ENHANCING SIDS VOICE AND REPRESENTATION

A selected list of ESCAP SAMOA Pathway-specific activities and programmes: 2014-2023
The shaded areas of the map indicate ESCAP members and associate members.*

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the Asia-Pacific region. The Commission promotes cooperation among its 53 member States and 9 associate members in pursuit of solutions to sustainable development challenges. ESCAP is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations.

The ESCAP secretariat supports inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in the region by generating action-oriented knowledge, and by providing technical assistance and capacity-building services in support of national development objectives, regional agreements and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

*The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.
Explanatory notes


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The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the regional arm of the United Nations, playing a unique role as the most inclusive intergovernmental forum for countries and territories of Asia and the Pacific.

ESCAP was established in 1947, and forms the largest of the United Nations’ regional commissions (in terms of population served). ESCAP’s mandate, as broadly defined in its terms of reference, is to promote economic and social development among countries of Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP’s 75th anniversary arrives during an unprecedented period of worldwide upheaval, with the COVID-19 pandemic highlighting the importance of inclusive and networked multilateralism, and strong commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals and global solidarity. ESCAP’s unique position, promoting multidisciplinary cooperation among countries in the Asia-Pacific region to achieve inclusive and sustainable development, has allowed it to pivot easily to respond to crises that are cross-boundary in nature.
The UN Comprehensive Response to Covid-19 outlines the three-point UN system approach of:

- Health response
- Safeguarding lives and livelihoods
- Transformative recovery

ESCAP Resolution 71/4. “Implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway” encouraged all members and associate members of the Commission to support, both actively and effectively, the implementation of the Samoa Pathway, particularly by strengthening the means by which it is to be done, including through partnerships, financing, trade, technology, capacity-building and institutional support.
The ten-year Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway (SAMOA Pathway) will conclude at the end of 2023. The Fourth International Conference on SIDS will enable ESCAP, along with the United Nations systems, to work together in furthering SIDS priorities and to meet the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

During the 2014–2023 period, ESCAP continued to enhance and strengthen its work with the region’s SIDS with a focus on supporting the key action points of the SAMOA Pathway and accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ESCAP enhances the voice and representation of SIDS member States through intergovernmental, analytical and knowledge products, as well as through technical cooperation activities. Over the past decade, ESCAP highlighted the priorities of the SIDS. This publication contains a selection of 50 activities and initiatives focused on these priorities to showcase plausible solutions to the existing and emerging challenges facing the SIDS in the Asia-Pacific region.

In 2014, the theme “Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity” explored strategies for strengthening regional connectivity. A major priority for the SIDS, connectivity is a cornerstone of regional economic cooperation and integration, especially in the context of efforts to find new drivers of regional economic growth and create additional domestic and aggregate regional demand. To best unlock the potential of increasingly interlinked production networks and value chains, a broader perspective on connectivity was key.

The following year, the Commission emphasized that the region would need to incorporate inclusive growth and sustainable development principles into its domestic policy frameworks. While economic growth is necessary, it is not entirely sufficient for achieving development. The discussions during 2015 provided a new perspective on regional inclusive growth in the context of global deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda, which encompassed the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development.

Similarly, science, technology and innovation also received attention in 2015, particularly their potential to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of efforts to meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda. For these areas to be effectively implemented for inclusive and sustainable development, it was critical to first chart the practical steps needed for balanced and integrated development.

Another focus area during this period was sustainable energy, and the need to increase regional energy supplies to meet the growing demand resulting from rapid urbanization, industrialization and economic growth. A shift to the use of low-carbon energy resources and diversification of the energy mix were required to enhance energy security, reduce environmental impacts and meet global commitments related to climate change.

