

Asia-Pacific Business Forum

Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development

8-9 February 2017 | Dhaka, Bangladesh



PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
Dhaka

Message

It gives me immense pleasure to know that under the patronage of the Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) are jointly organizing the Asia-Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2017 in Dhaka. The theme of the APBF is 'Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development' as envisaged by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The importance of Asia-Pacific Region is eminent considering its socio-economic and geopolitical location. This region also covers a large part of the world with diverse characteristics. It is essential to say that the role of UNESCAP is very crucial for attaining sustainable development and making this region a great hub of development. I truly appreciate UNESCAP for introducing this innovative forum that promotes regional integration, mutual efforts and contributes to constructing and sustaining just economic growth and social equity.

It is heartening to note that over the past few years Bangladesh has attained continued socio-economic growth despite world uncertainties. It has been possible because of government's appropriate policy and concerted efforts of business and social sector that have come forward to work closely together. I am confident that ICC along with other trade bodies from home and abroad would render their valuable contributions for making our economy more viable and strong.

I hope, APBF will be effective in creating scope for the business sector on the economic front, alongside its existing role in facilitating development issues and rendering regional leaders about their commitments towards the world and mankind.

I welcome the participants from home and abroad and wish them a very pleasant stay in Dhaka, the capital and heritage city of Bangladesh. I also extend my sincere thanks and appreciations to the organizers for holding such an important event in Bangladesh.

I wish the Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2017 in Dhaka a grand success.

Khola Hala, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid
President
People's Republic of Bangladesh



Md. Masud A. Moshit, MP
Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

It gives me immense pleasure to send this message of auspicious occasion of the inauguration of the International Conference on Asia-Pacific Business Forum, Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development, organized by Bangladesh National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh on 8-9 February 2017.

The Asia-Pacific Region's flourishing economic growth has Trade and Investment, the building blocks of regional integration and globalization can drive growth and generate resources for meeting poverty eradication, investment, trade and innovation, as well as technologies and lower barriers facilitate more efficient transactions. But less developed countries in particular find it challenging to participate in the process. That highlights the need to identify appropriate policies and institutions mechanisms will enable them to benefit from greater market access.

United Nations ESCAP should assist to development activities in the same area may be mentioned here that Trade arrangements, trade policy regional dialogues and Training, Enterprise Development, Building business networks, Trade facilitation, Trade and investment information, reducing poverty. I hope these activities may help to less developing countries of Asia-Pacific Region.

Organizing an event of this magnitude is not an easy task. It requires close involvement and dedicated efforts and cooperation of all stakeholders to make it reality. I am confident all participants of the conference will find it useful and rewarding.

I wish to commend the Bangladesh ICC for its indefatigable efforts to organize this important event and take this opportunity to extend my best wishes to the Bangladesh ICC for a successful outcome of the conference.

Md. Masud A. Moshit
Minister
People's Republic of Bangladesh



Tofail Ahmed, MP
Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

I am delighted to know that ICC Bangladesh in collaboration with UNESCAP is going to organize a significant International Conference on Asia-Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2017 on Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development.

Since APBF's launching in 2004, this platform has always remained an abode of ideas and discussions in shaping a country's future and helped in not just setting up policies that have a positive impact on people's lives but also in implementing them. I am sure this year there will be no difference.

There is a growing awareness, especially by business leaders and investors that it is not enough for companies to concentrate only with short-term profits because natural disasters, social unrest or economic disparity can damage long term prosperity. The business that understand this challenge and take action will be a step ahead.

The adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the world leaders in September 2015 is considered as an historic UN initiative. Over the next fifteen years, various new goals that universally apply to all countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

It is clear that the SDGs not only identify where we have to be in 2030 to create a sustainable world, they also outline new markets and opportunities for companies all over the world. To succeed, we must turn the global goals into local business, as well as national economic integration.

We in Bangladesh have been able to achieve most of the MDGs under the dynamic leadership of her Government. Bangladesh will again become the leader in achieving SDGs by the ongoing economic.

I realize the initiative of ICC Bangladesh in bringing distinguished policy makers, prominent business leaders, economists, researchers and investors together through this event and I hope their positive opinions and suggestions will make a difference in achieving the global goals.

