Effectively engaging the business sector in achieving the sustainable development agenda: the role of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network and the Asia-Pacific Business Forum

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The role of the private sector in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is well recognized. At the global level, the United Nations engages with the business sector through the United Nations Global Compact. At the regional level, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has established the ESCAP Business Advisory Council, the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network and the annual Asia-Pacific Business Forum as the main mechanisms for engaging with the business community. While these mechanisms generally have been successful, they can be improved in terms of impact and visibility, and need to be better aligned with the secretariat’s work towards helping countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The present report includes a review of the current role and work of these mechanisms and proposal for reform, which is currently under discussion with the Council and the Network members.

I. Introduction

1. With the launch of the Millennium Development Goals and in recognition of the role of the private sector in achieving sustainable development, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, set up the United Nations Global Compact in 2000 as an initiative to encourage businesses worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, and to report on implementation of them. This was the beginning of a fruitful partnership involving the United Nations and the business sector. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) followed suit with the establishment of the ESCAP Business Advisory Council at the first Asia-Pacific Business Forum, held in Shanghai, China, in 2004.
2. The role of the private sector was further underscored in “The future we want”, the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and in the adoption of the subsequent 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in which 17 Sustainable Development Goals were defined, replacing the Millennium Development Goals. In response, the secretariat and the Council launched the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network at the Asia-Pacific Business Forum held in Kuala Lumpur in 2012. The Council, the Network and the Forum have evolved as useful mechanisms for ESCAP to engage the business sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. ESCAP is the only regional commission that is involved in such mechanisms.

3. The activities of the Council and the Network have yielded concrete results and outputs while the Forum has produced many recommendations for government action over the years (see annex). However, these results have not always been very visible as there is no evidence that Governments have acted upon the recommendations emanating from the Forum. For that reason, the secretariat is working with the Council and the Network to explore ways to strengthen the role of the private sector and business in the work of ESCAP and its intergovernmental processes. The work and role of the Council, the Network and the Forum and outstanding issues and challenges were comprehensively discussed in secretariat note E/ESCAP/CTI(4)/5 under agenda item 5 (e) of the Committee at its fourth session, held in Bangkok from 4 to 6 November 2015, and therefore do not need to be repeated at length in this document. The present report serves as an update of recent developments and presentation of proposals for reform of these three mechanisms.

4. It is important that the engagement of the business sector in the work of ESCAP conforms to similar initiatives at the global level by the United Nations Secretariat based on the Guidelines on a Principle-based Approach to the Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Sector (2015). These guidelines apply to the United Nations Secretariat as well as to separately administered organs, funds and programmes. The original guidelines, developed in 2000 and revised in 2009, provide a framework on a common and systemic approach to partnerships between the United Nations and the business sector, placing greater emphasis on transparency, coherence, impact, accountability and due diligence. Most recently, in April 2017, the Joint Inspection Unit conducted a scoping mission for the terms of reference of a review of the United Nations system – Private sector partnership arrangements in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Taking a proactive approach, ESCAP is striving to develop mechanisms and partnerships for effective engagement of the business sector that could serve as a model for other United Nations regional commissions and entities.

II. Engaging the business sector: current modalities and issues

A. ESCAP Business Advisory Council

5. The ESCAP Business Advisory Council was established as an initiative of the Executive Secretary to engage the business sector in the secretariat’s work in the Asia-Pacific region following the establishment of the Global Compact at the global level by the Secretary-General. The Council established the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network in 2012 to promote the active engagement of the business sector in sustainable development. At its ninth session, held in Bangkok on 19 May 2015, the Council adopted revised terms
of reference and membership criteria along with the revised terms of reference and membership criteria of the Network.¹

6. The original idea was for the Council to remain a relatively small group of business representatives advising the secretariat and its intergovernmental meetings on development issues from a business perspective, while the Network, through its task forces, would undertake concrete projects and initiatives. However, as the Council and the Network normally conduct meetings together, there has been a certain level of confusion as to the division of labour and criteria for membership between them. At the same time, the Executive Secretary has indicated that she wants in place a higher-level business advisory board that would advise her on pertinent issues related to sustainable development.

