenges, including low levels of intraregional trade, poor cross-border connectivity, wide infrastructure gaps, pervasive informality, lack of decent work opportunities and low rates of female labour force participation. The subregion remains particularly vulnerable and lacks adequate coping capacities to address the severe socio-economic effects of the pandemic. Recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic must focus on implementing the 2030 Agenda. ESCAP Resolution 77/1 calls for greater regional cooperation at all levels to build back better, for getting back on track to achieve the SDGs and to build resilience to future pandemics and crises.⁴

Against this background, the “**Fifth South Asian SDG Forum**” will focus on inclusive, resilient and sustainable strategies towards COVID-19 recovery efforts and identify priorities to accelerate the Goals of the 2030 Agenda, with emphasis on climate- and environment-responsive approaches to building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme of the 2021 SASF is aligned with the theme of the 2022 HLPF and the APFSD, “*Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda*”. The Forum provides an opportunity to discuss how the South and South-West Asia subregion can cooperate to assess progress on the thematic SDGs for review by the HLPF in 2022, i.e., **Goals 4 (Quality education), 5 (Gender equality), 14 (Life below water), 15 (Life on land) and 17 (Partnership for the Goals)**.

As part of the follow-up and review process for the SDGs, all countries in the subregion submitted their first Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) by 2019. Turkey presented its second VNR in 2019, while Bangladesh, Nepal and India presented their second VNRs in 2020 and Afghanistan and Bhutan submitted their VNRs for the second time in 2021. Sri Lanka intends present its second VNR in 2022. In this context, this year's **Forum** will focus on experiences of member States participating in voluntary national reviews, and focus on national and subregional perspectives on challenges, progress and achievements, lessons learned as well as, forward-looking dialogue on partnership to accelerate the progress of SDGs.

³ UNESCAP (2021). Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/asia-and-pacific-sdg-progress-report-2021#>

⁴ ESCAP/RES/77/1. See https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/ESCAP_RES_77_1_E.pdf

As a subregional preparatory meeting, the Forum seeks to bring together multiple stakeholders from the government, international community, civil society, academia and the private sector on a common platform to discuss achievements and challenges in the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, assess progress on the thematic SDGs for review by the HLPF 2022 and advance regional cooperation to build back better from the pandemic.

Objectives

The main objective of the Forum is to foster deepened and shared understanding of member States and other stakeholders on the opportunities for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through inclusive dialogue and strengthened partnerships, as well as, to reflect subregional perspectives into the relevant regional and global processes

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

1. 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.
2. Provide a platform for expert discussions and reflections on subregional perspectives and good practices along with challenges related to means of implementation for achieving the SDGs.
3. Identify ways, through expert discussions to strengthen implementation efforts, stakeholder engagement, follow-up and review, linking national, subregional, regional and global processes, including through sharing of presentations and experiences of VNR countries at the HLPF.
4. Identify needs and opportunities for regional cooperation and delivery by regional and subregional bodies and the United Nations Development System.

Intended Participants

1. Government officials and representatives engaged in various aspects of implementing and monitoring the SDGs
2. VNR focal points and UNESCAP focal points for sustainable development
3. Representatives of UNCT, regional and subregional organizations that support SDG implementation
4. Representatives of civil society organizations and private sector organizations
5. Experts from think tanks and academia; and
6. Other stakeholders involved in SDG implementation at national, regional and 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 recommendations and presentations. The materials will be

disseminated to the participants and be made available on the UNESCAP Website. The highlights of meeting will feed into the subregional report to the APFSD and HLPF, 2022.

Tentative Programme

(Sri Lankan Time)

Day 1: 15 November 2021 (Monday)

This session will be held at PM House and the delegates will be taken in vehicle by local host. The delegates are expected to be in the Hotel Lobby by 08.00 AM. The last vehicle will leave at 08:10 AM.