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1 This publication was coordinated by the Subregional Office for the Pacific with contributions from Caitlin Harm Nam, Lutia Tauati, Ranhee Kim, and Orisi Samoce under the overall supervision of Sudip Ranjan Basu.
Furthermore, many countries at the time were experiencing a widening of existing gaps as well as environmental degradation. Market-led growth alone was insufficient to deliver a prosperous, sustainable future for all member States. In 2018, the Commission discussed inequality of outcomes, opportunities and impacts, with special attention paid to the potentially transformative role of technology and the impact that the incipient Fourth Industrial Revolution may have on inequality. Unequal access to basic opportunities had left large groups of people behind and contributed to widening inequalities of outcomes, particularly in income and wealth. In turn, these inequalities exacerbated inequalities in access to health care, education and technology, as well as to protection from natural disasters and environmental hazards – creating intergenerational hardship for communities and families.

In 2019, the Commission discussions examined progress towards equality in three key outcomes: education, full-time employment and income. It was recognized that women, rural populations, persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups had either fallen further behind, been included in overall national development gains, or empowered to catch up with outcome levels of non-disadvantaged groups. To quantify progress in inclusion and empowerment, the Commission used measures to show how gaps between disadvantaged and advantaged groups had changed over time.

The 2020 theme “Changing Sails: Accelerating Regional Actions for Sustainable Oceans in Asia and the Pacific” explored key areas around which regional platforms could rally interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral solutions for challenges facing the region’s oceans. The Commission called for enhanced sharing of ocean data, along with stronger investment in national statistical systems for collecting and harmonizing data. It also emphasized the need for enforcing international conventions, norms and standards relating to maritime shipping, sustainable fisheries and marine pollution; strengthening regional platforms as avenues for building partnerships, facilitating knowledge and data-sharing; and supporting the implementation and monitoring of global agreements.

The COVID-19 pandemic arrived in the region in 2021. The crisis resulted in sudden economic contractions, interruptions to trade and supply chains and the collapse of international tourism, which led to widespread job losses and an increase in poverty. The theme “Beyond the pandemic: Building back better from crises in Asia and the Pacific” reviewed the actions that had been undertaken so far and set out a policy agenda for building back better. The agenda was grounded in regional cooperation and centred on four critical interconnected areas: broadening social protection; investing in a sustained recovery; strengthening connectivity and supply chains; and mending the broken relationship with nature.

During ESCAP’s seventy-fifth anniversary in 2022, the Commission’s discussions were guided by the theme “Reclaiming our future: A common agenda to advance sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific”. Member States and stakeholders highlighted pathways to achieving more inclusive and sustainable post-pandemic recovery. The several key elements of this common agenda for present and future generations centred on protecting people and the planet, leveraging digital opportunities, increasing mutual trade and investment, raising financial resources and managing debt.
The theme for the programme’s final year demonstrated that the Asia-Pacific region’s transition to a net zero carbon future is critical to advancing sustainable development. The Commission provided an outline of the regional context of climate change and identified policies and actions that could be taken in various economic sectors to support the global climate agenda, while also making broad economic, social and environmental gains. Considering the carbon neutrality commitments of most of Asia-Pacific countries, the report recommended strengthening regional policy dialogue and technical cooperation for a low carbon, climate-resilient transition.

The thematic areas and activities highlighted in this publication relate to the priorities of SIDS in Asia and the Pacific. The publication showcases ESCAP’s engagements over the past decade with member States, other stakeholders and development partners in advancing the SIDS’ agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BANGKOK DECLARATION ON REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

The first Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration was held in December 2013. The Bangkok Declaration called for ESCAP to continue pursuing enhanced regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific, with four focus areas: (a) moving towards the formation of an integrated market; (b) the development of seamless connectivity across the region in the areas of transport, energy and information and communications technology; (c) enhancing financial cooperation; and (d) increasing economic and technical cooperation to address shared vulnerabilities and risks.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUVA DECLARATION ON IMPROVING MARITIME TRANSPORT AND RELATED SERVICES IN THE PACIFIC

