

# ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2018

“Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies in Asia and the Pacific”

28-30 March 2018 | UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE . BANGKOK, THAILAND

## Report of Roundtable on SDG 15 on Life on Land



The Roundtable was co-organised by **UN ESCAP, UN Environment, UNDP** and **FAO**, with input from the **One Planet Network**.

Moderator: M. Jaco Cilliers, Chief-Policy and Program, UNDP Asia Pacific

Presenting the Goal Profile: M. Kenichi Shono, FAO ROAP

### Panelists

- Mr. Hak-Kyun Maeng, Director, Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea
- Ms. Sonali Senaratna Sellamuttu, Ph.D., Senior Researcher and Head of Office, International Water Management Institute (IWMI) Southeast Asia and Co-Chair of the IPBES regional assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services

Discussant from civil society: Ms. Nukila Evanty-CSO Indonesia

### Working group moderators

WG1: M. Ben Vickers, FAO

WG2: Ms. Makiko Yashiro, UN Environment

WG3: M. Seunghee Kim, Environment Advisor, UNDP/BRH

WG4: Ms. Solene Le Doze, UN ESCAP

Rapporteur: M. Douglas Nanayakkara, Secretary, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife, Sri Lanka.

## **Outcome of the Roundtable**

These are the policy recommendations that government representatives and other stakeholders identified in order to make further progress on SDG 15 in Asia and the Pacific:

1) Integrated data systems that supports ecosystem-based management, integrating information from diverse sources, including community, indigenous and traditional knowledge; 2) Engagement across sectors and stakeholders, in particular with local communities and indigenous peoples; 3) Strengthened governance approaches and effective laws to promote participation, clarify land-tenure arrangement, enforce the rights of indigenous people and environmental defenders, support ecosystem-based management approaches and social impact assessment and recognize the intrinsic rights of nature; 4) Diversification of financing and linking this with strengthened improvements in governance and management approach; 5) Achieving land degradation neutrality; and 6) Strengthening regional cooperation including through implementing the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment 2017.

Given the vital importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services for human survival and well-being, effectively mainstreaming biodiversity across government sectors: it is essential for conservation to urgently mainstream biodiversity conservation into decision-making including by the Ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Planning, Tourism and Education, amongst others. This could be done by working in partnerships and adopting an integrated and evidence-based approach to Sustainable Development, planning and implementation, taking into account the links, synergies and tradeoffs, between SDG 15 and other SDGs, such as SDG 1-No Poverty, SDG 2-Zero Hunger, SDG 3-Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5- Gender Equality, SDG 6-Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 8-Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 12- Sustainable Consumption and Production, and SDG 13-Climate Action.

## **Outcome of the working groups**

### **1. Working group 1 on “Current status on SDG 15 in Asia and the Pacific, including areas where good progress is made and areas requiring specific attention and associated key challenges”**

The groups agreed with the current status of SDG 15 in Asia and the Pacific as presented in the profile, with the following additional comments and points:

1. A lot of progress has been seen in the region at the policy level, with generally a good level of areas covered by Protected Areas and dedicated conservation policies and National Biodiversity Action Plans (NBSAPs). However, wetlands and other unprotected forests are still subject to encroachment and illegal logging, affected by regional politics. The legal set up and government capacity are judged adequate, however there is a concern related to law enforcement. Further, there is a lack of awareness at the grassroot level and threats to Indigenous Peoples living in protected areas.
2. Specific issues related to the implementation of SDG 15 in the region include: encroachment into natural forest, extraction for commercial use, expansion of agricultural land, removal of firewood, illegal logging in border areas.
3. Ecosystem degradation and loss are driven by lack of concrete land use management plan, associated with adequate budget, institutional weakness and limited human resources.
4. Some good examples of policies related to ecosystem conservation and forests are recorded in Sri Lanka, the Philippines, where a reforestation programme will be launched, at the Myanmar-Thailand border where there are attempts to implement a reforestation programme, and in Myanmar- which has a 10-year reforestation and restoration initiative aiming at restoration 80,000 acres annually.
5. A lack of clarity on responsibility is impeding interprovincial and transboundary approaches for ecosystem conservation.
6. Good progress on NBSAPs is observed. However, despite cost estimations and investment plans being developed to support their implementation, finances are lacking to implement them given a lack of incentive. More private sector investment, including from local private sector, and through payment for ecosystem services for example, as well as wealth accounting can provide estimates of the value of biodiversity and indigenous knowledge. Full accounting of ecosystem value is the only way to encourage private and public investment in biodiversity.
7. In protected areas, there is a need to standardize monitoring approaches and for infrastructure to track activities. Limited human resources and lack of vertical and horizontal coordination between government agencies impede efforts in protected areas management.

