



ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

## ESCAP Sustainable Business Network – Monthly Update

July 2020

Dear ESNB members,

We hope you are doing well and staying safe in this challenging period. We hope this monthly update will help you stay updated with ESCAP activities to plan your engagement and volunteer for opportunities.

### ESCAP news

For short overview of ESCAP related news and activities over the past month, please see ESCAPs monthly newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/un/escap-newsletter-july-2020>

### Upcoming events of interest to ESNB members

All ESCAP upcoming events: <https://www.unescap.org/events/upcoming>

*2 July 2020, 15:00-16:30 SEOUL TIME (GMT +9)*

**Webinar: Managing COVID-19 Pandemic - Experiences & Best Practices of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.**

<https://www.unescap.org/events/webinar-managing-covid-19-pandemic-experiences-best-practices-china-japan-and-republic-korea>

*August 2020 (date tbc)*

### **SME Policy Guidebook**

In 2012 ESCAP published a Policy Guidebook for SME Development in Asia and the Pacific. During 2020 the Secretariat will work on the second edition of the Guidebook. ESNB members are invited to volunteer to contribute to this process e.g. through offering expert advice on special issues (like SME finance, digitization, start-ups), through participation in expert meetings and peer-reviews, or by proposing on such issues to contribute to the process. To volunteer or propose experts, please send an email to: [esbn@un.org](mailto:esbn@un.org).

*29-30 September 2020*

**2nd Forum on Trade Digitalization for Sustainable Regional Integration**

This Forum provides a platform for public and private sector experts from the region and beyond to share their experiences in enabling cross-border paperless data exchange. It will feature presentations of bilateral, regional and global initiatives to enable electronic exchange and legal recognition of electronic data and documents, to reduce trade costs and boost regulatory compliance. Panelists will share insights on how governments can deepen cooperation in this area, including through collaboration with the private sector and through South-South cooperation. The Forum will also provide updates on how frontier technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence are being applied to make trade easier and more inclusive. Finally, it will facilitate exchange of views on how to ensure that trade digitalization can most effectively contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

<https://www.unescap.org/events/2nd-forum-trade-digitalization-sustainable-regional-integration>

*29 October 2020*

**ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN), 8th Meeting**

The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) will meet in October 2020 in connection with the Asia-Pacific Business Forum, most likely virtually.

<https://esbn.unescap.org/events/escap-sustainable-business-network-esbn-8th-meeting>

*30 October 2020*

**Asia-Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2020**

The Asia-Pacific Business Forum will be held virtually on 30 October 2020 under the theme “The Future of Global Value Chains and Implications for SMEs”. The Forum will discuss innovative solutions to address the challenges and capitalize on opportunities to recover from the Covid-19 induced crisis and global trade tensions, and restore global trade and investment links through GVCs, while supporting the transfer to more world.

<https://esbn.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-business-forum-apbf-2020>

**Recently published by ESCAP**

**Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2020: Leveraging Ocean Resources for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (30 June 2020)**

The Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report examines how small island developing States can leverage ocean resources for their sustainable development. It examines how small island developing States should take advantage of their ‘blue’ economy to foster their development, focusing on two sectors, fisheries and tourism, which are important in small island developing States and which both rely on ocean resources.

<https://www.unescap.org/publications/asia-pacific-countries-special-needs-development-report-2020-leveraging-ocean-resources>

**COVID-19 and South Asia: National Strategies and Subregional Cooperation for Accelerating Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Recovery** (25 June 2020)

South Asia entered the COVID-19 crisis with a low level of preparedness: The COVID-19 outbreak hit South Asia at a time when the SDGs were gaining traction and countries had begun to make some progress. The crisis has exposed gaps in public health infrastructure, basic sanitation facilities and access to broadband connectivity. With already elevated levels of fiscal deficits and public debt, governments of the South Asian countries found themselves having limited fiscal space to mount major relief and stimulus packages to mitigate socioeconomic impacts. This paper argues the need for governments to build back better and turn the crisis into an opportunity to create more equal, sustainable and resilient societies in South Asia. <https://www.unescap.org/resources/covid-19-and-south-asia-national-strategies-and-subregional-cooperation-accelerating>

**A Framework for Country Studies on MSMEs Access to Finance in Asia and the Pacific** (19 June 2020)

The difficulties of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME) to access finance has been well known and documented for a long time, and governments and related agencies have set up various policies and mechanisms to facilitate the flow of finance. Have these efforts succeeded? What gaps and challenges remain? How policies and mechanisms can better address such gaps? And what role there is for FinTech solutions and training? This framework, developed by ESCAP, has been utilized for preparing detailed national studies on MSMEs access to finance in selected countries of Asia and the Pacific, some of which in collaboration with the ESNB taskforce on Banking and Finance.

