ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

ESBN Newsletter
July - December 2024

# Introduction to ESBN

The UN ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) serves as a dynamic platform designed to foster collaboration among the private sector, policymakers, and international organizations in the Asia-Pacific region. Its main objective is to accelerate the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by promoting sustainable business practices. ESBN scales up business ambition and action, tackling global challenges such as climate change, social inclusion, and economic inequality.

By aligning its efforts with the UN 2030 Agenda and related sustainable development frameworks, the ESBN advocates for innovative solutions, partnerships, and knowledge sharing. It empowers businesses to take the lead in the transition to a greener, more resilient future. The network fosters collaboration through peer-to-peer learning, policy advocacy, and collective action, enabling businesses to drive sustainable development both within and beyond their operations. This initiative plays a crucial role in shaping the region's sustainability efforts, facilitating better business practices, and inspiring positive change towards a more sustainable future.

**READ MORE**

## MEMBERS OF ESBN

The members of the ESBN include executives and representatives from leading businesses across various industries and sectors in the Asia-Pacific region. Members commit to actively participating in the network's initiatives, attending meetings, and contributing to sustainability-focused activities within their companies. Specifically, members agree to prioritize sustainability within their own companies by becoming signatories of the United Nations Global Compact, tracking and reporting on sustainability progress through annual sustainability reports and taking climate actions, such as setting emission reduction targets aligned with the science-based goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C.Through these efforts, ESBN members actively drive sustainable business practice and making a significant contribution to the achievement of global climate goals. Currently, there are 170 ESBN members from the region.

# ESBN Executive Council

The ESBN Executive Council is the primary leadership and decision-making body within the UN ESBN. It operates to guide the network's activities, oversee its governance, and ensure the achievement of its mission to advance sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. The Executive Council provides strategic direction for ESBN's work and its Task Forces, working closely with the ESCAP secretariat to ensure they align with the broader objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It conducts ESBN meetings and related events, fostering collaboration and engagement among members. It also offers guidance and advice to the ESCAP secretariat on programs and projects, emphasizing the business sector's perspective on sustainable development issues. The Executive Council also appoints coordinators for ESBN Task Forces to lead specific initiatives and represent ESBN at meeting of ESCAP's legislative bodies, Intergovernmental meetings and events, including the annual Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the Commission Session. Moreover, it provides guidance, and support to ESCAP for organizing the Asia-Pacific Business Forum (APBF), a key regional platform for public-private dialogue on sustainability. To align with Global initiatives, all ESBN activities are consistent with frameworks like the UN Global Compact, the Global Investor for Sustainable Development (GISD) Alliance. These responsibilities underline the pivotal role of the Executive Council in ensuring that ESBN operates as a leading network for sustainable business practices in the Asia-Pacific region, effectively bridging the private sector with the goals of the United Nations. The ESBN actively promotes inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development through public-private partnerships. It achieves this by launching and implementing activities and projects that facilitate the adoption and practice of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in alignment with its Task Forces in Finance, Innovation, Infrastructure and Logistics, Energy and Circular Economy.

**READ MORE**

# Five Task Forces

## ENERGY

The ESBN Energy Taskforce was established as one of five key task forces to champion a just transition to low-carbon energy systems in the Asia-Pacific region. Its mission is to ensure that this transition not only addresses climate goals but also prioritizes universal access to affordable and clean energy for all. By fostering innovation, collaboration, and sustainable practices, the taskforce is working to create a future where energy systems are both environmentally responsible and socially inclusive. Together, we can power the Asia-Pacific region with clean, accessible, and equitable energy solutions. Mr. David Simmonds is the Chair of ESBN Task Force on Energy.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOGISTICS

The Infrastructure and Logistics Taskforce, established under the Green Deal Declaration, is dedicated to advancing sustainable development in critical areas such as infrastructure, logistics, and city planning. Green infrastructure is at the heart of sustainable cities, communities, and economies. By leveraging smart design and digital technology, it integrates the built environment with the natural world, working in harmony with ecosystems rather than against them. This includes projects aimed at enhancing travel, education, health, energy, communication, and other essential aspects of daily life. Dr. Jacob Kam is the Chair of ESBN Task Force on Infrastructure and Logistics.

