

Report of the Secretary-General “Towards the achievement of sustainable development: implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through sustainable consumption and production, building on Agenda 21”

Inputs from ESCAP

Draft Outline

I. Introduction

In its resolution 78/151 of 14 December 2023, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, with a particular focus on the state of play with regard to sustainable consumption and production and the application and promotion thereof, taking into account the impacts of, response to and recovery from COVID-19, and to recommend concrete actions to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in this regard.

In the same resolution, the General Assembly decided to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-ninth session, under the item entitled “Sustainable development”, the sub-item entitled “Towards the achievement of sustainable development: implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through sustainable consumption and production, building on Agenda 21”.

II. Promoting sustainable consumption patterns for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on Agenda 21

A. Follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

This section will provide an overview of the status 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, built on Agenda 21, which recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

ESCAP has continued to review progress of all Sustainable Development Goals at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD). Overall the region is not on-track to achieve any of the SDGs by 2030. Analysis in the 2024 *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report*, prepared in advance of the APFSD, highlighted that the current pace of progress would necessitate an additional 32 years (2062) to achieve the SDGs. The report also identifies uneven subregional progress, with all subregions seeing regression since 2015 on Climate Action, and some subregions, including the Pacific, East and North-East Asia, North and Central Asia and South and Southwest Asia seeing regression across multiple SDGs. A continuing challenge to the annual assessment of progress remains the lack and insufficiency of data, which the progress report indicates affects nearly half of the SDG indicators in the region.

ESCAP has continued to provide support to member States in the development of Voluntary National Reviews (VNR). In the period 2022-2023, 15 member States presented Voluntary

National Reviews at the High-Level Political Forums.¹ In 2024, nine countries are expected to present their VNRs at HLPF².

B. Sustainable Consumption and Production

Taking into account the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, this section will focus on the central role of Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production as a cross-cutting goal supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, recognizing that eradicating poverty, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development.

It will refer to progress achieved in making fundamental changes in the way societies consume and produce goods and services through the transition to sustainable economic and business models that promote sustainable consumption and production patterns as well as enabling policies, policies, frameworks, partnerships, technological innovation and instruments that improve resource efficiency and the sustainable management of natural resources, including water-use efficiency, reduce waste, promote life-cycle approaches, encourage approaches such as the circular economy, life cycle and other approaches, ass appropriate and taking into account national circumstance and capacities, enable consumers to make sustainable consumption choices, mainstream sustainability practices, encourage sustainable and environmentally sound bio-based products and increase resilience across all sectors of the economy, which will contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 12. It will also take consider the important role of private sector in prompting and utilizing sustainable practices.

It will also explore sustainable consumption and production approaches, in which products and materials are designed in such a way that they can be reused, remanufactured or recycled and therefore retained in the economy for as long as possible, along with the resources of which they are made, the generation of waste is avoided or minimized, and greenhouse gas emissions are prevented or reduced.

In 2021, SDG 12 was among the cluster of SDGs reviewed in-depth but is assessed annually through the *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report*, presented before each APFSD. The 2024 report indicated mixed results across the region, identifying progress towards 2030 on track for indicators 12.4.2 (Hazardous waste generated) and 12.6.1 (Companies publishing sustainability reports). However, the report highlighted significant regression on 12.2.1 (Material footprint), 12.2.2 (Domestic material consumption). It notes that reducing reliance on fossil fuels is critical to achieve responsible consumption and production objectives by 2030, yet the region has regressed on 12.c.1. (Fossil-fuel subsidies). The report also identified slow progress on renewable energy capacity (12.a.1), e-waste recycling (12.5.1) and compliance with hazardous waste conventions (12.4.1).

¹ 2023: Cambodia, Fiji, Maldives, Singapore, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam;
2022: Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Togo, Tuvalu

² Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu are expected to present their VNRs at HLPF in July 2024.

The Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report analysis disaggregates progress in the ESCAP subregions, noting varying levels of progress in the different contexts. For SDG12, regression is seen in the Pacific, East and North-East Asia, South and South-West Asia, with modest progress but acceleration needed in North and Central Asia and South-East Asia. In all subregions, there remains insufficient data for half or more of the goal's indicators, highlighting the need for more data to effectively monitor progress.

