Media Update
25 March 2020

United Nations
Secretary-General Message

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE OF THE VICTIMS OF SLAVERY AND THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE
25 March 2020

This moving memorial commemorates the women, men and children who suffered and died after being forced on to slave ships to cross the Atlantic -- one of the biggest crimes in the history of humankind.

The theme for this year’s International Day of Remembrance is: “Confronting Slavery’s Legacy of Racism Together.”

Because while we reject racism, we still live in the shadow of the Transatlantic slave trade.

Racism continues to play a strong role in our world.

Racism is the reason why outside Africa, people of African descent are often among the last in line for health care, education, justice and opportunities of all kinds.

We need to raise our voices against all expressions of racism and instances of racist behaviour. We urgently need to dismantle racist structures and reform racist institutions.

We can only move forward by confronting the racist legacy of slavery together.
Secretary IT & FAO Representative Virtually Signed MoU

Mr. Shoaib Ahmed Siddique, Secretary IT & Telecommunication and Ms Minà Dowlatchahi FAO Representative virtually signed a memorandum of understanding while sitting in Pakistan and Rome, Italy respectively. The arrangement was adopted to thwart any delay imposed by worldwide social distancing in the wake of COVID-19.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Shoaib Ahmed Siddique said that agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan’s economy as it contributes around 20 percent in the overall gross domestic product (GDP) and is also a big source of employment. Low growth, water shortage, environmental concerns, volatile energy prices, rising expectations of consumers – these are some of the complex challenges the agriculture sector is facing today, in the face of diminishing production profit margins for farmers.

He said Ministry of IT & Telecommunication would do everything to resolve these challenges through technology interventions by bringing innovative solutions for increased yield and profit margins for the farmers by diminishing the role of middlemen.

Ms. Minà Dowlatchahi, FAO Representative Pakistan through a video link said that innovation in agriculture in Pakistan is a necessity – small farmers are not only food producers, they are consumers and also guardians of Pakistan natural resources: soils, water, biodiversity and seeds. Eighty percent of arable land is in small farms in Pakistan, the vast majority still under outdated agriculture systems. Innovation is the process whereby individuals or organizations bring new or existing products, processes or ways of organization into use for the first time. Innovation in agriculture cuts across all dimensions of the production cycle along the entire value chain - from crop, forestry, fishery or livestock production to the management of inputs and resources to market access.
It is time to help small-holder men and women farmers in Pakistan innovate at scale, adapt to climate change, increase their incomes and contribute to the transformation of Pakistan agriculture systems and will contribute to sustainable and inclusive food systems and healthy diets in the country.

Through the MoU both organizations vow to collaborate in providing a framework for supporting the formulation and execution of local and/or national projects in Pakistan. These projects will aim to benefit sustainable and inclusive agricultural and food systems (agriculture, livestock, forestry, aquaculture) to contribute to achieving zero hunger and poverty eradication.

Both FAO and MOITT through Ignite will share material such as statistical information, software and maps, made available by the FAO or MOITT/Ignite for use in the activities under this collaboration agreement. Both organizations jointly agree to host the “e-Agriculture Innovations Challenge” to be held in Islamabad to address the pressing challenges facing agriculture sector.

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ESCAP
Press Release

Striking lack of progress on environmental SDGs in Asia-Pacific, reveals new UN report

Bangkok (ESCAP news) – There is overwhelming evidence that the Asia-Pacific region needs to accelerate action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and substantially reverse current negative trends, especially those which are depleting and degrading its environmental resources, according to a new report released today by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).
The Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2020 draws attention to the region’s poor performance on most of the measurable environmental targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For example, the share of renewable energy has dropped to 16 per cent, one of the lowest rates globally. The region also emits half of the world’s total greenhouse gas - a number which has doubled since 2000. 35 per cent of countries continue to lose their forests.

“Our analysis finds that the Asia-Pacific region has struggled the most with two Goals: advancing responsible consumption and production, and climate action. In fact, the region is not even moving in the right direction,” underscored United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana.

“These findings sound the alarm for the region to urgently foster sustainable use of natural resources, improve the management of chemicals and wastes, increase its resilience against natural disasters, and adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change through integrated policies,” added Ms. Alisjahbana.

On a positive note, many countries are moving decisively and showing remarkable progress in improving the quality of education (Goal 4) and providing access to affordable and clean energy (Goal 7). The Report suggests that achieving these two Goals is well within reach. The region is also making good progress on targets related to economic growth. Real GDP per capita growth in the Asia-Pacific was more than double the world average in 2017, and at the same time, at least 18 countries in the region are experiencing less income inequality.

Yet, to grow more sustainably and equitably, the current economic progress of the region must be coupled with human well-being and a healthy environment. Progress has been far too slow in areas such as gender equality (Goal 5) and building sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11). ESCAP warns that the region remains unlikely to meet any of the 17 SDGs by 2030 without concerted and extra efforts from all stakeholders.

Progress has also been uneven across the five Asia-Pacific subregions, most especially in reducing inequalities (Goal 10), responsible consumption and production (Goal 12), and peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16). A positive example of collective progress across all five subregions however is on access to electricity, where steady improvement is noticeable, particularly in rural areas.
Data availability for the SDG indicators has substantially increased over the past few years in Asia and the Pacific, from 25 per cent in 2017 to 42 per cent in 2020. But data is still lacking on over half of the SDG indicators, especially those Goals with slow progress. This, according to ESCAP, highlights the urgent need to strengthen the policy-data nexus in the region.

A flagship annual publication produced by ESCAP, in partnership with five other UN agencies, the Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report uses the latest data for global SDG indicators to determine where additional effort is needed in the region and where momentum for future progress is building.

The full Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2020 can be accessed at:

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