

ESCAP NEWSLETTER MARCH 2021



SUSTAINABLE ENERGY THE KEY TO BUILDING BACK BETTER

Delegates from around the Asia-Pacific region convened at the Third Session of the Committee on Energy from 24 to 26 February to discuss how the region's move towards a sustainable, low-carbon energy future is now more critical than ever as it builds back better together from the COVID-19 pandemic. In her opening address, ESCAP Executive Secretary Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana said, "Accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goal 7 on energy offers an opportunity to assist countries in the region to recover from the pandemic towards a cleaner and low carbon future." Delegates also reviewed progress on energy priorities for the region, including ensuring universal access to modern energy, energy efficiency, and accelerating renewables' uptake.

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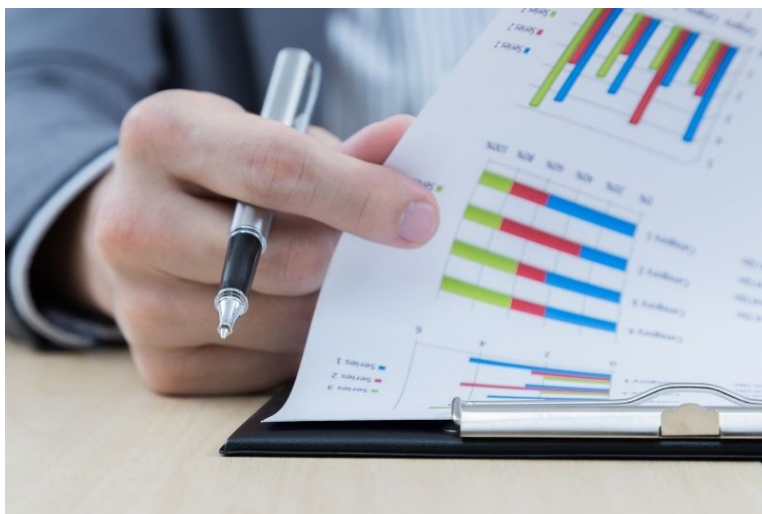
HIGHLIGHTS



ASIA-PACIFIC STATS CAFÉ FOCUSES ON EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON DATA COLLECTION

On 1 February, ESCAP and the UN Statistical Commission's Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys co-hosted a Stats Café with prominent statisticians from around the region. Here, they discussed mode effect assessment methodologies, lessons learned during COVID-19 with alternative modes of data collection, the potential of a 'mixed mode' approach moving forward, and elements to consider for a cost-effective data collection mode that produces high-quality data. On 15 February, a follow-up Stats Café was organised as a rapid response to participant questions and requests for advice on imputation, weighting and estimation in mixed mode data collections.

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ICT CONSULTATION FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In collaboration with CityNet, the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT) and ESCAP organised a virtual consultation meeting on ICT for Disaster Risk Management for Local Government, held on 3 February. The aim was to engage stakeholders to contribute to the module's thematic areas by reviewing emerging issues and assessing the current capacity developing needs. As local governments are the first respondents to disasters and responsible for community development, they have a critical role in managing disaster risks, protecting their citizens, and achieving community resilience. Recognising this, APCICT and ESCAP aims to equip local government officials with the essential knowledge and skills to understand the overall framework of disaster risk management.

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WEBINAR ON NUTRITION-SENSITIVE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

On 24 February, a technical webinar was held jointly by ESCAP, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) eLearning Academy, and Agreenium. The webinar's main objective was to allow practitioners to interact with international experts, UN officers, university professors, researchers, and fellow participants worldwide. Participants were provided with an overview of the existing resources on the formulation of nutrition-sensitive outcomes for sustainable food system policies, investments and programmes. Researchers also shared national research results as evidence of the importance of sustainable nutrition-sensitive food systems in different countries.

WATCH WEBINAR



FIFTH MEETING ON DISASTER-RELATED STATISTICS

The Technical Working Group (TWG) on disaster-related statistics held its fifth and final virtual meeting on 24 February. The meeting began with a step-by-step tutorial on how to make the best use of the 'Confluence Streaming Platform' as the primary communication platform to facilitate the work of the TWG. Members presented examples of tools and technologies for producing disaster risk and occurrence and shared good country practices on disaster-related statistics. Although this completes the official TWG meetings, members also discussed ideas for engagement topics in the future.