7. The Council currently has about 50 members. There seems to be agreement in ESCAP and in the Council that this number of members is probably too high to make up a credible advisory body. The number can be explained by the consideration that a credible business advisory council should reflect the diversity of the member States and various subregions and various economic, industrial and services sectors, and be gender balanced.

8. The Council has rendered feedback on many areas of the secretariat’s work over the years at its biannual meetings. However, Council members have noted that the level of their involvement in the legislative and intergovernmental meetings of ESCAP could be enhanced, in particular the annual Commission session, committees, and annual sessions of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and regional meetings on financing for development. For that purpose, Council members are working with the secretariat to make the current mechanisms for ESCAP engagement of the business sector more visible and impact-oriented.

B. ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

9. The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network is comprised of about 150 members and 10 task forces on (a) Green Business; (b) Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Social Enterprise; (c) Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction; (d) Banking and Finance; (e) Digital Economy; (f) Trade and Transport Facilitation; (g) Innovation and Competitiveness; (h) Young Entrepreneurs; (i) Agriculture and Food; and (j) the Pacific Issues.

10. Most of the secretarial backstopping to the Council and the Network is provided by the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, while the Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division extends substantive backstopping to the Task Force on Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction. Other divisions of ESCAP play a much smaller role.

11. While some task forces have been more dynamic than others, their achievements in general are remarkable, in particular in view of the fact that these achievements have been realized at no or little cost to ESCAP apart from staff time. Among the outstanding achievements are the development of an online platform to enhance small and medium-sized enterprise connectivity in Myanmar (www.myanmarsmelink.com); the donation of more than 1,000 solar lights to Timor Leste through the United Nations representative office to the Prime Minister of Timor Leste; capacity-building activities, policy advocacy events and publications pertaining to disaster risk reduction; social

¹ These terms of references can be accessed from the Council website, http://ebac.unescap.org/.
enterprise development; and sustainable banking. A list of the Network’s achievements is in the annex.

12. It is important that these achievements receive a higher level of visibility and acknowledgement, in particular from Governments. An increasing number of businesses have shown interest in working with ESCAP in the effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, as they understand the need for sustainability for the long-term survival of their own business. Many entrepreneurs understand that the Goals provide many opportunities for innovative business in new areas in the region. As a result, the membership of the Network is steadily increasing: members are admitted to the Network on the basis of a due diligence process. Therefore, the time is right for the Network to expand its activities, have a greater impact and become more visible.

13. At a joint meeting comprised of the twelfth meeting of the Council and the third meeting of the Network, held in Dhaka on 8 February 2017, the two organizations elected a new Chair and Vice-Chair after 13 years. The meeting also adopted the following recommendations: (a) the Network task forces should be more focused and have clear objectives; (b) activities and results of the Council and the Network should be better aligned with the work of key ESCAP divisions and feed into the ESCAP intergovernmental meetings to have higher impact; (c) ESCAP should state more clearly what it wants from the Council and provide better leadership and guidance to the Council and the Network from top management; and (d) ideally, each Network task force should have a clear focal point in ESCAP.2

C. Asia-Pacific Business Forum

14. The Asia-Pacific Business Forum has been convening since 2004 on an annual basis. The Forum is an initiative to consult the private sector and other relevant stakeholders on business-related policy issues of importance to Asia and the Pacific. It is the first and only region-wide multi-stakeholder dialogue forum with the objective to establish a meaningful network among stakeholders. Its participants are comprised of representatives of the business community, international agencies and civil society organizations, academics and government officials. The Government of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh International Chamber of Commerce hosted the most recent Forum, which was held in Dhaka on 8 and 9 February 2017. The report of that meeting was distributed as an information paper at the Commission at its seventy-third session in May 2017.