I wish APBF 2017 to be a splendid success.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangladesh.

Tofail Ahmed
Minister
People's Republic of Bangladesh

Regional Cooperation towards Achieving Sustainable Development

Introduction

The global community has entered a new global era of sustainable development in 2015 with the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) The 193 member states of the Asia-Pacific Business Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Sustainable Development Summit held in New York on 25-27 September 2015. The new Agenda calls for countries to begin efforts to achieve 17 SDGs with 169 targets over the next 15 years. The Agenda addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development: namely social, economic and environmental, as well as important aspects related to peace, justice and effective institutions. Immediate past UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said "SDGs is a roadmap to ending global poverty, building a life of dignity for all and leaving no one behind. It is also a clarion call to work in partnership and intensify efforts to share prosperity, empower people's livelihoods, ensure peace and heal our planet for the benefit of this and future generations".

The new agenda is critical to Asia and the Pacific as it is for the entire global community. Home to more than half of the world's population and as much extreme poverty, the region generates nearly 40% of global gross domestic product (GDP) and contributes 60% to global growth, with the rising importance of the Asia region in global sustainable development and climate change. It is essential to establish a regional framework for achieving the 2030 agenda and addressing the challenges. In fact, in the 'Means of Implementation and the Global Partnership' section of the 2030 Agenda, focused support to regional organizations in order to sustain achievements and address ongoing challenges and promotion of regional economic integration and interconnectivity, are mentioned (UN, 2015).

Current Global Socio-Economic Scenario

The SDGs have been built on the eight anti-poverty targets of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which the world committed to achieve by 2015. Although significant achievements have been made on many of the MDG targets worldwide, progress has been uneven across regions and countries, leaving significant gaps. Millions of people are being left behind, especially the poorest and those disadvantaged because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity or geographic location. So, SDGs have set target to reach the most vulnerable.

The latest estimate shows that the poverty rate in the developing regions has plummeted, from 47 per cent in 1990 to 14 per cent in 2015, a drop of more than two thirds and almost half in the proportion of undernourished people in the developing regions. The number of people living in extreme poverty has also declined by more than half during the same period. The literacy rate among youth aged 15 to 24 has increased globally from 83 per cent to 91 per cent and the inequality gap between women and men has narrowed.



Besides, over the past 25 years the proportion of women in vulnerable employment as a share of total female employment has declined by 13 percentage points. In contrast, vulnerable employment among men fell by 9 percentage points. The global under-five mortality rate has declined by more than half, dropping from 90 to 43 deaths per 1,000. New HIV infections fell by approximately 40 per cent from an estimated 3.5 million cases to 2.1 million.

Challenges for Asia Pacific Region to Achieve Sustainable Development

Asia Pacific Region has good track record in case of implementing different goals and targets of the MDGs. Most importantly, the region was most successful in eradicating poverty - among 1.2 billion people lifted out of poverty worldwide since 1990, about 1.1 billion were from Asia and the Pacific Region. Despite these improvements, as many as 743 million people in the region continue to live in extreme poverty. Also, the gap between the rich and the poor has increased. Even in countries where inequality is showing a downward trend still remains at high level.

The Asia-Pacific Region faces several key social and demographic trends - the region is facing significant development challenges in terms of quality of growth, social exclusion and inequalities, balance the benefits and costs of integration associated with economic, social and environmental considerations, and mitigate the impact of climate change. Low income countries of the Region in particular face important challenges in terms of ensuring required level of investment for social development particularly in case of health care, social protection, education and research and development.

A number of goals of SDGs has directly addressed the above-mentioned concerns. For example, following SDGs have direct relationship with the above-mentioned issues such as Goal 1 'Eradicate poverty in all its forms everywhere', Goal 2 'End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture', Goal 3 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages', Goal 4 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', Goal 5 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', Goal 8 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all', Goal 10 'Reduce inequality within and among countries' and Goal 11 'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'. More importantly, private sector of the Asia Pacific Region needs to play a critical role in order to achieve those goals.

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PRIME MINISTER
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Message

I am happy to know that the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) are going to organize the Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2017 on 8-9 February in Dhaka.