ESCAP convened the High-Level Meeting on Strengthening Inter-island Shipping and Logistics in the PSIDS in July 2013, at which the Suva Declaration on Improving Maritime Transport and Related Services in the Pacific was adopted. The Meeting was conducted in collaboration with the International Maritime Organization, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the SPC. The Suva Declaration was aimed at overcoming sustainable transport challenges in PSIDS and promoting sustainable development, and stipulated goals to (a) improve inter-island shipping services and create an enabling environment for services to shipping, and (b) improve maritime safety and security and prevent and minimize pollution from ships.
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE FIRST ASIAN AND PACIFIC ENERGY FORUM

The first Asian and Pacific Energy Forum was convened at the ministerial level in Vladivostok, Russian Federation in May 2013. Its purpose was to review the progress achieved in addressing energy security challenges at the regional, national and household levels, and to facilitate continuous dialogue among member States with a view to enhancing energy security and working towards sustainable development. Member States addressed the concept of enhanced energy security in moving beyond conventional short-term calculations of supply and demand. Through resolution 70/9, Implementation of the outcomes of the first Asian and Pacific Energy Forum, the Commission decided to convene the second Asian and Pacific Energy Forum at the ministerial level in 2018.

RESOLUTION 70/13, REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The Commission adopted resolution 70/13, which invited ESCAP members and associate members, in cooperation with relevant international organizations, the private sector and civil society, to enhance their efforts to build resilience to disasters, take strategic approaches towards evidence-based resilience through improved disaster data and ensure all vulnerable people are included in disaster risk reduction planning.

SIXTH ASIAN AND PACIFIC POPULATION CONFERENCE

ESCAP convened the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund in Bangkok from 16 to 20 September 2013. It was attended by more than 450 representatives of governments, civil society and the United Nations system, including those from 46 members and associate members of the Commission. Attendance was the highest ever recorded in the 50-year history of the Asian and Pacific Population Conference, reflecting the priority accorded by Commission members to issues concerning population and development. The Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development was adopted at the Conference.
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SIDS ACCELERATED MODALITIES OF ACTION (SAMOA) PATHWAY

Through resolution 71/4, the Commission requested the secretariat to work in collaboration with the relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, regional and subregional organizations and non-governmental organizations to assist Pacific Island members and associate members, on request, to enhance national capacities and institutions. It also requested the secretariat to enhance the voices and representation of Pacific Island members in regional and global processes, and ensure the realization of a transformational strategy for the sustainable development of the SIDS by strengthening the Commission’s role in monitoring the follow up to the SAMOA Pathway and the evolving post-2015 development agenda.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ASIAN AND PACIFIC CENTRE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISASTER INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Commission initiated the establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management in the Islamic Republic of Iran, inviting all members and associate members to participate in the development of the Centre’s programmes and support its activities. The Commission also reaffirmed the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the Yogyakarta Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and the Pacific 2012 and the Bangkok Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and the Pacific 2014.
STRENGTHENING COOPERATION ON SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Resolution 71/9 recalled the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development titled “The Future We Want”, which recognized the importance of water in sustainable development, as well as General Assembly resolution 69/215 of December 2014, which urged member States, the secretariat, and United Nations system organizations to accelerate their efforts to achieve internationally agreed water goals.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASIAN AND PACIFIC MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

The Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review adopted, by consensus, the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. Through the Ministerial Declaration, ESCAP members and associate members identified priority actions for advancing the achievement of gender equality in the Asia-Pacific region.

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific was held from 24 to 28 November 2014 in Bangkok, as part of the “Get Every One in the Picture” initiative. The Conference was the first intergovernmental conference on civil registration and vital statistics conducted in the Asia-Pacific region and produced the Proclamation of the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade 2015-2024.
Recalling General Assembly resolution 70/197 of 22 December 2015 on comprehensive cooperation among all modes of transport for promoting sustainable intermodal transit corridors, at its seventy-second session the Commission adopted resolution 72/5 on strengthening regional cooperation on transport connectivity for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. The resolution recognized the important role ESCAP had played in bringing about a new approach by member States to intermodal transport corridors for safe, efficient, reliable and affordable movement of goods and people.

