



Policy Dialogue on Inclusive Subregional Cooperation in East and North-East Asia for Sustainable Development

**Celebrating UN75 and
10th Anniversary of ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office
22 October 2020, 14:30 to 17:00 (GMT+9)**

Background

The *Policy Dialogue on Inclusive Cooperation in East and North-East Asia for Sustainable Development* is organized to discuss the current state of subregional cooperation and key agenda that will help accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in East and North-East Asia. The subregion, despite its economic dynamism and presence, has been lagging behind on many of the SDGs and related targets. Particularly on climate change action, environmental sustainability, as well as health and well-being.

In addressing these common challenges, regional cooperation has an important role to play as a catalyst for developing joint strategies and actions. Unlike other subregions in Asia and the Pacific, the East and North-East Asia subregion has not been able to capitalize on institutionalized regional cooperation mechanisms for multiple reasons. As such, functional and mainly bilateral cooperation in specific areas have been established in place of a multilateral entity covering multi-sectoral issues. While sectoral cooperation mechanisms have been effective in solving technical issues in a particular field, the growing interdependence and spill-over effects among different sectors call for a new approach to address subregional challenges.

At this time, when countries in the subregion are experiencing unprecedented socio-economic challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is concern that countries will retreat to inward-looking strategies and protectionism in line with border closures and disruptions in regional supply chains. The Policy Dialogue aims to explore the unique opportunity presented by the pandemic to realign the subregion's recovery in a more sustainable path by exploiting inclusive multisectoral and multilateral subregional cooperation.

ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office has prepared a publication entitled "Inclusive Cooperation in East and North-East Asia for Sustainable Development", as a background to this Policy Dialogue in order to identify new and old challenges that the subregion is facing that would be most effectively addressed through enhanced subregional cooperation.

Objective

The primary objective of the Policy Dialogue is to bring together key stakeholders to discuss the recommendations in the above mentioned publication. The publication assesses the current state of subregional cooperation in East and North-East Asia in the areas of sustainable connectivity, environmental sustainability, and innovation for inclusive and resilient societies and proposes four areas for regional cooperation that would accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The policy dialogue is also aimed at engaging a wide-range of subregional actors and experts outside the subregion, taking advantage of the virtual platform to seek their views and raise awareness on the benefits of subregional cooperation initiatives.

Celebrating UN75 and the 10th Anniversary of ESCAP ENEA

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific established its East and North-East Asia Office (ESCAP ENEA) on 17 May 2010 as a regional response to the Secretary-General's pledge to support the UN's development pillar and to bring ESCAP closer to member States. Since its inauguration in Incheon, Republic of Korea, ESCAP ENEA has been working closely with the six ESCAP member States in East and North-East Asia, namely China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, and two associate members, Hong Kong, China and Macao, China.

With contributions and support from the Incheon Metropolitan Government and the Government of the Republic of Korea, ESCAP has strengthened its presence and interventions in East and North-East Asia, delivering programmes that address specific subregional priorities for sustainable development. ESCAP has also provided more focused and in-depth assistance, upon the request of member States, to address key development challenges through fostering subregional cooperation mechanisms, conducting research, providing advisory services, organizing training workshops and implementing technical cooperation projects.

In the absence of major multilateral institutions in North-East Asia, ESCAP mobilized its analytical work and catalytic role to build various multilateral and multistakeholder platforms on subregional priorities, which include:

- **Improving environmental sustainability on key subregional priorities** by serving as the Secretariat of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) that leverages intergovernmental cooperation to address nature and marine conservation, transboundary air pollution (North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership), desertification and land degradation, and low carbon cities.
- **Strengthening subregional connectivity for trade, transport and energy** through subregional platforms including International Seminar on Trade Facilitation in North-East Asia, Inter-governmental Agreement on International Road Transport Along the Asian Highway Network among China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation, and North-East Asia Power Interconnection and Cooperation Forum, as well as technical projects and policy dialogues.

- **Strengthening means of implementation to address sustainable development challenges** through the North-East Asia Multistakeholder Forum on SDGs, North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum, Urban innovation challenge: Citypreneurs, and work on science, technology and innovation (STI) policies.
- **Promoting disaster resilient societies** by facilitating intergovernmental cooperation on capacity building for drought/dzud monitoring and early warning in Mongolia and conducting subregional studies.

Organizers

- United Nations ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office
- Incheon Metropolitan City, Republic of Korea
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea