Annex I

Chair’s summary of discussions at the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

1. The theme of the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Asia-Pacific”. During the Forum, members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), intergovernmental bodies, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, major groups and other stakeholders engaged in a dialogue on regional perspectives on the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region, including an in-depth review of the theme and of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17, which constituted the cluster of Goals to be discussed by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017. The Forum also discussed means to strengthen implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.

I. Regional perspectives on the theme of the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

2. During the session, a panel reflected on key challenges in eradicating poverty and achieving shared prosperity in Asia and the Pacific and on the responses that had been put forward by Governments, international organizations and civil society.

3. Several delegations reported that they had created national bodies to mainstream and implement the 2030 Agenda. The majority of the bodies were interministerial and cross-sectoral in nature and some included non-governmental stakeholders such as civil society and academia. Several delegations pointed out that key national strategies and development plans had already been aligned with the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, while other delegations reported the introduction of mapping exercises to match responsibility for the Goals with relevant ministries.

4. The Forum noted efforts to define national indicators and to establish nationwide processes for data collection to monitor progress on achieving the Goals, and highlighted the importance of localizing the Goals and tailoring interventions to the specific needs of households that were being left behind. Several delegations mentioned the important role of youth and women in promoting the implementation of the Goals. The Forum noted the efforts of two delegations in drafting their voluntary national reviews for the 2017 high-level political forum and of one delegation in tabling a sustainable development act.

5. Interventions from international organizations highlighted that effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals depended on mainstreaming nature-based solutions and that well-managed ecosystems could contribute to eradicating poverty. Interventions from civil society stressed the challenges posed by increasing inequality and disproportionate investment priorities that compromised the rights of local populations and could derail progress in achieving the Goals. The realization of the rights of persons with disabilities, as outlined in the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, was stressed as a prerequisite to leaving no one behind.
II. In-depth review of the cluster of Sustainable Development Goals

6. The Forum conducted an in-depth review of six of the seven Sustainable Development Goals that would be the focus of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017, in line with the General Assembly resolution 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, and developed specific recommendations on the following: (a) addressing systemic challenges that were barriers to further progress; (b) priorities for strengthening policy coherence in implementation efforts, including through attention to key leverage points; (c) areas for regional cooperation to address the transboundary dimensions of those Goals and challenges; and (d) promising innovations (policy, social, institutional, technological or other) at the national level.

7. The conclusions of each round table, including the wide range of specific recommendations made, were shared in a plenary session with reports delivered by the rapporteurs of each round table (available from www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/EESCAPFSD(4)CRP1.pdf).

8. A joint statement by civil society organizations called on States to take concrete actions to address the root causes and consequences of poverty, inequality, discrimination, violence and injustice and to build regional cooperation to that end. Regional trends that were not in line with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals were highlighted, including land grabs; increased military spending; territorial, resource and ethnic conflicts, violence against women and girls; and displacement of farmers and indigenous communities. Shrinking civil society space would prevent successful implementation of the Goals. Policy and institutional coherence were interlinked, and the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism should provide coherent support and civil society engagement.

9. Regional cooperation and action to enable development justice was supported by the statements made by the representatives of persons with disabilities and of fisherfolk communities. The opportunity to address barriers and inequalities due to disability, faced by one sixth of the regional population, through regional and global frameworks was emphasized. Participation, partnerships, awareness-raising, enabling regulations to protect rights and access to marine resources, and strengthened policy coherence at all levels were also urged, together with action to address the wide range of economic activities that decreased the income of small-scale fisherfolk, marginalized artisanal fishing and promoted migration and displacement. Mainstreaming the nature-based concept would support implementation and tackle the most pressing issues such as food and water security, disasters and climate change.

III. National progress and achievements with respect to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

10. The session highlighted national perspectives from countries participating in the voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum on sustainable development and provided an opportunity to exchange views on how member States were overcoming challenges, including alignment of national development plans, development aid programmes and institutional mandates through interministerial coordination and wider engagement of all stakeholders, as well as through regional peer learning and South-South cooperation networks.
11. The Forum reiterated the importance of political commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of alignment of national development strategies and subregional plans such as the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway with the 2030 Agenda through the institutional mandates of ministries and government institutions at the national, provincial and local levels.

12. The Forum noted that national efforts to localize the Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators through an inclusive and participatory process were improving the rule of law and promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment, peace and governance, and the inclusion of persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples.

13. The Forum highlighted the importance of subregional and regional cooperation and the pivotal role of the Forum as a platform for follow-up and review, for peer learning through the sharing of knowledge and best practices, and for South-South cooperation.

14. Civil society organizations recommended strengthening national follow-up and review through localization of the Goal indicators and engaging stakeholders and civil society in inclusive and participatory approaches for data collection and monitoring of implementation.

