

**United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)  
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)**

**Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of International Women's Day 2024 (IWD 2024)  
"Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress"**

**Friday, 8 March 2024, 10:00AM – 11:30AM  
(Thailand Time Zone: GMT+7)**

## **Concept Note**

### **1. Introduction**

International Women's Day, 8 March 2024 (IWD 2024) presents an opportunity to reflect on the efforts and progress made towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality within the context of economic empowerment. In this regard, the Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of International Women's Day 2024, jointly convened by ESCAP and UN Women, will highlight the remarkable roles held and contributions made, by women and girls working to reshape the economic landscape.

The theme of IWD 2024, "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress", will pivot the spotlight onto several critical topics essential for fostering inclusive and equitable societies through the economic empowerment of women and girls. These topics are in alignment with the priority theme of the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), i.e. "Accelerating the Achievement of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls by Addressing Poverty and Strengthening Institutions and Financing with a Gender Perspective".

Empowering women in the economy and closing gaps in workforce participation, rights to economic resources and unpaid care responsibilities are central to achieving SDG 5 and the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup>, as gender equality cuts across ten additional goals with gender-specific benchmarks which further reinforces the interconnectedness between women's empowerment and a better future for all.<sup>2</sup> The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – the most comprehensive and progressive blueprint for women's empowerment to

---

<sup>1</sup> UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment*, <https://www.empowerwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/empowerwomen/resources/hlp%20briefs/unhlp%20full%20report.pdf?la=en>

<sup>2</sup> UN Women, *In Focus: Sustainable Development Goal 5*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/in-focus/2022/08/in-focus-sustainable-development-goal-5>

date – identified “Women and the Economy”, as one of the twelve pillars for achieving gender equality. It emphasizes the need to address the structural barriers and discriminatory practices that hinder women’s full and equal participation in economic activities, promoting policies and initiatives that foster women’s economic empowerment.

Overall, countries in Asia and the Pacific have made noteworthy progress in empowering women and girls, however, the presence of discriminatory policies and social and cultural barriers persist which limit women and girls’ economic participation and empowerment.<sup>3</sup> In most Asia-Pacific countries, the share of women-owned enterprises is lower than that of men. Women-owned businesses are typically informal and unregistered, and their growth and success are threatened by restrictive ingrained gender norms and legal frameworks and limited access to networking and financing,<sup>4</sup> which can hamper efforts aimed at eliminating extreme poverty.

In the Asia-Pacific region, there is insufficient data available regarding women’s economic empowerment. Over 50 per cent of essential indicators for monitoring gender-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are unavailable in most countries, including in the areas of unpaid care and domestic work and key labour market indicators.<sup>5</sup>

International Women’s Day 2024 marks an important juncture for collective reflection and action in the pursuit of gender equality, with a specific focus on economic empowerment. It represents a call to dismantle barriers, challenge discriminatory norms, and forge a path that ensures women and girls are not only included but empowered at every level of economic engagement.

## **2. Objectives**

The objective of the Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of IWD 2024 is to discuss how ESCAP member States and other key stakeholders can contribute significantly to advancing gender equality, fostering an inclusive and empowered economic landscape, and facilitating a general consensus on strategies for advancing key frameworks, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (in particular the 2019 Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In particular, it aims to enable the exchange of knowledge, good practices, and lessons learned concerning gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the Asia-Pacific

---

<sup>3</sup> United Nations ESCAP, *Social Development: Advancing Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment*, <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/social-development/advancing-gender-equality-and-womens-economic-empowerment#:~:text=Although%20the%20number%20of%20women,being%20primarily%20informal%20and%20unregistered.>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

region and the progressive implementation of Beijing+25 Review commitments related to women's economic empowerment. The commemoration will facilitate the exchange of progressive policies, promising practices, and forward-looking initiatives that contribute to advancing gender equality, economic empowerment, and the overall well-being of women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region.

Moreover, the Commemoration serves as a forum for policy dialogue, capacity building and networking for stakeholders, in order to:

- Address the gender dimensions of poverty by integrating gender perspectives into financing strategies and strengthening institutions.
- Facilitate the exchange of knowledge, good practices, and lessons learned in participatory gender-responsive approaches to the design, implementation and monitoring of gender equality with respect to economic empowerment.
- Explore gender-sensitive policy solutions to address digital, green and care transformations and ensure women and girls have the skills needed in the future.
- Share lessons learned and discuss prevalent challenges faced by women and girls in the economic empowerment landscape within the Asia-Pacific region.

### **3. Participants**

The Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of IWD 2024 will bring together government officials, experts and professionals working towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the economic landscape, in addition to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (in particular the 2019 Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review), and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Participants will include members of the diplomatic community, policymakers, representatives from civil society organizations and the private sector, representatives of relevant UN agencies, and other stakeholders from across Asia and the Pacific.

### **4. Modality/Structure of Event**

The Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of IWD 2023 will be convened in a hybrid format, i.e. in-person at the UN Conference Centre, ESCAP Hall, with the option for online participation using the Zoom platform. The Commemoration will be conducted through an interactive format to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, good practices and lessons learned by representatives from countries in Asia and the Pacific. Participants may ask questions during the Q&A session(s) and/or share their observations and experiences through brief interventions.

### **5. Links to Key Documents**

1. [Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review](#)
2. [Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing+25 Review](#)
3. [Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development](#)

## 6. Contacts

Ms. Cai Cai, Chief of Section, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP [caic@un.org](mailto:caic@un.org)

Ms. Jessica Murphy, Associate Social Affairs Officer, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP [jessica.murphy@un.org](mailto:jessica.murphy@un.org)

Mr. Emad Karim, Advocacy and Campaigns Coordinator, UN Women [emad.karim@unwomen.org](mailto:emad.karim@unwomen.org)

***The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)** provides an inclusive intergovernmental platform for governments and other stakeholders in the region to accelerate the implementation of global gender equality commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.*

*ESCAP works to ensure that gender equality is addressed holistically in order to develop forward-looking strategies and contribute to efforts towards gender equality, poverty reduction, and economic growth in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.*

***The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)**, grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and benefit women and girls worldwide.*

*UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific located in Bangkok, covers a total of 42 countries and exercises its triple mandate and functions at a regional level and in support of UN Women's offices and UN Country Teams in 24 countries across the region.*