



## FOREWORD

The 2015 edition of ESCAP's *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific* covers an issue that is of special international importance this year: inclusive growth. This issue has direct bearing on the three global priorities for 2015: completing the Millennium Development Goals; adopting an ambitious new sustainable development agenda, including a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs); and reaching a meaningful, universal agreement on climate change.

The developing economies of the Asia-Pacific region continue to lead the global economic recovery. However, the economic expansion remains lower than pre-crisis levels and is not commensurate with growing populations and incomes of the region. Despite success in reducing poverty, the *Survey* shows an increase in income inequality. There are also inequalities in terms of opportunities between the richest and the poorest, between urban and rural areas, and between regions within the same country.

The *Survey* also demonstrates that while access to health, education, clean drinking water and other basic public services improved between the 1990s and the 2000s, the opportunity for every citizen to benefit from them actually shrank due to such factors such as gender and the level of income of one's parents.

This growing inequality can be partially explained by the unequal distribution of capital, and the *Survey* contains useful proposals to improve the pattern of public expenditures and increase access to financial services.

This analysis is especially timely as negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and regional consultations on financing for development move into high gear. These two processes will culminate in an agreement to rethink strategies to mobilize financing for development in Addis Ababa in July ahead of the adoption of a universal and transformative post-2015 development agenda, including a set of sustainable development goals, in New York in September. It can also contribute to the negotiations that will culminate at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December.

I commend ESCAP for its insightful analysis, practical advice and recommendations for policymakers in Asia and the Pacific and beyond. These proposals should be factored into global efforts to build the more inclusive, resilient and sustainable future we want.

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Secretary-General of the United Nations

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