15. The Forum has been largely successful in terms of organization but perhaps less in terms of impact. In particular, there are concerns that the Forum is not effectively linked to the formal policy formulation process as its outcomes and recommendations are not routinely discussed at the sessions of appropriate legislative bodies and intergovernmental processes and conferences of ESCAP. While various attempts have been made to make the Forum more impact-oriented, a higher level of government commitment and additional funding is required to make the Forum financially viable and sustainable. In particular, enhanced government participation in the Forum is recommended to advance it into a meaningful government-business or multi-stakeholder dialogue platform. In addition, given the existence of various other business forums in the region, the Forum needs to find its own niche.

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III. Engaging the business sector: agenda for reform

A. ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

16. The reform efforts are based on three main proposals. First, to integrate the ESCAP Business Advisory Council and the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network into one body by converting the Council into a streamlined executive council of the Network. Second, to consolidate the task forces of the Network and make their work more aligned with the work of ESCAP aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Third, to establish a high-level ad hoc topic-specific business advisory board for the Executive Secretary.

17. It is proposed to formulate the Network’s terms of reference as follows:

(a) Act as a force of change for businesses in the Asia-Pacific region through highlighting the need for businesses to be responsible and sustainable in accordance with internationally recognized principles and standards;

(b) Engage actively in promoting inclusive, resilient and sustainable development through public-private partnerships and providing funding or co-financing for development projects, including humanitarian and disaster relief assistance;

(c) Be a dialogue partner with Governments and voice the perspectives of the business sector on inclusive and sustainable development issues with particular reference to discussing with Governments the requirements for an enabling policy environment for the adoption, practice and implementation of corporate sustainability;

(d) Provide feedback and advice to the secretariat on the business perspectives of its activities and projects upon request;

(e) Contribute to the extent possible to ESCAP-organized or sponsored conferences, meetings and events related to sustainability;

(f) Launch and implement concrete activities and projects in the identified core areas of each Network task force through such modalities as research and publications, policy advocacy and capacity-building.

18. The senior management of ESCAP and selected Council members have expressed concern that there are currently too many task forces implementing small, isolated projects that may not have a direct link with the work of ESCAP or the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and lack long-term sustainability. It is therefore proposed to reorganize the Network into six thematic task forces around three themes, which reflect the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely economic (theme: prosperity), environmental (theme: planet) and social (theme: people). Each theme would have in principle not more than two task forces at this stage. The proposed names of the six new task forces and their backstopping divisions in ESCAP are contained in the figure below.
19. New or additional task forces can be established upon the recommendation of the Executive Council or the secretariat. Each task force is to have a Chair and Vice-Chair, who will be elected by task force members. Task force Chairs (but not Vice-Chairs) will automatically be members of the Executive Council of the Network.

20. The Network members participate in their capacity as representatives of a particular business. They meet at least one of the following criteria:

   (a) They represent a private sector business or State-owned enterprise conducting business in a member State of the ESCAP region;
   
   (b) They represent a non-governmental organization or government agency working in the area of private sector or business (in particular, small and medium-sized enterprise) development;
   
   (c) They represent a private sector representative organization, such as a chamber of commerce and industry or federation of industry or sectoral business organization.

21. Companies participating in the Network should show an active interest in conducting their business in a responsible and sustainable way, as exhibited through participation in the United Nations Global Compact, issuance of sustainability reporting or related actions showing the engagement of the company in sustainability issues.
22. The Network membership is continuous, with no set expiration date. However, it may be discontinued at the recommendation of the Executive Council or the ESCAP secretariat. Reasons for such discontinuation include, among others: resignation for personal reasons upon recommendation from a member of the ESCAP Business Advisory Council; non-payment of membership fees or non-participation in the Network meetings, including task force meetings for more than one year; or irresponsible or unethical business behaviour of the member or the company they represent (the ten principles of the United Nations Global Compact serve as a reference).

23. The Council in its current form will be reduced in size and transformed into the Executive Council of the Network. Its terms of reference are proposed to be as follows:

   (a) Oversee and provide direction to the work of the Network in consultation with the secretariat and conduct the Network meetings and related events;

   (b) Represent the business sector and provide business perspectives on development issues in the Asia-Pacific region at meetings of the legislative bodies of ESCAP, namely the Commission and its committees, and other intergovernmental meetings upon request, including the annual Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development;

   (c) Provide advice to the ESCAP secretariat (the divisions, sections and units) on its programmes and projects;

   (d) Provide guidance, direction and overall logistical, hospitality and financial support wherever possible to the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Business Forum.

