

Summary of discussion on Global Environmental Commons held on 6th April 2020 in preparation for the 7th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

Securing the global environmental commons entails living within planetary boundaries, conserving and sustainably managing globally shared resources and ecosystems as well as their shared vulnerabilities and risks. As these environmental commons ignore frontiers and are intrinsically linked, managing them sustainably requires concerted and integrated action to ensure sustainable and well-functioning human societies and economies. Asia and the Pacific hosts tremendous biodiversity and rich and diverse ecosystems, however is faced by devastating environmental degradation. Although regional progress has been made to achieve these goals, targets are not on track for the anticipated 2030 deadline and acceleration to protect and sustainably manage the environmental commons is urgently needed, especially as the environmental commons support the achievements of many other SDGs.

The webinar agreed on key policy actions for accelerating progress on the global environmental commons in Asia and the Pacific. Political commitments should be strengthened for the integrated management and protection of the environment. This should be accompanied by adequate governance systems, allowing for the integration and coherence of environmental policies across the board, as well as participation and accountability, and supported by regional policy making processes. Adequate policies, grounded in the commitment to sustainability, including in the aftermath of COVID-19 should be adopted, including government stimulus packages and rationalizing fossil fuel subsidies for decarbonization and greening of the economy. Preservation of wildlife and its habitat needs increased global, regional and transboundary cooperation to collectively ban illegal trade of wildlife, stop land degradation, plastic pollution and combat water scarcity. Shared risks amongst countries should be unifying, and viewed as common responsibilities for the region. Efforts should be made to mainstream biodiversity across public and private sector planning and financing processes. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, timing is opportune to plan for the reconstruction of economies with inclusive economic models and financing strategies that include environmental and social safeguards. Partnerships, education and outreach should be strengthened, and include youth, minorities and vulnerable groups including women. Finally, science and technology provide an opportunity to strengthen national and citizen led data capacities for multidimensional poverty measures and the environmental SDGs. With prioritization and foresight for the health of the environment and by taking action and collaborating, these collective efforts will see Asia and the Pacific accelerate towards securing the Global Environmental Commons.

This webinar and associated entry point profile was organised by ESCAP, in coordination with UNEP, UNDRR, UNESCO, and UNFCCC.