

Statement to the Seventy-ninth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

15 to 19 May 2023

Accelerating climate action in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Successive UN reports have raised significant concerns about the level of ambition in climate change commitments across the Asia Pacific region.

Some have noted that, without concerted action, countries across the region will not achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Others have highlighted that the region is regressing against the climate-related Sustainable Development Goals.

At the same time, the adverse impacts of climate change have only worsened, to the detriment of the region's sustainable development.

As the summary report for this 79th session of the Commission has noted, nowhere is the need for greater ambition to respond to climate change more urgent than in Asia and the Pacific.

Within this troubling, broader context, a lack of attention to the human mobility dimensions of climate and environmental change stands out as a critical gap.

For example, of the total 156 parties that submitted revised or updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the UNFCCC in 2020-2022, 61 (39%) included some reference to human mobility (including migration, displacement or planned relocation).

But of those, only 13 were from South-East Asia, South Asia, or the Pacific, and only 7 fully addressed one of the dimensions of human mobility or included concrete measures to address it.

Yet, just as the Asia Pacific region is amongst the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, it also experiences more climate-related human mobility than any other region.

For example, a total of 225.3 million internal displacements were reported in Asia and the Pacific during the period 2010–2021, which is around 78% of the global total for this period.

As we discuss the need to accelerate climate action across the region, we must therefore reflect on its human impacts, including on human mobility. But we should also consider the important role that migrants' skills and expertise may play in helping us transition to a green economy.

We must therefore do more to integrate human mobility considerations in national plans and frameworks, such as National Adaptation Plans, and promote greater attention to the issue at the global level, in particular in annual COP discussions.

Thank you.