The Workshop on Macroeconomic Modelling in Asia and the Pacific was held at ESCAP in Bangkok from 8 to 11 December 2015. The meeting requested ESCAP to provide a platform for regular consultations and support regional deliberations on sharing country experiences and knowledge in the areas of macroeconomic modelling. This would allow member States to learn from each other and reflect on the nature of their respective national economic structures, as well as create linkages across sectors to further help establish a network of experts – including academia, think tanks and other stakeholders – to enhance regional collaboration on creating a modelling framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.
FOSTERING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS TO RESPOND TO THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

At its seventy-second session, the Commission adopted resolution 72/8 on fostering regional cooperation and partnerships to respond to the climate change challenge in the Asia-Pacific region. The resolution invited members and associate members of ESCAP to facilitate the exchange of best practices and information sharing in the context of taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, by utilizing existing international and regional institutions, forums and platforms.

NAURU: CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION, RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HOUSEHOLD VULNERABILITY, HUMAN MOBILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The report was the first national empirical study representing the relationship between household vulnerability, human mobility and climate change in Nauru. It highlighted the importance for Nauru, at the country level, to improve, plan and manage the impacts of climate change on migration through the development of indicators, the provision of new knowledge on labour migration and by analysing community attitudes to climate-related migration.

REGIONAL COOPERATION TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE OCEANS, SEAS AND MARINE RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

At its seventy-second session in May 2016, ESCAP member countries adopted resolution 72/9. It called for greater cooperation, collaboration and coordination between Asia and the Pacific sub-regions and regional organizations through South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation for promoting the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, seas and marine resources in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14.
The third session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport, held from 5 to 9 December 2016 in Moscow, adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, which included the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, Phase I (2017–2021). The Conference recommended the implementation of the regional action programme. Through resolution 73/4, it endorsed the Declaration and encouraged all parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network to consider accession to the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network.

The guidebook provided strategic and practical guidelines on how to mainstream disaster risk reduction in policy plans and programmes across key sectors. It discussed strategic approaches towards risk resilient development in the Asia-Pacific region and demonstrated how to operationalize them using examples from various countries in the region. These guidelines could be adopted by countries according to their specific contexts, resources and capacities.
In May 2017 at its seventy-third session, ESCAP adopted resolution 73/8 on strengthening regional cooperation for sustainable energy development in Asia and the Pacific, which requested the secretariat to conduct analytical studies and compile and disseminate relevant energy information and data. The Commission also established two expert working groups under the Committee on Energy: the Expert Working Group on Energy Connectivity; and the Expert Working Group on Universal Access to Modern Energy Services, Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Cleaner Use of Fossil Fuels.

This report presented an array of practical policy actions that could help countries in Asia and the Pacific access the region’s emerging green bond markets. It presented a vision for a regional initiative that would bring together state and non-state actors to work with climate-vulnerable Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the SIDS from the Asia-Pacific region to take the “concept to market”, and to help these countries access green debt capital markets.

The Asian Development Bank and ESCAP report reviewed the state of trade facilitation and paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific. It investigated the evolution of trade costs in the region, examined trade facilitation and paperless trade implementation and highlighted the key initiatives and efforts in various subregions. It also included impact assessments of trade facilitation implementation and corridor performance on reducing trade costs and increasing trade.
The seventh session of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held from 5 to 8 September 2017 in Bangkok, adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development for Asia and the Pacific, 2017. The Ministerial Declaration recognized themes of common interest for member States to promote environment and development; identified areas of common work for member States to foster regional cooperation; and called for the Committee on Environment and Development to be held at the ministerial level in 2022.