## FINANCE

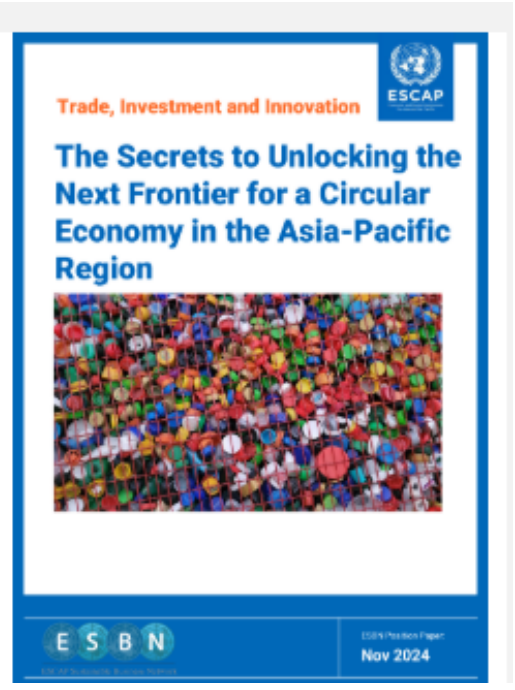
The ESBN Finance Taskforce plays a crucial role in driving the real economy by facilitating the flow of capital and scaling up sustainable business activities. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires trillions of dollars in investment—far beyond what public finance alone can provide. Through targeted programs, the financial sector supports private enterprises in transitioning to low-carbon pathways. By fostering coordinated action among governments, financial institutions, pension funds, and institutional investors, the taskforce helps unlock and channel investments into projects that reduce carbon emissions and build resilience to climate change impacts. This collaborative approach underlines the importance of leveraging private finance to create a sustainable future. Ms. Poman Lo, Co-Chair is the ESBN Task Force on Finance.

## CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The Circular Economy Task Force is one of five groups under the Green Deal Declaration, aimed at promoting more environmentally responsible production and consumption using circular economic models. The circular economy is an economic approach focused on keeping resources in use for as long as possible. It aims to extract maximum value from them during their use and then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of their lifecycle. This model can boost a country's economic efficiency and sustainability in several ways. By encouraging circular business models, the economy can create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and build resilience.Dr. Anthony Watanabe is the Chair of ESBN Task Force on Circular Economy.

## INNOVATION

Established under the Green Deal Declaration, the innovation Taskforce plays a pivotal role in fostering innovations essential to realizing the Green Deal. Innovation is a core strength of the private sector. Unlike the public sector, businesses operate in competitive markets, constantly adapting to shifting consumer demands and market pressures. This drive for innovation not only fosters growth but also helps mitigate potential risks. Currently, many countries in the Asia-Pacific region rely heavily on fossil fuels, transportation, and production systems that harm the environment, as well as consumption habits that lead to too much waste. To build a greener, more sustainable future, these countries must embrace bold innovations across energy, infrastructure, and consumption practices. Mr. Spencer Low is the Chair of ESBN Task Force on Innovation.




The secrets to unlocking the next frontier for a circular economy in the Asia-Pacific Region | ESCAP

# 2024 Highlights

## Our Engagement and Partnerships

In 2024, the ESBN strengthened its commitment to sustainability through impactful engagements and partnerships. Through targeted programs and collaborations, the network aims to address key priorities and strengthen engagement with diverse stakeholders, including governments, academia, and civil society. By fostering impactful partnerships and aligning efforts with global frameworks like the UN 2030 Agenda, ESBN continued to champion inclusive, resilient, and sustainable growth throughout the region.

