Seventh South and South-West Asia Subregional Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals

'Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises:
The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions'

10-12 October 2023, Kathmandu, Nepal

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Seventh South and South-West Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals was held in Kathmandu, Nepal from 10-12 October 2023. The Forum was co-hosted by the Government of Nepal, in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator in Nepal and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The forum was attended by nine member States from South and South-West Asia subregion comprising approximately 150 participants representing governments, civil society the private sector, academia, think tanks, international and regional organizations, and other stakeholders.

The Forum served as a subregional preparatory meeting for the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) 2024, which will in turn inform the annual High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF) 2024 to be held in New York. The subregional forum is a collaborative platform for multi-stakeholders to assess progress and challenges faced in delivering outcomes for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to highlight national and subregional priorities and issues, sharing of good practices and to collaboratively seek solutions. In alignment with the thematic SDGs which will be the focus of the 2024 APFSD and HLPF, the Forum reviewed progress on the Goals: 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 13 (climate action), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and 17 (partnerships for the Goals).

Outcomes of the Forum will shape ESCAP's upcoming initiatives aimed at delivering technical support to its member States.

SDG implementation in South and South-West Asia

South and South-West Asia is currently not on track to achieve any of the 17 Goals, and has regressed on Goal 13 (climate action) and 14 (life below water). The SDG Summit held during the UN General Assembly in September 2023 underscored the urgency for bold, ambitious, accelerated and transformative actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

During the Forum, member States (except Afghanistan) reported progress in the implementation of the Goals and shared good practices. Bangladesh has adopted a whole-of-society approach, and prepared a financial strategy, monitoring and evaluation framework and national action plan for implementation of the Goals. Bhutan has taken a long-term approach by focusing on sustainability and resilience, and developed flagship programs to address cross-cutting issues of national concern. India has developed a model for SDG localization that consists of creating institutional ownership; driving collaborative competition among its states; building capacities at various subnational levels; and adopting a whole-of-society approach. The Islamic Republic of Iran has established a single window for the delivery of welfare services, provided a food basket for its population through subsidies, and strengthened research institutes on natural disasters. The Maldives has established a public ferry network to improve access to services, developed skills development, income and business support programmes, and commenced its online schooling system. Nepal has aligned the Goals with its Smooth Transition Strategy for graduation from Least Developed Country status, and developed tools on Goals implementation for parliamentarians and government officials at the subnational levels. Pakistan has revitalized its civil registration and vital statistics programme at the national level, launched a student ambassadors programme to promote the Goals, and developed a dashboard to address data gaps at various ministries. Sri Lanka has developed
policies on income redistribution and social protection to address poverty and inequality; and invested in data collection and multistakeholder collaboration to track the progress of Goals implementation. Türkiye has established specialized commissions and working groups consisting of representatives from the public and private sectors, civil society and academia to support Goals implementation.

Yet the progress towards implementation of various Goals, already slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, continues to be hampered by global geopolitical conflict and its impact on inflation, food security and energy. Another major challenge is the increased frequency and severity of natural disasters, particularly those caused by climate change, which has created adverse impacts on the agriculture sector, displacement of local communities and economic downturn. Other challenges include: resource gaps and insufficient development financing, also due to slow progress in domestic revenue collection and the suboptimal prioritization and use of available domestic resources; weak data collection systems and limited disaggregated data to measure progress towards the Goals; lack of political ownership; poor coordination among ministries and tiers of government; disparate administrative capacities at different levels of government; limited engagement of non-governmental stakeholders in the implementation of the Goals; the digital divide and ensuing inequalities in educational opportunities and income; and population ageing and its burden on health systems.

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Türkiye have presented two voluntary national reviews. In 2024, Nepal will be preparing for its third voluntary national review.

Collective national ownership crucial to realization of the 2030 Agenda

The centrality of a whole-of-society approach through multistakeholder engagement was emphasized through Forum proceedings. The State, the private sector, civil society, academia and think tanks, and the media were affirmed as essential partners in co-creating solutions for accelerating the implementation of all Goals. Participatory decision-making and trust-building among stakeholders were highlighted as critical for the creation and furtherance of institutions, mechanisms, processes, policies and activities essential for SDG implementation.

Participants highlighted the leading role of the State in the formulation and implementation of policies for sustainable development; and in creating an enabling environment and inclusive institutional mechanisms for multistakeholder engagement and coordination.

The private sector, with its financial resources, is crucial in narrowing funding gaps for the implementation of the Goals, including through corporate social responsibility projects and public private partnerships. Businesses should be co-opted to conduct responsible business and ensure that local communities and marginalized populations are not negatively affected by their economic activities, including through environment impact assessments. As they are at the forefront of research and development, their technologies could also be leveraged for use in Goals implementation.

Civil society organizations represent the voices of marginalized groups and those furthest behind in participatory decision-making processes and in providing feedback on the design and implementation of policies concerning these populations. The indispensable role of local
communities, including indigenous populations, in contributing grassroots knowledge and expertise for the effective localization of Goals implementation was stressed.

The role of academia and think tanks in generating evidence for improved policymaking and service delivery and in developing new technologies for implementation of the Goals was underscored. For example, the development of advanced remote sensing methodologies to obtain geological data on hazards were cited as an important contribution towards strengthened disaster resilience.

There is immense potential for the media, including non-traditional media, to effectively disseminate major policy information and timely hazard warnings to the public, especially local communities and marginalized populations, to facilitate their access to basic services and emergency support. Media reporting of good practices and lessons learned on the implementation of the Goals will also enable institutions to improve their performance and better adapt solutions for sustainable development.

**Critical cross-cutting actions to achieve the SDGs**

The Goals can only be implemented effectively with political will, good governance, and policy coherence through effective vertical and horizontal coordination.

Across all thematic areas, participants underscored that political will, coherence and continuity was essential for the realization of sustainable development, including peace, justice and social inclusion, as was the need for state institutions to be transparent and accountable for their performance.

The silo approach to policymaking and service delivery, specifically the lack of coordination between government entities and administrative levels, was highlighted as being prevalent and having led to duplications and inefficiencies across government programmes, including social service delivery, disaster management, and data collection. To this end, there is a need to foster increased synergies and collaborations vertically and horizontally for the harmonization of policies and service delivery mechanisms.

**Financing for SDG implementation can be met through resource mobilization from a diversity of stakeholders, efficient and impactful spending, and effective public debt management.**

Governments should reform tax systems and upgrade tax administration capacities to improve tax-to-GDP ratios, and promote more formal and less costly channels for the transfers of remittances. Partnerships with the private sector should be leveraged, including via foreign direct investment and corporate social responsibility projects, with proper regulation of business activity to protect the interests of local communities and marginalized groups. Innovative instruments such as green bonds, blue bonds and debt swaps, should be considered. Measures, by state and non-state actors, to improve transparency and oversight of public expenditures could lead to more effective spending. Allocation of public budgets, including military spending, should be reviewed and diverted for SDG implementation, as necessary. Results-based budgeting was recommended as an approach for effective resource allocation.

Countries in South and South-West Asia must engage with global financing mechanisms, given the latter’s role in scaling-up development financing. Vulnerable countries should seek debt
relief through international norms and principles. The need to restructure global financial institutions was raised, although it was acknowledged that the way forward in doing so was unclear. Participants also called for more South-South and triangular cooperation, and the use of global, regional and subregional forums to advocate for increased financing for the Goals.

SDG financing, including for climate action, should be gender-responsive and accessible to civil society organizations, local communities and other marginalized groups. To this end, there is a need to simplify and facilitate processes for financing, and to build the capacity of both governments and other stakeholders to effectively access such financing instruments.

Countries should strengthen frameworks, mechanisms and technical capacities for data collection, measurement, dissemination and analysis, to ensure the availability of quality, disaggregated data for participatory, evidenced-informed policymaking.

Data are required at all stages of the policy cycle, to inform the design, implementation and monitoring of SDG interventions. Such data should be accurate, complete, reliable, relevant, timely – and disaggregated by sex, age, disability and income, inter alia, to adequately reflect the development status of different groups. They should also be integrated from the local, sub-national and national levels to regional and global levels.

Participants called on governments to recognize and integrate data generated by non-State actors. The importance of sensitizing and strengthening the capacity of all stakeholders from a young age to appreciate the criticality of data and become contributors of data was also raised.

Measurement frameworks used for data assimilation need to be revisited, with new methods and metrics developed to meet the needs of sustainable development policymaking. A priority is extend the national accounts system by incorporating relevant indicators of sustainability, inclusiveness and well-being – beyond the standard GDP and allied indicators – in policymaking processes. Participants also called for better measurement of multidimensional poverty, including the need to develop a globally accepted methodology to this end.

Reach the furthest behind first and include vulnerable and marginalized groups as contributors to sustainable development.

Marginalized populations are most adversely affected by shocks, including those induced by climate change as well as political and socioeconomic developments. They also have the least access to food, basic services and productive resources that serve as assets to mitigate negative impacts of such events. Compromising the well-being of marginalized groups may in severe cases lead to the disruption of peace; conversely, when those furthest behind are co-opted as stakeholders of the sustainable development process, they provide valuable information and feedback that lead to strengthened policymaking and service delivery.