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INTERGENERATIONAL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE WEBINAR

On 4 February, ESCAP co-organised a webinar on Intergenerational Action on Climate Change: Unleashing the Power of Older People, in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and HelpAge International. The webinar highlighted the relationship between population growth, ageing societies, and climate change. “While the impact of climate change on older persons is well documented, what we still need to explore is how the millions of older people over 60 in Asia-Pacific can be involved in fighting climate change and being part of the solution,” said moderator and ESCAP Deputy Executive Secretary Mr. Kaveh Zahedi.

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ESCAP-STATISTICS LAUNCH OPEN-SOURCE SOFTWARE GUIDE

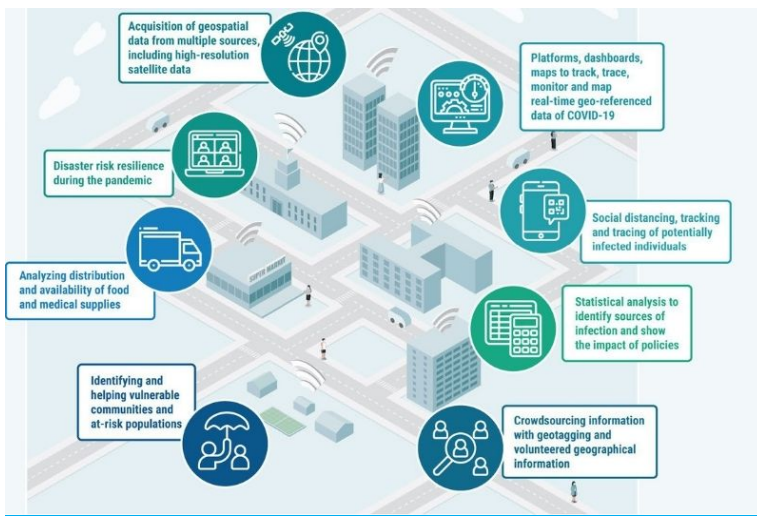
ESCAP-Statistics recently launched an informative guide explaining the use of open-source software to generate maps and statistical tables. Producing urban hotspot maps – Step by step guide on the use of QGIS, shows users how to construct a map displaying the rate of artificial surfaces in a geographical area over time. Urban hot spots are, in the context of the present guide, understood as locations with the rapid increase of artificial surfaces or built-up areas. The guide shows how to identify and visualize such locations on map. A public launch will take place at the Stats Café series this coming month.

[READ GUIDE](#)



INDONESIA WEBINAR ON MAINTAINING SOCIAL STABILITY POST-COVID-19

The STIE Indonesia Banking School held a national webinar on the role of the UN in maintaining economic and social stability in Asia and the Pacific during the COVID-19 pandemic on 5 February. In her presentation, ESCAP Executive Secretary Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana provided an overview of the work of ESCAP in enhancing regional cooperation in Asia-Pacific and supporting countries to build back better in the post-COVID-19 era. Ms. Alisjahbana underlined the importance of the 'recovering better together' framework and the UN Development System Response's five pillars of joint recovery action to guide their efforts.



ANALYSIS OF COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY POLICIES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered tremendous social and economic impacts, reversing hard-won development gains. There is a natural link between geospatial information and epidemiology - evident through applications such as contact tracing and methods including trend and risk analysis. An ESCAP working paper titled Preliminary Analysis of COVID-19 Response and Recovery Policies in Asia and the Pacific: Integrating Space Applications and Socioeconomic Data proposes a preliminary methodology to help determine and visualize the dynamic between socioeconomic aspects and COVID-19 and the impacts of Government response measures. Complemented by practices from around the region, the working paper serves as a guideline and example for decision-makers.

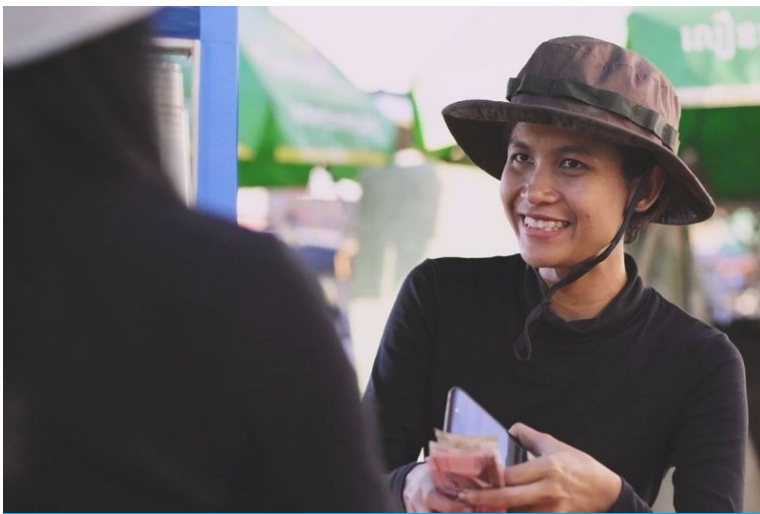
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TENTH ASIA-FDI NETWORK FOCUSES ON INVESTMENT PROMOTION POST-COVID-19

Representatives of more than 25 investment promotion agencies across the region met online from 23 to 24 February to discuss opportunities and challenges related to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policies, promotion, and facilitation for sustainable development. Key themes during the discussions were related to lead generation and investment promotion in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further topics included FDI policy responses and policy preparedness during and post-COVID-19, the Investment Facilitation Framework for Development initiative, the sustainable FDI indicators, and how to promote, regulate and monitor digital FDI.

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UN AND SHE INVESTMENTS LAUNCH KOTRA-RIEL APP FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

ESCAP, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), and SHE Investments launched the KOTRA-Riel bookkeeping app on 12 February – the first tool designed to support Cambodian micro-entrepreneurs plan, manage cash flows, and access formal financial services. “We are proud to have supported SHE Investments in developing this bookkeeping solution that is tailored to the needs of local women entrepreneurs,” said ESCAP Deputy Executive Secretary Kaveh Zahedi. “We hope this initiative can inspire and be used by the countless women entrepreneurs that are looking to build their digital and financial skills to access formal finance and, in the end to just grow their businesses.”

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COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY GUIDELINES FOR ROAD FREIGHT IN ASEAN

The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States will have new tools to help them address road freight transport issues caused by COVID-19 as part of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. Developed with ESCAP and the International Transport Forum (ITF) assistance, these guidelines will help categorise policy responses related to transport connectivity. "While we commend the great efforts made by our region to keep freight flowing across borders during the pandemic, we remain acutely aware that more must be done for Asia and the Pacific to stay competitive and fully recover from the crisis," said ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana.

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HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE WITH THOUGHT LEADERS
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
 9:00 - 10:30 hrs (UTC +7), 18 February 2021

Over the past seven decades, countries in the Asia-Pacific region have witnessed a remarkable transformation. By leveraging digital and technological innovation, citizens have been able to reap the benefits of economic growth and productivity gains. However, the region is still vulnerable to severe natural disasters and is yet to provide equal opportunities for all. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, regional cooperation remains a key driver to accelerate development for countries. This Dialogue with thought leaders aims to find sustainable solutions to focus on recovering better together from the COVID-19 pandemic and raising climate ambitions.

REGISTER HERE: http://bit.ly/SignUpESCAP75_1



MS. ARMIDA SALSIAH ALISJAHBANA
 Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP



MS. HELEN CLARK
 37th Prime Minister of New Zealand and former Administrator of UNDP



MR. MASATSUGU ASAKAWA
 President of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)



MR. MARTY NATALEGAWA
 Former Foreign Minister of Indonesia

HOW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IMPACT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA-PACIFIC

In her remarks at the 59th Session of the Commission for Social Development, on 10 February, ESCAP Executive Secretary Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana underscored the role of digital technologies in social development and the well-being of all in Asia and the Pacific. “The dynamism of the region – including the development of cutting-edge digital technologies in countries including China, Japan and the Republic of Korea has fostered greater equality by empowering those who were marginalized, such as older persons, migrants, and persons with disabilities, and by addressing deeper structural issues,” said Ms. Alisjahbana at the Interactive Dialogue with senior officials of the UN System.

[READ SPEECH](#)

AROUND THE REGION



FORUM ON DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN POST-COVID-19 RECOVERY HELD IN KAZAKHSTAN

The Digital Almaty Forum, organised by the Government of Kazakhstan, gathered Prime Ministers of the Eurasian Economic Union and international experts at an online meeting on 5 February to share examples of progress and challenges with a focus on digital transformation in post-COVID-19 recovery. ESCAP IDD Director Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, outlined the benefits of bringing regionally seamless broadband infrastructure connectivity to the Asia-Pacific region. She also highlighted how expanding investments in next-generation infrastructure networks and understanding the cost-effectiveness of codeployment of fiber-optic cables along passive infrastructure networks was an important step forward.

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SAMOA TOURISM SECTOR FIRST TO PILOT COMPREHENSIVE POLICY TOOL

Samoa Tourism is the first to pilot the 'Every Policy is Connected' (EPiC) tool in the Pacific. The application developed by ESCAP helps identify the gaps in sector plans which can be improved by aligning issues, actions with statistical indicators to ensure they are measurable. ESCAP is facilitating this initiative for Samoa and member States to support efforts in developing comprehensive and integrated indicator frameworks and national policies. Spearheaded by the Samoa Bureau of Statistics and supported by the Ministry of Finance, the trial will also run through 13 other country sectors.

[READ PRESS RELEASE](#)

Conference on Sustainable Green Financing in Sri Lanka



CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE GREEN FINANCING IN SRI LANKA

On 18 February, ESCAP, in collaboration with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Sri Lanka, organised the Conference on Sustainable Green Financing in Sri Lanka. The event brought together policymakers, private business and financial sectors, international organisations, investors, and other relevant stakeholders to discuss pressing issues in promoting green finance for sustainable recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. ESCAP recently estimated the additional annual investment required in the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific at US\$1.5 trillion per year. In addition to the investment requirements, selecting the appropriate funding source is critical to meet the SDGs.

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STRENGTHENING RAILWAY TRANSPORT LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

An ESCAP virtual capacity building workshop in cooperation with the Organization for Cooperation between Railways (OSJD) was held on 25 February. The workshop aimed to support the Lao People's Democratic Republic to deepen the knowledge of the OSJD legal documents for use in international railway transport and, ultimately, join the OSJD. With the imminent completion of the Lao-China railway in 2022, the ASEAN countries' railway network will extend significantly – hastening the need to exert extra efforts to take advantage of emerging opportunities. This workshop was a follow-up event from a consultation webinar held on 10 February.

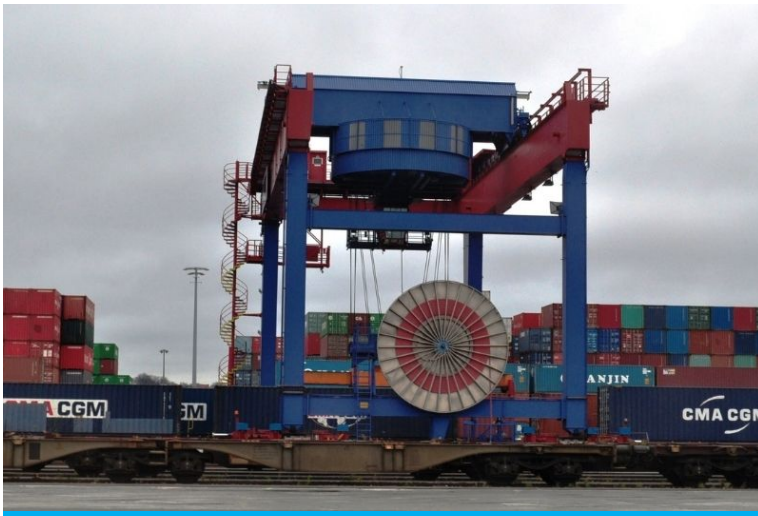
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WORKSHOP ON CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS DATA ANALYSIS IN PAKISTAN

The first of four workshops was held from 22 to 26 of February by the Technical Support Unit – Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS), Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Government of Pakistan, and ESCAP. Aimed at supporting CRVS improvements in Pakistan, the virtual webinar looked at the current situation in Asia and the Pacific and where Pakistan currently stands. Attendees were involved in presentations that demonstrated incorporating CRVS data into policy and planning decisions and communicating those results. The next workshop is scheduled from 8 to 12 of March.

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TRAINING FOR CAPACITY BUILDING OF BANGLADESH FOREIGN TRADE INSTITUTE

The third in a series of national workshops on developing the capacity of policymakers in Bangladesh to negotiate comprehensive economic partnership agreements was held on 18 February. The focus of the workshop was designing, negotiating and sharing best practices in trade agreements with respect to services provisions and E-commerce provisions. The training carried out by Henry Gao, Associate Professor at Singapore Management University School of Law, also included a feasibility study on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between Bangladesh and India.

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In partnership with the
Bhutan Ministry of Information and Communication

HIGH-LEVEL BRIEFING ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN THE NEW NORMAL

.....
Date: Thursday 25 February 2021
Time: 2:00pm BTT (5:00pm KST)



BRIEFING AIMS TO INCREASE AWARENESS IN BHUTAN ON EMERGING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

In partnership with the Department of Information and Media of the Ministry of Information and Communications of Bhutan, the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT) organised a high-level briefing on 'Social Media and Emerging Technologies in the New Normal' on 25 February. The briefing aimed to increase awareness of government leaders, policymakers, and executives from various agencies and ministries of the Royal Government of Bhutan on the potential of emerging digital technologies and social media's role in promoting governance and sustainable development in a post-pandemic world. The briefing also underscored the implications of these technologies for national policy and programme formulation.

