



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Ninth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Bangkok and online, 28–31 March 2022

Report of the Ninth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

1. The Ninth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), was held online and in person from 28 to 31 March 2022.
2. The Forum was attended by more than 3,000 participants, including representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations bodies, international organizations, and major groups and other stakeholders.
3. The Forum was attended by representatives of the following 46 members and associate members of the Commission: Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; France; Georgia; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nauru; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Tuvalu; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam. Representatives of Finland, Italy, Nigeria, Peru, Sweden and Switzerland attended as observers.
4. In accordance with rule 12 of the Commission's rules of procedure, the Chair and Vice-Chairs examined the credentials of all the representatives and found them to be in order.
5. Under agenda item 1 (a), the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations in New York, made the opening statement. A welcome message was delivered by the Executive Secretary. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, delivered keynote addresses. Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, 2014 Nobel laureate and Sustainable Development Goals Advocate, made an intervention. A statement on behalf of major groups and other stakeholders was delivered by Ms. Beverly Longid, Global Coordinator, International Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation.

6. Under agenda item 1 (b), the Forum elected the following Bureau members:

- (a) Chair: Mr. Karl Kendrick T. Chua (Philippines)
- (b) Vice-Chairs: Mr. Jone Usamate (Fiji)
 Mr. Mohamed Aslam (Maldives)
 Ms. Kitlang Kabua (Marshall Islands)
 Ms. Ayush Ariunzaya (Mongolia)
 Mr. M. U. M. Ali Sabry (Sri Lanka)
 Mr. Don Pramudwinai (Thailand)
 Mr. Muhammetgeldi Serdarov (Turkmenistan)

7. Under agenda item 1 (c), the Forum adopted the following agenda:

- 1. Opening of the Forum:
 - (a) Opening statements;
 - (b) Election of officers;
 - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
- 2. Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific:
 - (a) Thematic review;
 - (b) Review of Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17;
 - (c) Voluntary national reviews.
- 3. System-wide results of the United Nations development system at the regional level in Asia and the Pacific in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- 4. Other matters.
- 5. Adoption of the report of the Forum.

8. Under agenda item 2, the Forum took note of the notes by the secretariat on building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/RFSD/2022/1) and on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the subregional level (ESCAP/RFSD/2022/2), and the information document on progress towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17 at the regional level (ESCAP/RFSD/2022/INF/1). The Forum's discussion on the theme of the Forum was initiated with a ministerial panel moderated by the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Indonesia.

9. The Forum reviewed regional progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, supported by a presentation by the secretariat on the *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2022*.

10. The Forum discussed subregional approaches for accelerating the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, supported by a presentation by the secretariat on the outcomes of the subregional forums.

11. The Forum organized five round tables to conduct an interactive multi-stakeholder assessment of the trends, key challenges and priority actions with regard to Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17.

12. The Forum noted the recommendations emerging from the five round tables on the Sustainable Development Goals, which would be addressed at the forthcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in July 2022.¹

13. The Forum considered the experiences of member States in the preparation of their voluntary national reviews for the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2022 and shared national and subnational perspectives on challenges, progress and achievements, as well as lessons learned.

14. Representatives of member States, major groups and other stakeholders, and United Nations agencies shared perspectives on achievements in the region in accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. Under agenda item 3, the Forum took note of the information document entitled “United in action: system-wide results of the United Nations development system at the regional level in Asia and the Pacific in 2021” (ESCAP/RFSD/2022/INF/2) and discussed the coordinated approach of the United Nations system to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the regional level.

16. Under agenda item 4, one representative reiterated the importance of providing interpretation in each of the official languages of the Commission for the whole duration of the proceedings.

17. Under agenda item 5, the Forum adopted the present report on 31 March 2022. It was agreed that deliberations of the meeting would be summarized in a Chair’s summary, which would be made available within a week following the conclusion of the Forum and annexed to the present report. Further, the summaries of the five round tables organized under agenda item 2 would be issued as an addendum to the present report.

18. The Forum concluded that the present report, including its annex and addendum, should be brought to the attention of the Commission at its seventy-eighth session and to the global dialogues on sustainable development, including, in particular the upcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development, which would be held in New York from 5 to 15 July 2022.

19. On 28 March 2022, the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goal Partnership between ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme released the publication entitled *Building Forward Together: Towards an Inclusive and Resilient Asia and the Pacific*.

20. On 25 March 2022, eight side events were held on the following topics: “Policy coherence for sustainable development in Asian countries”; “Capturing Pacific priorities in the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report”; “Building back with young minds: COVID-19 and partnership in South Asia”; “Building forward: communities affected by modern slavery in

¹ The full text of the recommendations from the round tables is contained in the addendum to the report (ESCAP/RFSD/2022/5/Add.1). An advance version is available at www.unescap.org/apfsd/9.

Asia”; “Bringing living heritage to the classroom in Asia-Pacific to promote transformative education”; “APFSD Young Pioneers Forum (Asia-Pacific) 2022”; “People’s scorecard on the SDGs in Asia”; and “South-East Asia SDG Youth Dialogue: Enhance Youth Activism in Implementing the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development”.

21. On 28 March, nine side events were held on the following topics: “COVID-19, vaccine inequality and social protection of women and marginalized communities”; “Means to reach the climate and SDGs ambition: financing options, research and technologies to advance local governments’ efforts in turning commitments into reality”; “Intergenerational dialogue on SDGs: advancing SDG 4 in the context of COVID-19 recovery and sharing youth’s perspective on building back better”; “Transforming childcare for gender equality”; “Resiliency in future pandemics through food systems reform”; “Keys to unlocking the secrets of urban SDG implementation (hosted by CityNet)”; “Partnerships for safe and sustainable mobility”; “A one-health approach on microplastics in the ocean: translating advocacy into action”; and “Bridging the gap: experience of subnational governments in reporting and monitoring SDGs achievement”.

22. On 29 March, five side events were held on the following topics: “Girls’ education key to sustainable development”; “Get Related World Initiative explores education, climate, gender equality solutions through partnership and creativity”; “Climate mobility framework design process in the Pacific”; “Bridging the gap: addressing the vacuum in multilateral governance of digital technology to close the digital divide and support efforts to leave no one behind”; and “Building back better, together: how can SDG 17 and civil society partnerships ensure genuine development in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic?”.

23. On 30 March, 18 side events were held on the following topics: “Young people at the forefront ensuring COVID-19 recovery for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific”; “Girls’ voice, choice and power during and beyond COVID-19”; “From land to sea: the people’s perspective of SDG 14 and SDG 15 in the time of COVID-19”; “Build back equal for adolescent girls”; “Promote food security by combating soil degradation in Asia and the Pacific”; “Disaster risk reduction and sustainable development: views for the Sendai Framework midterm review”; “Feminist recovery post-COVID-19: just and equitable financing for achieving development justice”; “Building back better through gender and climate interventions: initiatives from faith actors”; “Advancing respect for indigenous peoples’ rights in the just transition”; “Informed societies at the foundation of a better post-COVID world”; “Role of women with disabilities in accelerating sustainable solutions”; “The Living River Initiative – To restore the Indus Basin”; “International cooperation to achieve the SDGs during the COVID-19 pandemic: current challenges and prospects”; “Making the voices of marginalized groups heard and count through data”; “We the Peoples... Why VNRs (voluntary national reviews) must be inclusive?”; “Indigenous peoples, gender and natural resources rights in the context of COVID-19: trends and experiences from the field for building back better”; “Invest in teachers, invest in education: supporting teachers towards achieving SDG 4”; and “Indian model of SDG localization: evidence of success and challenges ahead”.

24. On 31 March, four side events were held on the following topics: “Accelerating women’s economic empowerment in agricultural value chains: launch of the Guidelines for Transformational Partnerships and Women’s Economic Empowerment in Agricultural Value Chains”; “Ensuring the participation of environmental human rights defenders to achieve the SDGs

towards development justice”; “Climate science literacy in Asia and the Pacific”; and “Asia-Pacific Green Deal Declaration and Green Waste Pledge”.

25. The following associated events were held: the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development Youth Forum 2022 and the Asia-Pacific Regional Economic and Social Council Youth Forum 2022; the Asia-Pacific People’s Forum on Sustainable Development; the regional preparatory workshop for voluntary national review countries from the Asia-Pacific region; the regional webinar on the role of parliaments in SDG monitoring and implementation; pre-meeting of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda; round table on the network for South-South cooperation in Asia and the Pacific; resident coordinators workshop on the triple planetary crisis and the role of the United Nations development system in furthering response; and regional launch of *State of the World’s Volunteerism Report 2022: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies*.

