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Summary of round-table discussions

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present document contains a summary of the various views arising from the five round tables held during the Twelfth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development to review regional progress in and opportunities for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good health and well-being), Goal 5 (Gender equality), Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth), Goal 14 (Life below water) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The views summarized herein do not represent a negotiated outcome.

I. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good health and well-being)

1. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 3 was informed by the relevant Goal profile[1] and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Transform primary healthcare to achieve universal health coverage**. This entails workforce training, improved infrastructure, increased access to essential medicines and integrated community-based health services. Primary healthcare systems must also include mental healthcare; suicide prevention; health literacy advocacy, backed by supportive policies; adequate funding; and multisectoral collaboration to address emerging health challenges;

(b) **Increase health equity through the social determinants of health**. This requires policies on issues beyond health, such as poverty alleviation, gender equality and inclusive economic growth. Investing in social safety nets, nutrition programmes and education to create healthier living conditions is key. Measuring health inequalities using disaggregated data and strengthening partnerships between public and private sectors, civil society and

[1] Available at www.unescap.org/kp/2025/sdg-3-good-health-and-well-being-2025-update.

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local communities can support the design and implementation of targeted interventions and the allocation of resources to marginalized populations;

(c) **Embrace innovation and technology for health**. Key actions include strengthening governance to safeguard privacy, security and the ethical use of data, fostering public-private partnerships, facilitating joint research and development and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration in innovation and technology adoption;

(d) **Invest in health data and information systems**. Digital systems need to provide standards-based, interoperable data and enable seamless data exchange to improve healthcare coordination and decision-making. Robust data governance and community engagement are key to promoting ethical and safe data practices that ensure privacy, security and trust in digital health systems. A One Health approach to data is also crucial;

(e) **Promote and strengthen regional action to address environment-related health risks**. Key actions include raising awareness of environmental health in regional forums, addressing environmental health concerns through multilateral agreements and conventions and promoting inclusive stakeholder engagement by encouraging participation from children and youth, civil society and other stakeholders.

II. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender equality)

2. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 5 was informed by the relevant Goal profile[2] and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Advance gender equality**. Key actions include countering the backlash against advances in the human rights of women and girls in all their diversity through collective action by all stakeholders, bridging data gaps in relation to gender-disaggregated and intersectional data, challenging harmful gender norms, strengthening multisectoral partnerships and ensuring inclusive, safe and meaningful civil society participation, including at intergovernmental forums. In addition, integrating gender equality into strategies and actions relating to megatrends, such as digitalization, climate change, urbanization and demographic shifts, is critical for progress;

(b) **Promote women's leadership**. Key actions include implementing legal and policy reforms, such as temporary special measures and quotas; ensuring robust implementation and accountability; adopting intersectional approaches to supporting women's leadership; creating an enabling leadership ecosystem through mentorship programmes for young women and leadership networks; removing structural, financial and cultural barriers to women's participation; promoting social norms that affirm and support women as effective leaders; and engaging women's civil society organizations and women human rights defenders in inclusive decision-making;

(c) **Eliminate gender-based violence**. Key actions include ensuring that laws, policies and systems addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices are adequately funded and prioritize survivors' safety, needs and leadership; taking into account the diverse voices of women and girls; strengthening investments in the prevention of gender-based violence, including through education; transforming harmful gender norms and engaging men and boys as agents of change; and ensuring consistent funding and

[2] Available at www.unescap.org/kp/2025/sdg-5-gender-equality.

protection from violence and backlash for women's rights organizations. Quality data collection, analysis and collaboration, especially with local communities and civil society, need to be strengthened to inform evidence-based policies while ensuring confidentiality. Establishing systems that address technology-facilitated violence and the specific needs of women and girls before, during and after crises is essential;

(d) **Advance women's economic rights and empowerment**. Key actions include improving women's employment and entrepreneurship across sectors, promoting decent work for both formal and informal workers, promoting freedom of association and facilitating access to finance and resources. Institutionalizing gender- and age-responsive social protection and addressing gender disparities in sectors such as transport, technology and renewable energy are crucial. Closing gender gaps in skills development, in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in particular, investing in the care economy to reduce unpaid care burdens and redistributing care work can support decent job opportunities for women;

(e) **Advance adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights**. Key actions include empowering adolescent girls to advocate for their sexual and reproductive health and rights and to shape legal frameworks, policies and programmes to guarantee full and equal access to relevant services and decision-making autonomy; providing adolescent-responsive sexual and reproductive health and rights services to ensure that non-judgmental, trauma-informed care is delivered to girls and boys; expanding comprehensive sexuality education and promoting gender-transformative education to equip girls with knowledge and agency; and addressing gender data gaps and mobilizing gender-smart financing to support sustainable, inclusive and evidence-based policies and programmes.

III. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth)

3. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 8 was informed by the relevant Goal profile[3] and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Address age and gender disparities in employment and skills training**. Key actions include improving access to quality education, lifelong learning and skills training tailored to the specific needs of youth and women. It is vital to address barriers, such as foundational skill deficits, financial constraints, lack of access to transportation and unpaid care work, while being mindful of intersectional challenges. Fostering collaboration between government, education providers and employers is crucial to ensure that skills development programmes align with rapidly changing labour markets and with skills requirements associated with advancements in artificial intelligence, changing trade patterns and climate change;

(b) **Accelerate just transitions and the creation of green jobs**. Transitioning to a low-carbon economy requires coherent, participatory and multi-stakeholder approaches, supported by domestic and international financing. Key actions include upskilling and reskilling to ensure access to decent employment opportunities for marginalized groups, strengthening social protection to support displaced workers, promoting digital literacy, improving access to education in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, especially for women, and investing in low-carbon initiatives

[3] Available at www.unescap.org/kp/2025/sdg-8-decent-work-and-economic-growth.

to stimulate enterprise growth, especially among micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises;

(c) **Improve labour rights and safe working environments.** Key actions include ending child labour, forced labour, trafficking in persons and violence and harassment at work; strengthening national labour inspection mechanisms, including in the informal economy; promoting freedom of association and collective bargaining; and strengthening social dialogue;

(d) **Improve and leverage data to inform labour policies**. Gaps in data, in particular with regard to data disaggregated by sex and socioeconomic variables, hamper the evaluation and design of effective policies and programmes. Key actions include adopting inclusive data practices that enhance the voices of vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, leveraging new technologies and methods to strengthen capacity, data governance and transparency and increasing knowledge on data needs and applications to support evidence-informed policy and programme design.

IV. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life below water)

4. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 14 was informed by the relevant Goal profile[4] and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Increase investments and financing for Goal 14**. This requires scaling up private sustainable finance. The Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Principles, promoted by the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative, could be adopted to set out ocean-specific standards for investment in the ocean economy and mainstream the sustainability of ocean-based sectors. Financing from relevant multilateral environmental agreements could also be mobilized. There is also the potential to strengthen both innovative financing mechanisms and the tracking of financing for Goal 14;

(b) **Strengthen data and monitoring systems**. Strengthened ocean data collection, accessibility and disaggregation are needed to support informed decision-making and the creation of effective policies that address challenges and accelerate progress. Disaggregated data would allow for a better understanding of how human activity contributes to ocean degradation and conservation. Scaling up existing initiatives supported by the Global Environment Facility that apply natural capital accounting could guide sovereign decision-making and national and subnational development planning. Standardized, high-quality and accessible data, as well as related capacity development, are key to driving action for Goal 14;

(c) **Respect the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and operationalize a gender-responsive, human rights-based approach to marine and coastal biodiversity**. Integrating gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples, into marine biodiversity conservation is key to enhancing sustainability, promoting accountability and empowering people, especially those most marginalized, to participate in policy formulation. Respect for human rights is crucial, as is respect for the free, prior informed consent of all relevant stakeholders, and responsible business practices related to oceans must be promoted to uphold social and environmental standards;

[4] Available at www.unescap.org/kp/2025/sdg-14-life-below-water-conserve-and-sustainably-use-oceans-seas-and-marine-resources.

(d) **Strengthen ocean governance**. Subregional mechanisms continue to strengthen ocean governance in the region, drive cross-sectoral collaboration and advance integrated coastal and marine management in support of Goal 14. The ratification of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction is essential to strengthening ocean governance in areas beyond national jurisdiction;

(e) **Enable the meaningful involvement of youth and women in the areas of ocean science, policy and society, foster ocean knowledge and catalyse solutions**. The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development provides a framework for catalysing ocean science solutions, enhancing ocean literacy and creating platforms for scientists and stakeholders to develop the scientific knowledge and partnerships needed for science-based solutions. Decolonizing ocean management language and learning from Indigenous knowledge systems are crucial;

(f) **Scale up ocean-based climate action**. Collective efforts are needed to strengthen ocean-based action, such as protecting carbon-sequestering ecosystems, decarbonizing shipping and maritime transport, accelerating the deployment of ocean-based renewable energy projects and enhancing ocean-climate resilience.

V. Round table on Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

5. The discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 17 was informed by the relevant Goal profile[5] and focused on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific:

(a) **Strengthen the global tax system and facilitate collective tax actions**. Key actions include reinforcing the United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation to establish a fair global tax system and facilitate collective tax actions at all levels; reviewing the implementation of a global minimum corporate tax rate; reassessing incentives for extractive industries; exploring taxation models for the digital economy; preventing harmful tax competition; promoting country-by-country tax reporting for multinational corporations; and upholding accountability through increased tax transparency. It is essential to have further support from the United Nations in evaluating and exploring innovative tax practices through a comprehensive analysis and review of global best practices, to serve as a foundation for introducing progressive taxation and for developing alternative revenue sources;

(b) **Promote climate data and technology solutions and strengthen climate partnerships**. Key actions include combining market and non-market climate policies with culturally adaptive approaches for improved effectiveness and strengthening data and disclosure standards as a prerequisite for mandating climate-related financial risks disclosure. The Climate Technology Centre and Network is valuable for supporting low-carbon and climate-resilient efforts, especially in the water-energy-food nexus, buildings and sustainable mobility;

(c) **Promote sustainable public debt management**. Key actions include avoiding excessive levels of public debt by adopting responsible borrowing and lending principles, supported by enhanced good governance, transparency and accountability; ensuring that austerity measures do not

[5] Available at www.unescap.org/kp/2025/sdg-17-partnerships-goals.

disproportionately impact vulnerable groups; using tools such as the multidimensional vulnerability index to assess debt sustainability, in particular in countries prone to natural disasters; and incorporating the risks of foreign currency borrowing into debt management frameworks;

(d) **Scale up concessional and private finance**. Amid reductions in official development assistance, it is imperative to enhance its effectiveness, in particular by aligning funding with the sustainable development priorities of recipient countries. Other key actions include improving engagement from the private sector in partnerships with government, civil society and other stakeholders to support the upscaling of concessional and private finance and aligning sustainable finance regulations with regional and global standards to reduce greenwashing.