

ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2017

"Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Asia-Pacific"

29-31 March 2017 | UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE, BANGKOK, THAILAND

SIDE EVENT

Migration: A Critical Factor for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

Venue: UNCC, Meeting Room H

Date: 31 March 2017

Time: 10:00 to 11:00

Organizers: ESCAP, International Organization for Migration, UNFPA, ILO, UNHCR

The overall theme of the fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development is "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Asia-Pacific." The Forum will engage Member States, United Nations and other institutions, major groups and other stakeholders in a dialogue on regional priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. It will address scientific and technological innovation for sustainable development and focus attention on poverty eradication whilst fostering prosperity, through a discussion on achieving SDG 1 in the region.

Special sessions will also be held based on the High-level Political Forum 2017 cluster of SDGs, focusing on Global Partnership on Sustainable Development Data, and on the implementation of SDGs 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere); 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture); 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages); 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls); 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation); and 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development), as well as Goal 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development), which is to be considered each year¹.

The side event will focus on means of harnessing the poverty-reducing effects of international migration in the Asia-Pacific region. International migration, and especially labor migration, is a key driver of poverty reduction and sustainable development in many countries of the region. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, poverty is estimated to 6-7 percentage points lower than it would be without migration, largely due to the impacts of the remittances sent from migrant workers.² Similarly, in Lao People's Democratic Republic, over 75 per cent of surveyed households of migrant workers indicated that

¹In accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/299 "Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level"

²<http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/presscenter/articles/2015/5/25/exchange-rates--remittances--and-poverty-in-the-kyrgyz-republic.html>

remittances were important in improving their families' living conditions.³ Finally, in Bangladesh, a household survey also found that remittance-receiving households showed fewer indicators of poverty, exhibiting higher levels of literacy, land ownership and access to safe drinking water compared to non-recipient households.⁴

However, while the large numbers of migrants from and in Asia-Pacific countries already contribute to important advances in poverty reduction and sustainable development, significant barriers to further contributions persist. Such obstacles include poor living and working conditions for migrant workers; exploitation and abuse by employers of migrant workers; and lack of opportunity for skill development or recognition. These factors are facilitated by factors such as lack of opportunities for low-skilled migrants to access regular migration pathways, leaving migrants prey to irregular means of migration, often with high fees, and informal and often dirty, dangerous and demeaning work. These factors – in addition to being violations of migrants' human and labor rights – reduce the ability of migrants to support poverty reduction in their countries of origin, limiting their salaries and often locking them into debt to pay off recruitment fees.

In recognition of the significant potential for well-managed migration to further contribute to sustainable development, member States of the United Nations decided in September 2016 to launch a process of intergovernmental negotiations leading to the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.⁵ In the context of this process, ESCAP has been requested by member States to organize discussions among States Members of the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders “to examine regional and sub regional aspects of international migration and to provide inputs, in accordance with their respective mandates, to the preparatory process of the global compact.”⁶

This side event will support the process of this regional examination and discussion of international migration by engaging selected experts, governmental partners and other stakeholders to consider the importance of migration to poverty reduction and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region, and the potential role that the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration can play in this process.

Scope

The side event will aim to bring together all APFSD participants with an interest in international migration, including Government participants, civil society members, private sector actors and experts on international migration as speakers and participants. They will be encouraged to consider the importance of international migration in their work, and to participate in the process of providing inputs to the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Key Questions

The key questions to be discussed in this side event are:

- What are key issues holding back migration's contributions to sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region?
- What is needed to overcome these obstacles?

³ <http://th.iom.int/images/report/IOMLaosReportFinal1608-30.pdf>

⁴ http://203.112.218.65/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/LatestReports/SUR_2013.pdf

⁵ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/L.1

⁶ A/RES/71/L.58

- What should the global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration include to maximize the contribution of international migration to sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region?
- What are suggested areas of focus for the Asia-Pacific regional preparations for the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration?

Tentative programme

Panelists/discussants

Moderator: Ms. Nenette Motus, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, International Organization for Migration

Panelists

- H.E. Ambassador Saida Muna Tasneem, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Thailand
- Mr. William Gois, Migrant Forum in Asia
- H.E. Mr. Jaime Nualart, Ambassador of Mexico to Thailand

Proposed programme

1. Opening & Introduction by Moderator (5 mins)
2. Panelist interventions (30 mins)
3. Q&A and discussion (20 mins)
4. Key messages and closing (5 mins)

For more details and information contact:

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