Australia

UN Economic and Social Commission for the Asia Pacific

Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development,
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Statement by Dr Sharman Stone, Ambassador for Women and Girls

Thank you Madam Executive Secretary,

Ministers, Excellencies, Colleagues

On behalf of Australia, I would like to thank ESCAP for again hosting the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

Regional fora such as this allow us to come together to help accelerate our progress towards delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda).

We value this opportunity to consider our collective ambition, share lessons and focus our attention on issues of greatest concern to our region – including gender equality and women’s empowerment, governance, climate action and economic growth.

We welcome the regional roadmap as a means to capture these shared priorities.
We are especially pleased to see gender equality and women’s empowerment reflected in the roadmap as a guiding principle for development. The gender-sensitive implementation of the 2030 Agenda is essential to realising the ambition to ‘leave no one behind’.

This is an issue that is very important to Australia.

In 2016, Australia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs launched the *Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy*. The Strategy embeds the realisation of women’s and girls’ human rights across Australia’s foreign policy, economic diplomacy and development program goals.

It establishes three priorities for Australian advocacy and investment:

- increasing women’s voice in decision-making, leadership and peace-building;
- promoting women’s economic empowerment; and
- ending violence against women and girls.

The Australian Government has also set a target that requires at least 80 per cent of aid investments, regardless of their objectives, effectively addressing gender equality issues in their implementation. We are close; in 2015-16, 78 per cent of our investments achieved this commitment.

Australia is committed to giving effect to the 2030 Agenda, nationally, regionally and globally. Since the 2030 Agenda came into effect in January last year, Australia has actively sought opportunities to advance the agenda *globally*, including:

- Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull’s appointment to the *UN/World Bank High Level Water Panel on Water*, at which he most recently announced Australia’s new initiative – *Water for
Women – to improve access to safe and affordable water, and improved sanitation and hygiene practices,

- Australia’s contribution of $1 billion to assist developing countries address climate change, including $300 million for climate change and resilience initiatives in Pacific Island countries
- Australia’s co-chairing of the Green Climate Fund, and
- Advancing SDG16 on peace and governance through the UN Human Rights Council if Australia is elected for the 2018 – 2020 term.

Regionally, Australia:

- Is committed to the flagship Investment in Women Initiative – $A46 million over the next four years – to increase quality employment and business leadership opportunities for women in South East Asia,
- Is a founding partner of the Addis Tax Initiative and will double our investments by 2020 to support developing countries strengthen their tax systems, increase domestic resource mobilisation and promote good economic governance,
- Supports UNDP’s Asia-Pacific Development Effectiveness Facility, which assists countries better map and target financial flows to national sustainable development priorities, and
- participates in the work of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat-led regional SDGs taskforce to develop regional indicators.

Domestically, there are many Australian Government initiatives that go to the heart of the SDGs, including:

- new policies to reduce domestic violence;
- priority on Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians; and
- our National Disability Insurance Scheme.
However, Australia recognises the 2030 Agenda is not just a commitment by governments – other key stakeholders including businesses, civil society and academia must recognise the important role they must play. Australia is pleased with the level of ownership these stakeholders have already demonstrated – including over 30 Australian CEOs issuing a Statement of Support to implement the SDGs in their corporate planning and policies.

Conclusion

The 2030 Agenda challenges us all to:

- to build support for the globally agreed framework;
- to ensure our existing work is aligned with 2030 Agenda; and
- take the opportunities the agenda offers to accelerate our progress towards the goals.

Only by addressing these challenges together will we be able to truly give effect to the promise of the 2030 Agenda – and ensure we leave no one behind.