

**North and Central Asia Multi-Stakeholder Forum
on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals**

**Issky-Kul, Kyrgyzstan
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Video message by Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General
of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Excellencies, Distinguished participants,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development places the principles of empowerment, inclusion and equality at the heart of our efforts.

Four years after its adoption, governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders have been making sustained efforts to address the challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Today, we are not yet on track to achieve any of the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region. We must accelerate progress now.

In September this year, world leaders will gather at the United Nations headquarters in New York for the 74th Session of the General Assembly to take stock of the key global issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this context, the UN Secretary-General urged world leaders “to come to the September summits not with beautiful speeches, but with concrete actions, plans and commitments to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change”.

UN ESCAP analysis shows that on its current trajectory, the Asia-Pacific region will not achieve any of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Each one of us has a valuable contribution to make, and we must consider how to overcome the challenges still faced by our region. The North and Central Asia is a central part of that policy dialogue in making the progress on various SDGs.

I urge policymakers and stakeholders to act together to find sustainable solutions.

In North and Central Asia, countries are doing well in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and in providing quality education.

Moreover, the overall progress of this subregion is relatively better compared to other subregions of Asia and the Pacific in several SDGs: clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), reduced inequalities (Goal 10), responsible consumption and production (Goal 12), climate action (Goal 13), life below water (Goal 14) and peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16).

Yet, urgent action must be taken to reverse negative trends to achieve gender equality (Goal 5), support decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), and build sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11).

We must do more, and there are plenty of opportunities for the Governments in the North and Central Asia to accelerate progress.

To accelerate SDGs progress further, you may wish to consider three possible strategic policy issues:

First, mobilize additional and targeted investment in areas such as social protection, universal health care, and cleaner energy and climate resilient infrastructure.

Second, focus on reversing existing trends in gender equality.

Third, emphasize the importance of sustainable cities and communities, along with other environmental risks, including air pollution.

UN ESCAP is working closely with our member States from the North and Central Asia in supporting the SDGs policy designs and programmes.

Over the past several months, I had the good opportunity to meet the Presidents, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, senior Ministers and officials from the North and Central Asia to explore further collaboration opportunities focused on SDGs and regional cooperation.

I am optimistic that our collaborative approach and partnerships with the Governments and stakeholders will bear large benefits to the people and societies.

Furthermore, I plan to strengthen deeper economic cooperation between North and Central Asia and the rest of the Asia-Pacific region that would boost economic growth and sustainable development.

Supporting improved and sustainable transport infrastructure and trade facilitation measures are also part our efforts to deliver on the promotion of the economic diversification and spur productivity growth.

UN ESCAP is equally committed in collaborating with other intergovernmental organizations such as the Eurasian Economic Commission and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The economies of the North and Central Asia have great potential to take the sustainable development agenda a step further.

We all need to be together in our efforts to fulfill the aspirations of our societies.

I am looking forward to hearing the outcome of this subregional SDGs forum, and to joining forces with all of you to accelerate this work to achieve to 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

I wish you a successful Forum.

Thank you.