



**Written Statement of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network for the  
2020 Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.**

As members of the Executive Council of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network,

We are deeply concerned with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on workers and enterprises, in particular micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and emphasize the need to help those most in need, such as informal workers, women, migrants, refugees and older persons.

As a global pandemic, COVID-19 has severely impacted Asia and the Pacific. In a region that relies heavily on exports and tourism, lockdowns and related closures have disrupted business and supply chains, putting many out of jobs, and risking increasing the already stark inequalities in the region.

We are concerned that even before the onset of the pandemic, the region was not on track to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030. In particular, we are alarmed about the climate-related goals (SDG13) and sustainable consumption and production (SDG12), where the region is moving in the wrong direction, as well as provision of clean water and sanitation (SDG6), and ensuring decent work and economic growth (SDG8).

We underscore the need to accelerate our efforts to achieve the SDGs and focus on building back better from the Covid-19 crisis. In this regard we believe the crisis offers opportunities to strengthen the role of - and collaboration with - business in building a more sustainable Asia-Pacific region.

As members of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network, we pledge to work with Governments and the United Nations to help accelerate the delivery of the SDGs through enhancing our own sustainability, including by adhering to internationally recognized sets of principles and standards of responsible business conduct like the United Nations Global Compact, and setting company-wide carbon emission reduction targets. We will also work separately and collectively to promote increased sustainability and resilience among the wider business community digital tools and platforms are critical in enhancing resilience, we pledge to work to increase the knowledge and spread of digital tools in the region, including solutions for more effective and efficient supply chains, finance, sales and back-office functions, to enable more flexible production and delivery of work, including working from home where possible. As the region is already the most disaster prone in the world, we will also continue to work with ESCAP to emphasize the need for resilience and disaster risk reduction, including through public-private partnerships for tsunami monitoring.

We pledge to put people and planet before profit to ensure that businesses are sustainable and do not lead to a depletion or pollution of the earth's resources, including reduction of production and use of plastics and developing and transferring technologies that are environmentally sustainable.

In this regard, to accelerate wider business action, we encourage Governments to adopt policies that correct for externalities of business operations, including by putting a price on carbon, while incentivizing social and inclusive business models.

SMEs are the backbone of the regional economy, accounting for 90% of businesses. We would like to call on regional governments to save our SMEs via speedy and immediate emergency fiscal and economic stimulus packages which must be directly extended to the SMEs and their workforce in order to ensure their continued operations and save livelihoods.

Regional Customs Administrations must also keep trade and Customs borders open, and maintain continuity of the supply chain through transparent and speedy customs clearance procedures for essential medical equipment and food supplies.

We will ensure that throughout our business operations we will do our utmost to care for our employees and suppliers, including respecting human rights throughout our operations as outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and in line with United Nations universal declarations and relevant ILO conventions.

Thank you.