Session 1: Inaugural

09:30- 10:45

Opening Session

The session's aim is to enhance awareness and understanding of the key challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the subregion in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and recent regional and subregional developments. The Session will provide inputs to discussions on the Regional Road Map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

Welcome Remarks:

- **Mr. Anusha Palpita**, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Policies & Plan Implementation, Sri Lanka
- **Mr. Adnan Aliani**, Officer-in-Charge, ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office, New Delhi
- **Ms. Hanaa Singer-Hamdy**, UN Resident Coordinator, Sri Lanka

Launch of Sri Lanka National SDG Data Portal (10-12 minutes)

- **Ms. Chamindry Saparamadu**, Director-General of the Sustainable Development Council, Sri Lanka – (Sri Lanka SDG Data Governance and Management System and the National SDG Data Portal)
- **Mr. Robert Juhkam**, Resident Representative, UNDP Sri Lanka (Data in the context of SDGs)

Release of ESCAP South Asia SDG Report “Integrating SDG Implementation and COVID-19 Recovery: building back better and advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (5 minutes)

- **Mr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna**, Deputy Head, ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office, New Delhi

	<p>Special Remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP • H.E. Mr. Esala Ruwan Weerakoon, Secretary-General of SAARC • H.E. Ms. Fathimath Niuma, Deputy Minister, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives • H.E. Dr. Biswo Nath Poudel, Vice-Chairman, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal • H.E. Mr. Asad Umar, Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan <p>Inaugural Address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hon. Mahinda Rajapaksa, Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Policies and Plan Implementation, Sri Lanka <p>Vote of Thanks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Chaminda Udakumbura, Director (Operation), Sustainable Development Council, Sri Lanka <p style="text-align: center;">Group Photo</p>
11.00	Departure from PM House to Meeting venue
11.30-13.00	<p>Session 2: National progress, achievements and challenges with respect to the 2030 Agenda in the context of COVID-19</p> <p>The session will help reflect on how the regional and subregional follow-up and review processes can strengthen the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level. It will provide national perspectives on impact of the pandemic on the SDGs and highlight priorities to reflect on the kind of policies being implemented to respond to the pandemic and its prospects for meeting the 2030 Agenda. To strengthen the capacity of countries in the subregion considering making presentations at the HLPF 2022, the session will feature interventions from countries who have recently participated in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the HLPF in the past years and provide peer learning for countries in the subregion.</p> <p>Moderator/Chair:</p> <p>Mr. R. H.W.A. Kumarasiri, Director General, Department of National Planning, Sri Lanka</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections on Second Voluntary National Reviews in Asia-Pacific:

	<p>Mr. Riccardo Mesiano, Sustainable Development Officer, UNESCAP (10 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerating SDG Progress in South Asia: Mr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, UNESCAP SSWA (10 minutes) <p>Presentations by Country Representatives:</p> <p><i>Countries Presenting VNRs at the HLPF 2022:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Shabnam Sarfaraz, Member (Social Sector & Devolution), Planning Commission, Pakistan • Mrs. Shashikala Rathnayake, Director (Development), Sustainable Development Council, Sri Lanka <p><i>Countries that Presented VNRs at the HLPF 2021:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Phurba, Senior Planning Officer, Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC), Bhutan <p><i>Other SSWA Member countries:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Mohd. Monirul Islam, Joint Secretary (SDG), Prime Minister’s Office, Government of Bangladesh, Bangladesh • Mr. Soumya Guha, SDG Officer, NITI Aayog, India
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00- 15:15	<p>Session 3: National progress, achievements and challenges with respect to the 2030 Agenda in the context of COVID-19 (Contd.)</p> <p>Moderator/Chair:</p> <p>Mr. R. H. W. A. Kumarasiri, Director General, Department of National Planning, Sri Lanka</p> <p><i>Other SSWA Member countries:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Mojtaba Ghafouri, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran • Ms. Fathimath Niuma, Deputy Minister, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives • Dr. Kiran Rupakhetee, Joint Secretary, National Planning Commission, Nepal • Mr. Yunus Emre Kaval, EU Expert, Ministry of Health, Turkey (virtual) <p><i>CSO Representative:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Ananda Mallawatantri, Country Representative, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Sri Lanka • Dr. Jyotsna Mohan Singh, Asia Coordinator, Asia Development Alliance <p>Open Discussion</p>