Progress on water-related challenges, as framed in Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation, was integral to delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. Led by ESCAP, the Asia-Pacific consultation comprised an online survey conducted in November 2017, a meeting held on 1 December 2017 at its headquarters to validate the survey’s outcome and one-to-one interviews. The regional consultation highlighted the critical role of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in the coordination of water-related initiatives and in catalysing synergies for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6 at the regional level.
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGIONAL EXPERT WORKSHOP ON OCEAN ACCOUNTS

ESCAP invited national and international experts to attend the first Asia and the Pacific Regional Expert Workshop on Ocean Accounts from 1 to 3 August 2018 in Bangkok. The workshop’s purpose was to facilitate a community of practice around standards for ocean statistics and contribute to strengthening national, regional and international partnerships, including with the statistical community. In turn, this would focus efforts on compiling, interpreting and applying oceans data and statistics to enhance the capacities of member States to sustainably manage the ocean.

DIGITAL AND SUSTAINABLE TRADE FACILITATION IN PACIFIC ISLAND DEVELOPING ECONOMIES: SUB-REGIONAL REPORT 2019

The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2019 revealed that the average implementation of a common set of 31 Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation measures by Pacific Island SIDS stood at 35.5%, which was significantly lower than the Asia-Pacific regional average of 59.7%. Although trade facilitation implementation varied widely within each sub-regional grouping, differences in trade facilitation implementation levels were smallest in the Pacific Island SIDS.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE SECOND ASIAN AND PACIFIC ENERGY FORUM

Through resolution 74/9, the Commission endorsed and invited members to follow up and implement the Ministerial Declaration on Regional Cooperation for Energy Transition towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies in Asia and the Pacific. The Ministerial Declaration recognized the challenges in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 7 in the region and identified measures to address those challenges through regional cooperation. It also recognized the importance of energy connectivity and the potential contribution of cross-border energy trade in attaining Goal 7.
At the time this report was compiled, 690 million persons with disabilities lived in Asia and the Pacific. As this figure was expected to grow over the following decades, the need for enhanced accessibility was also expected to increase greatly. Disability at a Glance 2019: Investing in Accessibility in Asia and the Pacific — Strategic Approaches to Achieving Disability-inclusive Sustainable Development focused on the importance of increasing investment in accessibility to narrow these gaps and build an inclusive Asia and Pacific for all.

On 10 October 2018, ministers and space community heads from over 30 Asia-Pacific countries met in Bangkok for the Third Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. To guide work in the Asia-Pacific region for the following decade, the Conference adopted two documents that were endorsed by the Commission through resolution 75/7: 1) the Ministerial Declaration on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific; and 2) the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018–2030).
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON NAVIGATING POLICY WITH DATA TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Through the declaration Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, Committee members identified three principles for a whole-of-government approach to action: linking policy with data through dialogue between users and producers of official statistics; ensuring that investments in national statistical systems correspond to resource requirements for the statistical products and services demanded by users; and empowering national statistical offices and statistical units at all levels of government to “operate as one integrated system.”

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ULAANBAATAR DECLARATION OF THE 2018 ASIAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Pursuant to the outcome of the 2018 Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the Commission endorsed the Ulaanbaatar Declaration through resolution 75/5. The Declaration called on all governments and stakeholders to “urgently accelerate action to develop national and local strategies on disaster risk reduction to reduce disaster losses, thereby achieving Target (e) of the Sendai Framework by 2020.”

CATALYSING WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURSHIP: FIJI LAUNCH AND NATIONAL CONSULTATION

ESCAP actively supports its member States in efforts to enhance women’s economic empowerment and entrepreneurship as a strategy for poverty reduction, social well-being and sustainable economic growth. It does so to help progress the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality and the multiple related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As part of its support, ESCAP, in partnership with Global Affairs Canada and the Government of Fiji, launched a new project to support the growth of women entrepreneurs as a strategy for poverty reduction, social well-being and sustainable economic growth.
Regional Cooperation to Address the Socioeconomic Effects of Pandemics and Crises in Asia and the Pacific

It was crucial that recovery from COVID-19 and accelerating efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals were aligned. Recognizing the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which impeded progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the ESCAP resolution 77/1 highlighted that recovery from the COVID-19 crisis provided an opportunity for greater regional cooperation to build back better in the region through inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery strategies and investments aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Strengthening Cooperation to Promote the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

