Launch of Theme Study

“Reclaiming our Future: A common agenda for advancing sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific”

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1. COVID-19: a pandemic of inequalities

- As of March 2022:
  - 57% and 47% of officially recorded global cases and deaths

- In many low income countries, less than half of the total population are fully vaccinated.

- Many of the unvaccinated are front-line workers and persons in vulnerable situations.

Figure 1. Vaccine coverage and GNI per capita, selected countries, March 2022 (percentage of population having received two dosages)

Source: Data from Oxford University and World Development Indicators
1. COVID-19: a pandemic of inequalities

- Population segments that have suffered the most during the pandemic:
  - Older persons
  - Migrants
  - Children
  - Young people

Figure 2. Ability to protect against a rapidly spreading disease and gaps between the furthest behind and the furthest ahead groups, latest year

Source: ESCAP calculations based on latest DHS and MICS surveys conducted in the 2010s.
In 2018 the region was responsible for around 55% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Severe decline in biodiversity and ecosystems and heavily polluted air and water have a disproportionate impact on the poor.

Figure 3. Growth of GHG emissions in Asia and the Pacific, MtCO2e, 2010-2019
3. Disasters ahead

- @ tipping point: cascading risks are outpacing resilience
- Climatic extremes, will be unprecedented in magnitude, frequency, and timing.
- Patterns for vector-borne diseases such as malaria changing with climate change.
- Adaptation costs are highest for Pacific small islands developing states.

![Figure 4. Subregional adaptation costs for climate-related hazards and biological hazards, percentage of GDP](chart.png)
Three crises compounded by widening inequalities

1) Besides income inequalities, inequalities in access to opportunities, slow economic progress and erode trust and social cohesion.

2) By subregion, the highest inequalities: the Pacific, followed closely by South-east Asia and South Asia. North and Central Asia the most equal.

3) By sector the highest inequalities: higher education, access to clean fuels and the internet.

Figure 5. Average D-indices for basic services and opportunities, by country
Source: ESCAP calculations using available data from the latest DHS and MICS surveys.
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Be prepared in a richer but riskier world

Figure 6. Strategic foresight to manage systemic risk
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Protect people and the planet

Leave no one behind –
• invest in health systems and in universal social protection systems
• a mix of contributory and non-contributory benefit schemes,
• take advantage of digital advances.

Figure 7. Public expenditures on social protection, excluding health, per cent of gross domestic product, by country, latest available year

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Protect people and the planet

Protect our planet:
• More ambition on reduction in GHG emissions
• Coalition of willing, on climate adaptation, develop a regional cooperation modality on air pollution.
• Place women and girls at the centre
• Listen to and work with the youth

Figure 8. Status of Asia-Pacific nationally determined contributions submissions and their greenhouse gas emissions share (GtCO2e), January 2022
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Digital by default

• Universal access to affordable, reliable and safe broadband Internet by 2030

• Strengthen digital cooperation especially in investments in transboundary infrastructure and e-government services

• Support digital commerce platforms as they enable many SMEs to diversify revenue sources.


Note: These data represent only the countries that had data available for 2017, 2018 or 2019.
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Trading and investing together

- As key engines of growth with simplification and digitalization of trade procedures
- Building productive capacities in digital innovation, climate readiness and epidemic resilience
- Supply chain competitiveness will be increasingly influenced by green strategies of multinationals

Figure 10. Number of Asia-Pacific preferential trade agreements in force (by geographical region)

Source: ESCAP calculation, based on data obtained from the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Agreement Database (https://www.unescap.org/content/aptiad) (accessed October 2021).
Raising financial resources and managing debt

• More progressive forms of taxation, thematic bonds, diaspora bonds and debt swaps for development

• Curb non-developmental expenditures and direct spending to climate action

• Reduce costs of public debt servicing through better debt management.

Figure 11. Thematic bond issuance in Asia and the Pacific

Source: ESCAP (2021), Financing the SDGs to Build Forward Better from the COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.21.II.F.13).
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