15:15 - 15:30	Tea/Coffee Break
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15:30 - 17:30	<p>Session 4: Subregional perspectives and review of selected Goals for HLPF 2022 in South Asia (SDGs 4, 5, 14 and 15)</p> <p>The session is expected to develop subregional perspectives on the cluster of goals under review in the HLPF 2022 in the form of impact on progress due to the pandemic, challenges, priorities, good practices, as well as, propose solutions to accelerate progress by harnessing cross-border cooperation among other means. Through break-out sessions led by conveners of the working groups, this session will identify subregional priorities, reflect on opportunities for subregional responses, with focus on measures needed for vulnerable groups most affected by the pandemic to leave no one behind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the unique set of challenges and needs of countries and the subregion, and discuss concrete collaborations that could be developed with partners; • Expand field of work to incorporate a subregional perspective to better support ESCAP member States; and • Gather information on priorities, policies, stakeholder-led initiatives and projects for possible inclusion in the 2022 SDG Partnership report that are related to the HLPF theme 2022 “<i>Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i>” <p>Moderator/Chair:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ms. Fathimath Niema, Deputy Minister, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives <p><u>Presentation: Key messages and findings from 2021 SDG Partnership Report and Introduction to theme of 2022 SDG Partnership Report (30 min)</u></p> <p>Mr. Bishwa Tiwari, Programme Specialist, UN Development Programme (UNDP)</p> <p>Ms. Smita Nakhooda, Senior Results Management Specialist, Asian Development Bank (ADB)</p> <p>Comments from floor/Q&A</p> <p>Presentation by ESCAP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Riccardo Mesiano, Sustainable Development Officer, Office of the Executive Secretary, UNESCAP <p>Break-out sessions: Working groups (Each group will consist of government</p>
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officials, experts, UNRCO representatives, UNCT experts, CSOs etc.)

Guiding questions to gather input for 2022 SDG Partnership Report

- How has COVID-19 affected quality education, gender equality, and biodiversity (marine and terrestrial) conservation?
- How are the above effects of COVID-19 and recovery measures different for groups within countries and between countries?
- Where are you seeing emerging possibilities, initiatives and priorities to invest in these goal areas to enable a more sustainable recovery? How have these issues been included or mainstreamed in the COVID-19 recovery measures of your government and institutions?

Group 1. SDG 4: Quality Education

Moderator/Chair:

- **Prof. Nagesh Kumar**, Director, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID), India

Panelists:

- **Dr. Fahmida Khatun**, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh
- **Dr. Abid Suleri**, Executive Director, SDPI, Pakistan
- **Prof. Prashanthi Narangoda**, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka
- **Mrs. B.P. Withanage**, Director of Education, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka
- **Mr. Christian Skoog**, UNICEF Representative, Sri Lanka
- **Prof. Shahid Ahmed**, Professor, Department of Economics, Jamia Millia Islamia, India

CSO Representatives:

- **Mr. Shantha Kulatunga**, National Coordinator, Coalition for Education Development
- **Ms. Susmita Choudhury**, Capacity Support and Advocacy Advisor, Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education

Group 2. SDG 5: Gender Equality

Moderator/Chair:

- **Ms. Pramila Acharya Rijal**, President, South Asian Women Development Forum (SAWDF), Nepal

Panelists:

- **Mrs. Manel Jayamanna**, Executive Director – National Committee on Women, Government of Sri Lanka
- **Ms. Cai Cai**, Chief of Section, Social Development Division, UNESCAP
- **Ms. Athifa Ibrahim**, EPIC Consulting LLP, Maldives
- **Ms. Simrin C. Singh**, Director, ILO, Sri Lanka
- **Ms. Sharika Cooray**, Gender Expert, UNFPA, Sri Lanka

CSO Representative:

