



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Sixth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Bangkok, 27–29 March 2019

Item 3 of the provisional agenda**

**Linking national, regional and global dimensions of the
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development****Follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development: global and regional
perspectives****Note by the secretariat******Summary*

The present document provides an input for dialogue at the Sixth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

It is intended to contribute to discussions on the review of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The present document focuses attention on the regional follow-up and review processes and mechanisms and their contribution to global follow-up and review processes, and points to key issues for further consideration.

**I. Mechanisms for follow-up to and review of the
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global,
regional and national levels**

1. In resolution 67/290, the General Assembly established the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The resolution includes the general principles which guide the organization of the high-level political forum and the regional forums on sustainable development, including the approach to regional follow-up and review.¹

* Reissued for technical reasons on 4 March 2019.

** ESCAP/RFSD/2019/L.1/Rev.1.

*** The late submission of the present document was due to ongoing preparations for the review of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

¹ In paragraph 21 of resolution 70/299, the General Assembly decided to review at its seventy-fourth session the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum.

2. The high-level political forum on sustainable development constitutes the global body for follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and evaluation of progress on the 2030 Agenda and its framework of Goals to deepen the understanding of the challenges faced and the way forward.

3. In paragraph 10 of resolution 70/299, the General Assembly encouraged Member States to identify the most suitable regional or subregional forums and formats for follow-up and review activities to contribute to the follow-up and review at the high-level political forum. The inaugural Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was convened in May 2014, and its terms of reference were adopted in 2017 after extensive consultation. That year, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) adopted resolution 73/1, in which the Commission added the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development to the conference structure. The Commission also adopted resolution 73/9 on the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

4. The road map identifies priority areas for regional cooperation for accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. It provides for annual reviews of its progress at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

5. At the national level, Governments have also put in place institutional mechanisms for follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda, including within multi-stakeholder and multi-ministerial bodies, national parliaments and supreme audit institutions as key institutions. The voluntary national reviews are a key element of national follow-up and review and are reported on at the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

6. The present document seeks to inform discussions on regional follow-up and review, including on ways in which it may be strengthened to add value both to national and global follow-up and review processes. It is intended to contribute to discussions that could also inform the review of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

II. Overview of regional follow-up and review through the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, including the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda

A. Key principles for effective review and mechanisms for follow-up and review at the regional level

7. Effective follow-up and review is a key pillar of the 2030 Agenda. Paragraphs 79, 80 and 82 of the 2030 Agenda emphasize the principles for follow-up and review at all levels.² The principles state that national Governments have the primary responsibility for the follow-up and review at all levels, including the regional level, and national ownership is the

² At the national level, Member States are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress; follow-up and review at regional and subregional levels can provide useful opportunities for peer learning; the high-level political forum on sustainable development has a central role in follow-up and review at the global level.

cornerstone of follow-up and review. They emphasize that follow-up and review processes will be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent as well as rigorous and informed by country-led evaluations and data.

8. Discussion of follow-up and review during successive sessions of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and an expert group meeting on follow-up and review, held in 2016, have broadly supported these principles. Stakeholders and experts have shared other important perspectives on follow-up and review, including the need for a well-defined feedback loop between monitoring and review activities and policymaking and decision-making processes so that follow-up and review processes result in changes to policy.³

9. Regional follow-up and review processes facilitate peer review and learning, tracking and evaluating progress, identifying emerging issues and providing opportunities to advance progress through cooperation and partnership with diverse stakeholders. Follow-up and review processes also enable the consolidation of regional perspectives to inform the high-level political forum on sustainable development for more effective follow-up and review at the global level.

10. The main mechanisms for follow-up and review at the regional level are the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, the Commission sessions and the ESCAP Committees. All of these mechanisms have benefited from the work of the United Nations system in Asia and the Pacific, including through the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, and the work of other stakeholder groups which have contributed in various ways to these forums.

B. Contributions of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development to follow-up and review

11. The mechanisms of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development for follow-up and review have been developed over the past five years and are consistent with each of its functions, as defined in its terms of reference and as shown in the table.⁴

³ See E/ESCAP/FSD(4)/INF/4 and www.unescap.org/events/expert-dialogue-effective-follow-and-review-2030-agenda.

⁴ Commission resolution 73/1, annex.

Follow-up and review functions of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Inputs</i>	<i>Outcome and follow-up</i>
<p>Regional perspectives on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development</p> <p><i>Reviewed by high-level government officials with additional views from civil society and experts</i></p>	<p>Theme report produced under partnership between ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme</p>	<p>Peer-learning on government responses and recommendations for policymakers</p>
<p>Sustainable Development Goal round tables</p> <p><i>Multi-stakeholder review of progress, identifying challenges and innovations, in an interactive format</i></p>	<p>Sustainable Development Goal profiles prepared by United Nations agencies</p>	<p>Recommendations for follow-up on each Goal</p>
<p>Session on voluntary national review</p> <p><i>Sharing of experiences between countries that have delivered voluntary national review reports and others with reports in progress</i></p>	<p>National government and stakeholder views</p> <p>Document reviewing the various aspects of the voluntary national review reports, presented annually</p>	<p>Strengthened capacity at the national level for voluntary national reviews as contributions to the global review</p>
<p>Review of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda</p> <p><i>Presenting activities under the regional road map and review of progress on goals related to the road map</i></p>	<p>Annual report on ESCAP activities</p> <p>Document reviewing progress on the goals</p>	<p>Member State awareness of opportunities for regional cooperation in priority areas which can inform the work of the Commission and the Committees</p>

