Policy Dialogue: ESCAP - Ministry of Housing, Land and Urban Development, Maldives

"Boosting affordable and longer-term financing for Governments"

22 August 2024, Thursday
9:00 – 12:00 hrs
Maldives National University Central Auditorium, Maale

In-person event

Concept Note

A. Background

While developing Asia-Pacific economies have displayed resilient output growth in 2023, the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic together with the war in Ukraine have had significant socioeconomic impacts. Job creation is subdued, cost of living is high, and there are concerns regarding rise in poverty and inequalities. At the same time, climate change and related natural disasters are increasingly disrupting economic activities and adversely impacting people's wellbeing.

As of 2023, the Asia-Pacific region reached only 17 per cent the progress required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.[1] At the current pace, the region will only achieve all the 17 Goals by 2062 – marking a significant 32-year delay.

More public investments are urgently needed to promote inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. The latest UN analysis estimates that the annual SDG financing gaps range between $2.5 trillion and $4 trillion in developing countries worldwide.[2] Yet, the ability of governments to increase, or even maintain, developmental spending is constrained. Many governments are now paying more on interest payments than what they spend on education, healthcare and social protection combined.[3] In Asia and the Pacific, the risk of sovereign debt distress is also high in many countries, especially in the least developed countries and small island developing States, which already face sizeable development financing needs. Many governments in the region are also paying higher borrowing costs with shorter loan maturity period.

Developing Asia-Pacific countries need to strengthen their domestic resource mobilization strategies and macroeconomic fundamentals to reduce fiscal risks and borrowing costs. Yet, the tangible benefits of such policy efforts on fiscal and public debt positions may take years to materialize. Support from the international community is urgently needed in the meantime.

[1] ESCAP (2024). Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report.
[2] United Nations (2024). Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024. DESA.
[3] UNCTAD (2023). A world of debt.

To confront these development financing challenges, the United Nations Secretary-General launched the "*SDG Stimulus to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*" in February 2023.[4] Together with reforms of the international financial architecture, it calls for immediate actions to cut government borrowing cost and make financing for governments longer term.

In this context, the 2024 edition of ESCAP's flagship publication *"Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific"* examines how countries in the region, donors, multilateral development banks and credit rating agencies can boost the availability of affordable and long-term financing for Governments.[5] The report also provides an analysis on the fiscal implications of global megatrends, especially demographic shifts, climate change and environmental degradation, and rapid technological advancements.

B. Objectives, structure and participation

This policy dialogue is jointly organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Ministry of Housing, Land and Urban Development, Maldives (MoHLUD*)*. The event aims to discuss ideas on policy issues and actions to reduce the cost of government borrowing and to increase the supply of long-term capital for development purposes. The discussion would also include interconnected issues of macroeconomic prospects, challenges and policy options in the context of Maldives.

The policy dialogue contains five sessions for a total of two and half hours, featuring opening (20 mins), a context-setting presentation by ESCAP (15 mins), a moderated panel discussion (80 mins), open Q&A discussion (30 mins), and closing remarks (5 mins). Among others, participants include government ministries and agencies, especially those working on fiscal and public debt issues, academic institutions, international development partners, and private sector representatives , especially financial institutions and credit rating agencies. The event will be conducted in English .

The final version of the concept note (including the programme), presentation slides and other materials relating to this policy dialogue, is available on ESCAP *Survey* 2024 website.

C. Contact persons

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[4] www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/SDG-Stimulus-to-Deliver-Agenda-2030.pdf
[5] The full report and other outreach materials are available from: https://www.unescap.org/kp/2024/survey2024

AGENDA

22 August 2024, Thursday 9:15 – 11:35 AM Maldives National University Central Auditorium, Maale In-person event	
09:15 – 09:30 AM	**Arrival of Guests**
	Welcome Guests
09:30 – 09:50 AM	**Session 1: Opening**
2 mins 2 mins 4 mins 5 mins 5 mins 2 mins	**Recitation of Holy Quran:** Student Representative, Maldives National University **Brief Introduction of the event with outline of the agenda** **Opening Remarks:** Dr Ali Haidar Ahmed Minister of Housing, Land and Urban Development **Mr. Hamza Ali Malik**, Director, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division, UNESCAP **Mr. Bradley J. Busetto,** UN Resident Coordinator, UN Maldives **Introduce key speakers**
09:50 – 10:10 AM	**Session 2: Presentation by ESCAP**
15 mins 5 mins	*"Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2024 Boosting affordable and longer-term financing for governments"* **Mr. Hamza Ali Malik** Director, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division, ESCAP, Engagement with audience/ Q&A
10:10 - 10:30 AM	**Session 3: Presentation by Ministry of Finance**
15 mins 5 mins	*"Sustainability and longerterm financing in time of Polycrisis"* **Mr.Ahmed Saaid Musthafa** Deputy Minister Engagement with audience/ Q&A
10:30 – 10:50 AM	**Presentation by CMDA**
15 mins	*"Raising Finance through Capital market"* **Mr. Abdulla Zakariyya, Director General**

5 mins	Engagement with audience/ Q&A
10:50 – 11:10 AM	**Presentation by First National Finance Corporation**
15 mins 5 mins	**Mr. Hassan Mohamed** Co-founder and Non-Executive Director Engagement with audience/ Q&A
11:10 – 11:30 AM	**Presentation by MNU**
15 mins 5 mins	*"Affordable and long-term financing for development through capital markets"* **Ms. Nasheedha Rasheed** Lecturer (Department of Business and Marketing), BEM (Bachelors of Economics and Management) course coordinator Engagement with audience/ Q&A
11:30 – 11:35 AM	**Session 4: Closing**
	Ms. Zeeniya Ahmed Hameed Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Housing, Land and Urban Development
11:35 – 12: 00 AM	**Refreshment**