- **Dr. Kala Pieris**, Director for Women’s Research Sri Lanka (CENWOR)
- **Ms. Kamala Thapa**, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Manager, Center For Indigenous Peoples Research and Development (CIPRED)

Group 3. SDG 14: Life under Water

Moderator/Chair:

- **Dr. Anil Jasinghe**, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka

Panelists:

- **Mr. Sanjay Srivastava**, Chief, Disaster Risk Reduction, ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, UNESCAP
- **Mr. Uchita de Zoysa**, Chairman - Global Sustainability Solutions (GLOSS) and Executive Director - Centre for Environment & Development (CED), Sri Lanka
- **Mr. Aman Khaleel**, Planning Officer, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives
- **Mr. Parackrama Karunarathne**, Director General - Engineering, State Ministry of Coast Conservation & Low-Lying Lands Development, Sri Lanka
- **Dr. Arvind Kumar**, President, India Water Foundation, India
- **Ms. Malin Herwig**, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Sri Lanka

CSO Representative:

- **Mr. Arjan Rajasuriya**, Sri Lanka
- **Mr. Md. Mujibul Haque Munir**, Joint Director, COAST Foundation

Group 4. SDG 15: Life on Land

Moderator/Chair:

- **Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi**, Director General, Research and Information System for Development Countries (RIS), India

Panelists:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Phurba, Senior Planning Officer, Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC), Bhutan • Mr. P.K. Taneja, Director, SAARC Disaster Management Centre, India • Mr H.D. Rathnayake, Additional Secretary (Technical), Ministry of Wildlife and Forest Conservation, Sri Lanka • Dr. Chathurangi Wickramarathne, Environment Expert, FAO, Sri Lanka • Prof. Hemanthi Ranasinghe, Senior Professor, University of Sri Jayawardhanepura • Dr. Puspa Sharma, Executive Director, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal <p><i>CSO Representative:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Hemantha Withanage, Senior Consultant, Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ), Sri Lanka • Mr. Wali Haider, Joint Director, Roots for Equity
7.30 pm Welcome Dinner hosted by the Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Government of Sri Lanka	
Day 2: 16 November 2021	
09:45 – 11:15	<p>Session 5: Plenary- Review of selected Goals for HLPF 2022 in South Asia: Reporting by the Working Groups and the Way Forward</p> <p>The session will provide subregional perspectives on the cluster of goals under review in 2022, by the conveners of the Working Groups on the respective Goals based on the discussions in the previous session.</p> <p><i>Moderator/Chair:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ms. Fathimath Niema, Deputy Minister, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives <p><i>Reporting by Chairs of Working Groups (5 minutes for each group):</i></p> <p>Group 1. SDG 4: Quality Education Group 2. SDG 5: Gender Equality Group 3. SDG 14: Life under Water Group 4. SDG 15: Life on Land</p> <p>Discussion on the way forward: <i>Open discussion</i></p>
11:15– 11:30	Tea/Coffee Break
11:30– 13:00	<p>Session 6: Leveraging partnerships and means of implementation for the SDGs: Finance, technology, capacity-building and trade (SDG 17)</p> <p>This session will focus on the means of implementation identified under SDG 17 – which include finance, technology, trade and capacity building. It will discuss means and mechanisms for designing recovery strategies based on sustainable financing</p>