This platform, I hope, will provide a unique opportunity to bring together the stakeholders from government, academia, the international community, civil society and the private sector. This, it will create an environment for knowledge sharing and engaging in technical level discussions on different aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The platform will also provide feedback on the support required from UNESCAP and other development partners.

The forum's main agenda of this year is the role of business sector in implementing SDGs in priority areas such as cross border infrastructure, transport, energy and ICT, regional connectivity and cooperation.

We must not forget that our success in achieving the goals of MDGs was a collective effort. If we want to set an example on implementing SDGs, we will need every sector to come forward, especially the business sector, as it not only directly influences the socio-economic development of the world.

I believe that collective work and regional cooperation can play a vital role for achieving the UN 2030 SDGs, not only for the Asia-Pacific Region but also for the world.

I wish the Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2017 a grand success.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangladesh

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



Dr. Smriti Bamzang Yalwaysoo
Former President
Republic of Indonesia

Message

Excellency,

First of all, I would like to express my profound thanks to you for our fruitful meeting in Bali on 26 January 2016. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to you and International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh for the kind invitation to me to deliver a keynote speech at UNESCAP Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2017, which will be held on 8-9 February 2017 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The theme of the 2017 Forum, which is 'Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development', is very timely and relevant. I must admit that the Forum will be very critical as we witness together that our world is, indeed, at risk of many global challenges. Therefore, I am glad to see that the People's Republic of Bangladesh has stepped up in an effort to indicate the importance of Sustainable Development in the world's progress.

Understandably, I agree to indicate that I will not be able to participate in the Forum due to pre-arranged schedule which I have agreed to participate beforehand. However, without my presence, I am very sure that this year's UNESCAP Asia-Pacific Business Forum will produce another excellent outcomes and reliable solutions to address our common challenges.

Once again, I thank you for offering me this opportunity and my very best wishes to be successful.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Smriti Bamzang Yalwaysoo
Former President
Republic of Indonesia

Mr. Mahbubur Rahman
President
International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh



Rishad Bathudeen, M.P.
Minister of Industry and Commerce of Sri Lanka

Message

It is with immense pleasure that I send this message of Greetings for the important event, Asia-Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2017, 'Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development' from 8th to 9th February 2017 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

It is highly commendable for organizing this event at a time when the global economy is showing the signs of recovery especially the Asia-Pacific region. Although the overall outlook for Asia-Pacific depends on exports, to sustain this growth momentum in long run, while facing future challenges and risks and consolidating its position in the global economy with more regional cooperation and structural policy reforms.

I believe this forum provides an ideal opportunity for the Asian-Pacific business leaders, legislators, senior government officials, policy makers, academia and other professional bodies in the region to share their views, thinking and experiences for way forward in formulating regional and global strategies, to ensure that Asia-Pacific region continues to be a dynamic force driving the global recovery and take the lead role in sustaining the economic growth and remain resilient to global risks.

I also take this opportunity to commend the ICC - Bangladesh, Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh and the UNESCAP for organizing this Forum and inviting me to witness the deliberations to reach a constructive outcome.

I wish this Business Forum a great successful outcome!

Rishad Bathudeen
Minister of Industry and Commerce of Sri Lanka



Abul Hasan Mahmood Ali, MP
Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

I am happy to know that the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Bangladesh is going to organize the 'Asia-Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2017' in Dhaka on 8-9 February 2017 with the support and collaboration of the Ministry of Commerce, Bangladesh and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). The theme of this year's forum 'Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development' is very timely, particularly in the context of the inclusive growth and reducing inequalities within and among the countries to achieve sustainable development.

Deep ties exist between Bangladesh and the ASEAN. It has been proven that regional integration has its merit and is key to securing overall peace and stability and promoting sustainable development and economic growth for all. The adoption of the Agenda 2030 has added new dimensions to the development aspirations of the nations across the world. No single country is able to accomplish the goals of sustainable development alone. Subsequent regional integration in terms of cross border trade and investment, infrastructural development, connectivity, energy cooperation and people-to-people contacts contribute immensely towards achieving inclusive growth, poverty alleviation and reducing disparity among the people. This calls for effective, concrete and cohesive policies across the countries of the region.

