

**ESCAP Committee on Macroeconomic Policy,
Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development**

Fifth session Bangkok, Thailand

Side Event Concept Note

Friday, 21 November 2025, 10:00AM to 12:00PM

MR-H, UN Conference Centre | Hybrid

Duration: 120 minutes

Participants encouraged to register in advance

Registration: <https://forms.office.com/e/pPMU2ErtHt>

To Join: [Join Via MS Teams Here](#)

Website: <https://www.un.org/en/beyondGDP>

About this Session

“Emerging Pathways Beyond GDP: Interactive Dialogue”

This concept note outlines a consultation session for the United Nations High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) on Beyond GDP during the Fifth session of the ESCAP Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development.

1. Background

For decades, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has served as the principal measure of national progress, despite its well-known limitations in capturing the full scope of human and environmental well-being. GDP effectively reflects market activity, but it overlooks critical dimensions such as inequality, environmental degradation, unpaid care work, social cohesion, and overall quality of life. Growing recognition of these shortcomings—exacerbated by the intensifying climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and rising social and economic inequalities—has renewed a global call to “value what counts.”

In response, the UN Secretary-General established an Independent High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) in May 2025 to develop actionable recommendations for country-owned, universally applicable measures that move beyond GDP. As part of the HLEG’s mandate, a series of consultations with diverse stakeholders will be conducted between its appointment and the publication of its final report and recommendations. These consultations are fundamental to ensuring the legitimacy, inclusivity, and intellectual rigor of the HLEG’s analytical work.

2. Objective of the Regional Consultation

This consultation between the Member States served by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and members of the HLEG is pivotal for grounding the Beyond GDP project in regional contexts and priorities. The session aims to leverage Member States' technical expertise and deep understanding of existing regional architectures to ensure the framework's analytical rigor, coherence, and practical relevance. A principal objective is to secure critical input from Member States to align the recommendations with the diverse economic and developmental landscapes of the Asia-Pacific region, thereby fostering regional ownership.

3. Proposed Agenda

- **Opening remarks (15 mins):** Moderator to open the session and start with a question for the audience. Followed by welcome by DES Lin and background on regional priorities (4 min), followed by an HLEG overview of its mandate and the value of this consultation (6 min).
- **Framing presentation (20 mins):** A concise HLEG presentation on the core framework and key areas for regional feedback.
- **Interactive dialogue (Up to 60 mins):** A structured discussion featuring Mentimeter questions to engage the audience and reflections from the HLEG. The questions will follow the online consultation questions.
- **Conclusion and next steps (15 mins):** A summary of key takeaways by the HLEG Secretariat and closing reflections from ESCAP.

Time	Agenda
5 mins	<p>Moderator opens the event and sets out the agenda -</p> <p>Introduces DES Lin Yang and member/s of the High Level Expert Group and asks the audience to open Mentimeter and answer the first question. We will use Mentimeter so the audience online and in person can contribute.</p> <p>Audience question (open ended): What does progress mean to you – what indicates that your life is improving?</p>
10 mins	<p>Opening Remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deputy Executive Secretary, Lin Yang <p>To explain the background to this work and its importance</p>

Time	Agenda
20 mins	<p>Keynote speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pham Khanh Nam, Rector of the College of Economics, Law and Government and Associate Professor of Economics, University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam <p>To share on the work of the High Level Expert Group and the Interim Report.</p> <p><i>The moderator will open for audience Q&A after the presentation (5min)</i></p>
5 mins	<p>Panelist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Philip Schellekens, Chief Economist for Asia-Pacific at UNDP. <p>To share his reflections on the keynote speech</p>
Up to 60 mins	<p>Audience dialogue:</p> <p>The moderator will lead the audience in the room and online to complete a series of questions. The Panel (Pham Khanh Nam and Mr Philip Schellekens) will have an opportunity to reflect on the answers and look for synergies.</p> <p>What are three things that every country should measure to understand whether it is making real progress?</p> <p>The Panel should reflect back on the responses and how they relate to the 7 domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material well-being - being materially secure and having livelihood opportunities; • Health – being healthy, and having a long, fulfilling life; • Education – being knowledgeable, educated, and having skills to participate in many aspects of life; • Environmental sustainability – living in an ecologically safe and sustainable environment; • Subjective well-being – having more positive emotional states than negative ones, and having purpose and agency to pursue life goals; • Social capital – being connected and participating in one’s community; and • Governance – being safe, respected and empowered. <p>The audience will be asked the following two questions followed by an opportunity for the Panel to reflect on the answers:</p> <p>What role do technological and digital change play in how we should define progress today and moving forward?</p>