## National

### The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business: Accelerating corporate sustainability in Bangladesh, 16 July 2024




The webinar was organized as part of the Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business initiative, which seeks to promote green transformation of the economy for the well-being of all people in the Asia Pacific. The webinar focused on the Green Deal digital platform/ESGpedia, and participants learned how businesses could use the new Green Deal live digital platform and tools to track, report, and analyze their climate action initiatives, and in turn bring about change in the real economy. Participants gained a broad perspective of how initiatives like the Green Deal and green finance solutions could enable MSMEs to begin their sustainability reporting journey. The webinar was jointly organized by ESCAP, ESBN and Policy Exchange Bangladesh.

**READ MORE**

## Regional

### 2024 ASEAN LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP FORUM, Vientiane, Laos, 16-17 September 2024

The ASEAN Leadership and Partnership Forum is an annual forum bringing together Government, Business, Thought and Think Tank Leaders to discuss future challenges and key trends facing ASEAN.This year under the chairmanship of Lao PDR and with the theme of ASEAN Connectivity & Resilience of Growth, the region aims to build the institutional capacity and effectiveness of ASEAN to ensure faster growth, inclusivity, and economic sustainability by enhancing connectivity and resilience.




**READ MORE**

## Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business Roundtable & ASEAN Consultation Meeting on the Pre-Zero Draft of New Declaration on 3R and Circular Economy, Bangkok, 25-26 November 2024



Organized by ESCAP and ESBN, this high-level event brought together policymakers, private sector leaders, and sustainability experts to accelerate the circular economy transition in the Asia-Pacific region. Key discussions focused on the regulatory landscape, innovative circular business models, and green finance mechanisms to foster sustainable growth. Participants evaluated methods for measuring circularity and impact, strategies for engaging consumers to drive behavior change, and approaches to building capacity and skills for a successful transition.

The roundtable also highlighted regional collaboration opportunities to develop circular value chains and tackle challenges. Outcomes included actionable recommendations for policy alignment, enhanced public-private partnerships, and a roadmap to promote circular economy adoption, laying the foundation for a sustainable future in the region.

READ MORE

## Engagement and Policy Dialogue: Accelerating sustainability across the Asia-Pacific Private Sector, Jakarta, Indonesia, 4-6 December 2024



Jointly organized by ESBN and the Indonesia Employers Association (APINDO), the ESBN-APINDO Engagement and Policy Dialogue provided an opportunity to reflect on the private sector engagement and their efforts to address the sustainability for enhancing socio-economic prosperity, protecting nature and strengthening multi-layered partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region. The Engagement and Policy Dialogue provided national stakeholders (e.g. Indonesia) and other development partners an opportunity to promote sustainability dimensions of the national, subregional and regional initiatives to ensure that these new and emerging policies are linked to the acceleration of the decarbonization efforts, especially around climate action, social inclusion and partnerships.

READ MORE

## The 24th Consultative Commission Meeting of the Greater Tumen Initiative, 3rd Annual Forum on Connectivity: Strengthening the Role of Business in Promoting Sustainable Development, 09 December 2024, Seoul, Republic of Korea




The meeting focused on boosting regional cooperation to drive sustainable economic growth. Key discussions centered on expanding digital trade and making the transition to a low-carbon economy. Delegates from GTI member states, including China, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation, explored opportunities for working together on digital trade, e-commerce, and environmental sustainability. They also reviewed GTI's progress, approved a strategic action plan for 2025-2029, and tackled important issues like cross-border transport challenges and regional connectivity. The main theme of the meeting was fostering innovative economic growth and promoting sustainable, low-carbon development to address regional challenges and secure long-term prosperity. The meeting wrapped up with the adoption of the Seoul Declaration and the announcement that the Russian Federation would chair the next meeting in 2025.

READ MORE

## Fifteenth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES XV) Unleashing an equitable green transformation in South Asia, Kathmandu 11-12 December 2024

The summit focused on the theme of "Unleashing an Equitable Green Transformation in South Asia," and was held in Kathmandu on 11–12 December 2024. The summit has been organized on an annual basis since 2008. The summit brought together policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders to explore strategies for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth in South Asia, with a focus on equitable green transformation and regional cooperation. ESBN organized a session on circular economy to discuss options and approaches in South Asia.

READ MORE

## High-Level Regional Consultation on Financing for Development in Asia and the Pacific: In preparation for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, 17-18 December 2024.