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EXPERT OPINION



HOW THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN HELP BUILD SMART RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES

Population growth and domestic migration towards large cities in North and Central Asia have increased pressure on transport and municipal solid waste management infrastructure. Due to a lack of publicly available funds, engaging the private sector is a crucial path forward. This can be done through financial contributions to sustainable development projects, leveraging on technical expertise and past experiences, and aligning company strategies with sustainable development objectives. Entering the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs, all stakeholders concerted efforts are required. As a key player in the ecosystem, the private sector needs to be engaged to implement SDG-oriented strategies across the whole value chain.

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ACCELERATING TRADE DIGITALIZATION IN TIMES OF THE PANDEMIC

The Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA) entered into force on 20 February. Paperless trade across borders has proven an effective way to mitigate trade disruptions since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling commerce to continue. Yet, despite the increasing acceptance of electronic documents, the implementation of cross-border paperless trade remains low. ESCAP Executive Secretary Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana encouraged all member States to join the treaty. "There is no deadline for acceding to the treaty but doing so early on will ensure a seat at the table when the Parties formally discuss the implementation of priorities," said Ms. Alisjahbana.

[READ OP-ED](#)



PUTTING OLDER WOMEN AT THE CENTRE OF AGEING AND GENDER POLICIES

With International Women's Day on 8 March and the review and appraisal of the global Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2022 approaching, it is crucial to consider the needs and vulnerabilities of older women in Asia-Pacific. With over nine percent of people in our region over 65 and more than half of those women, a bold global agenda for handling ageing in the 21st-century is required. Addressing discriminatory laws and policies affecting older women in their quest for economic and social security paramount; as is acknowledging the significant contribution made by women, including older women, in unpaid work.

[**READ BLOG**](#)



GLACIER BURSTS AND CASCADING RISK

The breaking of the Nanda Devi glacier triggered cascading disasters including a landslide, avalanche, deluge, and flash floods. With glacial melt in the Himalayas doubling since 2000, we must shift from managing disasters to managing risk. The recent Special High-Level Event of ministers from South Asia requested ESCAP and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to facilitate the development of a new regional framework and strategic action plan to strengthen member States' management of cascading risks from natural and biological hazards through subregional cooperation. People's livelihoods, health, and ecosystems are at risk and urgent action is required.

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SUSTAINABLE ENERGY KEY TO COVID-19 RECOVERY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Clean and sustainable energy is central to recovery from COVID-19 pandemic. By emphasizing the importance of the SDGs as a guiding framework for recovering better together, we must focus on two critical aspects. First, by making meaningful progress on the SDGs, we can address many of the systemic issues that made societies more vulnerable to COVID-19 in the first place – health, decent work, poverty and inequalities, to name a few. Second, by directing stimulus spending to investments that support the achievement of the SDGs, we can build back better.

[READ OP-ED](#)

COMING UP AT ESCAP

ESCAP-OECD Initiative on Digital Trade Regulatory Analysis

5 March 2021

Bangkok, Thailand

Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe Series: Indirect Demographic Methods for Measuring Completeness and Coverage for Low Capacity Countries

8 March 2021

Virtual

Thailand

Asia Pacific Commemoration of International Women's Day 2021: Interactive Dialogue on Women in leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 world

8 March 2021

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE

Bangkok, Thailand

Second Thematic Workshop of the Infrastructure Financing and Public-Private Partnerships Network of Asia and the Pacific

10 March

Virtual

Bangkok, Thailand

Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

10 to 12 March 2021

Bangkok, Thailand

Company Action on Climate: Driving De-Carbonization Through Target Setting

22 March 2021

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE

Bangkok, Thailand

Enabling Sustainable Recovery With Greater Access to Information, Access to Justice and Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making

22 March 2021

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE

Bangkok, Thailand

Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2021

23 to 26 March

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE

Bangkok, Thailand

Expert Group Meeting: ESCAP Report on Financing for Development 2021

29 March 2021

Virtual

Bangkok, Thailand

ARTNeT Advanced Workshop on Machine Learning and Text Mining for Trade Policy Analysis With R

29 March to 12 April

Virtual

Bangkok, Thailand

Second Virtual Expert Meeting on Legal Frameworks for Multimodal Transport Operations in Asia and the Pacific

30 to 31 March

Bangkok, Thailand

5th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue

31 March

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE

Bangkok, Thailand