	<p>policies; leveraging public and private sources for financing COVID-19 recovery packages and achieving the SDGs; emerging capacity-building needs and advancements in digital technology and technology gaps; and opportunities for increasing intra-regional trade through trade digitalization, harmonization and trade facilitation.</p> <p>Moderator/Chair:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Shabnam Sarfaraz, Member (Social Sector & Devolution), Planning Commission, Pakistan <p>Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Hamza Ali Malik, Director, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division (MPFD), UNESCAP <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Nagesh Kumar, Director, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID), India • Dr. Ganeshan Wignaraja, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, National University of Singapore and Senior Visiting Fellow, Pathfinder Foundation, Sri Lanka • Prof. Saj U. Mendis, Director General (Bilateral)/Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka • Dr. Abid Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, and Member, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of Pakistan • Ms. Pramila Acharya Rijal, President, South Asian Women Development Forum (SAWDF), Nepal • Dr. Selim Raihan, Executive Director, SANEM, Bangladesh <p>CSO Representative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Choliya De Silva, Group CFO, Heyleys Group, Sri Lanka • Ms. Pooja Rangaprasad, Policy Director, Financing for Development, Society for International Development (SID) <p><i>Open discussion</i></p>
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:15	<p>Session 7: Strengthening means of implementation for the SDGs: Policy coherence, multi stakeholder partnerships, and data, monitoring and accountability (SDG 17)</p> <p>The session will explore effective strategies for contextualization/localization of SDGs to enhance policy coordination and coherence and examine the role and opportunities for multi-stakeholder partnerships, including public-private partnerships to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. It will explore the data gaps and statistical capacity preparedness, monitoring frameworks of countries in the subregion, identify emerging data needs in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and</p>

	<p>highlight opportunities for statistical innovations and development of common data strategies.</p> <p>Moderator/Chair:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. R.M.P. Ratnayake, Deputy Secretary to the Treasury, Sri Lanka <p>Presentation on SDG progress in the SSWA region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Arman Bidarbakhtnia, Head, Statistical Data Management Unit, ESCAP <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Noorjahan Khatun, Joint Secretary, Statistics and Informatics Division (SID), Ministry of Planning, Bangladesh • Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Director (SSD), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India • Ms. Aishath Shahuda, Chief Statistician, National Bureau of Statistics, Maldives • Mr. Dilli Raj Joshi, Deputy Director General, Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal • Mr. Muhammad Ali Kemal, Chief (SDGs), Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan • Dr. J.S.N.P. Dharmawardhane, Senior Statistician, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka • Ms. Rifa Musthapha, SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council (SCWEC) <p>CSO Representative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Karin Fernando, Team Leader, Sustainable Development, Centre for Poverty Analysis, Sri Lanka • Ms. Anita Gurumurthy, Executive Director, IT for Change <p>Open discussion</p>
15:15-15:30	Tea/Coffee Break
15:30-16:45	<p>Session 8: Building Back Better and Accelerating SDGs Achievement- Priority Actions for Regional Cooperation [South Asia Network on SDGs (SANS)]</p> <p>This session will explore trends and importance of regional, subregional and South-South and triangular cooperation in supporting the achievement of the SDGs and discuss how regional commissions like UNESCAP and the United Nations Development System can better support countries in the subregion to leverage regional platforms, including by promoting exchanges of good practices, knowledge and experiences, on relevant issues including the COVID-19 pandemic; enhancing greater access to information and innovation; and harnessing technical and research capacities through knowledge networks and partnerships.</p>

	<p>Moderator/Chair:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Nagesh Kumar, Director, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID), India <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh • Mr. Chanchal Sarkar, Director, Economic, Trade and Finance, SAARC Secretariat • Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director-General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), India • Dr. Puspa Sharma, Executive Director, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal • Dr. Abid Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, and Member, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of Pakistan • Dr. Dushni Weerakoon, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka • Prof. Shahid Ahmed, Professor, Department of Economics, Jamia Millia Islamia, India <p>CSO Representative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation, India • Mr. Daya Sagar Shrestha, Executive Director, National Campaign for Sustainable Development <p>Open discussion</p>
16:45-17:15	<p>Wrap up and concluding session: The way forward</p> <p>This last session will feature concluding remarks by the organizers, summarizing the key highlights, discussing the way forward, including the process leading to the APFSD and HLPF in 2022 and consolidating subregional inputs for the upcoming APFSD to feed into the HLPF 2022.</p> <p>Key highlights of the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Deputy Head, UNESCAP-SSWA <p>Concluding remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Chamindry Saparamadu, Director General, Sustainable Development Council, Sri Lanka • Mr. Adnan Aliani, Officer-in-Charge, UNESCAP-SSWA <p>Keynote address by Chief Guest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admiral Professor Jayanth Colombage, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Relations, Sri Lanka