Regional, subregional and cross-border cooperation are essential in catalyzing progress towards the achievement of the Goals.

Participants acknowledged across the board that South and South-West Asia had longstanding political complexities that made cooperation and consensus building as a subregion challenging. Participants therefore called for governments and other stakeholders to co-create practical, solution-oriented ways of cooperation for the collective benefit of the subregion. On climate action specifically, participants underscored the need for neighbouring countries to institutionalize collaboration prior to the onset of climate events. Twinning programmes at
various levels of government were raised across the diverse thematic discussions as an effective means for peer learning, knowledge transfer and the co-generation of solutions.

In all sessions, sustained platforms for regional and subregional cooperation was cited as being critical for accelerating multistakeholder partnerships and cross-country collaborations, with participants expressing appreciation to ESCAP for its pivotal role in the shaping of common agendas, the building of networks and informal ties, and the sharing of country experiences in a subregion characterized by complex relations between member States. Participants called on ESCAP and other development partners to continue such support towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Goal-specific policy recommendations to accelerate SDG implementation**

**SDG 1: No Poverty**

- Extend social protection coverage throughout the lifecycle, particularly for marginalized groups. Ensure that social protection systems to provide adequate benefit levels, and to be shock-responsive, gender-responsive and disability-inclusive.

- Create more equitable access to basic services and improve the quality of such services, including through bridging quality gaps between public and private service provision.

- Provide more equitable access to productive resources. Increase productive job opportunities in the agrarian sectors, and facilitate the mobility of surplus labour from agriculture to industry and services

**SDG 2: Zero Hunger**

- Prioritize food sovereignty, taking into account local needs and recognizing indigenous skills and knowledge. Planning and implementation of transitions in the agriculture sector (e.g. from traditional to organic farming or from manual to mechanized farming) must be carried out through stakeholder consultations.

- Enhance investments in the agricultural sector, particularly for developing climate resilient technologies, by redirecting subsidies from traditional to sustainable and regenerative agriculture. Allocate more resources for investments in agricultural infrastructure, including transport and cold storage facilities. Improve investment facilitation measures, with the active participation of the private sector, giving due importance to the development of post-harvest infrastructure to reduce food loss.

- Raise agricultural productivity and strengthen climate resilience of the farm sector through infusion of adaptive technologies and sustainable farming practices. Develop measures to conserve water resources for agriculture and promote indigenous seed varieties. Implement strategies to preserve marine eco-systems for sustainability of fisheries resources.

- Build resilience against supply chain disruptions and strengthen market price stabilization policies, including through regional cooperation for cross-border trade in agricultural inputs and food products.

- Sustain support measures such as subsidies, minimum-price support and direct procurement for vulnerable and marginalized small-scale producers. Address distortions in
the agriculture value chains to ensure that farmers receive an appropriate share of the value of their produce. Promote institutional mechanisms to protect farmers and consumers, such as through farmer-producer organizations and cooperatives.

- Adopt complementary policies to improve health systems, social protection, employment opportunities, skill development, access to finance and technologies for dependents of the farm sector, especially for small-scale farmers and vulnerable groups.

**SDG 13: Climate Action**

- Make long-term policies on sustainable and inclusive urbanization, including proper land-use planning. Sensitize communities to contribute to climate action.

- Utilize green technology for climate mitigation, including using new generation solar panels and better batteries and scaling up indigenous technologies. Leverage on regional cooperation to learn and adapt mitigation technologies from other countries.

- Adopt sustainable lifestyle solutions for climate mitigation, such as using evolutionary plant breeding methods, vertical agriculture to decrease water use, and indigenous methods for efficient groundwater use.

- Strengthen early warning systems, coupled with inclusive contingency plans. Develop technical capacities to predict potential hazards, understand people's needs during hazards and prepare for them, and consider climate migration and its consequences. Consider using the ESCAP's Risk and Resilience Portal and its projections for data-informed planning. Ensure access to timely information (including forecasts from international sources) for all its populations.

- The global community should provide countries most affected by climate shocks with enhanced access to the Loss and Damage Fund, and increase transparency and accountability within the climate financing mechanisms of international financial institutions.

- International and regional organizations should provide technical assistance and capacity building support to countries, including civil society and communities, in accessing climate finance and in obtaining better data on climate financing gaps.

**SDG 16: Peace, Justice And Strong Institutions**

- Invest in positive peace by addressing the root causes of conflict while resolving ongoing ones. Engage in dialogues of civilizations to cultivate mutual understanding among actors from diverse backgrounds.

- Complement the formal justice system with informal systems such as community mediation and justice initiatives, and create mechanisms to align both systems.

- Strengthen the capacities of the judiciary to deliver justice in a timely and non-discriminatory manner. Strengthen the capacities of law enforcement systems to uproot corruption and protect the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

- Enact anti-discriminatory laws to avoid conflict and promote diversity. Institutionalize legal aid for the poor as an integral part of the country’s basic social services.
- Ensure that state institutions have clear mandates, institutional capacity, and adequate infrastructure and financing. Uphold meritocracy as a principle for human resource management; set checks and balances to prevent the individual abuse of power; ensure the division and balance of power within and between institutions; and put in place a fair system of reward and punishment for performance management.

**SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals**

- Explore opportunities to form new value chains to improve and sustain trade growth.
- Invest in trade facilitation measures to reduce high trade costs, in particular, the adoption of paperless trade systems. Establish a modern customs administration, streamline and improve the transparency of trade processes and procedures, and provide improved services and information for private sector traders and investors.
- Improve the regulatory environment for promoting digital trade, including via reforms towards simpler, harmonized regulations, to reduce the high costs of participation for small and medium enterprises.
- Adopt support measures to enhance access to finance for small businesses and facilitate their compliance with standards.
- Facilitate long-term institutional build-up to bolster the science, technology and innovation capacities of countries. Broaden spheres of collaboration by promoting cross-border linkages between institutions and industries engaged in research and development.
- Invest in digital infrastructure, including measures to address the uneven access to digital technologies and to bridge gaps in digital connectivity. Enhance digital literacy and skills.
- Formulate policies to leverage the positive impacts of artificial intelligence and automation on jobs and livelihoods while minimizing possible adverse socio-economic effects.
- Capitalize on digital solutions for effective programme delivery and data management across all sectors.
INAUGURAL SESSION

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, UN Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary [video message]

Ms. Alisjahbana expressed her sincere appreciation to the National Planning Commission of the Government of Nepal for co-hosting the Forum with ESCAP, in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce. She underscored that, for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to be realized, accelerated efforts are needed to tackle the current polycrisis facing the world, including South and South-West Asia. She listed six transformative entry points with catalyzing and multiplier effects for the achievement of the Goals, specifically: (1) food systems; (2) energy access and affordability; (3) digital connectivity; (4) education; (5) jobs and social protection; and (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. She noted the particular relevance of the Goals to South and South-West Asia, where more than 170 million people were living with less than $1.90 a day and where 330 million people were undernourished even before the COVID-19 pandemic, and emphasized the criticality of nexus actions to be taken across all the Goals. Finally, she affirmed ESCAP's unwavering support to promoting regional collaboration and supporting member States in their pursuit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Ms. Hanaa Singer, UN Resident Coordinator in Nepal

Ms. Singer shared that only 15 per cent of the 140 global SDG targets are on track, around half being moderately or severely off track, and 37 per cent either having seen no progress or regressed below the 2015 baseline. Developing countries and the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people will end up bearing the brunt of the global community’s collective failure to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To achieve the SDGs will require unprecedented effort by individual Governments, a renewed sense of common purpose across the international community and a global alliance for SDGs-related action across business, civil society, science, young people, local authorities and more. SDG implementation can be accelerated through legislative reforms, spending decisions, and their effective implementations and through cooperation and peer exchange among countries that are present in this Forum. Progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will depend on how governments align their policies and synchronize their spending decisions with the Goals, and how the diverse stakeholders work together for the SDGs. Governments down to the local and sub-national governments must therefore be empowered and supported to bring SDG implementation to the ground level and to the people.