IV. Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls: a pathway to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

15. In this session, a panel highlighted the catalytic role that gender equality and women’s empowerment played across the three dimensions of sustainable development. It proposed innovative strategies and key recommendations to support gender equality and women’s empowerment in strengthening implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. The Forum emphasized its commitment to gender equality, including in promoting gender-responsive policies and plans and ensuring equal opportunities with respect to education, employment, leadership, decision-making and access to health services and social protection.

17. The Forum reported on innovative partnerships and concerted efforts to ensure effective service delivery for lower-income women, as well as measures to eradicate harmful practices against children and promote global citizenship. One delegation recommended strengthening institutional capacity and raising awareness among policymakers and society, mainstreaming gender equality into legal and policy frameworks and providing training for women to better prepare them for the changing world of work and the application of information and communications technology.

18. Civil society organizations stressed that economic growth models were based on systematic discrimination of women in the workforce and reliance on unpaid work by women, and called for the meaningful inclusion of women in all decision-making. The inclusion of women with disabilities in initiatives at all levels was emphasized as essential to effectively respond to the 2030 Agenda. In addition, the potential of youth to dismantle discriminatory gender norms was underlined, including through the addressing of their key needs and concerns in relation to gender-transformative education and health programmes, as well as through the promotion of meaningful youth participation.
V. Experiences and lessons learned with respect to localization of the
Sustainable Development Goals

19. In this session, participants discussed the significant role of local
governments in localizing the Sustainable Development Goals to eradicate
poverty and promote prosperity in cities in the Asia-Pacific region. A panel
of mayors stressed that successful efforts to localize the Goals took into
account local developmental needs, were embedded in the local cultural,
ecological and political contexts, and ultimately empowered people to take
ownership of the Goals.

20. One delegation noted that local governments should focus not merely
on reducing economic poverty, but on enhancing overall quality of life by
building local capacities and reducing dependencies of people on the
government. Another delegation noted the importance of adopting universally
accepted sustainability standards for industrial processes and of promoting
the use of trade and procurement as tools for enhancing the implementation
of the Goals. In that regard, Governments should map their trade policies in
relation to the implementation of the Goals.

21. Civil society organizations emphasized the responsibility of local
governments in recognizing that older persons and persons with disabilities
were equal and productive yet vulnerable citizens whose role was integral to
the process of localizing the Goals. Local government associations reiterated
their commitment to building local government capacities and multi-
stakeholder partnerships for the implementation of inclusive, resilient and
sustainable solutions in alignment with the Goals.

VI. Strengthening the delivery of the means of implementation

22. In this session, a panel drew attention to some of the main challenges
currently faced by the region in harnessing different means of implementation
of the 2030 Agenda, especially to eradicate poverty and ensure prosperity.
The participants highlighted ways to address those challenges and
emphasized the need to exploit the synergies between different means of
implementation.

23. The Forum observed that good governance and an enabling business
environment were crucial in harnessing the potential of different means of
implementation. Considerable synergies existed between the different means
of implementation, which needed to be harnessed through coherent national
policies. The Forum discussed how information and communications
technology could accelerate the participation of small and medium-sized
enterprises in international trade, how increased public infrastructure
investments could in turn promote trade and private investments, and how
new technologies could generate data required to monitor implementation of
the Goals.

24. The Forum recognized the importance of integrating statistical
planning into national development planning and that ill-informed policies
could be much more expensive than investment in data and statistics. The
Forum noted that statistical capacity-building and stakeholder engagement
were key challenges in implementation of Goals at the national level, and
underscored that collecting and managing high-quality and relevant
disaggregated data remained an issue.

25. One delegation requested ESCAP to continue assisting member States
with the reform of public finance, including taxation and public expenditure
matters. The Forum requested ESCAP to assist member States in meeting the data requirements for the 2030 Agenda by providing technical support for national efforts to strengthen data and statistics, and urged Governments to make statistics development a national development target. The Forum recommended that it should act as a platform to identify regional priorities, key challenges and opportunities.

26. The civil society organizations recommended a more explicit recognition of trade as means of implementation within the regional road map for implementing 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. They also called for a regional compatibility impact assessment of existing trade and investment agreements on the Goals, and requested ESCAP to play a lead role in that process. The major groups called for ensuring greater integration of core labour standards and rights into trade and investment agreements. The business community reaffirmed the important role of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network as an important modality for the Commission to actively engage business in promoting environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive growth in the Asia-Pacific region, and supported the Asia-Pacific Business Forum as a platform to articulate strategies for promoting public-private partnerships to achieve the Goals.

VII. Regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and the terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

27. The Forum considered the draft regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and the draft terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

28. The Forum welcomed the inclusive and collaborative efforts to develop the road map and thanked the secretariat for supporting the process.

29. The Forum recognized the road map as a living document that served as guidelines for regional cooperation and support in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

30. Civil society organizations recognized the road map’s contribution and benefits to developing and least developed countries, calling for wide stakeholder participation in its implementation, and made several suggestions for future iterations to promote development justice and ensure inclusion of all marginalized groups.