

Regional Conference on Aligning Corporate Sustainability with SDGs

20 May 2015

United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok, Thailand

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 (Rio+20), member States adopted an Outcome Document, The Future we Want and agreed to launch a process to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), building on the Millennium Development Goals, as part of the post-2015 development agenda. The intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) set up for this purpose presented its proposal in July 2014 on what the SDGs should be, comprising 17 goals and 169 targets.¹ The SDGs are expected to be adopted at the United Nations summit on 25-27 September 2015.

The Rio+20 conference also called for a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic efficiency, social inclusion and environmental protection. This will be the focus of the Second Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held on 21 and 22 May 2015 in Bangkok, which will provide regional input to the global High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the global level.

Given the imminent adoption of SDGs and the core role business needs to play in achieving sustainable development, this regional conference is organized by ESCAP, in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the ESCAP Business Advisory Council (EBAC) and its Sustainable Business Network. The aim is to gather business views as input to the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, as well as to provide input to the G20 workstream on inclusive business. The conference will:

- Examine what the SDGs mean for business and seek their views on the role of Asian-Pacific business in achieving sustainable development and implementing the SDGs.
- Propose tools and strategies to improve and better align business sustainability strategies with the SDGs.
- Showcase examples of responsible and inclusive business initiatives from the Asia-Pacific region.
- Provide guidance to policy makers on what is needed to advance corporate sustainability in the region.

In particular, the conference will centre around the following three main questions:

1. How does the private sector in the region view its role in achieving sustainable development and the SDGs? What is needed to increase the willingness and ability of the private sector to adopt

¹ See e.g. A/68/970, and <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=1579&menu=1300>

responsible business practices that effectively integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development?

2. What can governments do to provide an enabling environment for business to be an effective partner in achieving sustainable development?
3. What are the main modalities, international initiatives and instruments to advance corporate sustainability and responsible business practices and how do they link to SDGs? What additional frameworks, tools or policies are needed to help business align sustainability strategies with SDGs and contribute to SDG implementation?

Tentative agenda

07.30 – 08.30	Registration
08.30 – 08.50	<p>Opening addresses</p> <p>Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP</p> <p>Mohamed Iqbal Rawther, Chairperson, ESCAP Business Advisory Council (EBAC)</p>
08.50 – 09.00	<p>Keynote address</p> <p>Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary General, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)</p>
09.00 – 10.15	<p>The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – what impact for corporate sustainability strategies?</p> <p>The SDGs are intended to provide goals, targets and indicators against which to measure societal progress over the period 2015-2030. This session will explore what the goals are expected to cover, what the impact of their adoption may be on business sustainability strategies, and how business can contribute to the goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What are the SDGs and how do they apply to business?</i> - <i>What will change with their adoption?</i> - <i>What impact will the adoption of the goals have on sustainability strategies of companies?</i> - <i>How can existing CSR frameworks support SDG fulfilment?</i> - <i>How can the SDGs support the drive for more inclusive and sustainable business practices?</i> - <i>How can business be effectively engaged in fulfilling the SDGs?</i> <p>Moderator: Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Georg Kell, Executive Director, Global Compact (video recording) - Roel Nieuwenkamp, Chair, OECD Working Party on Responsible Business Conduct

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indu Bhushan, Director General, Strategy and Policy Department, Asian Development Bank (tbc) - Nicholas Rosellini, Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, UNDP (tbc) - Edward Clarence-Smith, Representative and Director, UNIDO Regional Office - Stefanos Fotiou, Senior Regional Coordinator: Resource Efficiency and SCP, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
10.15 – 11.15	<p>Sustainability monitoring and disclosure – how can it help drive the process?</p> <p>Based on the premise what you can't measure you can't manage, a number of different sustainability reporting and disclosure tools and mechanisms exist today to support companies in integrating sustainability considerations throughout their business operations. This session will discuss the landscape of tools for monitoring, reporting and disclosure, and how they it can drive increased sustainability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What are the tools for measuring and reporting on sustainability?</i> - <i>To what extend are they used in Asia and the Pacific?</i> - <i>What are the challenges in ensuring harmonized reporting, and how can they be addressed?</i> - <i>How can company sustainability reporting be linked to SDG monitoring?</i> - <i>How can reporting frameworks such as the GRI drive responsible business conduct and SDG implementation?</i> - <i>What is integrated reporting, and how can it contribute to change?</i> - <i>What accountability mechanisms exist for ensuring quality reporting and positive change?</i> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pietro Bertazzi, Senior Manager Public Policy and International Affairs, Global Reporting Initiative - James Kallman, Founder, Foundation for International Human Rights Reporting Standards and President Director, Moores Rowland - Michael Zimonyi, Senior Project Officer, Climate Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB) and CDP - Anthony Miller, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD
11.15 – 12.30	<p>Integrating sustainability in business operations and stimulating SDG related investments: Private sector views and experiences</p> <p>This session will discuss the level and scope of business implementation of sustainability considerations in day-to-day operations of companies in the region today. It will provide examples from the region of how companies are expanding and deepening their implementation of sustainability practices, and discuss remaining challenges and how these can be addressed. The session will also discuss private sector solutions for addressing key SDG goals, and discuss what is needed to expand their uptake in the region.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carson Wen, Partner, Jones Day, Chair of EBAC Task Force of Green Business - Asif Ibrahim, Vice Chairman, Newage Group of Companies, Bangladesh - Sutheash Balasubramaniam, Managing Director, Global Strategic Corporate

	<p>Sustainability Ltd, and Global Compact Sri Lanka network representative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aman ul Haque, Head, Engro Foundation, Pakistan - Gilad Regev, CEO, Windfire BV - Michael Greenslade, Director, Pacific Island Trade & Invest
12.30 – 14.00	<i>Lunch break</i>
14.00 – 15.00	<p>Increasing sustainability and enabling the SDGs: What role for banking and finance?</p> <p>As they main provider of finance, the banking and investment sector has a huge potential in pushing for increased sustainability among lenders and investees. In the Asia-Pacific region, an increasing number of banks are also adopting sustainability strategies, and some stock exchanges are mandating or requiring sustainability reporting on a ‘comply or explain’ basis. This session will explore what is being done today, and how the banking sector, stock exchanges and investment funds in the region can play a larger role in driving company sustainability implementation and disclosure in the region.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - George (Kam Ho) Yuen, Independent Non-Executive Director, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Asia), Hong Kong, China and Chair of the EBAC Task Force on Banking and Finance - Raghu Narain, Managing Director and Head of Sector Advisory for Asia Pacific, Royal Bank of Scotland - Manuel Rybach, Global Head of Corporate Citizenship, Credit Suisse - Rokia Afzal Rahman, Chair Airlinks Group of Companies and President Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bangladesh - Kesara Manchusree, President and CEO, Stock Exchange of Thailand (tbc)
15.00 – 16.00	<p>Enabling increased sustainability of business operations: What role for Governments?</p> <p>This session will elicit private sector views on what is needed from Governments to incentivize and push for increased integration of sustainability considerations in companies, and how Governments, the private sector and civil society could best work together to ensure speedy implementation of the SDGs.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roel Nieuwenkamp, Chair, OECD Working Party on Responsible Business Conduct - Thomas Thomas, CEO, ASEAN CSR Network - Pooran Pandey, Executive Director, Global Compact Network India - Shahamin Zaman, CEO, CSR Centre, and Global Compact Network Bangladesh
16.00 – 16.30	Summary and conclusions

For more information, see:

<http://www.unescap.org/events/regional-conference-aligning-corporate-sustainability-sdgs>