24. The Executive Council of the Network will consist of no more than 12 members. Of this number, six will comprise the Chairs of the Network task forces who will be elected for a period of two years with the possibility of extension. The other six members are to be elected from the existing Network membership upon the recommendation of Executive Council members or the secretariat for a period of two years with the possibility of extension.

25. The Network Executive Council will have a President and Vice-President who will be elected by the Network members for a period of two years with the possibility of extension once. They will be elected by a majority vote by the Network members on the basis of a ballot conducted during an annual Network meeting based on nominations from any Network member submitted to the secretariat. As a standard practice, the Network and the Executive Council meetings will be co-chaired by a senior official from the secretariat, such as the Deputy Executive Secretary, the Director of the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division or any other division director depending on the specific topic to be discussed.

26. The Network Executive Council will meet in principle twice a year. One of those meetings will convene once a year separately, and the other will be held jointly with the combined Network membership. The Executive Council can hold additional formal or informal meetings, as appropriate, upon the request of the President or any Executive Council member or the secretariat. Members of the Executive Council can request the presence of other Network members at its meetings.

27. The Network membership is open to application by any prospective member fulfilling the criteria stated above. New members of the Network can also be proposed by the secretariat, the Executive Council, and individual
Network members. New members will be considered for approval following a due diligence process.

28. It is proposed that the Network members pay an annual fee at a rate to be determined by the Network Executive Council, but in principle between $500 and $1,000. These fees will be used for the sole purpose of meeting the costs of the Network meetings and related events and the costs of the secretariat for providing backstopping services and servicing those meetings, including the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Business Forum (see below). In addition, the Network members will attend all meetings at their own expense. The collection of fees will be the responsibility of individual task forces through a modality to be decided by each task force.

29. The Trade, Investment and Innovation Division and the Office of the Executive Secretary will, in principle, serve as the main offices providing secretarial services to the Executive Council, while other divisions will provide similar services for individual Network task forces as proposed in the table below.
### New proposed structure of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

#### Focus group on prosperity (economic dimension of sustainable development)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current task forces</th>
<th>New task forces (core areas)</th>
<th>Sustainable Development Goals</th>
<th>Principal and secondary ESCAP backstopping division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Food</td>
<td>Poverty reduction and zero hunger (with focus on rural development and agriculture)</td>
<td>Goals 1,2</td>
<td>MPFD/TIID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Economy</td>
<td>Digital business solutions (online platforms, e-commerce, paperless trade, single windows and fintech)</td>
<td>Goals 9,17</td>
<td>TIID/IDD (ICT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and Transport Facilitation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Banking and Finance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Focus group on planet (environmental dimension of sustainable development)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current task forces</th>
<th>New task forces (core areas)</th>
<th>Sustainable Development Goal</th>
<th>Principal and secondary ESCAP backstopping division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Business</td>
<td>Clean water and energy (water access and responsible use of fresh water resources, renewable energy and associated technologies)</td>
<td>Goals 6,7</td>
<td>EDD/ED/TTID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and Competitiveness</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction</td>
<td>Disaster and climate risk reduction</td>
<td>Goal 13</td>
<td>IDD (DRR)/TIID</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Pacific Issues</td>
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#### Focus group on people (social dimension of sustainable development)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current task forces</th>
<th>New task forces (core areas)</th>
<th>Sustainable Development Goal</th>
<th>Principal and secondary ESCAP backstopping division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Social Enterprise</td>
<td>Responsible business (principles of responsible business conduct/corporate social responsibility, global compact, human rights, social enterprise and socially responsible investment, including impact investment)</td>
<td>Goals 8,12,16</td>
<td>TIID/SDD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Youth and women entrepreneurship (promoting start-ups and issues faced by young and women entrepreneurs)</td>
<td>Goals 5,8</td>
<td>SDD/TTID</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: ED, Energy Division; EDD, Environment and Development Division; IDD, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division; MPFD, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division; SDD, Social Development Division; TIID, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division. ESCAP subregional Offices will be engaged as and when necessary.*
30. At the request of the Executive Secretary, an ad hoc high-level business advisory board will be convened as needed to discuss and make recommendations on a particular topic related to sustainable development identified by and for the purpose of giving business perspectives and insights to the Executive Secretary and the Senior Management Team. This board will have between 12 and 20 members. The members will be selected by the Executive Secretary and may differ depending on the topics to be discussed though perhaps a core permanent membership of 5-6 members may be maintained. This board will be separate from the Network and its Executive Council though the Network members are, in principle, eligible to be members of this advisory board. The advisory board will be convened at a date and time convenient for the Executive Secretary. The Office of the Executive Secretary will provide secretariat services to this advisory board, which may be delegated to other divisions, depending on the topic of discussion. As advised by the Executive Secretary, for the time being, the focus of the advisory board will be on financing for development.