Bangladesh under the visionary leadership of Bangladesh's daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been pursuing a prudent policy which encourages more regional interdependence by harnessing the complementarities of the member countries through mutual understanding and cooperation. Bangladesh has been active in BRICS, BIMSTEC, SAARC and ICG-ISC initiatives. I firmly believe this forum will provide the right platform to encourage this cause among the member countries, international organizations, business leaders and experts to learn from and ahead - and come up with constructive and pragmatic ideas and suggestions to achieve its objectives.

I wish the Business Forum a great success.

Joy Bangla Joy Bangladesh!

Abul Hasan Mahmood Ali
Minister
People's Republic of Bangladesh



Asia-Pacific Business Forum

Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development

8-9 February 2017 | Dhaka, Bangladesh



Mahbubur Rahman
President
ICC Bangladesh

Message

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) The world business organization was founded in 1919 by 16 visionary business leaders of Europe immediately following the First World War. Having its HQs in Paris, ICC has been promoting Free Market Economics, formulating various rules and guidelines for cross border trade and investment. ICC's 45 million member companies in over 110 countries have interests spanning in every sector of private enterprise.

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly has granted Observer Status to ICC at its 71st Session on 13 November held in New York. The new role for ICC means that from now on, for the first time, have direct voice in the UN system. The decision paves the way for ICC to contribute directly in the work of the General Assembly and reflect the vital role the private sector will play in implementing the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Bangladesh National Committee of ICC, established in 1994, is comprised of major Chambers of Commerce & Industry, Business Associations, Stock Exchange, Banks, Non-banking Financial Institutions, Insurance Companies, Trade-fair/Trade Fairs, Law Firms and large Corporate Houses having significant interest in international trade.

The activities of ICC Bangladesh include promotion of foreign trade and investment, trade policy reforms, business dialogues, seminars & workshops both at home and abroad on related policy issues, harmonization of trade law & rules, legal reforms, updating business with the ICC rules & standards for cross border business transactions.

ICC Bangladesh has been holding International Conferences in Dhaka on various topical issues. It has so far organized five international events.

At the request of UNESCAP, we are organizing the Asia Pacific Business Forum in Dhaka. In view of the 2030 UN Agenda, we have chosen the theme as regional integration to achieve Sustainable Development.

The Sustainable Development Goals have been based on the outcome of the eight anti-poverty targets of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the world committed to achieve by 2015. Although significant achievements have been made on many of the MDG targets worldwide, progress has been uneven across regions and countries, leaving significant gaps. Millions of people are living in extreme poverty and those who are not because of their age, disability, ethnicity or geographic location. So SDGs have set target to reach the most vulnerable. Bangladesh is also performing in relation to the MDGs.

As it is well known that eradicating poverty is all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty is the greatest global challenge and an irresponsible obligation for sustainable development. All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnerships, will implement this plan. Achieving such ambitious goals may sound very challenging, but not impossible.

I firmly believe that the Asia Pacific Business Forum 2017 which is bringing together policy makers, business leaders, corporate firms leaders and almost will come out with strategy and road map for achieving SDGs in the Asia Pacific Region through Public-Private partnerships. It is an expression of commitment to work hand in hand with the Government to overcome all challenges.

We welcome our delegates from abroad to Bangladesh and wish them a pleasant stay in Dhaka.

Mahbubur Rahman



Ronal Ganchan Thakali
Minister
Commerce Government of Nepal

Message

I am pleased to note that ICC Bangladesh is bringing out a Special Publication on the occasion of Asia Pacific Business Forum meeting focusing the role of regional integration to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Asia Pacific Region.

The Asia Pacific region is diverse in geographic, economic, social and cultural setting. This region is also endowed with immense natural resources. Most of the LDCs in the region are facing with significant challenges of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, illiteracy and low human development. Hence, our efforts should be geared towards liberating our poor people from the poverty trap. The region is also confronting a wide range of inter-related challenges such as increasing environmental stress, climate change, and energy for capitalizing opportunities of trade, tourism, hydro-power, agriculture, mineral and marine resources for bringing a positive change in the life of our people.