Mr. Chandra Dhakal, President, Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Mr. Dhakal noted that the Forum marks a significant step towards achieving the SDGs, and emphasized the vital role of the private sector in driving sustainable development through innovation, investment, and collaboration. He highlighted that businesses are not just sources of funding, but contribute to economic growth, job creation and technology advancements essential for the achievement of the SDGs. He observed that the SDGs recognize the private sector's role in various areas, such as job creation, healthcare, education, gender equality, infrastructure, climate change and environmental conservation. Affirming the importance of cooperation between the public and private sectors, and of international collaboration, he called for the creation of business-friendly policies that strike a balance between incentives and regulations, ensuring transparency and accountability. He also urged businesses to foster
partnerships and adopt sustainable practices. Finally, he affirmed the Federation’s deep commitment to the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

Ms. Irosha Cooray, Director, SAARC Secretariat

Ms. Cooray noted that South and South-West Asia is not on track to achieving any of the 17 Goals. While countries of the subregion have made progress on Goal 1, more government expenditure on education, health and social protection is required, as is the engagement of local stakeholders. Regarding SDG 2, South Asia is the most food insecure subregion in Asia and the Pacific. On SDG13, South and South-West Asia is one of the world’s most disaster-impacted subregions. Latest projections presented by ESCAP at the G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group showed that the subregion will contend with multiple climate hazards at the same time with at least 50 per cent of the population exposed under the 1.5-degree and 2-degree scenarios; the subregion also has the lowest coverage of self-reported multi-hazard early warning systems in Asia and the Pacific. Regarding SDG 16, over 50 million children under the age of five in South Asia, or 1 in 4, were not registered in 2021, depriving them of the right to an identity and access to social services. The SAARC Secretariat has been committed to the achievement of SDG 17, particularly in the development of partnerships. She affirmed the close collaboration between ESCAP and the SAARC Secretariat on issues core to the subregion’s development, including connectivity, trade and supply chains, LDC graduation, disaster risk management and sustainable energy transition, among others. She also highlighted SAARC’s commitment to gender equality, a core tenant of its Social Charter, and shared that the organization has partnered ESCAP to empower women-led micro, small and medium enterprises through capacity building programmes on using e-commerce and digital marketing for business promotion.

Mr. Daya Sagar Shrestha, Executive Director, National Campaign for Sustainable Development Nepal and Focal Point for Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism

Mr. Shrestha informed the plenary that civil society organizations organized the South Asia People’s Forum on Sustainable Development on 28 September 2023, in collaboration with the ESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia. He noted that the subregion is struggling with unprecedented challenges including the Ukraine war, climate emergency, COVID-19 recovery and the mounting cost of living. He noted that the South Asia region is lagging behind in almost all development indicators, and opined that casteism, classism, sexism, racism formed the systemic barriers that impeded the subregion’s development. He highlighted that a human rights-based approach and developmental justice are instrumental in addressing the abovementioned unprecedented crises. He appealed to the plenary to deep dive and discuss the systemic barriers and structural causes of the subregion’s challenges and come up with sustainable, progressive and people-centric solutions. He also expressed his desire for meaningful participation of all civil society major groups in entire development processes.

Hon. Dr. Ram Kumar Phuyal, Member, National Planning Commission, Nepal

Dr. Phuyal shared that the Government of Nepal is fully committed to the achievement of the SDGs and have mainstreamed and localized the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in all three tiers of government. The private sector, cooperatives, civil society and development partners have also played important roles in SDG implementation, including in the mobilization of both internal and external resources. SDG implementation is regularly monitored by oversight agencies including the parliamentary committee and the Office of the Auditor-
General. Nepal’s current 15th Plan has incorporated 10 national goals, each contributing towards SDG progress. Even amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the country has met the criteria for the third time for graduation from Least Developed Country status and is set to graduate by 2026; the country has made notable progress in the social sectors but could not achieve significant progress in the economic sector. Nepal is formulating its 16th Plan, which will be aligned with the SDGs, the Doha Programme of Action and the Sustainable Transition Strategy. The Government of Nepal has identified key areas with potential to catalyze economic transformation, leading towards SDG attainment and irreversible graduation from LDC status, including enhancing production and productivity within the economy, generating skilled human capital, and creating productive employment opportunities. Finally, Dr. Phuyal highlighted the need to reinvigorate global cooperation to deal with current challenges as well as new risks and threats down the line in the implementation of the Goals.
SESSION 1: SDG BREAKTHROUGHS AND CHALLENGES

In this session, government representatives of the nine participating countries of South and South-West Asia made presentations on national progress in SDG implementation. The presenters shared salient breakthrough experiences and lessons, challenges and the way forward in accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in their respective countries.

Mr. Mohammad Masud Rana Chowdhury, Joint Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh

Bangladesh’s commitment to the achievement of the SDGs is evident from steps taken for the alignment of the SDGs with its national development priorities, and from measures adopted for SDG localization through awareness generation and institutional empowerment at the subnational levels. Policy measures taken in this regard include a comprehensive mapping of SDG targets with the development objective set out under the ongoing 8th Five Year Plan (2020-25), analysis of data gaps, preparation of the national SDG financing strategy, and the design of a monitoring and evaluation framework for tracking progress. A whole-of-society approach, engaging all relevant stakeholders, has been adopted across all aspects of SDG implementation, including in preparations for the Voluntary National Reviews in 2017 and 2020, preparation of its SDG progress reports and in conducting implementation reviews. As a result, Bangladesh has been able to improve its global SDG ranking and meet key milestones in its graduation from LDC status.

A main challenge faced is that of adverse impacts of climate change and increasing frequency of extreme weather events. Depending on the extent of sea level rise in the coming decades, an estimated 15 to 30 million people could be internally displaced from coastal areas. To address the needs of climate action, the government has prepared several strategic plans and laws to mainstream adaptation and mitigation programmes, such as the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, with a long-term development vision for achieving safe, climate resilient and prosperous delta regions. The Climate Fiscal Framework of the country provides the principles and tools for climate action related fiscal policymaking, helping to address both demand and supply side issues of climate financing. Bangladesh has also prepared ‘The Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan’ in alignment with the Paris Agreement, and the country has submitted an updated Nationally Determined Contributions to the UNFCCC.

Mr. Khedrup Dorji, Planning Officer, Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Bhutan

Bhutan has been an early-mover country within the Asia-Pacific region for SDG localization, having participated in the SDG Open Working Group from as early as 2013; organized SDG sensitization workshops at the national and local levels from 2015; and integrated the SDGs into its five-year plan framework. More than 50 per cent of SDG indicators have been fully or partially adopted by the country. Bhutan is making progress on 58 per cent of indicators for which sufficient data is available, with significant progress in Goals 1 (no poverty), 3 (good health and well-being), 6 (clean water and sanitation) and 7 (affordable and clean energy); regressing trends have been shown for Goals 8 (decent work and economic growth), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and 13 (climate action). Success factors for SDG implementation include the integration of the SDGs into national planning frameworks for greater national ownership and more effective implementation and monitoring of the Goals; dedicated flagship programmes to address cross-cutting national issues; the undertaking of a long-term approach...
to development, with a focus on sustainability and resilience; and the engagement of all stakeholders through participatory principles and whole-of-government approaches.

Progress towards the Goals have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a slowdown in the economy, particularly the tourism, construction and manufacturing industries; displaced large numbers of workers, including daily wage earners whose livelihoods were disrupted due to lockdowns; and a disparity in educational progress of children due to the digital divide and gaps in access to online learning. Other challenges faced by the country include the lack of robust real-time data for SDG monitoring; limited financial and technological resources; the twin demographic challenge of low fertility and outmigration of productive citizens; potential implications of graduation from LDC status; and vulnerabilities stemming from climate change and economic shocks given its heavy dependence on the hydropower sector. Moving forward, the Government seeks to realize the 2030 Agenda through reform and transformation of the public sector; integration and prioritization of the Goals into its 13th Five-Year Plan; further localization and sustained awareness raising of the SDGs; and enhanced partnerships and resource mobilization from the private sector, other countries, international organizations and civil society organizations. The Government will also continue to invest in education, health, and other social sectors to ensure that all citizens have access to quality services, while seeking to diversify the economy for more job creation and to invest in measures to build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Mr. Amit Verma, Director, NITI Aayog, NITI Bhawan, New Delhi, India

India has been working towards localization of the SDGs in alignment with the leave no one behind principle. The country has developed a model for SDG localization that consists of four pillars: creating institutional ownership with Niti Aayog as the anchor institution; driving collaborative competition among states with regard to SDG implementation; building capacities at various subnational levels, including through the sharing of best practices, monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge management; and adopting a whole-of-society approach that engages government and other stakeholders as partners in SDG localization and implementation. India has been using different monitoring methods to ensure the progress of SDG localization, including through producing regular progress reports, conducting voluntary national reviews, and the development of SDG data dashboards.

Examples of India’s SDG achievements include the reduction of its poverty headcount ratio from 25 per cent to 15 per cent, and the exit of 135 million people from multidimensional poverty between 2015-16 and 2019-21, with a decrease in the intensity of poverty from 47 per cent to 44 per cent. India is also working on various fronts to combatting climate change, among other initiatives. The capacity of installed solar energy in India has grown by 2300 per cent from 2014 (2.83 GW) to 2023 (66.78 GW), while tariffs for green energy have decreased by 62 per cent; the country is also leading the International Solar Alliance. Finally, in its contribution towards enhanced partnership for the SDGs, the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme covers around 160 partner countries from Asia, Africa, East Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific and Small Island Countries.

Mr. Masoud Mizaei, Head, Centre for Public and International Relations, Plan and Budget Organization, Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran is in the process of finalizing its Seventh Five-Year Development Plan Bill (2024-2028), which focuses on economic stability, expanding the purchasing power of its population, eliminating poverty, popularizing the economy, and creating employment.
New social security and social support policies covered under this plan include tax exemption for households below the poverty line and the establishment of a single window for welfare services. Other priorities include: improving the financial, performance and transparency of directors; the development of e-government systems; and digital economy growth. The Islamic Republic of Iran has also created a 10-year roadmap on food security and nutrition to eradicate hunger and achieve food security for its people.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been severely affected by climate change. Some initiatives taken by the country towards fighting the impacts of climate change include: the preparation of its national disaster risk reduction plan; the drafting and editing of its atlas of natural hazards; and participation in regional collaborations such as the hosting of ESCAP’s Asia-Pacific Center for the Development of Disaster Information Management in the country. The Islamic Republic of Iran is working towards Goal 17 (partnership for the Goals) through various actions, such as developing international economic interactions with an emphasis on regional and subregional relations with its neighbouring countries.

