



The Inaugural Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
10-12 June 2019

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

The theme of the first ever Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum (APIF) was "Technology Start-ups for Sustainable Development", in recognition of technology being a key means of implementation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under this theme, discussions focused on government policies to promote technology start-ups, women in innovation and technology, innovation & technology investment, grassroots innovation, technology parks and incubators, and south-south cooperation on science, technology and innovation (STI).

Key observations and messages emanating from the Forum with high relevance for policymakers in Asia and the Pacific are highlighted below:

- 1) The Forum highlighted the critical role of technology and innovation in promoting sustainable development, and showcased that governments have an important role to play in creating an enabling environment for technology and innovation including through implementing policies to promote technology start-ups, financing and investing in technology development, and developing supporting infrastructure such as technology parks and incubators.
- 2) The Forum highlighted the challenges member States in the Asia-Pacific face including poverty, inequality, capacity constraints, and the lack of adequate technology infrastructure, as well as emerging challenges and uncertainties to enhanced STI cooperation.
- 3) The Forum emphasized that technology and innovation should be inclusive in terms of engaging women and grassroots innovators, while ensuring that technology and innovation benefit the very poorest.
- 4) The Forum affirmed the critical role of international cooperation on technology and innovation so that no one is left behind, and established APIF as a means to enhance and facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration.
- 5) The Forum proposed collaboration in leveraging technology to bring more capital to early-stage start-ups through the sharing of best practices, and advice on regulation to support equity crowd funding.
- 6) The Forum recognized the progress for women's participation in ICT and science and technology in the region. However, it was also recognized that there were still challenges in a number of areas such as inequities in terms of working conditions and remunerations between women and men, and lack of women entrepreneurs. The Forum called for further actions to enable women to better participate in STI.
- 7) The Forum discussed key measures for facilitating grassroots innovations such as supporting a regional platform for mentorship, sharing lab facilities and services, linking innovators with investors, disseminating grassroots innovations, and sharing experiences on policies for promoting grassroots innovation.
- 8) The Forum emphasized that experiences of developing and managing science and technology parks should be further shared in the region. In this connection, the Forum

recognized that the guidebook prepared by ESCAP could be a useful reference for policymakers in charge of planning and developing science and technology parks.

- 9) The Forum recognized that a large number of Asia-Pacific member States represented at this Forum showed that governments in the region were attaching great importance on south-south cooperation in technology and innovation, while it is a complement to, rather than a substitute for, north-south cooperation.
- 10) The Forum stressed the importance of national sustainable development planning processes, policies and strategies; and the need for an enabling international environment; and stressed that further support is needed from developed countries especially regarding technology development and transfer, capacity building and financing.
- 11) The Forum reaffirmed ESCAP as one of the most suitable regional forums in the United Nations system for encouraging dialogue and cooperation among member States on technology and innovation. Furthermore, the Forum highlighted that ESCAP can further support the exchange of good practices including through platforms and face-to-face events, as well as build capacities through policy advice, research and training.
- 12) The Forum encouraged the ESCAP Secretariat to continue the APIF to act as a multi-stakeholder technology and innovation forum in the region, to act as a mechanism to share knowledge on technology and innovation, and link the APIF to the global United Nations STI agendas such as the STI Forum.
- 13) The Forum encouraged the ESCAP Secretariat to support member States specially through providing technical assistance and capacity-building in the field of STI directed towards development priorities and needs of member States in the Asia-Pacific region in order to help them fulfill their capacity building needs and gaps, and support the implementation of STI for sustainable development at national, sub regional and regional levels.
- 14) The Forum reaffirmed the importance of strengthening multilateralism and developing friendly relations among member States in the Asia-Pacific region including through cooperation and partnership in the area of STI.
- 15) The Forum proposed further collaboration on establishing and developing an Asia-Pacific start-up ecosystem network. In this connection, it was important that the Asia-Pacific Startup Network (APSN) was launched at the Forum.
- 16) The Forum recognized the current role of the United Nation system, specifically ESCAP, as well as other international, regional and sub regional organizations in helping governments to ensure that STI policies are integrated into and are supportive of national, sub regional and regional development needs and priorities.
- 17) The Forum also encouraged ESCAP to collaborate with the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development, with a view to contributing to convergence of their efforts, and providing mutual supportiveness to their common goals to enhance the capacities of member States in the Asia-Pacific region in the field of STI.