B. Asia-Pacific Sustainable Business Forum

31. The Asia-Pacific Business Forum is unique in the sense that it is the only regional business forum in the Asia-Pacific region and is organized within the context of the United Nations. As such, it is well positioned to address issues related to sustainable development.

32. In this regard, it is proposed to rename the Asia-Pacific Business Forum to the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Business Forum and include as its main function to meet to discuss and make recommendations on the role of business in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and associated policies. As such, the Forum would be an annual summit of the Network open to the public, in particular the business sector and Governments.

33. A dedicated annual budget would be required for the Forum to cover at least the costs of participation of government officials from least developed countries and other countries with special needs and travel of the secretariat staff, and to ensure high-quality speakers. Funding could be made available from the Network membership fees and ESCAP regular budget or extrabudgetary resources, though funds mobilized through these sources may not be sufficient. Therefore, private sector sponsorships should also be explored more actively. However, to secure the commitment from private sector sponsors, the impacts of the Forum need to be more visible. In this context, funding for marketing and advertising would be highly desirable, but, in practice, this is difficult to secure from the secretariat’s limited internal resources. To limit costs, it is proposed to convene the Forum in Bangkok at the United Nations Conference Centre unless a particular country offers to host the Forum and assume all associated expenses.

34. The next Asia-Pacific Business Forum or Asia-Pacific Sustainable Business Forum will be convened in Hong Kong, China on 10 and 11 April 2018, in collaboration with Cyberport and other local partners, back to back with the annual high-profile Internet Economy Summit, to be held on 12 and 13 April. The focus of the Forum is expected to be on digital business issues, including fintech and other regional connectivity issues with a particular emphasis on the Belt and Road Initiative. The government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is providing financial support for this event, and the Governor of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has agreed to address the opening session. The Asia-Pacific Sustainable Business Forum
2019 will be convened in principle in the Pacific and focus on sustainable development issues pertaining to the Pacific.

35. To more effectively link the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Business Forum with the intergovernmental meetings of ESCAP, the Forum should ideally be organized before the annual sessions of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and Commission sessions, so that the outcomes and recommendations from the Forum could be presented at these intergovernmental meetings. The President or Vice-President of the Executive Council or any other Network Executive Council member would be the ideal business representatives to participate in these intergovernmental meetings.

IV. Conclusions

36. Governments need to recognize the role and importance of the business sector in contributing to and realizing the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, it is more important than ever for Governments to effectively engage the business sector at the national and subnational levels through appropriate consultation mechanisms. The business community should have a say in the formulation of policies, laws and regulations, in particular those that affect them. This would result in more effective and legitimate policies and a higher level of commitment to comply with laws and regulations. In short, the business sector should be a full partner of the Government along with civil society in the efforts aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals based on national consensus.

37. ESCAP, as a regional intergovernmental agency of the United Nations, has initiated various mechanisms to engage the business sector at the regional level. These mechanisms are unique among United Nations agencies worldwide. However, there is scope to make these mechanisms more impact-oriented and visible, both at United Nations Headquarters in New York and among ESCAP member States, while alternative or additional mechanisms could also be considered.