It is vital that pressing short-term economic challenges in the region do not slow the region's transition towards sustainable patterns of production and consumption. Tackling the unsustainability of current consumption and production patterns (SDG 12) is a basic condition for addressing the deficiencies of the current growth-centric model of economic development. Given its interlinkage with many other Sustainable Development Goals, progress on Goal 12 is one of the most cost-efficient and effective ways to achieve sustainable economic development, reduce impacts on the environment, and advance human well-being. Policy recommendations drawn from ESCAP research for progressing Goal 12 for the region focus on three levels of action: local, people, and global action, as defined by the Decade of action to deliver on the SDGs by 2030.

Local action led by governments with the participation of private sector stakeholders, city administrations and other actors is required to embedding sustainable consumption and production in long-term policymaking and implementation, with attention to the reform of market incentives that promote wasteful, inefficient resource use, and supporting circular economy and other approaches, such as the sharing economy, that can reduce waste, and linking resource use efficiency and sustainable resource use, with Nationally Determined Contributions.

People action will require both businesses and consumers to move towards sustainability. Businesses should integrate sustainability into their core functions, factoring environmental, social, and governance aspects in investment analysis and decisions, adopting sustainability reporting rules for increase transparency on resource use and waste production., deploying behavioural science tools to shift consumer choices in sustainable directions.

Global action requires regional cooperation including harmonized standards and policies for accelerating action on the 10-year Framework of Programmes on SCP at the regional level in support of SDG12, including through trade and investments in environmental goods and services, sustainable procurement and eco-labelling, green supply chains, extending life of products, resource recovery and waste management. Incorporating sustainability provisions in regional and bilateral trade agreements helps ensure that businesses within GVCs adhere to sustainable practices, contributing to overall environmental and social goals. ESCAP has launched an Initiative on Mainstreaming Sustainable Development Provisions in Regional Trade Agreements, in continued collaboration with UNCTAD, UN Regional Commissions and other partners. This initiative aims to build the capacity of developing countries to design and negotiate sustainable development provisions while taking that into account their specific situation, and to encourage research and discussions on maximizing the impact of such provisions in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ESCAP's 2023 Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report, prepared in collaboration with UNCTAD and UNIDO, highlighted that digital trade policies, including those pertaining to digital goods and services, data, and digital governance, are critical for enhancing transparency and

traceability throughout Supply Chain 4.0 and the circular economy. Therefore, awareness of digital trade regulatory bottlenecks and the ability to make informed decisions on digital trade policies will be critical to achieving SDG 12.

United Nations Development Systems’ support for the implementation of SDG 12.

This sub-section will provide concrete examples of actions and initiatives being taken across the UN system in support of the implementation of the present resolution.

It will also include commitments and initiatives that provide tools for action on sustainable consumption and production, such as the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns and its new Global Strategy on Sustainable Consumption and Sustainable Patterns.

D. Financing for Development

This section will address the challenges of financing for development as envisaged in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, including financing the shift to sustainable consumption and production.

It will also explore policy options that incentivize and attract private sector finance and adjust national public and private financial systems to mobilize resources for sustainable investment at the national and regional levels.

The Asia-Pacific region is not on track to meet the SDGs by 2030 with its current financial requirements far exceeding available resources. Urgent and systemic change is required to deliver funding at such a scale, especially as SCP encompasses all aspects of the economy. It requires recognition and willingness by all countries to transform policies, regulations, and the financial system. In Asia and the Pacific this change has proceeded at too slow a pace.

ESCAP’s ten principles for actions on sustainable finance adapted for sustainable consumption and production are listed below.³ These ten actions are grouped into actions to be taken by governments, regulators, and private finance.

Governments and regulators

1. New sustainable finance partnerships for SCP are developed through which governments, regulators, MDBs, and private finance commit to action around specific goals and contribute specific tasks in line with this shared goal.
2. Effective NDC financing strategies are developed, led by authorities with clear mandates, which signal credible transition pathways with interim targets and clear resource mobilization plans. This will provide a clear and vital signal to investors, businesses, and project developers that governments are committed to change, particularly in regard to SCP.

³ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2023). Sustainable Finance: Bridging the Gap in Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP Financing for Development Series, No. 5. Bangkok.