Annex

Chair's summary of discussions at the Ninth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

1. The Ninth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was held on the theme of building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. During the Forum, members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), intergovernmental bodies, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and major groups and other stakeholders engaged in a dialogue on regional perspectives on the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

2. The key messages stemming from the Forum, further detailed below, are the following:

(a) The need for inclusive and sustainable approaches and strengthened regional cooperation to build back better and deliver on the 2030 Agenda;

(b) The need for policy actions to be grounded in human rights, focus on the vulnerable and empower women and girls through multi-stakeholder partnerships;

(c) The importance of enhancing social protection, providing quality education, advancing gender equality, and accelerating the transition to inclusive and green economies, and prioritizing nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation;

(d) The importance of increasing investment in sustainable and greener pathways and of balancing short-term recovery measures against long-term sustainability objectives;

(e) The key role of partnerships, humanitarian support and regional initiatives, including in education, gender, digital connectivity and the environment;

(f) The need for stronger linkages between national, subregional and regional forums, increased subregional cooperation and joint strategies to tackle common challenges and risks;

(g) The opportunity provided by voluntary national reviews to strengthen national ownership, share homegrown development approaches and locally driven pathways, and improve coordination among various levels of government for better policy integration and the critical role of peer learning in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(h) The importance of the collective work of the United Nations development system in supporting members and associate members of the Commission in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(i) The priorities for action as identified in the addendum to the report of the Ninth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

I. Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

A. Thematic review

3. Under agenda item 2 (a), the Forum reviewed challenges and approaches to reshaping the dynamics of recovery, with a focus on inclusion, empowerment, environmental sustainability and resilience.

4. The Forum underlined the need for inclusive and sustainable approaches and strengthened regional cooperation to build back better and deliver on the 2030 Agenda. Policy actions needed to be grounded in human rights, focus on the vulnerable and empower women and girls through multi-stakeholder partnerships. It was also emphasized that such approaches were necessary to address climate change.

5. The Forum noted several national policy priorities of member States, including enhancing social protection, ensuring quality education, advancing gender equality, accelerating the transition to inclusive and green economies and prioritizing nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation. It noted that the region and the international community had the collective experience and knowledge to build forward together and forge an inclusive, environmentally sustainable and resilient recovery that would leave no one behind.

6. The Forum noted that the pandemic had created opportunities for innovative and digital solutions, including for education and sustainable financing systems. It highlighted the need for better coordination among government institutions for greater policy effectiveness, and the need for more disaggregated data, which would improve policymaking and monitoring of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

7. The Forum noted member States' implementation efforts with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals despite the challenges posed by the converging COVID-19 and climate change crises. The Forum highlighted several national efforts of member States, including, for instance, providing universal vaccination and access to digital education, promoting a circular and green low-carbon economy, strengthening social protection, empowering women and girls and expanding fiscal space for sustainable development.

8. Representatives of major groups and other stakeholders highlighted the need for sustainable management of ecosystems within COVID-19 recovery plans. Member States were invited to build just societies, including through gender justice; reduce digital divides; enhance digital security and privacy; mainstream comprehensive sexuality education; integrate Sustainable Development Goals into school curricula and recover losses in learning opportunities; and ensure the inclusion and participation of marginalized groups, especially youth and indigenous peoples. The Forum was also informed about the role of local governments in building back better despite the challenges of reduced funding. In that regard, the need for digital platforms to support local governments, such as the secretariat-supported Asia-Pacific Mayors Academy, was emphasized. The development of voluntary local reviews was also welcomed.

B. Review of regional progress on the Sustainable Development Goals

9. Under agenda item 2 (b), member States were provided with an update on the progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific. In its presentation, the secretariat, while noting progress on some Goals, such as Goals 7 and 9, highlighted the slow progress in achieving most of the other Goals. It was noted that the region had regressed on Goal 13 (Climate action) and Goal 12 (Responsible consumption and production).

10. The Forum underlined the importance of increasing investment in sustainable and greener pathways and of balancing short-term recovery measures against long-term sustainability objectives. The importance of partnerships, humanitarian support and regional initiatives, including in education, gender and the environment, was emphasized. The Forum noted the important role of peace and security in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the potential impact of conflict on progress.