Time	Agenda
	<p>What other contemporary changes and challenges need to be captured in how we measure progress over the next 10-30 years?</p> <p>The audience will be asked the following two questions followed by Panel reflections</p> <p>The interim report includes seven domains or dimensions to measure progress, please indicate which three you feel are particularly essential for progress from this list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Health <input type="checkbox"/> Material wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/> Social capital <input type="checkbox"/> Subjective wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/> Governance <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental quality <input type="checkbox"/> Education <p>Are there any domains or dimensions you believe are missing (Wordcloud)?</p> <p>So far we have looked at what should be included in a framework, we are now going to move on to consider issues around the implementation of a framework. We have three questions for the audience on this followed by Panel reflections:</p> <p>Do you think governments should establish binding national targets for well-being and be held accountable for progress (eg. Health, education targets, climate targets)</p> <p>Strongly Agree</p> <p>Agree</p> <p>Neutral</p> <p>Disagree</p> <p>Strongly Disagree</p> <p>What risks or barriers might limit adoption of the framework in your context?</p> <p>How do you see the Beyond GDP framework fitting with existing frameworks such as SDG monitoring or national planning?</p>

Time	Agenda
	<p>And now for a final question followed by reflections from the High Level Expert group panel member:</p> <p>And finally do you have any recommendations for the High Level Expert Group on their Future Work?</p>
10 mins	<p>Conclusion and Next Steps – A summary of key takeaways by the HLEG Secretariat and closing reflections from ESCAP.</p> <p>Participants will be encouraged to look at papers and progress at: https://www.un.org/beyondgdp and to submit ideas and insights at: beyondgdp@un.org as well as to take part in the <u>online consultation process</u>.</p>

4. Contact Person

Elena de Jesús, Beyond GDP Project Secretariat
 Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs
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5. Short Bios



Opening Remarks

Lin Yang, Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Ms. Lin Yang oversees ESCAP's substantive programmes on finance, social development, and statistics, as well as five regional institutions supporting these divisions. She coordinates ESCAP's collaborative efforts with other UN agencies at the regional level. Ms. Yang joined ESCAP from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) where she provided advice on intergovernmental processes as well as follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, SAMOA Pathway and Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review as the Head of Strategic Planning and Communication Services, Office of the Under-Secretary-General. Ms. Yang holds a Master's degree in international relations from Peking University and a bachelor's degree in diplomacy from China Foreign Affairs University





Key Note Speaker

Pham Khanh Nam

Rector of the College of Economics, Law and Government and Associate Professor of Economics, UEH

Dr. Nam Khanh Pham is an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH), Vietnam. He also serves as Rector of the College of Economics, Law and Government at UEH and as Director of the Environment for Development Center in Vietnam (EfD-Vietnam). His research focuses on environmental economics and sustainable development, with particular attention to the green transition in emerging economies. He has led and contributed to a range of interdisciplinary projects addressing climate resilience, vulnerability, inclusive growth, and the development of effective policy tools. Dr. Nam regularly collaborates with national and international partners to strengthen the evidence base for sustainability-oriented policymaking in Vietnam and

	<p>Southeast Asia. His work supports the design of frameworks that integrate environmental, social, and economic dimensions.</p>
	<p>Panelist</p> <p>Mr Philip Schellekens, Chief Economist for Asia-Pacific at UNDP.</p> <p>He leads the region’s Economist Network and Inclusive Growth practice. Based in Bangkok, he works with 24 country offices to reimagine development and turn vision into action, focusing on people, smarter growth, and effective leadership and governance.</p>
	<p>Moderator</p> <p>Ms. Rachael Beaven, Director, Statistics Division, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</p> <p>She has over thirty years of experience in government statistics. Prior to joining ESCAP, Ms. Beaven led the Data for Development Team at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UK. She is one of the founders of the Inclusive Data Charter and established a data science hub with the Office for National Statistics, UK.</p>