Mr. Aman Khaleel, Senior Planning Analyst, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives

Maldives, as a low-lying country with 1190 small islands, mainly relies on tourism, fisheries and agriculture as its main sources of income. In recent years, Maldives has made significant improvements to its health-related indicators, such as decreases in maternal, neonatal and child mortality rates. Life expectancy has risen to around 79 years, and the household size has decreased from 5.2 to 4.7. In the education sector, the government launched online education programs in 2022. There has also been an improvement in the quality of life for vulnerable populations through schemes such as income and business support programs and enhanced national access and connectivity via an improved public ferry network. Women's involvement in decision-making has improved, with 33 per cent of local council seats allocated to women.

Challenges remain for Maldives. The COVID-19 pandemic led to many challenges, including fiscal deficit and increased debt vulnerability. In terms of social vulnerabilities, Maldives is moving towards an ageing population and needs to make appropriate plans moving forward. Substance abuse remains a challenge for the country. In terms of climate mitigation, Maldives has increased its renewable energy capacity from 1.5 MW to 17.5 MW. However, climate change has severely affected the country; for example, 90 per cent of islands report flooding annually. Despite existing challenges, Maldives will continue to work toward achieving its development goals by creating a long-term sustainable development vision, building economic resilience and economic diversification, and strengthening partnerships and international cooperation.

Mr. Mahesh Bhattarai, Joint Secretary/Head of Economic Management Division, National Planning Commission (NPC), Nepal

Nepal has been mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into its national policies, plans and strategies; the country has developed SDG-specific processes and resources, including SDG-based project selection and prioritization, SDG-based planning and M&E guidelines for the national, provincial and local levels, and SDG handbooks for parliamentarians. Based on preliminary findings from Nepal’s SDG mid-point progress review, 34 per cent of its 2022 targets were met, while stagnating and regressing trends were shown for 20 per cent of its indicators. Current priorities of the Government include: the integration of the SDGs into its 16th Plan; acceleration of SDG implementation; effective localization of
the SDGs at the subnational levels; aligning the SDGs with its Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC Graduation; and strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of SDG implementation, particularly through robust data collection and the reporting of SDG indicators. The Government also highlighted its priorities in promoting good governance in political, administrative and judicial systems, and in addressing inequality exacerbated by the digital divide and social security gaps, including through strengthening its public health infrastructure and boosting micro, small and medium enterprises.

Challenges in SDG implementation include: limited financial, human capital and technical capacities; resource gaps amidst the global economic slowdown and geopolitical crises; coordination difficulties among its three tiers of government; and concerns regarding data availability, disaggregation, quality and reliability. To accelerate progress towards the SDGs, the Government aims to further engage non-state actors throughout the policy cycle; better define the roles and responsibilities for SDG reporting among government entities; and ensure greater data availability and wider consultation for its next voluntary national review. The Government also requested for technical support in enhancing the capacity of its government officials and other stakeholders, including on digital governance and on quality enhancement for its micro, small and medium enterprises. It further called for increased peer exchanges at the regional and subregional levels; cooperation for sustainable development financing and resource mobilization for SDG implementation; and the leveraging of existing cooperation frameworks for comprehensive subregional and regional partnerships, including via the South Asian Free Trade Area and the Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement.

**Ms. Mahjabeen Cheema, Deputy Chief, SDGs Section, Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Pakistan**

Pakistan has made significant progress in aligning development strategies at the federal and provincial levels with the SDGs. The institutional architecture for SDG implementation in the country includes parliamentary task forces on SDGs and a Senate Standing Committee which monitors progress. Focal persons have been appointed at the provincial levels, along with various thematic core committees and working groups. The National Economic Council has been enabled with a Sub-Committee on the SDGs. Under the National SDGs Framework, various Goals have been categorized into enablers, outputs and those underpinning sustainability, providing an analytical basis to prioritize and localize SDGs in the country.

Efforts are being made to bridge data gaps, progressively improving the reporting and monitoring of SDG implementation. The country has developed an SDGs dashboard; revitalized its civil registration and vital statistics programme at the national level; improved its data collection systems; and created a central information repository. Challenges in SDG implementation that the country is try to overcome include: lack of awareness about the SDGs at provincial and local levels; inadequacies in factoring the interlinkages among various Goals and targets, leading to the duplication of efforts; and difficulties in inter-departmental coordination for adopting a whole-of-government approach to the SDGs.

**Ms. Deepa Nilanthi Liyange, Additional Secretary to the Prime Minister, Prime Minister’s Office, Sri Lanka**

As per national assessments, Sri Lanka is found to be on track for making progress on seven Goals, most notably on Goals 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being) and 4 (quality education). The country is currently regressing on Goals 1 (no poverty) and 15 (life on land) and is stagnating on the remaining eight Goals. Overall, Sri Lanka is on track for achieving
more than one-third (37.9 per cent) of the SDG targets. Limited availability of accurate and
timely data has been a severe constraint in SDG planning; the country is currently investing in
data collection and multistakeholder collaboration to better track the progress of SDG
implementation. Efforts are also being taken to overcome the disruptions to SDG
implementation caused by the domestic financial crisis and high inflation rates which hit the
country in 2022, following the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sri Lanka places vital importance on the development of a digital economy, and has initiated a
Data Protection Act. The National Cyber Security Policy and the National Digital Development
Policy are aiding the development of its digital public infrastructure, thereby helping to
accelerate the digital transformation of its e-governance system for ensuring citizen-centric
governance and service delivery. The country is making progress with policy measures to align
the SDGs with national development priorities and to generate more awareness about sustainable development among various domestic stakeholders at the national and local levels. Among various SDG priorities of Sri Lanka are policies for income redistribution and social protection to address poverty and inequality; measures for economic growth and job creation; the promotion of technology and innovation; infrastructure development; environmental sustainability; and mobilization of financing for the Goals.

Mr. Yusuf Esidir, Expert, Strategy and Budget Office of Presidency of Türkiye, Türkiye

Türkiye is on track to achieving Goals 1 (no poverty) and 4 (quality education), moderately
improving on Goals 3 (good health and well-being), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7
(affordable and clean energy), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and 12 (responsible
cConsumption and production), and stagnating on the rest of the Goals. The country is on track
to achieving almost 50 per cent of its SDG targets, but has made limited progress for close to
25 per cent of the other targets and worsening progress for the rest. Challenges include limited
financial resources and the lack of real-time disaggregated data.

The importance of undertaking transformative actions towards SDG implementation was
emphasized. To overcome major challenges, the Government has launched its 12th
Development Plan for 2024 to 2028; established the National Sustainable Development
Coordination Board and 87 specialized commissions and working groups; and mobilized more
than 8000 people from the public and private sectors, civil society and academia to jointly
contribute to SDG implementation. For enhanced monitoring and evaluation of progress
towards the SDGs, it has undertaken interactive SDG mapping, voluntary local reviews and is
planning its third voluntary national review in the upcoming years. The importance of political
ownership, multistakeholder collaborations, local priorities, and institutional and financial
capacity were cited as being core to the achievement of the SDGs.
The following sessions focussed on reviewing subregional progress on the five thematic SDG focuses of the 2024 High-Level Political Forum and the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, specifically, Goals 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 13 (climate action), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and 17 (partnership for the Goals).

Each session commenced with a presentation that reviewed subregional progress on the implementation of the specific Goal in question, followed by breakout discussions on major thematic areas concerning the Goal. Thereafter, each breakout group reported discussion outcomes at plenary, and a wider dialogue was facilitated.

**SDG 1: NO POVERTY**

Chair: Mr. Mohammad Masud Rana Chowdhury, Joint Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh

Presentation

Mr. Ken Chamuva Shawa, Senior Economist, Head, Regional Economic and Social Analysis Unit, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

The presentation provided an overview of how South and South-West Asia countries are faring on the five targets under Goal 1. While the subregion has made extensive progress in alleviating poverty, with Bhutan, Maldives and Türkiye having eradicated extreme poverty, between 5 to 12 per cent of the populations in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan still live below the poverty line of $2.15. Among all five ESCAP subregions, South and South-West Asia records the highest proportion of multidimensional poverty among its population as well as the highest numbers of deaths, missing persons and directly-affected persons attributed to disasters. Large gaps in the access to basic services persist between groups furthest ahead and those furthest behind within countries, with the exception of Maldives and Türkiye. The extension of social protection coverage remains a challenge. Expenditure on social protection as a percentage of GDP, excluding health coverage, range from 0.7 per cent to more than 10 per cent among South and South-West Asian countries; the ESCAP Social Protection Simulator estimates that the investment needed for the provision of comprehensive social protection ranges from 2.6 per cent of GDP in Bhutan to 5.1 per cent in Sri Lanka.

