



ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

ESCAP Sustainable Business Network – Monthly Update

Dear ESNB members,

We hope you are doing well and staying safe in this challenging period.

The ESNB Executive Council, at its last meeting, requested to share a calendar of ESCAP events. In response to that, from the ESNB Secretariat we will be sending out a monthly email to update members on key activities and upcoming events. We hope this will help you plan your engagement, and volunteer for relevant activities. We would also like to share stories of what ESNB members are doing, both through the taskforces and within the companies in response to the challenges caused by COVID-19 spread globally, so please see below for further details and send us information so we can share what our members are doing.

COVID-19: Recent ESNB activities

On 1 April 2020 the Digital Economy taskforce of the ESNB held a virtual discussion on the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on SMEs. Noting that the impact on cash flow for SMEs will be particularly critical, the taskforce discussed different ways that governments can support SMEs, ranging from the more immediate issues to address cash flow problems through initiatives like credit guarantee schemes, interest free loans, and delays on tax payments, to guiding SMEs to adopt digital solutions to be better able to manage back-end functions in times of crisis. The taskforce will summarize its recommendations as input to ongoing ESCAP studies on this area. Other taskforces are also considering organizing virtual meetings to discuss the impact on the COVID-19 crisis from their angle.

Current ESCAP activities related to COVID-19

The ESCAP Secretariat has issued a policy note on COVID-19 impact and responses and has collaborated with other UN entities in writing on social and economic impacts of COVID-19 by the Secretary General.

The Impact and Policy Responses for COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP policy note, 26 March 2020: This policy note summarizes the key impacts of COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific region and suggests short- and medium-term recommendations for consideration by member States to shape responses for a sustainable future. <https://www.unescap.org/resources/impact-and-policy-responses-covid-19-asia-and-pacific>

The Secretary-General's Report **"Shared responsibility, global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19"** is a call to action for the immediate health response required to suppress transmission of the virus to end the pandemic, and to tackle the many social and economic

dimensions of this crisis. <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/SG-Report-Socio-Economic-Impact-of-Covid19.pdf>

ICC call to action

The International Chamber of Commerce (t ICC) has issued “A Call for Action to Save Our SMEs” to combat the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, see:

<https://iccwbo.org/content/uploads/sites/3/2020/03/2020-sos-call-to-action.pdf>

COVID-19 - call for good practices and initiatives by ESNB members

In this challenging time, and in spite of struggling with challenges in their supply chains and with cash flow, many companies are also taking action to alleviate the situation and help suppliers or their community. We would like to share stories of what our ESNB members are doing, to spread creative ideas and inspire action. We plan to share inspiring stories within the ESNB and through social media platforms, with the aim to inspire further action. If you have positive stories to share, please send us a message at esbn@un.org with a copy to nilsesm@un.org

Upcoming ESCAP events of interest to ESNB members

30 March – 8 April 2020 (10-11.30 am Bangkok time)

Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development: Virtual Discussion Series on Accelerating Transformation in Asia and the Pacific.

As part of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, this discussion series replaces the multi-stakeholder roundtable discussions that form part of the Forum. All ESNB members are welcome to participate. To attend, please register at least one day before each discussion, at: <https://www.unescap.org/events/virtual-discussion-series-accelerating-transformation-asia-and-pacific>

8 April 2020 (11 am Bangkok time)

Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2020, virtual regional launch and Press briefing.

The COVID-19 pandemic and continuing trade uncertainties are having far-reaching economic and social consequences for the Asia-Pacific region, with strong cross-border spillover effects through trade, tourism and financial linkages. Economic growth in the region is also expected to sharply decline in 2020. The longest running UN publication on the region’s progress, this year’s edition of the Survey proposes a transition towards cleaner production, and less material-intensive lifestyles, supported by enabling policies. It further calls for all stakeholders, notably Governments, businesses and consumers, to urgently align their own goals and actions with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

<https://www.unescap.org/events/survey-2020> (webcast also available after the event)

22 April 2020

Earth Day: Learn how to take climate action in your workplace!

To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Earth Day movement and promote climate action in office environments, the United Nations is organizing a free webinar on practical steps to green workplace environments. The webinar will share best practices and provide guidance on how to get started on climate action in the workplace, and what main operational areas to target. The aim is to help workplaces step up their commitment to curb their carbon footprint and take action, by giving them

tools and tips on how to show leadership and build a community of best practices. Participants will be invited to select a focus area and make a pledge to green their office in 2020, and the efforts and achievements of the participating organizations will be shared by ESCAP in October 2020.

ESBN members are highly welcome to attend. To register, see: <https://www.unescap.org/events/earth-day-learn-how-take-climate-action-your-workplace>

9-11 June 2020

UN Virtual Forum on Responsible Business and Human Rights. Organized by ESCAP, UNDP, ILO, UNICEF, UN Women and the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, the forum will for the first time be held fully virtually. More information is forthcoming.

Upcoming ESNB events

- **Executive Council of the ESNB (virtual):** 15 May 2020 (only Executive Council members)
- **Asia-Pacific Business Forum + meeting of ESNB and its taskforces:** 29-30 October 2020.

Recently published by ESCAP

Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2020 (25 Mars 2020)

This report analyses trends as well as data availability for monitoring progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Asia and the Pacific. <https://www.unescap.org/publications/asia-and-pacific-sdg-progress-report-2020>

New ESNB members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the ESNB:

- China Navigation Co./Swire (Simon Bennett, General manager, sustainable development)
- Fugro (Paul Seaton, Regional Director)
- Pacific Consulting Ltd. (Corey Huber, Founder, Director and Principal climate consultant)
- Cyberport, Hong Kong (Johnny Chan, CFO)

Last but not least, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any questions or suggestions. We are working from home but can be reached at esbn@un.org.

Best regards,
ESBN Secretariat