

As delivered

Opening Remarks
of
H.E. Dr. Suriya Chindawongse
Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations
at
The Ninth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (9th APFSD)
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Ms. Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General,
Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP,
Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen, Good Morning.

1. I am honored to address you this morning in my capacity as Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and to bring you warm greetings amidst the cold of New York from H.E. Collen Vixen Kelapile, Permanent Representative of Botswana and President of ECOSOC.
2. I would like to commend the ESCAP Secretariat for the organization of the Ninth Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development which contributes to the High-level Political Forum of the ECOSOC.
3. When looking at the multitude of challenges that sustainable development seeks to address and overcome, I am reminded of a quote by John Donne, an English poet. With a slight variation to reflect the modern times, it goes something like this:

“ No person is an island, in and of itself;
Every person is a piece of the continent,
a part of the main; ...
Any person’s suffering and death diminishes me,
because I am involved in humankind;
And therefore, never send to know for whom
the bell tolls, it tolls for you.”

4. The challenges of sustainable development and the consequences of not achieving it, ultimately affects all of us, because we are all connected and interdependent. In the long haul, no island of prosperity, no atoll of affluence, can long endure in a sea of poverty and an ocean of inequity. And as residents of the same planet, we all bear the consequences of the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change.
5. Both the ECOSOC and the Secretary-General see eye to eye on the urgent need to “rescue the SDGs”, in view of the multidimensional challenges that humanity is facing currently. They have already impeded the world’s efforts and timeline to attain the SDGs. Indeed, the Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report 2022 paints a gloomy picture. At the current pace, the Asia-Pacific will not achieve the goals until 2065! This is a lose-lose situation.
6. So, with this in mind, and with a win-win philosophy, the ECOSOC is working hand-in-hand with the Secretary-General as well as the President of the UNGA to find effective and practical ways to reverse negative trends and accelerate progress through transformative actions – or to paraphrase the Secretary-General – to “turbocharge the SDGs.”
7. The ECOSOC is making intense preparations for the High-level Political Forum in July with the theme “Building back better from the COVID-19, while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”
8. But this global process will not be complete without the proactive contribution and participation of the various regions, and including the regional commissions. From my direct experience chairing the Coordination Segment of the ECOSOC earlier this year in February, the inputs from and active engagement by the regional commissions, including from ESCAP, have been critical – from regional innovations regarding vaccine development to regional approaches to closing gender gaps.
9. Additionally, coordination and collaboration with sub-regional groupings is likewise important, and in this connection, as we are in Southeast Asia, I am pleased to have seen active partnerships between organizations such as ASEAN on the one hand, and the UN and ESCAP, on the other.
10. So, my message is simple: we hear you in New York and elsewhere! Let us make full use of this APFSD to contribute significantly to a robust global-regional interface that would bring to the HLPF the Asia-Pacific’s voice --- from specific concerns to practical suggestions, and the Asia-Pacific’s vision --- from long-term aspirations to forward-looking dreams. And all this to achieve our common hopes to make sure that no one is indeed left behind.

11. I look forward to taking part in the deliberations of the Forum this year, and to receive its final report to ensure a timely consideration by the High-level Political Forum this July.
12. Thank you very much.