**Breakout Discussion 1: Policy Coherence and Financing**

Chair: Dr. Dushni Weerakoon, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

The importance of policy coherence and adequate financing for poverty alleviation was emphasized. Main challenges raised by participants include: the lack of convergence between global policies and those at the national, subnational and local levels; gaps in policy implementation and the silo approach of government entities and stakeholders in alleviating poverty. To achieve policy coherence and adequate financing for poverty alleviation, strong political will is required, including for the expansion of data collection and the development of relevant indicators. The need for government institutions to be accountable for their performance was also emphasized; a suggestion included the need to report to parliament in situations where set targets were not met. Financial instruments such as green bonds, blue
bonds and debt swaps were raised as innovative means for mobilizing resources, while results-based budgeting was recommended as an approach to support effective resource allocation.

**Breakout Discussion 2: Tackling Multidimensional Poverty**

Chair: Ms. Pramila Acharya Rijal, President, South Asian Women Development Forum, Kathmandu, Nepal.

There is a need to better measure multidimensional poverty so as to gain clarity on the levels and nature of deprivations faced by different vulnerable groups; the importance of developing a globally accepted methodology to measure multidimensional poverty was also raised. Additionally, to better design and prioritize interventions for poverty alleviation, it is also essential to understand the interlinkages between the different dimensions of poverty (e.g., the impacts of poor nutritional intake on educational attainment, and of lack of access to clean water and sanitation on health), as well as the different ways in which multidimension poverty affects various population groups. Participants further underscored the criticality of creating more equitable access to basic services and of improving the quality of such services, including through bridging quality gaps between public and private service provision. They also called for governments to provide more equitable access to productive resources; increase productive job opportunities in the agrarian sectors; and facilitate the mobility of surplus labour from agriculture to industry and services, given that multidimensional poverty is highly concentrated in rural areas.

**Breakout Discussion 3: Social Protection**

Chair: Mr. Tshering Drakpa, Programme Officer, Cabinet Affairs Division, Office of Cabinet Affairs and Strategic Coordination, Bhutan

As social protection coverage in South and South-West Asia is lower than that of other subregions, the need for governments to extend coverage throughout the lifecycle was emphasized, particularly for marginalized groups. Participants called for social protection systems to provide adequate benefit levels, and to be shock-responsive, gender-responsive and disability-inclusive. Limited social protection coverage was attributed to limited national resources, which have been further constrained by regressive tax and subsidy regimes, debt crises and loan conditionalities, as well as the mismanagement of social protection schemes. For the development of comprehensive social protection systems, participants underscored the importance of whole-of-society approaches, including via partnerships with civil society organizations, private sector corporate social responsibility projects, and the use of evidence-based interventions stemming from academic research. An example was raised of community centres which disseminated information on social protection schemes and housed training initiatives. Given that social protection schemes are often run by several ministries in South and South-West Asia, inter-ministerial coordination is also crucial for streamlining service delivery and ensuring comprehensive social protection coverage throughout the lifecycle.

**SDG 2: ZERO HUNGER**

Chair: Mr. Aman Khaleel, Senior Planning Analyst, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives
Mr. Ken Shimizu, FAO Representative for Nepal and Bhutan

South and South-West Asian countries are lagging behind on most of the targets under Goal 2, including the reduction of prevalence of undernourishment and the improvement of agricultural productivity. Although there has been a sharp decline in malnourishment and stunting among children, countries are regressing on indicators related to food insecurity and food price anomalies. Food systems in the subregion are affected by multiple drivers such as population growth, rapid urbanization, biodiversity loss and climate change. Agrarian sectors are becoming more capital intensive, thereby excluding smallholder farmers and landless laborers and prompting outmigration from the rural farm sectors in search of employment opportunities elsewhere. Frequent disruptions to global agricultural supply chains are triggering food price inflation. About one-third of the subregional countries are experiencing moderate to abnormally high food prices due to the rise in fuel prices, consequent cascading effects on transport costs and resultant supply chain disruptions, and trade policy changes. Progress in Goal 2 is further affected by multiple challenges and barriers related to institutional and infrastructural capacities, policy and resource gaps, and limited data availability.

South and South-West Asia needs to adopt a holistic approach for transforming food systems to make them more efficient, inclusive, resilient, equitable and sustainable. Enhancing investments in the agricultural sector, particularly for developing climate resilient technologies by redirecting subsidies from traditional to sustainable and regenerative agriculture, is critical for the subregion. Investment facilitation measures, with the active participation of the private sector, must give due importance to the development of post-harvest infrastructure to reduce food loss. Complementary policies are required to improve health systems, social protection, employment opportunities, skill development, access to finance and technologies for dependents of the farm sector, especially for small-scale farmers and vulnerable groups. Countries should also take steps to build resilience against supply chain disruptions and strengthen market price stabilization policies, including through regional cooperation for cross-border trade in agricultural inputs and food products.

Breakout Discussion 1: Policy Coherence and Financing

Chair: Mr. Daya Sagar Shrestha, Executive Director, National Campaign for Sustainable Development Nepal and Focal Point for Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism

The recognition of food security as a fundamental right should underpin interventions for achieving policy coherence and adequate financing of Goal 2 targets. Efforts must be taken to synergize agricultural and food market policies at the national and subnational levels. A multistakeholder participatory approach is needed at various stages of the policy reform process. Governments should give due importance to food sovereignty, taking into account local needs and recognizing indigenous skills and knowledge. Planning and implementation of transitions in the agriculture sector (e.g. from traditional to organic farming or from manual to mechanized farming) must be carried out through stakeholder consultations. While foreign direct investment in the agriculture sector and a greater infusion of private capital are potential instruments of financing, such participation must be properly regulated to protect the interests of smallholder farming sectors. New instruments for financing must be accompanied by measures to improve quality and conformity with standards for increased competitiveness in the global agricultural markets.
Breakout Discussion 2: Sustainable and Climate Resilient Agri-Food Systems

Chair: Ms. Selcen Altinsoy, Strategy and Budget Expert, Strategy and Budget Office of Presidency of Türkiye, Türkiye

There is a need to improve agricultural productivity and strengthen climate resilience of the farm sector through the infusion of adaptive technologies and sustainable farming practices. Conservation of water resources for agriculture and the promotion of indigenous seed varieties for crop diversity are critical for climate resilience. Strategies to preserve marine eco-systems are urgently needed for sustainability of fisheries resources. While addressing the supply side constraints, it is also important to enhance livelihoods in the rural agrarian sectors and to undertake measures to correct distortions in the agriculture supply chains and enable better market access. Governments should also allocate more resources for investments in agricultural infrastructure, including cold storage facilities and the mechanization and infusion of agricultural technologies in small-holder farming.

Breakout Discussion 3: Employment Generation in Agri-Food Systems

Chair: Ms. Rozana Wahab, Executive Member, Dhaka Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bangladesh

To promote employment generation in agri-food systems, policy interventions must address distortions in the agriculture value chains to ensure that farmers receive an appropriate share of the value of their produce. While taking measures to enhance the productivity and market competitiveness of the agriculture sector, governments should sustain support measures such as subsidies, minimum-price support and direct procurement for vulnerable and marginalized small-scale producers. To expand access to markets and control food price inflation caused by market distortions, countries of South and South-West Asia should promote institutional mechanisms to protect farmers and consumers, such as through farmer-producer organizations and cooperatives. Local governments also should play a coordinating role in the delivery of public services, including the provision of common facilities and services (e.g., packaging, training) at an affordable cost.

SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

Chair: Mr. Mahdi Hajimohammadi, UNESCAP Desk Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran

Presentation

Mr. Basanta Paudel, Climate Change Specialist, World Bank Nepal Office

South Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate shocks. More than half of all South Asians, or 750 million people in the eight countries, were affected by one or more climate-related disasters in the last two decades. The changing climate, with increasing slow-onset events as well as extreme events expected to increase in frequency and intensity, could sharply diminish living conditions for up to 800 million people in this subregion. South and South-West Asia is on course to achieving the SDG targets of reducing causalities from disasters and implementing disaster risk reduction strategies at the national level. However, the subregion is regressing on the adoption of disaster risk reduction strategies at the sub-national levels and on GHG emissions. Countries in the subregion are prioritizing climate change as articulated in
their Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans, Long-term strategies, and sectoral policies and programs, but implementation is a challenge. Priorities for climate adaptation vary amongst countries in South and South-West Asia. However, adaptation efforts towards strengthening early warning systems take precedence because the largest number of at-risk populations in this subregion are not protected by available early warning systems.