The Fourth International High-Level Conference on Financing for Development will be held in Seville, Spain, in June 2025 to assess progress on the Monterrey Consensus, Doha Declaration, and Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The Regional consultation aimed to address challenges, accelerate the 2030 Agenda, and reform the international financial architecture. As part of preparations, the Asia-Pacific regional consultation, mandated by UNGA Resolution 78/271, focused on four areas: a) domestic public resources, b) private finance for SDGs, c) public debt sustainability, and d) emerging issues. ESBN member Dr. Anthony Watanabe, chair of the ESBN Task Force on Circular Economy participated to represent the ESBN perspectives on the financing for development issues.

READ MORE

# Global

## COP29: Future Proofing Your Supply Chain: Mastering circularity and policy shifts for market success, Baku, Azerbaijan,14 November 2024




READ MORE

On 14 November 2024, the session at COP29 addressed critical issues for businesses navigating the evolving sustainability landscape. Participants explored the implications of major global policies, such as Europe's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the upcoming global plastic treaty in Busan, learning how to adapt operations to remain competitive and future ready. The discussion featured actionable strategies for mapping and supporting SME suppliers in their sustainability transitions, including setting ambitious yet achievable targets, providing training, and allocating resources. Additionally, insights were shared on how corporations and financial institutions are collaborating to deliver affordable financing solutions, enabling SME suppliers to transform their operations and align with circular economy principles. This session provided a comprehensive roadmap for businesses to thrive in the new economy.

# Looking Ahead

As we look ahead, ESBN is committed to driving impactful initiatives and fostering partnerships to advance sustainability across the Asia-Pacific region. In 2025, key priorities areas include: a) expanding ESBN membership with a focus on thematic areas, b) equipping businesses with tools for scaling up action oriented-solutions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, and strengthening the capacity building activities, such as through the ESGpedia training. Promoting public-private policy dialogue and mobilizing resources will remain central to supporting the green transition and sustainability in actions. Through these efforts, ESBN aims to amplify its role in promoting circular economy principles, sustainable business practices, and inclusive growth, ensuring a resilient and prosperous future for all in Asia and Pacific.

## Upcoming Events

ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

ESBN ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

**03.03-03.05**
- High-Level 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific (3-5 March 2025, Jaipur City, Rajasthan, India)

**04.21-04.25**
- The eighty-first session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (21-25 April 2025, Bangkok)

**04.28-04.29**
- High-Level Conference of Middle Income Countries（28-29 April 2025, Manila, Philippines）

**06.30-07.03**
- The 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (30 June – 3 July, 2025, Seville, Spain)

**02.25-02.28**
- Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) (25-28 February 2025, Bangkok)

**04.09-04.11**
- 2025 Asia-Pacific Business Forum (9-11 April, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

**05.28-05.30**
- Committee on Trade, Investment, Enterprise and Business Innovation, Second session (28-30 May 2025, Bangkok)

**11.10-11.21**
- 2025 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 30), 10–21 November 2025, Belém, Brazil














Asia -Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) , 25-28 February 2025, Bangkok, Thailand




High level 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific, 3-5 March 2025, Jaipur City, Rajasthan, India



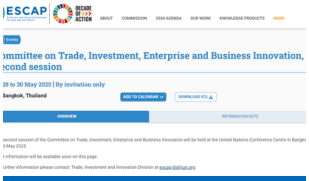

Asia Pacific Business Green Deal for Business Forum, 9-11 April 2025, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.




The eighty-first session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 21-25 April 2025, Bangkok, Thailand




High-level conference of Middle-Income Countries, 28-29 April 2025, Manila, Philippines



Committee of Trade, Investment, Enterprise and Business Innovation, Second session, 28-30 May 2025, Bangkok




The 4th International Conference on Financing for Development, 30 June- 3 July 2025, Seville, Spain




2025 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 30) 10-21 November 2025, Belém, Brazil




**Scan here to Join the APBF 2025**



ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

ESBN
ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

**Contact Us**
Email: esbn@un.org
Website: ESCAP SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK | ESCAP