- 18) The Declaration of the first Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum, issued at the Forum, pointed out that the successful organization of the Forum was an important step to create an enabling environment for technology and innovation cooperation at the regional level. Going forward, ESCAP and its partners would build on the momentum from the Forum and continue to work on advancing STI in the region.

- 19) The Forum recognized the generous hospitality and great support by the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Forum.

I. Background

Technology has been highlighted as a key means of implementation for the SDGs. In recognition of this, in 2016, ESCAP member States passed a resolution titled "Harnessing science, technology and innovation for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific"; inviting member States "to work further on convening a biennial Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum, as a means to enhance and facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration among member States, the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders as appropriate".¹

In 2018, during ESCAP's Committee on ICT and STI, the Islamic Republic of Iran offered to host the inaugural APIF in June 2019.

The theme of the first ever APIF was "Technology Start-ups for Sustainable Development" in recognition of technology being a key means of implementation for the SDGs. Further information of the forum is available from:

See: <https://www.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-innovation-forum-2019-technology-start-ups-sustainable-development>

and

See: www.innovationforum.ir

II. Aim of APIF 2019

The aims of APIF were to:

1. Showcase the most innovative technology start-up for sustainable development initiatives from the Asia-Pacific and beyond.
2. Share best practices for policies and strategies on STI.
3. Promote dialogue between the diverse actors in the STI for sustainable development ecosystem.
4. Support north-south, south-south and triangular regional and international knowledge-sharing and cooperation.

III. Outcomes

The key outcomes of APIF were:

- The inaugural APIF successfully delivered on the ESCAP Resolution 72/12 (E/ESCAP/RES/72/12) titled "Harnessing science, technology and innovation for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific" which "invited member States to convene an Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum, as a means to enhance and facilitate

¹ E/ESCAP/CICTSTI(1)/10 – Report of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation on its first session. Annex II Updated draft terms of Reference for the Asia-Pacific innovation forum

knowledge-sharing and collaboration among member States, the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders”.

- Participants found APIF to be beneficial. Analysis of the feedback from the participants showed that 96.9% of respondents found the theme of the Forum relevant to their country situations, and 90.9% of respondents said they were highly satisfied with the overall organization of the Forum.
- As highlighted in the Declaration of the First Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum, the successful organization of the Forum was recognized as an important step to create an enabling environment for technology and innovation cooperation at the regional level. Going forward, ESCAP and its partners would build on the momentum from the Forum and continue to work on advancing STI in the region.

IV. Participation

- Participants from 22 countries attended the Forum. Furthermore, representatives from United Nations agencies and other international organizations also participated in the Forum.

V. Summary of discussions

Ministerial segment

Welcome remarks:

- Mr. Mr. Ali Morteza Birang, Head of the Center for International Science and Technology Cooperation, I. R. Iran.

Forum report:

- Mr. Peyman Salehi, Chair of ESCAP 2nd Committee on Information and Communications Technology & Science, Technology and Innovation and Chair of the 1st Asia Pacific Innovation Forum.

Opening remarks:

- H. E. Mr. Sorena Sattari, Vice President for Science and Technology, I.R. Iran.
- Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP.

High-level segment remarks:

- H. E. Mr. Mansour Gholami, Minister of Science, Research and Technology, I. R. Iran.
- H. E. Mr. Sujeewa Senasinghe, Minister of Science, Technology & Research, Sri Lanka.
- H.E. Ms. Brenda L. Nazareth-Manzano, Undersecretary, Department of Science and Technology, the Philippines.
- H.E. Mr. Has Bunton, Secretary General, National Science and Technology Council, Ministry of Planning, Cambodia.

- Mr. Zainul Abidin Rasheed, Special Envoy of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Middle East, Singapore.
- Mr. YE Dongbai, Director-General, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Science and Technology, China.
- Mr. Hadi Soleimanpour, Secretary General, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Key messages