11. The active role of members and associate members in the Asia-Pacific region in promoting development cooperation and in advancing innovative approaches was noted. The Forum took note of national commitments to implement the 2030 Agenda, despite the impact of COVID-19, and outlined actions taken towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through national and international programmes and initiatives. A number of policy actions and good practices were noted in areas such as poverty reduction, social protection, green economy and environmental protection, clean energy, gender, trade and digital transformation. Strategies referenced in that regard included the sufficiency economy philosophy and a bio-circular-green economy model. There was a call for more progress on strengthening equality, especially for vulnerable groups, promoting greater stakeholder participation, mobilizing additional resources for sustainable development, improving the capacity to utilize information and communications technology (ICT) and building resilience to disasters and climate risks. The essential role of statistics for monitoring and strengthening the collection of national and subnational data for that purpose was also underscored.

12. Representatives from major groups and other stakeholders emphasized that the impact of COVID-19 on health, education and social protection systems had widened social divides, particularly impacting vulnerable communities such as people with disabilities, migrants, women and indigenous peoples. They called on leaders to promote rights-based and people-centred development pathways and to leverage the expertise, knowledge and good practices of indigenous peoples in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. One representative highlighted the challenges that the transgender community faced within the region with regard to access to public spaces. A representative of an international organization emphasized the importance of data and the capacity of national statistical agencies to guide the progress towards achieving the Goals.

C. Review of subregional progress on the Sustainable Development Goals

13. The Forum reviewed the updates on the subregional progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The secretariat gave a presentation in which it highlighted subregional perspectives, common challenges and solutions-oriented actions for sustainable recovery from COVID-19 in the context of social protection, sustained economic recovery, connectivity and supply chains, and environmental health.

14. The Forum called for building stronger linkages between national, subregional and regional platforms, strengthening subregional cooperation and joint strategies to tackle common challenges and risks, and addressing COVID-19 and other health inequalities at the national, regional and global levels.

15. The Forum highlighted the value of subregional approaches to accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and took note of the distinctive challenges of each subregion, including the following: high vulnerability to climate-related disaster; humanitarian crises caused by COVID-19; high mortality from air pollution; rising inequality and the impact of geopolitical dynamics on peace, democracy and human rights in South Asia; high vulnerability to disasters and air pollution partly in association with haze; deforestation and loss of biodiversity led by extensive plantation projects in South-East Asia; extensive mining, land degradation and air pollution in Central Asia; fragile peace and security in North-East Asia; and existential threats posed by climate change and the burden of plastic pollution in the Pacific. It was also highlighted that development aggression against indigenous peoples, violence against women and limited space for civil society remained common challenges across Asia and the Pacific.

16. The Forum underlined the significant role of regional platforms and collective actions in the recovery from COVID-19 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It also expressed appreciation for technical assistance and subregional stakeholders' meetings provided and organized by ESCAP as useful tools for achieving the Goals.

17. Representatives of subregional organizations informed the Forum of initiatives taken to respond to socioeconomic challenges emanating from COVID-19 and building back better. The initiatives include the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) COVID-19 Emergency Fund, the special allocation of the SAARC Development Fund to fund COVID-19 related projects, the SAARC COVID-19 Information Exchange Platform and cross-border distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan, the Greater Tumen Initiative North-East Asia Policy Dialogue on Sustainable Finance in connection with a sustainable recovery, and the adoption of non-standard policies in the agro-industrial sphere to ensure food security in the Eurasian Economic Union.

18. Representatives underscored the role and significance of ongoing partnerships between subregional organizations and the United Nations development system in promoting cooperation on subregional agendas and conducting subregional assessments of COVID-19 impacts. They also underscored the importance of subregional cooperation and integration for accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including by facilitating trade, finance and investment flows and leveraging opportunities for mutual learning and joint actions in the areas of health, social protection, education, gender, agriculture and science.

D. Review of Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17

19. The Forum held five round tables dedicated to reviewing progress towards Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17. Each of the round tables was organized by United Nations system entities, with inputs from other stakeholders, under the overall coordination of ESCAP. The summaries of all five round tables are contained in an addendum to the report (ESCAP/RFSD/2022/5/Add.1).

20. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality education)¹ focused on the themes of learning recovery and addressing the learning crisis, transforming education systems, and increased and better investment in education and enablers for transformation. In that context, the round table highlighted the need to: continue safe school reopening; prioritize targeted and equity-based learning recovery strategies; make early childhood care and education flexible and universal; strengthen skills development for adolescents; build stronger school links between families and communities; increase the efficiency of public spending on education; encourage equitable funding mechanisms and inclusive data-monitoring mechanisms; and strengthen the resilience of education systems to future health and climate shocks.

21. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender equality)² discussed policy priorities to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment. Those priorities included the following: ensuring that COVID-19 support measures benefited women entrepreneurs and workers; providing affordable, accessible and quality care services, public and digital infrastructure and family policies that could incentivize a more equal distribution of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities; strengthening gender-responsive and inclusive social protection; reducing gender-based violence; enhancing sexual and reproductive health services; and empowering women leaders, including young women leaders from diverse backgrounds, to initiate and lead reform and social and political changes across high-level political spaces, the private sector and technology industries. In addition, more broad-based policy actions, such as adopting gender-responsive policy planning and budgeting and closing gaps in gender statistics, including on violence against women and on time spent on unpaid care, were highlighted.

22. The discussion during the round table on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life below water)³ centred on the following: improving data collection and sharing; enhancing policy design and implementation; increasing financing for sustainable practices; enforcing international treaties and regulations; and promoting regional cooperation to strengthen ocean governance. To achieve the Goal, the round table noted the importance of engaging with local communities and authorities on marine protected areas and measures to prevent illegal fishing practices; increasing the quality and availability of data on waste and pollution; and enhancing the technical capacity of governments to protect the ocean. The Forum also underscored the need for identifying gaps in financing and for an integrated approach, such as public-private partnerships, to address marine debris and convene various stakeholders to leverage the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

23. Acknowledging the limited progress on Sustainable Development Goal 15 (Life on land),⁴ the round table noted that key challenges included over-exploitation of natural resources, overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and unsustainable agricultural practices. In that regard, the priority

¹ The profile for Sustainable Development Goal 4 is available at www.unescap.org/kp/2022/sdg-4-goal-profile.

² The profile for Sustainable Development Goal 5 is available at www.unescap.org/kp/2022/sdg-5-goal-profile.

³ The profile for Sustainable Development Goal 14 is available at www.unescap.org/kp/2022/sdg-14-goal-profile.

⁴ The profile for Sustainable Development Goal 15 is available at www.unescap.org/kp/2022/sdg-15-goal-profile.

actions discussed included the following: catalysing a shift towards nature-positive, regenerative and resilient agricultural, fisheries and forestry systems; recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples and their traditional practices; enhancing a holistic One Health approach in the post-COVID-19 world; enhancing public investment in health; addressing the health implications of chemical pesticides and fertilizers; mainstreaming biodiversity issues across government sectors; addressing the data deficit; mobilizing more financial resources for nature from private, public and global funds; implementing international environmental agreements such as the post-2020 global biodiversity framework; applying the principles of natural resource management and action of the International Resource Panel; and implementing the resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme to promote sustainable and resilient ecosystems.

24. The round table on Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)⁵ noted that multilateral cooperation based on human rights and equality would help members and associate members to build back better. Through modalities such as North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, the region could work together to achieve the following: broaden access to ICT; support digitalization of trade in the least developed countries; mobilize more fiscal resources for the provision of public goods; leverage private finance for the achievement of the Goals; and ensure public debt sustainability through prudent debt management, debt relief efforts and the review of debt conditionalities. In addition, the round table highlighted the importance of investments in national data governance, stewardship and innovation, including greater collection and use of geospatial, citizen-led and disaggregated data.

25. Representatives of members, associate members, major groups and other stakeholders addressed the Forum following the delivery of the summaries of the round-table outcomes. Several representatives informed the Forum of efforts in their countries to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into national planning and budgetary processes, and of national progress on the Goals under review, particularly in the context of the pandemic.

26. Coordinated responses and partnerships among governments, businesses, communities, civil society and other development partners were highlighted as crucial to building back better from the pandemic. Such responses and partnerships included acknowledging gaps in progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals under review; coordinating an integrated, smarter and greener response to the pandemic, rooted in the framework of the Goals; and evaluating the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of new and emerging technologies and digitalization to build back better.

