

**Secretary-General's message to 70th Session of the UN Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and the Pacific**
[delivered by UNESCAP Executive Secretary, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar]
Bangkok, Thailand, 7 August 2014

I am pleased to congratulate all participants at this 70th session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on this significant milestone. As the largest and most inclusive intergovernmental platform for regional consensus building, ESCAP continues to be invaluable in advancing the principles of the United Nations and in building a better future for the region's people.

The countries of Asia and the Pacific are driving the global economic recovery, achieving remarkable gains in reducing poverty and reaching many other Millennium Development Goals. At the same time, there are clear signs of rising income inequality as well as large gaps in access to transport, information and communications technology, modern energy resources, women's political and economic participation and other drivers of development. Now more must be done to bridge these divides and ensure that growing prosperity is shared by all.

I applaud the countries that have contributed to the region's recent dynamism, and I hope all the Asia-Pacific economies can take advantage of extended and integrated networks, markets and production chains to achieve overall progress. Boosting connectivity across Asia and the Pacific will enable countries to optimize their strengths and synergies, supporting sustainable development and shared prosperity.

Improved regional connectivity will also offer important development opportunities to least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries. This is particularly important as the global community prepares to gather in Apia, Samoa this September for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. That event offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity for world leaders to focus attention on a group of countries that remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities. Urgent steps are needed to address their common environmental, social and economic challenges, including through global negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

A meaningful new climate agreement will also be essential. Toward that end, I am convening a Climate Summit on 23 September in New York. I count on leaders of Asia-Pacific countries to attend, bringing bold ideas and strong political will.

ESCAP is a key partner in our collective journey to a more sustainable future.

I wish you great success and count on your continued engagement as we work together for the future we want.