- The session highlighted the critical role of technology and innovation in promoting sustainable development; and showcased that governments have an important role to play in creating an enabling environment for technology and innovation including through implementing policies to promote technology start-ups, financing and investing in technology development, and developing supporting infrastructure such as technology parks and incubators.
- The session highlighted the challenges member States in the Asia-Pacific face including poverty, inequality, capacity constraints, and the lack of adequate technology infrastructure, as well as emerging challenges and uncertainties to enhanced STI cooperation.
- The session emphasized that technology and innovation should be inclusive in terms of engaging women and grassroots innovators, while ensuring that technology and innovation benefit the very poorest.
- The session affirmed the critical role of international cooperation on technology and innovation so that no one is left behind.
- The session stressed the importance of national sustainable development planning processes, policies and strategies, and the need for an enabling international environment, and stressed that further support is needed from developed countries especially regarding technology development and transfer, capacity building and financing.
- The session reaffirmed ESCAP as one of the most suitable regional forums in the United Nations system for encouraging dialogue and cooperation among member States on technology and innovation. Furthermore, the session highlighted that ESCAP can further support the exchange of good practices, including through platforms and face-to-face events, as well as build capacities through policy advice, research and training.
- The session encouraged the ESCAP Secretariat to continue the APIF to act as a multi-stakeholder technology and innovation forum in the region, to act as a mechanism to share knowledge on technology and innovation, and link the APIF to the global United Nations STI agendas such as the STI Forum.
- The session encouraged the ESCAP Secretariat to support member States, especially through providing technical assistance and capacity building in the field of STI directed towards development priorities and needs of member States in the Asia-Pacific region, in order to help them fulfil their capacity building needs and gaps, and support the implementation of STI for sustainable development at national, sub regional and regional levels.

Session 1: Governments policies to promote technology start-ups

This session discussed the impact of government policies in promoting technology start-ups, and their contribution to the achievement of the SDGs.

Chair

- Mr. Mahdi Elyasi, Deputy for Policymaking & Development of I.R. Iran Vice Presidency for Science & Technology.

Presentations by

- Mr. Pun-Arj Chairatana, Executive Director, National Innovation Agency, Thailand.
- Mr. Rajabov Jahongir, Director, 55 Startup, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Tajikistan.
- Ms. Maryam Javan Shahraki, UNIDO Representative, Iran Country Office.
- Mr. Mostafa Mohaghegh, Senior Coordinator, Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM), ESCAP.

Key successes and lessons learnt

- In Thailand, over 40 agencies, in collaboration with the private sector, support the Thailand start-up ecosystem. The Ministry of Finance leads the Start-up Thailand initiative, while other ministries lead different commissions. It is essential and time consuming for all stakeholders in the country to understand the nature of start-ups. For example, it took a year to define SME start-ups. Building trust has been critical to promote start-ups. In this connection, government agencies may have a role to play to link start-ups with universities.
- In Tajikistan, the government places importance on encouraging the youth to be engaged in entrepreneurship activities, creating business incubators, and enhancing legal, financial and economic knowledge of entrepreneurs.
- International organizations such as UNIDO and APDIM are useful partners to work on technology start-ups.

Emerging concepts

- Institutionalizing support to start-ups through a royal decree in Thailand is under development,
- Internationalisation of investment provides a wide range of services for investing in start-ups in Thailand.

Proposals for collaboration

- Collaboration on establishing and developing an Asia Pacific start-up ecosystem network.

Session 2: Women; innovation and technology

This session discussed government policies supporting the role of women in the knowledge economy and technology development.

Chair

- Ms. Marta Pérez Cusó, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP.

Panelists

- Ms. Zeinab Hamidzadeh, Women Affairs Advisor to I.R. Iran Vice President for Science & Technology, I.R. Iran.
- Ms. Rokeya Khaton, Deputy Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- Mr. Anthony C. Sales, Regional Director, Department of Science and Technology, the Philippines.
- Ms. Mia Mikic, Director of Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP.
- Mr. Cvetan Cvetkovski, Officer-in-Charge, UNESCO Cluster Office in Tehran.

Key successes and lessons learnt

- Support for women in the knowledge economy starts with a broad national policy supporting women empowerment and gender equality, such as the Magna Carta for Women that the Philippines enacted into Law in 2009. The law promotes gender responsiveness in national development plans. Another milestone achievement was the passage of the legislation on the Gender and Development (GAD) Budget mandating all government agencies to allocate a minimum of five percent of their total appropriations for GAD programs and project.
- Work has to start at the school with quality education reaching women, and with education that addresses unconscious biases. Governments can provide monetary and non-monetary incentives to encourage women to take up their careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
- Outstanding careers of women in STEM around the world should be highlighted for promoting more women in STEM. Success stories include the Iranian Maryam Mirzakhani, the first woman winning the Fields Medal.
- A varied range of strategies and programmes can be implemented to support women in ICTs. For example, Bangladesh has promoted ICT literacy training for women and promoted women employment in the ICT sector. It has also used ICTs to provide easy access to information technology for underprivileged women in rural areas. The country has set up a Web, available both in Bangla and English, to provide knowledge on key information for women.
- Taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities in the process of supporting the role of women in the knowledge economy and technology development.
- International organizations such as the United Nations, IMF, the World Bank and OECD have been actively promoting female leadership.
- While women's participation in ICT and science and technology is increasing day by day, there are still challenges in a number of areas including poverty, lack of information on

women in the ICT industry, inequities in industry in terms of working conditions and remunerations between women and men persist, balancing paid work and care duties, ensuring women entrepreneurs can benefit from advice services, and ensuring female workers do not remain clustered in low-skilled occupations with lower pay.