Recognizing the importance of the ocean for the region, ESCAP adopted a resolution reinforcing the mandate to strengthen cooperation to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. The resolution requested the secretariat to continue to strengthen current partnerships and to develop new partnerships, where appropriate, for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, including through participatory multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms.
THE PROTECTION WE WANT: SOCIAL OUTLOOK FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The COVID-19 pandemic saw many countries strengthen existing schemes and introduce ad hoc social protection measures. The flagship report revealed that despite their rapid socioeconomic ascent, at the time most countries in the Asia-Pacific region had weak social protection systems riddled with gaps. The report recommended governments reprioritize existing resources, boost public revenues, tap into new technologies and embed social protection into national development strategies, underpinned by social dialogue.

THE DISASTER RISKSCAPE ACROSS THE PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES: KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

The Disaster Riskscape across the Pacific Small Island Developing States: Key Takeaways for Stakeholders report presented a comprehensive analysis of the sub-region’s “riskscape” to inform policy actions. Its overall message was that disaster risks were converging with critical socio-economic vulnerabilities, environmental degradation and climate change, to make the Pacific SIDS a disaster hotspot.

ONLINE CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT PORT DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE MARITIME CONNECTIVITY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

ESCAP aimed to strengthen sustainable transport development and enhance sustainable maritime connectivity to sustainably support the global supply chain in both normal and disruptive conditions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshop, which took place on 18 December 2020 in Bangkok, had the following objectives: (i) to discuss sustainable and resilient port development in relation to sustainable maritime connectivity; (ii) to share decarbonized shipping policies in the Asia-Pacific region; and (iii) to review regional and national strategies for sustainable and resilient port development and decarbonized shipping in Asia and the Pacific.
The Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific initiated by ESCAP came into effect on 21 February 2021. The Agreement was the first multilateral agreement on cross-border paperless trade under the United Nations framework. It covered the national trade facilitation policy framework and a favourable domestic legal environment, cross-border paperless trade facilitation and the development of a single window system.

In October 2020, ESCAP member States acknowledged the centrality of social protection to achieving inclusive and sustainable development and endorsed the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific. The Plan served as a guiding document for ESCAP member States to agree on a regional shared vision, strategy and platform on social protection.

In October 2020, ESCAP member States acknowledged the centrality of social protection to achieving inclusive and sustainable development and endorsed the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific. The Plan served as a guiding document for ESCAP member States to agree on a regional shared vision, strategy and platform on social protection.
In 2021, ESCAP developed a new tool, the SDG National Tracker, to allow for SDG progress assessment at the national level. The tracker enables countries to produce their own SDG progress assessment dashboards using their own data, indicators and targets. In collaboration with the National Statistical and Resident Coordinator’s Offices, at the time the tracker was being implemented in seven countries: Brunei Darussalam, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nauru, Philippines, Samoa and Tonga.

**WORKSHOP ON INNOVATIVE CLIMATE FINANCING INSTRUMENTS: SUPPORTING POST COVID-19 PANDEMIC RECOVERY IN ASIA-PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

As part of its Financing for Development programme and in cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, ESCAP conducted a workshop that aimed to enhance the capacity of key stakeholders to understand the various types of innovative climate finance instruments and how to mobilize such resources. The key outcomes of the workshop were shared at the Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers’ Meeting in July 2021 and the Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in November 2021.

**CATALYSING WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME**

The Catalysing Women’s Entrepreneurship Programme was launched in 2019 in six countries including Fiji and Samoa. On 21 January 2021, ESCAP held the training event Training of Trainers: Enhancing the capacities of women entrepreneurs in Samoa on using ICT tools in their business. It aimed to strengthen the capacities of Samoa Business Hub trainers in providing training support to women entrepreneurs on using digital tools in financial management. From 6 to 16 April 2021, ESCAP also conducted a community workshop on ICT tools for financial management for women entrepreneurs in Savaii, Samoa.
The Fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Bangkok and online from 14 to 17 December 2021, adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific. In the Ministerial Declaration, ministers highlighted themes of common interest for member States to promote sustainable transport development, adopted the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026) and endorsed the Transport Research and Education Network Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026).