**Breakout Discussion 1: Climate and Disaster-Resilient Physical and Social Infrastructure**

**Chair: Mr. Yusuf Esidir, Expert, Strategy and Budget Office of Presidency of Türkiye, Türkiye**

Priority areas identified include: the creation of long-term policies on climate-resilient infrastructure; sensitization of communities to contribute to climate action; and proper land-use planning, including through environmental impact assessments. Various gaps and challenges impede action under the priority areas, including: a firefighting approach and lack of proper planning for disaster resilience and climate action; limited capacity, accountability and transparency of disaster management authorities, especially at subnational and local levels; inaccessible information systems; the lack of coordination among line ministries; and limited budgets that are often misused. Governments in South and South-West Asia should bring the private sector to the table, by encouraging responsible business and reducing the negative impacts of business activities. It is also critical to strengthen regulatory bodies, engage civil society organizations in project implementation, encourage research on the impact of climate change on marginalized groups, and co-opt both traditional and non-traditional media to disseminate information to affected communities. Participants underscored the need for neighbouring countries to institutionalize collaboration prior to the onset of climate events (rather than provide ad-hoc humanitarian support when disasters strike), and called for peer learning in both the design and implementation of policies. One-to-one twinning at the ministry and institutional levels were cited as effective collaboration mechanisms.

**Breakout Discussion 2: Financing Climate Action**

**Chair: Ms. Kavitha Battula, Secretary (CED), Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of India, Hyderabad, India**

There is a need to simplify access to climate financing, including for civil society organizations and affected communities such as indigenous populations, and to build the capacity of both governments and other stakeholders to effectively access such financing instruments. Climate financing instruments should be gender responsive. Countries most affected by climate shocks should have enhanced access to the Loss and Damage Fund. Other initiatives, such as climate risk insurance, are also crucial. The subregion requires better data on climate financing gaps, and support by international and regional organizations is important in this regard. There is an urgent need to increase transparency and accountability within the climate financing mechanisms of international financial institutions. Debt sustainability needs to be addressed in the context of climate financing, and potential solutions such as debt swapping could be implemented. Additionally, green transitions in energy systems will require improved financing.

**Breakout Discussion 3: Knowledge and Technology for Climate and Disaster Resilience**

**Dr. Ravindra Ajith Fernando, Council Member, Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka**
On climate mitigation, it should be noted that most countries in South and South-West Asia, with the exception of Bhutan, still heavily rely on fossil fuels, although they have committed to increasing the share of renewable energy under various commitments such as the Paris Agreement and Global Biofuel Alliance. Using more advanced technologies in climate mitigation is crucial and only possible by regional and subregional collaboration. Potential ways of mitigating climate change includes: sustainable urbanization, moving towards clean energy, scaling up local or indigenous technologies, customizing solutions for small countries, adapting new generation solar panels that increase efficiency, and using better battery technology.

On climate adaptation, there has been a significant increase in the number of hazard-related incidents in South and South-West Asia, with vulnerable groups and middle-class citizens being most affected. Lifestyle solutions for climate adaptation include evolutionary plant breeding methods, using vertical agriculture to decrease water use, and adopting indigenous methods for efficient groundwater use. Importantly, South and South-West Asia needs to incorporate effective early warning systems coupled with inclusive contingency plans, with access to timely information (including forecasts from international sources) ensured for all its populations. Countries should also develop technical capacities to predict potential hazards, understand people's needs during hazards and prepare for them, and consider climate migration and its consequences. To this end, participants noted that tools such as ESCAP's Risk and Resilience Portal were essential in providing countries with the relevant projections of scenarios for data-informed planning.

SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Chair: Ms. Deepa Nilanthi Liyange, Additional Secretary to the Prime Minister, Prime Minister’s Office, Sri Lanka

Presentation

Ms. Binda Magar, Policy Advisor (Governance) & Assistant Resident Representative (Programme), United Nations Development Programme

An overview of progress towards Goal 16 at the global, regional and subregional levels was provided. South and South-West Asia is on track to achieve target 16.6 on effective institutions, should current progress be maintained, while progress needs to be accelerated for the targets on the reduction of violence and related deaths (16.1) and justice for all (16.3) to be reached. The subregion has regressed substantially in the target on countering human trafficking (16.2), and an urgent reversal of the current trend is required. Out of the 10 outcome targets and two means of implementation targets of Goal 16, eight cannot be measured in South and South-West Asia, as compared to five in Asia and the Pacific. Given the large data gaps, the presenter called for countries to demonstrate commitment to SDG monitoring, particularly for Goals 5 (gender equality) and 16, including through data collection systems that are integrated from the local, provincial and national levels to regional and global levels. That Goal 16 serves as an enabler for achieving all other Goals was also highlighted. Setbacks in Goal 16 will therefore lead to similar outcomes in other Goals; for example, an increase in the homicide rate will lead to a decrease in GDP per capita and growth rates. Finally, it was underscored that political will with practical action would be required to accelerate implementation of the Goals.

Breakout Discussion 1: Peace
Chair: Ms. Feride Gulsen Inan, Director of the Center for Geoeconomic Studies, The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Türkiye

There is a need to invest in positive peace by addressing the root causes of conflict while resolving ongoing ones. Participants called for a dialogue of civilizations, given that different societies and cultures have different understandings of peace. They further observed that the unity of dialogue requires common ground and that the lack of trust between actors, particularly between governments and their citizens, thus becomes a major barrier to peace building. To create trust, transparency and accountability are key. Disarmament, for example, is only feasible and sustainable through government leadership and civil society support. Decisions taken at the global level are also not always anchored in country realities, and there is therefore a need for the sensitization of decision makers such as parliamentarians, and for government entities and civil society organizations to closely engage one another towards the achievement of the country’s international commitments. Other concrete measures proposed include the creation of mechanisms to align formal and informal justice systems and the formulation of anti-discriminatory laws to avoid conflict and promote diversity.

Breakout Discussion 2: Justice

Chair: Ms. Jyotsna Mohan, Regional Coordinator–Asia, Asia Development Alliance, India

Justice is essential for the realization of rights-based development, and the converse is true as well, with inclusive development and the reduction of inequalities essential for the effective maintenance of the rule of law. Governments should consider complementing the formal justice system with informal systems such as community mediation and justice mechanisms. The capacities of the judiciary must be strengthened to deliver justice in a timely and non-discriminatory manner. Institutional capacities of law enforcement systems need to be bolstered to effectively uproot all forms of corruption and to actively protect the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups. To this end, legal aid for the poor is critical and should be institutionalized as an integral part of the country’s basic social services.

Breakout Discussion 2: Strong Institutions

Group 3: Chair: Mr. Khedrup Dorji, Planning Officer, Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Bhutan

For institutions to be strong, sustainable and resilient, they must have clear mandates, institutional capacity, and adequate infrastructure and financing. To this end, there is a need to uphold meritocracy as a principle for human resource management; build in mechanisms to preserve institutional memory, including through digital technologies; set checks and balances to prevent the individual abuse of power; ensure the division and balance of power within and between institutions; and put in place a fair and working system of reward and punishment for performance management. There is much potential in utilizing digitalization and technology for record keeping and the monitoring of institutional performance. The irreplaceable role of the state as duty bearer to its citizens was emphasized. Participatory decision-making and trust-building among stakeholders were also highlighted as critical for the creation of strong institutions, including through leveraging both traditional and non-traditional media for the dissemination of information on performance delivery of institutions.
SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Chair: Ms. Fathimath Shifaza, Assistant Statistical Officer, Maldives Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives

Presentation

Mr. Hamza Ali Malik, Director, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division, ESCAP

Countries in South and South-West Asia need to accelerate progress on Goal 17 targets. Although data availability has been improving, about 40 per cent of SDG indicators for the subregion continue to have insufficient or no data availability. National statistical systems and agencies face resource constraints and possess limited institutional capacities to collect, assimilate and disseminate data. Further, policymakers lack awareness on using SDG statistics for evidence-informed policymaking. Measurement frameworks used for data assimilation also need to be revisited, with new methods and metrics developed to meet the needs of sustainable development policy planning and implementation. One such priority is to update and extend the national accounts system by incorporating better indicators of sustainability, inclusiveness and well-being – beyond the standard GDP and allied indicators – in policymaking processes.

Better utilization of opportunities provided by digital systems is another priority for South and South-West Asia. Asia and the Pacific has witnessed a rapid expansion of digital trade and investments in recent times, and digitally ordered exports (e-commerce) in the region are above global averages in terms of volume; for instance, exports of digitally deliverable services have almost doubled in the period 2015-22 to reach about US$ 900 billion. While such opportunities are rising in the subregion, the regulatory environment for promoting digital trade needs improvement, especially as high costs of participation are challenging for small and medium enterprises. Trends in the Regional Digital Trade Integration Index indicate that South and South-West Asian countries need reforms towards simpler, harmonized regulations to boost digital trade prospects for small businesses. Despite better affordability, the subregion currently exhibits the lowest broadband digital network access rate among all Asia-Pacific subregions. Besides investing in digital infrastructure, countries also need to make policies that bridge digital divides and enhance digital literacy and skills.