- ESCAP is running projects to support women in STI. Women in ARTNeT supports women to conduct applied research and to enhance their influence on policymaking.
- ESCAP's programme financially supported by the Government of Canada on catalyzing women's entrepreneurship with access to finance along with training in financial literacy and ICT skills was highlighted.

Emerging concepts

- To truly reduce the gender gap, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics is developing a series of new indicators about the dynamics that shape women's decisions to pursue STEM careers through a new project known as SAGA (STEM and Gender Advancement).

Proposals for collaboration

- ESCAP and UNESCO can be a common platform for the member countries to strengthen the networking of women scientists, engineers, technologists and innovators at regional and national levels.
- ESCAP and UNESCO can also play a role in promoting reliable data and research on women in STI.
- ESCAP can also support the dissemination and deployment of the SETI scorecard in the Asia-Pacific region.
- ESCAP can also support the development of a Plan of Action for Women Empowerment in STI in the Asia-Pacific region.

Session 3: Innovation and technology investment

This session discussed the ways that governments can support technological investments, technology funds, and financing the technology development and commercialization process.

Chair

- Mr. Farhang Fassihi, Secretary of the Coordinating Committee at the Iranian National Council for Science, Research & Technology and Former Deputy of the Iranian National Innovation Fund.

Presentations by

- Mr. David Sokhasing, Managing Director, Angel Investment Network Indonesia.
- Mr. Hamidreza Amirinia, Barakat Venture Fund, I.R. Iran.
- Mr. Jinwon Kang, Research Fellow, R&D Evaluation Center, Korean Institute of S&T Evaluation Planning, Republic of Korea.
- Mr. Batnairamdal Otgonshar, Advisor to the Chief of the Cabinet Office, Mongolia.

Key successes and lessons learnt

- In Indonesia, the role of government has shifted from regulator to facilitator in supporting technological investment. A forum called Nexticorn has been set up for investors to meet with start-ups.
- The Islamic Republic of Iran recognizes STI as a key pillar for national development. Development of the start-up community over the past several years has been rapid.

Emerging concepts

- Innovation in the public sector is equally important. E-government will greatly facilitate access to government/public services.

Proposals for collaboration

- Leveraging technology to bring more capital to early-stage starts ups, through the sharing of best practices and advice on regulation to support equity crowdfunding.

Session 4: Grassroots innovation

This session discussed how governments can support grassroots innovations and success stories of supportive government policies.

Chair

- Mr. Saied Reza Ameli, Director of the UNESCO Chair on Cyberspace and Culture and Cyberspace Policy Research Center and Full professor of communications at the University of Tehran.

Presentations by

- Ms. Marta Perez Cuso, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP.
- Ms. Sharmila Binti Mohamed Salleh, CEO, Yayasan Inovasi Malaysia.
- Ms. Anamika Dey, CEO, GIAN, India.
- Ms Shahida Sultana, Deputy Secretary, Access to Information (a2i) Programme, Government of Bangladesh.

Key successes and lessons learnt

- Governments can put in place policies, strategies and programmes to support grassroots innovations.
- Public support may include the provision of funding, access to laboratories, the diffusion of grassroots innovation through public databases, the promotion of innovation among students and youth, and the recognition of outstanding grassroots innovators through awards.
- Digital platforms offer a paradigm shift in the decentralization of services to grassroots innovation.
- ESCAP in collaboration with the Gujarat Grassroots Innovations Augmentation Network (GIAN), the Honey Bee Network, and the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) of Ahmedabad will be launching a workbook on “Policies and Strategies to Promote Grassroots Innovations”.

Emerging concepts

- Inclusive innovation policies: policies that encourage STI that serve the welfare of lower-income and excluded groups, including innovations for the poor or pro-inclusive innovation, and innovations by the poor or grassroots innovation.
- Establishing specific instruments to support women grassroot innovations, such as women’s innovation camps that have women as main actors and encourage innovations that address the specific needs of women.