Overcoming infrastructure bottlenecks particularly excess supply of energy and promoting connectivity to remote and rural areas, air links, ports and inland waterways, as well as communication networks are critical for promoting trade and investment in the South Asia region. We need to strengthen our partnership for the effective implementation of SDGs and help realize the potential from the region at the earliest.

Nepal continues to be an active member of the global initiative for sustainable development and is fully committed to achieve SDGs. 2030 SDGs have been well integrated into the Fourth Five-Year Plan of the country and the Government of Nepal is determined to achieve these goals by the stipulated time frame. I am confident that this publication will forward comprehensive and insightful ideas from public as well as business leaders, experts and academia from the region regarding regional integration to achieve SDGs. A certain help in strengthening, partnership and collaboration between Government and private sectors in the region. I congratulate the whole team of this special publication for producing such a useful document.

Ronal Ganchan Thakali

Regional Cooperation towards Achieving Sustainable Development

Prospects of Regional Cooperation and Integration

Concerns have been raised about how the 2030 Agenda will be implemented and monitored at the country and regional levels. Governments have been focusing on how to tailor the global goals to national contexts for their successful implementation and tracking progress. Taking the lack of undertaking regional approach to implementing SDGs in some of the sub-regions of the Asia Pacific, it is important to undertake a regional approach for implementing SDGs. Moreover, regional monitoring and review mechanisms is necessary to follow-up the progress of implementing SDGs. A closer review of SDGs "means of implementation" reveals that regional perspectives are covered in the areas of poverty, food security, infrastructure, industry, oceans, seas and marine resources and science, technology and innovation (STI, 2015). However, there are also areas in which regional perspectives are not covered - health, energy, economic growth and employment, sustainable production and consumption patterns and global partnership (UNA, 2015). Hence, actionable regional agenda could be developed by the UNESCAP.

The past decade has witnessed increased economic regional integration in the Asia-Pacific Region. Interregional trade and economic relations are supporting the emergence of the region as the fulcrum of the emerging international trade scenario. Many countries are negotiating major trade agreements, and interregional foreign direct investment is also expanding in importance. However, the majority of regional cooperation and integration initiatives that have taken place are aimed at market integration, trade liberalization and financial cooperation, leaving behind the political, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of cooperation. While enhanced regional cooperation on trade can provide benefits, such as technology and information transfer and investments in green technologies, it can also impose costs to the environment, such as resource extraction and greater movement of goods and services.

Regional integration should, therefore, address promoting and mainstreaming sustainable development to "make existing regional integration efforts in trade, investment and infrastructure consistent with sustainable

development" for example, trade integration could establish mechanisms to promote resource productivity and sustainability across the entire production and supply chain and allow better movement of labor to help reduce inequalities between countries. This integrated integration in approaching the set targets.

Bangladesh: A Development Surprise

Bangladesh has been the Star Performer in achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), out of the eight goals Bangladesh has achieved four. Analysis agree that Bangladesh has made major progress in the following areas such as reducing headcount poverty and the poverty gap ratio (more than 45 per cent of the extreme poor have been pulled out of the poverty trap); decreasing malnutrition and the number of underweight children under five years of age; attaining gender parity in primary and secondary education in both rural and urban areas; increasing net enrollment ratio at the level of primary schools; lowering infant mortality rate and the maternal mortality rate; increasing the percentage of one-year old children immunized against measles and polio, including deaths from malaria and tuberculosis and in the provision of improved drinking water. Taking the lessons of MDGs and thereby deciding specific Goals would be better approach to achieve different targets of SDGs.

While many developing countries may face the challenge of mainstreaming the SDGs into national development plans and policies, Bangladesh however would face less challenge because of its better preparedness in the course of formulating long term policies including Seventh Five Year Plan and various sectoral and information transfer and investments in green technologies, it can also impose costs to the environment, such as resource extraction and greater movement of goods and services.

Implementation of SDGs would not be easy for Bangladesh. According to experts financing will be a major challenge for Bangladesh to attain the SDGs. We all know that the private sector is not only a source of financing, but it is also an actor in development.

Its role, especially when motivated by long-term sustainability interests, lies in core operations and the wide impact of business, and relates directly to UN values, poverty eradication and the appearance of issues arising covered by the proposed SDGs. The dynamic as a driver of sustainable economic growth brings with it opportunities in value creation as well as important responsibilities for business as a driver of sustainable economic growth.