3. Policy coherence and capacities are developed across key government ministries relevant to SCP such as finance, energy, transport, environment, industry and others, ultimately reducing the costs of financing. Governments need to invest in both the effort for such coordination and the capacities for such coordination.
4. Decisive regulatory action takes place to shift capital in Asia and the Pacific towards the net zero transition. Asia and the Pacific is home to significantly large pools of capital capable of bridging the gap in sustainable finance, especially for SCP. Regulators need to adopt a more active role in shifting capital towards climate action, recognizing that doing so will strengthen financial stability in the system, as well as create a level playing field for all.
5. Investment in the capacities of financial personnel to assess trajectories towards SCP, assess climate risk, innovate sustainable financial instruments, and supervise the transition path of the green economy is undertaken.
6. Investment in much-needed sectoral and project-based financial data is undertaken. Common data platforms that share valuable data on SCP, ESG, climate, nature, contracts, clauses standards, targets, and deals (where possible) will streamline investment, assist benchmarking, strengthen credibility and ensure higher replicability.

Private finance - Asia-Pacific banks, investors and issuers.

7. Commitments to net zero pledges for 2050 with credible transition pathways including 2030 goals are made. The slowness of banks in Asia and the Pacific to commit to net zero and transition their lending and investing portfolios with interim 2030 science-based targets is a serious brake on driving finance towards SCP in the region.
8. Local-currency financing of SCP is increased. Local-currency financing is critical to accelerate the scale and pace of private finance because it can fund projects that do not have to reach a higher rate of return just to cover exchange rate risk as well as provide other benefits.
9. Concessional financing and risk-sharing by multilateral development banks, bilateral development financial institutions, and public development banks is expanded and accelerated. This will de-risk otherwise sound projects and ultimately leverage significant private capital.
10. Investment of time and effort with partners in project preparation is increased in more challenging markets, whether it is in the LDCs, SIDS, or in new SCP technologies. While large projects have lower transaction costs, investing in project preparation for smaller-ticket projects will ensure a long-term pipeline of large projects. Ultimately good project preparation brings down the risk of projects when implemented.

E. Strengthening Science-Policy Interface

This section will assess the current state of scientific knowledge on sustainable development, innovative approaches to sustainability science, digital technologies.

It will refer to initiatives to harness science, technology and innovation, including new and emerging technologies, including through scaling up the use of open science, affordable and open-source technology, research and development to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 12.

It will also explore initiatives from the international community to support developing countries in strengthening their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

As highlighted in the 2024 Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report, the region continues to see increasing environmental pressures related to material use and extraction, and in most subregions, regression regarding the sustainable use of natural resources.

There is increasing awareness of the links between material extraction and climate and environmental pressures, including land use change, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Better analysis of trends in resources use is essential to support the development of policies that de-link economic progress and shared prosperity, from environmental damage.

ESCAP through 2023 continued to work with ASEAN to establish an ASEAN Resource Panel (ARP), modeled after the International Resource Panel, as a recommended initiative in the ASEAN Community Vision -UN 2030 Agenda Complementarities Initiative. Establishment of the panel, which was endorsed at the 2019 ASEAN Summit, is pending resource mobilization by the ASEAN secretariat and member States. The ARP would promote and conduct analysis in support of resource efficiency initiatives and reductions in material footprints in ASEAN member States and across the subregion. To provide a strong knowledge foundation for the ARP, ESCAP engaged with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) in 2022 to develop a series of reviews of resource efficiency policies for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Philippines and Viet Nam, as well as a State of Resource Efficiency compilation report for the same countries. Additionally, a Circular Economy Policy Brief and, given the subregion's urbanization trends, a brief on Policy options for sustainable urban resource consumption report were also produced.

ESCAP's Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report, prepared in collaboration with UNCTAD and UNEP, highlighted that governments in the Asia-Pacific region are increasingly adopting "climate-smart" trade policies. Governments have been implementing measures such as tariff reductions on renewable energy technologies, and other less polluting items but there is scope to do more.

