

Pro-poor urbanization, sustainable infrastructure can unlock Asia-Pacific's prosperity – UN

29 March 2017 – Some 400 million people in Asia and the Pacific still confront poverty as part of their daily lives due to widening income inequality, despite the region's impressive gains in reducing poverty in recent decades, a United Nations-backed report has found.

As outlined in the report, a renewed strengthening of the social contract is critical for addressing multi-dimensional poverty and the high marginalization and exclusion of people, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Shamshad Akhtar, told the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD 2017), according to a press release from ESCAP.

Titled *Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing Asia-Pacific*, the report notes that on top of the 400 million people, or one in 10, living in extreme poverty, more than one in four people in the region's developing countries experience poverty in multiple dimensions, including additional deprivations that impact their health, education, and standard of living.

The report underscores the importance of addressing poverty through pro-poor urbanization, effective management of rural-urban transitions, and investment in sustainable infrastructure.

Although people in extreme income poverty are more likely to live in rural areas, they are increasingly found in cities, therefore provision of high quality, low-carbon, and resilient infrastructure is essential.

Asia's infrastructure needs are large and will only grow, with our recent report suggesting that the region will need \$1.7 trillion annually in climate-resilient infrastructure investments, said ADB's Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, Bambang Susantono.

How our region chooses to bridge the infrastructure gap will have profound global implications. Concerted efforts, as highlighted in the tripartite report, can help us cover the last mile for infrastructure towards inclusive and sustainable development, he added.

Also addressing the forum was Haoliang Xu, UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific.

As urbanization booms across Asia and the Pacific, its cities are powering innovation, economic growth, and prosperity, lifting many out of poverty. But there has also been an increase in inequality and exclusion in some regions, he said.

To be more inclusive and to leave no one behind, cities must adopt

innovative policies that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and prioritize building the resilience of the most vulnerable groups," he added.

ESCAP, ADB, and UNDP also launched a new SDG Data Portal today to provide up to date data on SDG indicators for governments and stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific, along with an outlook assessment on SDGs in the region.

APFSD 2017 is being held by ESCAP in Bangkok from 29 to 31 March 2017. The conclusions and recommendations at the forum will inform discussions of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the global level, to be convened in New York in July 2017.

[In Jordan, UN chief urges region's leaders to shape 'new Arab world' able to address differences through cooperation](#)

29 March 2017 – Addressing the League of Arab States Summit in Jordan today, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted the importance of unity among the countries in the region to confront the challenges it is facing.

"Divisions in the Arab world have opened the door to foreign intervention and manipulation, breeding instability, sectarian strife and terrorism," said Mr. Guterres.

"At this time of transition and upheaval, unity will be critical," he said, emphasizing: "I appeal to your leadership in shaping a new Arab world able to address and solve, by itself, differences through dialogue and cooperation."

In his remarks, the Secretary-General also underscored the importance of partnership between the UN and the Arab League and said that it was his responsibility to use his good offices, in cooperation with Member States, as an added dimension for conflict resolution.

"It is time to end the fighting in Syria," he said, expressing hope that the Astana process can achieve an effective ceasefire.

"By now it should be clear to all involved that while fighting terrorism is essential, any success will prove ephemeral without a political solution that allows the Syrian people to freely decide their own fate," he added, underlining the need, also, to support Syrian refugees in their hour

of need.

Further, welcoming the progress in retaking territories held by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), the UN chief expressed hope that the violence in Yemen and Libya can be resolved soon.

Turning to the peace process in the Middle East, Mr. Guterres underscored that the two-state solution is the only path to ensure that Palestinians and Israelis can realize their national aspirations and live in peace, security and dignity.

“There is no Plan B,” he stated.

Concluding in his address, the Secretary-General highlighted the importance of addressing youth unemployment as well as empowerment of women – both as a matter of human rights as well as a spur to human development.

“Let us recognize the power and responsibility that lies in our hands to improve the lives of the people we serve.”

[David Beasley of United States appointed as head of UN emergency food agency](#)

29 March 2017 – The United Nations today announced the appointment of David Beasley of the United States as the Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP), which delivers emergency food assistance around the world and works with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres and José Graziano da Silva, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), announced the appointment today after consulting with the WFP Board at a special session in Rome.

In a statement, Secretary-General Guterres said that Mr. Beasley “brings to the position extensive experience with key governmental and business leaders and stakeholders around the world, with very strong resource mobilisation skills.”

Mr. Beasley, who is the Chair of the Center for Global Strategies, was Governor of the state of South Carolina from 1995 to 1999.

He will replace Ertharin Cousin, also a US national, whose five-year term expires on 4 April.

Ms. Cousin said she was “impressed” with Mr. Beasley’s

understanding of the organization and the strategic plan that guides WFP's work, as well as his commitment to the UN agency's work and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ms. Cousin led WFP from April 2012 through a period of unprecedented number of major emergencies, according to the UN agency.

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In Senegal, UN General Assembly President calls for sustainable management of marine resources

28 March 2017 – Visiting a traditional fishing community in Senegal, the President of the United Nations General Assembly has called on the countries in the region to prioritize conserving and sustainably managing their marine resources.

“I learned a lot today about how ocean issues like acidification, rising temperatures, overfishing and marine pollution affect the daily lives of fishermen,” said Assembly President Peter Thomson.

Mr. Thomson is currently in Senegal as part of his visit to several African countries to build momentum towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of which specifically deals with the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

“Understanding and acting upon the perspectives and expectations of artisanal fishers is an important component of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) that will be covered in The Ocean Conference this June,” added the UN official.

Being held from 5 to 9 June at the UN Headquarters, in New York, the Conference aims to reverse the decline in the health of oceans for the benefit of the people and the planet.

SEE ALSO: UN kicks off preparations for upcoming summit on oceans, launches voluntary commitment website

Involving all relevant stakeholders, including Governments, intergovernmental organizations, financial institutions, non-governmental and civil society organizations as well as the academia and scientific communities, the Conference will also contribute to the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda and provide input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

Also, while in Senegal, the Assembly President met with the country’s Minister of Fisheries and Maritime Economy and discussed the country’s response to challenges facing oceans such as overfishing, marine pollution, acidification and ocean warming.