Conclusion

Turning SDGs into reality is primarily the responsibility of countries, but it will also require new partnerships and international solidarity. Everyone has a role and everyone needs to make its own contribution. At the regional level, countries will share experiences and tackle common issues, while on an annual basis at the United Nations, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), will take stock of progress at the global level, identifying gaps and emerging issues, and recommending corrective measures.

Achieving the SDGs in all countries will require additional resources which is estimated to be between US\$3 trillion and US\$45 trillion a year. At the current level of public and private investment, there is an annual financing gap of US\$2.3 trillion (3.4% of world GDP). The cross-bound flow of the global proceeds from criminal activities, corruption and tax evasion is estimated to be between US\$1 trillion and US\$1.6 trillion per year which if possible to capture, could significantly meet the demand of domestic resources for implementing SDGs.

The Asia Pacific Region should have a regional and sub-regional framework, of cooperation and integration, to support the progress of implementing SDGs. Under the framework, an actionable agenda should be set on monitoring the progress of regional cooperation between different stakeholders concerning different targets of sustainable development.

The private sector of the region should develop their codes of conduct and other strategies taking into account the SDGs. A regional initiative under the auspices of UNESCAP could better supplement the national plans and strategies taken by the countries to achieve the sustainable development.



Dr. Shamshad Akhtar
Under Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to the Asia-Pacific Business Forum

Message

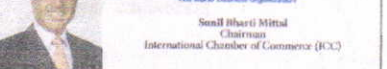
With the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in September 2015, United Nations Member States have agreed to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice and protect the planet, achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, this effort presents major challenges and requires the active participation of all stakeholders, in particular the private sector. Indeed, it would be impossible to accomplish the SDGs without active cooperation from business, which is a chief engine of growth and development through innovation, job creation and income generation.

The SDGs require new commitments and partnerships that go beyond traditional business for inclusive regional development. They must address crucial issues of North-South financial and technical assistance. They must address crucial issues of inclusivity, resilience and sustainable development. Government, business and civil society must proactively collaborate to meet social and environmental needs that none of them can meet alone. In particular, a more enabling investment environment at the national, sub-regional and regional levels is required. This would help to build solid public-private partnerships that focus on finding innovative ways to enhance access to financing for inclusive regional development. To promote science, technology and innovation in the digital economy era, to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to forge regional cooperation to harness assets of renewable energy. In this context, the protection and empowerment of women, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) takes on particular importance given their role as job creators and innovators. SMEs face critical challenges that can be tackled with innovative financial mechanisms and the development of effective cross-border value chains through trade and transport facilitation and harmonization.

In order to actively engage the business sector, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) organizes the Asia Pacific Business Forum (APBF) as an annual multi-stakeholder forum in the region. Since its inception in Dhaka in 2004, the Forum has provided a stage for regional dialogue between the public and private sectors on the role that business occupies in achieving desired socioeconomic development and is steered by the ESCAP Business Advisory Council (EBAC) and the Sustainable Business Network (SBN). Graciously hosted by Bangladesh, ESCAP is pleased to support the 2017 session of the Forum which will be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 8 and 9 February 2017. ESCAP is very grateful to the National Organizing Committee which includes the Ministry of Commerce of Bangladesh, the International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh (ICC) and other governmental and business agencies for their significant contribution to this year's Forum. They have led diverse development activities including the promotion of foreign trade and investment, trade policy reviews and development, business dialogues and harmonization of cross border trade rules and procedures. As this year's Forum, senior government officials, business leaders, industrial experts, academia, representatives of multilateral agencies and other professionals will discuss how they can collaborate to achieve the SDGs while pursuing technical, financial and political support.

I wish the Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2017 successful deliberations.

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar



Sunil Bharti Mittal
Chairman
International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

Message

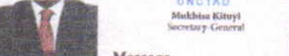
It is clear that the global challenges we face in 2017—from climate change to extreme poverty to jobless growth—all for enhanced dialogue and cooperation between business and governments. ICC is the world's leading business organization representing more than 6 million members in 100+ countries. We play a vital role in representing businesses at the global level in processes that affect not only the bottom line of companies, but the global economy—and society—as a whole.