Proposals for collaboration

- There are great opportunities for regional collaboration in the promotion of grassroots innovation. ESCAP could facilitate grassroots innovations by supporting a regional platform for: mentorship, sharing lab facilities and services (to support the finalisation of

products), linking innovators with investors, disseminating grassroots innovations, and sharing experiences on policies for promoting grassroots innovation.

- ESCAP could provide further policy advice and support for governments exploring to set up strategies and programmes promoting grassroots innovations.

Session 5: Technology parks and incubators

This session discussed policymaking practices to support technology parks and incubation centres. A report titled “Establishing Science and Technology Parks: A Reference Guidebook for Policymakers in Asia and the Pacific” prepared by the ESCAP Secretariat was launched in this session.

Chair

- Mr. Tengfei Wang, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP.

Presentations by

- Mr. Sunkook Kwon, Secretary-General, Asian Science Park Association (ASPA).
- Mr. Mehdi Keshmiri, Director General for Technology Planning & Policy Making, Ministry of Science, Research & Technology, I. R. Iran.
- Ms. Sri Setiawati, Director of the Center for Research, Science and Technology, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, Indonesia.
- Mr. Amin Reza Khaleghian, Director General of Communications and International Affairs, Pardis Technology Park, I. R. Iran.

Key successes and lessons learnt

- Despite the success of some science and technology parks in the region, it is imperative for governments to check that the precursory conditions are in place before a science and technology park is established. In this connection, ESCAP’s guidebook on “Establishing Science and Technology Parks: A Reference Guidebook for Policymakers in Asia and the Pacific” was launched at the session.
- Asian Science Park Association (ASPA) provides a platform for networking and exchanging information on technology and innovation.
- Both Iran and Indonesia have rich experiences in developing and managing science and technology parks. Their experiences can be shared in the region.

Emerging concepts

- The concept of science and technology park has been evolving. The innovation district or innovation hub concepts located in city centres - which are often different from the traditional science parks located out of the city - provide alternative solutions for innovation.

Proposals for collaboration

- Experiences of developing and managing science and technology parks should be further shared in the region. In this connection, ESCAP and ASPA may work together to introduce good practice and lessons learnt in the region. The guidebook prepared by ESCAP can be a useful reference for policy makers in charge of planning and developing science and technology parks.

Session 6: South-South cooperation and science, technology and innovation

Objective

This session highlighted how south-south cooperation has to be one of the major modalities for STI to enable countries to achieve developmental progress and illustrate approaches to developing south-south centric STI strategies. It also reviewed how changes in technology affect the global south, what can be done to mitigate adverse impacts, and discussed priority areas for sharing technologies to help LDCs meet the SDGs.

Chair

- Mr. Denis Nkala, UNOSSC Regional Coordinator.

Panelists

- Dato Sharifah Maimunah Syed Zin, Director, International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the Auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC).
- Dr. Raslan Ahmad, Senior Vice President, Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology Cyberjaya, Malaysia.
- Mr. George Benaroya, Vice President Finance, Long Term Investments, LLC.

Key successes and lessons learnt

- The session highlighted that south-south cooperation could serve as a vehicle for knowledge sharing and enable countries to apply lessons from experiences of other countries.
- The session encouraged member States to enhance north-south, south-south and triangular, regional and international cooperation and partnership building on technology and innovation.
- The session also highlighted that south- south cooperation is a complement to north-south cooperation, not a substitute.

Emerging concepts

- The large number of Asia-Pacific member States represented at this Forum showed that governments in the region are attaching great importance on south-south cooperation on technology and innovation.

Proposals for collaboration

- The topic on south-south cooperation in technology and innovation should be featured in future Forums whenever appropriate.

Closing ceremony

- Closing statement by Mr. Hongjoo Hahm, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP.
- Introduction to the Asia Pacific Start-up Network (APSN).
- Closing statement by Forum Chair, Mr. Peyman Salehi.

Key messages

- Iran climbed a staggering 55 places up the Global Innovation Index. It is also commendable that 70% of Iran's science and engineering students are women.
- The generous hospitality and great support by the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Forum was acknowledged.
- The Declaration of the First Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum pointed out that the successful organization of the Forum was an important step to create an enabling environment for technology and innovation cooperation at the regional level. Going forward, ESCAP and its partners would build on the momentum from the Forum and continue to advance STI in the region.
- The Asia-Pacific Start-up Network (APSN) was launched at the Forum.