38. To enhance the visibility and impact of business engagement mechanisms, an enhanced level of government participation in the annual ESCAP business forums and commitment to consider the views and recommendations from the business sector at the ESCAP intergovernmental conferences is strongly recommended. In particular, there is need for stronger representation from the business sector in the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, regional high-level and ministerial conferences, and ideally also in ESCAP legislative bodies, namely the Commission and its committees.

39. The secretariat plans to accord higher priority to the engagement of the business sector. The inclusion of specific and additional work programme outputs for this purpose in future strategic frameworks could be considered. Governments are encouraged to provide additional funding to enable the secretariat to achieve such outputs. At the same time, private sector funding of ESCAP technical assistance projects should be more actively explored.

40. The Committee is invited to deliberate on the issues presented and provide guidance to the secretariat in these areas for its future work. In particular, the Committee may provide guidance on:
(a) The role of the business sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) Required policies and strategies for Governments to engage the business sector in achieving the Goals at the national and regional levels;

(c) Mechanisms and modalities for ESCAP to strengthen the engagement of the business sector in its work, in particular through the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network and the Asia-Pacific Business Forum.
Annex

Main achievements of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (as of July 2017)

Completed activities:

- International conference to promote socially responsible business, at the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India Ahmedabad, India, in November 2013. The conference was concluded by adopting the Ahmedabad Charter for Sustainable Business.
- Internet-based platforms for business matchmaking and disseminating marketing information in the Greater Mekong Subregion, pursuing new approaches to reduce information asymmetries and sharing networks, resources, finance, capabilities and knowledge, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (one platform each in Kazakhstan and Myanmar).
- “Lighting a Bright and Sustainable Future – for Timor Leste and Beyond” under the Lighting Lives project, donating over 1,000 solar lights through the United Nations representative office to the Prime Minister of Timor Leste in Dili from 5 to 7 February 2015.
- Formulation of a “Green Index” for East Asia focusing on food waste problem (ongoing).
- Promotion of the active engagement of the business sector in addressing disaster risks and in building resilience through a series of business round-table meetings.
- Organization of socially responsible business workshops for young leaders in India.
- Corporate social responsibility awareness workshops for the Hong Kong banking and financial sector (June 2015).
- First Bangladesh Resilience Dialogue of Private Sector, Dhaka, 7-8 October 2015.
- Young Business Leaders Programme on Socially Responsible Business, 19 and 20 February 2016, Chandigarh, India.
• The Network mission to Kazakhstan (Almaty and Astana, 30 August-4 September 2016) for meetings with the Government, the Astana International Finance Centre and private sector and research on green finance.

• Workshop in Nepal on the theme “Prospecting business dialogue on disaster recovery and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SDFRR)” on 17 November 2016, with the support from the Ministry of Commerce of Nepal and ESCAP.

• The Network mission to Astana for a visit to Expo and to discuss progress on green finance with the Astana International Financial Centre, 26-28 June 2017.


Publications:

• Resilient Business for Resilient Nations and Communities.

• Draft working paper tentatively entitled “A Roadmap to business engagement in disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific”.


• Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR – International Road Transports), benefit study in the ESCAP region by the International Road Transport Union.


• The 3Cs for Responsible Banking in Asia and the Pacific: Corporate Governance, Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Sustainability.

• Corporate Agenda of Sustainable Development: Towards Responsible Business 2.0.

• Business and Development in Myanmar: A Policy Handbook for Private Sector Development.

• The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report Survey on International Trade and Regional Value Chains.

Future proposed activities by the Network task forces:

• Launch of BizOS, the new project of the Task Force on Digital Economy, which complements the small and medium-sized enterprise link platform by providing a range of productivity tools free of charge to small and medium-sized enterprises, available in several languages.

• Initiatives on green finance, green architecture and a food waste index.

• Development, demonstration and dissemination of successful agriculture and food sustainable models to agriculture cooperatives and public and private sectors.

• Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2018 (Hong Kong, China) and 2019 (Pacific).