We are the leading representative of business at the World Trade Organization and the United Nations—indeed, we are the only business organization to have been granted Observer Status in the UN General Assembly.

Over the coming year, ICC will continue to play a vital role in representing industry in many international regulatory processes—ensuring that global policies support and enable growth, not just profits and job creation.

Our role as the world's business organization has never been more vital or important. And under our charter, I am committed to ensuring that we continue to be the best where it matters most—and to ensuring that business is a genuine force for good in addressing the pressing global challenges we face today.

Sunil Bharti Mittal



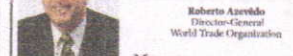
Mukhisa Kituyi
Secretary General
UNCTAD

Message

The world economy expanded by just 2.2 per cent in 2016, the slowest rate of growth since the Great Recession of 2009. Underpinning this sluggish growth are the weak pace of global trade growth, dwindling world trade growth, flagging productivity growth and high levels of debt. Low commodity prices have exacerbated these factors in many commodity-exporting countries since mid-2014, while credit and geopolitical tensions continue to weigh on economic prospects in several key economies. Amidst this constrained slow growth, East Asia and South Asia economies have been increasingly driven by domestic consumption but have also seen continued growth in investment, especially in infrastructure. The UNCTAD Asia Economic Update now shows that Asia's GDP is projected to grow by 7.1 per cent in 2017.

In 2016, the Asia-Pacific region has taken steps to boost investment in the region. These efforts should be complemented by stronger national and regional investment policies, including improved investment facilitation measures, as well as targeted steps to support young entrepreneurs and the expansion of the digital economy, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses. These steps will not only strengthen the region as a growth engine for the world economy but also contribute to the region's capacity to help all who still live in poverty and meet the Asia-Pacific economic goals of a new growth path.

Mukhisa Kituyi



Roberto Azevedo
Director-General
World Trade Organization

Message

The adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda was a historic moment for the global community. It represents an historic commitment towards responding to and promoting global prosperity across the planet. Now we must turn that promise into reality. Cooperation on all levels will be key if we are to achieve the Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. The private sector has a special role to play in this regard. It can be an important platform to break this debate, and explore how the public and private sectors can work together. I would like to commend your for this initiative, and wish you a successful event.

Trade and World Trade Organization Members must play their full part in implementing the SDGs. When the public and private sectors work together, they can create jobs, create jobs, and provide access to technologies. And if this can be done, it can be done. A health care system requires progress and engagement at all levels. Regional integration can play an important role here, helping to expand the benefits of trade. However, it is not enough to focus on trade. We must also focus on the other important pillars of the SDGs, such as education, health, and gender equality. These are very important pillars, but we cannot ignore them. WTO Members are now discussing how we can make progress in a wide range of areas, including agriculture, services, fisheries, education, and trade. Members are looking at the best way to implement the SDGs. The World Trade Organization is an opportunity to make this a reality.

Roberto Azevedo



Victor K. Fung
Chairman, I & B Fung Group
Former Chairman
International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

Message

This was a momentous event when the world's nations came together in 2015 to agree on the Sustainable Development Goals. These 17 sustainable goals will guide the development of our global society until 2030, including how we view our planet and create prosperity for all.

A unique feature of these Goals is the recognition that the participation of business in partnership with Government and Civil Society is essential to success. But it is not enough for business to participate only in the consultation process. To create the world we want, business has to continue to be engaged throughout implementation.

Victor K. Fung



Lise Kingo
CEO & Executive Director
UN Global Compact

Message

I send my warmest greetings to the Asia Pacific Business Forum, and commend the pathway of government, corporate, civil society and UN leaders who are so dedicated to putting the Sustainable Development Goals into action.

With the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement in force, we have a powerful common agenda for achieving peace and equity on a healthy planet by 2030—with an essential role spelled out for business. Business is the change agent that can spur innovation, unlock investment and protect sustainable growth across the planet. The task now is to raise awareness of the SDGs with businesses and improve concrete action and partnership everywhere.

Lise Kingo

Platinum Partners: BIDA Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, Standard Chartered, BIA, City Bank, Steam Diesel Ltd, etc.