8. Community engagement needs to be strengthened in order to better protect biodiversity and ecosystems.
9. Tenurial arrangements have hindered progress on the implementation of SDG 15. Indigenous People (IP) to protect protected areas, but conflict IP domains, are a threat. The classification of ancestral domain being either private lands or government lands, led to a lack of clarity impeding effective measures being put in place.

## **2. Working group 2 on “Promising innovation and best practices to build upon for making further progress on SDG 15 in Asia and the Pacific”**

In addition to, the innovations presented in the Goal profile, the group pointed to several innovations that can support the acceleration of progress on SDG 15 in Asia and the Pacific:

1. Market-based mechanisms and programmes to support forest mechanism are important but are too narrowly-focused on big companies. Policy makers should make sure that small enterprises are also engaged.
2. Community-based forestry.
3. Forest and landscape restoration initiatives that support local livelihoods.
4. REDD+ initiatives that support local initiatives and involve local communities, where projects with large scope and multiple countries are not sufficiently context-specific. It's thus important to reduce the scope of projects and highlight sub-regional opportunities and challenges, as well as best practices.
5. An inspiring model of nationally-tailored programmes comes from the Centre for People and Forest (RECOFTC) which has designed training courses for communities to work on forest management.
6. Generally speaking, policymakers should ensure that SDG15 consistently support the people that are the most impacted by land degradation -i.e. the most vulnerable and poorest communities which are dependent of forest incomes. Policy design for SDG15 should be strongly linked to SDG1 through livelihood and land-tenure arrangements).
7. When designing protected areas, policy makers should not only look at special area coverage but prioritize their actions in function of biodiversity needs.
8. The role of environmental defenders should be fully recognized and protected, as the first people targeted, and victims of ecological crimes.
9. An inspiring legislative innovation comes from Ecuador, Latin America where the rights of nature have been recognized in the constitution.

**3. Working group 3 on “Policy recommendations on priority for action, to be ideally structured around: thematic areas, means of implementation (as per SDG 17) and regional collaboration”**

Priority policy actions to make further progress on SDG 15 in Asia and the Pacific:

1. Ecosystem based management based on strengthened information and data management capacity, integrating multiple sources of information. Involve CSOs and indigenous peoples in providing data. An integrated data system that allows for ecosystem-based management is needed, and should also include traditional and indigenous knowledge, information on customary management. and ecosystem management from “ridge to reef” needs to be integrated. Community management of lands need to be better recorded.
2. Reframing and strengthening governance to promote participation and social engagement with local communities and other stakeholders, including through partnerships. This can reduce the financing burden for protected areas, and should operationalize rights-based approaches in land management. Legal deficits should be addressed, clarifying land-tenure arrangements and recognizing participation of communities in ecosystem based management
3. Finance SFM via diverse approaches, including from the private sector, banks, from tourists, from social organizations and from consumers. Approaches that operationalize ABS can mobilize financing from different sources. Increased access to finance can only have impact if accompanied with governance changes.
4. Promote awareness and behavior change: Nutritional information to be updated to include sustainability considerations, with education starting from schools. Information on the impacts of consumption through the supply chain, should be made available.
5. Regional cooperation should be strengthened, the actions recommended by the Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Development are broadly supported. Transboundary approaches are critical for management of impacts of biodiversity of consumption patterns.
6. Action on land-degradation neutrality, and the rapid loss of biodiversity

**4. Working group 4 on “Policy recommendations to address interlinkages between goals- a background document will be provided on this, mapping interlinkages between SDG 15 and other SDGs”**

Policy recommendations for integrated SDG 15 implementation with other SDGs in Asia and the Pacific:

Given the vital importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services for human survival and well-being, effectively mainstreaming biodiversity across government sectors: an essential

conservation need is to urgently mainstream biodiversity conservation into decision making including the Ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Planning, Tourism and Education amongst others. This could be done by working in partnerships and adopting an integrated and evidence-based approach to sustainable development, planning and implementation, taking into account the links, synergies and tradeoffs, between SDG 15 and other SDGs, such as SDG 1-No poverty, SDG 2-zero hunger, SDG 3-Good Health and well-being, SDG 5-Gender equality, SDG 6-Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 8-Decent work and economic growth, SDG 12- SCP and SDG 13-Climate Action.