On resource mobilization for financing sustainable development, the current financial flows towards SDG implementation in the subregion are inadequate to meet SDG investment needs. It is estimated that some countries need additional investments of more than 20 per cent of GDP per year. Several countries also have tight fiscal positions, unsustainable and rising debt levels, and low credit ratings, all of which make mobilizing financing for investments in transformative pathways difficult. Better fiscal discipline and control is extremely important in this context, including through measures for enhanced tax and non-tax revenue mobilization, efficient and impactful spending, and effective public debt management. Vulnerable countries should seek debt relief through applicable international norms and principles. Continuous efforts for reforming tax systems and upgrading tax administration capacities to improve tax-to-GDP ratios is vital for improved fiscal management. Developing a conducive ecosystem of ‘sustainable finance’ involving various regulatory and financing institutions is also crucial. Besides domestic reforms, countries in South and South-West Asia must engage with global financing mechanisms, given the latter’s role in scaling-up sustainable development financing.
Breakout Discussion 1: Financing SDG acceleration

Chair: Ms. Kartika Yadav, Planning Officer, Sustainable Development and International Relations Section, National Planning Commission, Nepal

Priority sectors identified for financing SDG acceleration in South and South-West Asia include education and health. To mobilize financing for SDG acceleration, governments can consider increasing public revenue through the introduction of progressive tax regimes. Given that remittances are a core source of income for many South and South-West Asian countries, it is essential for governments to encourage more formal and less costly channels for the transfers of remittances. Partnerships with the private sector, including via the expansion of corporate social responsibility projects, could also help mobilize additional resources. Additionally, the allocation of public expenditure, including budgets for military spending, can be reviewed and diverted for SDG implementation. Measures to increase financial transparency and better oversight of public expenditures, by state and non-state actors, could also lead to more effective spending by line ministries and entities. Participants called for more South-South and triangular cooperation, public-private partnerships, and the use of global, regional and subregional forums to advocate for increased financing for the Goals. SAARC was raised as an example for its role in facilitating subregional SDG partnerships and the sharing of CSOs perspectives on the topic of financing. The need to restructure global financial institutions was then underscored, although participants acknowledged that the way forward in doing so was unclear. Finally, it was emphasized that SDG financing should be accessible to civil society organizations, local communities and marginalized groups whose actions will contribute to the acceleration of SDG implementation.

Breakout Discussion 2: Trade and Technology

Chair: Dr. Sabyasachi Saha, Associate Professor, Research & Information System for Developing Countries, India

Over the past decade, the subregion’s average annual growth rate of aggregate exports has been slower compared to that of peer groups, further impacted by supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Opportunities to form new value chains must be explored to improve and sustain trade growth. South and South-West Asian countries need to invest in trade facilitation measures to reduce high trade costs, in particular, the adoption of paperless trade systems. Other measures include: building a modern customs administration; streamlined and transparent trade processes and procedures; and improved services and information for private sector traders and investors. Support measures to improve access to finance are needed to enable better participation of small and medium enterprises in trade and compliance with standards. There is a need for long-term institutional build-up to bolster the science, technology and innovation capacities of countries; to this end, countries should broaden the spheres of collaboration promoting cross-border linkages between institutions and industries engaged in research and development activities.

To utilize digital technologies as a critical lever for accelerating SDG implementation, governments need to take measures to address uneven access to digital technologies and bridge gaps in digital connectivity. The potential impacts of artificial intelligence and automation on jobs and livelihoods also need to be addressed by national policies so that their positive impacts can be leveraged while minimizing possible adverse socio-economic effects.
Breakout Discussion 3: Data for SDG Acceleration

Chair: Ms. Eresha Ayanthi Gursinghe, Director, Ceylon Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs, Sri Lanka

Participants emphasized the need to ensure the availability of quality data (i.e., accurate, complete, reliable, relevant, timely) that is disaggregated by sex, age, disability and income, inter alia, to adequately reflect the development status of different groups. Currently, the issue of data gaps is not prioritized at policymaking levels. Some data are not publicly available, and data are in fact at times distorted due to the need to share good news with the higher-ups, especially at the local levels. Further, data management processes among the various line entities are often not coordinated, with sporadic data collection timeliness, leading to the duplication of effort and the non-comparability of data. Countries in the region still utilize outdated methods of data management, and methodologies for data collection are often not well aligned with international standards. A suggestion was raised to shift to the use of remote sensing and satellites to obtain geological data on hazards rather than more time-consuming and less effective manual methods. There is also a lack of capacity to interpret data for evidence-informed policymaking. To ensure the availability of quality disaggregated data for monitoring progress towards the Goals, participants called on governments to recognize and integrate data generated by non-State actors. There is also a need to sensitize and build capacity of all stakeholders from a young age, including via formal education systems and informal learning programmes, on the importance of data and on becoming contributors of data. Governments also need to develop coordinated data collection frameworks and mechanisms; capitalize on digital solutions for data collection and analysis; and enhance capacities in data management and analysis.
CLOSING SESSION

Ms. Hanaa Singer, UN Resident Coordinator in Nepal

Ms. Singer expressed her thanks to ESCAP for organizing the Forum; the National Planning Commission of the Government of Nepal for co-hosting; and the Federation of the Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry for their partnership. She also showed her appreciation for ESCAP’s longstanding friendship, particularly ESCAP’s timely provision of technical support on economic and cross-border issues. She affirmed that the Forum provided a space to highlight a myriad of cross-border issues, including those on agriculture, value chains, regional trade, development, finance, digitization, data exchange, job creation, climate change, green and clean energy and governance – all of which requiring policy harmonization across and cooperation among countries in South and South-West Asia. Finally, she emphasized the importance of implementing the Goals in a world where peace is being critically challenged.

Dr. Toya Narayan Gyawali, Member Secretary, National Planning Commission, Nepal

Dr. Gyawali congratulated the Forum organizers and partners for the successful meeting, and appreciated the thoughtful discussions undertaken by participating government officials and representatives from the private sector, civil society, cooperatives, developing partners and think tanks of the different countries. He highlighted that achieving the Goals would require collective action, and that it has thus become imperative to re-invigorate global cooperation, confront existing challenges and anticipate emerging risks and threats. He noted that findings from the Forum would be instrumental for the development of Nepal’s 16th periodic plan, currently under development by the National Planning Commission, which will have a focus on structural transformation. He looked forward to a renewed partnership with ESCAP and other stakeholders based on ideas for collaboration arising from outcomes of the Forum.
ANNEX 1: FORUM PROGRAMME

Seventh South and South-West Asia Subregional Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals
'Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions'

10-12 October 2023

Venue: Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI)  
Kathmandu, Nepal

Background

The Seventh South and South-West Asia Subregional Forum will take place in Kathmandu, co-hosted by the National Planning Commission of the Government of Nepal, in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The SDG Subregional Forum is organized annually as the subregional preparatory meetings for the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) at the regional level and the ECOSOC High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) at the global level. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), led by its South and South-West Asia Subregional Office, has organized the South and South-West Asia sub-regional forum with rotating co-host governments and UN Resident Coordinators since 2017.

The Forum facilitates dialogue and deliberations between Government officials, civil society, think-tanks, private sector, experts and development partners on the themes and SDGs of the annual APFSD and the HLPF, providing a unique opportunity to exchange information on SDG implementation efforts, highlighting subregional priorities and issues. The outcomes and recommendations from the Forum feed into regional and global processes, including the abovementioned APFSD and HLPF in the following year.

South and South-West Asia has been impacted by the multiple cascading global crises of recent years and large populations have also been hit hard by natural disasters. The subregion is behind the targets in all 17 goals. Following the 2030 Agenda mid-point stocktaking and deliberation on acceleration strategies at the SDG Summit (18-19 September), the subregional forum offers an opportunity to deep-dive into challenges and solutions relevant for the subregion.

1 The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development is an inclusive regional intergovernmental forum which supports the preparations for the High-level Political Forum (HLPF). ESCAP resolution 73/1 indicates that the theme of the APFSD is aligned with the theme of the HLPF and will support an in-depth discussion of the cluster of goals under review at the HLPF. Regional Roadmap for Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific was adopted in 2017 by ESCAP Member States.

2 The first forum was hosted in 2017 by the Government of Nepal in Kathmandu. Subsequent forums were hosted respectively by the Government of India in New Delhi in 2018, the Government of Bangladesh in 2019 in Dhaka, the Government of Maldives in 2020 in virtual format (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), the Government of Sri Lanka in 2021 in Colombo in hybrid mode and the Government of Pakistan in 2022. Countries in South and South-West Asia are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Türkiye.

3 ESCAP, Asia Pacific SDG Report 2023.
This year’s sub-regional forum will review progress on the thematic SDG focus of the 2024 HLPF and APFSD:

**Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 13 (climate action), Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and Goal 17 (partnerships for the Goals)**

The Forum will bring together multiple stakeholders from governments, civil society, private sector, academia, private sector, sub/regional and international institutions on a common subregional platform to:

(i) Enhance common awareness and understanding on key challenges and opportunities for the acceleration of the SDGs in the sub-region.

(ii) Identify ways to strengthen implementation, stakeholder engagement and monitoring for SDG acceleration, linking national, (sub)regional, and global SDG review processes.

(iii) Deepen reflection on leaving no one behind in SDG implementation and stakeholder roles.

(iv) Identify needs and opportunities for (sub)regional cooperation and partnerships among regional and subregional bodies, UN, IFIs and development partners.

**Participants**

1. Government officials engaged in various aspects of implementing and monitoring the SDGs;
2. Representatives of civil society organizations active in SDG advocacy and implementation, including those representing or working with marginalized and vulnerable groups;
3. Representatives of private sector;
4. Experts from think tanks and academia;
5. Representatives of UN and international, regional and subregional organizations; and
6. Other stakeholders involved in SDG implementation at national, local, sub-regional and regional levels.