In Asia and the Pacific, a hub for digitally driven innovations,⁴ digital technologies are providing breakthrough solutions⁵ in dematerialisation and decarbonisation, by streamlining processes, enhancing resource efficiency, optimizing energy systems, minimizing waste, and reducing material use. Countries in Asia-Pacific are harnessing the benefits of digitalisation to promote responsible consumption and production patterns and support circular economy business models. In Singapore, the Smart Nation initiative is integrating sustainable and smart solutions across its

⁴ ESCAP, 2024, Seizing the Opportunity: Digital Innovation for a Sustainable Future. Available at: <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2024/seizing-opportunity-digital-innovation-sustainable-future>

⁵ ESCAP, 2022, Asia-Pacific Digital Transformation Report 2022: shaping our digital future. Available at: <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/asia-pacific-digital-transformation-report-2022-shaping-our-digital-future>

national projects including urban planning, transportation and waste management.⁶ The Republic of Korea's innovative e-waste management is promoting a circular economy,⁷ while China's Made in China 2025 initiative seeks to promote green production and manufacturing by integrating advanced technologies.⁸

F. Partnerships for Sustainable Development

This section will examine the role of multi-stakeholder and cross-disciplinary partnerships as means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It will refer to partnerships at all levels, including with the United Nations system and international financial system, to advance innovative pathways to achieving sustainable consumption and production.

This section also will refer to partnerships that contribute to resource efficiency, sustainable management of natural resources, reduce waste, and increase resilience across all sectors of the economy, which will contribute to SDG 12 and 2030

It will also address the imperative of leaving no one behind by supporting countries to implement sustainability practices through joint delivery.

ESCAP continues to engage with member States in South-South and triangular cooperation, which are key elements of regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific. Through capacity-building, knowledge exchange and peer learning, ESCAP is supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and facilitating monitoring of progress through Voluntary National Reviews and the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. The APFSD has provided a platform for country reporting and review of progress, and also for non-governmental organizations, private sector and a range of partnerships to report on their activities and opportunities to accelerate actions, including on SCP.

The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) consisting of private sectors representatives from the Asia-Pacific region, engages the private sector in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Recognizing that business must take a leading role in the green transformation in the region, the Executive Council of ESBN adopted the Asia Pacific Green Deal for Business in May 2022 with five pillars for action: (a) advancing a zero-carbon, affordable and resilient energy system; (b) building smart, low carbon, water-secure and climate-resilient cities, infrastructure and mobility; (c) mobilizing public and private finance for green transformation; (d) accelerating and scaling up innovations for sustainable development; and (e) changing towards a more circular economy. The Asia Pacific Green Deal for Business, a flagship initiative of ESBN calls on the private sector to voluntarily report on sustainability. Through a digital platform, companies that pledge support to the green deal for business are encouraged to track and report on ESG metrics across the five pillars of the Asia Pacific Green Deal for Business.

⁶ For more information on Singapore's Smart Nation initiative: <https://www.smartnation.gov.sg/>

⁷ ESCAP, 2021, Toward Sustainable E-waste Management in Asia and the Pacific. Available at: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/E-waste%20Policy%20Brief_New%20Tem_Final.pdf

⁸ ESCAP, 2023, Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2023/24: unleashing digital trade and investment for sustainable development. Available at: <https://www.unescap.org/kp/APTIR2023>

The role of local governments and city networks has also been highlighted at APFSD, and more than a dozen subnational authorities have prepared Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) based on ESCAP's *Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews*, since they were published in late 2020. A number of cities have prioritized waste management and circular economies within their VLRs, providing opportunities for urban solutions and for future data to be developed on SCP through local actions.

III. Conclusions

This section will refer to policy implications necessary to achieve implementation of sustainable consumption and production as a cross-cutting goal to achievement 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As populations and economic growth expand in the Asia-Pacific region, sustainable consumption and production practices are critical to ensure that development patterns do not also continue to result in resource depletion and environmental degradation. ESCAP analysis has found that the region broadly is off-track towards achievement of more responsible consumption and production practices, and support to countries in the collection of data, development of evidence-based policies and monitoring is essential. Without reversal of these trends, especially in expanding material footprints and the unsustainable use of natural resources, the economic and social development gains achieved over recent decades are at risk. In the post-pandemic era, following rapid shifts in behaviour patterns during COVID-19, further analyses are necessary to determine how consumption patterns may have changed within each country and how policies can be developed to reflect new realities. Thus, the continued review of SCP and enhanced science-policy assessments could be useful in reversing negative trends.