EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asia and the Pacific needs to accelerate progress towards all Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

On its current trajectory, Asia and the Pacific will not achieve any of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. To live up to the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, accelerated progress is required on all fronts. For three Goals the situation is deteriorating, and urgent action is needed to reverse course.

Progress has been made towards some SDGs in Asia and the Pacific, but the rate of progress is insufficient. Steps have been taken towards ending poverty (Goal 1) and ensuring all have access to quality education and lifelong learning (Goal 4). Measures are underway to achieve affordable and clean energy (Goal 7). Yet even where good progress has been made, it is too slow for these goals to be met by 2030. For instance, while the best progress has been registered for delivering quality education (Goal 4), quicker progress is needed towards the Goal's underlying targets.

For more than half the SDGs, progress is stagnant or heading in the wrong direction in Asia and the Pacific. Little progress has been towards ending hunger (Goal 2), supporting industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9), reducing inequalities (Goal 10), building sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11), combating climate change (Goal 13), protecting life below water (Goal 14) and life on land (Goal 15), or towards supporting peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16). For three Goals, the situation has deteriorated. Negative trends have been registered when it comes to providing clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), ensuring decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), and supporting responsible consumption and production (Goal 12).

Urgent action is needed to strengthen environmental protection.

Natural resource management must be improved in Asia and the Pacific. Targets related to sustainable food production, populations suffering from water scarcity, the generation and use of renewable energy, the management of chemicals and wastes, and the protection of biodiversity all register negative trends. Hazardous waste generation, the reduction in forest areas, and the permanent water body extent are the three SDG indicators which are predicted to regress the most by 2030, compared to 2015. With the exceptions of North and Central Asia and the Pacific, all subregions in Asia and the Pacific need to reverse existing trends on climate action.

Asia and the Pacific needs to strengthen its means of implementing the 2030 Agenda (Goal 17).

Lack of progress towards SDG 17 could undermine progress towards all other SDGs. Goal 17 seeks to strengthen global partnerships and means of implementation to achieve the ambitious targets of the 2030 Agenda. Its underlying targets focus on measuring tax revenues, debt sustainability, statistical capacity, technology transfer, international cooperation, trade conditions and policy coherence on sustainable development. Progress in all these areas is necessary to ensure we have the means to finance, target and implement policy solutions to achieve sustainable development. In 2018, all SDG Targets under Goal 17 need to be accelerated in Asia and the Pacific. Failing to do so could jeopardise the achievement of all other SDGs.

The subregions of Asia and the Pacific are making progress on different goals and face different challenges.

East and North-East Asia is leading other subregions in its progress towards no poverty (Goal 1) and zero hunger (Goal 2). **South and South-West Asia** is ahead in its effort to achieve good health and well-being (Goal 3) and decent work and economic growth (Goal 8). **South-East Asia** has made the greatest progress towards quality education (Goal 4), affordable and clean energy (Goal 7) and industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9). **The Pacific** is the leading subregion for gender equality (Goal 5), sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11), life on land (Goal 15) and partnership for the goals (Goal 17). **North and Central Asia** has made the most progress towards six goals: 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).

All Asia-Pacific subregions need to reverse existing trends for at least three Goals.

- **North and Central Asia** is regressing on gender equality (Goal 5), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8) and sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11).
- **South and South-West Asia** is regressing on clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), responsible consumption and production (Goal 12) and climate action (Goal 13).
- **South-East Asia** is regressing in decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), climate action (Goal 13), and peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16).
- **East and North-East Asia** is regressing in sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11), climate action (Goal 13) and life on land (Goal 15).
- **The Pacific** is regressing on zero hunger (Goal 2), industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9), life below water (Goal 14) and peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16).

Insufficient data remains a challenge in Asia and the Pacific.

The lack of reliable data to effectively measure progress towards the SDGs remains one of the region's biggest challenges. Despite a significant increase in the availability of SDG indicators since 2017, data gaps remain for two thirds of the global SDG indicators. Economic data is generally more plentiful than in the social and environmental domains. Nearly one-quarter of all SDG Targets lacking evidence relate to the environment. There is also a wide gap in data availability across subregions, with South and South-West Asia registering the best data availability and the Pacific the worst.

Surveys are key source of country-level data for the SDG indicators, but data availability from surveys is much lower than administrative sources. Surveys often only provide data intermittently and our analysis finds data availability is the highest when it can be sourced from administrative data. Increased use of these data sources could help overcome the difficulty of obtaining data from survey responses, as this data can be produced at a lower cost, more rapidly and at a higher frequency. There is also scope for the region to make greater use of alternative data sources to complement traditional sources and build a more accurate picture of progress towards the SDGs.

The findings of this report are only as comprehensive as the available data. Compared to the 2017 edition, this report incorporates 65 per cent more SDG indicators to provide a more detailed analysis of the region's progress towards the 2030 Agenda. 105 SDG indicators offer a more in-depth assessment of progress compared with last year's 64. This year's report now includes disaggregated data by age, sex and location for 21 SDG indicators, which enables a sharper focus on the most vulnerable when assessing progress. The use of this expanded set of SDG indicators means the findings in this report are not comparable to those of previous years.