27. Representatives of major groups and other stakeholders highlighted the need for more government participation during the round tables. For each of the Sustainable Development Goals under review, the following gaps were highlighted: for Goal 4, the need for a mother-tongue based and culturally appropriate education for indigenous peoples; for Goal 5, the need to strengthen women's rights and capacity to exercise agency over their own lives and over their participation in social and economic spheres; for Goal 15, the need for a human-rights-based approach to biodiversity conservation and climate change solutions; and for Goal 17, the need to further disaggregate data

⁵ The profile for Sustainable Development Goal 17 is available at www.unescap.org/kp/2022/sdg-17-goal-profile.

by gender, disability and ethnicity. The need for human rights policy coherence was highlighted across all the Goals.

E. Voluntary national reviews

28. Under agenda item 2 (c), a panel discussion was held to share experiences in preparing voluntary national reviews. The panel highlighted how voluntary national reviews created a unique space for taking stock, analysing evidence, promoting public dialogue and taking concrete action to align national policies and plans with the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. The panel underlined that voluntary national reviews provided the opportunity to strengthen national ownership and improve coordination among various levels of government for better vertical and horizontal policy integration. The Forum emphasized that peer learning was a critical part of the 2030 Agenda.

30. In that regard, it was recognized that second- and third-generation reporting countries could help others to present first reviews, and that countries could learn from each other. The Forum commended the ESCAP twinning programme as an effective tool to exchange best practices and methodologies for the preparation of the voluntary national reviews. Moreover, the twinning programme had demonstrated its potential as a South-South cooperation mechanism to facilitate follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

31. Leveraging various levels of partnerships was key to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The panel highlighted the fact that the voluntary national review process was an essential exercise for stakeholder engagement in participating countries.

32. The Forum identified key features of first, second and third voluntary national reviews, and emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement. It also stressed aspects of data-gathering and the alignment of reporting processes. The Forum highlighted the need for more robust data collection and improved statistical systems to better prepare the voluntary national review reports. New and improved indicators were required to make the voluntary national review process more comprehensive and evidence based. The voluntary national review process also played an important role in connecting national, regional and global levels in implementing the 2030 Agenda. The value of developing subnational indicators for an effective and efficient voluntary national review process was also highlighted. One representative referred to his positive experience with the National SDG Tracker developed by ESCAP to support the production of the reports.

33. Major groups and other stakeholders called for more space for a meaningful, inclusive and systematic dialogue. They underscored the importance of continued multi-stakeholder participation in the voluntary national review preparation process. They also highlighted that stronger inter-agency collaboration and consultations with major groups at the national and subnational levels were needed to ensure the inclusive and integral nature of voluntary national review preparation. One representative of an international organization highlighted that the voluntary national review process was important for monitoring progress on agrifood system transformations.

II. System-wide results of the United Nations development system at the regional level in Asia and the Pacific in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

34. Under agenda item 3, the Forum considered the work of the United Nations development system at the regional level to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. Examples of system-wide actions and results, including those of the Regional Collaborative Platform and its five issue-based coalitions, were highlighted. The Forum noted the following key areas for accelerating progress in the region: tackling gender inequality; providing targeted support to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States; leveraging technologies for sustainable development; and mobilizing expertise and partnerships, including for the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report entitled “Our Common Agenda”.

35. The Forum recognized the collective work of the United Nations development system in supporting members and associate members in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and commended ongoing efforts to reposition the system. The positive results achieved by the Regional Collaborative Platform as a unifying mechanism for collaboration were noted. One representative expressed appreciation for the ongoing support of the Issue-based Coalition on Building Resilience in integrating health into disaster risk reduction.

36. The Forum expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for its technical assistance in preparing voluntary national reviews and for supporting regional and subregional consultation processes.

37. Several representatives stressed the need to translate international and regional development priorities and frameworks into national actions. They expressed appreciation for the capacity-building and technical assistance of the United Nations development system in that regard and highlighted the support in the implementation of the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, the completion of the voluntary national reviews and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. One representative stressed that continued regional and multilateral cooperation was critical to address air pollution in Asia and the Pacific.

38. Representatives of major groups and other stakeholders highlighted the need to complement technical expert knowledge with the voices of constituents in the issue-based coalitions of the Regional Collaborative Platform. One representative called for the greater involvement of community networks in the work of the United Nations development system and highlighted the potential of technology to bridge digital divides and achieve gender equality, while also pointing out the need to minimize the negative impacts of new technologies on communities, livelihoods and culture.