I: Background

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires careful adaptation to country-specific developmental challenges through the prioritization and sequencing of actions aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The adaptation process, or the translation of the 2030 Agenda into a national planning and budgetary process, is particularly important for countries with special needs in Asia and the Pacific, which includes the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States. These countries continue to face a range of structural challenges resulting from lower levels of domestic economic diversification, limited productive capacities and increased vulnerability to external shocks, which is impeding progress in making a structural transformation. Thus, development partners, including new actors, should be encouraged to assist countries with special needs in the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The adaptation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level is a challenging undertaking because of (a) interlinkages across the Sustainable Development Goals and (b) bottlenecks that are impeding progress towards inclusive growth and sustainable development. In the case of interlinkages, policymakers are required to identify complementarities, synergies and trade-offs across the Goals. For example, there seems to be a close relationship between Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 3 (good health and well-being) and Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth). Policies that are intended to advance the 2030 Agenda in these four areas in a holistic and coordinated way could take advantage of potential complementarities and synergies among them, resulting in a more effective implementation. On the other hand, some people believe that there is a trade-off between Goal 8 and Goals 11 to 15 related to environmental sustainability. This perceived trade-off must be taken into account in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in order to maintain a good balance among the three pillars of sustainable development. Similarly, policymakers need to identify potential bottlenecks in the implementation process. These bottlenecks can help policymakers design intervention mechanisms, which would facilitate the effective allocation of resources. This suggests that a clear understanding of the interlinkages across Goals and targets and identification of bottlenecks are essential for adapting the 2030 Agenda at the national level.

In view of the above, the 2030 Agenda has to be localized to maximize its impact. Policymakers could develop country-specific policies and strategies for prioritizing and sequencing the actions that need to be taken as part of the overall effort to achieve the Goals. In this context, a recent ESCAP (2016) report, the Countries with Special Needs Development Report: Adapting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the National Level, emphasized the importance of prioritization and sequencing of actions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The analytical framework proposed in the report could be used to inform policymakers of their optimal, country-specific pathways on progress towards reaching the Goals, which would contribute to efforts aimed at adapting the 2030 Agenda into their national context, including through innovative policy initiatives and institutional reforms.
II: Contribution to the Development Cooperation Forum Theme “Development cooperation: lever for integrated and effective SDG implementation”

The prioritization and sequencing of national actions for achieving sustainable development can also provide useful insight for reshaping development cooperation frameworks. In order to make development cooperation more coherent and consistent and revitalize global partnerships for sustainable development, countries could adjust their national development cooperation strategies in line with the 2030 Agenda, while keeping in view the emerging global economic policy situation and outlook. At the same time, development cooperation frameworks, including North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, should re-orient cooperation flows in accordance with the priorities and sequencing of actions of beneficiary countries, in particular for the countries with special needs in Asia and the Pacific. This framework is expected to provide development partners with opportunities to identify areas and modalities, such as financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building programmes, of cooperation.

III: Objectives

The objective of the side event on “Adaptation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Role of Development Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific” is to facilitate the discussion of how to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda by leaving no one behind. The event will focus on the importance of the prioritization and sequencing of national actions for achieving sustainable development and discuss how development cooperation frameworks could be reshaped in accordance with the development needs and priorities of beneficiary countries.

IV. Organization and participation

The side event will be organized as a high-level panel discussion, which will be followed by an open discussion. Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP will moderate the session. The meeting will be chaired by Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and High Representative for OHRLLS. The panel will include finance ministers and senior Ministers from the Asia-Pacific region, an expert as well as a private sector and a CSO representative. Speakers will be kindly requested to limit their interventions to 5 minutes. Member States, representatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector and members of the media attending the High Level Political Forum are invited to attend.

V: Documentation

ESCAP will share background documents on the key areas of discussion prior to the side event. Please visit ESCAP website for further information: http://www.unescap.org/events/apcsn-nyc-def.