**Organization**

- The meetings will be conducted in English and all documentation will be in English.
- The meetings will be held in plenary and breakout group sessions.

**Meeting report**

The meeting report will consist of a summary of proceedings, presentations and the key issues and recommendations raised by participants. The report and relevant reference material will be disseminated to the participants and be made available on the ESCAP Website. The report will be consolidated with reports from other subregional forums for the purpose of the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Forum in 2024.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:00 – 09:00</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 – 09:30</td>
<td>Inaugural Session</td>
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<td>Welcome remarks: (Tentative)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, UN Secretary-General and ESCAP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Executive Secretary [video message]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ms. Hanaa Singer, UN Resident Coordinator in Nepal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Mr. Chandra Dhakal, President, Federation of Nepalese Chambers of</td>
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<td>Commerce and Industry</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ms. Irosha Cooray, Director, SAARC Secretariat</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Mr. Daya Sagar Shrestha, Executive Director, National Campaign for</td>
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<td>Sustainable Development Nepal and Focal Point for Asia Pacific</td>
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<td>Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism</td>
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<td>09:45 – 11:15</td>
<td>Session 1: SDG Breakthrough and challenges</td>
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<td>This session will cover country presentations on salient breakthrough</td>
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<td>experiences and lessons, challenges and way forward to accelerate</td>
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<td>progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Panellists may</td>
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<td>also identify their priorities, capacity building needs share how</td>
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<td>subregional and regional cooperation can help them achieve SDGs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>more effectively.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chair: Mr. Amit Verma, Director, NITI Aayog</td>
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<td>Panellists (member State government representatives – 10 mins each):</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mr. Mahesh Bhattarai, Joint Secretary/Head of Economic Management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division, National Planning Commission (NPC) Nepal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Mr. Khedrup Dorji, Planning Officer, Policy and Planning Division,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources. Bhutan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Mr. Mohammad Masud Rana Chowdhury, Joint Secretary, Economic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mr. Aman Khaleel, Senior Planning Analyst, Ministry of National</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ms. Deepa Nilanthi Liyange, Additional Secretary to the Prime</td>
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<td>Minister’s Office, Sri Lanka</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:15 – 11:30</td>
<td>Tea/coffee break</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 – 12:30</td>
<td>Session 1 (continued): SDG Breakthrough and challenges</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Chair: Hon. Dr. Jay Kant Raut, Member, National Planning Commission, Nepal

Panellists (member State government representatives – 10 mins each):
- **Mr. Amit Verma**, Director, NITI Aayog, NITI Bhawan, New Delhi, India
- **Mr. Masoud Mizaei**, Head, Centre for Public and International Relations, Plan and Budget Organization, Islamic Republic of Iran
- **Ms. Mahjabeen Cheema**, Deputy Chief, SDGs Section, Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Pakistan
- **Mr. Yusuf Esidir**, Expert, Strategy and Budget Office of Presidency of Türkiye, Türkiye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:30 – 14:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>Overview of SDG Review sessions (14:00 – 14:15) – ESCAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>Session 2: SDG 1 Progress review</td>
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<td>Chair: Mr. Mohammad Masud Rana Chowdhury, Joint Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Introductory SDG 1 Presentation (14:15 -14:45): Mr. Ken Chamuva Shawa, Senior Economist, Head, Regional Economic and Social Analysis Unit, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Breakout Group Discussions (15:00 – 16:00)</td>
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<td>Chairs:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group 1: Dr. Dushni Weerakoon, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>Group 2: Ms. Pramila Acharya Rijal, President, South Asian Women Development Forum, Kathmandu, Nepal.</td>
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<td>Group 3: Mr. Tshering Drakpa, Programme Officer, Cabinet Affairs Division, Office of Cabinet Affairs and Strategic Coordination, Bhutan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tea break (16:00 – 16:15)</td>
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<td>Plenary discussion (16:15 – 17:30)</td>
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**Day 2: 11 October 2023**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session 3: SDG 2 Progress review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00 – 12:00</td>
<td>Chair: Mr. Aman Khaleel, Senior Planning Analyst, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives</td>
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<td>Introductory SDG 2 Presentation: (09:00 – 09:30) Mr. Ken Shimizu, FAO</td>
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</tbody>
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Representative for Nepal and Bhutan

**Breakout Group Discussions (09:40 – 10:40)**

**Chairs:**

**Group 1: Mr. Daya Sagar Shrestha**, Executive Director, National Campaign for Sustainable Development Nepal and Focal Point for Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism

**Group 2: Ms. Selcen Altinsoy**, Strategy and Budget Expert, Strategy and Budget Office of Presidency of Türkiye, Türkiye

**Group 3: Ms. Rozana Wahab**, Executive Member, Dhaka Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bangladesh

**Tea break (10:40 – 10:50)**

**Plenary discussion (10:50 – 12:00)**

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tr>
<td>12:00 – 12:30</td>
<td><strong>Session 4: SDG 16 Progress review</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Chair: Ms. Deepa Nilanthi Liyange</strong>, Additional Secretary to the Prime Minister, Prime Minister’s Office, Sri Lanka</td>
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<td><strong>Introductory SDG 16 Presentation (12:00-12:30): Ms. Binda Magar</strong>, Policy Advisor (Governance) &amp; Assistant Resident Representative (Programme), United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30– 13:30</td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>13:30 – 15:45</td>
<td><strong>Session 4 (continued): SDG 16 Progress review</strong></td>
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**Breakout Group Discussions (13:30 – 14:30)**

**Chairs:**

**Group 1: Ms. Feride Gulsen Inan**, Director of the Center for Geoeconomic Studies, The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Türkiye (TEPAV), Türkiye

**Group 2: Ms. Jyotsna Mohan**, Regional Coordinator – Asia, Asia Development Alliance, India

**Group 3: Mr. Khedrup Dorji**, Planning Officer, Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Bhutan

**Tea break (14:30-14:45)**

**Plenary discussion (14:45 – 15:45)**
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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>15:45-17:30</td>
<td>Session 5</td>
<td><strong>Session 5: SDG 13 Progress review</strong></td>
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<td>Chair:</td>
<td><strong>Chair: Mr. Mahdi Hajimohammadi</strong>, UNESCAP Desk Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Introductory</td>
<td><strong>Introductory SDG 13 Presentation (15:45-16:15): Mr. Basanta Paudel</strong>, Climate Change Specialist, World Bank Nepal Office</td>
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<td>Group Discussions</td>
<td><strong>Breakout Group Discussions (16:30 – 17:30)</strong></td>
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<td>Chairs:</td>
<td><strong>Chairs:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group 1:</td>
<td><strong>Group 1: Mr. Yusuf Esidir</strong>, Expert, Strategy and Budget Office of Presidency of Türkiye, Türkiye</td>
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<td>Group 2:</td>
<td><strong>Group 2: Ms. Kavitha Battula</strong>, Secretary (CED), Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of India, Hyderabad, India</td>
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<td>Group 3:</td>
<td><strong>Group 3: Dr. Ravindra Ajith Fernando</strong>, Council Member, Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka</td>
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<tr>
<td>19:00 – 21:00</td>
<td>Dinner hosted</td>
<td><strong>Dinner hosted by NPC (venue Hotel Soaltee Kathmandu)</strong></td>
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<td>Day 3: 12</td>
<td><strong>Day 3: 12 October 2023</strong></td>
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<td>October 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 – 10:00</td>
<td>Session 5</td>
<td><strong>Session 5 (continued): SDG 13 Progress review</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plenary</td>
<td><strong>Plenary Discussion</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 – 12:45</td>
<td>Session 6</td>
<td><strong>Session 6: SDG 17 Progress review</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chair:</td>
<td><strong>Chair: Ms. Fathimath Shifaza</strong>, Assistant Statistical Officer, Maldives Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Introductory</td>
<td><strong>Introductory SDG 17 Presentation: (10:00 – 10:30) Mr. Hamza Ali Malik</strong>, Director, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division, ESCAP</td>
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<td>Tea break</td>
<td><strong>Tea break (10:30-10:40)</strong></td>
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<td>Group Discussions</td>
<td><strong>Breakout Group Discussions (10:40 – 11:40)</strong></td>
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<td>Chairs:</td>
<td><strong>Chairs:</strong></td>
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<td>Group 1:</td>
<td><strong>Group 1: Ms. Kartika Yadav</strong>, Planning Officer, Sustainable Development and International Relations Section, National Planning Commission, Nepal</td>
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<td>Group 2:</td>
<td><strong>Group 2: Dr. Sabyasachi Saha</strong>, Associate Professor, Research &amp; Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), India</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:45 – 13:15</td>
<td>Closing session</td>
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<td><strong>Summary by ESCAP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ms Mikiko Tanaka, Director &amp; Head, Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia, ESCAP</td>
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<td><strong>Closing remarks</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ms. Hanaa Singer, UN Resident Coordinator in Nepal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Dr. Toya Narayan Gyawali, Member Secretary, National Planning Commission, Nepal</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:15 – 14:15</td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
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ANNEX 2: SELECTED PHOTOS FROM THE FORUM