Pathways to Adaptation and Resilience in the Pacific took a forward analysis of the Asia Pacific Disaster Report 2021 and showcased how the subregion was being affected at the time by various risk parameters. It also identified where new hotspots of exposure and vulnerability to climate-induced, cascading multi-hazard scenarios were being created. The report revealed that every increment of a degree between 1.5°C and 2°C translated into increased risks of tropical cyclones in the Pacific SIDS.

The Sixth Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was co-hosted with the PIFS from 6 to 7 April under the theme “Reflections on SDGs in the Pacific amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and pathways towards the full
implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels and achieving the 2050 Strategy. Held in hybrid mode with more than 164 participants attending in person (Suva, Fiji) and online, the forum provided an inclusive and unique platform for Pacific member States to share perspectives and learn from each other about their common priorities and approaches to address COVID-19 and the climate crisis.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON BUILDING A MORE RESILIENT FUTURE WITH INCLUSIVE CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

Following the successful outcome of the Second Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok and online from 16 to 19 November 2021, the resolution:

- Endorsed the Ministerial Declaration on Building a More Resilient Future with Inclusive Civil Registration and Vital Statistics; and
- Emphasized the urgent need to improve civil registration and vital statistics systems for sustainable and inclusive development in the region.

ASIA-PACIFIC DIGITAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE 2022: SHAPING OUR COMMON FUTURE AND ASIA-PACIFIC DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FORUM

Through resolution 78/1 of May 2022, ESCAP members and associate members committed to strengthening digital cooperation at all levels, including the ministerial level, in closing the digital connectivity divide, ensuring digital skills training strengthening digital connectivity.

The groundbreaking Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023-2032 features a novel gender-responsive life cycle approach to disability inclusion in the region. It was adopted at the conclusion of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, which was convened by ESCAP and hosted by the Government of Indonesia to review the progress made in the past 10 years, share good practices and forge consensus on new strategic directions.

In cooperation with Fiji’s Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, ESCAP conducted the National Policies for Sustainable Maritime and Port Connectivity for Resilient and Efficient Supply Chains workshop in Suva, Fiji on 8 December 2022. The workshop, which targeted Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, focused on the economic, social and environmental aspects of maritime connectivity.
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON PROTECTING OUR PLANET THROUGH REGIONAL COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The Ministerial Declaration on Protecting Our Planet through Regional Cooperation and Solidarity in Asia and the Pacific was endorsed at the seventh session of the Committee on Environment and Development convened by ESCAP. The declaration included a regional action programme on air pollution to build momentum for stronger science-based and policy-oriented cooperation to improve air quality management, including through better air quality standards, open data sharing, exchange of best practices and capacity building.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JAKARTA MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON SPACE APPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

ESCAP and the Government of Indonesia jointly conducted the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific on 26 October 2022 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Ministerial Declaration aimed to continue to provide technical assistance, policy analysis and capacity-development to members and associate members on space applications and geospatial data and information while promoting knowledge-sharing among them.

2023 ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE MARITIME CONNECTIVITY

The 2023 Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Sustainable Maritime Connectivity was held in Bangkok and online from 30 to 31 May 2023. Attended by 78 participants, the Forum brought together experts from member countries and relevant organizations to engage on a wider array of issues relevant for strengthening and enhancing maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific.
Recognizing the importance of digital cooperation at the regional level, ESCAP members and associate members finalized a draft action plan for the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway for 2022–2026. The plan set forth a blueprint of regional cooperative actions to strengthen digital cooperation and capacities and was endorsed by the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation at its fourth session, held from 30 August to 1 September 2022.
The ESCAP secretariat supports inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in the region by generating action-oriented knowledge, and by providing technical assistance and capacity-building services in support of national development objectives, regional agreements and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.