

## **CONCEPT NOTE**

[VER. 19.03.2021]

- Event: **“Enabling sustainable recovery with greater access to information, access to justice and public participation in environmental decision-making”**  
(Side event during the 8<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development)
- Location: United Nations Conference Centre (Bangkok, Thailand)
- Platform: Via Microsoft Teams: [Click here to join!](#)
- Date/Time: Monday, 22 March 2021  
15:00-16:30 (Bangkok Time) – Verify your local time [here](#)
- Hosts: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

### **DESCRIPTION**

Within the 2030 Agenda, States affirm the need to build peaceful, just, and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels, and on transparent, effective, and accountable institutions. Effective laws and policies and strong institutions provide the necessary foundation for environmental protection and enforcement in order to create resilience to environmental crises, stop environmental crime and reduce future pandemic risks. These aims, encapsulated in Sustainable Development Goal 16, its targets, and its indicators, provide an enabling environment for inclusive, sustainable and green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of targets for Goal 16 outline procedural rights and guarantees, on what can be termed “access rights” – access to information, public participation in decision-making, access to justice.

### **OBJECTIVE**

The expected outcome of this event is an expanded regional dialogue with key stakeholders on access rights in the Asia and the Pacific.

The effective establishment of dialogue around these issues could seed the foundations of a wider framework in Asia and the Pacific, such as the “Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters” (Aarhus Convention) in Europe, and the “Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean” (Escazu Agreement). Such regional agreements reinforce the foundation for environmental rule of law and uphold access rights in environmental decision making.

## AGENDA

| Time<br>(Bangkok) | Presentation  |
|-------------------|---|
| 3:00 pm           | Moderator:<br><b>Georgina Lloyd</b><br>Regional Coordinator Environmental Law and Governance<br>Asia and the Pacific Office (UNEP)<br>(5 mins)  |
| 3:05 pm           | <i>Keynote presentation:</i><br><br><b>Prof. Amara Pongsapich</b><br>Thailand Representative to ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)<br>(10 mins)   |
| 3:15 pm           | <b>Panel discussion 1:</b> What are the benefits of regional mechanisms to enable Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19 with enhanced Access to Information, Access to Justice and Public Participation?             |
|                   | <b>a) Fiona Marshall</b><br>Environmental Affairs Officer, Aarhus Convention Secretariat, UNECE   |
|                   | <b>b) David Barrio</b><br>Environmental Affairs Officer, Escazú Agreement Secretariat, UNECLAC  |
|                   | <b>c) Katinka Weinberger</b><br>Chief, Environment and Development Policy Section, UNESCAP  |
| 3:30 pm           | Intervention:<br><b>Åsa Hedén</b><br>Head of Development Cooperation - Regional Asia and the Pacific<br>Embassy of Sweden, Thailand (Sida)<br><br><b>Q&amp;A</b>  |
| 3:45 pm           | Moderator:<br><b>Romchat Wachirarattanakornkul</b><br>Human Rights, Climate Change and Environment Focal Point<br>Regional Office for South-East Asia<br>Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) |

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|         | <b>Panel discussion 2:</b> How can inclusive and participatory decision-making accelerate sustainable post-pandemic recovery and promote the achievement of globally agreed environmental goals?            |
|         | <p>a) <b>Vitit Muntarbhorn</b> (5 mins)<br/>Professor Emeritus, Chulalongkorn University; formerly UN Special Rapporteur, UN Independent Expert and member of UN Commissions of Inquiry on human rights</p> |
|         | <p>b) <b>Joan Carling</b> (5 mins)<br/>Co-convenor of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development</p>  |
|         | <p>c) <b>Judge Brian Preston</b> (5 mins)<br/>Chief Judge of the Land and Environment Court of New South Wales, Australia</p>   |
| 4:05 pm | <b>Q&amp;A</b>  |
| 4:20 pm | <p><b>Matthew Baird</b><br/>Presentation of background document on <i>Access Rights in Asia-Pacific</i><br/>UNEP Consultant<br/>Director Asian Research Institute for Environmental Law (ARIEL)</p>         |
| 4:28 pm | Final Remarks (2 mins)  |

#### FORMAT

- This hybrid event will be hosted at the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok (UNCC) Bangkok for local participants, and via Microsoft Teams for remote connections.
- This event is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

**WEBSITE**

Click [here](#)



**REGISTRATION**

Click [here](#) or scan code to register.