12. The functions of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development are further strengthened by the multisectoral capacity of ESCAP, as well as its convening role, which allows it to coordinate and integrate the views of various stakeholders, including other entities within the United Nations system. Discussions in both informal and formal spaces are important to the Forum given its multi-stakeholder intergovernmental nature. The development of knowledge products for the Forum in collaboration with different partners also ensures quality substantive inputs.⁵

13. The follow-up and review processes of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development are also strongly enabled by stakeholder self-organization and the collaboration of the secretariat with Governments and stakeholders as they prepare for the Forum. The Asia-Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism has worked with the secretariat and other regional networks to enable the representation and substantive contributions of stakeholders in successive sessions of the Forum.

C. Contribution of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda to follow-up and review

14. In addition to calling for annual reviews, the road map also provides for the phases of its review, which may be aligned through the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development with the four-year cycle of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The year 2019 marks the fourth year of the first four-year cycle of the high-level political forum.

15. The secretariat has provided three reviews of the implementation of the road map since its adoption in 2017:

(a) An overview of the activities of the secretariat supporting regional cooperation for the implementation of the road map (see document ESCAP/RFSD/2018/1), which showed substantial action by the secretariat on the different thematic areas and means of implementation identified in the road map;

(b) A review of the secretariat focusing on stakeholder engagement as a major modality requested by member States (see document ESCAP/RFSD/2019/INF/5), which pointed to areas in which regional support may be further strengthened;

(c) A review of progress on the means of implementation on the priority areas of the road map, based on the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework (see document ESCAP/RFSD/2019/INF/4), which provided a ready reference in an easily accessible format to facilitate discussions on the link between the secretariat and national government actions and the outcomes for the region.

16. The participants in the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development have noted that the road map should be considered a living document. Stakeholders have expressed the need for Governments to include or better reflect specific issues in the road map, including the need to strengthen

⁵ This includes an annual thematic report produced by ESCAP in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme under the Sustainable Development Goal Partnership: <http://sdgasiapacific.net/knowledge-product>.

aspects related to the 2030 Agenda's aspiration to leave no one behind. The modalities for such updates have not been clearly established.

17. A possible opportunity for strengthening regional follow-up and review includes better linking of the substantive outcomes of follow-up and review processes to the deliberations of the Commission and the Committees and to the work of the secretariat. The United Nations system may also be further mobilized to provide inputs into the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and to help with follow-up to the outcomes of the Forum, in line with Commission resolution 73/9, in which it invited relevant organizations of the United Nations to play an active role in the implementation of the road map.

D. Relationship between the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum on sustainable development

18. The secretariat's work provides operational links between regional, global and national levels of follow-up and review.

19. The discussions held during the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development are documented in its report and the Chair's summary, which is annexed to it. The report is presented to the Commission annually and provided to the secretariat of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Discussion of the contributions of the region are limited to a dedicated session at the high-level political forum on the perspectives of the regional sessions. Regional discussions do not directly influence the specific substantive discussions of the high-level political forum under different agenda items nor do they have a formal influence on the outcome document of the high-level political forum.

III. Capacity-building for effective follow-up and review

20. The secretariat has played an important role in building capacity for national follow-up and review. Technical support delivered in collaboration with the United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices, the United Nations country teams and the United Nations Development Programme Bangkok Regional Hub have strengthened voluntary national review processes in several countries⁶ and contributed to the exchange of experiences among member States.

21. Support has focused on Sustainable Development Goal integration and policy coherence to address localization and to map interlinkages among the Goals and targets in the voluntary national review.

22. The secretariat is also working with partners to build capacity for stakeholder engagement for effective follow-up and review. This has included the development of a stakeholder engagement plan for the voluntary national review as part of the process plan. Relevant national task forces have been supported in ensuring that the process is followed by all actors involved.

⁶ In 2018 and 2019 support was provided to Cambodia, Fiji, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam.

23. Technical advice has been given to national statistical offices on providing high quality data and statistics and on alternative data sources. In addition, regional cooperation on statistical development has also made important inroads in strengthening capacity for monitoring, which is essential for effective follow-up and review.

24. Stakeholder groups have also helped to build capacity for follow-up and review. For example, the Transparency, Accountability and Participation Network and the Asia Development Alliance work to advance the development of indicators and guidelines to support follow-up and review.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

25. In view of the planned review at the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the General Assembly, as called for in its resolution 70/299, and in view of the experience afforded by five sessions of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, member States and other stakeholders may wish to provide their perspectives on key elements of national, regional and global review processes. Participants may wish to focus their comments specifically on the following:

(a) The current effectiveness of regional follow-up and review, and ways to strengthen it, including through measures to align the review of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda with regional and global follow-up and review processes and to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement in regional follow-up and review;

(b) The relationship between the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum, including how to strengthen regional contributions to the latter;

(c) The role of the secretariat in strengthening national follow-up and review, including through capacity-building.