<https://www.unescap.org/resources/framework-country-studies-msmes-access-finance-asia-and-pacific>

**Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises' Access to Finance in Samoa** (19 June 2020)

This study analyses the supply and demand of financial services for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Samoa, as well as the policy and regulatory frameworks in place and/or needed to better enable MSMEs to access and use financial services. The study also undertakes a gender lens analysis to determine the gender-specific constraints faced by Samoan entrepreneurs to access and use financial services. The main recommendations of the study are (i) an integrated training program for MSMEs, (ii) a collateral shortfall partial guarantee scheme; and (iii) technical assistance to the Development Bank of Samoa.

<https://www.unescap.org/resources/micro-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises-access-finance-samoa>

**E-commerce provisions in RTAs: Implications for negotiations and capacity building** (8 June 2020)

This paper addresses the regulatory and policy environments conducive for e-commerce to thrive. As regulatory issues affecting e-commerce have become more prominent in recent regional trade agreements (RTAs), the paper seeks to investigate their role in setting the regulatory standard in this area. The paper reviews previous findings on RTA provisions in e-commerce and explains the rationale for the inclusion of certain provisions in relation to promoting growth in e-commerce. It zooms in on two recent RTAs, one involving the European union, and another the United States of America, as both are seen as building "model provisions" to follow by others. Based on what emerge as typical obligations and commitments in past and recent RTAs, possible negotiations and capacity building implications for least developed and middle-income developing countries are discussed.

<https://www.unescap.org/resources/e-commerce-provisions-rtas-implications-negotiations-and-capacity-building>

**Working paper series**

Macroeconomics: <https://www.unescap.org/publication-series/mpfd-working-papers>

Trade: <https://artnet.unescap.org/publications/working-papers>

**Recently published by others****Global Trade Helpdesk (GTH)**

The Global Trade Helpdesk (GTH) is a multi-agency initiative jointly led by ITC, UNCTAD, and the WTO that aims to simplify market research for companies, and especially Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), by integrating trade and business information into a single online portal. The initiative builds on existing ITC, UNCTAD and WTO services as well as partner organisations, including FAO, IADB, AFDB, WCO, and WB among others, to provide an integrated solution that puts a wealth of global trade information at the fingertips of entrepreneurs around the world. Using GTH, firms can compare demand for their products across markets, explore tariffs and other market access conditions, access details about buyers, navigate domestic export processes, and find business partners.

Over the next nine years, the initiative will continue to expand and integrate crucial trade intelligence and strengthen links with national and international information sources to provide the most comprehensive information possible to global exporters.

<https://globaltradehelpdesk.org/en>

**Statement of Action by the Global Investors for Sustainable Development (GISD) Alliance:*****COVID-19 and Beyond: Response and Recovery***

In a meeting convened by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on 10 June, leaders of prominent financial institutions and businesses pledged to scale-up sustainable investments globally, especially in countries most in need as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance issued a statement vowing greater action to confront the global economic crisis driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and keep the Sustainable Development Goals on track.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/financing/post-news/private-sector-leaders-commit-mobilizing-resources-build-back-better-covid-19>

**Future of Consumption in Fast-Growth Consumer Markets: ASEAN****World Economic Forum, June 2020.**

The World Economic Forum Platform for Shaping the Future of Consumption aims to accelerate the responsible transformation of the consumption landscape by enabling consumer well-being, environmental sustainability, inclusive growth models, and trust and transparency among all stakeholders. This report builds on in-depth consumer surveys conducted across over 1,740 households in 22 cities and towns in ASEAN, covering all key demographic segments, and draws from over 35 in-depth interviews with private and public-sector leaders. This research leads to rich insights on ASEAN's present and future outlook on consumption, highlighting implications for businesses over the next decade. It also

lays out a call to action for all stakeholders in ASEAN's growth to build an inclusive future for the region in a post-COVID world.

[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Future\\_of\\_Consumption\\_in\\_Fast\\_Growth\\_Consumer\\_Markets\\_ASEAN\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Consumption_in_Fast_Growth_Consumer_Markets_ASEAN_2020.pdf)

**SME Competitiveness Outlook 2020: COVID-19: The Great Lockdown and its Impact on Small Business  
International Trade Centre (ITC), 24 June 2020.**

The SME Competitiveness Outlook 2020 analyses the impact of the pandemic on small firms, international supply chains and trade. It provides projections and a 15-point action plan for businesses, policymakers and business support organizations to weather the crisis - and gear up for a 'new normal' that needs to be resilient, digital, inclusive and sustainable.

The report combines analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on firms based on a large-scale global survey, with case studies and a thought leader viewpoint. The projected drop in supply chain trade is evaluated by region, and in 85 country profiles.

<http://www.intracen.org/SMEOutlook/>

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us to provide input, questions or suggestions for the monthly update: [esbn@un.org](mailto:esbn@un.org).

Best regards,

ESBN Secretariat