

Expert Group Meeting on Understanding Solidarity, Trust and Social Contract in the context of Social Development in Asia and the Pacific

16 December 2021

Session I: 10:00 - 13:00 (GMT+7)

Session II: 15:00 - 18:00 (GMT+7)

I. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the Asia-Pacific region's challenges in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in areas related to social development. Major reasons for these challenges are the predominance of informal jobs, the limited access to affordable healthcare and the low coverage of social protection. While everyone is affected by the pandemic, the impact has been disproportionately felt by people in vulnerable situations. The pandemic also emerged in the context of ongoing global megatrends, including climate change, rising inequalities, population ageing and digitalization, among others. While most megatrends offer opportunities for socioeconomic advancement, the absence of requisite policies may instead challenge development gains and leave many behind during transition.

The future of social development in Asia and the Pacific relies on policies that foster a healthy, protected and productive workforce. Income security, decent employment and access to healthcare will benefit people in the workforce and beyond. They will also build solidarity and resilience across generations and socioeconomic groupings, while increasing productivity and competitiveness of economies at large. In this context, the report of the UN Secretary-General "[Our Common Agenda](#)" highlights the need to renew the social contract between governments and people and within societies anchored in mutual respect and human rights.

Against this background, the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), through its Social Development Division, dedicates its upcoming flagship publication, Social Outlook 2022, to building a healthy, protected and productive workforce in recovering from COVID-19 pandemic and adapting to ongoing megatrends. The Report will offer an empirical analysis for extending social protection and health coverage to all, along with active labour market policies in Asia and the Pacific. To do so successfully requires solidarity and trust among people, as well as confidence in institutions. Without these necessary foundations for a renewed social contract, implementing and financing requisite policies for social progress become challenging. As such, the concepts highlighted in "Our Common Agenda" are central to the premise of the forthcoming Social Outlook 2022 publication.

II. Objective

The primary objective of this Expert Group Meeting (EGM) is to collect inputs from experts in the relevant fields of social science with regards to definition(s) and operationalization(s) of the concepts solidarity, trust, confidence and the social contract in the specific context of Asia and the Pacific. An improved understanding of these concepts can help policy implementation in practice. The EGM will also offer an opportunity to deliberate on publicly available data sources linked to these issues that are comparable across countries and over time.

III. Organization and Participation

The EGM will draw participation from experts in academia, think-thanks, research institutions and the United Nations system entities, among others. It will be organized virtually on 16 December through Zoom in the form two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon (GMT+7), each with a duration of 3 hours. The meeting will be conducted in English. The detailed programme for each session is provided below.

IV. Expected Results

The EGM will provide inputs to UNESCAP's forthcoming flagship publication, Social Outlook 2022, from the angle of deepening solidarity, building trust and confidence for renewing the social contract in Asia-Pacific countries. The EGM also aims to strengthen collaboration between UNESCAP and academic institutions in the region and contribute to a better understanding how to operationalize the key concepts in the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda".

V. Programme

Session I: Understanding solidarity, trust and the social contract in Asia and the Pacific	
Time	Agenda item
10:00 –10:10	<p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Srinivas Tata, Director, Social Development Division (SDD), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
10:10 -10:20	Self- introduction of experts
10:20 -10:55	<p>1.1 Setting the stage: What is the role of solidarity, trust and the social contract in the context of social development in Asia-Pacific?</p> <p>In this discussion, we introduce UN Secretary-General’s Report entitled “Our Common Agenda” and discuss the importance of solidarity and trust for strengthening the social contract and how important the social contract is for social development in Asia and the Pacific.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is “Our Common Agenda”? Featured remarks by Ms. Aditi Haté, ‘Our Common Agenda’, EOSG, UNHQ • How does Asia-Pacific fare in social development? Overview from ESCAP • Questions and Answers <p>Moderator: Selsah Pasali, Social Affairs Officer, SDD, ESCAP</p>
10:55 – 11:00	<i>Virtual Break</i>
11:00 – 12:50	<p>1.2 Exploring the state of solidarity, trust and the social contract in the Asia and Pacific context</p> <p>In this discussion, we explore the different elements of solidarity, trust and the social contract: what they entail and how they relate to development in Asia and the Pacific. By examining these elements, the session aims to have a better understanding of these concepts and also set the stage for session 2 on how to quantify them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key elements of solidarity and trust and how do they relate to the social contract in Asia and the Pacific? Featured remarks by Professor Matthew Gray, Australian National University Interactive Dialogue • How do trust, solidarity and the social contract play out in societies and how have they influenced social development policymaking in Asia-Pacific? Featured remarks by Dr. Stephen Rood, Social Weather Stations Interactive Dialogue <p>Moderator: Sayuri Okada, Social Affairs Officer, SDD, ESCAP</p>
12:50 – 13:00	<p>Closing Remarks by ESCAP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrik Andersson, Chief, Sustainable Socioeconomic Transformation Section (SETS), SDD, ESCAP

Session II: Operationalizing and analysing solidarity, trust and the social contract	
Time	Agenda item
15:00 -15:10	Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrik Andersson, Chief, SETS, SDD, ESCAP
15:10 -15:20	Self- introduction of experts
15:20 -16:30	2.1 From concepts to indicators: Measuring solidarity and trust <p>In this discussion, we explore potential data sources for quantifying solidarity, trust and the social contract, and discuss ways for measuring these concepts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can solidarity (among people), trust (in people and in institutions/government) and the social contract (between people and government) be measured? Featured remarks by Dr. Markus Quandt, GESIS (ISSP) Featured remarks by Mr. Chayanun Saransomrurtai, Research, Asia (Gallup) • What are some examples of indexes to measure these concepts? Featured remarks by Dr. Katherina Lima de Miranda, Global Solutions Initiative Foundation <p>Next, we will discuss potential areas of concern with selecting indicators and methodologies in cross-cultural analysis of values (e.g., cultural bias, issues with translation, weighting, sampling)? Is there an advantage of indicators that measure actions vs. opinions? How reliable/stable are these results over time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are possible pitfalls to avoid in selecting indicators and interpreting results from opinion surveys? Perspectives from ISSP, WVS and Gallup • Interactive Dialogue <p>Moderator: Ermina Sokou, Social Affairs Officer, SDD, ESCAP</p>
16:30 - 16:40	<i>Virtual Break</i>
16:40 - 17:50	2.2 Analysing solidarity, trust, and the social contract in relation to social development <p>In this discussion, we explore existing methodologies that analyse solidarity, trust, and the social contract to support the design and implementation of social development policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What empirical tools are available to analyze solidarity, trust and the social contract? Experience from ESCAP • Are there any good practices in conducting cross-country or longitudinal research on social development in relation to solidarity, trust and the social contract? Featured Remarks by Professor Franziska Gassman, UNU-MERIT Featured Remarks by Dr. Isabel Kempf, UNRISD • Interactive Dialogue <p>Moderator: Selsah Pasali, Social Affairs Officer, SDD, ESCAP</p>
17:50 - 18:00	Closing Remarks